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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a study of the Hawai'ian Kingdom's pathway to near-universal recognition by the international community during most of the 19th century. This case was exceptional, constituting one in handful of non-Western nations that were accorded recognition by Western Powers during the period of maximum Euro-American colonial expansion – the only case in the Pacific. The thesis adopts an interdisciplinary approach intertwining ethnographic and historiographical material with new constructivist frameworks in IR theory and the political sciences. It thus seeks to challenge long-held normative paradigms in the scholarly approach to state recognition, asserting instead the dynamic, historically and culturally dependent nature of such phenomenon. Espousing a constructivist approach, the thesis analyses state recognition as corollary of domestic and international processes of state formation, through the prisms of cultural change, hybridity and identity politics.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In dieser These wird das Prozess der Anerkennung des Hawaiianischen Königreichs durch die internationale Gemeinschaft im 19. Jahrhunderts untersucht. Hawaii war eine der wenigen nicht-westlichen Nationen, die von den westlichen Mächten während der Zeit der maximalen euro-amerikanischen kolonialen Expansion anerkannt wurden; Der einzige Fall im Pazifik. Die These verfolgt einen interdisziplinären Ansatz, der ethnografisches und historiografisches Material mit neuen konstruktivistischen Ansätzen der Theorie der internationalen Beziehungen und der Politikwissenschaften verbindet. Auf diese Weise sollen die seit langem geltenden normativen Paradigmen in der wissenschaftlichen Betrachtung der Staatsanerkennung in Frage gestellt und stattdessen die dynamische, historisch und kulturell abhängige Natur solchen Phänomens betont werden. Mit Hilfe eines konstruktivistischen Ansatzes wird die Staatsanerkennung als Folge innerstaatlicher und internationaler Prozesse der Staatsbildung durch die Prismen des kulturellen Wandels, der Hybridität und der Identitätspolitik analysiert.

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INTRODUCTION

The fundamental question posed by this thesis is: what are the factors that allowed for the full recognition of a small number of non-Western states within the Euro-centric international community of the 19th century?

The question is important in two regards. On the one hand, it offers the possibility for new departures in the historiographical study of state formation processes amongst non-Western societies during the period of maximum Euro-American colonial expansion. Too often historiographical treatment of this period outside of Europe focuses on the processes of colonisation without taking into considerations non-Western exceptions and responses to Western global expansion.

Secondly, this type of historiographical study requires the questioning of long-standing frameworks in International Relations (IR) theory regarding processes of state recognition, precisely because it deals with the time period when, through processes of colonisation, the international standards in terms of state recognition were being formed and expanded globally. Whilst the existence of globally shared processes and institutions provides a deceptively uniform understanding of state recognition within the discipline, a historical study of this phenomenon outside of the Western world is able to highlight the pivotal contribution that domestic processes such as state formation, identity politics and commercial interests play in determining bilateral and multilateral processes of recognition. Recognition, in turn, is revealed to be part of the process that leads to Western-style state and institutional formation in territories previously devoid of such structures. This, I believe, can provide insights which are relevant in better understanding contemporary state recognition processes.

Posing such a question, moreover, is important in that it contributes to a prominent debate that challenges the bases of IR studies as a discipline: namely the idea that the modern international system is essentially a Eurocentric structure. According to current historiographic consensus, the thinking that underpinned semi-colonial systems of extraterritoriality and exemption from domestic legal jurisdiction for Westerners in non-Western polities during the 19th and early 20th centuries was centred around the Euro-American idea that the judicial and political systems of non-Western nations was essentially ‘uncivilised’. This judgement was made not only on the basis of differing moral norms and standards of judgement and punishment, but also on differing standards for

institutional organisation, protocol and political dialogue. That is to say, for a polity to be considered ‘civilised’, it had to adapt to Western models of behaviour not only in substance, but also in form. This, in turn, was a prerequisite for recognition and equal treatment by Western nations according to their concept of international law and statehood. To what extent, I ask, does the recognition of a non-Western state constitute a deviation from this norm? And, if so, are the very concepts that form the very backbone of IR theory – state, power, system, agency – able to correctly depict a non-Western approach to the practice of diplomacy?

In an attempt to tackle the question, this thesis offers a study of Hawai’ian statehood from the late 18th century arrival of the first British ships to the archipelago until the US-led overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893. In this period, and particularly around the mid-1800s, the Kingdom of Hawai’i achieved recognition of independence by all major Western powers within the international community. Hawai’i provides a unique case as the first non-Western polity to achieve such widespread recognition within the Pacific region, in a historical period marked by extremely aggressive Euro-American colonial expansion throughout Africa, North America and the Asia-Pacific region. Japan, the second non-Western polity in the region to achieve similar recognition, would not get there before the last decade of the century. Although hosting an increasing community of English-speaking Westerners, throughout most of the 19th century Hawai’i was not subjected by Western powers to any of the systems of extraterritoriality with regards to trade and the justice systems that instead characterised the semi-colonial regimes established during the period in East Asia. Moreover, the Hawai’ian Kingdom maintained a continuous system of dynastic rule originating directly from the pre-contact period, steeped in aboriginal categories and socio-political structures, rather than achieving international recognition through colonially imposed transformation.

Most impressively, the Kingdom of Hawai’i has made use, particularly during the second half of the 19th century, of its internationally recognised statehood in order to pursue an independent geopolitical agenda. Forging extremely revered diplomatic ties with a number of Asian and Pacific nations, Hawai’ian monarchs and their statesmen developed and furthered a geopolitical project that has been labelled as pan-Oceanianism: a vision of the international order in the Asia-Pacific region that aimed to contain Western hegemony and revendicate (through political union if necessary) the right to auto-determination not only of Polynesians but, in its widest interpretation, of Austronesian and East Asian peoples as a whole. From this viewpoint, the Hawai’ian Kingdom emerged during

the 19th century as an important regional geopolitical actor in its own right within the international family of independent states – the first and, until the rise of Japan, only of its kind.

Although, in these regards, the case of Hawai'i is unique, in other cases, it follows closely developments in other non-Western polities, subjected to colonialism and other types of direct Western imposition. Namely, the Kingdom of Hawai'i undergoes, throughout the 19th century, a process of Westernisation of its institutions and legal system. This occurs primarily through the persuasive action of anglophone Protestant missionaries, able to forge close ties with the Hawai'ian court and popularise the Christian system of ethical norms, values and behavioural standards. Voluntarily adopted by Hawai'ian rulers, Western norms and customs were actively interpreted and made to intermix with the aboriginal system in order to create an increasingly hybrid polity. Such transformation was accompanied by the increasing presence and agency of Western individuals within Hawai'ian institutions, who were appointed by Hawai'ian monarchs to senior posts of government, transforming the polity and representing the Kingdom internationally. These Westerners, some of which possessed a mixed identity and were, in many ways, 'naturalised' into Polynesian society, played a key role in the development of the geopolitical ideas that formed the essence of pan-Oceanianism and Hawai'i's diplomatic standing. Hence rises the highly sensitive question of whether 19th century Hawai'i statehood should be considered a unique aboriginal achievement or a peculiar form of the semi-colonialism that characterised at the time many 'Oriental' nations.

Academic study of Oceania has for a few decades now been animated and fiercely divided by the concept of indigeneity, tightly linked to ideas of tradition, colonialism and power. At the heart of the debate lie diverging understandings of indigeneity as either a liberating idea, able to lead Polynesians to a re-appropriation of their socio-cultural heritage against the perduring impact of colonial institutions, or as a figment of colonial thinking, creating divisions within Polynesian societies that, far from reflecting any inherent reality, serve the purposes of power and economic exploitation. In the Hawai'ian context, due to the unique standing in international affairs that the archipelago attained by the middle of the 19th century together with the assertive geopolitical agenda that Hawai'ian diplomats furthered thereafter in the Asia-Pacific region, the indigeneity debate becomes extremely relevant to the study of international relations in the 19th century more generally. Nevertheless, this aspect of the indigeneity debate in the Pacific region has so far been extremely understudied, often due to an underestimation of the historic importance of Polynesian states in international politics.

This thesis aims to contribute to historiographic debates on indigeneity and colonialism in Oceania by highlighting the importance of these concepts in the international relations of the 19th century. This thesis thus asks, what kind of player was the Hawai'ian Kingdom in the international scene of the 19th century? How did indigenous state-formation processes within Hawai'i since the late 18th century contribute to form Hawai'ian diplomatic agency during this period? Is it legitimate to talk about a native Hawai'ian geopolitical viewpoint and type of agency? And to what extent did Hawai'i have to adopt Western statehood-markers and institutional forms in order to assert its agency as an independent player in international politics?

Any historical study into indigeneity and colonialism, just as any IR theory study into statehood and its recognition, must deal with the concept of agency. Lorenz Gonschor's (2019) study of Hawai'ian 19th century diplomacy, which provides the main starting point and inspiration for my research, likewise places agency at the centre of the preoccupations of Hawai'ian pan-Oceanianism; he considers 19th-century processes of institutional hybridisation in Hawai'i as the key to the creation of ideas of Polynesian autonomy in international affairs. My thesis aims to develop this idea of agency-through-hybridisation even further, surpassing the realm of identity-formation, and instead drawing upon the growing body of constructivist literature in IR theory that underlines the importance of institutional models and practices as determinants of political agency. The use of sociological concepts of practice, habitus and mythopoiesis in the study of the workings of political institutions, diplomatic negotiation and protocol has allowed IR theorists working within constructivist frameworks to better understand the influence of embodied structures of meaning, identity, and socio-cultural constructs in determining the agency of states in the exercise of their foreign policies. The study of processes of institutional hybridisation aimed directly at attaining state recognition and freedom of action in the international arena, which are the focus of this thesis, are a crucial element in furthering and challenging this important field within the discipline.

This thesis consists of an interdisciplinary case study split amongst the disciplines of history and IR theory. A prominent question, raised particularly in Part I, is that of state recognition, an intricate issue suspended between IR theory and international jurisprudence, with my thesis touching upon both disciplines. It is a library-based project, drawing data mainly from historiographic secondary literature, as well as from primary texts including the memories of some 19th century Hawai'ian statesmen, monarchs, foreign heads of state who received Hawai'ian diplomatic missions, as well as the text of treaties and agreements between the Hawai'ian Kingdom and foreign powers.

From the historiographical perspective, my thesis is interested in tracing, firstly, the establishment of the Kingdom of Hawai'i as a fully independent, recognised player amongst the Western-dominated family of nations. The culminating moment of this process is to be identified with the joint Franco-British recognition of Hawai'ian independence signed in London on November 28th 1843. This was accompanied and followed by numerous diplomatic missions by Hawai'ian monarch and diplomats, as well as the signing of declarations, trade and collaboration treaties throughout the mid-19th century that further rooted Hawai'ian statehood within the international system.

Secondly, I am interested in tracing the process of ideological and political maturation that brought the Hawai'ian Kingdom to formulate and assert a specific geopolitical doctrine. Though conceivable as chronologically posterior to Hawai'i's attainment of recognition on the international playfield, this second process is in truth intrinsic in the process of recognition itself. Hawai'ian monarch and diplomats, in fact, utilised diplomacy contemporarily as a means of attaining recognition and using this recognition to pursue a specific geopolitical policy. From this perspective, the act of claiming and seeking recognition as an independent state-agent in the international community of nations is, inherently, the expression of a certain geopolitical worldview. This emerges as particularly true in the context of the mid- to late-19th century, where an aggressive policy of expansion of Western 'powers' over non-Western nations was a norm in the assertion of Western statehood. Consequentially, my thesis asks a crucial theoretical question: to what extent can a state's forging of its agency (through the seeking of recognition in the international system, for instance) be heuristically separated from the exercise of this agency (through the pursuance of a geopolitical agenda, for instance)? In other words, does *being* a state power inevitably require *using* state power?

My approach to the study of these historic processes adopts a 'levels-of-analysis' framework. Considering states as institutions formed by individuals and their specific structural-behavioural norms that regulate the interaction between said individuals, I place the source and ultimate repository of agency in international affairs amongst these individuals, whilst I consider the institutions within which they operate and the wider international system as the structuring element of this agency – giving shape, but not pre-determining, the ways, timing and limits to which individual wills and ideologies come to realisation. My thesis thus aims to identify the nature of international protocols, norms, institutions and geopolitical circumstances that underpin Hawai'i

journey to international recognition and statehood during the 19th century, attempting to understand how these determinants stand in relation to the native ideologies and individual agencies that, within Hawai'i and in other Pacific polities, pushed the archipelago to the achievement of its status.

My theoretical framework is complicated by two factors: on the one hand, the factors of race, culture and indigeneity come into the pictures impacting institutional behavioural norms and producing power imbalances (that, given the context, can benefit either the 'native' or the Western counterpart) that need to be considered at the systemic level of analysis. the fact that the development of statehood and international recognition both following and leads processes of modernisation and Westernisation within Hawai'ian society. Whilst the agency of Hawai'ian statesmen is shaped by the national and international institutions they operate in, as they manage to assert Hawai'ian statehood and forge a set of strong relations with partner states, these institutions and power structures transform.

These concerns create a common thread that links my historiographical concerns with the IR-theory focus of the thesis. My study adopts a constructivist approach to the study of statehood and agency on the international field. I am specifically interested in the role played by culture and identity in shaping the agency of actors on the international field and in determining the formation of institutions. The levels-of-analysis approach allows my study to challenge realist understandings of state agency as wholly determined by material power distribution. As a materially weak state in a strategically important position, the recognition of Hawai'ian independence constitutes a peculiar case in relation to balance-of-power theories. Whilst, on the one hand, Hawai'ian independence may be explained on the systemic level as a side-effect of colonial competition and the need for the creation of a buffer state (thus re-confirming realist frameworks), to many Pacific and Asian states Hawai'ian independence constituted an empowering case, producing a level of international coalition and political fermentation able to, within a certain extent, alter power relations between world powers.

The issue of agency, and its relationship with structural issues, on the other hand, constitutes a major challenge in constructivist accounts of international politics. Theories that focus on practice, habitus, communication, institutional structures, as well as cultural and identity norms tend to highlight the structuring role of the latter depriving the actors that operate within them (be they states, organisations or individuals) of independent agency. The issue of determinism within structures of meaning and practice forms a central concern of my thesis too. I see great potential to

contribute to the debate through a study of the processes of institutional and socio-cultural hybridisation that characterise Hawai'i in the 19th century. The intermixing of native and Western practices, structures and ideologies, I claim, constituted a way for individual political actors to claim agency within Hawai'ian political structures, and for the country as a whole to carve itself a role in international politics.

My thesis is divided into three Chapters. Chapter I presents a broad theoretical and methodological framework for my analysis. I present and identify conceptual problems in the most popular theories of state recognition in IR theory and international law, arguing that new approaches in the constructivist school of thought offer a sound basis for reconceptualising this important phenomenon. On the one hand, I explore the concept of hybridity and its relationship to structuralist thinking in political science and anthropology. On the other hand, I dedicate particular attention to placing state recognition in a specific historical and geographical context, connecting my study to the study of colonialism and cultural change. I pay particular attention to the processes of colonial expansion within the Pacific region, highlighting the central role played by changing commercial interests and uncontrolled Euro-American settlement in defining the transformation of great-power politics in the region.

Chapter II focuses on the process of statehood formation and recognition of the Hawai'ian Kingdom during the late 18th century and the first half of the 19th century. I dedicate particular attention to the initial contact period for two reasons: to highlight the perdurance and transformation of native, pre-contact political institutions with the aim to emphasise the hybrid nature of the post-contact Hawai'ian polity, and, in line with prominent anthropological work on modern Hawai'ian history, to argue that hybridisation is a crucial element of agency and transformation within 19th century Hawai'ian society. I proceed with an overview of the diplomatic and legal initiatives undertaken around the middle of the 19th century by the Hawai'ian Kingdom in order to assert and maintain independence and agency in the international arena. Through the prism of hybridity, this process arises as a complex web of agency and power that reflects as much the domestic reality of the archipelago as the shifting reality of international politics at the time.

Chapter III turns instead towards an analysis of the very active and peculiar foreign policy pursued by the Hawai'ian Kingdom during the mid and late 19th century, conceived under the concept of pan-Oceanianism. I set off by an analysis of the main tenets and variations of the pan-Oceanianist geopolitical outlook, followed by an account of the domestic development of this ideology within

Hawai'i and kin Pacific polities. I attempt to understand the impact pan-Oceanianism had on processes of state recognition in Hawai'i, Oceania and the wider Pacific region, with particular attention to the concept of 'role identity'. I attempt to unravel the tight links between domestic and international identity constructs in international relations and state recognition processes.

CHAPTER I

Theories and Methods

1.1 Theories of state recognition

State recognition is a political act that remains under the discretion of single sovereign states. Despite the important consequences that each single act of recognition of a state has in international law, no shared normative basis to determine the right (or lack thereof) to be recognised as and duty to recognise an independent state exists in international law. This contrasts starkly with the notion, implicit in a vast array of national constitution, international agreements, and the general posturing of sovereign states vis-à-vis each other, of the national right at self-determination and its recognition as implicit and inalienable. The issue is indeed spikey, because recognition amongst states of the existence of other equally independent and sovereign entities forms one of the absolute pre-conditions for the existence of international law itself. Hence the great scholarly debate that the concept of state recognition engenders despite its effective elusiveness.

In IR theory and international jurisprudence the study of state recognition has been principally approached through the prism of two, seemingly opposed theories: declaratory and constitutive. The declaratory theory greatly diminished the importance of the political act of recognition itself, aiming rather to determine factual conditions that, independently any state's recognition of them, automatically constitute an independent nation. According to such theory, once these criteria are met, the act of recognition comes as merely the declaration of state of fact. A crucial issue in this regard is, however, the fact that the precise criteria that determine the existence of a state are highly disputed. One of the most influential theories, though by far not universally accepted, emerged from the Montevideo Convention between a handful of American states in 1933. According to this document, a sovereign state requires:

- a permanent population;
- a defined territory;
- government;
- capacity to enter into relations with other states.

Cases such as the Vatican City or Somalia, however, easily contradict these criteria, without these states necessarily losing their internationally recognised status. Likewise, the last point can be interpreted to take political recognition as one of the requirements, thus rendering the overall

definition non-objective. Despite these enormous difficulties, the declaratory theory remains the one most widely favoured, particularly within international jurisprudence, as it comes closest to providing an objective set of rules to sanction recognition.¹

The constitutive theory, instead, exalts the political nature of state recognition and, indeed, of the whole of international law, instating on the fact that the personhood of individual comes to be through the bilateral or multilateral act of recognition by other states. Like the whole of international relations, it is the actions and interactions of states themselves that bring into being the international community. The extremely relativistic implications of such pure constitutive theory, however, runs the risk of undermining the very ethical and law-like principles of the international system.

This thesis looks aims to look beyond the dichotomy between these two theories in two ways: on the one hand, I argue that a middle way between the two theories effectively corresponds much more to reality. On the other hand, I attempt to look beyond some of the fundamental assumptions that lie at the basis of these two theories and render them somehow quite similar. What is needed instead, I argue, is a more dynamic understanding of state recognition as developing from the interaction of various, historically situated, domestic and international processes.

Effectively, most of IR theory has moved on to recognise that a middle ground between constitutive and declaratory theories has the greatest explanatory value. Recognition is, indeed, a purely political act subject to the arbitrariness of individual states but, like any political act, it requires the pre-existence of a series of factual conditions – institutions, diplomatic practices and capital, material capabilities, that are indeed objective.² This insight, in conjunction with the study of the phenomenon of non-recognition, has led some scholars to highlight the importance of critical numbers in the recognition of states: what Guggenheim calls “authoritative certification”. The idea is that, indeed, recognition is brought about cumulatively, through the sum of individual and collective acts of recognition.³ The great advantage of Lauterpacht’s and Guggenheim’s frameworks is the fact that it attributes all states with functioning governments the ability to determine the personhood of any other state. Envisioning the power of recognition as diffused amongst the multitude of the international community, we are able to consider relatively insignificant acts of

¹ R. Nicholson, T.D. Grant (2019) “Theories of State Recognition”. In G. Visoka, E. Newman, J. Doyle (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of State Recognition*. Routledge.

² H. Lauterpacht (1947). *Recognition in International Law*. Cambridge UP.

³ P. Guggenheim (1953). *Traité de droit international public*. Georg & Cie; H. Kelsen (1949). *General Theory of Law and State*. Harvard UP.

bilateral diplomacy and dialogue as contributing, once reiterated and expanded, to the production of an internationally recognised state personhood.

On the other hand, the great difficulty of the “authoritative certification” paradigm is the fact that, once again, there is no single objectively definable criterion to determine what opinion counts as ‘authoritative’ and what not. If, indeed, international standards are created collectively, then exactly how many recognitions are required for a state to gain personhood under international law? Indeed, several problems that are inherent in IR more generally are revealed by this issue. If indeed, diplomatic institutions, practices and intentions are sufficient to produce international law, the ability to enforce and generalise international norms depends on the amount of military, economic and diplomatic capabilities available to support these norms. In truth, the ability of individual states to set international standards, including when it comes to recognition, varies according to these capabilities, and is therefore unequally distributed. In particular, Great Powers seem to play a crucial role globally in determining the success or failure of processes of state recognition (and strategies of non-recognition). In the current multilateral system, this power finds confirmation in, for instance, the set-up of the UN Security Council, whose executive powers make it a key institution in upholding and contradicting claims to national independence.

The considerable difference in states’ ability to *effectively* recognise and unrecognise other states raises, I argue, a crucial issue. If, indeed, each independent state enjoys, amongst its multiple prerogatives, the right to recognise other states, then, within a declaratory framework, this specific ability should feature amongst the requirements that determine state personhood (perhaps as an element of the “capacity to enter into relations with other states” from the Montevideo Convention). The fact that this is not so, and that certain states enjoy an enhanced ability to effectively recognise and unrecognise other states, reveals that the condition of being recognised is not clear-cut, cannot be subsumed to a clear dichotomy of recognised/unrecognised. Rather, it is a condition that requires qualification, that entails different ‘levels’ or ‘types’ of recognition.

A common shortcoming of both the declaratory and constitutive paradigms is that they both convey the deceiving impression that recognition is such a black or white category: a state is either recognised or unrecognised. This, however, does not correspond to reality. An adaptation of the “authoritative certification” framework can instead account for different degrees of recognition, for instance by considering the amount of other states a specific state is recognised by, or the type of states it is recognised by (whether its neighbours or countries afar, whether it is powerful states or

weak ones, whether it is only by ideological allies or by a diverse typology of states). Yet, I argue, this only highlights a part of the issue.

What is really determining once the idea of degrees of recognition is taken onboard, is the fact that different states define recognition with regards to themselves differently. Turning to the requirements of the Montevideo Convention once again, one could argue that, as determinants of statehood, are a definition of what a state essentially is. In actuality, such definition is an ideological and artifact that is profoundly entrenched in the historical and cultural background of individual nations. Whilst integrated civilisations (e.g. contemporary Western civilisation) have common elements to define what a nation is and ought to be able to do, even within a single civilisation the specificities of a definition depend vastly on the identity and the ideological construct of the international community that each nation makes for itself and is attributed by others. Recognition, I thus argue, is something that is defined as much internationally as domestically.

The nexus between identity and recognition in the fashioning of personhood and its social affirmation has been developed quite extensively in both sociology and anthropology. Current scholarship has noticed how this, however, has been largely overlooked in the study of state recognition in both IR theory and international jurisprudence.⁴ This, despite, the widespread use personhood terminology and the general recognition that, when it comes to questions of recognition, states are indeed viewed as persons with common recourse to Hegelian ideas of interpersonal recognition that form of the common theoretical backbone of all these disciplines.

The constructivist turn in IR theory has offered wide scope for going beyond this impasse. Wendt, for instance, has proposed two distinct understandings of recognition: “thick” and “thin” recognition.⁵ Whilst, “thin” recognition indicates merely the recognition of other states as ‘entities’ with the inherent right of acting independently, then “thick” recognition requires a profound understanding of one’s counterpart at the identity level – it requires understanding and interacting with the Other for what the Other understand themselves to be.⁶

⁴ A. Geis et al. (2015). “Gradual Processes, Ambiguous Consequences: Rethinking Recognition in International Relations”. In C. Daase et al. (eds.) *Recognition in International Relations*. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁵ A. Wendt (2003). “Why a World State Is Inevitable”. *European Journal of International Relations* 9, 4: 511-512.

⁶ P. Allan, A. Keller (2012). “Is a Just Peace Possible without Thin and Thick Recognition?” in T. Lindermann and E. Ringmar (eds.) *The International Politics of Recognition*. Paradigm: 76.

Murray has convincingly argued that Great Powers' struggle for recognition is qualitatively different from less powerful countries'.⁷ Amongst other things, Great Powers consider the ability to effectively recognise and unrecognise other states as constitutive of their "role identity" in the international realm. Recognition itself as a sovereign ability becomes, in the self-consciousness of Great Powers, a determinant of statehood. It is thus the case that practices of recognition of non-recognition become part of the symbolic alphabet of recognition itself: Great Powers take the liberty of recognising and non-recognising states in order to be recognised (as Great Powers) themselves. This, amongst other things, explains the US's domestic political and legal insistence – reiterated several times historically – of the inalienable right of the US government to recognise or not other states, despite the fact that the US has been one of the key contributors to the creation of a multilateral system aimed at reducing such arbitrariness.⁸

The domestic and international levels are thus profoundly interconnected in determining the modality, success and failure of processes of recognition. Identity, of which international recognition is an intrinsic part, is formed domestically, but reconfirmed, challenged and transformed at the international level. Maintaining a constructivist understanding of the international community, I contend in this thesis that processes of recognition are highly dependent on the way in which international relations are conceived by *specific* countries, during *specific* historical moments, in *specific* regions. This is in line with another of Wendt's important insights: namely that even apparently unqualifiable structures of international relations, such as realism's international anarchy, are in truth changing and qualifiable products of national imaginations.⁹

The context I choose as a case study provides a particularly illuminating point, since the culture of international relations in the Pacific, particularly with regards to non-Western nations, was radically different from the post-WWII reality. The context is that of colonialism and of radically different civilisations which are encountering each other for the first time. Identities, institutions, practices and symbolic paradigms that have developed in isolation from each other come into contact and are subjected to extreme power inequalities. This puts a huge strain onto Wendt's notion of "thick" recognition. How, in fact, can nations that present profoundly different institutional, ideological, structural and epistemological frameworks come to deeply understand and interact with each other? Tellingly, Wendt goes on to argue that processes of recognition throughout the world are playing a

⁷ M. Murray (2019). *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers*. Oxford UP.

⁸ As for instance in UN Security Council resolution 1948: 16.

⁹ A. Wendt (1992). "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of International Politics".

key role in a process of global political unification, as they lead to the production of common identities.¹⁰ This contrasts radically with the understanding of recognition as a tool of national and cultural emancipation, conceptualising recognition instead as a phenomenon that leads to homologation between nations, whereby power balances are reflected as well as renegotiated.

1.2 State recognition in a historical perspective

The history of state recognition in the modern world is intimately bound to the history of colonialism. Cases such as the one of Hawai'i serve, in a sense, to bring the study of state recognition and the formation of the international system back to its source, and realise the relevance of hybridity and its techniques to the construction of the international system. Recent scholarship has advanced an increasingly broad understanding of 'recognition'. This branch of study has found particularly fertile ground with the rise of movements demanding the recognition of indigenous communities within pre-existing states, following new trends in de-colonisation.¹¹ This has been matched by numerous political initiatives at the global level, including prominently the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples passed in 2007. Such changes in the study of recognition have caused academic dialogue to move beyond classic normative theories regarding territorial, functional and legal requisites in the definition of state recognition, and to instead bring back at the centre the ethical issue that stands at the core of this concept.¹² Many scholars have thus reached back to the Hegelian definition of recognition as "the struggle to achieve a relationship of equals between two subjects", and that "to recognise the subjectivity of another is to recognise their equal and autonomous status as self-determining people worth of respect".¹³

Whether applied to individuals (as in the original Hegelian sense) or to states, such an ethically rooted definition betrays a high level of subjectivity and cultural relativeness. There is, furthermore, a tautological quality in the definition, for recognition is indicated as a relation of respect to be granted to those that are "worth of respect". Exactly who is worthy of this respect has been historically a field of extremely varied opinions. The encounter of European Christian civilisation

¹⁰ Wendt (2003).

¹¹ See D. O'Sullivan (2020). *Sharing the Sovereign: Indigenous Peoples, Recognition, Treaties and the State*. Palgrave Macmillan.

¹² G. Visoka, E. Newman, J. Doyle (2019) "Statehood and recognition in world politics". Introduction to G. Visoka, E. Newman, J. Doyle (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of State Recognition*. Routledge.

¹³ A. Bell (2018). "A flawed Treaty partner: The New Zealand state, local government and the politics of recognition". In D. Howard-Wagner, M. Bargh, I. Altamirano-Jiménez (eds.) (2018). *The Neoliberal State, Recognition and Indigenous Rights: New Paternalism to New Imaginings*. Australian National UP. 79.

with the indigenous populations of the American at the end of the 15th century most is a valid point at which to pinpoint the beginning of the ‘recognition debate’ within Western civilisation. In a world still fully dominated by natural law, and the Church as its sole valid interpreter, debates on whether native Americans were humans at all hit at the very core of the recognition issue: recognition is a question of agency; if the native American was fully human, then s/he had the right to self-government, otherwise s/he was available for exploitation on a par with the natural world, as a resource.¹⁴

The European Enlightenment, in turn, constituted a move – in a Western civilisation that had expanded over multiple continents and mixed itself with numerous non-Western cultures and populations – away from natural law and towards legal positivism, and therefore of international law *per se*. The Treaty of Westphalia is generally recognised as the fountainhead of the modern ‘international system’, setting, within Europe, a standard for conducting relations between independent polities under a common, written, international legal framework. From the point of view of state recognition, however, the situation in Europe is far from revolutionary, as we see at this moment merely the reconfirmation and systematisation of a previously existent status quo within the Old Continent. It is rather in the following century, and, once again, in America, that the US declaration of independence in 1776 constitutes the first full modern state recognition. It is significantly the case of a post-colonial state, a state that finds itself having to assert such claim by way of war, and a state that is formed, internally as much as externally, by way of this declaration, that takes the form of a written constitution.¹⁵

Constitutions are perhaps one of the utmost expressions of post-Enlightenment legal positivism. They have a lot to say about colonialism too. A recent study by Linda Colley highlights the worldwide spread of written constitutions as means of state formation between the mid-18th and the late-19th centuries. Pointedly beginning her narrative from the early attempts to create a constitution as a declaration of independence on the island of Corsica, Colley pays particular attention to constitutions as a means of both claiming and limiting the rights of oppressed and marginalised populations. Colley draws a poignant comparison between the way in which constitutions made during the 19th century globally systematically deprived women of the right to exercise political agency, and the way in which constitutions in the Pacific region deprived indigenous people of a right to political participation and independent land management. Besides being techniques for the

¹⁴ J. Minahane (2014). “The controversy at Valladolid, 1550-1551”. *Church and State* 116.

¹⁵ M. Fabry (2019). “The Evolution of State Recognition” in G. Visoka, E. Newman, J. Doyle (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of State Recognition*. Routledge.

dispossession of resources for the use of Western settlers, such constitutions betrayed, towards both women and indigenous peoples, an infantilising logic: ‘savages’, much like women, were not morally capable or ‘civilised’ enough to possess a desirable political agency, having rather to submit to paternalistic, colonial management.¹⁶

As argued by Gong, the ‘standard of civilisation’ arose through the 19th century colonial experience as the response to two problems, one of a practical and one of a philosophical nature.¹⁷ On the practical side, the issue at stake was the protection of the interests and security of Western settlers and traders in non-Western polities. On the philosophical side, it was the determination of which nations “deserved legal recognition and legal personality in international law”. The philosophical element could be met, Gong further documents, through the adoption by non-Western nations of Western-type institutions such as a bureaucracy, a Western-style system of law (including particularly written laws and a system of courts), diplomatic institutions to engage in foreign relations in the modality Western countries were accustomed to, abiding to the customs of Eurocentric international law, custom and norms.¹⁸

The ‘standard of civilisation’ thus constituted merely an alternative to colonisation in the expansion of Western civilisation throughout the globe, the main beneficiaries of which were the political and economic elites of Western powers. Most telling was in fact that, in non-Western countries that hadn’t been subjected to direct colonisation, the exemption of Western citizens from accountability under the indigenous system of law – that is, extraterritoriality – was considered an important element of the ‘standard of civilisation’. Much like the constitutions of developed in the mid-19th century in colonies such as Australia, New Zealand, or the newly founded US state of California, the creation of two standards of legal accountability and political entitlement (one for settlers and one for natives) was part of the essence of the ‘standard of civilisation’.¹⁹

The multiple effect of the ‘standard of civilisation’ onto non-Western polities during the 19th century is illustrated by Fidler (2001) with the following table:²⁰

¹⁶ Colley (2021).

¹⁷ G.W. Gong (1984). *The Standard of ‘Civilisation’ and International Society*. Clarendon. 24.

¹⁸ Ibid.: 14-15.

¹⁹ Colley (2021): 276-284.

²⁰ D.P. Fidler (2001). “The Return of the Standard of Civilization”. *Articles by Maurer Faculty, Indiana University* 432: 142.

Relationship	Impact
Individual↔State	Introduced concepts of State obligations to protect basic individual rights of Western nationals
Market↔State	Liberalized commerce, empowering private actors and limiting the government's role in trade and commercial activities
State↔State	Imposed the apparatus of inter-State relations on non-Western countries, forced non-Western countries into political and economic intercourse with the West, and required obedience to international law
State↔International Society	Forced non-Western countries to adopt the common interests and values characterizing Western civilization

At the centre of this universalised configuration of states vis-à-vis individuals, the market, and each other lie the expansion of economic and trade interests that accompany colonialism. As famously argued by Lenin, the creation of new markets to ensure the strengthening and sustainability of the capitalist system is profoundly linked to the 19th century colonial phenomenon.²¹ Indeed, the transformation of global commercial equilibria is one of the principal phenomena shaping colonialism and state recognitions during most of the 19th century.

Following US independence, the single most impactful streak of state recognitions occurs following the Napoleonic Wars in Latin America. The US precedent, combined with the French revolution (and the Haitian experience that stemmed directly from it) and the expansion of the Napoleonic empire throughout the European continent constitutes a blow for the concept of dynastic legitimacy in the American colonies.²² With the re-establishment of the *ancien régime* in Europe following the defeat of Napoleon, a row of Spain's former colonies in the New World declare independence under republic form, with a wealth of constitutions (many of which based directly on the US example) appearing in the continent. The recognition of their independence by their former European colonisers, far from being automatic, owes much to the intervention of the United States and Great Britain. The formulation of the 'Monroe doctrine' in a speech to Congress by US President James Monroe in 1823 constitutes the single most important contribution to the successful recognition of these new independent states: an injunction to European states not to politically or militarily interfere in the affairs of the Americas, guaranteed by the strong arm of British naval power.²³

²¹ V.I. Lenin (1917). "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism." In *Selected Works*, Moscow (1963): Volume 1, 667-766.

²² Fabry (2019).

²³ P. Radan (2019). "Recognition of States in International Law" in G. Visoka, E. Newman, J. Doyle (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of State Recognition*. Routledge.

In terms of IR theory, what the Monroe doctrine betrays is a form of principled realism which, far from being merely idealistic, finds concrete motivations in the commercial interests of both the US and Britain. Much like the ‘standard of civilisation’ described above, the recognition of independent states throughout the Americas allows the two Anglophone countries unhindered (and, given geographical proximity and naval hegemony) preferential access to a wide array of markets.²⁴

Two factors thus emerge as central to the process of state recognition in the 19th century: the ‘standard of civilisation’ and commercial interest. Both terms are subjectively defined by the Western powers and are deeply interconnected, one serving the purposes of the other. They are, furthermore, defined through the shifting tides of commercial and military competition between the Western powers, shadowing thus the progress of colonialism through the century.

1.3 Key concept: hybridity

It is therefore under the spotlight of colonialism, both domestically and internationally, that I seek to answer the question of non-Western state recognition in the 19th century Pacific. Following the constructivist school, I proceed to explore the wish and need for recognition in Hawai’i as a force of social, cultural and institutional change in the Pacific and the ‘Orient’ at large. I do this through a protean concept, that of hybridity. The concept has gained great popularity in the social sciences, including IR theory, also as part of the constructivist turn. Despite this, I maintain a structuralist understanding of hybridity as what the American anthropologist Marshall Sahlins defines as “structure of conjunction”.²⁵

The concept touches upon a problem deeply lodged within the social sciences and IR theory amongst them: the issue of change within structures of social interaction. Structuralist currents in constructivist thinking about central areas of IR theory, such as the study of institutions and the logic of political actors have borrowed much from discourse theory and Bourdieusian practice theory. In all of these formulations a cultural structure is assumed, be it in the form of a mythology

²⁴ C.R. Rossi (2019). “The Monroe Doctrine and the Standard of Civilization”. In B. Nijhoff (ed.) *Whiggish International Law*. 123-152.

²⁵ M. Sahlins (1981). *Historical metaphors and mythical realities*. Michigan UP.

or a set of symbols,²⁶ *habitus*,²⁷ or an operational code,²⁸ to cite some prominent examples, that directs, gives meaning and predictable patterns to political action, as well as cohesion within institutions. These approaches nevertheless face difficulties when attempting to explain systemic change.

According to Sewell mentions, structuralists are unable to explain change emerging from within a single system, but rather always identify the source of change in the entry of a new system of meaning, clashing with the previous one (as the early colonial experience in the Pacific indeed was). Sewell proceeds to suggest an alternative account of social structures in an attempt to account for change through agency.²⁹ Sewell bases his theory on a combination of Giddens' understanding of structure as a dual entity³⁰ and Bourdieu's fluid understanding of structures as the product of a process of internalisations of patterns of action (*habitus*).³¹

Firstly, the latter's account too follows, in essence, Giddens' formulation, seeing structure (in the form of myth) as a script for action and interpretation of reality (most notably in ritual), but as a dynamic script that essentially involves pragmatic action that transforms it (most notably in heroic action), and thus bears within its own plot the keys to its transformation. Secondly, Sewell centres his argument on a series of characteristics he attributes to social structures. Namely: 1) multiplicity, 2) transposability, 3) the unpredictability of their transposability, 4) polysemy, 5) intersectionality. In short, societies are composed, according to Sewell, by a multiplicity of interlinked structures, that can combine in virtually endless ways when agents, operating at the interstices of these systems, leap between them. No definitive system can predict how these structures intersect, but the intersection of these structures is what produces systemic change within a society.

This thesis argues that great part of the answer to the dilemma of cultural change, and therefore opening up the possibility of radically different nations 'thickly' recognising each other, is what Sewell calls "transposability of schemas". In the following Chapters, this thesis will highlight the existence of various compatibilities between Hawai'ian and Western civilisations: political and

²⁶ M. Kornprobst (2019). "Framing, resonance and war: Foregrounds and backgrounds of cultural congruence". *European Journal of International Relations* 25, 1: 61-85.

²⁷ V. Pouliot (2009). "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities." *International Organization* 62, 2: 257-288; E. Adler, V. Pouliot (2011). "International Practices" *International Theory* 3, 1: 1-36.

²⁸ N. Leites (1951). *The Operational Code of the Politburo*. RAND Corporation.

²⁹ W.H. Sewell (1992). "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." *American Journal of Sociology* 98, 1: 1-29.

³⁰ A. Giddens (1984). *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. California UP.

³¹ P. Bourdieu (1980). *Le sens pratique*. Éditions de minuit.

social order, ethical precepts, as well as a most basic common lived human experience, which, once translated and merged by enterprising intellectuals and through the inevitability of shared lived practices, are able to produce a hybrid, compatible system.

In the last three decades, heightened attention to native voices and perspectives has given rise to a new school in Hawai'ian history that challenges such simplistic interpretations of Pacific histories and pays much more attention to the concept of 'hybridity'.³² Set between the 'native-foreign' dichotomy, hybridity sees contact and colonialism as creative processes stemming from the intermixing of indigenous and imported institutions and symbolic registers. Far from denying that the colonial and semi-colonial societies that were formed in the Pacific in the early 19th century were extremely violent, unjust and unequal, the hybridity framework challenges the idea of a clear-cut and static division between actors endowed with agency and subalterns. Rather, hybridity aims to study the ways in which new institutions and symbols are employed by all actors, indigenous and colonial, to forge their own agency and contest the agency of their adversaries.

As such, the hybridity framework draws its roots in the 'subaltern studies' school which profoundly transformed the study of South Asia during the 1980s. Re-analysing the Gramscian concept of 'cultural hegemony', the subaltern studies school contended that even oppressed and economically dispossessed groups are endowed with agency, and are in fact able to change the overall hegemonic system through bottom-up social movements. A specific focus in subaltern studies is the way in which, even in colonial settings that are extremely unequal, native institutions and symbolic registers remain a tool for oppressed groups to think differently and thus not be subjected to a totalising form of cultural hegemony. This form of counter-agency arising from the inevitable co-existence and inter-contamination – at all the levels of a colonial society – of 'native' and 'foreign' is reflected in the idea of hybridity.³³ In the 19th century Pacific context, furthermore, the special role attributed in the Gramscian paradigm to intellectuals (and particularly to writers) as primary challengers of cultural hegemony is confirmed, for, as we shall see, it is precisely the work of intellectuals of various extraction that endows the production and use of hybrid institutions and symbols with so much transformative power.

³² L. Colley (2021). *The Gun, the Ship & the Pen: Warfare, Constitutions and the Making of the Modern World*. Profile Books. 296; N.K. Silva (2017). *The Power of the Steel-tipped Pen: Reconstructing Native Hawaiian Intellectual History*. Durham UP.

³³ V. Chaturvedi (ed.) (2000). *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*. Verso.

At the same time, the hybridity framework presents, I contend, a potentially precious framework within IR theory. Related concepts such as the ‘us-them’ dichotomy or cultural hegemony have all featured majorly with the discipline. Additionally, there is within IR theory an increasing sensitivity to the need to render the paradigms through which we conceive of states and the international system more inclusive of non-Western and bottom-up perspectives.³⁴ This has become particularly the case with the rise to popularity of constructivist paradigms insisting on the analysis of ‘cultures’ and ‘representation’ in the construction of the international system. A particularly prominent example is Wendt’s reinterpretation of the realist concept of anarchy as the structuring element of the international system, whereby he places at the centre of his analysis different relational ‘cultures’, that highly qualify anarchy and provide for different behavioural types in the relations between nations. In an attempt to explain change in ‘cultures’ and their sublevels, Wendt develops a theory that espouses hybridity: all “cultures of anarchy”, in fact, contain within themselves, at least potentially, an element of all other cultures, which renders change possible by manipulation by agents within the political field.³⁵

Wendt’s attention to ‘cultures’ dovetails with heightened attention to ‘values’ within neoclassical realism and the English School of IR theory, to mention a couple of currents, that display an awareness that different nations imagine the international system differently, and that this must be taken into account by any sophisticated theory of IR.³⁶ In all such frameworks, I argue, hybridity or an analogue concept features centrally as precisely the tool, or condition, allowing for systemic change. Furthermore, behind all these perspectives, as Wendt makes very clear, there is an awareness, raised initially by the liberal school of thought in IR theory, that domestic processes have an enormous impact on the international system, as they are the very source of those ‘cultures’ and ‘values’ that constitute a nation’s individual conceptions of its IR.³⁷

The need to dedicate great attention to domestic processes makes hybridity doubly relevant. If, indeed, hybridity seems to be a powerful tool in explaining change at the systemic level, a look within the domestic black box of the individual nation comes with the question of how precisely this change occurs; otherwise put, how is hybridity put into action? Constructivist theorists dealing with concepts such as practice and discourse have been daunted by the task of explaining change within institutions and in the behaviour or belief systems of individual and collective actors.

³⁴ C. Reus-Smit (2017). “Cultural diversity and international order”. *International Organization* 71, 4: 851-885.

³⁵ A. Wendt (1992); A. Wendt (1999). *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge UP.

³⁶ E.g.: A. Hurrell (2007). *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society*. Oxford UP.

³⁷ For the most important precursor to this debate, see R.D. Putnam (1988). “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games”. *International Organization* 62, 3: 427-460.

Focusing on a number of theories that respond particularly well to this challenge, I attempt to highlight, in Part I of this thesis, how hybridity helps to contextualise and better develop such theories in a non-Western context such as that of early 19th century Hawai'i. I do this by focusing contemporarily on the process of state formation and the recognition of such state by the international community that characterised the Kingdom of Hawai'i during this period. In this regard, I consider the process of state recognition, central to IR theory and international jurisprudence as complementary and mutually dependent on the domestic process of state formation, so that the two cannot be fully understood independently of each other.

1.4 Methodology

This thesis approaches the issue of state recognition through the prism of anthropology and historiography. This, I believe, allows me to seek new vantage points into IR theory frameworks that are not completely suited at depicting social and political processes in non-Western and non-contemporary societies. It is a library-based project, building upon an expanding body of historiographical and anthropological literature on Hawai'i. I set off particularly from the work of historian Lorenz Gonschor, the main contemporary academic authority on the diplomatic history of the Hawai'ian Kingdom.³⁸ Building upon his work, I systematically assess historiographical and anthropological trends in the history of Hawai'i against the theoretical frameworks presented in this Chapter. The aim is producing a theory of state recognition that, whilst perhaps not being applicable to the world at large, is however as faithful as possible to the specific, *emic* experience of the international space made by Hawai'ian statesmen and the general public.

This is thus a work of historical anthropology, as much as of IR theory. Accordingly, I attempt, as far as possible, not to impose theoretical paradigm upon my case study, but rather to let the loose theoretical framework presented in this Chapter be refined through 'thick' anthropological and historiographic material. I predilect, in short, an abductive approach, whereby theory and case study are often intertwined; hybrid, in fact!

Given the jurisprudential nature of state recognition, I attribute particular value to the analysis of language, patterns of translation and specific terminologies. I side, in this approach, with historian Douglas Howland (2002), who conducted important work on hybridity and institutional

³⁸ L. Gonschor (2019). *A Power in the World: The Hawaiian Kingdom in Oceania*. Hawai'i UP.

modernisation in Meiji-era Japan – a cognate case to Hawai’i, as I shall argue. Howland insists on the importance of translation, and the specific qualities that the convergence of Western and Oriental concepts and practices produced in hybrid societies.³⁹ Through this thesis, historiographic and ethnographic material will highlight the development of a specific Hawai’ian term in conjunction or in contrast to analogue Western concepts. I allow my theoretical framework to be enriched by incorporating non-Western concepts and declining Western concepts through a Polynesian framework. This renders my theoretical framework hybrid, and thus more suited to reflecting the complex reality of the 19th century Pacific.

³⁹ D.R. Howland (2002). *Translating the West: Language and Political Reasoning in Nineteenth-Century Japan*. Hawai’i UP.

CHAPTER II

Forging statehood, *aloha*-style: the Hawai'ian Kingdom's path to international recognition

2.1 A sea of colonies

The fundamental object of my inquiry is a geopolitical anomaly: the fact that a militarily and economically insignificant country, maintaining a system of rule rooted in a non-European system operated by a non-European ruling class, achieved and exercised full recognition by all the world's major powers during most of the 19th century. This, with the added element that said country was situated at a strategically important position at the centre of ever-expanding Euro-American colonial interests.

The Kingdom of Hawai'i was established at the end of the 18th century through the unification of the archipelago under a single king. For the first half century of its existence the Kingdom existed in an undefined relationship to foreign powers. Until the 1840s, interest in the Pacific islands remained limited to the interests of the whaling and sealing industries, that utilise the northern archipelagos – particularly Hawai'i – as a site for wintering. The period sees also the gradual arrival of missionaries and the beginning of trade exchange in coastal villages. From a systemic point of view, however, the Pacific islands do not constitute a major strategic priority for the colonial powers.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, British and French explorers are active in the region throughout this period, extending the presence of their countries over the native populations and European settlers. Presenting native leaders in search of legitimacy and new frameworks for ruling with a Union Jack, for instance, became a favourite practice amongst British captains. This occurred in Hawai'i too, where in 1794 King Kamehameha I accepted from Captain Vancouver a Union Jack and willingly submitted his reign to the British Crown. As a proof of the little political interest that Pacific islands presented for London, the British government replied with nothing more than a statement of friendship which initiated the process leading to recognition of the Hawai'ian Kingdom by Britain (concomitantly with France) half a century later.⁴¹

It is from the late 1830s that colonial interests begin being prominent in the Ocean. Growing European settlements in Australia and New Zealand lead the British government to assume ever

⁴⁰ S.R. Fischer (2013). *A History of the Pacific Islands*. 2nd edn. Bloomsbury. Section 3.

⁴¹ L. Gonschor (2019). *A Power in the World: The Hawaiian Kingdom in Oceania*. Hawai'i UP: 22-23.

tighter commitments with regards to controlling the colonial population and regulating relations with indigenous peoples; this culminates in the 1839 passage of New Zealand under British sovereignty and its incorporation with the Australian provinces. Increasingly assertive French presence in the region becomes an important factor in leading the British government to assert claims of sovereignty on the islands their populations.⁴²

The late 1840s also mark the assertive arrival of the United States unto the Pacific coast following the Mexican-American war. Already the great majority of whaler and sealer that wintered in Hawai'i and had established personal and trade links with the Kingdom were American. The establishment of the State of California gave a great push to the development of a solid American naval presence in the Eastern Pacific. At the opposite side of the ocean, the Opium Wars and the American-led opening of Japan brought to a surge of American commercial presence throughout the Ocean that would rely on the Pacific islands, and the Hawai'i archipelago in particular, as strategic mid-way stations.⁴³ This was accompanied by the explosion of the gold rush in both California and Australia which brought to a colossal increase of the Euro-American population on both sides of the Ocean, with the populations on either side often migrating between the two countries and exchanging political tendencies regarding particularly the management of indigenous and non-white immigrant populations.⁴⁴ The Pacific not only becomes a white-dominated region: the gold rushes bring to the creation of highly mobile populations of Asiatic migrants who, using the archipelagos as steppingstones between the British colonies and the Americas increase the commercial and political relevance of the region.

Crucially, furthermore, the mid-19th century marks the point at which petroleum produced in the Americas quickly replaces whale fat as the fuel of choice for the European and North American market. The economic significance of the Pacific island region changes thus from wintering grounds for whalers to agriculture, and particularly the plantation of spices, coconut, sugar cane, and other tropical crops that are increasingly important for the Western market. This is accompanied by the settlement and acquisition of land and labour by Western entrepreneurs, which in Hawai'i are, once again, to the great majority American. The need to manage the flow of labour and to secure private property and land ownership for Western expatriates becomes a relevant interest for Western governments. The fact that Hawai'i, in this regard, counted the biggest white populations in

⁴² Fischer (2013). Section 4.

⁴³ Ibid. Section 4, "Hawai'i".

⁴⁴ M. Ngai (2021). *The Chinese Question: The Gold Rushes and Global Politics*. W.W. Norton & Company.

Polynesia (with the exception of New Zealand), makes the fact of its independence until the end of the century even more anomalous.⁴⁵

The 1840s, and the irreversible entry of the United States into the Pacific, change profoundly the geopolitical balance of the region. Nevertheless, it is precisely in this period that the Hawai'ian Kingdom manages to achieve widespread recognition by the colonial powers and assert its own nascent geopolitical ambitions. Earlier political commentators attribute the sustainability of Hawai'ian independence during this period to the enactment of a type of 'Pacific Monroe doctrine' by the United States.⁴⁶ The 1843 recognition of independence signed in London by representatives of Britain and France was drafted under the auspices of the British Hudson Bay company, and may thus be taken as part of the fierce competition that opposed American and British fur traders, whalers and sealers over control of the North American Pacific coast and the trade routes that, via Hawai'i, joined the region to Asia.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the Americans were quick to second the declaration of independence and, in the coming decades, were revealed as the most fervent supporters of Hawai'ian independence, and particularly of the Kingdom's right to freely commerce with all nations.

The realisation that an independent state filled with rich American expatriates (who were, amongst other things, slowly gaining control of land resources in the archipelago) was the best way to ensure American interests in the region, is thus widely considered the principal reason for Hawai'i's enduring independence during this period of rapid colonial expansion. America's voice in protection of Hawai'ian independence became the loudest as colonial competition grew in the region. In the 1870s, following German unification, Berlin stepped into the Pacific aggressively – a move which greatly accelerated British and French moves towards the consolidation of their sovereignty over chunks of the Pacific. This was accompanied by the increasingly assertive presence of the Russian Imperial Fleet in the North Pacific and the concomitant rise of Japan to a competitive level in terms of naval and commercial power. As the archipelagos of the Pacific fell more tenaciously into the hands of the European powers, the US government released numerous, increasingly assertive statements in defence of Hawai'ian independence.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Fischer (2013). Section 4.

⁴⁶ A.B. Hart (1915). "Pacific and Asiatic Doctrines Akin to the Monroe Doctrine". *The American Journal of International Law* 9, 4: 802-817.

⁴⁷ Gonschor (2019): 27-28.

⁴⁸ Fischer (2013). Section 4.

Describing this as a type of ‘Monroe doctrine’, I suggest, seems particularly appropriate. On the one hand because, much like the case of Latin America in the first half of the 19th century, the Pacific did not exactly experience a land grab comparable to the African experience. Rather, as Fischer (2013) argues, the colonisation of the Pacific, lacking political momentum as it was taking place, was the result of a concatenation of commitments taken by colonial powers that consolidated as Western populations came to inhabit the region and socio-economic interests consolidated.⁴⁹ Furthermore, like the original Monroe doctrine in the Americas, the US Pacific strategy betrayed the fact that America had the biggest interests at stake in the region and in Hawai’i in particular. Washington’s insistence on Hawai’i’s independence kept foreign powers away whilst – willingly or unwillingly – giving a stimulus to the white American majority on the archipelago to form a mighty civil front, that would be able to hold the native government accountable to its interests. This community, achieving the power of staging an effective coup in 1887, was able to overthrow the monarchy in 1893 in support of its interests.

Following this narrative, it is thus not surprising that the enormous geopolitical changes of the 1890s brought to a sudden re-evaluation of Washington’s position vis-à-vis the Hawai’ian Kingdom. The American victory in the Spanish-American war of 1898, accompanied by the annexation of the Philippines, Guam and other Pacific islands to the US, heightens the strategic importance of Hawai’i and the military presence of the US in Ocean to that point that, given the domestic events within the archipelago, a US annexation of the country becomes sensible.⁵⁰ Defeating a European power, the US gains the confidence to step beyond the containment policy of a ‘Monroe doctrine’ and fully assert itself as an equal power.

Told as this, the story of 19th century Hawai’ian independence deprives the islands, its government and its people of all agency. This, indeed, corresponds to a classic realist view of the international system, whereby a country so devoid of military, human and economic power is necessarily subject to the whims of great powers. In this sense, the US Pacific ‘Monroe doctrine’ may be interpreted as an act of power balancing, creating in Hawai’i an economically dependent buffer in an increasingly competitive geopolitical environment. Without denying the truthfulness of this account, I argue that it only tells half of the story. As hundreds of less strategically and economically sensitive and exposed islands were being swallowed by Euro-American colonialism, Hawai’i managed to maintain an independence that would allow it to enact a highly impactful foreign policy, some of it

⁴⁹ Ibid.: Section 4 – Conclusion.

⁵⁰ Hart (1915).

contributing in affecting the relations of other, more powerful nations in the region, and marking Pacific geopolitics for decades following the American annexation.

Furthermore, a systemic, realist of the recognition of a country's independence tells very little about the mechanisms of this recognition, which is by definition an agency-creating act. Another story runs parallel to this, which requires the opening of the domestic reality of the Hawai'ian Kingdom and an inquiry into what exactly – *from an inside-out perspective* – rendered the achievement of this independence possible.

2.2 Classical Hawai'i's 'compatibility'

A central concern in the West's paternalistic approach to the 'standard of civilisation' throughout the globe was the presumed ability of 'savages' to become 'civilised'. Again, reaching back to the American *conquista*, this framework was deeply linked with religious conceptions on whether non-Europeans were endowed with a fully human soul capable of allowing 'God's truth' to permeate them. Conversion of 'savages' into Christians was the ultimate goal in this assessment. Despite a general movement towards secularisation during the Enlightenment, it still befell to a large degree to priests and missionaries to determine whether recently 'discovered' populations were capable of being 'civilised', much like a religious conversion.

In the case of the early 19th century Pacific, Christian missions were established in virtually all archipelagos by the mid-19th century (1820 in Hawai'i). Opinions of missionaries varied considerably from archipelago to archipelago, but the historical record shows that, overall, missionaries posted to Hawai'i had a high regard of the ability of the indigenous population to be civilised, positively commenting on the rapidity and willingness with which the higher classes in particular adopted Western ways in all aspects of life.⁵¹

Understanding the 'standard of civilisation' in terms of its religious antecedent and subtext serves to highlight the fact that Western agents (be it explorers, missionaries, traders or governments) interpreted 'civilisation' not as a static attribute, but as an acquirable quality that, however, required a pre-disposition. When a people did not possess such a disposition, the native culture and its manifestations needed to be repressed and replaced – such an attitude characterised by and large the

⁵¹ Fischer (2013). Section 3 – "Missionaries".

most brutish settler experiences and, in particular, the relationship between Euro-American settlers and natives in North America and Australia.⁵² When a people, on the other hand, did possess such a disposition, then the populace needed merely to be accompanied to the attainment of ‘civilisation’ – such were French ideas of turning colonial subjects ‘into Frenchmen’ in Africa, for instance. The latter predisposition, furthermore, allowed, in the view of Western agents, for the possibility of non-Western societies attaining ‘civilisation’ through hybridisation. That is, through the internalisation of Western social structures within ‘valid’ native ones. In this section, I thus turn to an overview of how Hawai’i in the late 18th century corresponded to this second model, and was as such a candidate in obtaining and maintaining a form of agency in international dealings within a system dominated by an expanding, hegemonic West.

Upon the arrival of Captain Cook in 1778, the Hawai’ian islands were divided into several kingdoms normally not extending over more than an island or two. Despite being politically independent, these kingdoms were bound by very intense links of commerce, ritual and human relations, which caused political models, institutions and all sorts of ideas relating to the running of the state to migrate from island to island. The political systems in pre-contact Hawai’i are therefore relatively uniform.

Pre-contact Hawai’ian kingdom present an extremely high degree of centralisation, institutional sophistication and social stratification. In the wider context of pre-contact Pacific this degree of sophistication and stratification is only to be found in Tonga, and to a lesser degree. Overall, classical narratives of Hawai’ian history describe pre-contact kingdoms as the historical development of previous kinship-based chiefdoms. Evidence of this is attested in the high importance of mythological kinship links as foundations of Hawai’ian polities in the oral histories that constitute the main source of pre-contact historical knowledge. According to Gonschor, it is Hawai’i’s and Tonga’s similarly high levels of pre-contact development that allow for both the islands’ political systems to withstand extremely well the pressures of post-contact transformations, as well as be particularly receptive to each other and non-Polynesian polities in the wider Pacific region in terms of adopting and ideating new political models.⁵³

Gonschor’s claim is persuasively substantiated by the fact that the fundamental institutions of the pre-contact Hawai’ian political system were analogically correspondent to Western institutions.

⁵² Colley (2021): 276-284.

⁵³ Gonschor (2019): 17-18.

According to Beamer, these fundamental institutions were essentially three. The first was the *mo'i*, the king of each polity, which reigned as an autocrat endowed with an almost divine essence.⁵⁴ The term *mo'i* constitutes, Beamer notes, an absolute neologism amongst Polynesian languages, identifying a specifically Hawai'ian institution which is distinct from the chiefs (*'ariki*) found in other Polynesian polities. The *mo'i* is the element that renders classical Hawai'ian states so centralised and hierarchical.⁵⁵

In this respect, Beamer notes that the *mo'i* is a much closer equivalent to a western king than the more primitive Polynesian chief. Consequentially, with the establishment of relations between Britain and the Kingdom of Hawai'i from the end of the 18th century the term *mo'i* comes to be used natively by Hawai'ians to indicate kings both domestically and internationally, with Hawai'ian kings coming to model themselves upon foreign (namely British) monarchical models without this causing profound changes in the native political set up. This extended into the mid-19th century with the writing of a constitution and the entry of the Kingdom into a constitutional monarchical system, where the term *mo'i* remained in use to indicate the monarch in written sources of law. The situation is highly different in other Polynesian polities (as well as tribal and kinship-based polities subjected to European colonial rule in other parts of the globe), where the interaction and partial adoption (or in some cases imposition) by chiefs traditionally established in less centralised and less strictly hierarchical societies with British and French monarchical models brought to profound social conflict and the downfall of native political systems. Moreover, the *mo'i*'s institutions (again, unlike Polynesian chiefdoms) came with a bureaucratic system composed of several religious figures, often corresponding or linked to figures responsible for carrying out the law (including an executioner), as well as official advisors (*kuhina*) headed by a head advisor (*kuhina nui*). All these figures were swiftly considered as analogue to the corresponding bureaucratic elements in Western monarchical systems, with their native names being codified as such in the 19th century laws of the Hawai'ian Kingdom.⁵⁶

The second and third elements identified by Beamer as fundamental to the classical Hawai'ian state are those of *palena*, indicating the division of the land in units, and *kalai'aina*, indicating the ritualistic repartition of the land by the king to his supporting nobles (officiated by a specific figure in the state apparatus). The centrality of land management to the classical Hawai'ian political

⁵⁴ B.K. Beamer (2014). *No Makou ka Mana: Liberating the Nation*. Kamehameha Publishing.

⁵⁵ A. Fornander (1996 [1878-1885]). "Volume 3: Ancient History of the Hawaiian People to the Times of Kamehameha I" in *An Account of the Polynesian Race: Its Origin and Migrations*. Mutual Publishing Co.: 28-29.

⁵⁶ Gonschor (2019): 19-20.

system brings the polity closer than chiefdoms to the European model of a feudal society, whereby the allocation of land resources, and of the labour upon that land was determined by the favour of lower nobles towards the king. As in a European feudal system, so central was the bond between aristocracy and land in ancient Hawai'i, that in the post-contact period the word *kalai'aina* came to be the direct translation of the Western concept of 'politics'.⁵⁷

To these three concepts identified by Beamer, Gonschor adds a fourth concept: *kanawai*. This concept, tightly bound to the idea of *kapu* – the universal religious law that regulated the relationship between man and the natural environment –, indicated the “commandments, laws or decrees” that were emanated directly by the *mo'i* and which, in the post-contact Kingdom came to directly stand for the European concept of 'law'.⁵⁸

With the four concepts of *mo'i*, *palena*, *kalai'aina* and *kanawai* we therefore have four pillars of the pre-contact Hawai'ian political system which remain, both conceptually and linguistically, in full use through the transformations of the contact period, the written codification of law and the recognition of the Hawai'ian Kingdom internationally in the first half of the 19th century. This, despite the fact that almost all other Polynesian societies borrow English and French calques of the European words for these concepts.⁵⁹ Central to my argument is the idea that the continued use of these native terms does not merely consist of a case of linguistic conservatism or nationalism on the part of Hawaiians – the Hawaiian language was quick, from the very beginning of the 19th century, to integrate foreign borrowings for a myriad of concepts that were not considered present in the native culture before introduction by Europeans.

An extremely important role in this process of institutional and linguistic absorption was held by missionaries. 1820 sees the establishment of an American-led Calvinist mission in Hawai'i, which immediately sets off establishing a firm presence amongst all native social classes, but particularly the aristocracy, providing councillors for the court. Following the death of Kamehameha I in 1819, his successor during the 1820s – Liholiho (Kamehameha II) and Kauikeauli (Kamehameha III) – convert the court to Christianity and officially banish traditional religious beliefs. Though fiercely contested by large sectors of society, the *de jure* conversion of the archipelago brings about the

⁵⁷ Beamer (2014): 19-49.

⁵⁸ Gonschor (2019): 21.

⁵⁹ Ibid.: 20-21

introduction of writing as a means of government and particularly law-making – a task which befalls the missionaries.⁶⁰

In the early 1820, the American mission under a mandate by Liholiho set about putting *kanawai* – native laws previously tied to religious taboo – into writing in the Hawai’ian language. In the process they gave them a recognisably Christian form so that, whilst the Hawai’ian language and institutional precedent reflected a native origin and meaning, the first written laws of the Kingdom were effectively equivalent to the Christian commandments, and thus contemporarily immediately recognisable by Westerners. The process of translation of Western concepts (Christian and secular) in Hawai’ian, corresponding to a process of translation of the perceived essence of Hawai’ian traditional law into Western terms, captures the essence of the process of hybridisation. A process which, crucially, does not occur in a power imbalance, but is rather the product of a very close collaboration between Western missionaries and the native aristocracy.

A turning point of this collaboration is reached in the late 1830s under Kauikeauli. The American Calvinist mission appoints clergyman William Richards as personal chaplain, tutor and translator to the king. In 1839 Richard and Kauikeauli set about producing a ‘Declaration of Rights’ that sets the bases for the constitution of 1840 and the establishment in Hawai’i of a constitutional monarchy. The peculiar mix of British ascendancy, American influence and deep reflection on native political thinking in the making of this initial constitutional text – compiled in Hawai’ian – produced an extremely progressive text; an amalgam of the most liberal thinking in both the Old and New Worlds enhanced by native understandings of the relationship between aristocracy and the people.⁶¹

Beyond law, the late 1830s also saw the translation, always by Richards, of *Elements of Political Economy* by American economist Francis Wayland. Richards here translates ‘political economy’ with the term *kalalaina* – the division of lands, which had come in the post-contact era to indicate politics more generally. The translated textbook contributed to fuse native and Western ideas in the realm of economics too, in a period when an important American trading community had already settled in Honolulu and Hawai’i was at the centre of Pacific trading routes. Combined with Calvinist tutorship on capitalist practices, the publication contributed to develop the ‘cargo cult’ established under Kamehameha I into a global understanding and embracement of Western

⁶⁰ Ibid.: 24-26.

⁶¹ Ibid.

capitalist notions that would attract and appease Western investors and traders, thus contributing to the recognition of the kingdom's ability to provide efficient administration.⁶²

I do not wish to suggest that, for some historical quirk, Hawai'ian society, alone out of all Polynesian societies, independently developed in such a way as to resemble the Western political set up. Geography, cultural influence and evident differences in all aspects of the social institutions just mentioned confute this categorically. Conversely, the Hawai'ian institutions I have just compared to European ones could similarly be compared to (perhaps to even closer degree of similitude) to ancient Chinese or Aztec institutions; it just so happened that the impact that European culture had on Hawai'i during the 19th century brought this specific analogy to be drawn by Hawai'ians themselves. Rather, what I am arguing is that the historical development of Hawai'ian society just before European contact made it typologically different from most other Polynesian societies and specifically much more suited to enter in a state of structural and symbolic exchange and hybridisation with its European settlers. Hawai'i had constructed by that point, unlike other Polynesian polities, its own form of state society.

My argument here dovetails with Hommon's argument that, together with "Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley, China, Mesoamerica and Andean South America" (2013: 2), Polynesia was one of the state producing regions of the world.⁶³ He makes this argument through an analysis of the political structure of ancient Hawai'i which typologically distinguishes it from other Polynesian societies (dubbed as "non-state societies") and identifies within it the structures that distinguish the civilisations that developed, independently from each other, in the other abovementioned regions. Like Beamer,⁶⁴ Hommon places the control of land distribution and production activities by a highly distinguished, centralised and bureaucratic aristocracy at the centre of his definition of a state society juxtaposed to a non-state society.⁶⁵

True, despite the clear empirical evidence that seems to confirm it at least in the Polynesian context, the splitting of world societies into the neat dichotomy of "state" and "non-state" has been source of harsh scholarly debate in the last half century.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, I argue that such perspective is useful

⁶² Ibid.: 25.

⁶³ R.J. Hommon (2013). *The Ancient Hawaiian State: Origins of a Political Society*. Oxford UP. 2.

⁶⁴ Beamer (2014).

⁶⁵ Hommon (2013): 121.

⁶⁶ See, for instance, M. Sahlins (1972). *Stone Age Economics*. Transaction Publishers; P. Clastres (1974). *La Société contre l'État*. Éditions de minuit; J.C. Scott (2009). *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. Yale UP.

in that it has the added value of reflecting something similar to the ‘civilised-uncivilised’ dichotomy that had become a trademark of British dealings with colonised subjects throughout Africa, the Americas and the Asia-Pacific in the 19th century. With the onset of settler colonialism towards the middle of the century in territories such as South Africa and Australia, which brought with it violent armed conflicts between the British army and local aborigines (in the former case, of both African and European ancestry), British colonial authorities increasingly attempted to mediate conflicts through native political structures. This brought, by way of generalisation, to a predilection and ease of dialogue on the part of the British with native political structures that were more centrally and hierarchically organised as well as territorially defined, whilst reverting to clearance and (in some cases) outright extermination strategies with more loosely organised and nomadic populations.

In the South Pacific region, a most evident example of this is the difference of treatment between the Māori of New Zealand and aboriginal populations in Australia. Whilst, in the case of the former, centralised and hierarchical chieftainship and centrally controlled land distribution typical of Polynesian societies made the Māori appetible for official dealing and the stipulation of treaties with the British relatively early on in the colonial experience, nomadic and egalitarian Australian aboriginal societies were relentlessly dislodged and systematically excluded by the colonial legislative apparatus developed by British settlers. Already from the 1830s there was a willingness amongst British authorities to grant Māori chiefs some degree of sovereignty, with the opinion of British missionaries and settlers being generally positive regarding the level of ‘civilisation’ attainable by the Māori, largely due to their social organisation.⁶⁷

Two important factors thus emerge from an overview of the Hawai’ian socio-political system at the dawn of European contact. Firstly, the Kingdom of Hawai’i emerges as a native type of polity, with institutions that emerge from a century long journey of development and that are uniquely Hawai’ian. Secondly, and most importantly for my argument, these institutions form a structure of action and meaning capable of finding counterparts in the European (specifically British) power structure that penetrates into Hawai’ian society from the early 19th century. More precisely, there was a degree of compatibility between Hawai’ian and Western political structures which allowed for the two to be mutually intelligible and to a large degree interchangeable to both Hawai’ians and the Westerners that brought Western institutions to the archipelago. This structural and symbolic compatibility is what, I argue, makes hybridity not only a possibility, but a natural consequence of colonial contact in Hawai’i.

⁶⁷ Colley 2021: 287

The question of course remains of how exactly the reinterpretation of these categories occurred. Indeed, if the concept of *mo'i* contained at its very core the idea of the king as a demigod, and if traditional concepts of land management and division were grounded in the ritual, value-laden dogma of myth and religion, equating these concepts to their European correspondents would either mean bringing Hawai'ian spirituality into Western State structures, or 'disenchanted' native conceptions of the socio-political realm. It is evident then, that to deeply understand the mechanics of hybridity, one needs to turn to a study of the intersection of different types of rituality and cosmology – Western and Hawai'ian. This meeting of different visions, different symbolic registers, I argue, constitutes the single most important state-forming experience that characterises the first four decades of the Hawai'ian Kingdom.

2.3 Mechanics of culture change

As argued in section 1.1, the immediate post-colonial period was characterised by little military and colonial interest by Western powers in the Pacific region. Though the intensity of exchange was insignificant for Western and global standards, the effect of the first encounters between with Europeans was of enormous significance for the native population of Hawai'i. The arrival and return of Captain Cook, who was killed by the natives on his second visit to the archipelago one year after his first landing, has become, through the work of American anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, a scholarly classic in explaining the workings of cultural transformation. Upon his landings in Hawai'i, Captain Cook was identified by Hawai'ian as an impersonation of the fertility god Lono. This, Sahlins documents, was due to a series of coincidences which made the circumstances of the British landings correspond to the Hawai'ian religious calendar and its corresponding myths. The identification of the British with divinity kick-started a series of behavioural patterns, whereby Hawai'ian women provided British sailors their uninhibited sexual favours as a form of communion with the divine.⁶⁸

Contemporarily, the Hawai'ian chiefs followed the ritual script to the letter by treating the British outwardly with deference, but secretly viewing them with deep concern. The divine element in Hawai'ian kingship introduced in the previous section, in fact, is considered to be the product of a theft, whereby the chief is considered to have ritually stolen power from the god of fertility to the

⁶⁸ M. Sahlins (1996). *How "Natives" Think: About Captain Cook, For Example*. Chicago UP.

point of having ritually killed him, in order to project his own, human form of power onto society. Hawai'ian chiefs were thus found to encourage their male subjects to acquire and otherwise steal precious objects from the British (in the Hawai'ian view, principally metal objects useful as weapons) – a representation of the ritualistic custom of chiefs to secretly steal offerings made to Lono in order to assert their power. The return of Captain Cook one year after his first landing, occurring at a topical point of the Lono rituals, was accompanied by the outburst of a casual conflict that led to the slaying of Cook in an unsettling actualisation of the mythical narrative.⁶⁹

One of the crucial elements of the story highlighted by Sahlins is the peculiar way in which the very different cosmology of the British interacted with the mythologically founded actions of the Hawai'ians. Sahlins emphasises how, throughout the event, various socio-political forces internal to Hawai'ian society are at play, finding different role within the mythical meta-structure. In particular, there emerges a conflict between the clergy – loyal to the divinity and busy worshipping Cook with lavish food offerings and other honours – and the chieftainship, preoccupied by the need of maintaining primacy of power and not be replaced by the returning god. While, in the myth, the archetypal struggle is over ownership of the land as the primary means of production and reproduction, in political terms, the struggle is about power over the populace, which finds itself in a peculiar situation suspended between two mythological worldviews – the Hawai'ian and the British.⁷⁰

Meeting with the 'disenchanted' rituality of the British, acts of divine communion such as the acquisition of metals and weapons by Hawai'ian men and the offering of sexual favours by Hawai'ian women led to the creation of circuits of exchange and interested interpersonal relationships (including the birth of mixed-blood children). What would have been, from the Hawai'ian point of view, the actualisation of a divine presence into the physical logic of human phenomena, brought social relations within the native community to be completely transformed. Common women and men could claim a physical and economic proximity with the divine similar to that previously enjoyed exclusively by the nobility. Likewise, visiting and settling Westerners in the following decades would automatically come to be endowed with a sort of divine aura which conferred them (somewhat consciously and somewhat unawares), the ability to deeply impact the social reality of Hawai'ian society. A most impactful concretisation of this transformation was the

⁶⁹ A.O. Mascarenhas, F.C. de Vasconcelos (2009). "What Does Captain Cook Have to Tell Us About Culture? Contributions for a Structural and Historical Approach to Culture and Organizations". *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 9, 3: 323-338.

⁷⁰ M. Sahlins (2013). *Islands of History*. Chicago UP. Ch. 4.

way in which newly imported Western tools and weapons were of critical importance in allowing for the conclusion of the process of national unification of the Kingdom under King Kamehameha I.

Constituting a kind of archetypal historical event in Hawai'ian history, the death of Captain Cook constitutes a prime example of what Sahlins calls "a structure of conjuncture", which the anthropologist explains as "a set of historical relationships that at once reproduce the traditional cultural categories and give them new values out of the pragmatic context". In Sahlins' words, "chiefs, priests, and English were all following their received inclinations and interests. The result was a little social system, complete with alliances, antagonisms – and a certain dynamic."⁷¹ The anthropologist identifies in the murder of Cook the initial point of what is going to be the history of Hawai'ian foreign relations. Indeed, as King Kamehameha I unified the archipelago, his dethroning of various chiefs was interpreted by several European observers as the expression of a revenge for the killing of Captain Cook. According to Sahlins, this represents the continuation of a mythical archetype: that of usurpation, considered as the primeval form of kingship-making not only in Hawai'i, but in Polynesian cultures more generally. Usurpation by an immigrant king is, following Sahlins' argument, the actualisation of the god-killing myth described above; an act which requires the establishment of a cult of the killed god by the usurper. In light of this, the Cook incident sets the bases for the establishment of what Sahlins call a "cargo cult" under the reign of Kamehameha.⁷²

In the 1790s, the first head of the Hawai'ian Kingdom pleads to open the islands to foreign trade and to revere the British in particular, mentioning that the beginning of a new era of prosperity and development for the Hawai'ian people. Not only does this allow for the material importation of weapons that, as mentioned, are central to the consolidation of the state's rule, but it explains the peculiar relationship established between the Hawai'ian crown and Western (particularly British) power. In 1794, Captain Vancouver of the Royal Navy lands in Hawai'i with the wish of establishing close relations with the King for the advantage of the British Crown. Despite the lack of a mandate from London, he easily convinces Kamehameha to cede sovereignty of the islands to Britain and presents him with a spare Union Jack from his ship. The king adopts the Union Jack as the symbol of his reign and accepts to share sovereignty by reference to "his loving brother King George" of England.⁷³ The custom of Hawai'ian royals to refer to the British Crown in terms of kinship is continued until well into the mid-19th century. Besides it, there also develops the practice

⁷¹ Ibid.: Ch. 3: "History, or Mythopraxis"

⁷² M. Sahlins (1981). *Historical metaphors and mythical realities*. Michigan UP. 22-28

⁷³ Ibid.: 27-28.

for members of the royal bureaucracy to use names pertaining to Western politics. Thus, Kamehameha's *kalaimoku* (officer in charge of the division of land) went by the name of Billy Pitt – the British Prime Minister at the time.⁷⁴ At the same time, British advisers to Kamehameha are quickly absorbed within the native aristocracy close to the king in an attempt to establish a lasting tie with the divine element. This tie works two ways for the nascent Hawai'ian monarchy: it gains the king more legitimacy vis-à-vis internal contestants to his power, but it also provides him with loyal Western diplomatic interlocutors that play a role in preparing the ground for international recognition.

There emerges therefore what Baré identifies as an “interiorisation of England” in a “mytho-political construct”, whereby the Hawai'ian myth of divine kingship merges with a peculiar view of international relations, whereby an open, receptive, almost submissive relationship to England (and, by extension, Western powers), is akin to re-confirming the supremacy of the domestic ruling elite above internal factionalisms and other sources of power (particularly the native clergy).⁷⁵

Throughout the post-contact period, just as Western countries begin exercising a form of expansion over Hawai'i by means of commerce and the exchange of symbols (first a flag, but soon after religion, laws and institutions), from a Hawai'ian perspective this expansion becomes a discursive source of statehood, a mytho-political guarantee of its agency – or, to put it in Polynesian terms, the source of the Hawai'ian Kingdom's *mana*.⁷⁶

We find here, I argue, a valid model for understanding how hybridity actually works in the forming of Hawai'ian statehood in the post-contact period. Just as, as described in the previous section, Hawai'ian socio-political development makes it a type of polity able to interact and intermingle with the Western socio-political structure, the current section has illustrated how Western socio-economic, cultural and political agency is quickly englobed into the wider mythological structure of Hawai'ian political thinking. This makes for the construction of a state, and of a foreign policy within this state, that is truly hybrid, ambivalent, and mutually empowering.

⁷⁴ Gonschor (2019): 23.

⁷⁵ J. Baré (1987). “L'Angleterre dans la mythologies historique polynésienne: Tahiti et Hawaii” in P. de Dekker, P. Lagayette (eds.) *États et pouvoirs dans les territoires français du Pacifique*. L'Harmattan. 19.

⁷⁶ Sahlins (1981): 26-33.

2.4 Achieving equality through treaties

It thus emerges that Hawai'i's journey to international recognition in the 19th century is marked by two processes: on the one hand, an internal process of state formation the high point of which is the Constitution of 1840 – a surprisingly liberal and progressive document (producing, amongst other things, universal suffrage for all residents of the Kingdom independently of financial assets), which was followed by several reworkings in the successive decades. This internal process endowed Hawai'i with a political and institutional form that was recognisable and workable both for Western governments and the Western traders and entrepreneurs which were empowered by these governments' economic and military might.

On the other hand, there was also the establishment of a diplomatic practice. Kamehameha I's acceptance of the Union Jack from Captain Vancouver (described above) constitutes a very early instance of such practice; it was met by the British by a refusal to assume sovereignty over the islands in the form of a statement of friendship. In the early 19th century, however, this initial recognition of the existence of a unified Hawai'ian Kingdom was followed by formal conventions on trade with the United States (1826), Great Britain (1836) and France (1837).⁷⁷ These treaties betrayed once again how trade and the interests of Western entrepreneurs were the driving force in defining the nature of the Western powers' relation to Hawai'i. What is striking given the historical and geographical context, is the level of reciprocity that Hawai'i managed to achieve in its treaties with the Western powers.

With a view to these treaties, James Westlake, a leading figure in 19th century international jurisprudence, notices in 1894 how "international society" was composed by the European and American nations with the addition of "a few Christian States in other parts of the world", namely "the Hawaiian Islands, Liberia and the Orange Free State".⁷⁸ In the same volume, Westlake specifies that "our international society exercises the right of admitting outside states to parts of its international law without necessarily admitting them to the whole of it".⁷⁹ With this statement, he recognises the fact that the Western powers had recognised and entertained international treaties on multiple issues with states beyond those listed above, but these were only partial and, what is crucial, unequal.

⁷⁷ Gonschor (2019): 35-37.

⁷⁸ J. Westlake (1894). *Chapters on the Principles of International Law*. Cambridge UP: 81-82.

⁷⁹ Ibid.: 82.

Perhaps the most common example of this were the arrangements of extraterritoriality and preferential trade agreements imposed upon China, Japan and a series of other nations (including numerous Pacific islands), especially following the Opium Wars. Asiatic countries were thus kept in a state of semi-colonialism, whereby Western citizens were exempted from accountability vis-à-vis local government and law, and, in the most extreme case of China, were allowed full political and military control of strategic port cities, as well as monopolies over major trade. Such rights were, of course, not granted to the citizens of said countries when in the West.⁸⁰

The case for Hawai'i was from the outset far from dissimilar. The early treaties listed above were equal, allowing simply for the favouring of trade between Hawai'i and the counterpart, as well as the settlement and right of trade of Westerners and Hawai'ians alike in each respective country. A turn of events occurred in 1839, with the French forcing a trade treaty onto Hawai'i through an act of gunboat diplomacy. The treaty granted France enhanced rights, including the right of the French consul to choose juries in cases involving French citizens. As Gonschor notes, this was still much more parsimonious than most extraterritorial rights imposed by Western powers onto other Asiatic and Pacific nations. This notwithstanding, by virtue of precedent Hawai'i was compelled, in 1846, to grant similar rights to the United Kingdom in a revision of previously existing trade agreements.⁸¹

The imposition of the French treaty was perceived as a humiliation by the Hawai'ian government. Besides the king, a most outraged reaction came from the Western actors close to the government (both in the missions and secular), as well as the hundreds of Westerners that inhabited Honolulu. This influential Western community, endorsed by the political participation granted to them by the recently created Declaration of Rights, considered itself to a certain degree (especially in for what concerned its trade freedoms and privileges) subject of the Kingdom. Moreover, it was a community composed in the large majority by Americans. Upon the unequal terms of the French treaty, the US found itself embarrassed, continuing, as mentioned above, to propound a rhetoric of friendship, equality and full recognition of the Hawai'ian kingdom as an independent and friendly nation.⁸²

⁸⁰ P.K. Cassel (2012). *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan*. Oxford UP.

⁸¹ Gonschor (2019): 36.

⁸² Hart (1915).

The diplomatic response of the Kingdom was excellent. The most notable act was in 1842-43, when Kamehameha sent a delegation, headed by British and American representatives but including also native elements, to travel through Europe and America and officially seek recognition by the United Kingdom, France and the US. Early in 1843 this was achieved with regards to the first two in London, and soon after by the US in Washington too. Whilst the treaty constituted a historic moment domestically, marked by the institution of a national holiday, it accompanied a much more comprehensive diplomatic practice. Kamehameha III, in fact, commenced a widespread use of Hawai'ian participation in official ceremonies (such as royal weddings, funerals and anniversaries) throughout the world. St Petersburg, London, Paris, Washington, Vienna, but also smaller powers such as Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, several German states, and Asian nations such as China, Japan and other Pacific islands. In all of these countries Hawai'ian delegations were making their presence felt and showing *savoir faire* in Western diplomatic protocol.⁸³

The effects of these diplomatic successes followed due, with the United Kingdom renouncing all extraterritorial rights and signing fully equal trade treaties in 1851 and 1852, with France accepting the same conditions in 1858. This achievement highlights an interesting aspect of the process of state recognition more widely. In IR theory literature there is a tendency to accord great powers enhanced sovereignty when it comes to dictating the success and modality of state recognitions. Yet, despite the fact that Great Britain and France were the undisputed military powers in the Pacific until the very end of the 19th century, we find in the case of Hawai'i a subversion of this power balance through well-executed and capillary diplomatic practice. As Gonschor documents, the step back on extraterritorial rights taken by the UK and France is a direct consequence of a series of equal treaties concluded by Hawai'i with minor powers, including a treaty with Denmark in 1846 and with Hamburg in 1848, accompanied by a series of more informal diplomatic exchanges throughout the Western world.⁸⁴ Hawai'i was thus able to exploit the globalist tendencies of smaller European nations, which had effectively no relevant military or economic interests in the region and were thus uninterested in securing unfair advantages, in order to create a body of bilateral agreements that were undoubtedly inserted in the Western 'civilised' context and constituted powerful precedent.

Current scholarly theories of state recognition focus on the fact that, despite there existing in international law a legal definition of statehood (codified in particular in the Montevideo

⁸³ Gonschor (2019): 35-37.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Convention of 1933), the act of state recognition is a purely political act. This act, however, tends to be underpinned and rendered effective by a series of legal acts, including, as showcased above, the signing of bilateral treaties. Roth (...) thus describes the achievement of effective (both *de facto* and *de jure*) recognition as the product of a “mixture of political and legal decisions” that are taken in highly decentralised system. In its bilateral dealings with a state that is in the process of being recognised, each nation reserves the right to assess the statehood of its counterpart. Thus Roth describes the process of state recognition through bilateral agreements:

“... in the aggregate, individual state assessments will determine, as a practical matter, whether the entity is accorded or denied the benefits of statehood. Moreover, absent any other source of legal judgement generally available to the decentralised international system, the aggregation of individual state assessments may, where relatively uniform, amount to a collective *opinio juris* that dictates the legal outcome. This aggregation of judgments may thus be regarded as constitutive of the entity’s statehood.”⁸⁵

As proof of the effectiveness of such an aggregate system, the row of fair free-trade agreements concluded by Hawai’i with minor European powers was followed by an agreement with the US 1849 modelled on the basis of the immediately antecedent texts. This gave rise not only to the re-evaluation of the conventions with Great Britain and France, but also to similar agreements with Sweden and Norway (1852) and Bremen (1854).⁸⁶

It must be granted that Hawai’i’s ability to acquire and exploit a Western diplomatic *savoir faire* in creating a written body of international law that substantiated its independence was a contributor, and not the sole cause of its successful and enduring recognition by the world’s powers in the mid-19th century. Without a doubt, the geopolitical and economic context described in section 1.2 concurred to at least an equivalent extent. Indeed, recognitions and the generous conditions of treaties following 1849 owe much to the influence exerted by the US precedent specifically, Washington’s insistence on Hawai’i’s right to open trade and its increasing presence in the Pacific. Likewise, whilst having little effect on the tenuous reality of exchanges between Hawai’i and small north European states, an immediate effect of free trade agreements was boosting Hawai’i’s penetration by and economic dependence on the American market, leading the way to the Kingdom’s ultimate complete loss of independence. Moreover, much of the diplomatic success of

⁸⁵ B.R. Roth (2019). “Bilateral Recognition of States” in G. Visoka, E. Newman, J. Doyle (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of State Recognition*. Routledge.

⁸⁶ Gonschor (2019): 37.

the archipelago lay in the constantly increasing presence of Western advisors and agents within the Hawai'ian government and diplomatic corps. This, in turn, accompanied an erosion of the native quality of Hawai'ian laws, institutions and political practices.

Nevertheless, if interpreted in the context of hybridity, such narrative should not be seen as a disguised loss of national agency. Western actors within Hawai'ian political life overwhelmingly identified with the Kingdom and associated with it their personal destinies, transforming the nation with its independence and sovereignty in mind. Likewise, increasingly close relations with the United States were advanced in large part by the quickly increasing number of American residents in the islands, a great part of which had come to feel completely at home in Hawai'i and identify with the Kingdom's institutions and national identity. To many of these white Hawai'ians the United States represented a guarantor of their national sovereignty and thus of their agency as an independent nation. Having thus surveyed the way in which the Hawai'ian Kingdom developed and was recognised as an independent, hybrid state through the first half of the 19th century, I now turn to an analysis of the use that this state made of the agency that came with recognition – a story that takes us into the second half of the 19th century.

CHAPTER III

Projecting Polynesian power: Hawai'i's formulation and advancement of the pan-Oceanian ideal

3.1 A 'power in the world': but power to do what?

Statehood and sovereignty are inherently connected concepts. A pre-requisite for statehood is the existence of a political entity able to exercise exclusive authority upon a defined territory and population – that is, sovereignty. Sovereignty is the active use and maintenance of power by a state's government. Declarative theories of state recognition hold sovereignty to be an indispensable element for effective state recognition.⁸⁷ Accordingly, the recognition of a state by the international community – which, as we have seen in Part I, is a power-endowing act – implies the active harnessing of such power by the recognised state to some political purpose.

In line with this, the rise to universal international recognition of the Kingdom of Hawai'i by the mid-19th century engendered, amongst both domestic and international audiences involved with the geopolitical affairs of the Pacific, a conviction that the unique international power status conferred upon Hawai'i as a native Polynesian polity came with a moral requirement to pursue an idiosyncratic geopolitical project. Power, in short, came with a responsibility and urge to use it.

In pre-contact Hawai'ian political thought, this necessarily active understanding of power or sovereignty is, I argue, encapsulated in the concept of *kuleana*. Originally, this term indicated a small holding of land held individually by the person or family which inhabited it. As Hawai'i's feudal type pre-contact land ownership system (as described above) precluded commoners from actually owning the land, the possession of it was determined by its active usage; *kuleana* indicated property by virtue of this active usage (either through labour or dwelling) of a piece of land. By extension, *kuleana* came to have a series of meanings which, moving into the modern period, became more relevant than the land-related denotation: 'right', 'privilege', 'concern', 'responsibility', 'interest', 'jurisdiction', 'authority', 'liability', 'cause', 'function', 'justification'.⁸⁸

Needless to say, in Western legal understanding many of the concepts expressed by the word *kuleana* seem to be very distinct, if not even contrary to each other. The idea of 'cause',

⁸⁷ R. Nicholson, T.D. Grant (2019) "Theories of State Recognition". In G. Visoka, E. Newman, J. Doyle (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of State Recognition*. Routledge.

⁸⁸ P.F. Nahoia Lucas (1995). *A Dictionary of Hawaiian Legal Land-Terms*. Hawai'i UP: 61.

‘justification’ and ‘function’ being one and the same, for instance, appears as counterintuitive to the dominant linear cause-effect logic, and much closer instead to the Aristotelian concept of *aition* – ‘cause’ understood, etiologically (preceding the act), teleologically (justifying the act) and formally (by reference to the very nature of the act).⁸⁹ Whilst this type of thinking might contradict dominant logical categories, it nevertheless provides a powerful framework for understanding the happenings of complex processes in the phenomenal realm – happenings such as state recognition. The idea of ‘right’, ‘privilege’, ‘authority’, ‘jurisdiction’ (the result of state recognition) being also a form of ‘responsibility’ and ‘duty’ calling upon the *morally qualified* use of such the former is thus very much a fact of international politics as a concept well-rooted in Hawai’ian political thinking.

Crucially, the native cosmological framework that underpins *kuleana* presents an expanded idea of personhood and interest that encompasses the whole cosmos. The interest of the individual is not, like in the Hobbesian framework that dominates in realist vision of IR, conceived of as in conflict with a multitude of other interests. Rather, it is the establishment of a cosmic harmony that constitutes the greatest benefit for the individual, and thus leads collective and individual interest to match. Accordingly, Gonschor describes *kuleana* as an altruistic sentiment, although, I argue, it in fact goes beyond altruism, challenging the very limits of what the individual is. In any case, when confronted with the crucial IR theory concepts of statehood, national interest and recognition, *kuleana* requires a net shift away from all dominant assumptions within the discipline.⁹⁰

It is within this framework that pan-Oceanianism comes, by the 1840s, to be an articulated and pervasive tenet of Hawai’ian foreign policy. This geopolitical ideology attributed Honolulu the moral duty to use its privileged standing in international politics to further the cause of native resistance towards Western colonial encroachment in the – very broadly defined – ‘Orient’. The Hawai’ian kingdom would have had to place itself as the leading figure in a coalition of Pacific nations able to develop political systems able to equally achieve recognition amongst the world powers and thus block the further expansion of Western power.

As Gonschor argues, pan-Oceanianist thought, with its emphasis on moral duty, finds its native historical roots in the concept of *kuleana*.⁹¹ Despite great geographical isolation, interest in other Polynesian archipelagos was displayed by Hawai’ians throughout the pre-contact period. By the

⁸⁹ B. Wiryomartono (2022). “Aristotle and the Doctrine of Aitia: A Theoretical Exploration of Environmental Design and Sustainability.” *Architectural Humanities in Progress*. Springer: 177-194.

⁹⁰ L. Gonschor (2019). *A Power in the World: The Hawaiian Kingdom in Oceania*. Hawai’i UP: 111

⁹¹ Ibid.: 64-67.

18th century, however, this had for many hundreds of years been relegated to the mythological realm, with Hawai'ians effectively having stopped taking to the sea for trans-oceanic trips to other archipelagos. Nevertheless, as documented above, the mythological sagas referred the divine origins of the Hawai'ian people to an island called *Kahiti*, and religion and oral traditions maintained an awareness amongst Hawai'ian that indeed, they existed amongst a multitude of islands sharing common origins with the peoples inhabiting them.⁹²

The arrival of Westerns and their naval technologies, combined with Hawai'i's opening to trade, led to a re-ignition of this awareness. Thousands of Hawai'ians quickly became engaged in Western crews sailing to all the corners of the world, whilst the establishment of the Kamehameha dynasty produced immediate interest in the development of a national navy capable of inter-oceanic travel and trade. Indeed, already during the reign of Kamehameha I the Hawai'ian monarchy took extreme interest in developing diplomatic and trade interests with Tahiti, Bora Bora and Fiji (the last of which was initially identified as the mythical Kahiti).⁹³ The mythopoetical thinking characteristic of Kamehameha's reign, as described above, can equally be considered at the root of these incipient acts of geopolitics – a spirit of common descent and exchange between Polynesian polities is established on mythical and religious purposes, thus serving the power of Polynesian leaders in the optic of service to divinity and worship. All this occurring in a hybrid context which employs new, Western technologies, motives (political and commercial) symbolic systems (law and diplomacy).

With the establishment of Christian missions in Hawai'i during the 1820s, a further level of hybridisation in the relations between the Kingdom and its Polynesian neighbours occurs. As Euro-American missionaries approached the evangelisation of the insular Pacific as a single endeavour, often led by individuals who travelled between the various archipelagos, missionaries themselves acted as bridges between Polynesian polities. The culturally distant perspective of missionaries was quick in assimilating the similar physical appearances, languages and customs of Polynesians into a single whole, thus pushing for analogue approaches to the 'civilisation' of these peoples. This was particularly the case of Tahiti, which was Christianised at roughly the same time as Hawai'i. As argued at the outset of this thesis, together with Hawai'i, Tahiti was the only island in the region which had developed a uniquely advanced native political system. This was recognised by missionaries who were the primary vectors of early political contacts between the two archipelagos. The influence was immediate and mutual: whilst Tahitian king Pomare II's adoption of Christianity

⁹² Ibid.: 42-46.

⁹³ D. Chappell (1997). *Double Ghosts: Oceanian Voyagers on Euroamerican Ships*. Routledge.

in 1819 directly foreshadowed the Hawai'ian monarch's identical move the following year, Hawai'ian legal and institutional transformations during the 1830s and 40s were carefully observed by Tahiti's monarchy (under the direction of its missionary advisors) and accompanied by numerous appeals by Tahiti to receive advice and aid from Honolulu towards its own legal and institutional modernisation.⁹⁴

It is the intensive translation work undertaken by missionaries in Polynesia during this period that allows native concepts to be harnessed towards the development of a specific Hawai'ian geopolitical stance. Combining the idea of political *kuleana* with the Christian idea of a duty to convert and civilise, missionaries produce a geopolitical understanding that places Hawai'i at the head of Polynesian civilisation, conferring upon it a duty to help its more 'savage' brethren reach the same level of civilisation. These brethren were referred, by early missionary writers, "as '*ai kanaka* (cannibals), *hiuhiu* (savage), and *na 'aupo* (ignorant), as opposed to the Hawaiian Islands, which thanks to the missionaries had become *na 'auao* (enlightened or civilised)." ⁹⁵ The missionaries thus interweaved their own civilisational worldview into an active, natively rooted political doctrine for the establishment of relations between Hawai'i and its neighbours.

Once again, the importance of the introduction of the written word in Hawai'ian is essential in understanding this development. A nascent pan-Oceanianist geopolitical view rendered accessible and popular to the bulk of the Hawai'ian population; particularly so with the creation of wide-circulation newspapers in Hawai'ian and English (such as the tellingly named *The Polynesian*) from the 1840s, which further extended this worldview to the growing non-ecclesiastical circles and the Euro-American naturalised population. Indeed, it is amongst this non-native, non-missionary naturalised population that pan-Oceanianism finds its most complete development from the mid-19th century.⁹⁶

Pan-Oceanianist ideology finds its fullest expression in the 1850s in the work of Charles St. Julian – a journalist of Anglo-French descent, based in Australia and, later, Fiji. Gathering great personal interest in the political realities of the insular Pacific, St. Julian enterprises as a political advisor to Pacific native kingdoms and as an advocator of native political emancipation in the region. This leads him to an intense exchange of letters with the then Hawai'ian Minister of Foreign Affairs (also of British origin) whereby pan-Oceanianism is developed. St. Julian appeals, in particular, to the

⁹⁴ Gonschor (2019): 43-48.

⁹⁵ Ibid.: 109.

⁹⁶ Ibid.: 46.

Kingdom's advanced and highly sophisticated system of constitutional government as something that ought to be exported to other Polynesian polities:

“The natural mission of the Hawaiian nation seems to be that of political and social leadership among its southern brethren, who have as yet no recognized international rights ... Such a confederation would be a power in the world in the real as well as the political sense of the term.”⁹⁷

On the one hand, I argue, St. James' conceptualisation of pan-Oceanianism betrays the perpetuation of the Western category of the 'standard of civilisation' and its paternalistic application by the West. Indeed, Hawai'i's Westernised political institutions are seen as a civilisation telos for the whole of the region, or, in St. James' own words, “the Hawaiian nation may, as a whole, be fairly appealed to as affording a proof of what the Polynesian race is capable of”.⁹⁸ As argued by Diamond, St. James' ideology is highly influenced by the contemporaneous Italian and German unification movements, which explains his understanding of Hawai'ian political agency in the region as necessarily aimed towards the expansion of liberal monarchism.⁹⁹ It is thus a discourse reflective of Western ideological transformations at time, which, due to Hawai'i's successful and holistic adoption of hybridity during the previous decades, had been integrated into the Hawai'ian political experience much more fully than in other native polities in the region.

The development of Pan-Oceanianist thought in the decades following St. Julian's further attests to the Eurocentric nature of the ideology. It is a specifically mid-19th century romantic ideal that pushes a series of entrepreneurial adventurers such as St. James to take at heart the imagined fight of native peoples against advancing Western tyranny. A fight, that, once again, finds thematic similarities in the images of the Greek and then Italian struggles for independent statehood, and in figures such as that of Giuseppe Garibaldi, the selfless, adventure-loving 'hero of two worlds'.¹⁰⁰

The 1870s see the rise to power of King Kalakaua – a fervent supporter of the pan-Oceanianist ideal. Amongst the principal supporters of political unification in the region during this period we find Walter Murry Gibson (another Brit) and Celso Cesare Moreno (an Italian), whose personal

⁹⁷ C. St. Julian (1857). *Official Report on Central Polynesia*. John Fairfax and Sons: 29.

⁹⁸ C. St. Julian (1851). *Notes on the Latent Resources of Polynesia*. Kemp and Fairfax: 65.

⁹⁹ M. Diamond (1990). *Creative Meddler: The Life and Fantasies of Charles St. Julian*. Melbourne UP: 44.

¹⁰⁰ On the topic see: P. Ginsborg (2012). “European Romanticism and the Italian Risorgimento” in Patriarca, S. and Riall, L. (eds.) *The Risorgimento Revisited*. Palgrave Macmillan: 18-36; T. Fulford (ed.) (2009) *Romanticism and Colonialism*. Cambridge UP.

dedication to the Kingdom's geopolitical potential earns them both high nominations by the King within the Hawai'iian government. Much like St. James, Gibson gains much of his popularity within Hawai'i due to his editorial activity as both a journalist and a travel writer. Before arriving to Hawai'i, he spends time in Indonesia, struggling (and being imprisoned) for the cause of native resistance against Dutch rule. His literary production during this period, providing an exoticist picture of Jakarta, ties his further to the romantic freedom fighter trope, gaining him great popularity amongst middle-class anglophone audiences. Upon arrival in Hawai'i, his ties with the Mormon establishment allow him to quickly gain fluency in the language, creating a Hawai'iian language newspaper and meddling into national politics. He translates his Indonesian memoirs into Hawai'iian, developing this time, however, upon the similarities between these two peoples, rather than the exoticisms. Communicating to the tool of the Hawai'iian language, Gibson promotes the idea amongst the islands' population, that effectively a civilisation link exists not only between Polynesian people, but amongst Austronesian peoples more broadly, expanding pan-Oceanianist to encompass the whole of the Pacific.¹⁰¹

From more of a commercial than a literary background, Moreno is equally a polyglot with extensive experience in the Malay archipelago, as well as in China. His arrival in Hawai'i follows his personal entrepreneurial commitment to the creation of a trans-Pacific cable, which leads him to identify Hawai'i as the ideal logistic middle-point of the project. Tepidly welcomed in the United States, the project receives a much more enthusiastic participation amongst Moreno's Chinese company, with the Italian managing to secure funding principally by the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company – one of China's attempts to break the Western monopoly upon its own trade. Finding Kalakaua's enthusiastic support, Moreno's project effectively conceals, under allegedly neutral commercial purposes, one of several late-19th century Asian attempts to challenge Western political and economic pre-eminence.¹⁰²

Moreno's effective diplomacy, bringing him close to the Hawai'iian king and into his government, betrays once again the European framework through which pan-Oceanianism is imagined. Thus, in several of his letters to Kalakaua, Moreno invites the Hawai'iian monarch to follow the example of "Il Re Galantuomo" ("The Gentleman King", referring to Victor Emmanuel II, first King of Italy),

¹⁰¹ Gonschor (2019): 67-71.

¹⁰² R.J. Vecoli, F. Durante (2014). *Oh capitano! La vita favolosa di Celso Cesare Moreno in quattro continenti, 1831-1901*. Marsilia Editori.

unifying the “Polynesian race” and making “Honolulu a monarchical Washington” – once again, a federal, constitutional monarchical model based on Western-developed racial categories.¹⁰³

Yet, unlike his predecessors, Moreno configures pan-Oceanianism within a wider commercial worldview that sets the whole of the non-Euro-American Pacific (including China and Japan) in competition with the Western powers. Kalakaua’s fascination with the trans-Pacific cable project is reflected in a greatly heightened production of maps during his reign, pointedly depicting the Hawai’ian archipelago at the centre of this wide expanse of brethren Pacific nations, thus graphically adapted to leading their resurgence on the world’s political and economic scene.

Scholars look back to Kalakaua’s reign more significantly as a period of renaissance of Hawai’ian traditional arts and customs.¹⁰⁴ Effectively, what is to be witnessed during the 1870s and 80s is the extremely active sponsorship, by both the crown and important figures amongst the non-native civilian population, of indexical elements of Hawai’ian lore. Religious customs, traditional garments and ancient crafts that had been all but abandoned for decades were openly celebrated and put on display. The highly successful participation of the Hawai’ian Kingdom at several Universal Expositions in Europe brought these folkloristic elements to arouse the fascination of peoples around the world, with their legitimacy as the customs of the civilised though non-Western people secured by the Kingdom’s secured international standing. The funding of the Hawaiian National Museum in 1872 provided Honolulu a unique platform in the region to produce and raise to civilisational rank the cultures of the whole of Austronesia.¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, artifacts from all over the region were acquired during diplomatic missions and brought to Honolulu for this purpose.

Written scholarship participates majorly in this endeavour, with numerous native Hawai’ian voices – including treaties written by members of the court themselves – writing on Polynesian folkloristics. Kalakaua himself offers publications reading Hawai’ian epic sagas into the geopolitical reality of the Pacific, particularly interested in drawing a mythical connection between Hawai’i and Samoa that would legitimise the establishment of a Hawai’ian protectorate over the latter.¹⁰⁶ Journalism, mapmaking and folkloristic lore thus combine with Hawai’i’s standing in

¹⁰³ C.C. Moreno (1887). *The Position of Men and Affairs in Hawaii. Open Letter to His Majesty King Kalakaua*. Judd & Detweiler: 11.

¹⁰⁴ See in particular: R.S. Kuykendall (1967). *The Hawaiian Kingdom, 1874-1893: The Kalakaua Dynasty*. Hawai’i UP; S.L. Kamehiro (2009). *The Arts of Kingship: Hawaiian Art and National Culture of the Kalakaua Era*. Hawai’i UP.

¹⁰⁵ Gonschor (2019): 94.

¹⁰⁶ Kalakaua (1972 [1888]). *The Legends and Myths of Hawaii: The Fables and Folk-Lore of a Strange People*. Charles E. Tuttle: 71.

international law to provide a popularised, diplomatically passable and, at times, influential construct of Hawai’ian power as a tangible civilisation. Promoted by foreign self-made romantic ideologues such as St. James or Gibson, the idea that modernity did not necessarily require Westernisation came to be profoundly rooted in the worldview of an increasing number of Hawai’ians and, most profoundly, amongst the native nobility at court.

It is necessary, once again, to emphasise the importance of the written word and publications in Hawai’i, which by the mid-19th century vaunted extremely high levels of literacy amongst both its native and non-native populations, in the process of Hawai’ian state formation and consolidation. In one of the most influential studies of nationalism and statehood formation ever written, Benedict Anderson considers the tool of journalism and editorial publication as pivotal in the creation of nation states, particularly during the 19th century: the creation and popularisation of national newspapers, writing and publishing for a broad audience within a specific nation state and in a standardised national language was, according to Anderson, one of the key imaginary tools in the production of nationalist feeling globally. The importance of the surprisingly quick process of alphabetisation of the Hawai’ian language and production of translations and native publications in such language (as well as national publications in English), initiated with the missionary activity of the 1820s, provides, in the late period of the Hawai’ian Kingdom, an undoubtedly pivotal tool in the consolidation of Hawai’ian national sovereignty and recognition, domestically and internationally.¹⁰⁷

Referring to non-Western polities more specifically, Anderson further identifies other tools that, in his understanding, are as important as the mass press for the creation of a national consciousness by colonial powers: the “census, map, museum”. Looking at the case of the Southeast Asia, Anderson considers how the classification of artifacts into eras and ethnicities, their placements on neatly drawn maps, and the further categorisation of ethnicities living within designed territories by means of censuses was crucial in producing the institutional entities that then emerged into tangible national units following decolonisation.¹⁰⁸

Central elements of the Kalakaua period in Hawai’i, these tools of identity formation and instillation are of doubtlessly Western origin. A preoccupation with the categorisation of nations and

¹⁰⁷ L. Colley (2021). *The Gun, the Ship & the Pen: Warfare, Constitutions and the Making of the Modern World*. Profile Books: 295-305.

¹⁰⁸ B. Anderson (1991). “Census, Map, Museum” in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso: 163-185.

ethnicities into distinct groups with traceable genealogies and geographic positioning emerges as a notable feature of 19th century European academia, and consequently a major vector of nationalist movements globally. Reaching well beyond folkloristics, this extensive fascination for ethnic categorisation reflected itself in linguistics as well as biological anthropology, with the development of the first racist scientific theories.¹⁰⁹ Hawai’ian pan-Oceanianism fully incorporates this register too. Gibson’s and Moreno’s appeals for Hawai’ians to embrace a union with their Austronesian and East-Asian ‘brethern’ derives also from a widespread concern amongst Westerners interested in Pacific affairs that the Polynesian populations of the insular Pacific were constantly dwindling in numbers, particularly due to severe vulnerability to imported diseases, alcoholism, and a proportionally growing non-native population. Mixing with ethnically ‘kin’, but much more resilient and populous Asian populations would, in the thought of these popular influencers, secure the longevity of the ‘Polynesian race’.¹¹⁰

Interestingly, Anderson mentions how nations in the region that weren’t directly colonised, such as Thailand, developed similar narratives of national identity through equivalent means as a reaction to what was occurring in adjacent territories, and often went further in such attempts than the colonial authorities did themselves. This reactive pattern that characterises the construction of national identities ironically allowed Western colonial categories of culture, history and ethnogeography to root and shape the worldviews and identities of peoples and territories beyond their empires.

It is possible, I argue, to view the construction and assertion of Hawai’ian national identity during the second half of the 19th century as precisely such a process of reaction to the expansion and assertion of European ideas that were now, directly or indirectly, affecting global geopolitical worldviews. Whilst founding the basis of racist discrimination, in fact, ethnic theories also provided the possibility of attributing each ethnicity a claim to auto-determination, if led by a ‘civilised’ group amongst its family, such as the Hawai’ians could be for the Pacific peoples. As a geopolitical doctrine that required an active use of the privileges conferred by international recognition, pan-Oceanianism contributed to the consolidation Hawai’i’s international status, providing the nation a niche and a kind of soft-power in world affairs.

As the product of a reaction to a world-phenomenon, pan-Oceanianism is a prime example of hybridity in the formation of the Hawai’ian nation. Concepts of Western origin are translated and

¹⁰⁹ M. Couroucli (2007). “Identity, Nationalism and Anthropologists” in Sant Cassia, P. *Between Europe and the Mediterranean*. Palgrave Macmillan: 73-87.

¹¹⁰ Gonschor (2019): 67-85.

re-interpreted within the native canon, transforming the Hawai'ian conception of its traditional political categories and of its myths, whilst contemporarily breathing new life and political relevance into these myths, so that when reign of Kalakaua came, native mythical and religious categories could be used to legitimise a very modern type of geopolitical assertiveness. The question to rise from this outward looking worldview that asserted itself in Hawai'i by the 1870s, is whether a native notion of an altruistic sense of *kuleana* actually is a valid description of Hawai'ian foreign politics at the time, or whether, on the contrary, hybridisation had led Hawai'i to embrace, as yet another perpetrator, Western-style imperialism.

3.2 Nation or empire? Being a 'world power' in the 19th century

The nature of any process of state recognition is intimately tied to the international context it occurs in. The constructivist turn in IR theory has highlighted how even seemingly unqualified international environments (such as the realist concept of 'anarchy') are in truth qualifiable and highly dependent on the domestic political and cultural interpretations that are made about a state's relationship to specific other states.¹¹¹ Along these lines, Murray argues that the process of state recognition both participates in the domestic process of identity-formation, as well as being profoundly influenced and in great part motivated by it. According to Murray, cultures of aggressivity and conquest in international relations – which both she and Wendt qualify as “Hobbesian” cultures – maintain states into a state of existential insecurity that perpetuates their aggressiveness and distrust towards other states, but also reflects internally, constantly brining a questioning of the state's own right and nature of existence and assertion as a sovereign power – its “self-understanding”.¹¹² In turn, very much like the concept of ‘power’ or *kuleana* presented in the previous Chapter, Murray contends that a nation's identity is constructed *both* domestically and internationally, as much of it depends on nations' ability to “sustain their self-understanding in practice, which requires the cooperation of other states. This international aspect of a nation's identity is what Murray defines as “role identity”.¹¹³

¹¹¹ A. Wendt (1992). “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of International Politics”. *International Organization* 46, 2: 391-425.

¹¹² M. Murray (2019). “The Struggle for Recognition: State Identity and the Problem of Social Uncertainty in International Politics” in *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers*. Oxford UP: 29-52.

¹¹³ Ibid.: 41-42.

By the late 19th century, the geopolitical reality in the Pacific was a highly competitive one, marked by fierce military and commercial competition between the Western powers to secure land claims. It was by all means a “Hegelian” type of international society, both from the perspective of non-Western nations attempting to gain a status of equality vis-à-vis Western powers. This, indeed, posed an existential threat to non-Western and materially weak nations like Hawai’i, but it could also provide them a peculiar “role identity”, which is indeed what emerged through the prism of pan-Oceanianism – a recognition of the perilous nature of the international position of non-Western nations vis-à-vis Western colonial expansion, that was at the same time a call to take decisive action to act.

It is precisely through this vision that King Kalakaua sets off on a diplomatic circumnavigation of the globe, both to test the waters of opposition and set the bases of an alliance that would reconfirm Hawai’i’s chosen geopolitical role amongst prospective partners. The result of the trip confirmed the broad acceptance by Asian nations of Hawai’i as suited to the role. Kalakaua receives the most intimate and elaborate welcome celebrations in Japan, China and Siam. Japan particularly, by now in the midst of the Meiji restoration and thus quickly treading the path of hybridisation that Hawai’i had followed, confirms itself a promising partner.¹¹⁴ In a confirmation of the ‘Hobbesian’ international atmosphere that Western colonialism had imposed in the East, Kalakaua privately states to the Meiji Emperor:

“The European countries make it their policy to think only of themselves. they never consider what harm they may cause other countries or what difficulties they may cause other people. Their countries tend to work together and cooperate when it comes to strategy in dealing with the countries of the East. The countries of the Orient, on the other hand, are mutually isolated and do not help one another. They have no strategy for dealing with the European countries. This is one of the reasons why the rights and benefits of the East are now in the hands of the European countries. Consequently, it is imperative for the countries of the East to form a league to maintain the status quo in the East, in this way opposing the European countries. The time for action has come.”¹¹⁵

Though Kalakaua’s words may at first strike as compellingly anti-imperialist, analysis of the text will reveal them to be a calque of the Westernised pan-Oceanianist rhetoric advanced by his Euro-

¹¹⁴ Gonschor (2019): 76-85.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.: 77.

American advisors at the time; a product of hybridity, as argued in the previous Chapter. Indeed, the civilisational divide implied by Kalakaua – a product of Western thought – did not compel a change of thinking in world affairs, rather a union that would bring to a balance of power in a condition of Hobbesian competition.

Non-Western nations, in a bid to secure recognition and improve their lot in the international playing field, had to adopt the strategies and symbols dictated by the Western powers. Japan's sudden and meticulous opening up to the West during the Meiji restoration, China's attempts to compete commercially with Western shipping companies, and Hawai'i's diplomatic engagement all served in this purpose, being marked by a growing awareness that power in international affairs required modernisation, but that modernisation itself did not imply necessarily a fully Westernisation. For a considerable part of the Japanese intelligentsia, thus, the import of Western technologies, customs and symbols was seen as serving the expansion of Confucian civilisation, and careful attention was dedicated in assimilating only those aspects of Western culture that were considered as compatible with the Eastern canon. Hence, what from the Western perspective can be easily seen as an irremediable processes of holistic Westernisation in East Asia and the Pacific, could occur, in Japan particularly, concurrently with a heightened wariness with regards to the West and its ways.¹¹⁶

If a reading of pan-Oceanianism through the Hawai'ian concept of *kuleana* implies that the rights conferred by international recognition endowed the Hawai'ian nation with the duty of furthering the Polynesian race out of a sense of sacred co-participation in the order of the cosmos, then it is equally true that the Western concepts that equally dominated pan-Oceanianism, and the wider international context in which this reality had to be played out, compelled Hawai'i to exercise its power aggressively and expansively – as it befitted, that is any other Great Power of the time. The question of extraterritorial rights is paramount. In Chapter II I have discussed France's initial unequal trade treaty with Hawai'i, granting the former extraterritorial rights over its citizens present in the Kingdom. This, I have argued, constituted for Hawai'i a breach of its recognition, relegating the nation to a state of semi-recognition similar to that conferred by European powers upon other Asiatic nations. By extension, this negatively reflected onto Hawai'i wider status amongst the whole international community; hence Honolulu's great diplomatic effort in reversing the situation. From the French position, I argue, the situation could be considered similar – the importance of achieving extraterritorial rights upon a non-Western nation was for France an attempt of gaining full

¹¹⁶ C. Aydin (2007). *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*. Columbia UP.

recognition of its rights amongst its peers. In an age where Great Power status was measured by colonial assertiveness, France – defeated and spoiled of its empire in favour, majorly, of Britain just a few decades earlier – was at a disadvantage, which justified the disproportionate importance that such a symbolic act would have with regards to its position vis-à-vis other colonial powers. International recognition, as a quality that needs to be qualified temporally as well as qualitatively and quantitatively, can require the trampling of another entity's recognition in order to be asserted. This was by any means the case, I contend, in the context of West-East relations during the colonial 19th century.

Extraterritorial rights, specifically, were during this historical period intimately bound with the distinction between 'civilised' society eligible for full recognition under international law, and 'savage' peoples, and this distinction so pivotal for the Eurocentric conception of state recognition. According to such worldview, 'civilised' man required the protection of 'civilised' law to maintain his civility, whilst the 'savage' was yet incapable of fully reaping the benefits of 'civilised' law, and therefore was better kept under its native laws or, at best, a hybrid system. The logical solution for the citizens of 'civilised' nations operating in non-Western nations was thus extraterritorial rights and privileges, which accordingly became a *sine qua non* of full international recognition as a Power.

Hawai'i was no exception to the rule, with the 1871 Japanese-Hawai'ian trade treaty granting the archipelago's citizens extraterritorial rights on a par with the Western powers. This stood in great opposition to the emancipatory rhetoric of King Kalakaua's meeting with the Meiji Emperor, a fact that was reflected by the voice of a Hawai'ian envoy to Tokyo (of native Hawai'ian descent), who, rather hypocritically, described the situation as a "relic of barbarism".¹¹⁷ Despite the awkwardness that this inequality afforded to the Kingdom, extraterritoriality was necessary to the confirmation of Hawai'i's status in international relations. Indeed, although Hawai'i was the first nation to renounce all extraterritoriality rights in Japan in 1893, this occurred when a major cultural change in the nature of the West's relation to Japan was already taking place, and indeed it preceded Britain's same move by only a few months. Even more tellingly, it occurred under the direct order of Queen Lili'uokalani immediately before the complete overthrow of the Hawai'i'ian monarchy in favour of US rule by a group of non-native citizens. Amongst the arguments used by the insurgents figured

¹¹⁷ Gonschor (2019): 86.

also the allegation that the Queen was undermining Hawai'i's international position – a testament to the fact that, in Western eyes, the culture hadn't changed completely yet.¹¹⁸

Given the symbolical pre-requisites of recognised and fully independent power status in the 19th century Pacific, it thus seems legitimate to recognise pan-Oceanianism as an imperialist ideology, which perpetuated not only Western rhetoric and soft-power techniques, but also more concrete colonial methods of projecting power – protectorates over other territories, extraterritoriality –, though adapted to Hawai'i's extremely modest material capacities vis-à-vis the other Powers. Indeed, already observers amongst the American and Australian press recognised Hawai'i's application of pan-Oceanianism in its diplomatic practice as a form of rather limited 'Monroe Doctrine' in the Pacific. According to such vision, the 'brotherhood' and *kuleana* rhetoric advanced by Hawai'ian leaders and intellectuals covered an attempt to gain privileges in terms of trade and political influence over the Pacific archipelagos that were still not assimilated by Western empires.¹¹⁹

Whilst, indeed, such a logic is in line with the impositions of the culture of international relations in the region at the time, I argue, it is wrong to dismiss the truthfulness and native value of the concept of *kuleana* which came up again and again in the writings and speeches of the Hawai'ian leadership as it pursued pan-Oceanianism through its foreign policy. Kalakaua's cultivation of relations with Japan and other Asian countries, that were prevented by Western interests and their own imperial attitude from ever actually coalescing into a pan-Asian political union, testified to this matter. Indeed, the King was keen to subsume Hawai'i to Japanese leadership for the sake of pan-Oceanianism recognising the military and demographical weakness of his own nation, thus doing more to foment nascent Japanese imperialistic ambitions than exploit his own country's political and commercial advantage.

The most telling case, however, is that of Hawai'i's two, failed, attempts to turn pan-Oceanianism into reality. The first case, in 1856, concerned the plans for annexation of the small southern-Pacific island of Sikaiana under proposal of St. Julian. Far from a case of assertive expansionism, this case is surprising because of King Kamehameha IV requirement that the island be only annexed following a universal plebiscite amongst Sikaiana's native population – something that, as Gonschor points out, was completely unheard of at the time and contradicted the common practice

¹¹⁸ S. Dando-Collins (2014). *Taking Hawaii*. Open Road Media.

¹¹⁹ Gonschor (2019): 109.

amongst expansionist Western powers.¹²⁰ The idea of the plebiscite, founded on an idea of equal dignity and rights amongst Polynesian nations, is closely tied to the concept of *kuleana* which accompanied Hawai’ian discussion of its role in the Southern Pacific at the time. The plebiscite was, I argue, a political innovation at that time and in that region, that could emerge through hybridisation and combination of the native concept of *kuleana* (wider responsibility towards a ‘family’ of kin peoples) and the Western ideology of liberal, constitutional government. Kamehameha IV’s attitude towards the Sikaiana case remained canonical in later Hawai’ian political consciousness and formulations of pan-Oceanianism. It returned to be relevant and discussed thirty years later, during another case of possible annexation regarding Samoa.

During 1886-87 Kalakaua sends a high-ranking government mission to Samoa with the intent of creating a confederation that would enable the latter archipelago to maintain its independence and modernise its native institutions under Hawai’ian tutelage. The initiative would eventually fail due to extremely aggressive German colonial claims onto Samoa, leading Bismarck to menace militarily attacking Hawai’i. The event might seem to confirm the Hawai’ian ‘Monroe doctrine’ thesis, yet the way in which Hawai’ian media portrayed it and King Kalakaua acted contradicts much of power-politics nature of the original American ‘Monroe doctrine. In first instance, the Samoa incident and its ultimate failure was depicted by the Hawai’ian press as a civilisational clash. Hawai’i, in their words, had failed in the face of Western economic greed and material power, in its attempt to create a union based on kinship and mutual interest:

“... these great nations merely want to put Samoa in order for the sake of business, for the sake of trade that the adventurers of these great countries may want to undertake in Samoa. We have another interest besides mere business. We have a neighbourly interest in the welfare of Samoa.”¹²¹

As Gonschor argues, this rhetoric, dominant in Hawai’i at the time, far from hiding a Hawai’ian version of imperial power politics, is the testimony that, in line with political and intellectual developments in the rest of the ‘Orient’, pan-Oceanianism was “moving away from a discourse of similitude to one of civilizational relativism”.¹²² This relativism allowed for radically different “role identity” for Hawai’i, truly based on native concepts such as *kuleana*.

¹²⁰ Ibid.: 57.

¹²¹ *Ka Nupepe Elele* (1886). December 25 edition: 2.

¹²² Gonschor (2019): 103.

The hybrid convergence of *kuleana* and liberal constitutional monarchy in the Hawai'ian geopolitical worldview during the second half of the 19th century is one of the greatest examples of hybridity in the fashioning of the Hawai'ian Kingdom. It stands to underline the importance of hybridisation not only in the process of statehood formation that rendered the full international recognition of the Hawai'ian Kingdom possible, but also in qualifying this recognition in the wider geopolitical atmosphere of the time and region. Whilst the need and want for recognition in a highly competitive and often violent international arena profoundly shapes and changes Hawai'i domestically, native concepts are redefined and projected to the exterior through the fashioning of a unique, hybrid "role identity" with the potential of modifying realities beyond Hawai'i.

3.3 Alternative hybridities

Hawai'i's intense diplomatic action under the banner of pan-Oceanianism during the second half of the 19th century had a profound impact on state building processes throughout the Pacific world. Several Pacific polities actively or under the stewardship of Western missionaries and advisors, sought out political help and support in structuring government and achieving recognition from Honolulu. Adopting the practice set by the United Kingdom, Hawai'ian monarchs would usually reply by sending copies of the Hawai'ian constitution and legal codes.¹²³

As Gonschor convincingly argues, the spread of Hawai'ian-based institutions and laws throughout Oceania during the 19th century is not an oblique form of colonisation.¹²⁴ Numerous scholars have strongly critiqued institutional transfers from Hawai'i considering the Hawai'ian system itself a dysfunctional, colonial style system, which would have accelerated the processes of political collapse and loss of independence that characterised most Polynesian polities by the end of the 19th century.¹²⁵ As argued in Chapter 2, however, what was being transferred from Hawai'i was, in truth, a hybrid system which, at its core, was constituted by a reinterpretation and adaptation of a native Polynesian political set-up. Despite the more pervasive adoption of English terms in other Pacific archipelagos relative to Hawai'i, analysis of political terminologies coined during the mid-19th century in Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and Tahiti reveals impressive similarities with Hawai'ian native terminology.¹²⁶ Contact with Hawai'i can thus be better described as having engendered a processes

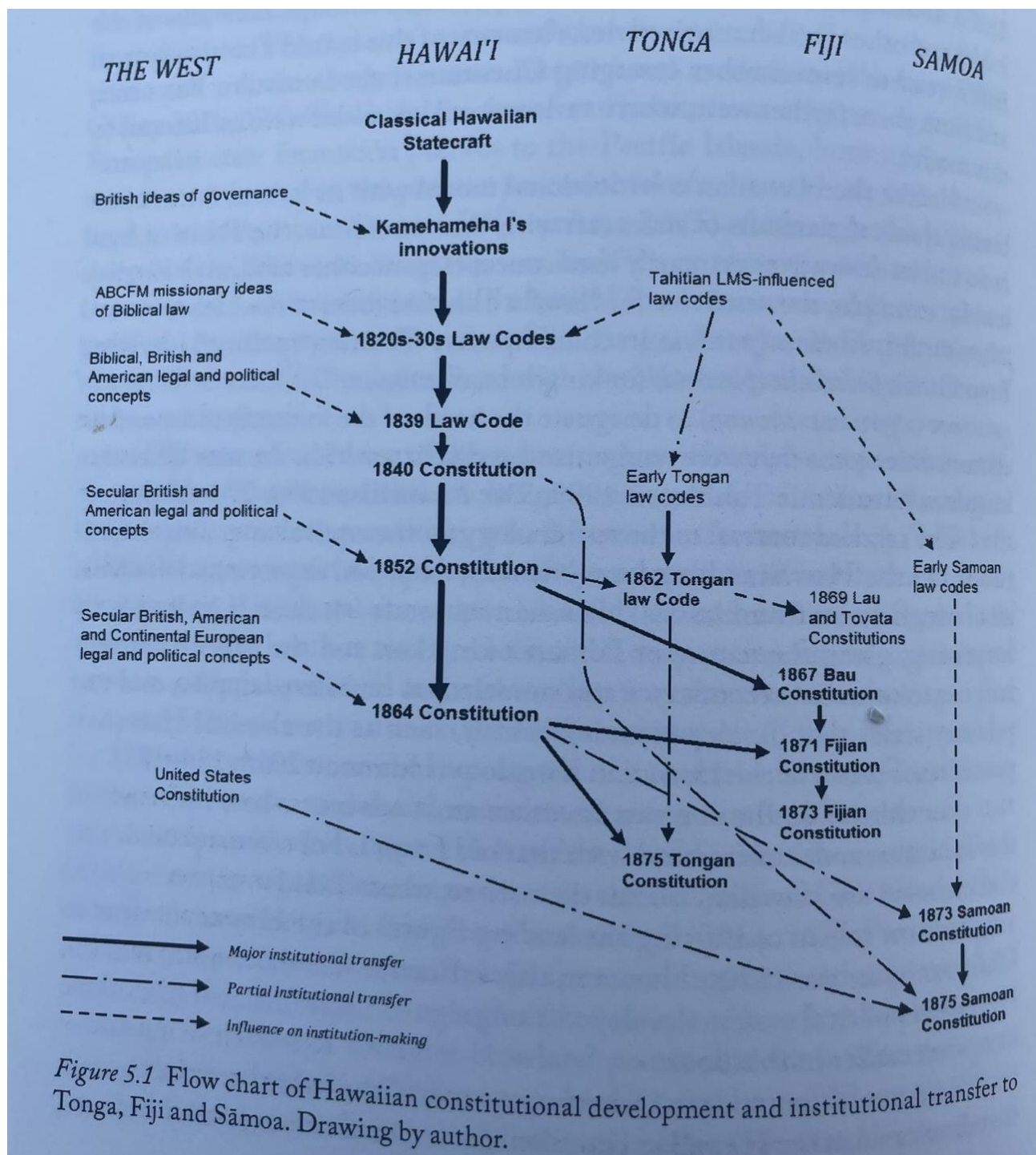
¹²³ Ibid.: 112-145.

¹²⁴ Ibid.: 147-153.

¹²⁵ Most recently N. Thomas (2010). *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire*. Yale UP.

¹²⁶ Gonschor (2019): 151.

of hybridisation of native governmental structures in other Polynesian polities, similar to what occurred in Hawai'i. Gonschor diagrammatically represents this process:¹²⁷



Further countering the colonial narrative, ample evidence shows that legal and institutional precepts were not simply transplanted from Hawai'i, but rather underwent thorough processes of adaptation and reinterpretation in the polities where they arrived, in order to correspond to the realities of

¹²⁷ Ibid.: 116.

individual archipelagos. Particularly in the case of archipelagos having less complex native systems of social stratification and governance (virtually all archipelagos except for Hawai'i and Fiji, as argued in Chapter 2), such processes of adaptation occurred often violently, by causing profound social conflict in native societies. Such polities often ended up with political systems that entailed a much greater portion of Western (usually British) institutional and legal elements, thus giving the impression of falling more exactly into the colonised category.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, the agency of native leaders and their advisors, thanks also to the active role played by the Hawai'ian kingdom, stands as proof that institutional transfer processes overwhelmingly occurred in favour of the agency of native leaders, at least until the actual colonial (military) takeover of archipelagos by Western powers.

Hawai'i was thus a catalyst for the hybridisation of the whole of the Pacific Polynesian space, its diplomatic agency leading to the creation of several 'hybridities', adapted to local conditions and containing, in variable proportions, elements of the Western, Hawai'ian and local native set-ups. The lasting impact that these institutional and legal models had into the 20th century lies as a testament to the regional power and impact of the Hawai'ian Kingdom. Acting, through an understanding of *kuleana*, in order to foster the independence and international recognition of Polynesian nations, Hawai'i indeed enormously contributed to the creation of a region-wide culture of shared hybrid institutions that were both mutually compatible and could enter into dialogue (and be recognised) by the Western powers. The movement for recognition in the region indeed led to the creation of a common identity in the region, which in turn brought Pacific polities closer to the ruling global order of the time, thus confirming Wendt's understanding of international recognition as a force of positive homologation in the international arena.¹²⁹

As the 20th century Chinese military and political leader Sun Yat-sen (who spent several years of his youth in the Hawai'ian Kingdom), stated in 1910,

“This is my Hawai'i. Here I was brought up and educated; and it was here that I came to know what modern, civilized governments are like and what they mean”.¹³⁰

The Hawai'ian political system, through the Kingdom's enterprising diplomatic action, influenced the wider Asian political and ideological landscape too. Kalakaua's visits to Japan and China in the 1880s indeed remained in the consciousness of these countries through the social and military upheavals and struggles of the following decades, until the catastrophe of WWII. As argued above,

¹²⁸ Ibid.: 127-134.

¹²⁹ A. Wendt (2003). “Why a World State Is Inevitable”. *European Journal of International Relations* 9, 4: 491-542.

¹³⁰ Gonschor (2019): 112.

the apex of pan-Oceanianist thought, in fact, corresponded to a period of profound change in the way in which the polities of the Asian Far East conceived of themselves vis-à-vis the West. The technological, economic, military and demographic rise of China and Japan were, correspondingly, increasingly viewed as a threat by Western polities, particular colonial ones. Already the Californian and Australian gold-rushes of the mid-1800s had led to the issuing of racist anti-immigration policies aimed specifically at Asians in both the British Pacific colonies and the US. ‘Yellow peril’ rhetoric then developed and spread aggressively to Prussia and Russia later in the century.¹³¹

By the 1880s capitalist economic expansion and exploitation in the Pacific had reached such levels that conflicts over resources and political power had become more aggressive. In both the European colonies and in independent states such as Hawai’i, the resentment of the non-native population turned both towards immigrants and natives. In the context of these social transformations, it is ironically pan-Oceanianism that, domestically, constitutes one of the primary instigators of the coups that would overthrow the Hawai’ian monarchy and lead to the annexation of the archipelago by the United States.

Already since the 1850s pan-Oceanianism had been at the centre of growing social conflict in Hawai’i. By this time the bulk of the non-native population in the archipelago was constituted by the children and grandchildren of the mainly American missionaries that had shaped the Kingdom in its early phase of development. As argued at the end of Chapter 2, these individuals identified with the Kingdom as subjects, but retained a worldview deeply attached to the United States as a source of civilisational precepts, protector force and main economic partner. From the outset, the missionary activity was to create in Polynesia a satellite of Western (particularly American) Christian society. The identity role that these influential individuals foresaw for Hawai’i was therefore not one of leadership, but of enlightened dependency.

The arrival of anti-clerical, mainly British political advisors, such as Wyllie, motivate the ideals of the Enlightenment and by romantic images of native resistance to Western encroachment by the mid-19th century, created a divide between this part of the population and the Hawai’ian native leadership. The following four decades witness a growing ideological gap amongst the Kingdom’s population, that eventually opposes natives, their aristocracy and their British advisors, to the mainly American settler population which had, already by the 1850s, acquired ownership of much of the productive land and economic resources in the archipelago. One of the key moments of this

¹³¹ M. Ngai (2021). *The Chinese Question: The Gold Rushes and Global Politics*. W.W. Norton & Company.

political struggle is the election of King Lunalilo 1872, following the heirless death of Kamehameha V. The election was orchestrated by the clerical party and brought about a reign that completely ended all pan-Oceanianist activity initiated under the Kamehamehas with St. Julian's guidance.¹³²

Kalakaua's return to the cultivation of pan-Oceanianism brings about new elements that further increase tensions. Indeed, the clerical party follows supporting American protection by reference to Hawai'i's lack of military power. Having founded their wellbeing upon commerce with the US, this part of the population feared, in particular, the overtaking of Hawai'i by a European power – something which had led to the fostering of independence in the first half of the 19th century, but which was open to new perils with Hawai'i's fostering alliances with non-Western nations.

From this perspective, the Samoan experience of the mid-1880s was one of the events that led to the 1887 coup d'état by the missionary party and the forcing upon the monarchy of the 'Bayonet Constitution', which effectively paralysed native rule and was the single most important event in the run-up to the American overthrow of 1893. Much of the popular momentum during the 1887 uprising was caused by the German threats to militarily attack Honolulu, which gave the missionary party a strong argument to the effect that pan-Oceanianist policies were hindering the independence and national security of Hawai'i.¹³³

More incisive yet, however, was the social and economic transformation that took place through Hawai'i's diplomatic opening up to Asia. Kalakaua's sponsorship of Moreno's trans-Pacific cable project, for instance, led to the exponential growth of Chinese commercial presence in Hawai'i, which had been considerable already since much earlier in the century. As the western powers and particularly the US saw Chinese commercial expansion at the global level as a threat to national security and pre-eminence, Hawai'ian Americans read domestic events through the same, racist prism.

Even more significantly, diplomatic rapprochement with Japan brought to the signing of a convention between the two countries in 1886 allowing for the immigration of Japanese citizens to Hawai'i. Diplomatic contact and celebrated cultural similarities between East Asian and Polynesian peoples were fostered by the Hawai'ian government and the Japanese state, with Japanese

¹³² Gonschor (2019): 57-63.

¹³³ J.K.K. Osorio (2002). *Dismembering Lahui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887*. Hawai'i UP.

immigration coming to be seen, by natives and Japanese, in the optic of pan-Asianism. The seeds of a different Hawai'ian hybridity would be set that would see the merging of 19th century Hawai'ian reality with Asia, rather than the West exclusively. A telling moment of this socio-cultural change is the arrival of the first contingent of Japanese immigrants in Honolulu. Upon seeing King Kalakaua, these migrants, remembering photographic representations of the Hawai'ian King together with the Meiji emperor, greet him with the invocation "Banzai!", reserved for the Japanese emperor.¹³⁴

It is the changing face of Hawai'i's hybridity through the pursuit of pan-Oceanianism that heightens social conflict in the archipelago. Consequently, both the Bayonet Constitution and the 1893 overthrow come with the imposition of American-style anti-Asian laws that were previously unheard of in Hawai'i. It is only following the end of WWII that Hawai'i's Polynesian-American-Asian hybridity will come to be seen as a point of force and a winning argument in Honolulu's quest to secure statehood within the Union.¹³⁵

Hawai'i's success story is therefore ultimately a story of failed recognition. What leads to the disappearance of an independent Hawai'i are domestic events, much more than international ones. Nevertheless, these domestic events are shaped by a specific international worldview. With the changing of the culture of international relations between East and West at the end of the 19th century, Hawai'i's hybridity stops being the key to its independence, and becomes instead a source of social dichotomies, of contrasting 'role identities', which eat away at the country's stability and pave the way to its demise. Recognition and unrecognition emerge here as tools in a domestic struggle for power, between opposed elites and economic interests. At the same time, they are revealed as the reflection of wider global power structures within a country that, through its unique hybridity, became, for almost a century, a nearly harmonious miniature of a changing Oceania.

¹³⁴ I. Field (1937). *The Life I've Loved*. M. Josph: 220.

¹³⁵ S. Miller-Davenport (2019). *Gateway State*. Princeton UP.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that the achievement and exercise of near-universal international recognition during most of the 19th century by the Kingdom of Hawai'i was possible through the adoption of what I have defined as 'hybrid' practices and institutions. Hybridity has been presented as a key element in the process of state formation and transformation that characterised the Hawai'ian nation throughout this period, whereby Hawai'i underwent profound cultural, demographic and economic changes, which were intimately connected to regional and global trends. Just as domestic processes of state formation were thus crucial in determining the course of Hawai'ian foreign relations, the international level was deeply intertwined with internal processes. This substantiates my claim that the study of international recognition processes must step beyond simplistic dualities such as the mutual exclusion of domestic and international levels of analysis.

Placing state formation and cultural change at the centre of state recognition processes, I have dedicated considerable attention to the mechanics of systemic change. On the basis of Hawai'ian ethnographic and historical material, I have argued that hybridity provides a model of systemic change in line with Giddens' dual formulation of structure into a static cognitive system and a dynamic practical system. In this regard, I have highlighted the importance of systemic and cognitive 'compatibility' as a key ingredient in the peaceful and successful formation of hybrid practices and institutions in Hawai'i. In particular, I have focused on processes of translation and the educative function of Western missionaries and political counsellors in developing such hybrid system.

My argument has focused on a distinction between Hawai'i's developed socio-political system and other, less structured Polynesian polities, arguing that the former was more compatible with a Western political system and therefore more able to hybridise its institutions and practices. In this regard, I suggest, the concept of a structurally inherited 'compatibility' or 'aptitude' towards hybridity (something that must always be qualified historically and relationally, and should not be taken to presume the existence of global system of 'superior' and 'inferior' cultures) can provide a possibly precious framework to understand the variable success in recognition claims throughout the world.

Following recent constructivist trends in the study of state recognition, I have furthermore approached the question through the prism of 'identity' – a key concept in the study of cultural

change and state formation. This thesis has adopted a systemic approach to identity, as something constructed through a domestic process of interpretation and re-interpretation of the international arena, but which is nevertheless understood relationally amongst nations. State recognition has two crucial functions within processes of identity formation: it is a necessary pre-condition of the ability to claim, exercise and deny an active international identity, but it is also a faculty that is deeply connected to certain identities. Most evidently global Powers consider the power to confirm and confute claims to international recognition as constitutive of their role identity in the international arena. Such framework serves to contextualise and contextually explain the success and failure of state recognition processes globally.

In this regard I have argued that state recognition needs to be understood in its historical and systemic context. In the 19th century Pacific, in fact, an international culture of colonialist expansion put high stakes onto state recognition. Reserved almost exclusively to Western states, international recognition was asserted through specific behavioural norms, that included the assertive creation of civilisational hierarchies. As a recognised state, Hawai'i was not exempt from this norm, leading to the contradictory and internally divisive application by the monarchy of the geopolitical doctrine of pan-Oceanianism. These contradictions, I have argued, were what ultimately brought to the death of Hawai'ian independence within the context of changing international culture and geopolitical balances.

This thesis has sought to emphasise how the intimate link between colonialism and recognition in its broad sense is relevant not only for indigenous studies and activism – which have been making wide conceptual use of it for the last few decades – but also for IR theory. In its attempt to create multilateral legal standards, the post-WWII international system has sought to overcome colonial biases, thus transforming approaches to recognition. Throughout the Cold War and later, however, enduring and resolved disputes over the recognition of states and governments such as the Soviet satellite states, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, North Korea, Afghanistan, the post-Soviet states and many others bear witness not to the disappearance of East-West civilisational standards, but rather to their replacement by ideological dichotomies, such as the capitalism–socialism divide, or, most recently, the opposition between Western liberal democracies and authoritarian states. Recognition remains to be part of an ideational, domestically conceived and internationally perpetuated construction of the global arena and the agents within it. More than ever, the study of civilisational biases and the multifarious strategies in which minorities have overcome them and claimed their agency, is relevant to understand the dynamics of international relations.

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*On my honour as a student of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, I submit this work in good faith
and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.*

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