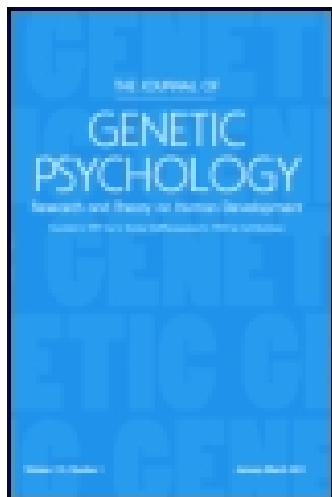


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EARLY EDUCATION IN HAWAII.

By W. B. ELKIN, Honolulu.

Formal education in Hawaii began in 1820. In 1819 ere the missionary's voice had been heard in the land, the Hawaiian people, led by Keopuolani, the queen mother, and Kaahumanu, the queen regent, broke the tabus, abolished idolatry, burned the idols, and demolished the heathen temples. It is a matter of much interest that just as, in the Garden of Eden, the tabu was first violated by Eve, in the pursuit of knowledge, so on the Hawaiian Islands a religious and social revolution, the most singular in all history, was effected by women.

In 1820, when the first missionaries arrived, they found a people practically without religion. The missionaries were not at once allowed to land, as it was a custom among the people that no foreigners should live on the islands without the consent of the king and chiefs. These latter refused to give their consent, lest in course of time the missionaries should interfere with affairs of government, or dispossess the natives of their land,¹ fears that were only too well grounded, as later events proved. When the missionaries suggested that some of them should disembark at the port of Honolulu, the king significantly remarked:² "White men all prefer Oahu. I think the Americans would like to have that island." After much negotiation, and after waiting for nearly a fortnight, the missionaries received permission to remain on the island for one year, on condition of good behavior. Before the end of the year, however, they were not only invited to remain permanently, but were asked to send to America for more teachers. After landing, they straightway began to teach and to preach.

The history of education in the Hawaiian islands falls, roughly speaking, into four periods, and each period had its own distinctive class of schools. These were as follows: (1) Schools for the chiefs, 1820-25; (2) schools for the common people, 1825-35; (3) boarding schools for boys and girls,

¹Anderson: *The Hawaiian Islands*, pp. 50, 339; Jarves: *History of the Hawaiian or Sandwich Islands*, p. 221; Dibble: *History of the Sandwich Islands*, pp. 160-162.

²Bingham: *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands*, p. 89.

1836-46; and (4) public schools, from 1846 to the present time. It is the object of this paper to give a brief account of the first three classes of schools.

1. The Schools for the Chiefs. The first contingent of missionaries established four stations, two on Hawaii, one on Oahu, and one on Kauai, and they instituted a school at each station. When reinforcements arrived, in 1823, a few additional stations and schools were established. These schools were attended by the chiefs, some of their retainers, and the children of a few foreign residents. The chiefs would not have allowed the common people to attend, even had there been accommodation. They said that they did not know whether or not education was a good thing. If it was good, they themselves should have it first; and if it were not good, it should not be given to the common people.

The members of the royal family and the nobles were exceedingly anxious to learn. Books and slates were substituted for musical instruments and hula dancing. It became customary for the chiefs and chiefesses to carry their slates about with them, while they took the greatest pleasure in writing, and reading what one another had written. Ellis says of Liholiho, the king;¹ "I have sat beside him at his desk sometimes from nine or ten o'clock in the morning, till nearly sunset, during which time his pen has not been out of his hand more than three-quarters of an hour, while he was at dinner." On occasion he would entertain a party of chiefs for hours together, "with accounts of different parts of the earth, describing the extensive lakes, the mountains, and mines of North and South America; the elephants and inhabitants of India; the houses, manufactures, etc., of England, with no small degree of accuracy."

The missionaries found the people of Hawaii without a written language, but "by diligent application, and the help of the elementary books in the dialects of the Society Islands and New Zealand" they soon reduced the language to writing. The first school books were portions of Scripture, Webster's spelling book, an arithmetic, and *Thoughts of the Chiefs*. But notwithstanding the great disadvantages under which the islanders labored, they made remarkable progress. Assisted by the phonetic system of spelling, some of them learned to read in a few days. Mr. and Mrs. Bingham brought a book to Kaahumanu. "They found her on her mats," says Mrs. Judd,² "stretched at full length, with a group of portly dames like herself, engaged in a game of cards, of which they were

¹*A Tour Through Hawaii*, p. 426.

²*Honolulu*, p. 15.

passionately fond. . . . The teachers waited patiently until the game was finished; they then requested the attention of her ladyship to a new paper, which they had brought her. She turned toward them and asked, 'What is it?' They gave her the little spelling-book in her own language, explaining how it could be made to talk to her, and some of the words it would speak. She listened, was deeply interested, pushed aside her cards, and was never known to resume them. . . . She was but a few days in mastering the art of reading, when she sent orders for books, to supply all her household."

2. The Schools for the Common People. When the chiefs realized, as they soon did, the value of education, they desired that the common people might share in its benefits. In 1825, Kaahumanu issued a proclamation declaring that as soon as schools are established, "all the people must learn." And in 1835 Hoapili, governor of Maui, "required all the children above four years of age, to attend school, and ordered that no man or woman, in his jurisdiction, unable to read, should have license to marry."¹ Soon after Kaahumanu's proclamation, schools were established in all parts of the islands. One instance will suffice to indicate the manner in which they were instituted.² Hoapili sent Moo, his pipe lighter, to Hawaii to establish schools in Puna. Moo opened a school in a central part of the district for all the people who could attend. Then as soon as some of the brighter pupils had learned to read, write, and solve simple problems in arithmetic, he sent them to open other schools in the surrounding villages. These teachers did likewise. And soon there was a school in every village throughout the district of Puna. At the same time a similar process was going on in every district throughout the islands. In a few years schools were established everywhere, and almost the entire adult population went to school. In 1832 there were 53,000 pupils, nearly all adults, in a population of 130,000.³

In some places the largest house in the village was taken for the school. In other places the people used the church for this purpose, or they put up a new building. These structures were ordinary grass houses. They were destitute of tables, desks, and chairs; except a few mats, they were entirely without furniture. Grass houses do not last long, and soon the roofs of many of these were so bad that in rainy weather the pupils were obliged to hold their slates vertically, in order that the descending rain might not erase the figures. But

¹ Bingham: *A Residence of Twenty-One Years*, etc., p. 474.

² Dibble: *History of the Sandwich Islands*, p. 246.

³ Anderson: *The Hawaiian Islands*, p. 254.

many of the people did not have slates or copy books on which to write. They wrote and ciphered on the floor, on sand, on stones, and on the leaves of the ti plant. In a certain school on Oahu the complete outfit consisted of "a single copy of elementary lessons in spelling and reading."¹

The teachers of these schools received no pay.² They taught either because they liked to teach, or because it was the wish of the chiefs. After a time grass houses were erected for them; they were given each a little plot of ground on which they might raise taro; and they were excused from paying the road tax, or performing the ordinary road work. They taught reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic. They could not teach any other subjects. Indeed some of them could not teach this much. There were some teachers who, when giving instruction in reading, found it necessary to hold the book in the most favorable position for themselves. This was wrong side up for the pupils. Hence it resulted that certain people, when reading, held the book wrong side up, that having been its position when they first learned.

Although the schoolhouses were poor and ill equipped, and the teachers deficient in knowledge and training, the pupils in large measure made up for all these defects by their surprising zeal and diligence. As the people had their regular work to carry on, they could not well afford to go to school for more than a few hours each day. But such was their devotion to study that in some districts they went to school at six o'clock in the morning.³ At Waimanu a youth, Wahapuu, "learned to spell and read well, or to have mastered his spelling book, in the short space of five days."⁴ A boy on Kauai came to one of the missionaries to procure a book. "Who is your teacher?" asked the missionary. "My desire to learn," he replied; "my ear to hear, my eye to see, my hands to handle; from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head I love learning."⁵ But the one study which the early Hawaiians loved above all others was mathematics. So ardent were they in the pursuit of this subject, that a common mode of school discipline was to deprive them of the pleasure of studying it.

Lastly, what was the result? In a few years the people had learned all their teachers could teach them. Then the schools of the second period began to decline. On the death of Kaa-humanu, the indomitable queen regent, in 1832, the attendance began to fall off, and in a few years the schools for adults had

¹Bingham: *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the S. I.* p. 257.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 337, 472.

³Bingham: *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the S. I.*, p. 337.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 297.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 257.

practically disappeared. But they had done their work. All the people had learned to read and write, and they had got a glimpse into the magic realm of mathematics, with its fascinating enchantments, and wonder-working power.

3. The Boarding Schools for Boys and Girls. When the Hawaiian people had acquired all the instruction that the native teachers could offer, the missionaries saw the necessity of establishing schools for the better education of teachers. And when the reaction against the Christian religion set in, after the death of Kaahumanu, the missionaries perceived the importance of having a native ministry. For this twofold object, the training of teachers, and the education of a native ministry,—as well as for the sake of higher education generally,—the boarding schools were established. A boarding school had been opened at Honolulu soon after the arrival of the missionaries, but not until the fourth decade did they become common. Boarding schools were established on Hawaii, Maui, Oahu, and Kauai. The most important of these was the Lahainaluna Seminary, which was opened in 1831.

For the first few years of its existence, the Lahainaluna Seminary represented the transition stage between the schools for the common people and the boarding schools. It was a school for adults, and they had to board themselves. Dibble,¹ the missionary historian, relates that at the General Meeting of the mission in June, 1831, "it was unanimously resolved to establish a Seminary for raising up teachers and other helpers in the missionary work." Some time after the General Meeting the site, then in a rude and barren state, was selected. There was "no schoolhouse, no apparatus and no school books properly so called; and what was more, there was no arrangement or appropriation by General Meeting to answer these demands." A shed made of poles and grass was put up to serve as a schoolhouse. "A house for the teacher and his family was constructed in the usual native way with poles and sticks and thatched with grass. With merely these preparations, the school went into operation as early as the 5th of September."

The students came from the different islands. They numbered 25 at the beginning of the year, and increased to 67 before the close. They were all adults, and many of them were married.² They had little or no means. They had to erect booths or grass huts to live in, cultivate taro and vegetable patches for food, and carry on their studies at the same time. Nor was this all. In a few weeks, under the direction of the teacher, they began the construction of a stone building, 50

¹ *History of the Sandwich Islands*, p. 305.

² Dibble: *History of the Sandwich Islands*, p. 307.

feet by 26 inside. Building stone houses was not an easy matter in those days.¹ The students carried the stones on their backs, or in their arms. The customary method of obtaining mortar was for a number of men to go out in canoes some distance from the shore and dive for coral rock. If the piece of coral was too heavy for the diver to bring to the surface, he rolled it along the bottom of the sea to shallow water near the shore, rising occasionally to take breath; or else he came to the surface, took a rope and descending tied it round the piece of rock; then coming to the surface he hauled up the coral. When the students had obtained a sufficient quantity of coral, they went to the mountains and collected fire-wood to burn it. Their wives rendered assistance, carrying in calabashes sand and water for the mortar. When the walls of the house were built the students went again to the mountains for lumber. Many of the rafters they hauled with ropes, or carried on their shoulders from east Maui, a distance of 25 or 30 miles. The schoolhouse was finished and furnished before the end of the year. Meanwhile, these Hawaiians carried on their studies, and, with the assistance of their wives, supported themselves and their families. "Rarely has a school appeared more truly interesting," says Bingham,² "than that high school, at Lahainaluna. [The students were] withdrawn a mile and a half from the town which they overlooked, laboring at their new building, and pursuing their studies, often hungry, with almost no shelter from the sun and rain, no furniture, and very little school apparatus; when they held their slates in a perpendicular position to prevent the descending showers from washing out their questions, and refused to be dismissed till their lessons were completed." These were the men who became, in due time, the teachers, preachers, lawyers, and legislators of the Hawaiian kingdom.

As time passed the missionaries became convinced that an educated class of natives was necessary to the maintenance of a progressive Christian civilization on the islands, and that the best method of obtaining this result was to establish boarding schools for boys and girls. The boys should, in course of time, not only take the place of the foreign clergy and teachers, but become an enlightened professional class; and the girls should become their suitable help-meets. Accordingly, in 1836, when the A. B. C. F. M. granted some financial and personal aid, a change was made in the organization of the Lahainaluna Seminary. The institution gradually ceased to be a self-supporting

¹ Bingham : *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the S. I.*, pp. 425, 427.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 473.

school for adults, and became a boarding school for boys. Soon afterwards, a number of boarding schools were established, notably the Preparatory School at Hilo, the Female Seminary at Wailuku, and the Family School for young chiefs at Honolulu,—the last named being maintained at public expense. Some of these schools continue to the present time.

The following is the programme for the Hilo Preparatory School, which may be taken as representative of the boarding schools for boys:¹ "The scholars rise at 5 o'clock, assemble for morning prayers at 5:15, breakfast at 6:15, labor from 7 to 8:30, attend school from 9 to 11:30, bathe, dine at 12:30, attend school from 1:30 to 4, labor from 4:30 to 5:45, sup at 6:15, attend evening prayers at 7, and extinguish their lights at 9." The exercises for the day at the Wailuku Female Seminary were as follows:² "At daylight, prayers, then one hour of light labor in the garden, breakfast, miscellaneous work; from 9 till 11 o'clock, school . . . in spinning, sewing, knitting, weaving, etc., then bathing and dinner; from 2 till 4, in the afternoon, school . . . in reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and other studies; from 4 to 5 labor in the open field with hoes and other implements for vigorous exercise, then supper and evening prayers. Wednesday afternoon is devoted to excursions and sea bathing." Such was the daily schedule for these simple children of nature, whose forefathers, for countless generations, had been accustomed to spend a large portion of their time basking in the sunshine, reclining in the shade of their palms and fruit trees, or disporting themselves in the cooling waves of the sea.

The discipline in these schools seems to have been severe, in some it was inhuman, and not a few of the reports make now painful reading. The nightmare of the detested tabu system still lingered in the restrictions of Jewish law. A pious visitor who saw the boys eat dinner at the Lahainaluna Seminary related:³ "They partook of their meal in perfect silence—rather a difficult requirement for a Hawaiian, one would suppose, but only the more necessary to be observed from their extremely loquacious habits." In the second Quarterly Report of the Boarding School at Wailuku we read:⁴ "The instructors feel that they have great occasion for gratitude to God for his special favors during the term. . . . Near the close of the term, the Holy Spirit was graciously sent down upon the seminary. Nearly all the little girls seemed to be more or less convicted of sin, of their ruined condition, and of their need of

¹Dibble: *History of the Sandwich Islands*, p. 325.

²*Ibid.*, p. 322.

³*Hawaiian Spectator*, I, p. 428.

⁴*Ibid.*, I, No. 2, p. 103.

mercy." A few weeks later nearly all the little girls were seriously ill. Five died, 12% of the total number in attendance during the year, and several others were obliged to leave school. The next year, according to Dibble, there was "much seriousness," and "considerable sickness." During the third year, "sickness made more alarming ravages than in any previous year. Five died. Twelve left on account of sickness, of whom a part died but the greater number recovered."¹ Dr. Judd, the missionary physician, was then called in. He recommended less confinement, and more exercise in the open air. Dibble characteristically remarked:² "It seemed impossible to restrain [the pupils] from rude and romping behavior and to confine them to those exercises deemed more proper for females, without serious injury to health. To require at once habits of civilization according to our notions of it, was evidently attended with great risk." Nevertheless, in 1843, the good principal of this school, evidently with pious satisfaction, wrote of these poor children:³ "So far as we know, all met to pray in little circles, every morning or evening, or both. They often arose long before the light of day, to engage in this blessed work. The taste for play seemed to vanish; and all appeared, in a greater or less degree, to feel that the salvation of their souls was the great thing to be attended to." That in some schools the health of the pupils seems to have been good is a pleasing testimony to the remarkable natural strength and vigor of the Hawaiian people.

In 1846 the Hawaiian government assumed the entire support of the common schools. And as these were modelled largely after the public schools of America an account of them need not be given here.

The result of the efforts in early education, in Hawaii, as above described, may be fairly understood from the following quotations. Rev. W. P. Alexander, in a sermon preached in the United States in 1859, said:⁴ "By a careful calculation from official documents I have come to the conclusion that as great a proportion of these islanders can read and write their own language as of any State in this Union; and the government spends a greater proportion of its revenue to educate the people than any other government in the world." And in 1860, when Mr. R. H. Dana, a lawyer from Boston, travelled in the islands he wrote:⁵ "The proportion of the inhabitants who can read and write is greater than in New England."

¹ Dibble: *History of the S. I.*, p. 321.

² *Ibid.*

³ Bingham : *Op. cit.*, p. 583.

⁴ Alexander: *Mission Life in Hawaii*, p. 175.

⁵ Anderson : *The Hawaiian Islands*, p. 99.

One now sees the islanders "going to school and public worship with more regularity than the people do at home; and the more elevated of them taking part in conducting the affairs of the constitutional monarchy under which they live."

Unfortunately for the welfare of the Hawaiians, as well as for the honor of Christian missions, the further results to be naturally expected from this bright and encouraging outlook did not materialize. In the course of a few years nearly all the early missionaries had died or retired; and nearly all their children, instead of carrying on the ministry of the word, had taken to serving tables. Since then the missionaries' children, with a few notable exceptions, have been busily engaged in exploiting the natural resources of the islands, rather than in teaching the people. It should be said, of course, that for a long time the descendants of the missionaries, in many ways, favored and helped the natives, a policy which seems to have been also for their own best interests. But it must be conceded that the interest which the missionary party now take in the natives is mainly indirect, and that generally speaking the rising generation is like the new Pharaoh who knew not Joseph.

It will be readily acknowledged that the changed attitude of the missionary party toward the natives has been, to some extent, forced upon them through stress of circumstances, in their competition with the non-missionary foreign element. It is these latter who must ever be held chiefly accountable for the ill treatment which the Hawaiians have received. And the indisputable fact remains that the foreigners, finding that the Hawaiian was a landselling and exceedingly accommodating individual, but not a sugar raising animal, resorted to China, Japan, and every other country under the sun, where there was a probability of getting cheap labor. Then the simple minded native, having weakly sold his birthright for a small mess of pottage, was left helpless on the roadside, while the grand chariot of Christian civilization sped triumphantly onward. The Hawaiian, in his native land, has been ruthlessly sacrificed to the financial interests of the all-devouring Anglo-Saxon.

But why, it may be asked, did the Hawaiians not use the light when they had received it? Why did they not, when they went to school and public worship with greater regularity than did the Americans, take an active part in the development of modern civilization? Many causes might be assigned, but the statement of two must suffice. One was the evil influence of depraved foreigners, a cause which has been universally recognized; the other was the inadequacy of the missionary education, a fact which has been universally ignored.

The diabolical criminality and shameless licentiousness of the foreign element is without parallel, and is almost beyond conception. The history of the islands teems with instances of a most revolting nature. "The extremity to which some of the foreigners pushed their point," says Stewart, in his *Private Journal*,¹ "and of the means resorted to, for its accomplishment; you may judge, from the fact, that the pupils of the first female school collected, at this place [Honolulu], by Mrs. Bingham—after being clothed, and brought, with much care and attention, to habits of neatness and propriety in their persons, and made themselves to be deeply interested in various useful instruction—were borne off, openly and forcibly by them, to become their mistresses, while the instructress herself, could answer the appeals made to her for protection, only *by her tears*."

It is now well known that a race cannot be civilized in a generation. The Hawaiians were never really educated. They indeed made a noble and supreme effort, and their progress was surprising. But the education introduced to the islands by the New England missionaries, although it might be "a system baptized by the Holy Ghost,"—as Dibble characterized it,—had one very serious defect, when imposed upon a primitive people. It was essentially based on the conception of the miraculous, rather than on the conception of natural law. It is a most significant fact, in this connection, that during all the time that the Hawaiian people were dying out, when the population decreased from 130,000 in 1832, to about 38,000 in 1900, and when the Hawaiians were distinguishing themselves in law and politics, in education and religion, only one studied medicine and became a physician. The kahunas cured and killed people by prayer and fasting, and their "brother priests," the missionaries, followed all too closely their archaic example. Their works did not keep reasonable pace with their faith. If early education in Hawaii, instead of being based upon the Hebrew bible, had been based on natural law, on industry, and on commerce, the Hawaiian people would now be far more numerous and intelligent than they are, and would possess much more property, wealth, and political power than they do.

¹ P. 159.