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# Queen Kamāmalu's Place in Hawaiian History

#### Introduction

Queen Kamāmalu's name appears over and over again in the pages of journals, letters, and histories written in her own time by people who knew her. They watch as she grows from a young woman, uncertain of her new role as the consort of the king, into a confident, competent queen determined to use her own voice to advocate for her husband and their people. True to her understanding of her duties as Kamehameha II's principal queen, she agrees to accompany him to England in search of an alliance that will secure his kingdom against encroaching Americanization. They arrive safely in London in May 1824 but tragically die of the measles before meeting George IV to arrange the alliance. The British government assigns H.M.S. Blonde under the command of Captain George Anson Lord Byron to return their bodies to Hawai'i.2 Liholiho's kingdom is devastated by grief; after a magnificent funeral, their bodies are interred on the grounds of present-day 'Iolani Palace. On October 31, 1865, their bodies are moved to the new Royal Mausoleum at Mauna 'Ala in Nu'uanu where today they lie sealed in the Kamehameha family tomb.<sup>3</sup>

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The Hawaiian Journal of History, vol. 46 (2012)

London artist John Hayter's popular 1824 drawing of Kamāmalu ensures that her face is easily recognized even today as 'the queen who died in England.' [Illustration 1] The people who recognize her face, however, know very little about her life. After her death, Kamāmalu's name is rarely mentioned by her own people in Hawaiian language accounts, even by members of the Hawaiian historical canon so aptly described by Dr. M. Puakea Nogelmeier.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, the curious reader learns nothing about Queen Kamāmalu's personality, character or queenly role from the 1860s newspaper accounts written by the two people from Dr. Nogelmeier's canon most likely to provide those details—John Papa 'Ī'ī and Samuel M. Kamakau. As the future king's childhood steward, John Papa 'Ī'ī served in Liholiho's household when Kamāmalu joined it as a small child. Nevertheless, the reader can search in vain through his 1869-1870 series of newspaper articles from Ka Nupepa Kuokoa to find some comment that brings the queen to life. Kamāmalu seems to hold little interest for 'Ī'ī, and he provides only sketchy genealogical details.<sup>5</sup> Samuel M. Kamakau surely would have had access to the knowledge necessary to describe the queen, but he disappoints as well. Although Kamakau prided himself on the thoroughness of his newspaper accounts of the Kamehameha family, now republished as Ke Kumu Aupuni and Ke Aupuni Mo'i, he, too, scarcely mentions this remarkable daughter of the great Kamehameha.6

Looking beyond 'Î'î and Kamakau into other early Hawaiian language sources is equally unproductive. *Ka Mooolelo Hawaii*, printed in 1838 to preserve Hawaiian history for the Hawaiian people, describes Liholiho in detail but only tells the reader that Kamāmalu married Liholiho, traveled to England with him, and died there. Almost as unrewarding is a digital search of the small number of newspapers within the *Ulukau* Hawaiian Electronic Library *Nupepa* collection available for digital searching. On December 29, 1858, for example, the kingdom's official Department of Public Instruction organ *Ka Hae Hawaii* printed an article about Liholiho's reign but mentioned Kamāmalu merely as one of the king's wives. Only in the January 9, 1844 edition of *Ka Nonanona* is there an interesting tidbit: the author praises Kamāmalu because she took the blind Batimea Puaaiki, an early Christian convert, into her household.

English-language historians are equally brief, beginning with Shel-



Tamenamalu, Her Majesty the Queen of the Sandwich Islands as she appeared during her visit to London in 1824. Picture drawn on stone from life by John Hayter. Courtesy of The Hawaiian Historical Society.

don Dibble in his 1843 *History of the Sandwich Islands*. <sup>10</sup> In 1847, James J. Jarves describes the queen, but he takes his information about Kamāmalu from other journalists who witnessed the events they described. <sup>11</sup> By the 20th century, when historian Ralph S. Kuykendall wrote his exhaustive three-volume history of the Hawaiian kingdom, the only details about Kamāmalu he deemed important are the facts that she accompanied Kamehameha II to England in 1824 and died there. <sup>12</sup>

Beyond these brief details, interested readers must acquire their knowledge of Kamāmalu from reports written by foreigners who knew the queen just during the last five years of her life—after she had become a married woman, and after her royal husband Liholiho had become King Kamehameha II. These foreigners—American and English missionaries and their wives, adventurers on world travels, British officials, and even ordinary Londoners—give tantalizing glimpses of the queen from their own perspectives. Piecing these different glimpses together forms a picture of Kamāmalu as a fascinating, complex, and accomplished woman who was determined to fit herself into the new order of life that events had thrust upon her after her husband became king—first by the elimination of the traditional religion and its many *kapu* restrictions, and second by the new learning the American missionaries brought.

# THE QUEEN'S EARLY LIFE

Kamāmalu began life as a privileged member of the upper strata of Hawaiian *ali'i* rankings. Kamakau gives the year of her birth as 1801 and writes that she is the eldest child of the great conqueror Kamehameha and the "wife of his heart" Kaheiheimalie (also called Kalakua). Kamakau and 'Ī'ī agree that Kamāmalu possessed the prestigious *kapu wohi* rank together with its accompanying *kapu a noho* status. *Kapu a noho* status required that others of lower rank had to squat in her presence—and even in the presence of her belongings as they passed along a roadway. As a toddler, Kamāmalu was betrothed to the sacred Liholiho, her own half-brother by her father and his highest-ranking wife, the *ni'aupi'o* chiefess from Maui named Keōpūolani. One of the few details that 'Ī'ī gives is that the young couple married when Kamāmalu was twelve years old and Liholiho was seventeen or eighteen.

Although Kamāmalu was Liholiho's first wife, he soon took four more wives.<sup>17</sup> In May 1819, the great Kamehameha died, Liholiho became king, and Kamāmalu became his "principal" queen—meaning she was foremost in standing and influence within his royal household.

Nothing else is known about her early life or her first years as a married woman. Kamāmalu no doubt lived the usual pampered life of a woman of high *ali'i* status. Women were particularly restricted by the traditional *kapu* system, unable to eat certain foods or eat in the presence of men, unable to travel freely, and unable to engage in meaningful endeavor. Enveloped by these constraining but protective *kapu*, Kamāmalu's life should have proceeded to its conclusion along a predictable, uneventful path. The fact that it did not is what makes the story of her life so interesting, and its omission from historical accounts so disappointing.

#### PERSONAL GLIMPSES

Two Frenchmen on an around-the-world expeditionary voyage provide the first recorded physical descriptions of Kamāmalu. On August 12, 1819—just three months after Liholiho became king—L'Uranie sailed into Kawaihae Bay to provision with water and foodstuffs. A resplendently-dressed Liholiho eagerly stood at quayside to greet French Captain Louis de Freycinet. The king's most important chiefs ranged themselves behind him, and his five queens grouped themselves nearby in the shade of a small shed. One of the expedition's artists, J. Alphonse Pellion, sketched the teenage Queen Kamāmalu from the waist up, showing a pleasant looking—but not pretty—young woman wearing a wrap of kapa cloth called a pa'u [sarong]. The queen is lightly tattooed across her breast and on her face, and she wears what appears to be a feather coronet atop her short-cut hair. Kamāmalu looks out at the world from Pellion's sketch with an open, direct gaze. [Illustration 2]

It is Captain de Freycinet who makes the first recorded comment about Kamāmalu's singular physical feature: the queen, he writes, is of a "great height." Indeed, Kamāmalu is at least a full head taller than her husband and taller than most of the chiefs. Ubsequent observers are equally fascinated by her size. In 1821, the Russian naval Second Lieutenant Aleksei Petrovich Lazarev calls her "a woman of



Kamahamarou, Reine favorite (Kamamalu, wife of Liholiho, Kamehameha II). Engraving, Freycinet Voyage, Historique Atlas: Livraison xxii, Paris, 1825 [–1835]. Forestier sculpt; A. Pellion delint. Courtesy of the Mark and Carol Blackburn Collection.

unusual height and size;"22 "large in her person," echoes English visitor Gilbert Mathison in June 1822;<sup>23</sup> and "tall and masculine" in appearance declares American missionary Charles Stewart in April 1823.<sup>24</sup> In 1824, when Kamāmalu and Liholiho arrive in London to meet with King George IV, Londoners are just as overwhelmed by her height. The legendary Miss Mary Berry meets the queen at a formal reception in London and gossips that the queen is "more than six feet high, and broad in proportion." Even the Honorable Frederick G. Byng, assigned by George IV's Foreign Office as escort to the king and queen, cannot resist privately commenting in a letter to a friend that "her Majesty is a whacker [British slang for "large person"] nearly six feet high." The London *Times* took a more tactful approach: although the queen is "certainly a fine full grown lady," she is "not so tall nor of so robust an appearance as has been reported."

Having focused first on her size, however, most observers move on

to admire Kamāmalu's open and pleasant nature, as well as her grace and dignity of bearing. Captain de Freycinet also commented that Kamāmalu "has a pleasant nature." Shortly after declaring her "tall and masculine," Stewart describes Kamāmalu as a well-bred woman who exhibits a queenly bearing. Mathison praises the queen's "benevolent and pleasing cast of countenance," even as he expresses hurt feelings because he thinks Kamāmalu "laughed immoderately" at his answers to some of her questions. The London Missionary Society's missionary William Ellis finds the queen distinguished by her good nature, and at all times helpful to those in distress in her husband's kingdom, whether natives or foreigners.

When offended, however, Kamāmalu could also react with a haughty, imperious air. Missionary wife Sybil Bingham tells about one such occasion when she seems to have provoked Kamāmalu by her own behavior. Kamāmalu frequently requested the mission wives to make new dresses for her from her large supply of Chinese silks and brocades, and one March day in 1822, she summoned one of the mission wives to come to the palace and receive her sewing instructions. Mrs. Bingham responded—her annoyance with the summons obvious in her telling of the story—and walked the half-mile or so over to the palace from the mission, received her instructions, and returned home.<sup>32</sup> Three days later, Mrs. Bingham unexpectedly arrived back at the palace with a partially-made garment to fit on the queen. Although Mrs. Bingham found the queen avidly engaged in betting money on a game of whist, she insisted that the queen interrupt her play to try on the garment then and there. Clearly annoyed by her seamstress' bossiness, Kamāmalu imperiously gave only a cold, civil nod to Mrs. Bingham and refused to turn her attention away from her card game. A tug of wills ensued; Mrs. Bingham persisted; Kamāmalu ignored her. Some time passed. At last,

still intent at her cards, without rising she gave me first one arm, then the other, but as the garment went on it appeared that we had not made sufficient allowance for her large shoulder, and saying, *peleka hame* (too close—cast off) she shuffled her cards, allowing me the satisfaction of knowing some alterations were needed.<sup>33</sup>

Separate reports give interesting glimpses of other aspects of her behavior and personality. Kamāmalu likes to smoke a pipe.<sup>34</sup> She

bathes in the surf with her husband and his mother.<sup>35</sup> She rides a horse and loves a good card game—particularly whist.<sup>36</sup> She enjoys taking care of business affairs. 37 She eats ali'i style while reclining with her head on a pillow, partaking of a variety of native foods with her hands. She is just as adept at eating western style, seated in a chair and using a knife and fork.<sup>38</sup> Sometimes she drinks too much.<sup>39</sup> She likes to dress her hair with a clay mixture, native style, while checking her image in a mirror. 40 Pellion sketched her wearing a pa'u [sarong] in 1819, but by 1823 she also wears western-style dresses of rich silks brought from China.41

In contrast to Sybil Bingham's story, other missionaries attest to Kamāmalu's loving and affectionate nature. Two men from the London Missionary Society, the Reverend Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet, visited Honolulu for several weeks in the spring and summer of 1822. On August 22, it was time for them to depart aboard the Mermaid to continue on their journey, but Kamāmalu missed their farewell visit to the king's house. Suddenly from the deck of the Mermaid, Tyerman and Bennet saw Kamāmalu and one attendant paddling a small canoe towards their ship. Drawing near the ship, the queen jumped from her canoe into the water and quickly climbed aboard the Mermaid. She affectionately bade the two men farewell, then jumped from deck back into the water, dexterously pulled herself into her little canoe, and quickly paddled back to shore. 42

Fifty years after it happened, American missionary wife Lucy Thurston poignantly recalls how Kamāmalu comforted her at a time when Mrs. Thurston experienced great grief. Kamāmalu, "being possessed of ample dimensions, cradled [my] head in her arms, pillowed [my] head upon her bosom, and wept over [me] tears of sympathy."43 In September 1823, William Ellis watched as Kamāmalu sat with her husband day after day at the bedside of his dying mother, Keopuolani. Although there were always servants in attendance, Kamāmalu would permit no one but the two of them to minister to Keopuolani's needs.44

### THE QUEEN FINDS HER OWN VOICE

In November, 1819, almost three months after Captain de Freycinet and the L'Uranie departed, Liholiho discarded the traditional religious *kapu* system, abandoned claims of divinity and special status for himself and all other *ali'i*, then fought and won a war to enforce these changes throughout his kingdom. No longer confined within a *kapu* enclosure or shackled by the many restrictions formerly placed upon women, Kamāmalu was free to pursue whatever activities she chose. Captain de Freycinet had described Kamāmalu as a young queen who listened but did not speak while he and Liholiho talked. As time passed, however, other foreigners offer glimpses of a young queen who has found her voice and seeks to actively participate in affairs of state.

Six months after the end of the kapu system, Kamāmalu used her new voice to speak up on a matter of state policy. An American company of missionaries sent by the ABCFM arrived at Kailua Bay from Boston, in April 1820. They sought permission from Liholiho to live in his kingdom in order to proselytize and teach. Kamāmalu spoke out to give her own opinion, publicly urging her husband to let them stay.<sup>47</sup> After several days, Liholiho did grant permission, and the immediate impact of that decision was that Liholiho and his wives enrolled in a course of English language study under the tutelage of missionaries Asa Thurston and Elisha Loomis. 48 Most of the members of the royal court were indifferent students, but Kamāmalu found that she had a natural affinity for her new studies. Furthermore, Kamāmalu refused to let her travels interfere with her study routine—even requiring teacher Elisha Loomis to join the court on a short canoe trip to Kealakekua in September 1820.49 She continued to study diligently, and by mid-1822 Kamāmalu could read and write in her own language using the Hawaiian language alphabet produced by the American missionaries in January 1822. 50 Soon she began the habit of sending almost daily notes on one subject or another to the chiefs and members of the mission family.<sup>51</sup> It was obvious to all that Kamāmalu took pleasure in her studies, continually seeking to learn more, and she liked to display her proficiency in palapala, as reading and writing came to be called. Kamāmalu enjoyed "amus[ing] herself and us," wrote Stewart in 1823, "by writing and reading both in English and in the Hawaiian tongue."52 Unlike earlier missionary reports, however, Stewart did not believe that Kamāmalu understood English, even though she had learned to pronounce and read it with tolerable accuracy.<sup>53</sup>

Englishman Gilbert Mathison gives a particularly vivid description of the queen engaged in her studies. "She showed me her performance on the slate with great eagerness; and well she might, for really the letters were by no means badly formed." Returning again on another day, Mathison writes: "She is dressed carelessly in a loose coloured chintz gown and kapa wrap, lying on the floor mats at work with her slate and spelling book, together with her attendants." Kamāmalu used broken English to convey her desire that Mathison review her writing, and she told him that the king was anxious that she should learn. 55 Even historian Samuel M. Kamakau makes a glancing reference to Kamāmalu's studies, but he inexplicably buries his comment within a passage about *ali'i* Kapi'olani. 56

There is a charming anecdote captured among the papers of the Kahn Collection at Hawai'i State Archives illustrating Kamāmalu's delight in using her writing skills. Charles Stewart encourages the queen to write a letter to a friend of his in New York, and Kamāmalu quickly composes a few lines in Hawaiian. Hiram Bingham translated her lines into English for her, and Kamāmalu copied the English translation precisely using some new red ink she had just received. "Aroha oe a Mrs. Frances Chrystie," she begins in her own language, and she signs her name "Na Kamehamaru." Copies still exist of both Kamāmalu's original, Hawaiian version and the English translation she sent to Mrs. Chrystie. Out of all the letters and notes that the queen penned, this August 14, 1823 letter is the only one still known to exist.

The contents of Kamāmalu's letter to Mrs. Chrystie are noteworthy far beyond their expression of her composition and writing skills. Kamāmalu tells Mrs. Chrystie that she now serves "the great God of you and us," and that she wishes the Hawaiian Islands soon will become "good" from knowing the word of God. Only the king, of course, could lead his subjects to Christianity, and Liholiho had announced his own conversion in June 1822. 58 Unfortunately, Liholiho's own personal behavior could prevent him from paying proper attention to religious duties. Kamāmalu stepped into the leadership breach that Liholiho often vacated and used her influential voice to insist upon holding morning and evening prayers for the household whether or not the king was present. 59 Even when criticized, the queen insists that the blind man called Batimea Puaaiki (who later became well-known as an influential Christian convert) say prayers before she took her

meals.<sup>60</sup> While in Lahaina during the period of Kēopūolani's illness in the summer of 1823, Kamāmalu continued to take the lead. Even if the evening's hula entertainment had not concluded by the usual time for prayers, Kamāmalu would arise, beckon to a missionary to follow, and lead everyone in the royal household—including Liholiho—off to prayers.<sup>61</sup> Kamāmalu wrote her letter to Mrs. Chrystie during this same Lahaina sojourn, and its contents confirm that the queen acted with the intention of using her own voice to help Christianize Liholiho's kingdom.

## KAMĀMALU AS PRINCIPAL QUEEN

Beginning with the French Captain de Freycinet, 62 every foreigner had quickly recognized Kamāmalu's preeminent position in Liholiho's household. Gilbert Mathison even goes so far as to say that Kamāmalu is known simply as the Queen because she alone is considered the king's real wife. 63 Mathison does not explain who views her as the only "real" wife, but it is well-recorded that it is Kamāmalu who is at Liholiho's side during important events. On board L'Uranie in 1819, it is Kamāmalu who sits with Liholiho and presents the royal gifts to Captain de Freycinet.<sup>64</sup> Two Russian flag ships arrive in April 1821, and it is Kamāmalu who accompanies Liholiho and his chiefs to a conference with the visiting Russians, then later accompanies the king to dinner with the Russian commodore aboard the Otkrytie. 65 When American Consul John C. Jones hosts an elaborate Fourth of July celebration dinner in 1822, it is Kamāmalu who Jones seats at his left at dinner, while Liholiho sat on his right.<sup>66</sup> Thus it is no surprise that it is Kamāmalu whom Liholiho selects as the queen who will accompany him to England in November 1823 to meet King George.

No doubt Liholiho valued the private counsel that he received from his principal queen. Certainly it is a matter of public record that Kamāmalu would not hesitate to weigh in publicly on differences of opinion between the missionaries and the king. In 1821, when Liholiho refused to cancel a hula festival that Hiram Bingham claimed was an affront to Christianity, it was Kamāmalu who stood with the king during the confrontation with Bingham while they insisted that the hula festival would go on because it was simply "play." Later in 1821, the mission wives pleaded with Kamāmalu to urge the king to per-

mit the mission to erect a wooden house—but the king had decided against it, and the queen refused to intercede.<sup>68</sup>

Kamāmalu's most important intercession occurred in October 1823, after Liholiho's behavior seemingly had spun out of control. Hearing that the missionaries are about to make their annual staffing assignments throughout the island group without regard for the needs of the king, Kamāmalu suggests a better plan: Station a missionary near the king who would instruct him and turn him away from his bad habits, then the king by his authority and influence would induce the people generally to follow his example and persevere in what she calls "the good way." The missionaries are offended by the suggestion and refuse, insisting in their own journals that it is more appropriate for them to strive for the greatest number of converts than to cater to the needs of the king. 69 There is no paper trail linking this decision to what happened next. But it cannot be overlooked that this refusal by the American missionaries may have so affronted Kamāmalu's sense of Liholiho's authority that it propelled her to support his decision to sail to England six weeks later to seek a stronger political bond with the British.

The queen's new literacy skills were just as significant as her ability to advocate on policy issues because they enabled her to create the first written record of the kingdom's tax receipts. Charles Stewart gives an elaborate description of the queen hard at work on the king's business affairs when he arrives for a welcoming reception shortly after his 1823 arrival. Clearly captivated by the scene, Stewart goes on at length. The queen sat on a sofa at the middle of a long table covered with a cloth. She had a writing desk open before her, and supervised two native secretaries, who busily recorded in a roll-book the names, resident districts, and taxes of the natives who passed before them to deposit their tax money. Although Kamāmalu left her writing desk to greet the missionary guests as they arrived, she soon excused herself to return to "the public business in which she was engaged."

Kamāmalu's competencies and skills, however, extended beyond her ability to articulate a position and manage the kingdom's finances. Like her royal husband, Kamāmalu understood how royal pomp binds ruler and subject together. The queen's first recorded opportunity to display herself with full royal ceremony arose in late April 1820. Liholiho held what would become an annual ceremonial

feast to mark the first anniversary of his father's death and his own accession, and Lucy Thurston describes how Kamāmalu proudly presented herself to the assembly. The queen wrapped herself in traditional fashion in a very long, elaborately-arranged  $pa^{i}u$  [sarong] made of kapa so voluminous that it required attendants to carry the outer folds. Mrs. Thurston particularly noted that the queen wore an exquisite yellow feather wreath in her hair and maile lei around her neck.<sup>71</sup>

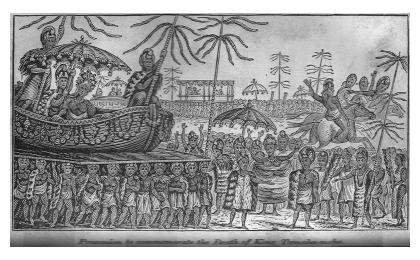
As the years passed, Kamāmalu also developed into an experienced hostess and arranged Liholiho's ceremonial affairs with great competence. She became as comfortable with westernized dress and manners as she was with the trappings of Hawaiian royalty. On some ceremonial occasions, Liholiho's addiction to alcohol marred his own noble bearing, but Kamāmalu's good manners and dignity charmed both the foreign community and the Hawaiian community and sustained the image of a stable government.

Two official programs from the 1823 commemorative festivities demonstrate the queen's ability to appeal to either culture and maintain the dignity of an event despite Liholiho's failings. At the first event, the king's April 25 commemorative feast for guests drawn principally from the foreign community, Kamāmalu planned Liholiho's elaborate, formal dinner with traditional ceremonial details. More than 5,000 of their subjects crowded the perimeter of the royal tent to glimpse their ali'i in all of their western-style panoply. Groups of natives carried in stylized presentations of taxes and tribute for the king. The five queens selected black as the color of choice for the occasion, and Kamāmalu wore a western-style black satin dress ornamented with gold lace. She also acted as mistress of ceremonies. At one point during the festivities, Kamāmalu noticed several American seamen standing outside the dining area, and she ordered servants to bring them refreshments. Even though a drunken Liholiho abruptly retired from the table before the end of the dinner, Kamāmalu's capable, unflappable presence carried the program through to a dignified conclusion.72

The second event occurred just three weeks later. It was a dramatically different sort of event designed to appeal to native sensibilities—a spectacular parade through the streets of Honolulu village by the royal family to mark the end of that year's commemorative festivities. Led by Kamāmalu, the other four queens and Liholiho's younger

brother and sister displayed themselves to their subjects in great show. Each queen rode on a separate parade float elaborately decorated with traditional featherwork splendor. Kauikeaouli and Nahi'ena'ena (the king's younger siblings) rode together. Kamāmalu presented herself to her subjects wearing a scarlet *pa'u* and a coronet of feathers while carried aloft in an elegantly decorated whale boat. Two high-ranking chiefs (Kalanimoku and Na'ihe) attended her. [Illustration 3] Again, Liholiho disgraced himself by parading in drunken dishabille. The king's shameful behavior, however, did not dampen the enthusiasm of the crowds of natives who thronged around the other parade floats, cheering their *ali'i* and occasionally breaking into song and hula.<sup>73</sup>

Later, in London in the spring of 1824, the London *Times* would celebrate Kamāmalu's conformance to "the English mode of dress" and compliment her noble manners.<sup>74</sup> The sounds and smells of a large metropolis, and the manners, dress and speech of Londoners must have caused considerable cultural shock for the royal suite when they arrived in England. George IV's refusal to receive them immediately also distressed the king and queen.<sup>75</sup> They were heartened, however, by the enthusiastic welcome they received from London society as they ventured out under the protective arm of their official British



"Procession to commemorate the death of King Tamaha-meha". 1823 woodcut from the Rev. Ephraim Eveleth's *History of the Sandwich Islands*, 1829. Courtesy of the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society.

escort, the Honorable Frederick G. Byng. Despite her lack of English language skills, Kamāmalu bravely mixed with the titled and the famous at several London events, always behaving with great dignity.<sup>76</sup>

From George IV's own royal box at Covent Garden Theater on June 1, Kamāmalu stood with the king while they bowed and waved in response to the plaudits of the other theater-goers. 77 On June 8, Kamāmalu and Liholiho sat in another of George IV's royal boxes at the King's Theater. That night Kamāmalu wore what *Pierce Egan's Life in London* called a "beautiful white satin dress" and a wreath of flowers in her hair. Several English dukes, duchesses and royal princesses sat in nearby boxes, and *Pierce Egan* noted that Kamāmalu saluted them with "a grace by no means unbecoming royalty." No one who knew her in her own kingdom would be surprised by that assessment.

### Kamāmalu's special charge

Unlike westerners, Hawaiian *ali'i* practiced polygamy, married close relatives, and moved in and out of marital relationships easily. None of Liholiho's five wives bore him children; but if they had, his children would have been raised in his large, extended family group. Lucy Thurston gives a glimpse of marital harmony in the royal household in a story she tells about her first days at Kailua in April 1820. The king had not yet granted permission for the Americans to stay, and some of the mission group called on the king to press their case. They found Liholiho at dinner with his five wives. At the end of the meal, Mrs. Thurston writes, four of the wives "with apparent sisterly affection and great pleasure" began a game of cards while one wife remained with the king to attend to his every need.<sup>79</sup>

Being the principal queen, however, did not guarantee that Kamāmalu would be her husband's "favorite" wife, meaning the wife whose company he preferred above the others. Indeed, at least two western observers speculate that Kamāmalu's younger, prettier sister Kīna'u is Liholiho's favorite wife, not Kamāmalu. French artist Jacques Arago, who traveled with de Freycinet in 1819, spends time teaching Kīna'u his card tricks and becomes convinced that Liholiho prefers the petite, playful, flirty Kīna'u to his other wives. Three years later, Englishman Gilbert Mathison observes Liholiho and Kīna'u together and is equally certain that Kīna'u is the king's "favorite," even though

Kamāmalu is the "principal" queen.<sup>81</sup> There is no other speculation that Liholiho preferred Kīna'u over his other wives, however, and there is clear evidence that he held Kamāmalu in highest esteem.

The official "Journal of the Missionaries" suggests that Kamāmalu herself may have wondered at one point about her place in Liholiho's affections. During the time that the mission's leaders pressed their case for permission to remain in his kingdom, Liholiho learned from Hawaiian convert Thomas Hopu that the missionaries did not tolerate incest or polygamy.<sup>82</sup> Unaware of this, Kamāmalu strongly urged Liholiho to allow the missionaries to remain. A missionary watched while Liholiho teased Kamāmalu, telling her in a pleasant but firm tone that if he did so, he would be restricted to one wife, and that one wife would not be she. "As a gentle reproof," reads the mission's journal, Kamāmalu "arose from the mat on which they were reclining, and attempted to leave him; but he detained her, and turned off the subject playfully."83

From time to time, Liholiho would spend several days apart with just one of his wives. It was on such an occasion that Charles Stewart provides another of his well-drawn pictures of Kamāmalu, comfortably secure in her position as the central figure who managed the family affairs of the royal court. Liholiho had summoned all of the senior ali'i to Lahaina to attend his mother, Keopuolani, as she lay dying. Most of the ali'i arrived at Lahaina on August 31 only to find that Liholiho had gone to Wailuku in central Maui with Kīna'u. Stewart's admiration for Kamāmalu is evident as he describes how she first discharges her responsibilities as the competent, efficient hostess, then turns to her duties as the faithful, loving wife. After making all the food and lodging arrangements for the new arrivals, Kamāmalu sat apart from the others at her writing desk in the sand "preparing a letter, by the light of the torches held by several servants, to be sent express to the king, now on the windward side of Maui," to tell him that the ali'i and his principal advisors Ka'ahumanu and Kalanimoku had arrived.84

Three months later, Queen Kamāmalu's greatest moment came as she prepared to follow her husband out to the ship which would carry them to England. Hiram Bingham watched in the early afternoon of November 27, 1823 as the queen stood alone at the stone quay near the boats. Thousands of her subjects thronged the shore, wailing and

weeping and begging her not to leave. The queen looked around with her usual open countenance, then revealed her own inner pain at departure as she addressed a farewell to her country and her people in tender, plaintive tones:

O skies, O plains, O mountains, and oceans
O guardians and people, kind affection for you all.
Farewell to thee, the soil,
O country, for which my father suffered; alas for thee!

With an abrupt shift, Kamāmalu next addressed Kamehameha the Great as she rhetorically explained to the crowd that she was bound by her promise to her father to accompany her husband wherever he may choose to go:

We both forsake the object of thy toil. I go according to thy command: Never will I disregard thy voice. I travel with thy dying charge, Which thou didst address to me.<sup>85</sup>

With that, Kamāmalu stepped into her canoe and departed the kingdom.

Kamāmalu's poetic address deeply impressed Hiram Bingham. Indeed, the spontaneous eloquence of Kamāmalu's oratory is unmatched in the annals of Hawaiian royal history before or since she uttered it, and her words acquire an added poignancy given the fate that awaited the king and queen in England. Bingham's animus towards Liholiho does not prevent him from heaping praise on this "affectionate, filial, courteous, [and] patriotic" queen, but Bingham pointedly prefers to remember Kamāmalu not as a faithful wife, but as a faithful daughter.<sup>86</sup>

As is well-known, after a lengthy ocean journey and a visit of several days to Rio de Janeiro, the king and queen and their royal suite arrived in London on May 18, 1824.<sup>87</sup> Governor of Oʻahu Boki and his wife, Liliha, chiefs Kekūanāoa and Kapihe, as well as several servants and interpreter John Rives (James Kanehoa Young having been left behind in Rio de Janeiro) comprise their suite.<sup>88</sup> The British government quickly took Liholiho's affairs in hand, and the royal suite

visited the sights of London while they waited for George IV to grant them an audience.

Trouble struck on June 10. A servant, Manuia, came down with the measles. Soon all of them were ill. Most rallied, but by July 6, the queen's lungs had become seriously affected, and she was gravely ill. <sup>89</sup> Two days later, it became clear to all that the queen's death was near. Mary Graham's 1826 account in *Voyage of H.M.S. Blonde to the Sandwich Islands* describes the royal couple's emotions at their last meeting:

On the 8th, no hope remaining of the queen's recovery, her husband was apprised of her danger. He caused himself to be immediately placed in his arm-chair and wheeled to her apartment; when, being lifted upon her bed and placed by her side, he embraced her affectionately, and they both wept bitterly. He then dismissed the attendants, and they remained for some time alone together . . . . At five o'clock he desired to be conveyed to his own bed, where he lay without speaking, and the queen died about an hour after he left her; that is, about six o'clock in the evening of the 8th July,1824.90

In the privacy of Kamāmalu's room at Osborne's Hotel in the Adelphi area of central London, Liliha dressed her queen's body in their customary manner. She unclothed Kamāmalu's body to the waist, left her ankles and feet bare, and dressed her queen's hair with wreaths of flowers. When Liliha had finished, the king asked that Kamāmalu's body be brought to him in his own room and laid on a small bed near him. Again, Mrs. Graham tells the poignant story best:

. . . that being done, he sat up looking at it, but neither speaking nor weeping. The medical attendants observed, that the state of Rihoriho was such as to render it highly improper to keep the queen's body near him, and it was therefore proposed to him to allow it to be taken away; but he sat silent, and answered no one, only by gestures showing that he forbade its removal. At length, after much persuasion, and then leaving him to himself for a time, he suddenly made signs that it might be taken away; which was accordingly done, and the queen was again placed on her own bed. 92

Liholiho asked the Honorable Frederick G. Byng to arrange that Kamāmalu's body be preserved and deposited in some church until he had recovered himself and was able to leave the country and carry her home. <sup>93</sup> Accordingly, Byng arranged that the queen's body be placed in the vault at nearby St. Martin's in the Fields, and he ordered a splendid coffin. Now came another poignant moment. After the queen's body had been embalmed by the royal surgeons and was placed in its leaden inner coffin, Liholiho handed Kekūanāoa his prized talisman—two teeth from the body of Kamehameha the Great—with orders to place them in Kamāmalu's coffin. <sup>94</sup> Surely the king intended this gift of his prized possessions as a way to express his great love for Kamāmalu. Then the coffin lid was soldered shut. At the lying in state, Liholiho ordered that the royal suite position their royal feather cloaks and *kahili* [feather standards] around the room. Someone placed Kamāmalu's exquisite yellow feather coronet—probably the same one Lucy Thurston had admired at Kailua in April 1820—on the lid, at the head of her coffin. <sup>95</sup>

Shortly before she fell ill, an unknown artist produced a drawing from life of "Tamehamalu, Queen of the Sandwich Islands" printed by Londoner Mr. J. Dawson in June 1824. Her head is turned to one side; and she wears an off-the-shoulder gown and earrings-but not the diamond earrings that the emperor of Brazil had given her on her way to England. <sup>96</sup> Her hair—short at the sides and left long at the back—is arranged in close curls, "French style." By 1824, her somewhat plain face has acquired character and determination, and exhibits a bit of wistfulness. This artist does not draw in the tattoos across her breast and face that A. J. Pellion depicted in his 1819 sketch, and neither does he turn Kamāmalu into a pretty, stylishly-dressed English lady as artist John Hayter did. The caption on this print tells its own story, declaring that it is "from a drawing made by the express desire of her Majesty, to H. M. the King of the Sandwich Islands." Indeed, it is "a correct likeness," affirm both Governor Boki and John Rives by their signatures on the face of the print.<sup>97</sup> [Illustration 4] Taken together, these assertions establish this drawing as the most accurate depiction of Kamāmalu extant today.

Within days, Liholiho also died. The British government assigned Captain George Anson Lord Byron to carry the bodies of Kamehameha II and Queen Kamāmalu back to their own kingdom aboard *H.M.S. Blonde.*<sup>98</sup> Liholiho's kingly accomplishments and relationship with Britain are soon obscured by the government's turn towards



Entitled Tamehamalu, Queen of the Sandwich Islands, aged 22 years, from a drawing made by the express desire of Her Majesty, to H.M. the King of the Sandwich Islands." "A correct likeness," affirm Boki and Rives by their initials. [London]; Printed and sold by J. Dawson, [1824]. Lithograph from National Library of Australia available on Wikimedia Commons.

Americanization during his younger brother's rule as Kamehameha III. Soon Kamāmalu's memory as "one of the most noble and interesting of the nation" also fades.<sup>99</sup>

In 1870, from the distance of fifty years, Lucy Thurston looks back sadly to compare her own journey to a foreign land with the queen's fate, and asks: "O Kamamalu, Kamamalu, thou, too, didst become a stranger in a strange land, and when there so early called to plunge into the dark, cold stream, didst thou reach a better land?" 100

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> According to S. M. Kamakau, she was named at birth Kamehamehakapuaiwa, later called Kamehamalu, or the "shade of Kamehameha," but she is better known as Kamāmalu. S. M. Kamakau, *Ke Aupuni Moʻi* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press, 2001), 228; S. M. Kamakau, *Ke Kumu Aupuni* (Honolulu: Ahahui Olelo Hawaiʻi, 1996), 252, 259.
- <sup>2</sup> J. Susan Corley, "Kamehameha II's Ill-Starred Journey to England Aboard *L'Aigle*, 1823–1824," *HJH*, Vol. 44, 2010: 1–35 for a discussion of the conflicts caused by American traders.
- <sup>3</sup> "Removal of the Remains of the Kings to the Royal Mausoleum," *The Friend*, ed. Damon, 22, no. 11 (1 November 1865): 84.
- <sup>4</sup> M. Puakea Nogelmeier, Mai Pa'a I Ka Leo Historical Voice in Hawaiian Primary Materials, Looking Forward and Listening Back (Honolulu, Hawai'i: Bishop Museum Press, 2010).
- <sup>5</sup> "Ka naenae aloha no ka mea i make," *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa*, 30 Jan 1869: 1; "Na Hunahuna no ka Moolelo Hawaii," *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa*, 18 Dec 1869:1; see also, John Papa 'I'i, *Fragments of Hawaiian History*, Dorothy B. Barrere, ed., Mary Kawena Pukui, trans. (Honolulu, Hawaii: Bishop Museum Press, 1959), 53, 59,70.
- <sup>6</sup> Kamakau, Ke Kumu Aupuni, 283 and Ke Aupuni Moʻi, 361.
- <sup>7</sup> Ka Mooolelo Hawaii, Hawaiian Language Reprint Series (1838: reprint, Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society, 2005), 93, 96, 109.
- 8 "Mooolelo Hawaii—Helu 37, Ke Kau ia Kamehameha II, No ka noho ana o Liholiho," Ka Hae Hawaii, 20 Dec 1858: 158.
- <sup>9</sup> "Batimea Puaaiki," *Ka Nonanona*, 9 Jan 1844: 78. Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet tell somewhat the same story, but do not give the blind man's name. See Fn 6o.
- <sup>10</sup> Sheldon Dibble, *History of the Sandwich Islands*, (Lahainaluna: Press of the Mission Seminary, 1843), 192–3, 207.
- <sup>11</sup> James J. Jarves, *History of the Hawaiian Islands*, 3d edition (Honolulu: Charles Edwin Hitchcock, 1847), 108, 117, 119, 120, 126, 127.
- <sup>12</sup> Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Volume I, 1778–1854* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978), 77–78.
- "Ka naenae aloha no ka mea i make," Ka Nupepa Kuokoa, 30 Jan 1869: 1; Kamakau, Ke Aupuni Moʻi, 130–131. For a discussion of aliʻi rankings and their accompanying personal kapu, see S. M. Kamakau, Ka Poʻe Kaniko, ed. Dorothy Barrère, trans. Mary Kawena Pukui (Honolulu, Hawaii: Bishop Museum Press, 1968), 4–6, 9–10.
- <sup>14</sup> His full name is "Kalani nui kua Liholiho i ke kapu," meaning "the heavenly chief with the burning back kapu." *Hawaiian Dictionary*, 1973 ed., s.v. "Liholiho."
- <sup>15</sup> Kamakau, Ka Po'e Kahiko, ed. Barrère, trans. Pukui, 7.
- <sup>16</sup> "Na Hunahuna no ka Moolelo Hawaii," Ka Nupepa Kuokoa, 18 Dec 1869:1.
- <sup>17</sup> Kīna'u, Kalanipau'ahi, Kekāuluohi, and Kekau'onohi. Kamakau, Ke Kumu Aupuni, 252.

- Louis Claude de Saulses de Freycinet, Voyage around the world undertaken by order of the king performed on his majesty's corvettes l'Uranie and l'Physicienne in the years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820: Historical narrative, Vol. 2, Part 2: Book 4, Chapters 27 and 28, trans. Ella L. Wiswell (Honolulu: Department of Anthropology, Bernice Pau'ahi Bishop Museum, 1978), 14.
- <sup>19</sup> Freycinet, *Voyage*, trans. Wiswell, 14, 17.
- <sup>20</sup> Freycinet, *Voyage*, trans. Wiswell, 17.
- <sup>21</sup> English Chronicle and Whitehall Evening Post (London), 29 May to 1 June 1824: 4.
- <sup>22</sup> Glynn Barratt, ed., "The Honolulu narrative of Aleksei P. Lazarev," Russian View of Honolulu, 1809–1826 (Ottawa, Canada: Carleton Univ Press, 1988), 262.
- <sup>23</sup> Gilbert Farquhar Mathison, Esq., Narrative of a visit to Brazil, Chile, Peru, and the Sandwich Islands in the year 1821 and 1822 (London: printed for Charles Knight, Pall Mall East, 1825), 365.
- <sup>24</sup> C. S. Stewart, Journal of a Residence in the Sandwich Islands during the Years 1823, 1824 and 1825, 3rd ed. (1830; reprint, Honolulu, Hawaii: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1970), 95.
- <sup>25</sup> Mary Berry, Extracts of the Journals and Correspondence of Miss Berry from the Year 1783 to 1852, Volume 3, ed. Lady Theresa Lewis (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1865), 353–354.
- <sup>26</sup> Frederick G. Byng to Viscount Granville, 25 May 1824, PRO 30/29/7/12/4, handwritten, Levenson-Gower, 1st Earl Granville and predecessors and successors: Papers 1604–1909, British National Archives (hereafter "BNA").
- <sup>27</sup> The Times (London), 25 May 1824: 3.
- <sup>28</sup> Freycinet, *Voyage*, trans. Wiswell, 17.
- <sup>29</sup> Stewart, Journal, 102.
- 30 Mathison, Narrative, 365-366.
- <sup>31</sup> William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches- Hawaii*, new ed., enlarged and improved (Rutland, VT & Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc., 1969), 452.
- <sup>32</sup> Sybil Bingham, Journal, Volume 2, 11 March 1822, Journal Collection 1819– 1900, HMCS.
- <sup>33</sup> S. Bingham, *Journal*, 2, 11-14 Mar 1822, HMCS.
- <sup>34</sup> Rev. Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet, Journal of Voyages and Travels by the Rev. Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet, Esq. deputed from the London Missionary Society to visit their various stations in the South Sea Islands, China, India, &c., between the years 1821 and 1829 in three volumes, compiled by James Montgomery (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1832), II: 82.
- 35 Thaddeus Journal, Journal of the Sandwich Islands Mission, 1819–1821, typescript, 4 Apr 1820, The Journal Collection, 1819–1900, HMCS.
- <sup>36</sup> S. Bingham, Journal, 19 Feb, 14 Mar 1822, HMCS.
- <sup>37</sup> Stewart. *Journal*, 102.
- <sup>38</sup> Tyerman and Bennet, *Journal of Voyages and Travels*, II: 82; "Journal of the Mission," *MH* 20/7 (1824): 208–209.
- <sup>39</sup> Elisha Loomis, *Journal*, 07 Apr 1822, handwritten, Journal Collection 1819–1900, HMCS.
- <sup>40</sup> Tyerman and Bennet, Journal of Voyages and Travels, II: 82.

- 41 "Journal," MH 20/7 (1824): 208–209.
- <sup>42</sup> Tyerman and Bennet, Journal of Voyages and Travels, II: 89.
- <sup>43</sup> Lucy Thurston, Life and Times of Lucy G. Thurston, Pioneer Missionary to the Sandwich Islands gathered from letters and journals extending over a period of more than fifty years (Ann Arbor, MI: S. C. Andrews, 1882), 231.
- <sup>44</sup> Ellis, Polynesian Researches, 453-454.
- <sup>45</sup> Elisha Loomis, *Journal*, 30 Mar, 28 Aug 1820, handwritten, HMCS.
- 46 Freycinet, Voyage, trans. Wiswell, 22.
- <sup>47</sup> Hiram Bingham, A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands; or the Civil, Religious and Political History of those Islands, 3d ed. rev. (Canandaigua, NY: H. D. Goodwin, Auctioneer, 1855), 88.
- 48 "Extracts from Mrs. Thurston's Journal," MH 17/6 (1821): 177-178.
- <sup>49</sup> E. Loomis, *Journal*, 05–06 Sep 1820, handwritten, HMCS.
- <sup>50</sup> S. Bingham, Journal, 9 August 1822, HMCS.
- 51 "Joint Letter of the Missionaries," MH 19/4 (1823): 100: Maria Loomis, Journal, 1 Sep 1822, handwritten, Journal Collection 1819–1900, HMCS; S. Bingham, Journal, 09 Aug, 4 Oct 1822, 18 Feb 1823, HMCS.
- <sup>52</sup> Stewart, *Journal*, 110–111.
- <sup>53</sup> Stewart, *Journal*, 110–111.
- <sup>54</sup> Mathison, *Narrative*, 365.
- <sup>55</sup> Mathison, Narrative, 421–422.
- <sup>56</sup> Kamakau, Ke Aupuni Mo'i, 221.
- <sup>57</sup> C. S. Stewart to Mrs. Frances Chrystie 15 Dec 1823, handwritten, and Queen Kamāmalu to Mrs. Frances Chrystie, 14 Aug 1823, handwritten, Kahn Collection, Kamāmalu Letter 34/43, AH.
- <sup>58</sup> Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, 45.
- <sup>59</sup> MH 19/11 (1823): 351.
- <sup>60</sup> Tyerman and Bennet, I: 438.
- 61 Stewart, Journal, 200-201.
- 62 Freycinet, Voyage, trans. Wiswell, 17.
- 63 Mathison, Narrative, 421.
- 64 Freycinet, Voyage, trans. Wiswell, 28.
- <sup>65</sup> Thaddeus Journal, HMCS, typescript, 9 Apr 1821.
- 66 Mathison, Narrative, 389.
- 67 H. Bingham, Residence, 129.
- <sup>68</sup> Thaddeus Journal, HMCS, typescript, 11 Apr 1821.
- Levi Chamberlain, Journal, Vol. 2, 11 Oct 1823, typescript, Journal Collection 1819–1900, HMCS; Thaddeus Journal, typescript, 11 Oct 1823, HMCS.
- <sup>70</sup> Stewart, *Journal*, 101–102; *MH* 20/7 (1824): 209.
- <sup>71</sup> Thurston, Life and Times, 41-42.
- <sup>72</sup> H. Bingham, Residence, 184; MH 20/7 (1824): 208–209; Stewart, Journal, 114–115.
- <sup>73</sup> Stewart, *Journal*, 116–120.
- 74 The Times (London), 25 May 1824: 3
- <sup>75</sup> Byng to Granville, 8 Jun 1824, handwritten, PRO 30/29/7/12/6, BNA.

- <sup>76</sup> Byng to Granville, 1 Jun 1824, handwritten, PRO 30/29/7/12/5, BNA.
- <sup>77</sup> English Chronicle and Whitehall Evening Post, 29 May-01 Jun 1824: 4.
- <sup>78</sup> Pierce Egan's Life in London, 13 Jun 1824:158.
- 79 Thurston, Life and Times, 34.
- So Jacques Arago, Narrative of a voyage round the world, in the Uranie and Physicienne corvettes, commanded by Captain Freycinet, during the years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820, Part II (London: Treuttel and Wurtz, 1823), 93–94.
- 81 Mathison, Narrative, 373.
- 82 Thurston, Life and Times, 36.
- $^{83}$  "Journal of the Missionaries," MH 17/4 (1821): 117.
- 84 Stewart, *Journal*, 205–206.
- 85 H. Bingham, Residence, 203. There is a Hawaiian text of the queen's farewell and other English translations. Bingham's version is used because he was an eyewitness, and he describes other aspects of her departure.
- 86 H. Bingham, Residence, 203.
- <sup>87</sup> John Rose, "Log, L'Aigle Whaler, 1822–1824," microfilm, 27 November 1823 to 17 May 1824, National Maritime Museum, UK (hereafter NMM). The ship arrived at Portsmouth Harbor on May 17, and the king took an overnight coach to London, arriving there May 18.
- 88 English Chronicle and Whitehall Evening Post, 22-25 May 1824: 1.
- <sup>89</sup> Captain the Right No. Lord Byron, Commander, *Voyage of H.M.S. Blonde to the Sandwich Islands, in the years* 1824–1825 *Part I and II,* ed. Mrs. Mary Graham (London: John Murray, Albemarle-Street, 1826), I: 64–65.
- 90 Byron, ed., M. Graham, Voyage of H.M.S. Blonde, I: 66-67.
- 91 Byron, ed., M. Graham, Voyage of H.M.S. Blonde, I: 67.
- 92 Byron, ed., M. Graham, Voyage of H.M.S. Blonde, I: 67.
- 93 *Morning Post* (London), 12 Jul 1824: 2.
- 94 "Removal," The Friend, ed. Damon, 22, no. 11 (1 Nov 1865): 84.
- 95 Morning Post (London), 12 Jul 1824: 2.
- <sup>96</sup> London Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, &c., 3 Jul 1824: 430.
- "Tamehamalu, Queen of the Sandwich Islands, Aged 22 Years, from a drawing made by the express desire of her Majesty To H. M. the King of the Sandwich Islands," Printed & Published by J. Dawson 31 Threadneedle Street [London] [1824], National Library of Australia. John Rives signs the French style of his given name, "Jaissant."
- 98 The Times (London), 15 Jul 1824:2; The Times (London), 24 Jul 1824: 2. The king died on July 14.
- 99 Stewart, Journal, 239.
- <sup>100</sup> Thurston, Life and Times, 231.