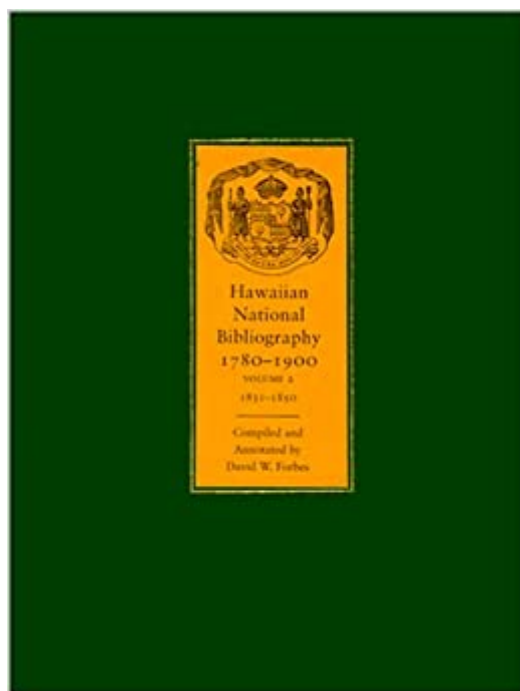


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Hawaiian National Bibliography, 1780-1900: Volume 2:1831-1850



Synopsis

The second volume of the Hawaiian National Bibliography records the transformation of Hawai'i from a feudal system of government to a constitutional monarchy whose autonomy was recognized by the United States and the great powers of Europe. Here are referenced the formation of laws, a constitution, a bill of rights, and government reports. Political entanglements with Great Britain and France, the Provisional Cession of Hawai'i to Great Britain, and the restoration of sovereignty in 1843 are documented. Publications resulting from the United States Exploring Expedition under Captain Charles Wilkes are included. Also listed and described are theater bills, broadsides, and other ephemera, which illuminate the everyday life of the period.

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Customer Reviews

David W. Forbes is an independent scholar based in Honolulu.

Ordinarily, bibliographies don't have much of a plot. But David Forbes' excellent "Hawaiian National Bibliography" does, sort of. The shock of Hawaii's discovery to the rest of the world can be measured by the echoes down the decades from the clicks of the composers' sticks and the clanks of the world's presses as they spread the news. Forbes' first volume, which was published in 1998, just barely entered the period in which printing began in the islands. That volume was about books about Hawaii. Volume 2 signals the era of books from Hawaii. It roughly coincides with the eventful reign of Kamehameha III. Books and broadsides record the first bill of rights that made commoners

and chiefs equals before the law, the first law codes, the translation of the Bible into Hawaiian, the interference of the British and the French, the struggles for supremacy between Catholic and Protestant missionaries, the schooling of nearly a whole nation previously illiterate, the visits of the whalers and the beginnings of scientific reports on the islands' unique plants, animals and geology. Although the thousand or so publications catalogued in this impressive volume are largely from Hawaii, they are still not yet of Hawaiians. Most were written (or translated) by missionaries, much of the rest by other foreigners. Hawaiians did not, at this point, figure often as authors; and while the government was an active publisher, the bulk of its writing was handled by foreign advisers. Hawaiians were, Forbes notes, enthusiastic contributors of letters and articles to newspapers, starting with *Ka Lama Hawaii* (published at Lahainaluna from February 1834, the first newspaper printed west of the American Rocky Mountains) and *Ke Kumu Hawaii*, the first newspaper with a general circulation, printed in Honolulu from November 1834. But Hawaiians did not write books until 1838, when the Lahainaluna press issued "*Ka Moolelo Hawaii*," described by Forbes as "one of the most important books on Hawaii . . . the first Hawaiian history written and published in Hawaii, and the first from a Hawaiian viewpoint." This was written by some of the top students at the Lahainaluna school, of whom the most famous was David Malo. By the 1840s, there were four presses in Hawaii. The original Protestant missionary press at Lahainaluna, where the students learned not only printing but woodblock and copperplate engraving, did not survive as late as 1850. But there was another Protestant press in Honolulu, as well as a Catholic missionary press and a commercial press there. The type lice, who usually hide in the seldom-used ffi and ffl compartments of the lower case, had an easy life at *Pai Palapala Katolika*. This was the age of the sainted Pius IX, when all the educational efforts of the church of Rome were devoted to ensuring that its communicants remained illiterate. *Pai Palapala Katolika* published in Hawaiian only some slender catechisms, hymnbooks and prayerbooks. The rest of its issue was devoted mainly to dissing the Protestants, and for a European audience. The Protestant presses issued 50 times as much material as the Catholics, and 100 times as much in Hawaiian. Editions were impressively large, 10,000 for textbooks in the early years and as many as 15,000 by the late 1840s. The per capita availability of Hawaiian books was at least as great as the per capita issue of daily newspapers in the state today, probably greater. It was all edifying or instructional. Up to 1850, no press in Hawaii attempted to present anything for mere entertainment. The early collections of Hawaiian stories could be read for enjoyment, but they were issued as history or ethnology. The first attempt at publishing a popular work was a failure. Even this was also edifying, John Bunyan's "*Pilgrim's Progress*," which has been read by 20 generations of English-speakers for its

adventure. However, the translation into Hawaiian in 1842 was a failure, as Bunyan's allegorical concepts like the Slough of Despond only puzzled Hawaiians. Though much of the ambitious edition of 10,000 was pulped, it did not sell out until 1960. By 1850, an impressive amount of information about Hawaii, some of it reliable, was available in English, French, Dutch, Danish, German, Swedish, Russian and Italian. Hardly anything in Spanish, though. Although the world's literature and philosophy (except the Bible) was still, literally, a closed book to Hawaiians, by 1850 they too had an impressive library of information on history, geography, mathematics, surveying, astronomy, zoology, botany, drawing and music to read. Some of it translated oddly, such as the story of George Washington and the pear tree in "O ke Kokua no ko Hawaii poe kamalii e ao ana i Ka olelo Beritania," an 1843 student's guide to learning English; but the Hawaiians were on their way to becoming, in late kingdom times, what historian Gavan Daws has cited as one of the few societies in which almost everyone was literate in two languages. Forbes's bibliography is published in partnership with the Sydney antiquarian bookseller Hordern House.

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