

Robert Louis Stevenson and the Kingdom of Hawaii

I saw that island first when it was neither night nor morning. The moon was to the west, setting, but still broad and bright. To the east, and right amidships of the dawn, which was all pink, the daystar sparkled like a diamond. The land breeze blew in our faces, and smelt strong of wild lime and vanilla.

—RLS, *The Beach At Falesá*

In the summer of 1888, Robert Louis Stevenson sailed from San Francisco to the South Pacific in a chartered yacht. By then, the 37 year old Scotsman had traveled extensively in Europe and was already a famous author, having previously written several popular works of fiction, including *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island*. Some chroniclers say he was going into voluntary exile owing to his health, which had always been poorly due to childhood bouts with tuberculosis. Others say he was simply living out his dreams of travel to the South Seas. In fact, he originally planned to return to Europe after one year in the Pacific, but the prospect of vitality and enchantment kept him in Polynesia.

Stevenson began his adventure with a general tour of the South Pacific. He visited the Marquesas and Tahiti, and then spent the first six months of 1889 in Honolulu hanging out with the “royal crowd.” In June he sailed to the Gilbert Islands, Samoa, and Australia. By November of 1889, he had settled in Samoa, where he built an estate, supported native causes, got involved in local politics, and even took sides in the struggle for leadership within the Samoan monarchy in the face of direct American, British, and German influence. In 1893, discouraged by the defeat of the Samoan leader Mataafa, and needing a change of scenery, he traveled to Hawaii again. But his visit was cut short by political turmoil in Honolulu and problems with his health, so he returned to his home in Samoa, where he died of a stroke a year later, at the age of 44.

By the time of Stevenson's first visit to Honolulu, the Hawaiian monarchy was itself in decline, and was having its own problems with survival in the face of foreign influence. The Kingdom of Hawaii was in fact a fragile thesis throughout the 19th century, but its existence was becoming increasingly tenuous as the century drew to a close. A major problem was geography. Once protected from foreign intervention by miles of open sea, this tiny island nation in the middle of the Pacific Ocean had become by the 19th century a strategic military and economic outpost for competing international powers.

The Westernization of Hawaii

After Captain James Cook's famous discovery in 1778, Hawaii became a British protectorate. Curiously, Spanish explorers had apparently discovered the island chain over 200 years earlier, but they didn't claim it for the King of Spain because their attention was focused on the New World and the Philippines. It was during the years of the British protectorate that guns and new diseases were introduced to Hawaii, and both played significant roles in Hawaii's history. The introduction of guns, according to experts, gave Kamehameha the ability to conquer all the islands and unify various chieftains into one kingdom, which as it turned out was a very convenient development for foreign entities who might want to negotiate treaties and contracts or influence local government. And the introduction of new diseases—including measles, flu, whooping cough, cholera, and VD—intimidated the natives and greatly reduced their numbers, which may have reduced their ability to resist change when resistance to change was necessary.¹

By the 1820s, when Hawaii was loosening its ties with Britain, international traders and whalers had made the island kingdom an important port-of-call between Asia and the West. Businessmen moved in, and entirely new service industries sprang up, reinforcing a white society that would increasingly push Hawaiian society into the background. Local agriculture suffered because the monarchy focused its attention on the harvest and trade of sandalwood instead of the traditional farming economy. After a pliant king suspended Hawaiian religious practices, multi-talented missionaries (doctors and teachers, preachers and printers) arrived on the scene to reveal a new religion, a new set of customs, and a new form of government. And planters arrived teaching a radical new agricultural life-style and a whole new economy. Hawaii was now within the sphere of US influence.

Introduction of the Western economy

The introduction of sugar cane plantations in 1835, on land leased from the king, was an attack on an entire way of life. Hawaii's traditional agricultural economy was based on royal favor, tribute, subsistence farming, and barter, but the planters operated a modern agricultural business that relied on a cash economy and wage earners. Not every Hawaiian farmer was sold on the idea of earning wages as a live-in field laborer, but enough of them left their small farms to make the plantations a success. In exchange for the labor, early planters paid chiefs a fee in lieu of the tribute and services they would have expected had the farmers stayed on their own land. Experts say the slippery slope to alienated farm labor had already been greased when chiefs who were heavily in debt to foreign merchants ordered commoners to cut sandalwood and neglect the small farms that they relied on for food. Missionaries also played a role when they warned against the evils of idleness and got laws enacted prohibiting life without labor.²

¹ Venereal disease was introduced to the inhabitants of Kauai and Niihau even during the first two weeks of Cook's visit, partly because the natives thought the foreigners were gods... There is evidence that organized resistance to foreign intervention might have succeeded early on. Cook himself was killed on the Big Island of Hawaii during an argument with natives, despite his superior weapons, and the British did not return to the Hawaiian Islands for eight years. By then, however, Hawaiian chiefs, perpetually at war with each other, were eager to form military alliances with the powerfully armed foreigners who they had since realized were not gods... The British provided firearms to various contending chiefs, but Kamehameha became a favorite. The British even helped him acquire a small navy. Moreover, the use of foreign-operated artillery was instrumental in Kamehameha's victory on the island of Oahu... The foreigners also introduced alcohol, tobacco, fleas, and mosquitoes to Hawaii... In 1803, a cholera epidemic reportedly killed about half the Hawaiian population, causing an indelible wound to the native psyche. Kamehameha caught the disease but survived... As late as 1819, the year Kamehameha died, there was talk among chiefs of killing all the whites who had supported unification, but nothing came of it.

² The question of property rights for foreign residents was a burning issue in early 19th century Hawaii. By the 1830s, foreign businessmen, diplomats, and sea captains were all pressuring the monarchy to end the tradition by which the king owned all the land. The king refused to grant property rights to foreigners at that time, however, because he feared it would eventually lead to the loss of his kingdom. He did, nevertheless, accept the idea of renting and leasing property to foreigners. This economic development led to economic and political concessions later in the 19th century. After property rights were granted and constitutional government established, voting rights for foreign residents became a burning issue. Together, both domestic issues—property rights and voting rights for foreign residents—were instrumental in the transformation and eventual elimination of the Hawaiian monarchy.

A Traveler's History of Hawaii

By mid-century, the monarchy dissolved the centuries old “feudal” system by which the king controlled all the land, and foreigners were permitted to buy property outright. Large scale agriculture was now free to expand. A boom period in sugar production ensued, and thousands of new field workers were imported from China, Japan, and Portugal. By the late-19th century, sugar cane fields were a prominent physical feature on the islands, and foreign businessmen were the dominant political force in Hawaii. Royal “property” had been reduced to Crown lands and government lands, and commoners had lost their farms when the lands their ancestors had worked for centuries were sold from under them. It was pretty clear by then who were the winners and losers in the cash economy.

According to experts, the whaling industry had also drawn Hawaiians from their small farms to wage labor. By mid-century, about 3000 Hawaiian men, or 20% of the male population between the ages of 15 and 30, were earning wages as seamen. The service industries in the major whaling ports of Honolulu and Lahaina were also attractions to men and women who sought employment at trading companies and taverns. Movement to the towns increasingly produced intermarriages and a significant population of part-Hawaiians, called “half-castes” in the white vernacular.

The terms “haole” and “kanaka” were now in common usage. At makeshift white-run hospitals, landless natives were labeled “indigents.” Ironically, the dictionary definition of the word indigent is “lacking the means of subsistence.” The first public hospital in Hawaii, sponsored by King Kamehameha IV in 1860, was in fact built to address the widespread problem of “indigent sick natives.” Before 1860 there were only native healers, small private clinics for moneyed residents, and mobile marine hospitals for foreign sailors. The marine hospitals, sponsored by the American and British consuls, were often in taverns.

The Hawaiian people had suffered huge population losses in the few years between Captain Cook’s discovery and the mid-19th century. From a 1770s population of at least 300,000 (some estimates are as high as 1,000,000), their numbers had dwindled to 70,000 by 1850 due to disease, poverty, and a falling birth rate. The trend toward depopulation continued during the last half of the 19th century. In 1860 the number of Hawaiians stood at 65,000, but by 1890 there were only 35,000 native people remaining in the Islands. The full-blooded Hawaiian population was in serious decline, but the part-Hawaiian population that had come into being during the early 19th century was on the incline. In 1850 there were about 1,000 part-Hawaiians in Hawaii, but by 1890 their numbers had grown to 6,000.

Honolulu was a mix of traditional Hawaiian grass houses and European-styled wooden buildings during the early 19th century. But by the late-19th century, when its port was bustling with ship traffic, buildings made of wood, brick, and stone prevailed, and the city was home to a prosperous and growing American-styled mercantile community.

Hawaii, with its western economy, was looking to the world like a prime piece of real estate, and European powers were jockeying for position in the face of America’s apparent advantage. By the mid-19th century, after various political maneuverings toward takeover, the chief foreign competitors—Britain, France, and the United States—had all reaffirmed Hawaii’s independence. But in the halls of Congress in Washington DC there was already talk of ending the intrigue by annexing the tiny island kingdom.

Introduction of a Western form of government

It didn't take long for foreign advisors, businessmen, and missionaries to change the way the Hawaiian monarchy operated. First the white power structure convinced the monarchy to create a constitution in the American style, and then they made sure that each constitutional change lessened the political power of the Hawaiian monarchy and increased the political power of the non-Hawaiian moneyed classes. The result was a monarchy that was always at the mercy of foreigners, even as Hawaiian commoners became a subject people in their own homeland.

The monarchy's slide down the slippery slope to its own demise was greased by its financial debt to rich foreigners, its fear of larger predator nations, its respect for foreign enlightenment, and its inclination to compromise as a means of self-preservation. The need for written treaties and written laws, required for dealing with foreign diplomats, foreign navies, and foreign residents, quickly gave rise to a written constitution.

The Constitution of 1840 was fashioned after the famous American Constitution which had been promulgated some sixty years earlier. It established a two-house legislature and a judicial branch of government, replete with a lower house of representatives, an upper house of nobles, and a supreme court. The executive branch was the monarchy and its cabinet. Members of the lower house were elected by popular vote, and according to experts this was the most notable part of the constitution because it gave common Hawaiians political power for the first time in their history.

The Constitution of 1852 limited the king's powers to those of chief magistrate of the executive branch of government. Curiously, the 1840 charter had allowed him to sit in the upper house of nobles and on the supreme court as well.

The Constitution of 1864, the centerpiece of the 19th century, was a popular as well as reactionary document. The charter, which was the creation of King Kamehameha V and his allies, restored many of the monarchy's traditional powers by eliminating various executive offices and combining the two-house legislature into a single body. But it also weakened the political power of common Hawaiians because it imposed property and educational requirements on voters, and abolished the house of representatives as an independent force. As a result, the new constitution both discouraged and encouraged foreign residents. Ten years later the property requirement for voters was dropped.

One of the burning issues during the mid-19th century movement toward representative government was the role of white foreign residents—businessmen, plantation owners, and other members of the propertied classes—who coveted political power in Hawaii but did not want to become citizens of the tiny island Kingdom. It was these people who favored a closer relationship with the United States, and it was these same people who were not terribly keen on the idea of native male suffrage in Hawaii. The Reciprocity Treaty of 1876, which allowed for the duty-free sale of Hawaiian sugar in America, was the international trade agreement that these landed interests wanted, and the constitution that they put forward in 1887 was their political credo. Experts say that David Kalakaua's ascendance to king was supported by the sugar lobby, but he probably wasn't prepared for his rude reception once in office.

The Fateful 1887 Constitution

The Constitution of 1887 was the beginning of the end for the Hawaiian monarchy. It is commonly known as the “Bayonet Constitution” because it was authored by American businessmen who reportedly forced it on King Kalakaua with a bayonet at his throat. In the words of one witness, the new charter reduced the king “from the status of an autocrat to that of a constitutional Sovereign.” In general, the monarchial powers restored by the 1864 charter were overturned by the 1887 charter and the king’s role became largely ceremonial, with real power going to the cabinet and the legislature, which all along were mostly white, as was the judiciary. The statement quoted above, for example, was made by the king’s own attorney general, a white proponent of the 1887 constitution.

According to the new charter, the king could no longer dismiss cabinet ministers, and his friends in government could no longer become legislators. Moreover, nobles were no longer appointed by the king, but were elected, and there was a \$3000 property requirement or \$600 annual income requirement for elected nobles. Representatives had smaller property or income requirements. The biggest change, however, was in the voter pool, where the requirement of Hawaiian citizenship was discarded outright. Now any male 25 years or older of Hawaiian, American, or European descent, was allowed to vote. Moreover, all voters for nobles were required to own \$3000 worth of property or have an annual income of \$600.

Ralph Kuykendall, in his masterly three-volume treatise *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, says the new constitution created two classes of voters in Hawaii—those who could vote for representatives only, and those who could vote for nobles as well as representatives. “The voting privileges extended to resident aliens gave to the *haoles* as a group a greatly increased power in the government and reduced the Hawaiians to a position of inferiority in the political life of the country.” Other chroniclers have been even harsher. The 1887 constitution, they say, eliminated full voting rights for 75% of the Hawaiian people, and gave American businessmen the exclusive right to vote for nobles and thus dictate the overall composition of the legislature.

King Kalakaua, when he didn’t have a knife pointed to his throat, was an intellectual. Like many of his royal predecessors, he had conquered the language of the most intrusive western invaders. His reign was characterized by various attempts to revive Hawaiian culture in the face of overwhelming American influence. In his famous book, *The Legends and Myths of Hawaii*, the king raised Hawaiian folklore to epic standards, and even defended the by then taboo Hawaiian religion against its critics. During the same year that the king was forced to sign the Constitution of 1887, his editor and kindred spirit (who for a time was U.S. minister to Hawaii) wrote what turned out to be an early eulogy for the independence of the Hawaiian monarchy and the fate of the Hawaiian people.

“In the midst of prosperity and advancement,” said R. M. Daggett in the introduction to King Kalakaua’s book, “it is but too apparent that the natives are steadily decreasing in numbers and gradually losing their hold upon the fair land of their fathers. Within a century they have dwindled from four hundred thousand healthy and happy children of nature, without care and without want, to a little more than a tenth of that number of landless, hopeless victims to the greed and vices of civilization. They are slowly sinking under the restraints and burdens of their surroundings, and will in time succumb to social and political conditions foreign to their natures and poisonous to their blood. Year by year their footprints will grow more dim along the sands of their reef-sheltered shores, and fainter and fainter will come their simple songs from the shadows of the palms, until finally their voices will be heard no more for ever. And then, if not before—and no human effort can shape it otherwise—the Hawaiian Islands, with the echoes of their songs

and the sweets of their green fields, will pass into the political, as they are now firmly within the commercial, system of the great American Republic.”

Arrival of Robert Louis Stevenson in early 1889

Robert Louis Stevenson's first visit to Hawaii came a year and a half after King Kalakaua had signed the Bayonet Constitution. By then, the monarchy was holding on to power by a thread, and annexation by the United States seemed imminent. The king had embarked upon a world tour in defense of his independent island kingdom, and had even suggested to the Japanese that they form a great Pacific empire, leaving him to rule Hawaii. In the end, however, his international efforts to stave off encroaching western influence failed. His kingdom remained at the mercy of American interests, and he was left to host festive dinner parties and sponsor public celebrations of traditional Hawaiian ways, including performances of the hula, which was severely frowned upon by whites in government.

One successful result of his visit to Japan was the importation of thousands of workers for Hawaii's sugar cane fields. King Kalakaua had sought these new workers to satisfy the increasing demands of plantation owners for more field labor, and to save native Hawaiians from the task. Or, as King Kamehameha V had said two decades earlier in his quest for Chinese labor, for “the wants of our agriculture, the dictates of humanity, and the preservation of our race.” As late as 1873, Hawaiians were still the majority of all plantation workers, but over the next twenty-five years plantation acreage would grow ten times larger. Some experts say King Kalakaua felt a special affinity with the people of Japan, and by attracting single Japanese men to Hawaii he was also hoping to replenish a Polynesian race that was in obvious decline. But even plantation owners were interested in replenishing the native population by this time. In 1884 there were virtually no Japanese people in Hawaii, but by 1890 their numbers stood at 12,000. Single Japanese men working in Hawaii tended not to intermarry, however, but instead sent home for mail order brides.

There are no statistics showing 19th century interracial marriages by ethnicity. But there are statistics showing the numbers of various ethnic groups in Hawaii, and we know by the existence of part-Hawaiians in the 19th century that interracial marriages did exist. Neither are there numbers showing part-Hawaiians by ethnicity, because census takers even in the late 19th century tended to clump all part-Hawaiians into one group. But a quick look at the available data can be revealing on both counts. In 1884 there were about 18,000 Chinese and about 6,500 whites (not including about 10,000 Portuguese) living in the Islands with about 40,000 full-blooded Hawaiians and 4,000 part-Hawaiians. Given the fact that whites occupied most positions of economic and political power by 1884, their smallish numbers seem especially compelling. Reported “bad feeling” in the 1860s and 1870s between native Hawaiians and the first Chinese immigrants (“coolies”) also seems notable. It is probably safe to say, then, that during King Kalakaua's reign the overwhelming majority of interracial marriages were half-white, just as the overwhelming majority of the part-Hawaiian population was part-white, or “hapa haole” in the Hawaiian vernacular.

Upon his arrival in 1889, Robert Louis Stevenson was introduced to the Hawaiian royal family by Archibald Cleghorn, a fellow Scotsman, a Honolulu merchant, a government minister, and a former British diplomat in Hawaii. Stevenson became fast friends with King David Kalakaua and the king's 13 year old niece, Princess Victoria Kaiulani, the half-Hawaiian daughter of Cleghorn and Princess Likelike. Stevenson was a frequent guest in Waikiki at Ainahau, the royal estate of Princess Kaiulani which Cleghorn had built into an opulent and celebrated gathering place for fashionable society.

During his six months in Hawaii, Stevenson hung out with the “royal crowd” and was privy to many of the king’s successes and failures. One of the king’s long-held anti-western schemes was the proposed establishment of a federation of Polynesian states that might resist foreign encroachment. The plan never materialized, but it must certainly have led to many conversations between the two friends. Of a more light-hearted nature were King Kalakaua’s famous all night dinner parties, where Stevenson was an honored guest. There are historic photographs of Robert Louis Stevenson and King Kalakaua at a private luau hosted by a white socialite and government administrator in Waikiki during the month of February 1889. About fifteen people are in attendance, and the layout of food and drink is invitingly abundant.

Stevenson also mixed with ordinary people and learned the ways of Hawaiian natives. Among the most poignant scenes he witnessed involved native prisoners from the local jail performing slave labor. “In Honolulu,” he said, “convicts labor on the highways in piebald clothing, gruesome and ridiculous, and it is a common sight to see the family of such a one troop out, about dinner hour, wreathed with flowers and in their holiday best, to picnic with their kinsman on the public wayside.” Stevenson said he was much in favor of the traditional Polynesian criminal system whereby the doer of a crime was given a “short and sharp” punishment and then forgiven, as opposed to the white practice of prolonging the punishment, often beyond proportion to the crime, which only “transfers the sympathy to the offender.”

The renowned author also found time for writing, completing *The Master of Ballantrae* and *The Wrong Box* during his six-month stay. After visiting the famous leper colony on Molokai, he wrote a scathing vindication of Father Damien’s work on behalf of island lepers, which had been demeaned by the Catholic missionary’s Protestant critics. About this time, also, Stevenson began *In The South Seas*, a personal account of his voyages to the Marquesas and Gilbert Islands. Then, soon after leaving Hawaii in June of 1889, he wrote his masterful *The Beach At Falesá: The Narrative of a South Sea Trader*, and in 1892 he published his fiercely anti-colonial *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa*.

By the time Stevenson saw it, Waikiki had long been a favored residence of kings and chiefs who used it as a political center or vacation retreat. The name “Waikiki” means “fetched water,” which stems from the fact that springs and wetlands originally separated the beach from inland areas. Hawaiian commoners also came to live in the village, which had a special appeal because of its proximity to Diamond Head. The first marine hospital for American sailors was built in Waikiki in 1837 by the U.S. Consul. The location was considered “convenient.” A marine hospital for British sailors was opened in the Waikiki Plains around 1848. By the 1860s, a road had been built between Honolulu and Waikiki, and whites moved in, first as day-trippers and then as residents. By 1889 it was a resort village with grand estates, royal dwellings, modest seaside cottages, traditional thatched huts, but no hotels. There were, however, bathhouses and amusement rides, and the idea of building overnight accommodation was already in the minds of moneyed whites. In 1887, King Kalakaua’s book editor called Waikiki a “dreamy suburb” of Honolulu.

Departure of Robert Louis Stevenson in mid-1889

When King Kalakaua rebuilt Iolani Palace in tribute to the Hawaiian monarchy, he may not have thought that he would be the last 19th century king to enjoy the royal residence, but he probably had an inkling. In July of 1889, following the departure of Robert Louis Stevenson from Hawaii, the king was blindsided by a group of insurgents who blamed him for the Constitution of 1887. The insurgents, purporting to support native causes, demanded that the king resign in favor of his

sister, Liliuokalani. The insurgency failed, and the rebels were brought to trial, but their leader, a part-Hawaiian, was found “not guilty” of conspiracy by a jury of native Hawaiians. In November of 1890, the king retreated to California due to ill health, naming his sister regent. He died of a stroke two months later, at the age of 54.

By 1892, when he published *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa*, Robert Louis Stevenson had grown bitter about the situation in both Samoa and Hawaii. In general, he was raising a ruckus against colonial powers in the South Pacific, and he was not above criticizing even those whose side he took. Despite his previous friendship with King Kalakaua in Hawaii, Stevenson now called the king “theoretical” rather than intellectual, and said he had been “amiable, far from accomplished, but too convivial.” Stevenson, however, saved his fiercest criticisms for foreigners. He declared that King Kalakaua had been held hostage by a “clique of white shopkeepers,” and he claimed that many of the king’s white cabinet members had been little more than wayfaring rogues. Former Prime Minister Gibson, for example, was said to be an adventurer and Mormon emissary who became a “Christian owner of part of the island of Lanai” and then rose to political power in Hawaii with the support of Catholics. “In a very brief interval he had thus run through the gamut of religions in the South Seas,” said Stevenson.

Stevenson by now clearly favored his adopted Samoan home to Hawaii, where “the brown faces had grown so few and the white so many.” According to Stevenson, the Samoans had held Hawaii and King Kalakaua in very high regard during his reign. “News of Hawaii and descriptions of Honolulu are grateful topics in all parts of the South Pacific, and there is no better introduction than a photograph in which the bearer shall be represented in company with Kalakaua.” That high esteem, however, had been a double-edged sword, said Stevenson. A few years earlier, when a Hawaiian delegation sent by King Kalakaua had arrived in Samoa to discuss a possible Polynesian federation, the all night festivities had been an eye-opener for the Samoan king. “All decency appears to have been forgotten,” wrote Stevenson of the event. “High chiefs were seen to dance, and day found the house carpeted with slumbering grandees who must be roused, doctored with coffee, and sent home. As a first chapter in the history of Polynesian Confederation, it was hardly cheering.” Later, according to Stevenson, the Samoan king had told a member of the Hawaiian embassy, “If you have come here to teach my people to drink, I wish you had stayed away.”

By the time of Stevenson’s second visit to Honolulu, in the autumn of 1893, the Hawaiian monarchy had been overthrown and the new Queen was attempting to negotiate a reversal of her misfortune. Other members of the royal family were apparently not in a gracious mood either because Stevenson stopped over at a small, recently built prototype hotel in Waikiki before suddenly returning to Samoa. Curiously, Waikiki’s first major hotel, the Moana, was not built until 1901, but it would be located just across the street from the then still extant Aina hau, where Stevenson in 1889 had been the frequent guest of Archibald Cleghorn and his daughter Princess Kaiulani.

Overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy by U.S. interests

Upon the death of King Kalakaua in January of 1891, his sister, Princess Liliuokalani, became queen and almost immediately introduced a new constitution. Curiously, she took a poll of public opinion and found overwhelming sentiment in favor of a new charter. Unfortunately, she didn’t ask the white power structure for their approval.

A Traveler's History of Hawaii

Queen Liliuokalani was sensitive to native causes. The domestic insurgency that had risen against her brother in 1889 was actually a protest against the Constitution of 1887, which was written by white businessmen, and the Reciprocity Act of 1876, which authorized the duty-free sale of Hawaiian sugar in the United States and thus spurred the growth of plantations in Hawaii. With the importation of Chinese and Japanese laborers to work greatly expanded sugar cane fields, the Reciprocity Act had also indirectly promoted the cultivation of rice instead of taro, the traditional Hawaiian food staple. Experts say that the sugar plantation labor force in 1872 numbered less than 4,000 and was largely native Hawaiian, while the labor force in 1892 numbered more than 20,000 and was largely Asian. Moreover, when the Reciprocity Act was renewed in 1887, the United States was given right of access to Pearl Harbor (then Pearl Bay) in perpetuity. In this context, the insurrection of 1889, called the Wilcox Rebellion in history books, can be seen as an expression of pent up native resentment to de facto white rule and de jure American expansion.

Experts say that Queen Liliuokalani's new constitution would have restored power to the native monarchy and reversed some of the most outrageous clauses in the white-written 1887 charter. Her constitution would have made cabinet members serve "at the queen's pleasure," and it would have changed the law so that nobles would be appointed rather than elected. Her proposed charter also would have allowed the queen to act without the "advice and consent" of her cabinet. Perhaps more important, her constitution would have reinstated full voting rights to Hawaiian citizens, and denied voting rights to resident non-citizens. She had also planned to appoint some full-blooded Hawaiians to her cabinet.

On January 14 of 1893, the queen informed her existing cabinet members that she was about to "promulgate a new Constitution at the request of my people." Three days later there was a palace coup in Honolulu led by a group of prominent American residents who argued "that steps be taken at once to form and declare a provisional government with a view to annexation by the United States" because under present circumstances "life and property were in imminent danger." Sailors and marines from the American warship USS Boston made a show of force on city streets, ostensibly to maintain peace in a climate of tension between natives and whites, and the American minister to Hawaii recognized the new provisional government. The storming of the government building was non-violent, but after the takeover the building was surrounded by US troops. Queen Liliuokalani, with the help of some white advisors, issued the following protest:

"I Liliuokalani, by the Grace of God and under the Constitution of the Kingdom, Queen, do hereby solemnly protest against any and all acts done against myself and the constitutional Government of the Hawaiian Kingdom by certain persons claiming to have established a provisional government of and for this kingdom. That I yield to the superior force of the United States of America, whose minister plenipotentiary, His Excellency John L. Stevens, has caused United States troops to be landed at Honolulu and declared that he would support the said provisional government. Now, to avoid any collision of armed forces and perhaps the loss of life, I do under this protest, and impelled by said force, yield my authority until such time as the Government of the United States shall, upon the facts being presented to it, undo the action of its representatives and reinstate me in the authority which I claim as the constitutional sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands."

Later that year negotiations between Queen Liliuokalani and a special emissary from the President of the United States almost got her monarchy restored, but she wouldn't agree to a general amnesty for members of the provisional government and the people who had authored the Constitution of 1887. By the end of 1893, the provisional government made it known that it was not about to "surrender its authority to the ex-Queen," and in 1894 a more permanent form of government was established to await American annexation. The constitution of the "Republic of

Hawaii” instituted severe wealth and loyalty restrictions on the voting pool, automatically disqualifying most native Hawaiians and all Asians. Interestingly, Chinese and Japanese immigrants by then comprised over one-third of Hawaii’s total population.

Just after the palace coup a year earlier, Archibald Cleghorn had sent news of the overthrow to his 17 year old daughter, Princess Kaiulani, who was studying in England. “I have never given the Queen anything but good advice. If she had followed my advice, she would have been firm on the throne, and Hawaiian Independence safe, but she has turned out a very stubborn woman and was not satisfied to Reign but wished to Rule.”

At Cleghorn’s suggestion, Princess Kaiulani visited the United States on behalf of the deposed Hawaiian monarchy. Interestingly, she herself had been next in line to the throne after Queen Liliuokalani. She held press conferences in New York and Boston, and even had a private meeting with President Cleveland at the White House, where her beauty and intelligence reportedly made a very favorable impression. There was still some hope among royalists in Hawaii that the monarchy could be salvaged, and even elements in the white provisional government back home thought it might work to have an “English Queen.” In the end, however, Kaiulani’s efforts failed to rouse the American government, and the situation in the Pacific only worsened. The “Republic of Hawaii” promulgated its white-oriented constitution on July 4, 1894, and in December of that year her childhood friend, Robert Louis Stevenson, died in Samoa. Then in 1895, her aunt, deposed Queen Liliuokalani, was accused of treason, imprisoned within Iolani Palace, and forced to officially abdicate. Princess Kaiulani was not in good health when she finally returned to Hawaii in 1897, just in time to observe the official annexation of her homeland by the United States in the summer of 1898. She died of pneumonia less than a year later, at the age of 23.

Ode to a half-Hawaiian Princess and a Child of Verses

Princess Kaiulani was half white and half Hawaiian, which may have been acceptable and even advantageous in government circles, but not among commoners. When Robert Louis Stevenson first met her, she was a gorgeous child of thirteen years, and there is reason to think that the mixed impression she left with him had an effect on his island writing. *The Beach At Falesá*, a novella written by Stevenson just after his six-month visit to Hawaii in 1889, portrays the life of a rough and tumble white South Seas trader who unexpectedly, and somewhat reluctantly, loses his heart to a beautiful native maiden.

It’s strange how it hits a man when he’s in love; for there’s no use mincing things—Kanaka and all, I was in love with her, or just as good.

“You no love me,” she cried.

“Uma,” I said. “I would rather have you than all the copra in the South Seas,” which was a very big expression, and the strangest thing was that I meant it.

She threw her arms about me, sprang close up, and pressed her face to mine in the island way of kissing, so that I was all wetted with her tears, and my heart went out to her wholly. I never had anything so near me as this little brown bit of a girl. Many things went together, and all helped to turn my head. She was pretty enough to eat, and it seemed she was my only friend in that queer place.

He marries the girl, but has some trouble with a rival trader.

She stood and looked at me with eyes like saucers.

“You no savvy?” she gasped at last.

“No,” said I. “How would you expect me to? We don’t have any such craziness where I come from.”

“Ese no tell you?” she asked again.

*(Ese was the name the natives had for Case. It may mean foreign, or extraordinary, or it might mean a mummy apple. But most like it was only his own name misheard and put in a Kanaka spelling.)*³

After the trouble with his rival is finally resolved, the trader settles down, learns island ways, and even learns to speak Pidgin and the native language. He and his “little wifie” soon have a son and two daughters together, and they seem to live happily ever after, but in the end the white trader is still caught fast between love of family and prevailing racial prejudices. His son is all right, but the conflicted protagonist worries about his daughters.

I’m stuck here, I fancy. I don’t like to leave the kids, you see, and—there’s no use talking—they’re better here than what they would be in a white man’s country, though Ben took the eldest up to Auckland, where he’s being schooled with the best. But what bothers me is the girls. They’re only half-castes, of course; I know that as well as you do, and there’s nobody thinks less of half-castes than I do; but they’re mine, and about all I’ve got. I can’t reconcile my mind to their taking up with Kanakas, and I’d like to know where I’m to find the whites?

“We are all hypocrites,” Stevenson told his editor upon publication of the story.

³ Stevenson must have known someone named Case in the Pacific because he seems honestly perplexed in this story as to why the natives call the protagonist’s bitter rival “Ese.” Maybe it’s their Pidgin way of pronouncing Case, the protagonist muses, or maybe it means something else altogether. Had Stevenson been a Spanish speaker, he might have guessed that “Ese” came from the Spanish slang for you, him, or that, as in *that thing*. Spanish was a big part of turn-of-the-century Pidgin English, both in construction and vocabulary. “Savvy,” for example, the most popular word in Chinese and Pacific Pidgin, was derived from the Spanish verb *saber*, *to know*; and *you no savvy?* (*usted no sabe?*) is perfect syntax. Stevenson may well have been aware of all this, however, and by his use of the pronoun *Ese* was intentionally connoting that Case was a bad sort, leaving only the protagonist in the dark on this matter, at least temporarily.

A Traveler's History of Hawaii

Writing two or three years earlier, when he was less hardened by events of a racial nature, Stevenson offered his own eulogy and brought to mind the memory of *A Child's Garden of Verses* and a young author who reassured children everywhere that it was okay to grow up. The best thing about being an adult, he once confided, is that you can play with your toys anytime you want.

*When I am grown to man's estate, I shall be very proud and great
And tell the other girls and boys, not to meddle with my toys.*

“For nearly ten years my health had been declining,” he wrote on the opening page of *In The South Seas*, “and for some while before I set forth upon my voyage, I believed I was come to the afterpiece of life, and had only the nurse and undertaker to expect. It was suggested that I should try the South Seas, and I was not unwilling to visit like a ghost, and be carried like a bale among scenes that had attracted me in youth and health. I chartered accordingly Dr. Merrit's schooner yacht, the *Casco*, seventy-four tons register, sailed from San Francisco towards the end of June 1888, visited the eastern islands, and was left early the next year at Honolulu. Hence, lacking courage to return to my old life of the house and sick-room, I set forth to leeward in a trading schooner, the *Equator*, of a little over seventy tons, spent four months among the atolls (low coral islands) of the Gilbert group, and reached Samoa towards the close of '89. By that time gratitude and habit were beginning to attach me to the islands. I had gained a competency of strength, I had made friends, I had learned new interests. The time of my voyages had passed like days in fairyland, and I decided to remain.”