THE QUILT SPEAKS: CRAFTING GENDER AND CULTURAL NORMS IN HAWAII

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Abstract: When protestant missionaries first arrived in Hawaii in the early nineteenth century one of their first concerns was the nudity of the indigenous population and the introduction of cloth and sewing was an early priority. Their hope was that sewing would help turn these savages into appropriate Christians. However, with the introduction of fabric, thread, and metal needles, unexpected skills developed. Feminist scholars have often recognized that so-called “women’s crafts” hold important values. Quilting allows women to work collectively, to reflect on cultural and national values, and to offer political challenges. Analyzing the history of sewing in Hawaii and using the quilts themselves as texts, we can understand how Hawaiian quilts were able to fulfill many of the missionaries’ norms about Christian women, but also subvert aspects of the missionary belief system. Although the West gained influence in the islands, the Hawaiian quilt continued to voice the beliefs of native identity.

Keywords: quilting; Christianity; rhetoric; Native Hawaiian; gender; Indigenous identity

The Quilt Speaks

I am about 60 years old
And if you look closely you'll see that
I have the brown spots of age
These browns spots were once on the brown
Hands that lovingly shaped me into the
Beauty I am today.
There were six women: Aunty Mabel, Aunty Sara, Aunty Elsie
Aunty Emma, Aunty Api, and Aunty Nani.
They shared secrets, desires, frustrations, laughter and tears
While cutting, pinning, basting and finally sewing the little
Stiches that hold me in place
I wrap myself now around that once *hanabata* little girl that
Was always hanging around
And keep her warm with the memories of the quilting aunties.

Author's Mother, Marie Kimokeo-Goes[1]

My house is filled with quilts. A star shaped, pinwheel quilt of bold red, yellow, and black hangs on my living room wall – my first attempt, but its imperfections are hardly visible. A sweet, crib quilt in gingham pastels with boxy lions, pandas, and giraffes is laid out in the guest room. From my paternal grandmother, it was my introduction to my Midwestern family years before I was ever able to visit them. But the dominant quilt in my life comes from a woman I never met, who passed nearly a generation before I was born. My great-grandmother's quilt is overwhelming in detail and in size – more than 7 feet each in each direction (just over two meters), 50 square feet total. Although mute in colour (pale yellow on cream), its intricate nature-based pattern is appliquéd with incredibly uniformity, and stitches echo out from the centre a mere 3/8 inches apart from one another. Its image is abstract, perhaps likening to Hawaiian honey thistle, and it is framed by looped boughs of angular leaves. Although the edges are frayed and a handful of dark spots mar its surface, it remains solid, yet elegant, and impressive – like my mother. She guesses it was made in the 1950s, family members' hands stitching together the massive pieces laid out on my great grandfather's sitting room floor (a luxury today's generation lacks as many Native Hawaiians struggle to find housing). However, when New England missionaries first introduced fabric and formal sewing to Hawaii, they had other plans.

Many visitors look around at the lush mountains, fragrant flowers, and white sand beaches of Hawaii and think that the islands could be Eden; for the missionaries this did not excuse the lack of clothing. The introduction of clothing was an early priority. Missionaries wanted to clothe the naked, and hoped that sewing would introduce other “civilized” qualities such as a strong work-ethic, and industriousness. They also hoped it would put a stop to idle/idol hands. Sewing could help turn the “savages” into appropriate Christians. Sewing could also teach appropriate notions of gender, as these skills were considered “domestic” and related to the private sphere, unlike previous indigenous crafts. However, with the introduction of fabric, thread, and metal needles, unexpected skills developed. By the 1860s Native Hawaiians had adopted and adapted quilting.[2] The Hawaiian use of sewing fulfilled many of the missionaries’ goals; yet quilting also continued to represent values of a “heathen” past. Combining beauty and representing tradition, Hawaiian quilting became an important skill for native women.

Contemporary Cultural Significance

Although they were introduced by missionaries, quilts in Hawaii were never representative of missionary values alone; quilts speak with many voices. Initially, the Hawaiian quilt may seem an unlikely depository for cultural and gendered meaning, however, quilts represent ancient patterns, traditional spiritual views, and contemporary political beliefs.[3] Even mainland society is beginning to understand the importance of quilting to preserving culture. Notably, in 1985 a native Hawaiian quiltmaker, Melaii Kalama, was honored with a National Heritage Fellowship.[4]

Since the 1970s Hawaii has seen a cultural renaissance, which has re-embraced the native language, native dances, and native arts. Wrapped within these cultural priorities are political concerns. Native Hawaiians are increasingly vocal regarding their concerns about the illegal actions committed by the United States to colonize Hawaii, and about the need for greater government help in addressing the prevalent poverty and health problems among many native Hawaiians.[5] Political independence seems to demand cultural distinction. As Joshua Bell puts it: “Tied into the new political activism undertaken by Hawaiians is a reassertion of aspects of their cultural heritage, such as language, voyaging and artistic practices. Cultural traditions have become new sources of pride, markers of difference and a means by which to negotiation spaces for Hawaiian identity within multicultural society.”[6] The native population pursues greater practice of arts that were sometimes challenged by relations with the West, quilting among them.

Tourism has also made those outside the islands aware of the beauty of Hawaiian quilts. Indeed, much of their renewed popularity in the last forty years has been due to the

efforts of hotels that commission quilters and hold shows in their lobbies. Although the tourist industry's support of local culture is not always a blessing, in this context it has helped revitalize a fading art. However, it can be tricky to uphold the value of the traditional quilt in the wake of trends that have both expanded the craft and created cheap imitations. Patterns and techniques were sometimes guarded secrets shared only within families. However, quilter Hannah Bakes ironically notes: "We've hung onto our quilt patterns and we've given away our land."[7]

Today, many quilters are becoming more open, taking in students and recognizing that too few Hawaiians remain and efforts need to be collaborative for Hawaiian identity to thrive. In fact, the *'Iolani* palace in Hawaii, where the queen once reigned and is now a museum, recognizes the connections between quilting, culture, and politics, and offers classes to learn how to make traditional quilts. Cultural items such as quilts also serve important functions for a diaspora population, and being able to purchase these items in major cities like Los Angeles and Seattle continue to connect people as physical boundaries expand.[8] Considering more Native Hawaiians now reside outside the islands than within, these connections are important for cultural survival. Both sides of my family quilted. While my efforts are quite limited, I engage in hand-stitching small pieces I will appliqué into a larger project, continuing arts that help me stay attached to both sides of my distant family and to women who have now passed on. Because I am mixed race, quilting seems uniquely vital for me and lets me feel a part of my mother's and my father's families' traditions, especially since each side has so little else in common.

In most ways, my incredible family heirloom resembles other traditional Hawaiian quilts. Appliquéd and two-toned, one fabric is folded into eighths, and cut into a pattern, like a snowflake. In these quilts, patterns branch out from the middle, or *piko.* Quilts are generally square, making it easier to create symmetric patterns. Darker colors tend to be laid onto lighter; the most common combination is red on white and bold, primary colors are often used in Hawaiian art. One notable difference between Hawaiian quilts and their mainland counterparts is that they use two complete pieces of fabric. Missionaries introduced Hawaiians to quilting alongside fabric, thus they did not have scraps from other projects to use. Mainland quilters often take pieces from various fabrics, cutting them into smaller pieces only to sew them back together. Without scrap fabric and with a cultural mindset that focused on seeing the world holistically, the missionaries' traditional process was foreign to native Hawaiians. And even as Hawaiians had more access to fabric scraps, their preferences for keeping fabric pieces together remained. "Quilting" specifically refers to the process by which the three layers (upper, center basting, and lower) are connected together through stitching, and both mainland and Hawaiian quilts are often made from cotton.

Many of the most valuable quilts reflect themes such as crowns, the Hawaiian seal, flags, plumes, or other items related to royalty and the Hawaiian monarchy. Hawaiian quilts were especially popular during the 1880s and 90s. This time period was marked by various political upheavals, and growing foreign control meant that themes related to Hawaiian royalty were especially valued. More common, however, is the use of natural themes, especially plants and flowers. Reflecting the lush environment, quilts contain abstracted images of lilies, *'ulu* (breadfruit tree), hibiscus, *miulana* flower (champak), plumeria, *awapuhi* (red ginger), and bird of paradise.

Today, Hawaiian quilts are considered valuable family heirlooms, beautiful craftwork, and strong investments. My purpose is not to define the artistic value of Hawaiian quilts, but to analyze what they tell us; these quilts hold remarkable histories and give powerful insights to aspects of Native Hawaiian identity. Analyzing the history of sewing in Hawaii and using the quilts themselves as texts, we can understand how Hawaiian quilts were able, both to fulfill many of the missionary's norms for Christian women, and also subvert aspects of the missionary belief system. Although the West has gained influence in the islands over aspects such as religion, politics, and culture, the Hawaiian quilt continues to voice the beliefs of native identity.

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The Quilt Speaks

To help unpack the quilt, Krista Ratcliffe offers one useful approach that focuses on "rhetorical listening." For Ratcliffe, we can approach a text and attempt to understand its persuasiveness both by what is being said, and what is being left silent. She specifically outlines the following goals for rhetorical listening:

1. Promoting an understanding of self and other
2. Proceeding within an accountability logic
3. Locating identifications across commonalities and differences
4. Analyzing claims as well as the cultural logics within which these claims function.[9]

Using this method, we can see how quilts inform us about the maker and about the medium. Ratcliffe's perspective shows us how we might identify with some aspects of a text while challenging others. Indeed, her primary goal is to remain "open" to a text, seeking to understand the ways that we agree *and* disagree with its messages. Applying Ratcliffe's methods we can see how the quilt making process speaks to various values and cultural

logics, upholding traditional values of femininity and Christianity while also challenging gender and cultural norms.

Hawaii and the West made contact with the arrival of Captain Cook in 1778. Word traveled fast, and by 1820 protestant missionaries were arriving in droves to Christianize the newly "discovered" savages. When Calvinist missionary Hiram Bingham first saw Hawaiians he stated, "[The] appearance of destitution, degradation, and barbarism, among the chattering, and almost naked savages, whose heads and feet, and much of their sunburnt, swarthy skins were bare, was appalling."[10] Bingham's comment gets right to heart of the matter – nudity was unacceptable.

Life changed quickly. Missionaries made education their top priority, and just ten years after their arrival two-fifths of the entire population was attending school.[11] Missionaries also reorganized the existing dispersed agricultural communities around schools and churches and the changes they made to indigenous life were swift and vast. By the mid eighteenth century the majority of Native Hawaiians were Christian. While missionary influence profoundly changed spiritual beliefs, education, and government, conceptions of propriety also changed artistic skills and gender norms.

The missionaries' value judgment of the naked body profoundly altered Hawaiian daily life and material culture. Clothing, and especially that of the West, was an indicator of spiritual relationships. The clothed body was believed to be closer to God. Speaking metaphorically, missionaries Green and Armstrong stationed on Maui in 1836 noted this relationship: "[The native] mind may be greatly improved, and well stored with useful knowledge, but his old habits are so inveterate that he cannot put off the filthy garments of barbarism, and clothe himself in the clean robes of civilization."[12] Susanne Küchler and Graeme Were support the more literal take, noting: "The adoption of clothing became an important sign of a person's conversion to Christianity . . . When Pacific Islanders adopted European modes of dress the missionaries thought they were taking their first steps towards accepting the teachings of the Bible."[13] Part of this introduction required conveying notions of *appropriate* attire, meaning dresses for women, slacks, shirts, suits for men. These gendered distinctions were different than many of the standards of Pacific Island cultures where dress was often reliant on social status, but not necessarily gender.[14]

Of course, clothing the natives required sewing. Although rough stitching was known by Native Hawaiians, missionaries used the quickly expanding classrooms to introduce sewing, particularly, if not exclusively, to women. The value of sewing was also worked into the value of being a good student, and a good Christian. For example, Dr. Gulick, who served most of his life as a Hawaiian missionary, was known for giving clothing, needles,

and scissors as rewards for behaviour such as regular Sabbath attendance and mastery of English.[15]

However, sewing served two other significant functions. Sewing, quilting, knitting, and weaving replaced other traditional skills considered heretical. Quilting, for example, was an important substitute for craft workers who once made masks and carved icons with religious connotations. In many Pacific Island cultures, religious idols were clothed in *kapa*. Much of Polynesia used *kapa (or tapa)* as mats, tapestries, and clothing. It was made of pounded mulberry bark (barkcloth) and although thicker and stiffer than cotton, barkcloth could be dyed, stitched, and made malleable. Christy Dwyer explains: "Making cloth from *kapa* was an extremely laborious task," that took months and the bark was, "stripped and peeled away and left to soak in streams under running water with stone weights."[16] Creating patterns, dyeing, and shaping the bark required working with the material in ways similar to quilt work. It was often sewed, with spun thread of natural fibers, bone needles, and rough stitches. *Kapa* was printed with natural dyes, and some patterns would later be found on quilts. The process was dominated by women who pounded the barkcloth together. Missionaries brought many changes that effected crafting, but traditional practices surrounding *kapa* paved the way for quilting. Quilting also replaced the craftwork that had been connected with traditional religious practices.

Sewing and quilting were also important in creating "industrious" natives. Because missionaries disapproved of hula and "heretical" craftwork, Native Hawaiians appeared to have idle time. Missionaries believed Hawaiians to be naturally lazy and slovenly and looked to fill their time with "appropriate" behavior. Creating clothing fit the need. Missionaries noted: "Kuakini, the governor of Hawaii, has lately taken up the subject of manufacturing cotton cloth; but some greater establishments mush exist before a thousandth part of the nation can ever be clothed with cotton raised and manufactured on their own soil; or employment given to an idle, dying, enervated population."[17] Other clothing options did exist, however, missionaries wanted to see Christian Native Hawaiians cast in their images, requiring them to wear cotton. It should be noted that during this time period the vast majority of the indigenous population was "dying;" the population had been decimated, not from idleness, but from the influx of Western diseases.[18]

The introduction of clothing was meant to raise the entire indigenous population to a higher level of morality. However, clothing and sewing implicated gender in different ways. Küchler and Were state: "Missionaries…managed to reinforce the association of women with the house through the introduction of technologies to produce and maintain clothing. Sewing technologies and the general care of clothing, including the washing and drying of clothes, became inseparably linked to the conversion of women who were already responsible for the

production of indigenous clothing."[19] This expanded "domestic" responsibilities; traditional clothing did not require the same care, did not require fresh water for washing, and was not associated with being completed "in the home." Femininity was redefined through the introduction of clothing that required women to take on roles that were similar to those of their Western counterparts.

Proper women's clothing had other drawbacks. Missionary dresses were heavy, complicated, and restrictive. Women's dresses reflected the life a woman was to lead: passive and in the private realm. Particularly, given the warm environment in Hawaii, these garments kept women indoors. Within just ten years of the missionaries' arrival, the royalty of Hawaii opted for garb that reflected traditional European royal wear, and they largely continued this trend throughout the monarchy's existence. The last monarch of an independent Hawaii, Queen Lili'uokalani, was always photographed in the heavy European dresses of velvet and silk and appeared clothed like any Western monarch.

One reading of the history of the introduction of clothing and sewing in Hawaii could certainly support the missionary efforts. Christian adaptation was quick and properly dressed Native Hawaiians filled the pews each Sunday. Royalty embraced a European look, and women were taught the skills of knitting, weaving, and sewing that kept them from idleness or from returning to heretical cultural practices. The cultural logic that affirmed that a good Christian woman was properly dressed and properly domestic translated itself effectively into Hawaiian life. Soon, upper level education for indigenous women helped to prepare them to be fitting missionary wives and educators, bringing these newly learned skills to other Hawaiians and to the expanding missionary efforts taking place throughout Polynesia.

However, there were slippages in the adoption of clothing and sewing in Hawaii that did not quite fulfill missionaries' goals. Pacific Islander reaction to the introduction of Western fabrics was sometimes subversive. While fabric was meant to replace native dress, which missionaries disapproved of, many Islanders continued to dress traditionally and use the fabric for creating things, notably quilts. In some cases, traditional culture trumped missionary influence. For example, in Tonga (another Polynesian nation) missionaries attempted to introduce white fabric believing this would help instil values of industriousness since one would have to work harder to keep it clean. However, white barkcloth was associated with commoners, thus chiefs continued to prefer traditional barkcloth dress, sometimes over white clothing, much to the missionaries' dismay.[20]

Styles were mixed to uphold new values while respecting tradition. In the early 1800s as missionaries were only beginning to arrive in Hawaii, Queen Kaahumanu required missionary women to adapt their high necked, long sleeved, fitted gowns to be of looser fit.

The resulting garment, *holokû*, resembled a dressing gown. Royalty in return began to copy this style, and some commoners used barkcloth rather than cotton. Even today at special occasions some Native Hawaiians opt for this garb. Importantly, the *holokû* met missionaries' basic standards, but also allowed more freedom of movement than traditional Western women's dresses. Although most styles would come into line with more standard mainland apparel, if less popular, the *holokû* remains. Hawaiians also tried to balance competing cultural demands. When King Rihoriho died in 1825, his sister, fearing to anger the Christian God, but wanting to uphold Hawaiian traditional, opted to wrap *pa'u* around her black silk gown.[21] Native Hawaiian women had worn *pa'u* (layered barkcloth wrapped around their hips in a skirt-like fashion) for centuries, and the expectations to mourn in black was new.

Quilting is perhaps the most evident example of how the introduction of cloth and sewing was adapted. Quilting was useful for missionaries to teach Native Hawaiians in order to get the feel of fabric and to learn how to stitch neatly which could be applied to sewing garments. The craft also created industriousness. Dr. Gulick, remarking on opening a missionary school in Ascension Island, tells his students of a Hawaiian quilt: "I called their attention particularly, to a large, beautiful bed-quilt, which we had hung up to decorate one end of the house, and which had been sent us by the children of Mr. Lyons congregation of Waimea, Hawaii; and I explained how that formerly the men, women and children of Hawaii were as ignorant and poverty stricken as those of Bonabe. The brilliant colors, tastefully arranged, and the neat, regular sticking, were much admired."[22] Hawaiian students were a model for other Polynesians and Gulick seemed to hope his students would soon be able to accomplish such skills and thus demonstrates their strides toward becoming civilized. Notably, the quilt he is describing seems to be that of the American style, however, by the 1860s a distinctly Hawaiian style quilt was developed.[23] Analyzing how the Hawaiian quilt adapted the skills and subverted the values put forth by the missionaries shows how quilting was largely able to uphold the cultural logic of the indigenous people.

Quilting as Empowering

Many scholars have looked at how quilting in North America has been empowering for women. Mary Rose Williams notes: "Women have used their quilts to record private and public concerns. Women have used their quilts to record historical events; pass family values, stories, and histories from one generation to the next; cast ballots; register their support for or opposition to various political policies and draw road maps to freedom."[24] Quilting tells us about social relations and by viewing the quilt as material folklore we can trace the values represented through the medium generally. Feminist scholars have pointed out that in North America quilting empowered women in part by giving them a legitimate reason to gather together. Quilting groups were sometimes specifically political. For

example, Williams argues that the *Crusade Quilt*, created by a women's temperance group in 1873 serves as protest rhetoric.[25] She explains that the quilt's sturdiness and its use of machine stitching challenged assumptions of femininity. Hardiness and technology were not seen as feminine. The quilt was also signed by the women, serving as a petition to demonstrate their beliefs. Particularly in an age when women were denied the right to vote, Williams argues that the quilt allowed for a domestic and private activity to have public relevance.

North American quilting also represents certain important values for women. Quilts often showed aesthetic beauty but balanced other values such as function. Made of scrap fabric and sometimes created "one square at a time under the harshest pioneer conditions,"[26] they also represented frugality and resourcefulness. Charlotte Robinson points out that the geometric knowledge required in quilting made the skill impressive for women who largely lacked formal schooling.[27]

The above reasons why quilting empowers women are significant, but are shaped by contexts that largely do not apply to Hawaiian quilts. Quilting empowered Native Hawaiian women, but in very different ways because of cultural dissimilarities. Concepts like dissent (represented by the temperance women's group), functionality, and resourcefulness can be connected with broader American cultural values. These values are nationally constructed. Functionality and resourcefulness are similar to the value of industry that missionaries attempted to instill in Native Hawaiians through quilting. In the mainland, quilting showed how women upheld these important American values. However, in Hawaii, upholding these values prioritized a Western viewpoint. In other words, values that were in one context empowering were in another hegemonic. Hawaiian women's quilts represented different norms. As Western and Christian influences changed and diminished, Native Hawaiians' voices in religion, politics, and culture, and women's work preserved Hawaiian identity, allowing the quilt (in this context) a rare ability to speak.

Quilting communities also existed in Hawaii, but not in the same way as in America. One factor was class differences; piecing together scrap fabric helped poorer mainland families make the most of their materials. Especially initially, only the elite in Hawaii could have afforded fabric, and its recent introduction meant scraps were uncommon. The applique work of fusing bed-sized pieces of fabric together also required space, which was a luxury. In addition, while quilting groups in the mainland often consisted of women from different families, in Hawaii quilting was generally done with extended family. As expressed above, this is how barkcloth was produced. In the mainland, patterns and quilting skills were often passed down through the family; in Hawaii, family would have been a quilter's primary, if not only, context for quilting. Robert Shaw describes that sewing for the quilter often

evoked past work completed with her mother. He states that: “These memories often became a driving force in a woman’s later quilting, as each new quilt became a means of reconnecting with her mother’s spirit.”[28]

Quilts were important in passing along memories of traditions and beliefs that had been overshadowed by Western contact. Quilter Lois Joslyn Smith learned Hawaiian quilting from her mother-in-law, and her grandmother had also been a quilter. She states: “The beginnings of Hawaiian quilts lie in the memories of women no longer here to tell us. Each island has its own legends, its own music, its own quilt patterns, named for winds, for rains, for plants. The traditions depend on memories of the children and grandchildren. Too many tales have been forgotten.”[29] Smith’s quotation helps me understand just how lucky I am to have my great grandmother’s quilt and to have some of my family’s history preserved through my mother’s memories, even as I long to ask her more about what other quilts were lost.

Even terminology shows the connection of quilts with women and motherhood. The term *piko*, the center of the quilt, uses the maternal metaphor of the navel/umbilical cord and connects it with a dominant aspect of the piece. Ester Fitzpatrick and Avil Bell write: “Images encourage embodied knowledge.”[30] *Piko* connects the quilt with life. Haunani-Kay Trask describes the term in the following way: “Throughout Polynesia, the *piko*-navel cord-is buried or secreted away after birth because of its sacred connection to life. Where the *piko* is buried once determined part of the Hawaiian identification with home, or birthplace.”[31] Quilts were often given at life confirming events, like births or wedding, and in the past some quilters choose to be buried with their work. The quilt represents life in a way that also affirms women’s role as mothers.

The greatest change that missionaries brought was, unsurprisingly, religious. However, in all the ways that Hawaiians embraced Christianity, aspects of the older belief systems lingered, and remained apparent in cultural items like quilts. As the ancient Hawaiian religious discussions were silenced and its traditions faded, quilts continue to tell the story. Quilts may have also allowed Native Hawaiians to embrace their new Christian identity while balancing some of their traditional beliefs.

Native Hawaiians, like other indigenous peoples, hold the belief that they are connected with nature. Their worldview does not assume that land, animals, and humans are distinct, unrelated categories – all things are interrelated. Trask puts it in the following way: “To love and make the land flourish is a Hawaiian value. *Āina*, one of the words for ‘land,’ means ‘that which feeds.’ *Kama’āina*, a term for native-born people, means, ‘child of the land.’”[32] The symmetry of Hawaiian quilts helps demonstrate this understanding of the

world. Hawaiians tend to view the world in opposites, night and day, light and darkness, land and water, male and female.[33] Quilts are generally balanced; both symmetric in terms of the snowflake like design and often equal in color distribution.

The themes of Hawaiian quilts, and their “echo” technique are also tied to the Native Hawaiian spiritual worldview. Themes reflect the natural world but are not concrete representations. Shaw explains that, “[Hawaiian quilters] create designs that recall natural forms and, in so doing, embody and elicit their inherent spirituality. By avoiding realism, the abstract appliqué patterns of Hawaiian quilts allow the viewer to see the real plant or animal form in his mind’s eye and connect his own understanding with (and through) the image before him.”[34] The quilt stitches further support these reflective views of nature. While mainland quilters tend to quilt in the ditch of the fabric, or in patterns over the fabric pattern, Hawaiians use “echo” quilting. In this process, the stitches mimicked the outlines of the patterns, expanding outward in multiple rows, often only three-eighths of an inch apart.[35]

Beliefs, however, also limited certain themes. Contemporary quilter Mary Haunani Cesar states that: “You don’t see animals in old Hawaiian quilts. They’re *kapu* (forbidden). My grandmother told me animals are too restless to be held still on a quilt. If you sleep under animals they will give you a restless night.”[36] Cesar shows how many spiritual beliefs are passed down through quilts. Her knowledge of tradition comes through her grandmother and in this sense her grandmother is not only the source of skill, but of understandings of the Native Hawaiian worldview. This double responsibility puts women in an important role as tradition-keepers.

Several specific quilts document traditional religious beliefs as well. For example, some suggested imagery once used in carving of the gods. One particular quilt from 1930, in stark dark blue and white, used a simplistic floral image which examined from afar is reminiscent of lost religious Hawaiian masks. Adrienne L. Kaeppler writes of this quilt: “Images became things of the heathen past and knowledge of them was repressed by Christianized Hawaiians.”[37]

Other quilts combined traditional stories with Christian motifs. One such example is a quilt from the late nineteenth century titled *Na Kihapai Nani Lue’ole O Edena A Me Elenale*, the beautiful unequal gardens of Eden and Elenale. The right side of the quilt shows Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The left side depicts the myth of Elenale and Leinaala. Their love story was the first published literary work in Hawaii and tells of supernatural Elenale who grew up in a magic garden, fell in love with the earthly princess Leinaala and rescued her from a witch that held her captive. The image of Leinaala is modeled after a photograph of Queen Emma, showing that the quilt weaves myth with appreciation of Hawaiian royalty.

The image of Elenale possibly represents King Kamehameha IV. The quilt is also unique because it is pictorial – both Hawaiian and mainland quilts seldom attempted realistic resemblances of people (rather than patterns). In some ways, the quilt is like the Chilean *arpilleras* tapestries, crafted in the late twentieth century that protested government action and were "works of art describing historical circumstances illustrated in fabric."[38] This rare pictorial quilt reflected Western dominant religious ideas and yet prioritized indigenous monarchs. The Hawaiian quilt embraces various cultural logics and stitches them together in a way that demonstrates Hawaiians' hybrid identities.

Queen Lili'uokalani, the last monarch of the independent Hawaiian nation, demonstrates hybrid identity as well. The Queen was a skilled quilter and crafted a beautiful piece in protest when arrested by American forces. Her predecessor had amended the constitution to allow for greater foreign influence and when Queen Lili'uokalani met with her cabinet to draft a new constitution, a group of men representing American business interests conspired to overthrow the monarchy. Because of the presence of a U.S. battleship and troops, supposedly stationed to protect American lives and property, the queen yielded. In 1895, Hawaiian citizens gathered arms and attempted to mount an effort to force the provisional government to step down – their plans were discovered. Although evidence seemed to indicate that she was not involved, the Provisional government (protected by American troops) tried Queen Lili'uokalani and found her guilty of treason. She served five months of her sentence and during this time began the quilt. In 1898, Hawaii was officially annexed.

The queen was imprisoned with her assistants in 1895 and together they began the quilt while under house arrest. It contains embroidery that documents the dates of the Queen's birth, accession, dethronement, arrest, abdication, the names of the queen's supporters, and the names of the women who assisted with the quilt. The quilt included the phrase: "Imprisoned at 'Iolani Palace. We began this quilt there." Embroidered Hawaiian flags appear at each corner of the center square. The quilt does not represent the traditional Hawaiian style, but rather, a popular type during that time – the "crazy" quilt, and is composed of hundreds of small scraps of elegant fabric neatly stitched together with golden thread. Queen Lili'uokalani was a devout Christian, and was always photographed in European regalia. Influenced by Western values, perhaps it is unsurprising that her quilting did not represent the traditional Hawaiian style. Ratcliff, however, shows us that texts can speak to multiple values, and Lili'uokalani's quilt also made a powerful political statement that challenged the authority of the Western presence in the islands. Dwyer notes: "Faded but arrested from total annihilation, The Queen's Quilt serves as an enduring historical and cultural metaphor for a sovereign nation that was struggling to maintain its cultural identity against all odds."[39]

In many ways, Queen Lili'uokalani's quilt reflects the type of protest rhetoric which Williams discusses in relation to the *Crusade Quilt* by the women's temperance group. Williams's analysis was that the quilt documented sentiments of women who lacked public representation and public voice.[40] Queen Lili'uokalani was in a similar position. Dethroned and forced to abdicate to save the lives of the citizens that had rebelled against the provisional government, her quilt documented her struggle and her supporters. Unsure of the length of her prison sentence and unsure of the ultimate punishment of her supporters (hanging was a possibility), the quilt spoke the names and the dates important to independent Hawaii. The embroidered flags were also symbolic; the Hawaiian flag was immediately lowered when the queen stepped down. The quilt became an important relic of a lost political identity.

During this time, quilts often reflected subversive political beliefs. In addition to Queen Lili'uokalani's quilt, Hawaiian flag quilts were created to prove allegiance to the monarchy and independent Hawaii. Under the Provisional government, and continuing when Hawaii was first annexed, flying the Hawaiian flag was illegal. Quilters responded by making quilts that resembled Hawaiian flags. In one's home, loyalty was proven, even when public symbols were illegal. Rita Ariyoshi writes: "When the Hawaiian monarchy was overthrown by American settlers in 1893 and flying the flag became an act of treason, families quilted flags onto canopies of their four-poster beds so they could sleep under their beloved flag and hold it as a place of honor above their heads."[41] Sometimes these quilts were two sided and if they were used as a bedspread this meant that they could be flipped if certain guests were coming. Now, these quilts are considered very valuable both to collectors and to families who can prove their ancestors' allegiance to Queen Lili'uokalani. Women's crafts were important as political protest.

The name given to most Hawaiian flag quilts is *Ku'u Hae Aloha,* which means my beloved flag or lost beloved flag. The outside border of the quilt represents the Hawaiian flag and the center the Hawaiian shield. They contain eight stars, representing the eight major Hawaiian Islands. Although the flag quilts use echo stitching and are square, in many ways, like Queen Lili'uokalani's quilt, they reflect styles more popular in Western quilts. However, these quilts rejected American influence and American policy that attempted to deny the symbol of the independent Hawaiian monarchy. Thus, even though stylistically *Ku'u Hae Aloha* quilts embraced the cultural logic of the United States, thematically they challenged that authority.

Conclusion

While arts besides quilting are also important to understanding Native Hawaiian culture, it is a beginning, and quilting shows how political battles are often tied to cultural ones. Ratcliffe's rhetorical vision allows us to understand how missionary priorities for clothing and sewing still allowed for native identity even while missionaries were often successfully reshaping religious and gender norms. Coming to terms with Hawaiian history and the effects of Western influence requires a nuanced reading that refuses to see changes in culture as a zero-sum game. Seeing quilting as empowering is important to break apart these lessons, but doing so also requires understanding that dissimilar national and cultural backgrounds will lead to different conclusions. Importantly, while Native Hawaiians attempt to bring their voices to the religious, cultural, and political spaces where they have long been silent, quilting is helping to create resonance.

My home is small, but filling it with quilts and fabric with colorful Hawaiian patterns harkening back to my ancestors' *kapa*, keeps me grounded. I do not have my mother's memories of quilting aunties, and indeed she may be the only one of her sisters who had much skill in sewing. Still, quilting allows for my "engaging of matter and meaning, past and future."[42] My mother has twice gifted me a sewing machine, and while my craftwork is far from traditional, the missionary skills of sewing and quilting and my indigenous undertones remain.

Acknowledgements

Earlier versions of the project were presented at the International Communication Association Conference and the National Communication Association Conference in 2007. The author would like to thank her 2018 American Public Discourse students at Willamette University for their feedback on a draft of this project and for the generous feedback of the reviewers of this journal. The author would also like to thank her mother for sharing her quilts and her stories.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Personal correspondence, unpublished poem. Originally written around 1986, revised 2006. The author is my mother. *Hanabata* is Hawaiian Pigeon referring to childhood. The term comes from combining the Japanese word "hana" meaning nose and the English bata-butter, thus meaning the runny-nose days of childhood.

[2] By the term "Native Hawaiian" I mean those people who can claim ancestry to the indigenous people who lived on the islands before contact with Captain Cook (and thereby the West) in 1778.

[3] Although the aesthetic is quite different, quilting practices in the Cook Islands also captured Polynesian values and culture. See, for example, Suzanne P. MacAulay "Tivaevae: Local Aesthetics and Cook Islands Quilts" *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings* (2000): 409-419.

[4] Marsha MacDowell and Margaret Wood, "Sewing it Together: Native American and Hawaiian Quilting Traditions," *Akwe:kon Journal* 11, Fall/Winter (1994): 109.

[5] See Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

[6] Joshua Bell, "A New Hale for the Nation: The Center for Hawaiian Studies, Mānoa Campus, University of Hawai'i," in *Pacific Art: Persistence, Change and Meaning*, ed. Anita Herle, Nick Stanley, Karen Stevenson, and Robert Welsch (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 114.

[7] Hannah Baker as quoted in Reiko and Woodard, *Hawaiian Quilts: Tradition and Transition* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 16.

[8] See Susanne Küchler and Graeme Were, *Pacific Patterns* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2005).

[9] Krista Ratcliffe, *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 26.

[10] Hiram Bingham, A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands (1847, reprint, Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1981) 81.

[11] Norman Meller, "Missionaries to Hawaii: Shapers of the Islands' Government," *The Western Political Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1958): 788-799.

[12] Green and Armstrong, "Report of the Station at Wailuku," *The Missionary Herald* 32, no. 10 (October 1836): 389.

[13] Küchler and Were, *Pacific Patterns*, 42.

[14] Missionary influence throughout the Pacific Islands was enormous and interwove with local customs differently according to each culture and each set of missionaries. Although my focus is Hawaii, much of the general experience, particularly with other Polynesian cultures such as Tonga, has strong parallels.

[15] Dr. Gulick reports giving such rewards in his missionary work on Ascension Island and discusses how his students sewing skills would soon match those of Native Hawaiians. Most of his life he served in Hawaii. Gulick, "Journal of Dr. Gulick," *The Missionary Herald* 50 (July 1854): 7

[16] Christy Dwyer "Queen Lili'uokalani's Imprisonment Quilt: Indomitable Spirits in Protest Cloth," *Femspec* 9, no. 2 (2008): 10.

[17] "General Letter for the Mission, Dated June 20, 1838," *The Missionary Herald* 35, no. 4 (April 1839): 146.

[18] For a more complete discussions of precontact populations and the effects of Western disease, see David Stannard, *Before the Horror: The Population of Hawaii on the Eve of Western Contact* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).

[19] Küchler and Were, *Pacific Patterns,* 42.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] See "Sandwich Islands," *The Missionary Herald*, 22 (March 1826): 3.

[22] Gulick, "Journal of Dr. Gulick."

[23] For the purposes of this paper, I will be looking at qualities that tend to distinguish the piece as a Hawaiian style quilt, rather than concentrating on the maker as the dominant criterion. Certainly, traditionally these quilts were made by Native Hawaiians, but sometimes in the past, and often today, those who make Hawaiian quilts are not ancestrally Hawaiian. Because the quilt style was initially developed by Native Hawaiians and reflected the cultural and spiritual beliefs of the islanders, they continue to hold significance to native identity.

[24] Mary Rose Williams, "A Reconceptualization of Protest Rhetoric: Women's Quilts as Rhetorical Forms," *Women's Studies in Communication* 17, no. 2 (1994): 21.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Charlotte Robinson, *The Artist and The Quilt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984), 10.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Robert Shaw, *Hawaiian Quilt Masterpieces* (Fairfield, CT Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 1996), 66.

[29] Lois Josyln Smith, as quoted in Shaw, *Hawaiian Quilt Masterpieces*, 88.

[30] Ester Fitzpatrick and Avil Bell “Summoning up the Ghost with Needle and Thread” *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 5, no. 2 (2016): 11.

[31] Haunani-Kay Trask, *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (Corvallis: Calyx Books, 1994), 81.

[32] Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 141.

[33] The choices of opposites are not mine, but given by Martha Beckwith as quoted in Shaw, *Hawaiian Quilt Masterpieces*, 74.

[34] *Ibid.*, 15.

[35] One exception is the turtle shell pattern, which consisted of interlacing semi-circles and was quilted over the pattern.

[36] Mary Haunani Cesar, as quoted in Reiko Brandon and Loretta Woodard *Hawaiian Quilts*, 91-92.

[37] Adrienne L. Kaeppler, “A Survey of Polynesian Art,” in *Exploring the Visual Art of Oceania*, ed. Sidney M. Mead (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979), 180.

[38] Marjorie Agosin, Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love: The Arpillera Movement in Chile (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 19.

[39] Dwyer “Queen Lili’uokalani Imprisonment Quilt,” 3.

[40] Williams, “A Reconceptualization of Protest Rhetoric,” 21.

[41] Rita Ariyoshi, “Shopping: Quilts Stitches in Time Hawaiian Quilts Get a New Airing as a New Generation Discovers Their Special Beauty,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 6 1994.

[42] Paraphrasing Karen Barad in Fitzpatrick and Bell “Summoning up the Ghost with Needle and Thread,” 7.