**FOOTHOLDS IN THE PACIFIC**

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|  | **A**s ships crossed the vast ocean to trade in Asia, islands in the Pacific became important stops for coal, provisions, and repairs. In the South Pacific, the American navy claimed the islands of Midway and negotiated with awestruck natives for the rights to build a base on the island of Samoa. The Hawaiian Islands, which lie closest to the American mainland, had long been an important stop for the Pacific fleet. Pearl Harbor, on the island of Oahu, offered one of the most attractive natural bases in the Pacific. |
|  | In the early 1800s, missionaries from the United States (particularly New England) made the long and difficult voyage to Hawaii and settled there. They sent back news of fantastic economic possibilities in the islands. Soon other Americans followed to become sugar planters and to establish profitable businesses. |
|  | To the native Hawaiians, or Kanaka, their island was a paradise. The sea, the abundant fruit trees, and the rich, fertile soil provided the Kanaka with all their necessities. Because of the perfect year-round climate, their simple shelters were adequate and comfortable. To the Americans, however, the Kanaka behaved like foolish children, as one early visitor described:  *“The ease with which the Hawaiians on their own land can secure their food supply has undoubtedly interfered with their social and industrial advancement. . . . [It] relieves the native from any struggle and unfits him for sustained competition with men from other lands. The fact that food is supplied by nature takes from the native all desire for the acquisition of more land. Today's food can be had for the picking, and tomorrows as well. Instead of grasping all he can get, he divides with his neighbor, and confidently expects his neighbor to divide with him”*. |
|  | While the Kanaka were content to live in their traditional ways, Americans were busy building huge plantations, warehouses, railroads, dry-docks, banks, hotels, and stores. They soon dominated the island's economy, and they were able to influence its government as well. Americans created and controlled Hawaii's legislature and cabinet, and they limited the power of the native king. |
|  | As the nineteenth century drew to a close, disputes arose between the Kanaka and those of foreign descent. "Hawaii for Hawaiians" became the slogan of people who sought to restore the traditional ways of the kingdom. On the other hand, many businessmen called for the annexation of Hawaii by the United States. Annexation would eliminate the recent trade restrictions on sugar and revive the island's now faltering economy. Secret organizations, such as the Annexation Club, plotted revolution. |
|  | In the midst of this unrest, Liliuokalani took the throne upon the death of her brother, King Kalakaua and became Queen. At age fifty-two, Liliuokalani already had experience as a leader. She had governed the islands during her brother's long absences. She was well qualified to take control of the government. An American newspaper reporter who interviewed the new queen described her as "strong and resolute. Her manner was dignified, and she had the ease and authoritative air of one accustomed to rule." Educated in American schools, Liliuokalani's voice "was musical and well modulated, and she spoke remarkably pure and graceful English." |
|  | Those living on the islands who favored annexation hoped that the new queen would support them. Liliuokalani, however, was determined to eliminate American influence in the government. She tried to create a new constitution that would strengthen the traditional monarchy, but her cabinet refused to cooperate. The American residents were outraged. They organized the Committee of Safety and appointed members of the Annexation Club as its leaders. On the morning of January 17, 1893, armed members of the committee attacked. They took over the government office building. From its steps they read a proclamation abolishing the monarchy and establishing a provisional government. The provisional government "would exist until terms of union with the United States of America have been negotiated and agreed upon." Sanford B. Dole, an elderly judge with a flowing, white beard, became its president. |
| Hawaiians who were loyal to their queen tried to come to her defense and stop the revolution. When they arrived in Honolulu, however, American troops confronted them. Without permission from the government in Washington, the United States' minister, John L. Stevens, had sent marines and heavy weapons from the American warship *Boston.* They were ordered to protect the provisional government. For the Hawaiians, resistance was hopeless. |
| Queen Liliuokalani sadly surrendered her throne. She wrote a document in which she "yielded to the superior forces of the United States." She pleaded with the U.S. government to "undo the actions of its representatives and reinstate me in the authority I claim as the Constitutional Sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands." Meanwhile, the Provisional Government sent five representatives to Washington to apply for annexation. They quickly drew up a treaty, and President Harrison signed it and submitted it to Congress. |
|  | Before the Senate could approve the treaty, however, a new president took office. This president, Grover Cleveland, had reservations about taking over an independent country. He withdrew the treaty and sent a special commissioner to Hawaii to investigate the revolution. The commissioner reported that Minister Stevens had conspired with a small group of revolutionaries to overthrow the government. Cleveland replaced Stevens with a new minister and tried to restore Liliuokalani to the throne. |
|  | President Dole flatly refused to give the government back to the Hawaiians. He told President Cleveland that the United States had no right to interfere in Hawaii's internal affairs. Congress agreed, and it adopted a "hands off" policy toward the island. Dole's new government then created an army and held a constitutional convention. On July 4th, 1894, the government unveiled the completed constitution and declared an independent Republic of Hawaii. |
|  | Despite Liliuokalani's pleas for help, other governments quickly recognized the new republic. In desperation, supporters of the queen began to collect weapons and to make secret plans to overthrow the republic and restore the monarchy. They planned to strike on the morning of January 7, 1895, but informers told the government about their plot. |
|  | At dawn, as the queen's supporters slipped silently ashore on Waikiki, government soldiers opened fire. A few of the rebels fell dead or wounded; others surrendered. The government declared martial law. During the next few days, government troops defeated the disorganized rebels in a series of brief but deadly battles. Within two weeks, they completely suppressed the uprising and captured its followers, including Queen Liliuokalani. The prisoners were tried for treason. Liliuokalani was forced to sign a document in which she finally renounced all claims to the throne. |
|  | Now secure in its power, the republican government turned its attention to international relations and trade. In 1896, however, the election of a Republican, William McKinley, as president of the United States, renewed Hawaiian hopes for annexation. President McKinley, like many Republicans, favored expansionism, and he welcomed the new annexation treaty. A joint resolution of Congress annexing Hawaii passed both houses, and the islands became American possessions.  KEY TERMS:  **annexation**: bringing an area under the control of a larger country  **monarchy**: a form of government led by a king or queen  **provisional**: serving for the time being only, temporary  **martial law**: Temporary rule by military authorities, imposed on a civilian population  especially in time of war or when civil authority has broken down |
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