

Many hula dancers say that it is their lifelong dream to appear in the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival or, better yet, to win a trophy at the world-renowned hula competition named in honor of King David Kalākaua, the nineteenth-century patron of traditional Hawaiian arts. Since 1971, this prestigious hula showcase has taken place at the Edith Kanakaʻole Stadium in the town of Hilo, Hawaiʻi. I accompanied the hula troupe Hālau o Nā Pua Kukui and its kumu hula (hula master), Ed Collier, as they prepared for the competition in 2006. Several months of intensive practice culminates in three nights of hula before a panel of judges, cheering sellout crowds, and live television cameras. Hālau hula (hula troupes) must be invited to participate, and each year twenty or more vie for recognition as the best in competitive hula.

During the week of competition, I bunked with the hālau's women dancers in a cabin a few miles away from Kīlauea Volcano. The backstage rhythms and preparations—the ironing of costumes, gossiping, the making of flower lei—were familiar to me because I had danced in smaller Honolulu competitions in the 1990s. While setting their hair in braids and curlers for that evening's performances, the dancers, whose ages ranged from midteens to midthirties, turned on the MTV reality show *My Super Sweet Sixteen*. In each episode, a girl and her family spend fortunes on sixteenth-birthday celebrations. The Merrie Monarch hula competition is a more modest and culturally specific version of this rite of passage, but many dancers and their families approach the contest with similar once-in-a-lifetime fervor, investing time and resources in this public display.¹

Watching the tv birthday girl squeal as she received a new Lexus,



Fig. 1 Kamele Collier on stage at Merrie Monarch Festival, 2006.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DALTON SUE.

Kamele Collier, the senior member of the troupe, remarked, “This reminds me of the Princess of Brunei. Janet Jackson did a concert for her birthday.” I asked Kamele where she had seen the princess’s birthday party and she replied casually, “Oh, I danced hula for her in Brunei. We did a show right before Janet Jackson.” As Kamele explained, the princess had invited her and nineteen other dancers from Hawai‘i to give a half-hour performance in 1998. They were flown first class into the oil-rich sultanate, chauffeured in Mercedes limousines for two weeks, paid handsomely, and each given a diamond and sapphire-encrusted watch as a token of gratitude. Although Kamele intended to emphasize the Brunei princess’s access to extraordinary wealth, she also revealed her own worldly experience afforded by hula. During and shortly after high school, Kamele danced hula in several U.S. states, New Zealand, Samoa, Tahiti, Germany, Wales, Switzerland, and France. She later joined two large shows in Waikiki as a professional dancer, where she was responsible for choreographing hula and Polynesian dances, and performed as a solo dancer at a four-star resort. A mother of two, Kamele now serves as one of the leaders of her father’s hālau (see figure 1).²



Fig. 2. Hālau o Nā Pua Kukui’s Miss Aloha Hula contestant, Aisha Kilikina Kanoelani Valmoja with kumu hula Ed Collier, Merrie Monarch Festival, 2006. PHOTOGRAPH BY DALTON SUE.

Kamele’s younger hula sisters in the troupe have also benefited from the soaring global interest in hula.³ They perform abroad frequently in Japan, where hula has become a passionate avocation and multimillion-dollar industry. While sharing a bathroom with the girls, I noticed how the counters were lined with new beauty products—moisturizers, hair creams, makeup removers—sold only in Japan. They had purchased these modest luxuries while dancing on all-expense-paid trips. On the strength of their teacher’s reputation and appearances in the Merrie Monarch festival, the young dancers of Hālau o Nā Pua Kukui fly to Japan a few times a year to perform hula at festivals and workshops and are treated as VIPs.⁴

Winners at this prestigious festival do not receive cash prizes but status and public validation, which usually result in increased student enrollment for a hālau and invitations to participate in hula festivals abroad. The hālau’s Miss Aloha Hula contestant for 2006 in the female soloist category, Aisha Kilikina Kanoelani Valmoja (see figure 2), was featured on the cover of the Japanese magazine *Hula Heaven* during her competition preparation. *Hula Heaven* is but one of several glossy, photograph-rich publications in Japan dedicated to “hula and Hawaiian style.” Kumu hula, whose hālau have consistently placed at the Merrie Monarch festival, have

opened up profitable affiliate schools in Japan. Dancers whisper that a handful of kumu hula can earn \$300 an hour teaching hula and up to \$20,000 for a few weeks of work there; some return to Hawai‘i with stacks of yen in their suitcases. These glimpses reveal the occasional material enhancements that young Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) and islander women gain via globalized hula circuits.⁵ Hula is a potent cultural and economic opportunity structure in which women earn cultural capital and, occasionally, even a living wage, while charting their own desires for fashion, beauty, and travel.⁶ Some dancers are able to turn hula into full- or part-time professions, without a college education or other formal credentials.⁷

Hula and Hawai‘i have become nearly synonymous in the global cultural imaginary, bringing opportunity and challenges to Hawaiian women such as Kamele Collier. United Airlines has advertised its Hawai‘i airfares as a “Honolulu Hula Sale” with an illustration of a dancer in a *lā‘i* (ti leaf) skirt.⁸ Tourists are greeted in airports and hotel lobbies with photographs of hula dancers on luau brochures. From nineteenth-century descriptions of blasphemous hula dancers to present-day advertisements published by the Hawai‘i Visitors and Convention Bureau that regularly include silhouettes of hula dancers, Hawai‘i has been personified through the figure of the female dancer during more than a century of American colonization. More so than any other cultural or ethnographic artifact, the gendered hula dancer—or as she is known more familiarly in Americana, the “hula girl”—has come to represent Hawai‘i. How and why hula performers have become such material and symbolic embodiments of Hawai‘i are the focus of this book.

Like Kamele Collier and her hula sisters, previous generations of hula practitioners have had to negotiate the commodification of their bodies and art as hula took them in unexpected directions outside of the islands. Over a century ago, the first organized hula tour of Hawaiian *po‘e hula* (hula practitioners) crossed the Pacific and Atlantic. A woman named Kini Kapahukulaokamāmalu (later known as Mrs. Jennie Wilson), one of the central historical figures of this study, left Hawai‘i to tour North America and Europe shortly before the American-backed overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom in 1893. *Po‘e hula*, such as Kini, became highly visible, commodified objects for Euro-American audiences at world’s fairs, vaudeville theaters, commercial nightclubs, and military bases. As Hawai‘i’s political and economic entanglements with the United States intensified during and after the overthrow of the Hawaiian government,

so did the exhibition of Hawaiian cultural practices in the U.S. empire. Tours of hula outside the islands proliferated as the United States established political control over Hawai'i.

Aloha America examines U.S. imperial interests in Hawai'i through the circulation of hula. Hawaiians became legible and largely desirable to Americans through what I term "hula circuits"—popular tours of hula performers that crisscrossed both the Atlantic and Pacific, performing for largely Euro-American audiences in Western metropolitan centers, rural outposts, and small towns. Beginning in the late nineteenth century and peaking in the late 1950s, these hula circuits brought scores of Hawaiian men and women to the continental United States and Europe, but primarily staged the bodies and performances of Hawaiian women.⁹ Hawai'i became familiar and assimilable to American audiences through the alluring female bodies those spectators saw circulating on the continent. Commodified Hawaiian culture—the "luau," the "hula girl," and "aloha"—became part of the American vernacular and everyday life.

The United States emerged as a colonial power with insular colonies and territories in the wake of the Spanish-American War in 1898. Hawai'i was the only overseas territory to become a U.S. state. Guam, Puerto Rico, Samoa, and the Philippines remained unincorporated territories and Cuba a semi-independent protectorate, all lacking the legal possibility of incorporation.¹⁰ Yet it was by no means a foregone conclusion that Hawai'i would achieve annexation in 1898, status as an incorporated territory in 1900, and statehood in 1959.¹¹ Annexation was fiercely debated in the U.S. Senate and popular press after the U.S.-backed overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom. The debate largely centered on whether the islands and their racially suspect inhabitants were worthy of the privileges of American citizenship. Who and what were Hawaiians? Stoked by fears of racially suspect "mongrel" and "Asiatic" populations, Americans were deeply divided about whether to admit Hawai'i to the United States.

Those who opposed and those who favored annexation issued opinions that took on a decidedly racist valence. A Chicago newspaper advocating annexation wanted universal suffrage withheld from Hawai'i on account of its racial character. The newspaper editorialized, "It would not do to admit Hawaii as a State, unless the character of the population underwent radical change."¹² These suspicions erupted throughout the twentieth century; in the 1930s questions arose about whether Hawai'i even deserved territorial status, and after World War II, Southern senators argued that Hawai'i harbored too many Asians.¹³ Given this ambiva-

lence, how did Hawai'i become legible and domesticated enough to be admitted into the union in 1959 by overwhelming congressional majority? Why did Hawai'i become a politically and culturally integral part of the United States? What assured Americans that Hawai'i would likely become "an American community" after annexation, as one writer confidently proclaimed?¹⁴

In practical terms, the United States enjoyed informal influence via white settlement in Hawai'i for nearly a century before it effected formal colonization. The existence of a haole (white) ruling class and extensive capital investment prior to American political interventions made Hawai'i distinct from other U.S. colonies and quasiprotectorates. Since their arrival in 1820, American missionaries had been increasing their political and economic control, reforming traditional land tenure, assuming power in kingdom cabinets, and industrializing agriculture. Descendants of these missionaries orchestrated the overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom and ruled Hawai'i through large corporate trusts.

While long-standing settler colonialism and Hawai'i's military and strategic importance in the North Pacific cannot be underestimated, this book begins with a different premise: the popular cultural phenomenon of hula also helped to broker this process of incorporation and integration. I seek to reveal how the colonial relationship between the United States and Hawai'i has been constituted and intensified by cultural displays of hula since the U.S.-backed overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom. For although colonialism has been understood and analyzed as a series of related political and economic processes and as the consolidation of political and economic interests, they are also deeply cultural projects.¹⁵ As Nicholas Thomas writes, "Colonial cultures are not simply ideologies that mask, mystify or rationalize forms of oppression that are external to them; they are also expressive and constitutive of colonial relationships in themselves."¹⁶

Although this is not a study of the colonization of Hawai'i by the United States, I bring American imperialism and Hawaiian popular cultural practices into the same arena to deliberate on hula within a larger context of the political and economic incorporation of Hawai'i. Hula did not win uniform praise—indeed, it was excoriated at times as a barbaric practice—but live hula performances in the continental United States began a process of marking Hawai'i as an eroticized and feminized space, a space disposed to political, military, and tourist penetration. The staged hula in embodied, mediated, and discursive forms, I suggest, has made

islander bodies available for the labor of leisure and translated Hawai'i into a safe sanctuary for the nation.

Hawai'i's colonial incorporation into the United States—the transformation of the islands from quasicolony, to U.S.-oriented republic, to territory, to the fiftieth state—has been a fraught and contested process. Occasionally Hawai'i becomes unfamiliar or jarring in the American imaginary. It can be treated as a “foreign, exotic place,” as occurred in 2008, when Cokie Roberts, a National Public Radio senior news analyst, criticized Barack Obama, then a candidate for the presidency, for vacationing in Hawai'i, his birthplace and childhood home.¹⁷ However, while Roberts was not alone in her assessment of the fiftieth state as an alien outpost, she was roundly berated for her ignorance by journalists, political pundits, and bloggers who claimed Hawai'i was a legitimate, albeit tropical, state.¹⁸

Hawai'i has indeed become a familiar domestic destination for Americans, with nearly 4.5 million tourists arriving each year from the continent.¹⁹ Jet airlines made travel more affordable and accessible to Americans by the mid-twentieth century. Since then, the hallmark of middle-class status in the United States has been the honeymoon or family vacation to Hawai'i. Whereas the highbrow variant of American tourist consumption may have been Paris or Europe in the twentieth century, Hawai'i is a decidedly middlebrow, banal destination for outsiders. This was represented perhaps most emblematically by the quintessential American family, the Brady Bunch, exploring the islands during three television episodes broadcast in 1972.²⁰ How did Hawai'i enter this American orbit of leisure and repose to become a taken-for-granted domestic experience?

Aloha as Imperial Metaphor

In a little more than seventy years, American interventions transformed Hawai'i from an independent kingdom to the fiftieth state of the union. In the nineteenth century a succession of Native chiefly monarchs ruled Hawai'i but increasingly found their authority eroded by American missionaries and foreign businessmen in the islands. As early as 1854, the Hawaiian government began negotiating a reciprocity treaty with the United States that would permit Hawaiian sugar duty-free into U.S. markets. In exchange, the United States sought exclusive use of Pearl Harbor, the only natural harbor in the North Pacific, for a naval and fueling station, which the Hawaiian monarchy conceded in 1887 under threat of force by a militia of white settler businessmen.²¹ The kingdom of Hawai'i ultimately

paid an enormous price for this economic dispensation: loss of autonomy and eventual incorporation into America's Pacific empire.

By the 1880s, Western settlers and sugar planters in the islands sought Hawai'i's annexation to the United States in order to obtain favorable domestic status. For its own part, the United States was interested in obtaining a secure and permanent commercial and military foothold in the Pacific. In 1893, a group of haole businessmen and missionary descendants in the islands conspired to overthrow the Hawaiian kingdom with the help of U.S. marines. American marines landed in Honolulu Harbor, took control of government buildings, and effectively held Queen Lili'uokalani and her cabinet hostage. The queen at first refused to surrender to the conspirators, but to avoid bloodshed Lili'uokalani temporarily relinquished her crown under protest to the U.S. minister in Hawai'i on January 17, 1893.²²

In the midst of its lengthy sugar tariff negotiations with the United States in the 1870s, the Kingdom of Hawai'i made its first appearance at a U.S. world's fair. During the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, the reciprocity treaty was signed, making Hawai'i a virtual protectorate of the United States. A large sign reading "Aloha America" hung above Hawai'i's exhibit. Hula was not staged at this international exposition as it would be fewer than twenty years later, but the sentiment behind this greeting suggests Hawai'i's position as supplicant to its future colonizer.²³ "Aloha America" may be translated simply as "Hello, America" or "Greetings, America." It also serves as a summation of the colonial experience in Hawai'i. "Aloha America" manages to communicate the ambivalent yet intimate relationship Hawai'i has had with the United States over the last century. Consider the meaning of "aloha," possibly the most overdetermined Hawaiian word that has entered the English lexicon. "Aloha" is commonly used to say hello and good-bye, but it is also a highly contextual expression that may encompass love, sympathy, pity, joy, compassion, affection, veneration, and mercy.²⁴

Hawaiians past and present have defined themselves through aloha, sustaining intimate bonds with family, friends (pili aloha), land (aloha 'āina), and guests with what Reverend Akaiko Akaka called "the very kernel of Hawaiian ethics, the very core of the Hawaiian life."²⁵ Another kupuna (elder) and mānaleo (native speaker of Hawaiian), Ralph Ka'ōnohiokalā Alapa'i explained in the 1980s, "Aloha is the spiritual essence of the tangible self, that gave you and me the breath of life."²⁶ The contemporary Kanaka Maoli educator and philosopher Manulani Aluli

Meyer declares aloha “our intelligence,” borrowing from kumu hula Olana Ai.²⁷ Meyer elaborates, “Aloha is the life force found in our [Native Hawaiian] na‘au [gut], the place where intelligence thrives.”²⁸

Yet, while aloha nourished Hawaiian self-regard and vitality, particular aspects of aloha were crudely instrumentalized and appropriated in colonial relations and discourse. Imagined and deployed as mutuality, intimacy, and hospitality, aloha has managed to mask U.S. imperial expansion in Hawai‘i, providing an illuminating metaphor for U.S.-Hawai‘i relations over the past century. Rather than being seen as violent and aggressive, colonial encounters between Hawaiians and Americans were frequently imagined as points of intimate contact, with Hawaiians freely giving aloha to Americans, and Americans eagerly accepting these gifts of hospitality. In one emblematic example, the celebratory illustrated book *Our Islands and Their People* introduced America’s new acquisitions following its victory in 1898 in the Spanish-American War. It was one of dozens of popular illustrated books produced about the “new possessions” of the United States.²⁹ This passage describes Hawai‘i’s “boundless hospitality,” a hospitality so frequently invoked that it became a common refrain: “The very words which a native uses in addressing a stranger indicate the character of the race—*Aloha nei*, the first meaning ‘great gratification’ and the latter, ‘my country, myself, everything that I have is yours.’ And they meant it, for it was their custom while in a state of paganism to surrender their grass huts and even their wives to the full and free gratification of strangers who visited them.”³⁰

In this florid narrative, the writer conjures an imperial fantasy of aloha in which Hawaiians, here gendered as male, naturally gave away everything they esteemed. The typical Hawaiians who emerged in these American accounts were “ideal communists” who shared and “can not do too much to manifest their good-will and desire for your comfort.”³¹ Figured as the inevitable outcome of Hawaiian hospitality toward outsiders, the American colonization of Hawai‘i’s land and people assumed a benign cast.

Unlike the massive armed military takeover of the Philippines by the United States, which prompted protracted battles between Filipino and American forces at the turn of the century, or the U.S. military conquest over Native America, Americans perceived the colonization of Hawai‘i as relatively peaceful.³² Hawaiians did not mount military uprisings, with the exception of an armed rebellion in 1895.³³ Their organized resistance to colonization and annexation materialized in the form of petition cam-

paigns that defeated a U.S. annexation treaty in 1897. Historiography produced in the islands and the metropole further reified this passive narrative and naturalized Hawai'i's colonial status within the U.S. nation-state. In these narratives, colonization and military occupation was achieved with the tacit, if not willing, consent of Native Hawaiian and local populations.³⁴ Indeed the violence of U.S. imperial relations—the decimation and dispossession of the Native population, relentless suppression of Hawaiian language and cultural practices, imposition of a racist social and economic order, disfranchisement of Asian immigrants in the colony—was largely disguised until the emergence of the Hawaiian cultural renaissance and sovereignty movements in the 1960s and 1970s.

Empire as a “way of life” in the islands remains visible yet nearly unspeakable even today, manifesting itself as the most “militouristic” zone of the United States.³⁵ As described by Teresia K. Teaiwa, militourism is a “phenomenon by which military or paramilitary force ensures the smooth running of a tourist industry, and that same tourist industry masks the military force behind it.”³⁶ Tourism and the military are inextricable and symbiotic forces in the islands: tourism is the state's largest industry, followed closely by U.S. Department of Defense spending.³⁷ What makes American empire in the islands so difficult to assess and repudiate is that it was and continues to be interpreted as a consequence of aloha. Aloha functions as a shorthand and brand for the islands today. “The Islands of Aloha” is an advertising slogan and registered trademark of the Hawai'i state tourist bureau.³⁸ Tourists and military personnel are exhorted to “discover aloha” during their “R & R” in the islands, and islanders are encouraged to contribute aloha to this hospitality industry.³⁹

While aloha is a commodified product and service—the hospitality and love of Hawaiian people packaged and sold by a multinational, state-sponsored tourist industry—it is nevertheless insistently referred to as something elusive and noncorporeal: a “spirit,” a “warmth,” an “unseen force.”⁴⁰ Hawai'i, like other tourist destinations, has been crippled by the global economic recession. The tourist industry hit a “crisis mode” in 2009, with visitor arrivals declining for nearly a year and hotel occupancy scraping record lows.⁴¹ With its centrality to the wavering tourist economy in the islands, Native Hawaiian culture and its stewards—living Kanaka Maoli—remain a nexus of anxiety in the islands. More than ever, Hawai'i tourism must rely on the literal and performative aloha of Hawaiian cultural practitioners, especially hula performers, to compete as a “special and unique visitor destination.”⁴² For their part, hula performers

must also rely to an uncomfortable degree on state tourism. This uneasy yet mutually dependent relationship between hula and tourism has developed over a century.

Aloha has been incorporated into an imperial repertoire, naturalizing colonization as benign, mutual, and consensual. Hula practitioners have performed and staged imperial scripts of aloha since the nineteenth century. For Americans consuming these performances, hula was neither an outgrowth of American expansionism nor a form of colonial labor, but a gift of aloha freely proffered, with no expectation of return. Live hula circuits established what I call an “imagined intimacy” between the United States and Hawai‘i, a potent fantasy that enabled Americans to possess their island colony physically and figuratively. In this imperial fantasy, the United States and Hawai‘i were figured as inseparable companions: Hawaiians as supplicants and Americans as guests. This interpretation allowed Americans to cast their relationship with the colony as benevolent and affectionate, without disrupting a colonial hierarchy. Hula performances dangled the promise of intimacy between Hawaiians and Americans, animating an imperial metaphor of aloha or love.⁴³ By metaphors of aloha, I mean that interactions between U.S. colonial institutions and Hawaiian subjects were not framed as a conflict with foreign bodies, but were experienced through affective metaphors of integration, assimilation, and submission. The stagecraft of imperial hospitality eroded the distinction between conquest and consent as it insisted on affective bonds between colonizer and colonized.

Encompassing chanted poetry and bodily movements, hula has provided a kinesthetic repertoire of Kanaka Maoli history, politics, and social life. Prior to Western contact and continuing through the late nineteenth century, hula was a highly venerated, selective, and restricted form of religious and political praxis. Its practitioners were guardians of Native historiography, cosmogony, and genealogies, undergoing ritualized training to reproduce and transmit knowledge for high-ranking chiefs. Some religious forms of hula honored akua (gods), having survived the repression of Christian missionaries who arrived in 1820. Spanning the sacred and secular, hula also provided entertainment for both chiefs and commoners. As late as the 1880s, hula was resurrected and enshrined by the Hawaiian monarchy as an anti-imperial, state-sponsored form of national revival in defiance of haole missionary settlers.

The earliest hula practitioners to perform abroad had been trained within this ritualized hula system. However, hula became imperial tableaux

on Euro-American tourist circuits as po'e hula—particularly women—were recruited and cast as passive and subordinate fetishes. Sensationalized as a transgressive dance performed by sexualized Hawaiian women, hula became visible on American stages around the time of the U.S.-backed overthrow in 1893. The same year of the overthrow, journalists described the practice as “the seductive hula hula passion dance,” one whose “motive [was] grossly sensual.”⁴⁴ Although most Hawaiians regarded hula as an embodied practice animating the genealogies of gods and chiefs, new American audiences came to associate the kinesthetic movements of Hawaiian bodies with the erotic pleasures of a new colony.

An Empire and Its Women

Imperial conquest has been complicated and secured by gendered and sexual subjugation. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said forcefully established the relationship between sexualized discursive formations and imperial dominion. Through its invention of a feminized and indolent “Orient,” Europe was able to establish control over this new knowable object. The eroticization of Pacific women and the imperial possession of Oceania during the age of European discovery have been astutely connected by Bernard Smith.⁴⁵ The Pacific was made “pacific” through the aestheticization of its women, who were exposed quite literally in Western portraiture as beautiful and sexually available. Smith suggests that the image of the tempting Pacific woman made the entire Pacific “young, feminine, desirable and vulnerable, an ocean of desire.”⁴⁶ In another settler-colonial context, that of the U.S. Southwest, the metonymic, enduring image of the “olla” maiden, a Pueblo woman carrying a pot on her head, personified the region. These picturesque images, Barbara A. Babcock has suggested, turned these Native women into “vessels of desire” and enabled gendered control over the region.⁴⁷

Hawai'i was also subjected to gendered and sexualized conquest through regimes of representation. Within the imperial knowledge-production of the developing U.S. empire, Hawaiian women bore much symbolic weight. As ambassadors of aloha, Hawaiian women have been susceptible to the eroticization of their bodies and the insistent commodification of their aloha. If the imagined Orient was feminine and sexually alluring, the putatively primitive Hawai'i was similarly feminine and sensual, but also simpler and less civilized.⁴⁸ From their first appearance in the Western historical record, Hawaiian women have been represented as eagerly offering their sexual gifts, as Captain James Cook and his officers

portrayed them enticing British sailors during his 1778 and 1779 landings in Hawai'i.⁴⁹ In the late nineteenth century, when the United States was preparing to administer its new imperial archipelago, representations of women and, to a lesser extent, children from Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Cuba, and Hawai'i were analyzed and compared by administrators in order to establish protocols and strategies for rule, as Lanny Thompson has examined. In the case of Hawai'i, narrative and visual representations of "exotic, beautiful" Hawaiian women residing in a civilized paradise produced material effects: a "logic of imperial rule" that swayed toward territorial government, as opposed to imperial government or protectorate status.⁵⁰

These alluring Hawaiian women were often conflated with hula dancers in fin de siècle print culture, depicted with signifiers of hula such as flower lei and leaf skirts. Both men and women performed hula, but Hawaiian women were spectacularized on colonial stages and became metonyms for the nation of Hawai'i. Hawaiian women thus bore the responsibility of reproducing national knowledge for their people as they were commodified within U.S. tourist economies. As Partha Chatterjee discusses, during colonial struggles women are expected to be sanctuaries for the nation and receive protection from the perversion of the colonizing culture.⁵¹ Like other colonized or postcolonial women, Hawaiian women can be both potential contaminants *and* virtuous refuges, signifying the moral corruption or rapturous beauty of Kanaka Maoli. Po'e hula have the privilege and burden of serving as the spiritual essence of their nation while representing the islands to outsiders.

Because it was and continues to be associated closely with Hawaiian women and their bodies, hula has met with both vitriolic criticism and passionate approval by missionaries, colonial settlers, tourists, and Hawaiian nationalists. Hula practitioners have danced on the fringes of respectability and been criticized for commodifying their bodies and cultural practices. Historically, the distinction between sex work and Hawaiian cultural performance has been very porous, with hula often being used as a proxy in popular and juridical discourses about sexual commerce and tourist commerce. Hula has been conflated with literal forms of prostitution—the performance of sexual acts in exchange for money—and metaphorical cultural prostitution, such as the sale of cultural patrimony to tourists. Indeed, soon after their arrival in 1820, Calvinist missionaries pressured ali'i (chiefs) to ban hula performances, with some alleging that prostitutes practiced hula.⁵² These prohibitions forced

hula underground and to remote areas of the islands.⁵³ Almost a century after the first missionary-led interdictions, hula retained its lascivious reputation. A Hawaiian woman identified only as “Madame Puahi” ignited scandal when she sought a license to give commercial hula performances in her Waikiki home in 1913. The city sheriff, civic groups, and building inspectors alike tried to deny her the license, on the grounds that “lewd women” frequented the site.⁵⁴

Women performing acculturated forms of hula for tourists—that is, hula performed with Western instrumentation—frequently receive harsh scrutiny and suspicion. Nathaniel B. Emerson, the Hawai‘i-born ethnographer and missionary son, undertook a salvage ethnography of the ancient religious dances and poetry he fretted were being defiled by the tourist trade. The resulting study, *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* (1909), became the definitive, edifying treatment of hula in the greater part of the twentieth century.⁵⁵ In it, Emerson opined about the regression of hula: “An institution of divine, that is, religious, origin, the hula in modern times has wandered so far and fallen so low that foreign and critical esteem has come to associate it with the riotous and passionate ebullitions of Polynesian kings and the amorous posturings of their voluptuaries.”⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, dancers performing on the tourist hula circuit were roundly rebuked by some members of their own communities. One of the central actors in this book, Kini Kapahukulaokamāmalu, returned to Hawai‘i in 1896 after performing in Europe and North America. Hawaiians shunned her, saying, “You go to mainland and dance the hula—you disgrace the Hawaiians. You disgrace yourself. I don’t want to talk with you.”⁵⁷ In the 1950s, dancer Teela Hailele Holt received similar treatment. She remembered, “I wouldn’t dance at home. People would be too critical, saying we used to dance for haoles. When I came home, I was embarrassed.”⁵⁸ More recently, some who teach hula to nonislanders have been accused of corrupting the practice. The hula matriarch Paulie Jennings endured criticism for “selling hula out to foreigners” when she founded the hula competition E Ho‘i Mai Ka Piko (Return to the Source), also known as the World Invitational Hula Festival. Seeking to share hula, the nonprofit festival invites dancers from outside Hawai‘i, including ones from Latin America and Asia, to learn and perform in Hawai‘i. This has led some Hawai‘i-based hālau hula (hula troupes) to boycott the festival.⁵⁹

With the rise of decolonization and Native rights movements, hula performers can be seen as anathema to these political goals. Haunani-

Kay Trask, a scholar and Hawaiian sovereignty activist, has argued that Hawaiians who perform for tourists are prostituting their culture. They allow themselves to be exploited because they have been colonized: “Tourism is viewed as providing jobs, not as a form of cultural prostitution. Even those who have some glimmer of critical consciousness do not generally agree that the tourist industry prostitutes Hawaiian culture. This is a measure of our own mental oppression. . . . As colonized people, we are colonized to the extent that we are unaware of our oppression.”⁶⁰ As a tourist commodity, hula seems inauthentic and fake, conveniently serving the needs of the neocolonial, multinational corporate tourist industry. Trask allegorizes Hawaiian dancers in order to draw attention to the material exploitation of Hawaiians by a neocolonial state. In her structural critique of tourism, performers remain shadowy abstractions, shorthands for exploitation suffered under colonialism.

In keeping with this skepticism of commodified bodies and knowledge, the movement for Hawaiian sovereignty and self-determination usually cites its origins in 1970s struggles over land development and evictions in such communities as Kalama Valley, Halawa, Ota Camp, Waimānalo, Waikāne-Waiāhole, Niumalu-Nāwiliwili, Mokauea, and Sand Island.⁶¹ The reclamation of the island of Kaho‘olawe, which had been used for U.S. naval testing since 1941, also spurred Hawaiian anticolonial political formations.⁶² Hula—and tourist hula in particular—is not considered an essential element of the movement’s genealogy. While I concur that more visible and lauded aspects of land struggles were significant developments for the twentieth-century Hawaiian nationalist movement, I also weave hula and cultural practices into this genealogy in order to historicize lesser-known but vital connections between a range of commodified and noncommodified cultural knowledge and political practices. I attempt to analyze how hula, in multiple modalities and locations over the last century, produces “counter-memories” that contest sedimented histories of settler colonialism and sustain decolonizing processes.⁶³

Discrepant Desires

As Trask asserts, Native bodies can become commodified objects and imperial fetishes. In tableaux of tourist hula, it would seem that Hawaiians are objects who “cannot represent themselves, they must be represented.”⁶⁴ Hula performers were not only central to the colonial imaginary of Hawai‘i, but were at times instrumentalized for U.S. empire building. In the twentieth century the Hawaiian “hula girl,” as she became known

in popular Americana—whether as an embodied or mediated figure—assisted in domesticating the Pacific for U.S. political, military, tourist, and economic interests. Only a year after Hawai‘i’s annexation by the United States, the hula dancer emerged as a sexualized hostess to American soldiers fighting in the Philippines. Honolulu became an essential fueling stop for U.S. military vessels headed to quell Filipinos who were waging anticolonial guerrilla warfare against American occupation. Aboard a transport vessel in Honolulu, American troops sang this song, “Sweet Mionomai”:

The nautch girls I have seen
 And the ballet’s a fairy queen
 The pretty little oriental geisha—
 All the qualities and shades
 Of charming dancing maids
 I’ve seen in Europe, Africa and Asia

Circassian dancers, too,
 Zoamacuecas in Peru,
 The Kafir dance, the Hottentot and Zulu.
 She who bears the wreath away
 Is the sweet Mionomai,
 The prettiest hula girl in Honolulu.⁶⁵

The soldier-narrator encounters a panoply of eroticized dancing women during his militarized tours, but deems Hawaiian women by far the most desirable. There is no evidence to suggest that “Mionomai” became an enduring musical standard, but the imagined figure of the hula dancer motivated men moving from one stage in the Pacific empire to another during this segment of the Philippine-American War. The hula girl, then, might facilitate not only the integration of Hawai‘i, but other tropical colonies into an American empire.

In their critiques of colonialism and neocolonialism, feminist scholars of the Pacific have discussed how female bodies have been deployed for colonial and neocolonial ends. Teresia K. Teaiwa has made the compelling argument that the iconography of the bikini, named after a U.S. nuclear test site in the Marshall Islands, exposes an eroticized female body that depoliticizes the violence of American colonialism and nuclear testing in Micronesia. Margaret Jolly, responding to Teaiwa, has proposed that sexual possession—imagined or otherwise—of beautiful Polynesian

female bodies may be connected to military and colonial possession of the region.⁶⁶ Turning to Hawai‘i, I consider how the positioning of hula bodies helps to conceal an illusory peace over a continuing military occupation. Throughout the twentieth century, particularly during World War II and the Vietnam War, Hawaiian women have performed important symbolic and material roles in American empire-building in Asia and the Pacific Islands, as I discuss in chapter 5.

But does their influence mean hula performers were locked within ideologies of empire as agents and collaborators? Louis Althusser maintains that ideology cannot be seen, but can hail its subjects nonetheless.⁶⁷ While hula performers were interpellated into imperial ideologies and scripts, I do not mean to suggest they were stable mediators of aloha. They did not always transmit imperial messages as they were intended. Hawaiian women and men have been largely subordinated on colonial stages, but they also inserted and created discrepant scenarios for themselves in hula circuits, at times usurping them. I remain interested in performers as more than allegorical figures and representations. My interest is in how they managed to seize their time on and off the stage for their own discrepant practices and desires. These unpredictable and occasionally insurgent disruptions—while not necessarily oppositional to colonialism—nonetheless disorganize empire. For as we know, colonialism is never complete. Although producing violence over the *longue durée*, empires are not as stable as they may appear, but shift according to the participation of both colonial and indigenous actors. Colonization was not a “fatal impact” dooming Hawaiians.⁶⁸ More than abused objects operating under false consciousness, this cohort of mobile dancers negotiated with colonization and tourist commodification as self-aware agents, brokers, and political actors. I seek to highlight the oscillation of power between colonial institutions, agents, and performers who were often the most direct mediators of Hawai‘i’s fantasy image.

Although empire and colonization may appear to be abstract processes, this is not a disembodied treatment—I turn my focus to the corporeal movements and experiences of Hawaiian performers and cultural brokers, both women and men, on the ground. I track how their counter-colonial politics and desires at times weakened and pressured American hegemony in the islands, focusing on discrepant forms of participation, collusion, and political opposition by Hawaiian performers. I contend these subjects produced “counter-colonial” rather than “anticolonial” scenarios and critiques. Analyzing Chamorro converts to Christianity in

Guam, Vicente M. Diaz argues that they did not demonstrate explicit opposition to colonial institutions in an intentional and legible manner, but that their latent critiques may be better understood as counter-colonial.⁶⁹ Hula performers, too, were not simply “converted” objects, but responded to colonization with counter-colonial desires that were neither clearly oppositional nor accommodating.

Beyond coercion or resistance, a more useful analysis focuses on the “alternative,” rather than “oppositional,” politics of this cohort of Hawaiians, to employ Raymond Williams’s productive distinction.⁷⁰ Men and women on the hula circuit did not appear to directly contribute to an anticolonial resistance movement, unlike Kanaka Maoli patriots who organized petition drives in Hawai‘i that defeated an attempt at U.S. annexation.⁷¹ However, po‘e hula cannot simply be framed as “cultural” performers, for their labor and their productive activities—music, chant, and dance—were cultural *and* political. Refining Marxist evaluations that privilege the economic “base,” Williams argues for the materiality of all struggles, including those relegated to putatively “superstructural” or cultural fields. Cultural activities are deeply material and productive—“elements of a whole material social process,” he writes.⁷² The practice of hula is not merely “aesthetic” or epiphenomenal to political life or labor; it and other cultural and religious performances ground Hawaiian political sovereignty. Jonathan Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio describes cultural activities undertaken in the late nineteenth century, including hula and the publication of chiefly genealogies, as “highly assertive of the glory and vitality of Hawaiian traditions.” They enabled Hawaiians to distinguish themselves from acquisitive foreigners and constitute themselves as a nation as Western powers threatened their sovereignty.⁷³ This also speaks true of hula on the road, as I attempt to demonstrate.

In James C. Scott’s analysis, the “hidden transcripts” of subordinated groups critique and rebel against public transcripts of domination.⁷⁴ This theory can be brought into productive conversation with the Hawaiian epistemology and practice of kaona, “veiled language” or hidden meanings.⁷⁵ Hawaiian poetry and song contain innuendoes, allusions, and metaphors purposely meant to conceal and reveal. The kaona of a song may reference clandestine lovers and activities in the guise of descriptions of flowers or landscapes only meant to be understood by select audiences. Kaona, as a tactic of enclosure and revelation, demarcated those who could interpret and those not meant to know. Hawaiian performers, I suggest, deployed kaona as a cultural and political resource in their

colonial performances and travels; it served as a productive disguise for subtle and more dramatic political critiques and struggles against colonial incorporation.

Their “infrapolitics,” what Scott describes as the often invisible “circumspect struggle waged daily by subordinate groups,” can be detected in extraordinary and mundane aspects of life, sexuality, food, and fashion.⁷⁶ Within and beyond their stage performances, these dancers were political and cultural actors who wanted to have fun, dress up, and play. By examining these performers and their lives in full frame, I hope to demonstrate that Hawaiian performers were not merely passive objects in Euro-American tourist economies, but resisted and negotiated with colonization through their own “traveling cultures” and consumer practices.⁷⁷ They carved out their own homes, political expressions, and diasporic networks in view and out of view of foreign audiences.

In a rare, candid photograph I found of Hawaiian entertainers at the turn of the century, a group huddles together in Omaha, Nebraska. Their coats and hats appear splotted with snow, as if they had emerged from a snowball fight. Native American settlements outside tribal lands led to the phenomenon Philip J. Deloria has aptly called, in the case of Indian Country, “Indians in unexpected places”—the incongruous sight of an Indian in a modern landscape, whether it was Geronimo in a Cadillac, an Osage Indian driving an expensive automobile, or a Wild West performer playing ping pong.⁷⁸ Hawaiians’ authenticity as an autochthonous people was and is often tied to their relationship to land and ocean. However, Hawaiians appeared in unexpected locations, such as snowbound streets, restricted military bases, diners in the deep South, Harlem nightclubs, and New York City taxicabs. Moving through the U.S. empire, they modeled a kind of Native modernity—a Hawaiian cosmopolitanism, if you will.

Hawaiian women on the hula circuit, especially, danced through uncharted territory. They unsettled preconceptions of Hawaiians as premodern, indolent “Kanakas” sitting on a faraway rock—“so pleasure-loving, so happy-go-lucky,” as the *New York Times* described them.⁷⁹ But more important, they produced novel ideas of what Hawaiian women could be and do. Asserting autonomy from male authority with varying degrees of success, they traveled, smoked cigarettes, went to nightclubs, and created businesses. An important question I ask is, what did these performers want for themselves? What do they desire as they seek employment and self-fulfillment in places like Brunei, Japan, and New York?

What are the lived experiences of women and men who are potential agents of empire and a nascent decolonization movement?

The Aunties and the Archives

Born in 1933, Raylani Nihoa Piliāloha Kinney grew up on the U.S. hula circuit. Since the age of four to fifteen, she had lived in buses and hotels with a troupe of hula dancers and musicians. Led by her father, famed Hawaiian bandleader Ray Kinney, this troupe performed in hospitals, hotels, and military bases in almost every American state in the 1930s and 1940s. One memory of Raylani's extraordinary childhood delighted her: "Fireflies were beautiful in the South." And yet, her own grandchildren knew nothing about her cosmopolitan, peripatetic past and saw her only as a childcare provider from the sleepy town of Waimea, Hawai'i. They asked her, "What have you done, Grandma? You just take care of children." Raylani insisted, "But I've done all of these things and have seen things."⁸⁰ Her protest is emblematic of the gendered neglect and amnesia surrounding this history of hula and Hawaiian mobility. When I first began talking to Hawaiian and islander dancers who had headlined and performed on the professional circuit, most were surprised. They asked, "Why do you want to know my story?" Some demurred, "I'm not important." But when they began sharing their stories about fame, glamour, and occasional notoriety in their youth, it became clear many felt forgotten as they reached their seventies and eighties.

Indeed, when I began this research in the late 1990s, I was spurred by deep gaps in the history of hula. I discovered a newspaper clipping about famed Hawaiian dancers on tour in the 1930s and failed to recognize any of their names, though I grew up in Hawai'i and was an active member of a hālau hula. Despite the ubiquity of hula in present-day Hawai'i, people who dance hula today do not often talk about commercialized, tourist hula, particularly the kind of hapa haole (meaning "part foreign" or acculturated) hula that became popular in the twentieth century. One reason for this period's absence in historical and popular discourse is that hula associated with pre-European performance forms—glossed as hula kahiko (literally "old hula")—has become highly valorized for its more ostensibly "authentic" connection to indigenous Hawaiian values and practices. Acculturated hula, in contrast, is seen as tainted by tourist markets and removed from Native self-determination and nationalist causes. From this perspective, dancers who performed this "hapa haole" hula are far too colonized or "haole." While there is a growing body of

scholarship emphasizing the connection between Kanaka Maoli sovereignty and cultural activism, there is little literature on tourist hula practices in the last century.⁸¹

The bodies of hula performers present a curious problem: they are hypervisible in popular culture while leaving only the faintest traces in archives. I am keenly aware that subordinated subjects and their live, often ephemeral, performances are often absent in official, state-oriented archives. To reconstruct hula circuits over the past century, I have depended on a range of primary and secondary sources in American and Hawai'i archives: English-language newspapers from the islands and the United States, Hawaiian-language newspapers, military films and photographs, oral histories, and guidebooks.⁸² Colonial archives—what Ann Stoler has described as “intricate technologies of rule”—included intercultural tourist performers most often as archetypes (the hula girl, South Seas maidens), but rarely individuated.⁸³

The appearance of intercultural hula performers and their travels abroad in Hawaiian-language newspapers is also attenuated, possibly because their travails were eclipsed by political turmoil. English-language newspapers published in Hawai'i and the United States provide more details, though not necessarily accurate, of hula tours and performances abroad. In the Hawai'i state (formerly territorial) archives, most of the visual materials on hula are grouped together as “Hula Dancers, Musicians, Groups.”⁸⁴ Therefore, we only know a fraction of the names of female performers from the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth.⁸⁵ The movements of Hawaiian women from colony to metropole further complicate their documentation. As fourth-world women in the first world, tourist performers, and itinerant colonial laborers, *po'e hula* were, with few exceptions, anonymous and linger on the margins of territorial archives and U.S. national archives.

Because of the limitations of American and Hawaiian textual and visual archives, I found myself working in the interstices of archive and field, reconstituting and creating new archives with insights gained from hula performance and ethnographic research in hula communities. My lived participation in Hawai'i enabled a methodology that traffics freely between past and present, connecting colonization in the past and ongoing neocolonial pressures in a not-yet-decolonized fieldsite.⁸⁶ Foucault presses for the “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” in criticism.⁸⁷ He suggests that “it is through the re-appearance of . . . these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its

work.”⁸⁸ I further propose to examine the “low-ranking knowledges” of (neo)colonial subjects and women, whose lives have been particularly illegible in colonial repositories and have seemed marginal to the practice of history.

To do so, my method has required a reliance on two overlapping systems of knowledge: archives of written texts and repertoires of live and mediated performances. Repertoire, as Diana Taylor theorizes it, is “embodied practice/knowledge” that enacts memory through live action.⁸⁹ In paying attention to the repertoire, Taylor suggests analyzing “scenarios” instead of texts and narratives. Scenarios enable the study of the “social construction of bodies in particular contexts” as well as embodied behaviors such as “gestures, attitudes, and tones not reducible to language.”⁹⁰ Hula is an embodied practice that deploys what Joseph Roach has called “kinesthetic imagination,” a principle and practice that enables a “way of thinking through movements.”⁹¹

My first research tactic to bring these subjugated knowledges and movements into view has been to create alternative archives and repertoires of oral histories, photographs, personal memorabilia, performances, and films. I identified and found surviving dancers and their families, conducting open-ended interviews and relying on their extensive personal collections to interpret their life histories. As it is impossible to confine a study of hula and colonization to the past, my participation extended into intersecting arenas of contemporary Hawaiian sovereignty and hula, in other words, the ongoing, living repertoire of hula.

Most of the women maintained an active relationship to hula, whether directly or indirectly through their kin, and had varying connections to Kanaka Maoli cultural nationalism. I attended sovereignty marches, assisted with ‘ohana (family) newsletters, and attended family reunions, hula rehearsals, hula competitions, informal performances, and fundraisers for Native Hawaiian rights. I also spent a year producing a video documentary of the dancer Betty Puanani Makia, her family, and her performing history centered around New York City.⁹² In short, I was documenting and creating archives, as well as a repertoire, of the present.

At first the performers eluded me: they existed only as an inert list of names culled from a local newspaper archive, fittingly called a morgue. However, local kinship connections allowed me to track down a dancer from the hula circuit of the 1930s, animating my research. Meymo Ululani Holt had attended the same high school I had in Honolulu. When I stopped at the school library to look up her photograph in the 1930 an-

nual, the archivist mentioned that another much younger “Meymo” was an alumna. Might they be related? I called her namesake, a grand-niece, and a few phone calls later was in touch with two nerve centers and kūpuna (elders) of the extended Holt clan. Though Meymo Ululani Holt had passed away a few years earlier, I was put in touch with Meymo’s older daughter, who shared photographs and the Holt family genealogy with me. Her cousin and I visited Meymo’s gravesite in the valley where my family lives. From here on, there was no such thing as simply gleaning the biographies of hula performers from newspaper clippings.

A few women proudly displayed glamorous framed portraits in their living rooms, while nearly all had compiled and tucked away elaborate albums and scrapbooks of their performing careers. Even if they did not intend their personal effects to be entered into official archives, they were prolific collectors and archivists in their own right. Though one professional dancer already had advanced Alzheimer’s disease when I met her, she had stored a lifetime of newspaper clippings and photographs in several army trunks. Many dancers had already passed away or were in fragile health when I began this search. But even when they had passed away years before, their lineaments came into focus through the stories and faces of their descendants.

My second tactic is to offer what I call discrepant readings of official and unofficial archives and performance repertoire; that is, finding “hidden transcripts” within imperial scripts, scenarios, and tableaux.⁹³ Recognizing that a totalizing reconstruction of these women’s experiences is impossible, I attempt to read archives against the grain or, as Saidiya Hartman has demonstrated in her critical reexamination of slave performances, to reclaim archives for “contrary purposes.”⁹⁴ I rely on fragments and the ephemeral—those often gendered traces of women’s desires, such as souvenirs, fashions, songs, photographs, and embodied gestures—that suggest daily acts of critique, contestation, survival, and pleasure during colonization.

My lived relationship to Hawai‘i, a place I call home, has meant that my role as a researcher is simultaneously more fraught and intense. I am both insider and outsider in Hawai‘i. Though born and raised in the islands, I am not Kanaka Maoli. I have access to community-based knowledge through my local kin networks, but I am also a non-Native researcher in a Kanaka Maoli community that is engaged in a long-standing decolonizing struggle and has been ethnographically overdetermined by Western scholarship. A non-Native scholar must be keenly aware of the complex

ethics and politics of conducting research in a Native community and the potential epistemic violence that this relationship may produce. Many postcolonial studies have come to take as self-evident the analytical framework of Native and Other.⁹⁵ Marking the epistemological and political differences between Native and Other subjects has also been vital for indigenous movement politics in Hawai‘i and other settler-colonial sites, cohering in the 1980s and 1990s.

However, while postcolonial anthropology and movement politics are animated by the distinction between Natives and Others, the assumption that a non-Native researcher is a problematic interpreter of Native histories, experiences, and values is neither universally nor consistently held. This framework does not obtain in the social values and everyday practices of my informants, predominantly Hawaiian women who came of age between the 1930s and the 1950s, and who predate the sovereignty and Native rights activism I discuss in the epilogue. The more significant values and concrete relations that organize these women’s everyday lives are shared interactions via cultural training, place, gender, and local kin. They distinguish less between those who are Native and non-Native, but make judgments based on whether one is from Hawai‘i and has community or family-based cultural knowledge of the islands. I became involved with these Hawaiian women as someone whose multigenerational family lived in the same neighborhoods, attended the same schools, and moved along similar circuits outside the islands. My research subjects and so-called informants recognized that I was not Hawaiian, but they treated me as someone more like them than not. I was a neighbor from one valley over, a hula sister, a hānai (adopted) niece.

For each individual dancer I encountered, I met extended families, grandchildren, and childhood friends, and whenever possible learned their hula genealogies and mo‘o kū‘auhau (kin genealogies). They became my “aunties,” “aunty” being an island term of endearment and affection for an older woman, blood-related or not. My fieldnotes name them as Aunty X, Aunty Y, Aunty Z, although in this book I have abided by the convention of referring to my subjects by first name. However, this access was both a gift and a burden that brought its own challenges: the attendant obligations, confidences, and silences that come with intimate access to local knowledge. Many revealed sensitive disagreements, secrets, and traumas, relying on me to protect their privacy while narrating their experiences and passing them into the public domain. My decisions about how much to transmit of the women’s lives in this book were shaped by

their own conscious choices to unveil and protect particular aspects of sacred knowledge on hula circuits.

Producing scholarly work about hula has also come into productive tension with established modalities of authority, rank, and training in the hālau hula system, amplifying differences between writing and dancing. The kumu hula, who has earned his or her credentials through authorizing living bodies and the blessings of akua and ancestors, is the ultimate authority of a hālau; the word of the kumu is final. Haumāna (students) like me are expected to faithfully reproduce every movement taught by a kumu, particularly the chanted poetry and dances that make up a hula tradition.⁹⁶ Only with express permission are students allowed to creatively adapt movements, alter the repertoire, or rechoreograph chants; but dancers have certainly transformed repertoire, as evidenced by great shifts in performance styles over several decades.⁹⁷ In order to write about hula, I had to also unwork this fundamental dictate, as do dancers: I was not simply recording what I was taught, but interpreting and assembling a shifting repertoire with its contradictions and ellipses.

Embracing these challenges of the fragmented colonial and postcolonial archive, I have made a deliberate choice not to pursue a linear chronology. Rather than presenting a comprehensive history of hula or a compendium of Hawaiian performers and their itineraries, *Aloha America* frames performers as actors operating within U.S. colonizing processes. While proceeding roughly chronologically, the book places emphasis on particular performers and performance sites—embodiments of aloha that mediated Hawaiian hospitality.

The first two chapters of this book examine performers on fin de siècle hula circuits before and during the American overthrow of the monarchy. Over the last century and a half, hula practitioners performed in diverse venues for Euro-American audiences, but one of the earliest sites was the transnational royal court of Honolulu. Chapter 1 traces the origins of the hula circuit to late nineteenth-century transnational Honolulu. I introduce Kini Kapahukulaokamāmalu and her contemporaries, commoner (i.e., nonchiefly) women who received formal hula training and sponsorship in King David Kalākaua's royal court. Kalākaua, the ribald bon vivant known as the "Merrie Monarch," elevated hula and Native genealogical arts to a central stage of his reign, while battling hostile missionary and planter elements and U.S. economic pressure. Hula achieved notoriety because of its association with Hawaiian sexuality, but also materialized as a nationalist practice and opportunity structure for Hawaiian women

during informal and formal U.S. colonization. By virtue of institutionalized hula training and their encounters with foreign people and ideas in the port town of Honolulu, commoner women emerged as transgressive, intercultural figures prior to their departure from Hawai'i. Their expertise in hula made them more valuable as protectors of Hawaiian genealogical knowledge, but also exposed them to criticism from Christian observers.

Chapter 2 takes a closer view of the counter-colonial tactics of these dancers during the first major hula tour of the continental United States and Europe. With the American colonial acquisition of overseas territories, Hawaiian women were interpellated as erotic collectibles in imperial entertainments such as the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, dime museums, and vaudeville theaters. However, they were not simply reducible to imperial objects; they followed their own diversions as cosmopolitan tourists and consumers in contravention of nationality, gender, and rank. Peeking behind the theatrical curtain, I deliberate on how Hawaiian performers pursued their own idiosyncratic, gendered collecting and touristic practices in the age of Victoria, appropriating modern technologies such as studio photography and fashion. As they developed unexpected friendships and alliances backstage, their discrepant and modern desires at times ran counter to both Hawaiian anticolonial nationalism and American imperialist logics.

Although Hawaiian women performers have commanded the tourist spotlight over the last century because of the gendered hierarchies of colonial entertainments, chapter 3 of this book turns toward Hawaiian men who were influential brokers of hula and Hawaiian culture during the early territorial period. Organizing and presenting living Hawaiian villages at U.S. world's fairs, entrepreneurial and cosmopolitan men managed to convert their work in cultural performance into anticolonial political capital. These Hawaiian brokers—indeed, impresarios—circumvented and challenged the haole oligarchy of the islands by “playing Hawaiian” in commodified entertainment venues away from the colony.⁹⁸ Representing Hawai'i and Hawaiians directly to American audiences, these mobile actors merged culture and politics on the hula circuit and defied U.S. annexation in diasporic sites. Traveling far from the islands under conditions of political exile, they wrote and performed music and asserted their autonomy from the territorial government. With men serving as public brokers, hula circuits also produced internal gendered hierarchies.

Chapter 4 looks closely at hula circuits across the U.S. continent as Hawaiian women became ambassadors of aloha for the territory of Hawai'i.

Performing in popular Hawaiian showrooms in New York City, Chicago, and other metropolitan areas, they were heralded as “hula queens,” celebrities, and success stories. Their commercial performances produced what I discuss as an imagined intimacy between Hawai‘i and the United States, enabling American audiences to experience a fantasy of Hawai‘i as a different but welcoming place. Live hula performances, while elevating Hawaiians to the principal brokers of Hawaiian culture, simultaneously helped to erase the presence of large numbers of immigrant Asians who lived in Hawai‘i. Yet, hula also led island women to lives and careers both inside and outside entertainment during a time when many women were limited to racially and gender-stratified plantation and service industries. They created “traveling cultures” and gendered diasporas in often hostile and unfamiliar new cities, and they supported each other as “sisters” and fictive kin.

The final chapter of this book turns toward an enduring staging of aloha and hospitality: the luau. An extended performance of feasting in which hula played a central role, the tourist luau emerged at world’s fairs in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, during World War II, volunteer hula troupes staged luaus in the islands for arriving American soldiers. Analyzing military films and photography taken by military combat photography units, I suggest how tourist luaus engendered an “imperial hospitality” that helped to restabilize intimacy between Hawaiian colonial subjects and the military. This highly gendered and racialized imperial hospitality produces an alchemy of “rest and relaxation” for tourists. While the sexuality of the Hawaiian population was regulated through this militouristic visual economy, islanders who performed in this “Pacific theater” developed counter-memories of their experiences that I disclose through dancers’ alternative archives.

The epilogue of this book leads both backward and forward to the future of hula. By this, I mean to suggest one provenance of Hawai‘i’s present-day self-determination movement may be found in an unexpected site—the tourist hula circuit that sustained cultural reproduction and political contestation during American colonization. Challenged by a globalized economy, hula also provides energy for an ongoing Kanaka Maoli decolonization movement. Contemporary performers, like their forebears, cross into multiple realms of tourist performance, Native rights activism, and cultural competitions. There are few clear victories to be earned over U.S. empire, as the experiences of nineteenth-century kūpuna reveal, but new generations of po‘e hula may look toward their tactics for sustenance and guidance.