Notes & Queries

Dedication of Kamehameha III, A Sculpture by Thomas Jay Warren

PUAKEA NOGELMEIER
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JOHN CLARK

For a period of five months in 1843 the Hawaiian monarchy was under the rule of a British commander, Lord George Paulet, who had threatened to attack Honolulu if Kamehameha III, Kauikeaouli, did not comply with demands. When Rear Admiral Richard Thomas of the British Royal Navy, Paulet's superior, arrived in Hawai'i on July 26, 1843, he reviewed the setting and restored rule of the Hawaiian monarchy to the king in a formal ceremony on July 31. The land where the ceremony took place is now a public park known as Thomas Square.

To commemorate these extraordinary events, the City and County of Honolulu commissioned a statue of Kamehameha III, installed it in Thomas Square, and dedicated it on July 31, 2018, the 175th anniversary of Lā Ho'iho'i Ea, or Sovereignty Restoration Day. The keynote historical speaker at the dedication ceremony was Puakea Nogelmeier, professor emeritus from the University of Hawai'i's School of Hawaiian Knowledge and a past-president of the Hawaiian Historical Society (2014–15). The following are his remarks.

“Kamehameha III” by Thomas Jay Warren, 2018. Courtesy of the Mayor’s Office of Culture and the Arts.

Haʻiʻōlelo No Ka Lā Hoʻihoʻi Ea

175th Anniversary, Thomas Square, July 31, 2018

Welina ke aloha iā kākou pau loa, e ka hanohano me ka haʻahaʻa, e ko luna me ko lalo, e ko uka a kai, e ko mua a hope, e ka hiʻikua me ka hiʻialo, aloha kākou. I am Puakea Nogelmeier, and I am both honored and humbled to be here today.

The historical event we celebrate today happened in 1843, and the park was established seven years later. The events that inspired it occured right here, 175 years ago today. This area was called Kulaokahuʻa, and it was the open land between the town of Honolulu and the cultivated wetlands and royal compounds of Waikīkī.

The event was a big thing, and was a pivotal turn in Hawaiʻi's history. But it's the story leading up to that day, and the outcomes of that day, that make Thomas Square worthy to celebrate.

It is not a story about "Little Hawaiʻi" being threatened by "big guns," but a glimpse into how an emerging nation saw itself in the bigger picture of international relations. It highlights Hawaiʻi's understanding that there was a larger justice than the "bully in the bay."

So there are three parts to my talk—a back story, coverage of actual events, and a bit of followup.

What we commemorate today happened during the reign of Kauikeaouli, titled Kamehameha III. His name and title are both used, so please don't get tangled. Kauikeaouli means—Placed In The Dark Cloud—Kau I Ke Ao Uli—you don't have to master it, just don't let it confuse you.

Kamehameha III was only about 12 years old when he took the throne in 1825, so most external crises, like demands from irate ship captains, were handled by the Kuhina Nui, the Regent, and by the other powerful chiefs of the King's circle. The Kuhina Nui was Kauikeaouli's step-mother Kaʻahumanu until 1832, then his half-sister Kīnaʻu, and by the time this happened in 1843, another half-sister/aunt, Kekāuluohi, had been Regent for a few years.

But a lot had changed in the nearly twenty years since Kauikeaouli came to the throne. Both he and his kingdom had grown up. Kauikeaouli was 30 by the time Lord Paulet arrived in 1843, and he had

been ruling a maturing nation for 18 years. Christianity was widely embraced, education was a national project, and foreign relations and trade had steadily expanded, while the native population of the islands continued to diminish. Governance, both internal and external, was an ever-growing concern while Hawai'i moved, as a nation, into the modern world.

Gunship intrusion occured sporadically, and had often embroiled the King and his chiefs. In 1839, a French gunship had demanded $20,000 in hastily-borrowed gold to guarantee its right to sell liquor in Hawai'i, but Kauikeaouli was already moving to radically change the form of his government. That same year he proclaimed a Bill of Rights that extended to all citizens, and the next year, 1840, established a Constitutional Monarchy to replace absolute rule.

These choices were partly to ward off gunship diplomacy, for the king and his country could not be so easily bullied if the King shared control with a legislature of Nobles and Representatives. A constitution and laws would prevail. But experience warned that armed captains would more likely heed the words of their own leaders than those of the Hawaiian King, so two years after the new constitution was in place, Kauikeaouli prepared to send special emmissaries to America, England and France to secure formal recognition of Hawai'i as an independent nation, a peer nation where treaties guided interactions, not cannons. A modern government backed by recognition from the great world powers should diffuse attempts by armed captains to impose their will upon the nation.

But the diplomatic envoys, Sir George Simpson, Timoteo Ha'alilio and William Richards, were still out negotiating those super-power acknowledgements when trouble erupted. The long-time British Consul in Honolulu, the ever-cantankerous Mr. Richard Charlton, was on his way to Britain and met in Mexico with Lord George Paulet, a British battleship commander. He complained woefully to Paulet about Hawai'i's mistreatment of himself and all British subjects. Paulet then headed to Hawai'i to demand special attention for British subjects, particularly Mr. Charlton, whose spurious land claims had tied up Hawaiian courts for years. The drama leading to Thomas Square began at that point.

February 11, 1843. Arriving in Honolulu on the ship *Carysfort*, Lord Paulet demanded to see the King. Kauikeaouli was in Lahaina,

the nation's capital, and appointed government minister Dr. Gerrit P. Judd to handle the diplomatic interactions. Paulet refused to meet with Judd and accused him of making up the King's response. He would only speak with the King.

February 17, 1843. After many letters back and forth, Lord Paulet sent a list of demands to the King and announced he would attack the city the following day at 4:00 pm. He formally requested Captain Long of the USS *Boston,* in Honolulu Harbor at the time, not to interfere.

Kauikeaouli and Kekāuluohi responded that they would comply under protest, and they sailed to Honolulu. Kauikeaouli met for several days with Lord Paulet and the interim British Consul, agreeing to review Charlton's many claims, but refusing to simply overrule the courts and grant all of Paulet's wishes, which opposed constitutional law. Lord Paulet was unwilling to negotiate.

February 25, 1843. Instead of complying with Lord Paulet's illegal demands, Kauikeaouli decided to peacefully surrender the Hawaiian government to the British crown until Britain reviewed the setting. This offer may have surprised Lord Paulet, but it was a hard, yet brilliant, political move—relying on a higher level of justice.

Rev. Damon described the event like this in his newspaper *The Friend*:

> "He signed the treaty of cession while bathed in tears. At 3 o'clock, p.m. Feb. 25, 1843, the National Flag was taken down, while that of England was raised. Never shall we forget the day."

Kauikeaouli made a speech to his people that day to explain the crisis, and his speech was then published in the newspaper *Ka Nonanona.* Kauikeaouli said:

> "'Auhea 'oukou, e nā Ali'i a me nā kānaka, a me nā maka'āinana mai ku'u kupuna kāne mai, a me nā kānaka o ka 'āina 'ē,
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> E ho'olohe mai 'oukou. Ke ha'i aku nei au iā 'oukou, ua pilikia au no ko'u ho'opilikia 'ia mai me ke kumu 'ole, no laila, ua hā'awi au i ke ea o ka 'āina o kākou, i lohe 'oukou. Akā, e mau ana nō ko'u Ali'i 'ana ma luna o 'oukou a me ko 'oukou pono, no ka mea, ke lana nei nō ko'u mana'o e ho'iho'i 'ia mai ana nō na'e ke ea o ka 'āina ke ho'opono 'ia mai ka'u hana 'ana."

This is a translation:

> "Listen, O Chiefs, People, and Subjects from my Grandfather's time, as well as those from other lands, Heed my words.
>
> I hereby inform you all that I am distressed as a result of predicaments into which I have been drawn without cause, and have therefore surrendered the *ea,* the sovereignty of our land; Be it known. But my Rule over you and your rights shall continue, for I am hopeful that the *ea,* the sovereignty of the nation, will be restored, once my actions have been justified."

The nation held its breath, awaiting the final outcome. During the five months of Paulet's occupation of Hawai'i, he appointed himself and his officers as the head of the governement, destroyed all Hawaiian flags and raised the Union Jack in their places, preparing Hawai'i to be a British territory. He cleared the houses off the waterfront land at the wharf that Charlton claimed and took over control of all land transactions.

July 26, 1843. Lord Admiral Richard Thomas, Lord Paulet's commander and the highest ranking officer in the British Pacific Squadron, arrived from Valparaiso Chile on his ship, HMS *Dublin,* and requested a meeting with Kauikeaouli. He reviewed the situation and decided that Paulet's actions were inappropriate and that the occupation must end. They arranged for a public event to document the restoration of the nation's independence and self-rule.

Gerrit P. Judd, Minister of the government, carefully described the events of that day at Thomas Square in his 1865 speech. He recounted as follows:

> Kauikeaouli emerged from the grounds of Kana'ina on horseback, along with Kekūanāo'a, Pākī, Keoniana, Kānoa, Kivini, and some foreigners, and they rode for Kulaokahu'a.
>
> Admiral Thomas was there with his troops and mounted guns in all his grandeur, and also there were the young chiefs and a throng of natives and foreigners awaiting the appearance of the King.
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> When the King arrived, Admiral Thomas approached him, holding the Hawaiian flag in his hands. The King and all his people dismounted and the Admiral came to him, opened the flag to the wind, and then gave it to Kauikeaouli's flag bearer.

Right then, 21 mounted guns fired as a salute to the Flag. The British flag atop Pūowaina, Punchbowl Crater, was lowered, while the Hawaiian flag was drawn up again, whereupon 21 guns of Pūowaina sounded. Then the British flag was pulled down at the Fort and the Hawaiian flag was raised, so the Fort fired a 21-gun salute, followed by 21 guns from the ship *Carysfort,* 21 from the *Dublin,* 21 more from the *Hazzard,* and then the American ship *Constellation* fired a 21-gun salute. When that was over, the 21 mounted guns here in the park fired another salute in honor of the King.

The British soldiers stood in a circle saluting the King, and when that was done the King returned to the palace. At 1 o'clock the King, his soldiers, and a crowd of people all went to the church of Kawaiaha'o and gave thanks to God for his grace in restoring the sovereignty of the Nation.

At three o'clock that day, the King went aboard the ship *Dublin* to a dinner hosted by the Admiral, and when the *Carysfort* saw the King's flag on the skiffs, a 21-gun salute was fired, followed by 21 guns from the *Hazzard,* then the *Dublin,* and then a final 21-gun salute came from the *Constellation.*

When the dinner on board the ship was finished, the King and his retinue came ashore and the *Dublin* fired another salute, followed by the *Carysfort,* then the *Hazzard* and the *Constellation,* 21 guns each.

The next day at the great feast at Luakaha, Kauikeaouli proclaimed July 31st as a holiday for the Nation and the people.

"Ua Mau Ke Ea o ka 'Āina i ka Pono,"—"The *Ea, Sovereignty* or *Life,* of the land is perpetuated in Righteousness" This maxim, proclaimed in the King's speech at Kawaiaha'o, became an adage for the Hawaiian Kingdom, and has been adopted as the official motto of the State of Hawai'i.

315 guns fired in salute, speeches, feasts for thousands, and songs celebrated the event, which began right here. It was a grand jubilation and was celebrated throughout the islands every year until the overthrow in 1893. In more recent years, the restoration of Restoration Day has again become a yearly commemoration.

There are several outcomes of the events that happened right here 175 years ago. Belgium, Britain, France and the US did grant official recognition of Hawai'i as an independent peer nation, the first non-European country to be so recognized. While that endeavor was

already in process when Pault came, the effort gained impetus when news reached Europe about his seizure of Hawai'i.

An important outcome of Lā Ho'iho'i Ea was Kauikeaouli and his government initiating the Māhele, documenting title to all lands in the kingdom and ending the possibility of frivolous claims that might be backed up by gunships.

A second outcome of the 1843 events was that in January of 1850, the Privy Council approved the establishment of the first park in the Hawaiian islands—a brand-new concept. They named it Thomas Square in honor of British Admiral Richard Thomas. Why seven years later?

The impetus for this Memorial Park might have been yet another international incident of the previous year, 1849, when a French warship destroyed the Fort of Honolulu. The Hawaiian government moved to commemorate a historical act of justice rather than any of the many historical injustices. Laid out in the design of the Union Jack, Thomas Square has been maintained as a public park since 1850. It continues to be a memorial to fairness overcoming force and power.

It is often cited that when Queen Lili'uokalani relinquished her government to the United States, whose forces backed the 1893 overthrow, her diplomatic model was Kauikeaouli's enduring belief that a larger justice would win over direct military might. The outcomes of the two events were not the same, at least so far, but it is critical that we as a people continue to commemorate the historical models that honor the highest of principles.

Thomas Square stands as an elegant example of that kind of model. It gives physical presence to the words of Kauikeaouli on that happy day in 1843: "Ua Mau Ke Ea O Ka 'Āina I Ka Pono" and reminds us that justice can, indeed, be more powerful than force and might.

The statue of Kauikeaouli, Kamehameha III, is unveiled today to honor the boy, the man, the ali'i, the mō'ī, who ruled his kingdom through 29 turbulent years. It stands here because the events of Lā Ho'iho'i Ea embody Kauikeaoli's vision of Hawai'i in the global world of his time and give form to how he integrated and adapted those larger systems and values into his venerable society as a developing nation. He fostered literacy, education, equal rights, a constitutional monarchy, national independence, and land ownership, and became

known by his people as "Ka Mōʻī Lokomaikaʻi," or "The Benevolent King."

Today we commemorate history that happened right here, and which shaped Hawaiʻi, past and present. As part of this celebration, the Hawaiian Flag will wave once again, just as it did 175 years ago.

The statue of Kauikeaouli Kamehameha III, will remain here as a perpetual tribute to one of Hawaiʻi's great heroes: Ka Mōʻī Lokomaikaʻi, The Benevolent King.