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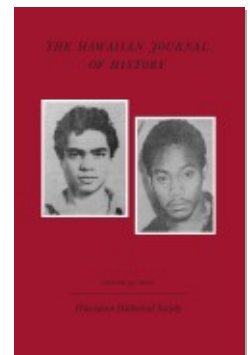
*Unsustainable Empire: Alternative Histories of Hawai'i
Statehood* by Dean Itsuji Saranillio (review)

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Hawaiian Journal of History, Volume 54, 2020, pp. 193-195 (Review)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/hjh.2020.0007>



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boy emerged from the colonial empire to beat Western cowboys at what the Americans believed to be their own game, and it is a story that more Americans should know.

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Unsustainable Empire: Alternative Histories of Hawai'i Statehood. By Dean Itsuji Saranillio. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018. xxvi + 282 p. Illustrated. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$26.95 paper; \$99.95 cloth

Unsustainable Empire works to de-naturalize the popular story of Hawai'i statehood, in which a long-deserving United States territory overcame racism to become an equal part of the American nation. Instead, Dean Saranillio frames statehood as part of a longer history of U.S. settler colonialism in Hawai'i, a project that required constant effort to maintain its legitimacy in the face of recurrent opposition. He divides his focus between elites in Hawai'i who were engaged in "manufacturing consent" for statehood and a group of defiant "unexpected individuals," among them "historical revisionists, unruly women, subversives, communists, con men, gays, and criminals" (pp. 6, 8). Significantly, most of these figures were active in the era before the emergence of an organized Hawaiian sovereignty movement.

Saranillio traces the discursive roots of the statehood campaign to the 1890s. After the settlers' overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893, the haoles elite were determined to erase any trace of Hawai'i's recent status as an independent nation in order to secure American support for annexation to the U.S. Lorrin Thurston, a third-generation settler, newspaper publisher, and one of the men behind the recent coup, helped lead this public relations campaign at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The Hawai'i exhibit—the "Cyclorama of Kilauea," a huge encircling painting of the Big Island volcano with a giant statue of the Hawaiian goddess Pele standing above its entrance—suited the overall tone of the fair, whose displays help chronicle the transition of the U.S. from a continental settler nation to an emerging global empire. Thurston hoped that the cyclorama would bolster the annexationist cause by portraying Hawai'i as "an exotic island frontier zone, a primitive space to be made anew with the joint help of white settlers in Hawai'i and a newly industrialized United States" (p. 31).

Thurston got his wish with annexation in 1898, and for the next decades, the haole ruling class enjoyed Hawai'i's territorial status, with whites disproportionately represented in the legislature and Hawai'i's majority Asian population barred from naturalization (and thus unable to vote). Meanwhile, the Big Five—the interlocking companies that oversaw Hawai'i's sugar industry—essentially controlled Hawai'i's economy. White supremacy in Hawai'i was further supported by the theories of University of Hawai'i eugenicist Stanley Porteus, who lent academic legitimacy to the subordination of Hawai'i's nonwhite communities. Elites in Hawai'i had to adjust their stance, however, when the Sugar Act of 1935 imposed limits on exports of territorial sugar to the continental U.S. The Big Five and other powerful interests quickly pivoted to statehood, now arguing that Asians in Hawai'i exemplified successful assimilation.

But, as Saranillio makes clear, not everyone in Hawai'i acceded to the message statehood advocates wanted to convey. Saranillio thus juxtaposes the efforts of Hawai'i boosters to sell statehood to Congress with grassroots voices of resistance. Where statehood supporters painted Hawai'i as an ethnically harmonious society with a well-run economy, a number of Hawaiian and working people of color sought to project a much more troubling picture of Hawai'i to federal lawmakers. Ironically for statehood advocates, when members of Congress held hearings in Hawai'i during the first statehood bid in 1937, their presence created “a powerful opportunity” to put forward alternative understandings of “Hawai'i's new political possibilities...beyond Big Five hegemony” (p. 89). Flouting the conformist pressures of the statehood movement, the Japanese newspapers *Hawaii Hochi* and *Voice of Labor* promoted labor militancy while criticizing statehood advocates for whitewashing class strife and Big Five dominance over the territorial government. This odious portrait of the Big Five—along with anti-Asian racism—was one of the factors the congressional investigative committee cited in its report recommending statehood be delayed.

The successful statehood campaign of the 1950s is often celebrated as a victory for the forces of racial liberalism and democracy against the Southern racists who sought to derail it. But a few dissenters within Hawai'i called into question this progressive narrative, arguing that statehood represented another form of Native Hawaiian dispossession. The most notable was Alice Kamokila Campbell, a territorial senator from Maui and descendant of Hawaiian nobility, who in 1946 spoke out forcefully against statehood, saying that she did not want to “forfeit the traditional rights and privileges of the natives of our islands for a mere thimbleful of votes in Congress” (p. 117). Saranillio finds other examples of defiance even in the immediate post-statehood years, when triumphalist sentiment around statehood was at its height. One of them

is Sammy Amalu, a local Waikiki “trickster” who orchestrated an elaborate hoax on the tourism industry in 1962 when he convinced several hotel owners and developers that he was an investor willing to pay unprecedented millions for their properties.

Saranillio’s analysis tends to stress continuity over change. This is both a methodological and a political project. He aims to show how the American settler colonialism that began in Hawai‘i in the 19th century shaped statehood and its opposition, and how Hawaiians and their allies in Hawai‘i today can use older forms of knowledge to challenge the settler state—for instance by employing traditional land use techniques as an alternative to global capitalism. One of the drawbacks to this approach, however, is that it does not fully explain why statehood, or resistance to it, gained more support in some periods than others. Why did an organized opposition to statehood, in the form of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, emerge in the 1970s and not the 1950s? Historians might take issue with some of the elisions made here—between past and present moments of protest, or between pre- and post-statehood society and governance. But *Unsustainable Empire* draws these parallels to show how current-day activists may consciously echo historical dissent. In doing so, it reminds us that while Hawai‘i’s history of settler colonialism is long, the history of Hawai‘i is longer.

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American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War. By Duncan Ryūken Williams. Cambridge Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. 384 pp. Illustrated. Notes. Index. \$29.95 cloth

American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War by Duncan Ryūken Williams is the story of the experiences of American Buddhists during World War II. While numerous scholars have studied the wartime discrimination, dislocation, dispossession, and confinement of Japanese, Williams illuminates the role that Buddhism played in not only identifying Japanese suspects, but also in sustaining the Japanese community during the war. Subsequently, Buddhism was transformed into what Williams describes as a new American Buddhism, revealing the possibility of being both Buddhist and American during a period of tenuous national loyalties.