

Tea Party

The mission compound at Kawaiahaʻo was always a bustling place. There were many duties to attend to by the mission women: cooking cleaning teaching, entertaining guests and visitors, and raising their own children to name just a few.

These many domestic labors were hard on the mission women, so many of them hired for wages, Native Hawaiians to aid them in this domestic work. This interface between Native Hawaiians and Missionaries, and the women in particular was a major one, as it occurred on a daily basis, and occurred within the 1821 Mission House. (Mission Houses)

Then, they invited the leading chiefs to a tea ...

“(T)o this interesting group we should have been happy to have introduced you, or any of our Christian friends; and I doubt not you would have been highly gratified with the interview. ... twenty-one chiefs of the Sandwich islands mingling in friendly, courteous and Christian conversation with seven of the mission family ...”

“Listen, and you will not only hear the expressions of gratitude to us and to God for the privileges they now enjoy, but you will hear these old warriors lamenting that their former kings, their fathers, and their companions in arms, had been slain in battle, or carried off by the hand of time, before the blessed gospel of Christ had been proclaimed on these benighted shores.”

“Your heart would have glowed with devout gratitude to God for the evidence that, while our simple food was passing round the social circle for their present gratification, the minds of some of these children of pagans enjoyed a feast of better things; and your thoughts, no doubt, like ours, would have glanced at a happier meeting of the friends of God in the world of glory.”

“When our thanks were returned at the close of our humble repast, though you might not have been familiar with the language, you would have lifted up your heart in thankfulness for what had already appeared as the fruits of your efforts here, and for the prospect of still greater things than these.” (Bingham, December 15, 1827)



“Twenty-One Chiefs of the Sandwich Islands Mingling in Friendly, Courteous and Christian Conversation”

“On Tuesday of last week (December 11, 1827,) Mrs. Bingham & Mrs. Richards, undertook to make a ‘tea party’ to bring all the chiefs in the place & the members of the mission family together to join in a friendly & social cup of tea, to shew Christian kindness & civility to our Sandwich Island neighbors and to promote kind feelings among the chiefs themselves now assembled from the different Islands.”

“The two sisters with their native domestics spent most of today in preparing biscuit, cakes &c. & making such arrangements as seemed to them desirable.”



Sybil Bingham

Clarissa Richards

“We sent out our billets in due form in the morning to the king & Ka’ahumanu, and all the chiefs of the first & second rank and to some others connected with them by marriage. As soon as Kaahumanu received her invitation she sent over a supply of good white sugar for the occasion.”

“(T)o this Interesting Group We Should Have Been Happy to Have Introduced You, Or Any of Our Christian Friends”



Ka’ahumanu

“You would have seen the regent, once the haughty Kaahumanu, now condescending, and kind, and grateful to the Christian teachers; with her two royal sisters, Kalākua and Pi’ia, all members of the church, bearing the Christian names of Elizabeth, Maria and Lydia ...”

“... and all endeavoring, as we believe, to copy the virtues of those Scripture characters, exerting a great influence over the people in favor of reformation, and rejoicing in the mercy of God in giving them the gospel.”



Kalākua



Kauikeaouli

“You would have seen the pleasing youths, the king (Kauikeaouli, Kamehameha III) and his sister (Nahi’ena’ena,) rising rapidly to maturity, both possessing vivacity, and exhibiting kindness towards us ...”

“... the latter a member of our church, and a great comfort to the serious party, and the former as far advanced in the rudiments of learning as most of our native teachers, and, we believe, disposed to aid decidedly the cause of the mission.”



Nahi’ena’ena



Kuakini

“You would have seen Kuakini, the governor of Hawai’i, dignified, sociable and friendly, who has built a church at Kailua, which probably cost as many days’ work as any church in America, and who has for some time been diligently assisting in translating the Gospels, and in teaching a class in the rudiments of arithmetic. He has recently advised Kaahumanu to have laws established, written and published.”

“Naihe you would have met, a decided friend, of similar rank, and his wife, Kapi’olani, who, perhaps, is second to none in improved manners and Christian character.”



Kapi’olani



Hoapili

“You would have seen the solid Hoapiri, of the same rank, the governor of Maui, recently propounded to the church, the most fearless of all in resisting foreign encroachments, and foremost of all to suppress the vices which derive so much support from abroad.”

“Another of the old phalanx of Tamehameha would have attracted your notice—Kaikioeva, now governor of Tauai, who seems desirous to be instructed and to promote our cause; and his wife, Keaweamahi, also, who, as you know, is a respected member of our church, admitted at Tauai.”

“You would have seen, also, the late queen of Tauai, Deborah Kapule, and her husband. Simeon Kaiu, whom we regard as promising Christians. They recently presented their infant son to the Lord in baptism, whom they called Josiah Taumuarii, out of respect to the characters of those two men.”



Kekāuluohi

“You would have seen Kekāuluohi, Kīna’u and Kekauōnohi, the three surviving women who were, on our arrival, wives of Rihoriho. The former has, for five years, lived regularly with another husband, gives evidence of piety, and was, last sabbath, propounded for admission to our church.”



Kīna’u

“Kīna’u, who has recently married Kekūanāō’a, who accompanied the king to England, now appears friendly, but not pious; her husband, whom you would also have seen, is like her in those respects, and is commander of a small standing force, of two or three hundred men, at this place.”

“Kekauōnohi has, for about four years, lived single, appears to be a cordial and decided friend of the mission, and is now talked of as a suitable wife for the young king. There is little disparity in their age and rank.”



La’anui and Namahana

“Three interesting young chiefs, La’anui, Keli’iahonui and Kana’ina, of pleasing manners and hopeful piety, would also have engaged your attention among the happy guests. La’anui, the husband of Pi’ia, or Lydia Namahana, by his correct behavior for more than five years, has given us much satisfaction.”

“He is, you know, a member of our church. He is a good assistant in the work of translation. We consult him, and others of his standing, with more advantage than any of the youths who have been instructed in foreign schools.”

“Keli‘iahonui, the son of Taumuarii, you doubtless know, is also a member of the church, and exerts, we hope, a good influence. He travelled round Hawaii, a year ago, exhorting the people to obey the word of God and the voice of the chiefs. He has had an oversight of several schools, and been employed considerably, and with success, in teaching. He lives single, keeps a regular diary, and is foremost of his countrymen in the art of singing in our mode.”

“Kana‘ina, the husband of Kekāuluohi, often assists in conducting conference meetings, and is very desirous to be admitted to the church. Though we hope to admit him before a great while, yet we think some longer trial advisable. Joseph Leleiōhoku, the sprightly little son of Karaimoku, the late regent, and Kamanele, the young daughter of governor Kuakini, were also present.”

“We might have invited nearly as large a number of others of the third and fourth grade of chiefs, who exhibit similar marks of improvement, and who appear to be truly friendly to the cause of the gospel, and whose presence would have added to your pleasure, had we room and means and strength to accommodate so many at one time.”

“But look, for a few moments, at the present group: twenty-one chiefs of the Sandwich islands mingling in friendly, courteous and Christian conversation with seven of the mission family, whom you have employed among them.”

“Contemplate their former and their present habits, their former and their present hopes. They have laid aside their vices and excesses, and their love of noise and war.” (This entire summary is portions of a December 15, 1827 letter written by Hiram Bingham.)



Hawaiian Mission Bicentennial

Over the course of a little over 40-years (1820-1863 - the “Missionary Period”), about 180-men and women in twelve Companies served in Hawai‘i to carry out the mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in the Hawaiian Islands. Collaboration between Native Hawaiians and American Protestant missionaries resulted in, among other things, the

- Introduction of Christianity;
- Development of a written Hawaiian language and establishment of schools that resulted in widespread literacy;
- Promulgation of the concept of constitutional government;
- Combination of Hawaiian with Western medicine; and
- Evolution of a new and distinctive musical tradition (with harmony and choral singing)