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Reviews of Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai'i: The Cultural Power of Law*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999. 375 pages. \$21.95 paper, \$75.00 hardcover.

Sally Engle Merry's *Colonizing Hawai'i: The Cultural Power of Law* won the Law and Society Association's 2002 Hurst Prize in Legal History. In writing this important interdisciplinary work, Merry, an anthropologist, has given us a careful historical study of the colonization of Hawai'i by New Englanders in the middle part of the nineteenth century, taking, as she puts it, "a magnifying glass to one small place and at the same time deploy[ing] a wide-angle lens to view the larger processes that envelop that place" (p. 9). To produce this work, Merry wore two academic hats. In the guise of historian, she examined sixty years of court records from the town of Hilo, covering roughly the period 1820–1880, in order to understand the ways in which Hawaiians both appropriated and transformed Anglo-American law as a means of resisting the European imperial project. But in thickening her archival findings, she also conducted a significant amount of ethnographic research in Hawai'i in order to explore and understand the Hawaiian plantation system of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The book is divided into two parts. The first, "Encounters in a Contact Zone: New England Missionaries, Lawyers, and the Appropriation of Anglo-American Law, 1820-1852," focuses upon the process by which the sovereign kingdom of Hawai'i appropriated Anglo-American law and brought Americans and Europeans into its legal system, in order to at least temporarily ward off colonial annexation. As Merry suggests, "Constructing a society that appeared 'civilized' to the Europeans in nineteenth-century terms clearly helped to win acceptance from those European powers whose recognition conferred sovereignty" (p. 13). The second, "Local Practices of Policing and Judging in Hilo, Hawai'i," draws upon Hilo court records in order to examine the effects of this legal

transformation in the everyday lives of Hawaiians, particularly in the areas of work, family, and gender relations. Throughout, Merry pays careful attention to the ways in which law was produced, appropriated, and transformed in the struggle for power that marked this era of Hawaiian history. Her historically rich and theoretically sophisticated book is a stellar contribution to sociolegal studies, and we are delighted to have three outstanding commentators take up Merry's insights and provocations in this forum.