Domestic Arts
Textiles, Domesticity, Education, and Meaning

Hawaiian Mission Houses
Historic Site and Archives
Honolulu Hawai‘i
Missionary and Native Hawaiian Attitudes Toward Sexuality and Clothing
Thomas A. Woods, Ph.D., Executive Director

19th Century Women’s Education
Michael Smola, Curator of Programs

Fabrics of Change
Domestic Arts in the Hawaiian Islands
Betty Lou Kam, Guest Curator

Historical presentations from a celebration of the newly restored Domestic Arts Room of the 1821 Mission House
Saturday, September 5, 2015

This project is supported by a grant from the Hawai‘i Council for the Humanities
Even before the ABCFM missionaries came to Hawai‘i, ali‘i often wore Western clothing when appearing before visiting Westerners. Western dress symbolized a “civilized” person to Western visitors. The ali‘i fully understood that fact and wanted to project a civilized image to the Western visitors with large ships, powerful guns and cannon. Western clothing reflected Western moral values, and decorative stitchery—such as samplers—taught decorative arts, written language, and morality at the same time. Along with books, textiles were so much in demand that they served as “money” in the early mission period.

Hawaiian ali‘i, and other Hawaiians, were generally eager to adopt Western dress, at least in public settings. An 1836 letter signed by Kamehameha III and leading chiefs to the ABCFM, requested the mission send teachers to train Hawaiians to produce cloth and make clothing, shoes, and hats, among other things. This request demonstrates the eagerness with which they wanted common Hawaiians to learn to make and wear Western clothing.

Clothing has many functions. It has a practical function. It is a covering for the body that protects the wearer against injury from contact with the environment; it provides warmth; and it conceals portions of the body deemed private. Clothing also has a symbolic function. It symbolizes status, connects people to social groups or clans, suggests a person’s personal identity, and is a symbol for the core belief systems of the cultures the clothing represents. So clothing is practical, but has both social and individual symbolic significance. This was as true in pre- and post-contact Hawaiian society as it was in Western society. In pre-contact Hawai‘i, for instance, feathered capes and highly decorated pa‘u, malo, or ki-hei were signs of chiefly status.

Many mission women taught sewing classes in their own homes for common Hawaiian women living near their mission stations. For better or worse, in teaching the practice and arts of western clothing and domestic needlework, in general, missionaries introduced and/or reinforced Western Christian morality and gender roles for the broader Hawaiian population. Even among those Hawaiians who did adopt the new dress as their standard outfit, many maintained a dual identity, shedding the clothing readily when they were remote from mission stations or their chiefs, or in the privacy of their own homes; and thus, at least temporarily, also symbolically shedding the belief systems of Western civilization.
One of the central factors in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions missionaries’ critique of Hawaiian culture when they arrived in 1820 was the difference in their attitudes towards sexuality and the related issue of covering one’s body. The views of missionaries toward sexuality and clothing were at polar opposites to those of traditional Hawaiian society. Understanding their different perspectives on sexuality explains the language missionaries used to describe Hawaiians when they first encountered each other, and it also explains poorly understood and still controversial missionary positions on some Hawaiian cultural practices.

Pre-contact Hawaiians were not ashamed of their bodies or their sexuality. In traditional Hawai‘i nudity itself was not considered sexual. Traditional Hawaiian clothing was designed to protect the procreative genitals and provide warmth or protection from the sun, not to cover the body from shame. Men wore the malo and women wore the pa‘u for protection, and occasionally, a kihei was worn for added warmth. Young children, generally in the company of females of their extended community, were permitted to roam about nude until they were six years old. When young males moved into the hale mua (men’s house), they were allowed to wear a malo for the first time. Women’s breasts were always left uncovered. Adult males and females played water sports together in the nude.¹

For Hawaiians, sex was seen as one of the joys of life. It was fun and pleasurable and helped knit people together. Sexual expression was seen as a basic human need, not different from eating. References to the pleasures of sex were playfully incorporated into chants, poetry, and dances, often using kaona, or words with hidden meanings. Hawaiians were initiated into sex early and were sexually active throughout their lives. Sex education was the responsibility of adult males and females. Boys and girls were taught to look forward to sex. Families slept in common sleeping rooms, often on the same mats, so children learned about sex through observation as well as direct instruction from adults, often of the opposite sex.² Children’s sexual organs were even shaped and trained by adults to ensure pleasurable experiences when they matured. At puberty, sexual experiences and experimentation were actively encouraged. Sex was sought for pleasure, not just for procreation.
There was no Hawaiian word for marriage, and generally, there was no expectation of monogamy. If monogamy occurred, it was often for practical considerations, and no ceremony was attached to it. Having multiple sexual partners was a common arrangement. Jealousy was unusual. Propositions were considered a compliment and it was generally seen as rude to refuse a sexual advance. Prostitution was unnecessary and unknown in pre-contact Hawai’i. Same gender sexual relations were not considered unusual, and incest among siblings was considered normal. In fact, the mating of sisters and brothers was considered by the ali’i to be sacred and productive of the greatest mana and highest ranking chiefs. However, sexual relationships were not considered appropriate between parents and their children.3

A Hawaiian is quoted as testifying in court in 1854 that “In the old days, before the custom of marriage became general, it was moe aku, moe mai [sleep there, sleep here].”4 Malo says that “in ancient times indiscriminate sexual relations between unmarried persons, (moe o na mea kaawale)” and a range of other sexual activities he enumerates “were not considered wrong.”5

According to a noted scholar, “marriage and the control of sexuality was at the core of the mission project, the bedrock of virtue.”6 For the Protestant missionaries, Hawaiian sexuality was heathen (godless); it was “filthy;” it was “savage.” When missionaries describe “the sin of uncleanness” they are referring to sexual permissiveness, not a lack of bathing. When missionaries talk about Hawaiians living like beasts, they are usually referring to casual sexuality and the lack of privacy in one-room sleeping houses.

Missionaries feared their own sexuality, and for them sex was a source of “shame, anxiety and frustration.”7 Their attitudes were grounded in the bedrock of their Christian beliefs—in The Holy Bible itself. These Protestant missionaries came to Hawaii to teach the Bible, and in their interpretation, the Bible had taught them to be ashamed of their sexuality. The temptation in the Garden of Eden had undone the innocence of Adam and Eve. In Genesis 2:25, before eating of the tree of knowledge, Adam and Eve “were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”8 But after eating of the tree, shame engulfed them: “the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”9 Christian modesty was expressed, in part, with clothing that covered the entire body, because nudity or immodesty in dress could tempt the Christian man or woman. Christians were warned in 1 Timothy 2:9, “That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”10 Fornication, sex with a partner out of marriage, or adultery, sex with another
partner while married, were mortal sins. Proverbs 5:3 – 5 warned that succumbing to the attractions of another woman led to hell: “For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.”11 Leviticus forbids incest of any kind and specifically the union of brothers and sisters, a traditional Hawaiian approach to bolster mana: “if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it [is] a wicked thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people. . . .”12

In a letter to her sister in Vermont, Hilo missionary wife Sarah Lyman exhibited the typical missionary response to casual attitudes toward their bodies typical of Hawaiians, an attitude which missionaries viewed with horror.

There are many things I am desirous of having you know about this people, but I am at a loss to know how to communicate the information. I cannot convey right impressions by writing, besides some things would not look well written. Supposing I tell you some things about them. You must be careful whose hands this falls into.—You have read that the men wear the Malo, but I presume you have not the least conception how it is put on, or what it is. It is a strip of cloth about three yards long and several inches wide. When folded together it is about the size of a skein of yarn. It is put perhaps twice around the body just above the hips, and then passed between the legs barely covering the private parts with the end fastened behind. This constitutes the whole clothing of multitudes. In my opinion, it would not be much worse to go naked. A great many of the females think no more of going with their breasts exposed, than we do our hands. All, or nearly all who do not wear a full dress, wear the kihe, which covers from the hips to the knees. [Here Sarah refers to ki-hei, but she describes paʻu-. Ki-hei is a shawl worn over the shoulders for warmth.] Those who live near us have learnt that we think it not right to expose their nakedness, and are more modest about their dress. But neither class have the least sense of shame about them. Both men and women, if they have occasion for it will sit down in, or by the side of the road to do their duties, right before our eyes too. They seem to think no more about it than the dumb beasts. I am often put to the blush, but such things do not affect me as they did when I first arrived. . . . Children are as wise as their parents. Things which are kept private from children at home are common talk among children here. Indeed there is nothing kept private from children. Whole families sleep in one apartment, and on the same mat; this is perhaps one of the greatest evils existing.13

Protestant missionaries quickly learned that the way to mold Hawaiian culture
into their own “civilized Christian” image was to focus on Hawaiian women, who would become agents of civilization, just as women were the moral arbiters in the newly emerged American “Cult of Domesticity.” To successfully convert and civilize them, “Hawaiian women should be rendered genuinely pious, sexually pure, dutifully submissive, and domestically oriented as housewives and mothers.”

Hawaiian women had seen almost no examples of Western-style clothing for women and they knew almost nothing about Western women until the missionary wives began arriving in 1820. Almost immediately, the chiefesses asked the missionary women to teach them how to make dresses like the ones they wore. The missionaries created new patterns to fit and cover the ample size of the female chiefs.

Mission women began teaching sewing classes near their mission stations. Sarah Lyman, as one example, worked hard to teach the women at her mission station to sew, so they could develop their own sewing skills that would allow them to conform to New England fashion or create their own style with mu‘umu‘u. She organized sewing groups and assisted Fidelia Coan with sewing groups that met regularly to make clothing and straw hats. First Sarah tried to teach the women in her mission to sew Western-style clothing with native materials—kapa and thread made from olonā. She also taught them to braid straw hats.

Sarah expressed satisfaction in the progress she and other missionaries made in gradually influencing Native Hawaiian women to conform to Western styles of dress and head coverings. Students of thirty schools in the Hilo area met in the church on September 5, 1832, for their examinations. Sarah was pleased to see her girls dressed in gowns of native material. She wrote her sister, “The school that I have had the superintendance [sic] of, numbered 100 scholars, all, with two or three exceptions, drest [sic] in black tapa gowns, and straw hats of their own manufacture with wreaths of flowers around their neck.” A year later, she was even more pleased with the progress of students in schools taught by Reverend Dibble, herself, and her husband, David Lyman. She seemed especially happy to see that her students had replaced clothing of native tapa with clothing made with Western fabric: “It has been on the whole the most pleasant examination I have attended. Most of the females had on new straw hats and all of them were drest in calico or white cotton frocks.”

Sarah’s journal shows that sewing and teaching sewing occupied much of her time during the early years in Hilo. She taught local mothers and daughters to sew, and initially, she sewed the clothing for the Hilo Boarding School boys.

I was much gratified on going into the meeting for native mothers this P.M. to see most of the women there with clean dresses and neat looking heads. Had
an interesting meeting. More than 50 present. Selected a class of 20 who have
daughters, to meet them once a week, to instruct them in sewing and fitting work.
The pieces they baste, they are to take home and see that their daughters sew them
during the week, and at the next meeting they are to exhibit the work. . . .
I am now cutting and basting shirts for the boys, who are to belong to the boarding
school. . . .

She gave a more thorough description of the classes four days later.

At the ringing of the bell at 2 this P.M. I took my rag bag, a quantity of needles,
thread and thimbles and went to Mrs. Coan's house, where I met about 20 mothers,
to assist Mrs. C. in teaching them to sew, cut and fit work. As most were new
beginners, we selected wasted pieces for those who knew how to use the needle a
little, to baste, and soon all were asewing. Some appeared as though it was their first
attempt. Their daughters requested them to take home pieces for them to sew during
the week. . . .

In addition to Hawaiian women learning to sew clothing to cover their bodies,
the result of missionary teachings of Christian precepts on morality led chiefs
to promulgate laws regulating sexual behavior. As a natural extension of their
understanding of biblical injunctions, and their fear of sexuality, many missionaries
objected to hula as they witnessed it. Women danced wearing only a pa’u, and
missionaries thought the hula was too erotic. At the time, hula celebrations
sometimes lasted for days. Many missionaries also objected to surfing, because
they believed it was a waste of time that could have been used for more productive
purposes, but more so because Hawaiians bathed in the nude and surfed in the
nude, and they did it in mixed gender groups. Missionaries believed that these
activities characterized by full or partial nudity and the casual mixing of genders
would lead to fornication and adultery. While they did not have the power to forbid
any activities, they could teach the Biblical injunctions to Christian Hawaiian ali‘i,
like Ka‘ahumanu, Hoapili, Kalanimoku, or Kapiolani, and in their zeal to be good
Christians, they themselves made the decisions to discourage or forbid certain
traditional behaviors.

In August 1825, during the time when Ka‘ahumanu was undergoing training
for Christian baptism, she sent criers throughout Honolulu to proclaim the first laws
against lewdness and adultery. Her edict prohibited certain sexual games, encouraged
people to read and write, and urged husbands and wives not to forsake each other or
be guilty of lewdness, and told people to observe the Sabbath and go to church.

Ka‘ahumanu and several other high ranking chiefs were baptized as Christians
in December 1825. Shortly after they were baptized, the chiefs proposed adopting the Ten Commandments as their new laws. This was not a surprising development, as the kapu system had combined religious and civil law and Massachusetts law of the time was also largely based on Biblical injunctions. The opposition of foreign traders and chiefs aligned with Boki caused the proposal to be withdrawn. Instead the Seventh Commandment became the focus of the new Christian chiefs. The missionaries translated the Seventh Commandment, which is “Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery” in broader terms as “Mai moe kolohoe oe,” or “Thou Shalt not sleep mischievously.” The Christian chiefs began to live monogamously in marriage, modeling a new custom for common Hawaiians, and they enacted laws that put a kapu on women engaging in the sex trade with visiting ships.

The chiefs frequently battled with randy sailors over the new laws. The crew of the English ship Daniel IV under the command of Captain William Buckle attacked William Richards’ house to force him to repeal the restrictions against women going aboard ships, but Richards said they were not his laws. In January 1826, the crew of the U.S.S. Dolphin, under Lieutenant Jack Percival threatened the Hawaiian chiefs and his crew attacked Bingham. Under threat of bombardment, Kaahumanu relaxed the kapu for the Dolphin, but reinstituted it when the ship departed.

Missionaries objected to the practice of Hawaiian women selling sexual services to sailors because they thought it was a sin—and it spread disease. Missionaries witnessed the rapid spread of venereal disease that resulted from casual sexuality, and resulting disfigurement and sterility. It did not matter to the missionaries that the sex trade was one of the few ways that common Hawaiian women could access Western goods for themselves and their families, or that reciprocal trades such as this were part of Hawaiian tradition. Missionaries also tried to suppress alcohol, rum in particular, as they believed it led to dissolution, disorder, violence, and often accompanied the sex trade.

Merchants opposed the new sexual behavior laws because it was bad for business. In 1847, it was estimated that twelve thousand sailors visited ports in Hawaii in 1847, spending ten dollars each, equaling a $120,000 economic boost. Nine-tenths of that went to the sex trade and grog shops, though the majority went to women in the sex trade, who then spent it with the merchants.

The first printed code of laws for Hawaiians was enacted December 8, 1827. Not surprisingly, it included a law controlling sexuality and protecting marriage. The laws prohibited murder, theft, and adultery. Due to the opposition of merchants, three other laws were listed as only “teachings,” not enforced laws. These teachings prohibited
rum selling, prostitution, and gambling.

Statistics on legal cases demonstrate the persistent significance of the laws against illegal sexual behavior, which were basically intended to redefine marriage and monogamous relationships. In 1838, 73% of all the criminal cases in the Hawaiian Islands were connected with illegal sexual conduct. The most common form of sexual crime was adultery, but fornication, prostitution, and lewdness composed the remainder. From 1844 – 1845, of the cases in Honolulu, 29% were sexual in nature. In Kaua‘i, 63% of the criminal cases were for sexual behavior in 1846 – 1847. On the Island of Hawaii for all of 1852 and much of 1851, about 44% of the crimes were related to sexual crimes. The penalty for adultery was arduous, about $30, equivalent to about half a years’ wages, or eight months of hard labor.26

In the Protestant missionary effort to create a Christian civilization in Hawai‘i, they attempted to suppress and re-channel Hawaiian sexuality into monogamous marital relationships, recreating the Christian New England family in Hawai‘i. Their main tools were Western clothing and laws regulating sexual behavior.

Endnotes
3. See Diamond, who uses broad sources, but especially David Malo, S. M. Kamakau, E.S.C. Handy, Marshall Sahlins, and Mary Pukui.
5. David Malo, Hawaiian Antiquities (Moolelo Hawaii), trans. by N. B. Emerson (Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Co., 1903), 103
6. Merry, Colonizing Hawai‘i, 73.
10 The Holy Bible, 1 Timothy 2:9.
15. Lyman, December 8, 1832, in Martin, 48.
16. Lyman, September 5, 1832, in Martin, 43.
17. Lyman, November 19, 1833, in Martin, 60.
18. Lyman, August 22, 1836, in Martin, 90.
19. Lyman, August 26, 1836, in Martin, 90.
20. Lyman, January 35, 1834, Martin, 63-4.
22. Silverman, 105.
25. Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i*, 222 – 226.
26. Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i*, 251.
Education was an important part of both Hawaiian and New England culture. Before the arrival of Westerners in the islands, Hawaiian culture and education were passed down orally. The term kahuna was used to refer to anyone who was a specialist in their field—there were religious kahuna, canoe-making kahuna, farming kahuna, etc. Hawaiians held skill, knowledge, and expertise in high regard; the extensive vocabulary related to learning supports this fact. The family was the main educational setting. The older generation taught the younger generation the knowledge, ritualistic, practical elements related to certain activities and skills. Some families were recognized far and wide for a particular skill or set of knowledge, and others from outside the family would seek training from them. The kumu (teacher, foundation of knowledge) of hālau filled the role of parents and grandparents to the students studying under them, thus making the hālau a family structure. Perfection in knowledge was held in high regard, a necessary requirement for an oral culture where imperfect knowledge could result in cultural and practical loss. This depth of knowledge was tested often through ho‘ike or other public contests. Memory skills, sorting and classification skills, and knowledge manipulation was an important part of Hawaiian culture, intended to ensure that knowledge would be completely passed down to the next generation.

Native Hawaiian women were taught the necessary skills for survival and the occupations for which they were considered suited. Women were taught their role in doing jobs considered proper for women, like producing food (planting behind the men preparing ground), making kapa for clothing and other needs, making mats of lauhala, making clothing for the whole family, as healers, and other things necessary for a good quality of life.

The goal of education for Americans in the early nineteenth century was to make good citizens of the republic with good ethical character. There were different philosophies of education for men and women in nineteenth-century New England. Men were educated for public life as citizens, breadwinners, businessmen, and political leaders. Women were educated for hearth, home, and child-rearing. This fits neatly with the idea of the “Cult of Domesticity” or the “Cult of True Womanhood” as elaborated in the 1960s by Barbara Welter. The four pillars of True Womanhood (for middle and upper class white women) were piety, purity, domesticity, and
submissiveness. American women’s formal education focused on these four virtues and the skills necessary to live up to this high-minded ideal. In the nineteenth century, piety was the core virtue that led to the other virtues espoused in the cult of domesticity. A woman’s moral superiority to men lay on a foundation of piety. Women were considered to have the moral high ground over men, who were enslaved by their passions and their worldliness.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM) women who came to Hawai‘i were no strangers to piety. Purity stemmed from piety and is the second virtue to being a “true New England Christian Woman.” Most commonly this referred to sexual purity until marriage and monogamy within marriage, but could also refer to purity in terms of not “degrading” one’s self by drinking or engaging in other behaviors that damage the body. New England women were also expected to be submissive to God and to male authority. ABCFM missionary women were submissive to God (also showing piety) and to their husbands, though many women managed to carve out areas for themselves outside of the domestic sphere during their time as a missionary in Hawai‘i. The final virtue was domesticity. Domesticity involved the ability to take care of the home, the children, to be a gracious hostess, an interesting conversational partner, and to be the social coordinator for the family.

When the first missionaries arrived, sewing and the domestic arts were an early way for the missionaries to ingratiate themselves with the ali‘i. Upon arrival in Hawai‘i, “One of the former queens . . . requested that our wihenes [sic – wahine] . . . make her a gown like their own, [but] was told that it was the Lord’s Day, and that they would make it tomorrow.” A sewing circle began on the ship the next day with four “women of distinction” taking part, including Queen Kalakua and Pi‘ia, two of Kamehameha I’s wives. On another occasion, Mrs. Bingham was asked to make the King a dozen shirts with ruffles and a whole suit made from broadcloth. Early Domestic Arts education was in the homes of the missionaries themselves, very soon after they landed on shore. Two months after arrival, one of the male missionaries wrote in the Sandwich Island Journal, (authored by several missionaries), “Took a native female into our family, to assist in the domestic concerns, and to be taught the best things. Some of the native women, every week, come to be instructed and assisted in making garments for themselves in English fashion.” On that same day, Sybil Bingham wrote, “I will hope to say a word to my sisters each day the Levant continues in port. The most which has interested me to-day has been my little school. To see the little things so ready to learn, and so busy with their needles is very pleasant. I long to know more of their language, that I might be pouring into their tender minds more
Sybil Bingham also wrote the following entry on February 4, 1821:

Many of my dear pupils there would be happy to hear me say that, as they will remember that I often had much enjoyment in school, arduous as it might have been. These heathen girls are most of them indeed in earnest to receive instruction as the conduct of each day testifies. Three of them are obliged to attend the hula hula every afternoon. At the close of the school this forenoon, and also last Saturday, they proposed going quickly to eat and return immediately that they might not lose the privilege of the bible lesson. The exercise of Saturday afternoon is sewing, with a reading of a portion of scripture by those who are able.  

Even when requesting reinforcements, the missionaries requested those with sewing skills to teach Native Hawaiians domestic arts: “A lady here need never be at a loss for business. Besides contributing to the comfort, respectability, and usefulness of her husband, and superintending her family concerns, she will find ample employment in instructing the natives, especially the females, in reading, writing, and sewing.”

The missionary women, in addition to teaching a skill they thought Hawaiian women needed, were addressing a very particular concern of theirs—New England standards of propriety in dress, manners, and housekeeping. Many of the women were shocked by the dress of Native Hawaiians upon their arrival in Hawai‘i Nei. Shortly after arrival, Sybil Bingham wrote in her journal on March 31, 1820:

I need not say this is a deeply interesting season. For a moment my heart has failed me. I have been these five months, bringing these scenes to my view, so much that I thought I should in a measure stand unmoved. But I am obliged to seek my little room and let the tears flow. Canoes of the naked natives are along side of our vessel and coming on board. O, my sisters, you cannot tell how the sight of these poor degraded creatures, both literally and spiritually naked, would affect you! I say naked. They have nothing but a narrow strip, which they term a marrow [malo], tied around them.

Upon arrival in 1828, Laura Fish Judd was disappointed in the dress of Native Hawaiians, which had apparently improved only little after eight years. She was determined to make a difference in their dress:

Mrs. Bingham, who is in feeble health, allowed me the privilege of superintending the breakfast this morning, as I am eager to be useful in some way. I arose quite early, and hastened to the kitchen. Judge of my dismay on entering, to find a tall, stalwart native man, clad much in the style of John the Baptist in the
wilderness, seated before the fire, frying taro. . . . I stood aghast, in doubt whether to retire, or to stand my ground like a brave woman, and was ready to cry with annoyance and vexation. The cook’s ordered him out to make his toilet in foreign attire. I suppose travelers in Southern Italy become accustomed to this statuesque style, but I am verdant enough to be shocked, and shall use all my influence to increase the sale and use of American cottons.10

These concerns both link to piety and purity.

In spite of Laura Judd’s shock, sewing had quickly become popular with Native Hawaiians, and they were adopting western clothing. In 1829 Peter Gulick wrote, “I believe the natives have now some hundreds of hats and bonnets, made by themselves, of this and similar materials. Since the 4th of August, Miss Ogden has been chiefly engaged in instructing native females in writing and sewing.”11 Once some of the Native Hawaiian women learned to sew, they taught others.

In September last a sewing school was established at Kaluaaha [Molaka‘i]. To this purpose, the mauka room in my house was appropriated. It was commenced with twelve girls, which number has been gradually increased to 25. They meet under the superintendence of a most excellent native woman Peenahele [?], who had been for a long time in the employ of Mr. Andrews and my associates. The school meets 5 times a week and spends two hours a day in this very necessary feminine employment. This sewing school will compare well with any school I have seen. They are taught to cut out and make pants, vests, sacks, and shirts. The older scholars are now at work on a set of shirts with linen collars and bosoms that will be exhibited at the next examination. They have earned for themselves by their needles the sum of $37.12.12

By 1834, Rev. Emerson could report, “In addition to her other schools Mrs. E [Emerson] taught a sewing school for twenty females for three months 2 afternoons a week. In this sewing school were made about 200 shirts and pantaloons for which the women obtained as compensation each a calico or cotton gown.”13

There was some effect of all the effort to educate Hawaiian women in Western garment making and other similar domestic skills. In 1840, Rev. Lowell Smith at Kaumakapili Church reported,

The external appearance of the congregation has materially changed also during the two and a half years of our residence among them. Their dirty and tattered tapa garment have been exchanged for clean white dresses and instead of disheveled hair and heathenish leis, they now generally wear hats and bonnets. A goodly number of our congregation has provided themselves with Seats [sic] and

Educating Native Hawaiian Women to be Christian Wives and Mothers
benches for the Sabbath. Some of the females have become quite skillful with the needle in making garments—Some are skillful in braiding and sewing bonnets, and nearly all can braid mats and sugar bags, by wh [which] means they obtain many comforts at the store both for themselves and their families. 14

The missionary women set up women’s schools, or “female seminaries,” during the missionary period from 1820 – 1863. More of these were started slightly after that under the auspices of the Hawaiian Evangelical Association, the successor to the ABCFM mission in Hawai‘i. They were modeled after many of the female seminaries the missionary women and their children attended in New England. Schools like Mount Holyoke, Ipswich, Hartford, and Troy were all schools that missionary women attended in their youth. The curriculum included the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, with practical lessons on various tasks necessary for successful household management. Morals, religion, literary, domestic, as well as “ornamental” (sewing, music, dance, foreign languages) instruction made up the balance of the curriculum. The first female boarding school for Hawaiian women and girls was the Wailuku Female Seminary under the supervision of Lydia Brown and Rev. Jonathan Green. It opened in July 1835. Maria Ogden was quickly added to the staff there in November. 16

By 1839, spinning and weaving were being undertaken to some degree, and the missionary teachers continued to be impressed with the advancement of their female students in the domestic arts. The Mission proudly reported to the ABCFM on their progress.

In the annual report of the station at Kailua we have a very pleasant account of the success attending Governor Adams exertions in this department [the manufacture of cloth]. The art of spinning was taught at Kailua by a female from Lahaina who was herself instructed by Miss Ogden. . . . We are at present, however, more particularly encouraged by the prospects at the Female Seminary. The little girls learn to spin with great ease, and have already accomplished considerable in that department and also in knitting. Very encouraging specimens of their skill and industry were exhibited at one of the sessions of the General Meeting, and should we live to see the improvement of the Sandwich Islanders a few years hence we shall hope to see a Fair which will interest the philanthropist much more than any exhibited in New England.17

As the nineteenth century progressed, other Female Seminaries were started and run either by the government or the Hawaiian Evangelical Association (HEA), the successor to the Sandwich Islands Mission. The government sponsored or ran “Family Schools” where the female students lived with the instructor in their home. Classes
and instruction were conducted in the home. In early 1860, the Makiki Family School was chartered by the government—Maria Ogden was the teacher of this school. Rules were set by the government and included: teaching reading and writing in English OR Hawaiian, arithmetic, grammar, geography, and some branch of industrial work [skills training], religious education [no matter what denomination]. Rev. Richard Armstrong, a former missionary and the Minister of Public Instruction during this period, made the purpose of the schools clear, especially in terms of what women were expected to learn: “what the Hawaiian people want is mothers, mothers, mothers, to train their sons and daughters; to reign in the domestic circle and make homes, quiet, well ordered, clean, and happy homes”18 All of these curriculum items fit well within the “Cult of Domesticity.”

As one can see, the missionary model of women’s education was both wide-ranging, yet limited in goals. It addressed the ideals of Western motherhood and womanhood, while also reinforcing their view of Christian morals and how to publicly display that morality. All of the ideals of womanhood and how to promote them were brought to Hawai‘i with the female missionaries, many of them graduates from female seminaries in New England. They tried to mirror their own experience as they began to teach Hawaiian women. These skills in spinning, weaving, and sewing were necessary to be considered a proper Christian wife. Hawaiian women became very skilled in these areas and began spreading that knowledge on their own to other Hawaiian women. Domestic Arts were an early entrée for the ABCFM Mission into political and social connections with the ali‘i, while also becoming a major educational and moral focus for missionary women in nineteenth-century Hawai‘i.

**Endnotes**

2. Ibid., 2
11. Peter Gulick to Jeremiah Evarts, 27 April 1829, Missionary Letters Collection, HMCS Archives, Honolulu.

18. Ibid., 98.
17. General Letter to ABCFM, 8 June 1839, HMCS Archives, Honolulu, HI.
18. Ibid., 102.
Introduction
Before the arrival of Captain James Cook (1728 – 1779) of the English Navy, governance and social structures were well-defined and effective in maintaining order and balanced livelihood for the Hawaiian people. Culture and arts, linked with a respect for the reigning order and class system, and stimulated by a respect for the beauty of natural elements, had attained levels of excellence during the years before foreign contact. On the eve of the arrival of foreign influences that would greatly impact practices and lifestyles, native Hawaiians had achieved a sophisticated approach to creative design, applying various motifs and methods of patterning and color—all that natural resources then available afforded. This period can be described as the apex of traditional Hawaiian arts.

Western clothing styles and “domestic arts” in the Hawaiian Islands were seeded as the first European foreigners landed on Island shores. What impact did the introduction of western domestic arts, especially the activity of sewing, have on the culture of talented native Hawaiians? What existing conditions and values encouraged the acceptance of different forms of handwork and creativity? This paper will attempt to examine those questions, discussing traditional practices, Hawaiian interest in new innovations, and the period of dramatic change that accompanied the arrival of the missionaries and their sharing of foreign domestic arts.

Fabrics of Change
Hawaiian skills and creativity produced highly refined products such as featherwork, cordage and barkcloth that equaled, at the very least and most often exceeded in quality, similar items manufactured in other parts of the Pacific. The hundreds of years of relative seclusion of these Hawaiian Islands promoted the development of distinctive arts made by specialists, the fine artists and artisans of their time, in service to a particular ali‘i (chief). At the time Captain James Cook’s arrival in 1778, Hawaiian cultural arts were at the peak of their development. Cook and others on his ships, as well as those explorers who followed him, took note of the talented native Hawaiians and often commented on the exquisite work of their hands. From Captain Cook’s journal, is this description of his first encounter with the great ali‘i Kalaniopu‘u and other of high rank:

Fabrics of Change Domestic Arts in the Hawaiian Islands
Singing with much Solemnity, from which we concluded that this procession has some of their religious ceremonys mixt with it; but instead of going on board they came to our side; their appearance was very grand, the Chiefs standing up drest in their Cloaks and Caps. . . . We drew out our little guard to receive him, & the Captn observing that the King went on shore, followd him. After we got into the Markee, the King got up & threw in a graceful manner over the Captns Shoulders the Cloak he himself wore, & put a feathered Cap on his head, & a very handsome fly flap in his hand; besides which he laid down at the Captains feet 5 or 6 Cloaks more, all very beautiful, & and to them of the greatest value. . . .¹

Dr. Adrienne Kaeppler, Curator of Oceanic Ethnology at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institute, reviewed the Hawaiian treasures gathered by Cook:

The specialized skill necessary for fabrication [of Hawaiian featherwork] and the aesthetic genius of Hawaiians in making use of this colorful part of their environment, speak eloquently of the artistic mastery employed by Hawaiians in fashioning objects of sacred and ceremonial use. The perfection of technique and the variation in form and design are unsurpassed by any Pacific peoples. . . .²

In 1969 Kaeppler initiated a monumental effort to locate and catalog the items collected by Cook during his Pacific travels. Her comments on the superb nature of Hawaiian arts were forged in detailed comparative review and extensive examination of the several hundred Cook’s “artificial curiosities” that exist to this day.

Governance in the Hawaiian Islands of the pre-contact period was characterized by a well-defined social system based on a network of recognized ali‘i lines. The ali‘i held the utmost authority and power, balanced by a responsibility for the welfare of those they ruled. This responsibility included the fair and effective distribution of natural resources in their domain; attention to religious and cultural ceremony; and the manufacture of items necessary for the activities of daily life, warfare and the practice of martial arts, agriculture and fishing, and the dedication to religious protocol and ceremony. Most activities required individuals with specific skills. Such specialists were responsible for the safe collection of natural resources, and the shaping of these materials into highly valued items such as barkcloth, featherwork, cordage, stone tools, plaited mats and baskets, wooden and gourd containers. Each item was created with respect for nature, and to honor those of the ali‘i class for whom it was made.³ In this world, gender played a key role—not necessarily as a means to elevate one over the other—but as an effective way to delegate activities that were necessary for the good of all. As an example, women were primarily responsible
for the making and decorating of *kapa*, the traditional Hawaiian fabric while men made the tools by which it was manufactured. The making of this Hawaiian textile is a traditional domestic art in which both women and men participated.

Hawaiians were skilled observers as their lives and livelihoods depended on the careful reading of nature and seasonal changes evident in the patterns of the wind, sea, rains, and clouds. Their power of keen observation was not lost as foreign materials and practices came ashore. The arrival of the first European explorers to the Hawaiian Islands provided an exciting introduction to new materials and fashions never before encountered by native Hawaiians. The appearance of foreigners in vessels of such size and unfamiliar architecture, the introduction of metals, and the first encounters with fashion and fabric of foreign manufacture stimulated curiosity among Hawaiians of the time.

This fascination with the outside world and foreign innovations is aptly illustrated by the story of Ka’iana (1755 – 1795) This chief from the island of Kaua’i was a young man when Captain James Cook visited in 1778. Recorded is an account of a young chief named Taiana, sometimes thought to be Ka’iana though not confirmed, who came on board Cook’s *H.M.S. Resolution* as the ship prepared to depart the islands. He begged to join the sailing party, hoping to make his way to England. His request was denied. While this chief is not confirmed to be Ka’iana, Ka’iana eventually did become the first Hawaiian ali’i to travel abroad.

...on about August 27, 1787, Ka’iana sailed away from Kaua’i on the Bengal ship *Nootka*, Captain John Meares, which was bound for Canton with a cargo of otter and beaver skins from Northwest America. Ka’iana’s desire was to go all the way to England.4

Though his wish to visit England was never realized, he did travel through China, the Philippines and the Northwest Coast of America in 1787 – 1788. A passage in a 1788 account of his visit to what is now Vancouver Island, British Columbia, relates that Ka’iana, with:

...as much clothing on him as he could well carry...was...very impatient to return to Owhyhee.5

Ka’iana was enthused by his new garments, and perhaps eager to return home to impress native Hawaiians with new styles and materials used in their creation.

When Ka’iana returned to Hawai’i in December of 1788, he brought with him treasures that filled five canoes. These included:
...saws of different kinds, gimblets, hatchets, adzes, knives and choppers, cloth of various fabrics, carpets of several colours, a considerable quantity of Chinaware, and ten bars of iron.\textsuperscript{5}

Kamehameha I, recognizing the advantage of Ka’iana’s knowledge of western technology and ways, granted property on the island of Hawai‘i to secure the support and loyalty of this traveler-ali‘i. While the balance of Ka’iana’s short life and his military activities in support of and against Kamehameha I fascinate historians, his enchantment with fabric and foreign styles is significant in the current discussion and indicative of the Hawaiian interest in the new materials, concepts and styles presented by foreigners.\textsuperscript{7}

This same period is marked by seminal events, military conquests by Kamehameha I that led to fundamental transition in the governance of the island chain. Kamehameha I and his allies established unified rule throughout the Hawaiian Islands by April 1810. Dramatic political changes supported this unification and Kamehameha’s leadership. He established and ruled the new kingdom with a strong hand and great acumen, and wisely balanced the preservation of important Hawaiian traditions with careful assimilation of foreign technology and innovation. An often used example of what may have been a quiet penchant for useful western introductions demonstrates his wisdom in establishing an image for himself as a progressive and enlightened ruler as well. It was his choice to wear a red European vest for an 1816 portrait by Louis Choris, artist for the Russian Otto von Kotzebue expedition.\textsuperscript{8}

The only known paintings from life of Kamehameha I were made on November 24, 1816 by Louis Choris, draftsman with the Russian von Kotzebue expedition. The King first sat in native dress, then to Choris’s surprize appeared of his own accord in European clothing. Choris made an unknown number of watercolor sketches differing slightly in detail, from which at least six versions in oil were copied later by unknown artists. The rendering of Kamehameha in a red vest seems to have been his favorite, becoming in time a kind of symbol of kingly office.\textsuperscript{9}

Traditional feathered garments and highly decorated barkcloth of fine construction had always signaled the high status of ali‘i. Kamehameha’s choice of garb of western fabric and style was intentionally made to sway the attention and impression of those outside his island kingdom. This decision shows a significant departure from standards previously appropriate for ali‘i.

By the time of his death in 1819, Kamehameha I had achieved near god-
like status and his passing created a void at the top of the political structure he had shaped. In succession his son Kamehameha II (Liholiho, ca. 1797 – 1824) rose to the throne with the great Kaʻahumanu (ca. 1768 – 1832) favored wife of Kamehameha I, as the actual and perservering political power. Within months of Kamehameha’s passing, dramatic transformation in religious and social practices emerged, and the long-standing kapu system (taboos) that defined class and gender roles was overturned.

Fed up with burdensome taboos (which foreigners violated flagrantly and fearlessly), and aware that Tahiti had abandoned its old ways in favor of Christianity four or five years earlier, many influential Chiefs and priests were ready to urge abolition of the kapu system when steadfastly traditionalist Kamehameha I died on May 9, 1819. The symbolic event trigering [sic] the overthrow occurred at a feast held in Kailua in early November 1819, about six months after Liholiho had succeeded his father as Kamehameha II. Urged by the two most powerful female chiefs, Queen Regent Kaʻahumanu and his mother, Keōpūolani, the 19-year-old king was persuaded to eat publicly at a table prepared for females in open violation of one of the most fundamental taboos. Thus, in this one dramatic gesture of free eating, or ‘ai noa, the entire overt structure of the ancient religious system collapsed.

In 1823 the young Kamehameha II, with his consort, Kamāmalu (ca. 1802 – 1824), and a party of distinguished Hawaiians, traveled to England to seek a personal audience with King George IV. The young king hoped for a promise from the British king of extended support and protection of the Hawaiian Kingdom. The appearance of the members of the entourage was closely observed and critiqued:

Their dress was intensely scrutinized and analyzed in relationship to their physical appearance and manners—considered to be collective indicators of their civility and intelligence. Their featherwork, while appreciated, was thought to be part of their ‘savage’ and primitive nature that needed to be shed in order to be received by ‘civilized’ English society and, ultimately, King George IV.

While the King and his entourage brought gifts of treasured feather capes and exquisite, hand-made barkcloth to England, these were put aside in actual use. In England, the royal Hawaiian couple and other aliʻi were most often portrayed in European attire. A most striking pair of portraits by John Hayter (1800 – 1895) show both in decorous and fashionable European clothing. These two images are the most common depictions of the royal couple even in the present day. Hayter, the favored
portraitist of the time, may have preferred an exotic approach in presentation, a design that seemed to be in line with the desires of High Chief Boki (pre-1785 – ca.1829) and his wife, Liliha (1802 – 1839), who were also members of the royal party. The official Hayter portrait of this very handsome couple was made ca. 1824 and depicts both in traditional Hawaiian chiefly attire. Boki wears a mahiole (feather helmet) and ‘ahu’ula (feather cloak), while Liliha dons a po’o (head lei) and a lei niho palaoa (necklace of braided human hair with an ivory pendant). Boki was a staunch traditionalist, but even he is recorded to have returned to Hawai‘i wearing the dress uniform of a British major general.12

Robert Dampier (1799 – 1874, British artist and clergy) was on board the Blonde, accompanying the solemn entourage of the royal couple who had died while visiting England, when it arrived in Hawai‘i in 1825. While in the islands, Dampier made numerous illustrations—for those of native Hawaiians he preferred native attire. However, the subjects of those portraits were:

...desirous of being presented in their European gowns; the artist, however, insists on the native costume, to their no small mortification, and certainly, in their eyes, a black silk frock must be more delectable than a fine scarlet and yellow feather cloak.13

Christina Hellmich, Curator-in-Charge of the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas at the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, who recently researched and wrote on Hawaiian featherwork, commented on the changing visual records that resulted in the meeting of age-old traditions and new introductions.

Clothing played a key role in conveying meaning in the portraiture of late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century European voyages. Europeans and Hawaiian sought to control representation through images that were created to circulate outside Hawai‘i. . . . The entirely European dress of Liholiho and Queen Kamāmalu created during their visit illustrated their civilized state, suitable for an audience with King George. Despite the bias of Dampier and other artists, and their interest in controlling the presentations of Hawaiians, portraits of this period reveal the personal experiences and agency of members of the royal family and their entourage during tumultuous times.14

The decades of the 1820s and 1830s were tumultuous in a multitude of realms. Old traditions that once separated Hawaiians by gender and provided roles for each were no longer in effect. The throne suffered from the absence of a ruler of the calibre of Kamehameha I. Real political power lay in the hands of Ka‘ahumanu, and at the
death of Kamehameha II, his brother Kauikeouli (1814 – 1854), still a child, rose to power as Kamehameha III. There was competition among foreign commercial interests and missionary efforts. The disarray in many areas of governmental control and administration had yet to settle. The Islands were being pounded by the influx of new peoples and cultures, new business styles, new means of livelihood, new strains of morality — and though many Hawaiian traditionalists maintained their ways, most who occupied the heights of the social and governing structure enthusiastically opened their lives to change. The fabric of this change is well represented in the rapid acceptance of western attire, followed then by training in the making of such new clothing and in other domestic arts.

When the pioneer company of missionaries sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) landed in Kailua-Kona in 1820, Hawai‘i was primed for even greater change. The missionaries who came ashore had already been prepared with familiarity of the Hawaiian language. This was the inspired gift of the Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia—a young Hawaiian boy, who, orphaned by war, sought protection from an American ship captain, and then traveled to New England under his care. ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia attempted to prepare others for missionary work in his home county by developing a codified Hawaiian language translation system. While he himself never set sail for his island home, four other young Hawaiians with whom he had studied, accompanied the first missionaries destined for the Hawai‘i mission, teaching them their language during the long voyage.15 Readied in this way, the American missionaries began their work among native Hawaiians almost without delay. By 1825 prominent ali‘i had accepted the new religion, and schools, some specifically intended to instruct young women in proper behavior and domestic arts, were established.

Pauline King composed a fine description of this period of both opposition and assimilation in her introduction to The Journal of Stephen Reynolds:

Among the groups who reacted most frequently in opposition to each other were the merchants and the missionaries. The enclave of resident traders had been established in Honolulu since the time of Kamehameha I. After 1819 and the breaking of the kapu system, the resident foreign community grew. Pursuing business, they desired to have a minimum of interference from the government of the chiefs and the least restriction on their personal behavior. . . . By 1823, the American Protestant missionaries were firmly established in the Islands. The Honolulu station was led by the powerful Reverend Hiram Bingham. Gradually their influence over the chiefs and chiefesses grew stronger. Late in 1825, many of

Fabrics of Change Domestic Arts in the Hawaiian Islands
the most important Hawaiian leaders became members of the Church. From then on, more and more suggestions of the missionaries were adopted by the chiefs and chiefesses and it was apparent that their influence was great. 16

Within a span of less than five decades (1778 – 1825), those all-significant, clear representations of power and status, the traditional textiles and items of clothing made for the ali‘i, were clouded by an emerging need—the demand that native Hawaiians of authority and prominence be recognized as such by foreigners within and outside the island kingdom. The manufacture of such symbols exclusively the possession of ali‘i—the precious ‘ahu‘ula of the feathers of rare forest birds and the finely decorated masterpieces of kapa, along with carefully plaited household mats of fragrant makaloa—waned. The necessity of maintaining highly trained specialist/artists associated with these arts in service of the ali‘i class also declined. The shift to western goods that occurred among prominent Hawaiian families also took place in the homes of the maka‘ainana (commoners, people of the land).

By the 1830s, western textiles had already become sought-after commodities among native Hawaiians, and missionaries negotiated the exchange for services and other goods for fabric. The Islands underwent cataclysmic change within cultural, economic and societal systems starting in the 1820s, and the making of such exquisite treasures could no longer be supported as it once had been. By 1840 bark cloth was no longer considered to be an appropriate tax payment in kind. By the end of the five decades 1825 – 1875, the master makers of these traditional arts had all but disappeared.

An interesting sidebar to this story of change illustrates the very curious and open-minded nature of native Hawaiian artists. As they came in contact with introduced materials and conventions, whenever possible, Hawaiian artists incorporated these into their traditional arts. Thus, immediately after the introduction of metals, metal adze blades were lashed to wooden hafts by traditional methods and with prized Hawaiian olona cordage. Lei of feathers of introduced birds, not just native birds, were created. Once functional mats and baskets were replaced by western style blankets and containers, a distinctive type of Hawaiian plaited hat emerged. The decoration of barkcloth quickly incorporated coloring techniques based on introduced red fabric fibers and laundry bluing. Recent conjecture by a prominent kapa practitioner and researcher suggests that some of the impressed designs (“watermarks”) on Hawaiian kapa and the finely stamped motifs that decorate its surface were influenced by patterns on early printed fabrics introduced from England following the arrival of Captain Cook. Museum collections abound with
such amazing and beautiful examples of traditional Hawaiian material culture that welcomed and combined elements of foreign introduction. These items provide proof of the skill of native artists, their openness to change, and their great gifts of exciting creativity.

In this arena of quick-change, the flash of western clothing was eye-catching and rapidly took hold in Hawai`i. Many Pacific cultures were changed by the influx of foreign business interests and missionary activity. Traditional barkcloth was replaced by western fabric. In places other than the Hawaiian Islands, the clothing styles that resulted were similar to what had been earlier fashioned from barkcloth. Barkcloth wraps in these Pacific localities tended to be replaced by cotton sarongs. These were practical and appropriate to the new morality that then influenced these island cultures.

The people of the Hawaiian Islands were already in touch with European and American styles, and the emerging fashion mimicked the character of missionary garb.

When the missionary women arrived dressed in the fashion of the day—high-belted tight skirts, short waists, and long tight sleeves—the chiefly women brought out their stores of rich Chinese silks and brocades obtained from early traders. The day before anchoring at Kailua on April 4, 1820, it is recorded that missionary wives aboard the Thaddeus gave their first sewing lessons to Kalakua, Namahana and the two wives of Kalanimoku, who had come to welcome the newcomers.17

Hawaiians, in this case, already conditioned and familiar with foreign clothing styles, were eager to create clothing that demonstrated their progressive mindset—styles certainly more delectible, a word that historian Gavin Dawes appropriately used, than a simple length of fabric wrapped as a sarong. Missionary wives set up schools for Hawaiian women at which western domestic arts were taught. They were instructed in sewing and guided in the proper and civilized ways of dress and behavior for women. In turn, these women, were able to share with other family members at home what they had learned from missionary wives. Sewing lessons were likely initiated with the teaching of simple straight stitches used in patchwork sewing. Sewing circles were formed and the practice of these domestic arts in the home were called out as models of virtuous women’s work. Dr. Roger Rose, Pacific ethnologist, comments:

Although it is not known when or where the first Hawaiian quilts appeared, the patchwork coverlets introduced from New England after 1820, and the traditional
kapa moe [sleeping barkcloth], both provided ready prototypes for an exuberant folk art that is still pursued today with enthusiasm. Early Hawaiian quilts tended to be simple in design and were usually made of turkey-red cloth on white, possibly a reflection of the pa‘i‘ula [pink/red barkcloth colored with the fibers of red western textile] cover sheet found on many kapa moe.  

Appliqued quilts made by Hawaiians evolved into two distinctive groups of thematic focus—both fitting cultural values espoused by native Hawaiians from early times. Appliqued quilts (now accepted as Hawaiian quilts) feature the silhouettes of items of nature—primarily flowers and leaves—cut from fabric of a single color that is then attached to a fabric field of an opposing hue. The second group of Hawaiian quilts features symbols of Hawaiian royalty and sovereignty. Included are those patterned with the beloved Hawaiian flag (Ka Hae Hawai‘i), the Hawaiian coat-of-arms, kāhili and crowns. The selection of these topics are echoes of themes employed by Hawaiian artists and artisans in traditional spirit and practice in the years before the death of Kamehameha I and the 1820s decade of dramatic upheaval that followed.

One of the primary tasks of the first missionaries who arrived in Hawai‘i was the suitable clothing of native Hawaiians in keeping with standards of Christian morality. Sewing instruction, therefore, had strong design and purpose that promoted industry and service, as well as modesty among native women. Missionary wives taught sewing of clothing styles that complied with Christian values, and necessarily matched the ample stature of many of the Hawaiian women. A fabric gown made of a generous quantity of fabric, with a loose waist and a high neckline resulted. By the 1830s young Hawaiian women had been taught to create in this style, and were producing such gowns, carefully sewn by hand under the direction of missionary women. As with Hawaiian quilts, this style of gown became distinctively Hawaiian and remains popular today — worn in simplicity, or dressed up with the use of special fabrics, ruffles, trim and accessories.

Other domestic arts were taught by missionary women and accepted by Hawaiians. The influence of the influx of western fabrics and fashion, and sewing instruction promoted by missionary wives demonstrate best the impact of the sharing of domestic arts introduced by early missionaries in the Hawaiian Islands and espoused by Hawaiian women.
Summary
The domestic arts of pre-contact Hawai‘i had similarities to practices worldwide. The making of clothing, household containers, baskets and other such items were routine tasks divided among men and women, and performed according to standards. In the pre-contact era native Hawaiian artists and artisans consistently strove for excellence, especially if such goods were to be presented to ali‘i for their use and ownership and not for the personal glory of the maker. Magnificent examples of unsurpassed quality and flawless design were appropriate for the chiefs, and those with special talents participated in this level of art and creativity without thought of marking the treasure as a personal accomplishment. Social status and roles were clearly defined and accepted.

The actions of Protestant missionaries sent to the Hawaiian Islands by the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions were also motivated by a greater cause and in service to a divine power. The instruction they offered, the crafts they shared were driven by their faith beliefs and strict attitudes formed by morality and religious practice. Their behavior, appearance and activity were shaped by religious guidelines that promoted sacrifice, service to a divine power, and the work to bring others to the faith.

The overwhelming upheaval in governing and social systems that occurred in the Islands just prior to the arrival of the ABCFM missionaries paved the way for further rapid change, and the acceptance of missionary instruction. The abolition of traditional taboos, and the disarray that ensued as the power and authority of the newly formed kingdom became compromised by weak leadership. Hawaiians who were dedicated to the production of items of highest value primarily for the honor of specific ali‘i found that their skills were no longer useful, no longer considered of the same value.

In the void that resulted in the aftermath of the death of Kamehameha I, centuries-old traditions, structures and systems evaporated. In this emptiness Hawaiians were presented with religious instruction, a new sense of morality and a directed lifestyle introduced by faith-driven missionaries. The lives of native Hawaiians of this time mingled with the zealous spirit of missionaries who traveled perilous ocean miles to the Islands with their God-directed obligation. Acceptance of religious instruction and American customs and styles was rapid. Guidance provided by the missionaries in the response to a new order that resulted as foreign influence grew in the islands was beneficial and helpful.
It would be too simple to explain the changes of the 1820s and 30s in only this manner. While there is truth to the facts of this history, attention to new introductions were in actuality essential elements that shaped the spirit of the Hawaiian people. Native Hawaiians were intelligent and inquisitive, skilled and creative. New concepts and innovations were attractive, and often rather than shying away from the unknown, Hawaiians were drawn into the activity of making the new a part of their own world. The making of clothing and the use of introduced fabric and fashion found clear acceptance and favor with Hawaiians—and this, the heart of domestic arts, was presented to Hawaiian women by missionary wives, and readily accepted.

Endnotes
1. Clerke, in Beaglehole 1967, p.1320. Captain Charles Clerke was on Cook’s Third Voyage. Cook spent more than three months in the Hawaiian Islands, initially being treated almost as a god. In the light, the gifts of fine featherwork was appropriate.
3. An excellent source for information on the customs and practices of this period is Fragments of Hawaiian History by John Papa II (1959). Ii was born in 1800 and raised under traditional systems.
5. Meares, Voyages, p. 322.
7. An excellent resource providing more information on Ka‘iana is Desha’s Kamebameha and the Warrior Chief Kekūhaupi‘o, Kamehameha Schools Press, 2000.
8. Otto von Kotzebue, 1787 – 1846, sailed from 1815 – 1818 in an effort to find passage through the Arctic Ocean.
11. Hellmich, 2015, p. 117.
Bibliography

Beaglehole, John C. ed.


Caldeira, Leah, Hellmich, Kaeppler, Kam, Rose editors.


Daws, Gavan


Desha, Stephan L.


Dunn, Deborah, et al.


Hellmich, Christina


Ii, John Papa


Jones, Stella M.


Kaeppler, Adrienne L.


Keawe, Lia O’Neill, MacDowell and Dewhurst, editors


King, Pauline N. editor


Fabrics of Change Domestic Arts in the Hawaiian Islands
Meares, John  
“Extracts from Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789 from China to the Northwest Coast of America, with an introductory Narrative of a Voyage Performed in 1786, from Bengal, in the Ship Nootka.” Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Reprint of 1791 edition, 1916.

Miller, David G.  
“Ka‘iana, the Once Famous Prince of Kaua‘i.” Honolulu, 1988.

Rose, Roger G.  

Silva, Carol L.  