Thomas J. Osborne. *"Empire Can Wait"; American Opposition to Hawaiian Annexation, 1893–1898.* Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1981. Pp. xv, 200, bibliography. $18.00.

America's first great political debate in the acquisition of overseas territories "did not begin in 1898, as so many historians have assumed, but in 1893" in the wake of the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy led by expatriate Americans. Such is the contention of the author in his examination of the political and journalistic literature on the issues. Osborne's study, the first which "concentrates on the resistance to the acquisition of Hawaii," focuses on the ideology of those individuals and organizations which felt that the annexation of Hawaii would be a serious departure from the vision of America as the "archetype of the virtuous republic" as originally contemplated by the Founding Fathers. Though there were more pragmatic motivations against Hawaiian annexation, the main concern of the anti-imperialists over the question was American expansion into areas considerably beyond its Pacific boundaries.

In his evaluative examination, Osborne makes several important challenges to long-standing notions on the annexation issue. First, the view that the contending forces in the annexation debate differed little, if at all, on the subject of commercial expansion and race. To the contrary, the author cites varied viewpoints. Some, it seems, viewed the native Hawaiian population as "ignorant and brutal" and thus opposed the absorption of

"this variegated agglomeration of the fag-ends of humanity" into the American Union. Contrarily, others viewed the Polynesian population as "a kind and gentle and humane people." Hawaii's Oriental communities were likewise viewed in contradictory terms, with some seeing them as a "leprous" people, and yet others viewing the Island Chinese as "enterprising." Though it is difficult to determine whether concepts of race followed or predetermined the position on the annexation issue, it was clear that such views played an integral part in the overall debate. In commercial terms, West Coast sugar interests opposed annexation as a threat to their economic interests, while pro-annexationists argued that annexation would improve the American trade position in the Pacific.

Aside from these observations, Osborne comments on a fundamental legal issue generally passed over or discounted in previous commentaries. Though the American constitution gives the Congress the authority to acquire territories, the exact procedure for doing so has never been specified. Though negotiations for annexation between the United States and the Hawaiian government were conducted in the context of the treaty-making process, the anti-annexationists successfully obstructed a necessary two-thirds majority for ratification. Politically, the pro-annexationists resorted to joint resolution as a means of prevailing in the Congress. Jurists questioned the constitutionality of this procedure as an undermining of the Senate's treaty ratification power. Such a procedure, moreover, did not include a plebiscite which some viewed as a derogation from the long-held American principle of "consent of the governed." Joint resolution as a means of acquiring Hawaii without a specified intent to grant statehood was also seen as constitutionally defective and historically out of character.

Osborne's most serious challenge is to Thomas A. Bailey's contention that the breaking of the political deadlock over the annexation question in Congress came when the exigencies of the Spanish-American war became manifest and were subsequently argued in the press and on the floor of the Congress. These notions, asserts Osborne, have been "exaggerated." Commercial concerns over the economic consequences of the American surplus in goods, the appeal of the potential Asian market, and an expanded American-Hawaiian trade relationship "were more decisive in bringing about the defeat of the anti-annexationists." In support of such a contention, Osborne relies upon the correspondence of such influential Senators as Cushman K. Davis and Henry Cabot Lodge, two prominent figures in the congressional debate, as sources of authority.

Such acute and important observations aside, Osborne recapitulates in readable terms a litany of anti-imperialist concerns over Hawaii's annexa-

tion as an "entering wedge" for the further acquisition of overseas territories. Indeed, only seven months after the passage of the joint resolution of annexation, the acquisition of Guam, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Wake Island was consummated under the Treaty of Paris. In his own well-chosen words, Osborne concludes that American diplomatic historians "have been examining only the dramatic and advanced stages of the crusade against empire, while largely ignoring the vast body of evidence connected with the formative stage of that crusade." The "Great Debate," as documented by Osborne, amplifies Hawaii's position and role in American diplomatic history and the historical and moral dilemmas contained therein.

William Tagupa
Office of Hawaiian Affairs