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# Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits through the American Empire

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A GROUP OF INFLUENTIAL HAWAIIANS—A PRINCESS, A FAMED HULA DANCER, AND A composer—gathered at a Honolulu home in 1919 to judge a private hula performance. David and Lydia Bray, a young Hawaiian couple who were dancers themselves, had staged this unofficial “hula trial.” All we know is that girls from the ages of eight to fourteen presented their hula repertoire before the panel. Responding to nearly a century of denigration of hula by Christian missionaries, the Brays sought to reinsert hula into everyday public life. Was hula truly vulgar and obscene, as many *haole* (white) missionaries and Christian Hawaiians asserted? At the end of the presentation, the judges conferred and delivered a “not guilty” verdict. The hula was clean; its practitioners should not fear performing before Hawaiian and American audiences.

Less than twenty years later, another kind of hula “trial” entertained Hawai‘i. A group of judges assembled again, except this time they had before them the task of choosing the best hula dancer in the islands. Sponsored by Hollywood’s Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios (MGM) and the Hawai‘i-based Consolidated Amusement Company, the “Inter-Island Hula Contest” sought to crown a “hula queen” in 1938. In the “greatest hula contest ever staged in the Islands,” nearly five hundred young Hawaiian women competed for the title for more than a month, going through several rounds of competition.<sup>1</sup> Each hoped to win the

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grand prize: a trip to Hollywood and a chance at stardom in the United States.

On almost every island, audiences followed the competition with great enthusiasm, buying tickets for preliminary rounds held at movie theaters and rooting for their favorites. On Friday nights on O'ahu, local people attended elimination rounds at the Hawai'i Theater and indicated by applause their choices of finalists. In September 1938 five finalists from five different islands gathered in Honolulu for a "Hula-Nui Nite" (Big Hula Nite). In an overflowing theater, a board of judges crowned the contestant from Kaua'i, Alice Kealoha Pauole Holt, "Hula Queen" (fig. 1). Holt subsequently passed her MGM screen test in Hollywood and spent three months there, touring as an "ambassador of good will" and dancing in the American stage and film productions of *Honolulu*.<sup>2</sup>

What happened between the Brays' hula trial in 1919 and the MGM "Hula-Nui Nite" in 1938? How was hula transformed from ignominy to celebrated practice in the islands and the United States? In the developing tourist economy, Hawaiian cultural practitioners like David and Lydia Bray labored to revive traditional forms of hula but also put themselves on display. By the 1930s Hawaiians had managed to create self-sustaining enterprises as tourist entertainers in the islands, creating conditions for their export overseas.<sup>3</sup> Alice Holt may have been MGM Studio's only official "Hula Queen," but she was only one of a generation of Hawaiian women who began leaving Hawai'i in the 1930s for the U.S. continent. American nightclubs and showrooms packaged hula as middlebrow American entertainment, and hula dancers joined circuits that routed them between Hawai'i and Manhattan. Hula became the ticket out of Hawai'i for many women, promising fame and glamour in the United States.

These commercial cultural displays emerged in the years prior to World War II and Hawai'i statehood in 1959, when Hawai'i was a U.S. territory. What can these hula circuits reveal about the nature of imperialist relations between the U.S. nation-state and its Hawaiian colony? The orientation of the territorial economy was shifting from agribusiness to new crops of tourists. Hawaiian bodies and Hawaiian culture—particularly Hawaiian music and hula—became valued commodities for the tourist industry, both inside and outside Hawai'i. As "ambassadors of aloha," Hawaiian performers promoted Hawai'i's charms on the U.S. continent. Hawaiian cultural practices became



**Figure 1. Alice Kealoha Pauole Holt, Hawai'i's Hula Queen, 1938. Courtesy Hawai'i State Archives, copyright holder unknown.**

highly politicized, for whoever brokered the presentation of Hawaiian culture would determine the development of tourism in Hawai'i. Yet these practices also enabled many Hawaiians in the islands and in American urban centers to secure a measure of freedom and pleasure. Although these imperial hula circuits were not structures of their own choosing, within them Hawaiians sustained cultural reproduction, pursued employment and education, and created intimate diasporic communities.

A colonial relationship had been established between Hawai'i and the United States, officially beginning with the American-backed overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893. A group of *haole* businessmen in the islands conspired with American government officials to overthrow the constitutional monarchy of Hawai'i and succeeded with the help of U.S. marines. Five years after this illegal

armed takeover, the U.S. government annexed Hawai‘i; two years later, in 1900, the United States officially incorporated Hawai‘i as a territory. Americans on the continent did not, however, come into close contact with Hawaiians on a wide scale until the 1930s. In the years prior to World War II, as the Pacific colony grew more important to national security, Americans needed to define Hawai‘i and Hawaiians for their own interests. Concomitant with tourism, American military operations mounted in Hawai‘i, where the United States required a foothold to assert itself against Japan. In an era before jet planes delivered Americans to the islands, Americans came to experience Hawai‘i through live performances on the U.S. continent.

The imperial hula circuits of the 1930s and 1940s produced what I call an “imagined intimacy” between Hawai‘i and the United States. A fantasy of reciprocal attachment, this “imagined intimacy” made it impossible, indeed unimaginable, for Americans to part from their colony. Hawaiian women produced a feminized version of Hawai‘i on stage, offering their *aloha*—the promise of intimacy, affection, and veneration—to the United States through live hula performances. The dreams spun out of steel guitars, ukuleles, and grass skirts made the distant territory familiar to those who had never visited the islands and made American military and tourist expansion seem benign.

In order to understand how U.S. entertainment circuits operated during this period of tourist and military development from the 1930s to the late 1940s, it is necessary to examine the island scene and the conditions from which these islander performers emerged. To do so, we must begin in territorial Hawai‘i and follow Hawaiian and islander women who moved from Hawai‘i to the U.S. continent to take their chances as performers.

#### The New Plantations in Territorial Hawai‘i, 1920–1940

More than twenty-five hundred miles away from the California coast, Hawai‘i was the jewel of the American colonial periphery. In *Song of the Islands*, a twenty-minute promotional film produced by the Hawai‘i Tourist Bureau in 1934, white American tourists bid a bitter-sweet good-bye to Honolulu after a stay in the islands. Draped in long carnation leis on a steamship deck, they are serenaded by a group of strolling Hawaiian musicians. Shown in Fox movie theaters in the United States, such films necessarily obscure the social and political relations that enabled this leisurely experience.

The U.S. federal government and a *haole*-dominated territorial government held the islands in a stranglehold. From 1900 Hawai‘i was an incorporated territory of the United States—an indeterminate political and social body that was not quite a state, yet not merely a possession. As residents of a U.S. territory under jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of the Interior, Hawai‘i’s citizens were not allowed to elect their own governor; the president appointed Hawai‘i’s governor and judges. This would remain the case until Hawai‘i became a state in 1959. The elusive promise of U.S. statehood seemed near but not achievable. In the 1930s statehood bills proposed to Congress by Hawaiian territorial legislators failed. Questions about the racial suitability of Hawai‘i’s large nonwhite population—particularly the Japanese—plagued Hawai‘i’s bids for statehood.<sup>4</sup> In 1930 *haole* made up only 21.8 percent of the population, and the rest was Asian and Native Hawaiian. Japanese were the largest single segment of the population, at almost 38 percent.<sup>5</sup> Yet the minority *haole* population treated Hawai‘i as its own fiefdom.

A *kama‘āina haole* (Hawai‘i-born Caucasian) oligarchy of American missionary descendents achieved near economic and social consolidation over the islands through five interlocking corporations known as the Big Five.<sup>6</sup> The Big Five owned plantations, banks, shipping lines, railways, insurance, retailers, and service industries like hotels. Through a vertical monopoly, their affiliated corporations grew, refined, marketed, and shipped the sugar produced on the islands. In the 1930s sugar was the largest industry in Hawai‘i, followed by pineapple.<sup>7</sup> Blending paternalism and brutal strikebreaking, the Big Five ruled the plantations with a tight fist, befitting the Calvinist backgrounds of their directors.<sup>8</sup> The Hawaiian colony, with its racialized workforce of Native Hawaiians and Asians, produced agricultural commodities for the metropole and absorbed the inflated exports of the mother country.

During Hawai‘i’s territorial period, between 1900 and 1959, Hawai‘i was subject to U.S. federal legislation and a U.S.-oriented export economy. Yet the internal power wielded by the Big Five and the *haole* oligarchy meant that they represented Hawai‘i in Washington. They could lobby and often manipulate the U.S. government and corporations for policies beneficial to themselves. Although nominally appointed by the president of the United States, the governor of the territory was in actuality handpicked by the Big Five and presented to the American president for his rubber stamp.<sup>9</sup> Until the end of World

War II, one group of intermarried *haole* families controlled nearly every aspect of island life: the Republican territorial government, legislation, taxes, labor, and the inflated cost of living.<sup>10</sup> The colonial relationship between the United States and Hawai‘i enabled a small group of *haole* Americans in the islands to have their way with the islands, with inconsistent oversight by the federal government.

Hawai‘i of the 1920s and 1930s had much in common with the plantation economies of other tropical possessions in the Caribbean, including racialized class structures, the concentration of economic power in a few hands, an export imbalance with North America and Europe, and a strong American military presence. Hawai‘i’s economy was increasingly supported by U.S. defense spending; by 1940 the armed forces population had risen to six times its 1920 level.<sup>11</sup> Besides military bases, Hawai‘i extended the promise of beaches and sun. In the 1920s American and European tourists started to arrive in greater numbers on steamships. In 1921 a Honolulu writer predicted that tourists would be “without doubt . . . THE leading crop of the future.”<sup>12</sup> Although tourism ranked a distant third to sugar and pineapple cultivation, the Big Five recognized its potential to generate profits and began to develop a tourist infrastructure and market Hawai‘i in the early 1920s.

Luxury hotels became the new plantations. In 1927 Matson Navigation Company, a Big Five company, opened the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Waikiki. The local elite, including former Hawaiian royalty, arrived in black tie for the opening of the elegant property. Matson—the shipping monopoly that controlled all routes between Hawai‘i and North America—enjoyed a large market share of the early tourist industry.<sup>13</sup> After sailing on the S.S. *Lurline*, Matson’s luxury ocean liner, visitors would stay in Hawai‘i at a Matson-owned property. In the mid-1930s Hollywood movie stars such as Shirley Temple, Mary Pickford, and Bing Crosby flocked to Waikiki for vacations, as did the “great and new great of the world.”<sup>14</sup> The tourist industry centered in Waikiki saw glimmers of success that were to be realized with mass tourism in the post–World War II years.<sup>15</sup>

What could sell Hawai‘i to the United States? The Big Five recognized the value of hula and Hawaiian music in publicizing Hawai‘i to Americans. The *haole* elite aimed to benefit from Native bodies and culture, although they largely disapproved of hula performance. Hawaiian musicians and dancers had proved themselves influ-

ential envoys as they circulated at world's fairs and expositions starting in the 1890s. Hawaiian performers made their world's fair debut at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, only six months after the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom.<sup>16</sup> As the territory began to promote tourism as another industry, Hawaiians became necessary for their ability to convey *aloha* to Americans and advertise the territory's cash commodities, such as pineapple and sugar.

At world's fairs in Seattle in 1909 and San Francisco in 1915, the Hawai'i Pineapple Growers' Association brought *hapa-haole* (part-white, part-Hawaiian) women to serve pineapple to visitors at the Hawai'i pavilions. Over a five-month period in Seattle, these "native girls" served more than two hundred thousand plates of pineapple and were credited for giving visitors a favorable impression of Hawai'i and the islands' delicious fruit.<sup>17</sup> Attractions in their own right in the territorial exhibits, Hawaiian women were in the process of becoming the ripe "fruit" of the territory, superseding even the exotic pineapple. The icon of the "hula girl" at first helped to sell commodities, but Hawaiian women would soon be marketed as commodities themselves, providing gendered labor for the territory in the form of hula.

Hula in precontact Hawai'i was a religious practice performed at temples, and specialized troupes of dancers also provided entertainment for chiefs and important visitors.<sup>18</sup> Through chanted poetry and bodily movements, hula performers celebrated the births and achievements of chiefs, recorded the genealogies of high chiefs, and relayed Hawaiian epics. Hula was also embedded in a culture of sexual arousal; some songs specifically honored chiefly genitalia, encouraging procreation and the continuation of a chiefly line. Even while entertaining people, hula practice was a part of a sacred realm and governed by strict rules, because hula performances manifested the chiefs' *mana* (sacred power) and rank.<sup>19</sup> Dancers trained under strict rules and the protection of the female goddess Laka.

Christian missionaries who began arriving in the islands in 1820 almost immediately condemned hula's strong sexual and spiritual content. They pressured Hawaiian chiefs to ban the hula, driving it underground. Missionaries associated the "hulahula" with Hawaiian debauchery, idleness, and sexuality, qualities that cast Hawaiians as unproductive workers in the emerging capitalist economies of Hawai'i. Upon the insistent urging of *haole* members of the Hawaiian Evangelical Society, the Hawaiian legislature passed a new civil code in 1859



that regulated all public hula performances. Any public exhibition of hula that charged admission was forbidden without a prohibitive ten-dollar license issued by the interior ministry. Those who disobeyed risked imprisonment or fines.<sup>20</sup> The law effectively erased hula from the public sphere. But hula continued to be practiced in rural areas, where Hawaiians were under less surveillance.<sup>21</sup>

Hawaiian cultural practices, and by extension Hawaiian survival, were increasingly under attack during the territorial period, as they had been for decades. Federal and territorial policies of land restructuring made many Hawaiians landless.<sup>22</sup> Hawaiian language had been officially banned in Hawai'i since 1896, a few years after the American overthrow. At public schools, some teachers punished Hawaiian children for speaking their native tongue.<sup>23</sup> And yet the *haole*-dominated tourist industry of the early twentieth century recognized that some kinds of Hawaiian culture were indispensable commodities.

By 1910 hula was part of the entertainment for the developing tourist trade in the islands.<sup>24</sup> *Haole*-operated newspapers and journals saw hula and Hawaiian music as potential attractions, and public discourse began to shift in favor of hula. Once packaged properly, Hawaiian culture marked Hawai'i as unique, and hula dancers provided Hawai'i with its "destination image."<sup>25</sup> The reverend John T. Gulick asserted the utility of hula, despite its occasional "immorality": "Under the right kind of supervision [Hawaiian dances] can be made so interesting and free from objectionable features that they will be of inestimable value as a source of amusement and interest to thousands of tourists and residents of Honolulu."<sup>26</sup> In the 1920s editorials in the Honolulu magazine *Paradise of the Pacific* called for more hula dancers and musicians to go on tour.<sup>27</sup> By 1925 the Hawaii Tourist Bureau, which was part of the Hawaii Chamber of Commerce, had allocated \$125,000 a year for tourist promotion. Ten years later, even during the Depression, the Tourist Bureau spent \$100,000 on a "comprehensive campaign" to "tell the world of Hawaii."<sup>28</sup> The same year a more effective advertising reach to the U.S. continent came in the form of the popular "Hawaii Calls" radio show. Broadcast from the Moana Hotel in Waikiki, the program featured Hawaiian musicians and dancers.

By the end of the 1920s *kama'āina haole*—particularly those who had invested capital in the tourist infrastructure—saw themselves as the guardians of authentic Hawaiian practices. They would protect Hawaiian culture from Hawaiians themselves, who crudely reduced hula to its market value without regard for public standards and authenticity.

Lorrin A. Thurston, the grandson of American missionaries, had actively participated in the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and later served as the new republic's annexation commissioner in Washington. In 1922 Thurston felt strongly enough about the "fake" hula skirts used in films—he wanted only Hawaiian-made hula skirts shown—that he tried to establish a Hawaiian board of review to censor any films that exaggerated "hula effects."<sup>29</sup> Even the once scathing *Paradise of the Pacific* resurrected the hula in the 1930s, opining: "Never . . . was she [hula] an abandoned profligate. Always she was beautiful, consistently full of charm and, certainly, never boring. . . . Hula is Hawaii and Hawaii is hula."<sup>30</sup> Some *haole* considered Hawaiian cultural practices their own heritage and, by extension, their profitable property. This is not to say that they did not feel genuinely attached to Hawai'i and Hawaiians. Yet this eulogizing of a "purer" hula was a form of "imperialist nostalgia," the mourning of colonizers for what they have transformed.<sup>31</sup> This nostalgia discursively erases the complicity of those who contributed to that change.

Hawaiian cultural practitioners were caught in this contradictory logic. For Hawaiian practices to remain authentic, they could not afford to be tainted by market relations, but this "pristine" culture was in turn eagerly appropriated and commodified by the tourist industry. Hawaiians found themselves trying to ensure cultural reproduction while participating in capitalist markets. Who was to mine Hawaiian culture in the 1930s and 1940s as tourism developed? The stakes for selling Hawai'i's principal cultural resources would be raised even higher as the United States expanded its consolidation over Hawai'i and career opportunities in the United States grew.

### Native Entrepreneurs: The Lalani Hawaiian Village

A young Hawaiian woman named Pualani Mossman thrilled Waikiki tourists in the early 1930s with a "volcano hula." As Mossman danced on a raised platform, a man blew kerosene from his mouth and lit a large replica of a volcano. The "volcano dance" was the nightly *pièce de résistance* at the Lalani Hawaiian Village, a family-run Hawaiian cultural center in Waikiki. The "volcano hula" was, however, only one of a number of attractions at the Lalani Hawaiian Village. Tourists could learn the hula from Mossman and her two sisters, watch Hawaiian boys climb coconut trees, eat freshly pounded *poi* (a Hawaiian staple), and sit down at a *lū'au* (fig. 2).<sup>32</sup>



**Figure 2. Hula Show at Lalani Hawaiian Village, Waikiki, ca. 1935. Left to right dancers: Pualani, Leilani, and Pailani Mossman. Photograph by N.R. Farbman, Bishop Museum.**

In 1932 Pualani Mossman's father, a *hapa-haole* man named George Paele Mossman, opened the Lalani Hawaiian Village on a parcel of land in Waikiki fronting the beach.<sup>33</sup> Located on the site of a former Hawaiian estate near Diamond Head, the village encouraged the learning of native arts, hula, and Hawaiian language. Mossman sought to re-create the experience of a traditional Hawai'i, which was not easily available in an increasingly urbanized Honolulu, for both locals and tourists. Next to his modern house with a shingled roof, porch, and stone walkway, Mossman reconstructed a Hawaiian village. Built by a master Hawaiian hut maker, the village included seven grass huts for sleeping, cooking, eating, worshipping, making *kapa* (bark cloth), and storing *wa'a* (canoes). Tall coconut palm trees grew between the huts, and a large *ki'i* (wooden carving of a god) stood in one corner.

Lalani Hawaiian Village promised the best of disappearing Hawai'i, all in one place. One advertisement featured a photograph of *'ukulele*

players and hula dancers in ti leaf skirts and promised the following: “In this idyllic setting, you will thrill to the romance of Island yesterdays. Delicious foods of the Luau (native feast) will please the most discriminating. Ancient Hulas . . . native maids . . . weird chanting . . . thumping gourds . . . strumming ukuleles . . . plaintive Island melodies . . . majestic palms . . . quaint grass huts. Enjoy a never to be forgotten experience.”<sup>34</sup> Mossman attempted to re-create Hawaiian practices predating Western contact. At tourist *lū‘au*, the Mossman family dressed up as *ali‘i* (chiefs) in Hawaiian regalia. Resurrecting royal pageantry, George Mossman wore a chiefly feather cape and *malo* (loincloth), while his daughters stood above him holding the sign of royalty, the feathered *kāhili* (staff). His Hawaiian wife, Emma, sat as his consort.<sup>35</sup>

Despite Mossman’s seeming insistence on authentic Hawaiian experiences, in actuality Hawaiians freely mixed indigenous Hawaiian music and dance with Western styles like waltz and jazz. In addition to the *ipu* (Hawaiian gourd), Lalani Village musicians played the ‘*ukulele*, an instrument that the Portuguese had introduced to the islands in the 1870s. Pualani Mossman, the eldest daughter, performed “For You a Lei,” a jazz-influenced hula featuring English-language lyrics.<sup>36</sup>

As they mediated between Hawaiian and Western cultural forms, the Mossmans were also comfortable combining Hawaiian cultural activism with capitalist savoir faire. While they played up their “soft primitivism” for tourists, they also pursued another agenda.<sup>37</sup> Mossman planned to revive disappearing Hawaiian culture and educate other Native Hawaiians at the Lalani Village. A 1934 newspaper article, “Hula of Old Hawai‘i Being Revived Here,” explained: “It is through these [tourist] activities [luaus and dancing] that the village is financed and . . . has become best known to the public, but its main purpose . . . is not merely to be an entertainment center, but to preserve the Hawaiian lore that is fast vanishing.”<sup>38</sup>

At Lalani Hawaiian Village, the grass huts were not just for show. They housed residents from rural districts—elderly experts in Hawaiian chant and hula and their pupils. The noted hula teacher Akoni Mika, aged sixty-eight, came from Keaukaha, Hilo, on the island of Hawai‘i. His pupil Kekuewa joined him. Mika’s hula repertoire rarely had been seen publicly since Christian missionaries had proscribed it in the mid-nineteenth century. He performed the *hula pahu* (sacred drum hula) and the *hula ki‘i* (pantomime hula). Nuuhiwa Kiaaina, a cowboy and dancer

from the island of Kaua‘i, also lived in the village, as did the famed Kuluwaimaka, who was once a court chanter for the late King David Kalākaua. Kuluwaimaka was eighty-seven or eighty-eight years old in 1934; he could perform genealogical *oli* (chants) that stretched back centuries.<sup>39</sup>

These elderly men were to perform for tourists but also pass their knowledge on to Hawaiians. Mossman held auditions for promising young Hawaiians who were to work with tourists and learn from the resident experts. In 1934 he had accepted only two girls out of a large group. In addition to being able to sing, dance, speak Hawaiian, and cook Hawaiian food, the youngsters had to explain Hawaiian life and offer a specialized skill like weaving or quilt making. Said Mossman: “The old people with the knowledge of the old Hawaiian customs are dying rapidly and their knowledge is dying with them. Our task now is to preserve everything we can.”<sup>40</sup> He employed a discourse of the native’s impending extinction.

The *kupuna* (elders) relayed knowledge of *hula pahu* and chanting mainly to Native Hawaiian students. They also taught newer forms of hula that used Western instrumentation such as ‘ukulele and steel guitars. Mossman’s two younger daughters, Piilani and Leilani, were often photographed dancing for *haole* tourists in bra tops and cellophane hula skirts—costumes that were usually used for *hapa-haole* (acculturated) hula.<sup>41</sup> Hula repertoire and costuming had changed to accommodate the tastes of the tourists: shorter skirts, fewer verses, and English-language lyrics. It is more likely that the older sacred repertoire—if it was performed for an audience at all—was used for private performances for Native Hawaiians and islanders.

Mossman’s discourse of cultural preservation echoed that of *haole* proponents of tourism. It also suggests the objectification of Hawaiian culture often produced under tourist regimes. In the process of “cultural objectification”—a phenomenon whereby a person sees culture as a thing outside of him/herself—culture is something to be used and displayed, even preserved.<sup>42</sup> Hawai‘i’s tourist industry objectified Hawaiian culture by removing cultural practices from their community context and creating a market value for them. Yet Hawaiians like Mossman also self-consciously objectified cultural practices by exhibiting themselves according to Western ideologies of primitivism.

While Mossman rightly feared the potential demise of Hawaiian cultural practices, by the 1930s *hula pahu* (sacred drum hula) reap-

peared publicly for the first time in nearly a century. Many teachers began spreading their knowledge of traditional hula.<sup>43</sup> Tourist development and American interest in Hawai‘i partially account for hula’s surfacing in the islands and on the U.S. continent in the 1930s. George Mossman himself had benefited from this hula revival, due to his Mormon background.<sup>44</sup> He began learning from hula master Samuel Pua Ha‘aheo in the 1930s.<sup>45</sup> Ha‘aheo was a Mormon elder who taught hula under the aegis of the Mormon Mutual Improvement Association starting in 1931. The Mormon church encouraged Ha‘aheo and other teachers, like Keaka Kanahale, to teach and pass on their knowledge, in contrast to the earlier Protestant condemnation of hula. Ha‘aheo agreed to teach hula at the Kalihi Gymnasium in Honolulu; for him hula was likely a secular practice. For many Mormons in Hawai‘i, indigenous dance was benign and even beneficial so long as it was divorced from religious rituals such as the *kuahu* (hula altar) to the goddess Laka.<sup>46</sup> Teachers like Ha‘aheo modified hula to the constraints of the church by excising Hawaiian religious practices and repertoire. Nonetheless Ha‘aheo may have exposed his non-Mormon hula students to some Hawaiian religious practices, such as chants to hula gods.<sup>47</sup>

### Hula Practice as Labor Practice

Lalani Hawaiian Village, where cultural preservation met commerce, became popular with tourists. Even Americans who did not make it in person to Waikiki could experience the village through Hollywood movies like *The Kamaaina* (1929) and the promotional film *Song of the Islands* (1934). Lalani Hawaiian Village was a family operation that included every member of George Mossman’s immediate family: his wife, Emma; several sons; and three daughters: Leilani, Piilani, and Pualani. Pualani, the oldest daughter, began to work at the age of six in her father’s various Hawaiian ventures, which included ‘*ukulele*’ manufacturing and a Hawaiian language school. In Waikiki the Mossmans danced, instructed tourists, cooked pig in the *imu* (underground pit), and served food at “Lalani’s Poi Inn.” This self-supporting enterprise resembled the small-scale ‘*ohana*’ (family)-based agricultural practices that preceded the incorporation of large tracts of land into sugarcane and pineapple plantations in the late nineteenth century. Hula and music performance enabled Hawaiians to reinsert themselves into local economies.

Tourism and cultural activism—the self-conscious deployment of culture for political ends—were not contradictions for many Hawaiians. While the Mossmans put themselves on display, they were also cultural activists who pursued a range of personal and community aspirations.<sup>48</sup> Through profitable hula ventures, they simultaneously fulfilled American models of economic success and stimulated the recovery of previously denigrated Hawaiian cultural practices. Hula's compromised engagement with capitalism encouraged practitioners to pass on knowledge that once was taught furtively. In effect the prospect of profit and public approval encouraged the training of more hula dancers in Hawai'i.

Within the restrictions of a U.S.-oriented consumer culture, Hawaiians were able to play music, dance hula, and make a decent living. Other Hawaiians who left the islands as entertainers later employed similar strategies. The Mossmans' small business prototype appears to have succeeded for their two older daughters, Pualani and Piilani, after they moved to New York City to dance. Growing up in the tourist village under the tutelage of their father and resident hula masters, they were to parlay their knowledge into businesses of their own, including hula studios and Polynesian catering, in the United States.

Some hula performances were commodified in this emerging tourist economy; tourists paid a fee to experience Hawai'i in the form of live dance. Yet hula was more than an object to those who performed; it was also an "inalienable possession," to use anthropologist Annette Weiner's concept.<sup>49</sup> To employ a distinction between *genealogy* and *performance*, the hula *genealogy* descended from hula masters Kuluwaimaka and Ha'aheo could neither be bought nor sold, but was an "inalienable possession" that could be attained only through rigorous training, according to strict cultural protocol. Those deemed worthy learned a specific repertoire of chants and movements that had been transmitted from teacher to student, from generation to generation. The Mossmans certainly profited from tourist hula *performances*, but profit was not the sole aim of their cultural revival. Capitalism never disappeared, but a hula economy based on reciprocity and noneconomic exchange operated within it. Cultural knowledge may have been consumed in tourist venues, but it was not easily reproduced.

With fewer than a dozen hotels in Waikiki in the 1930s, the Mossmans could insert themselves into a niche tourist market with a piece of Waikiki property and their own labor. American and

transnational capital had not yet invested extensively in Hawai'i's tourist industry; this would happen after World War II and Hawai'i statehood in 1959. Lalani Hawaiian Village is a compelling example of small-scale entrepreneurship that contended with Waikiki hotels and tourist businesses funded by *haole* capital. While hula did not rival the sugarcane or pineapple industries, it had "it's [*sic*] place in the Hawaiian scene and quite a large place at that," observed a Honolulu writer in 1937. Some Hawaiian performers joined the ranks of the petite bourgeoisie, such as one unnamed hula entrepreneur who met with this enviable success: "Did you know that one hula teacher has raised her whole family to be hula artists and has a family hula troop? She has also made enough of an income from hula to build her own home and studio, and keep the family equipped with new and good looking cars. Several years ago she took the family to Hollywood for pictures and recently took another trip with some of her family back to the same place where they are reported as packing them in at the film colony's biggest night club."<sup>50</sup>

Why would Hawaiians like the Mossmans and their contemporaries create these small businesses? If they had not been self-employed entertainers, they likely would have been employed as plantation laborers in the two largest industries in Hawai'i—sugar cane and pineapple—or another industry controlled by the Big Five, like shipping and warehouses.<sup>51</sup> Non-*haole* in Hawai'i had little opportunity for upward mobility. Plantation labor was segregated according to a racial hierarchy: Portuguese *luna* (foremen) at the top, followed by Puerto Ricans, Japanese, then Filipinos.<sup>52</sup> Japanese and Filipino plantation labor forces had gained only modest concessions against owners in the previous decade of strikes. Organized labor was still emerging in the 1930s, although collective bargaining was aided by the passage of the National Labor Relations Board Act. In response, big business formed the Industrial Association of Hawai'i to combat "racial unions" and federal labor laws like the 1936 Wagner Act.<sup>53</sup> In 1937, when the first NLRB hearings were held in Honolulu, there were still no minimum wage and child-labor laws in the territory, and women workers were not protected in any industry. As late as 1938, striking longshoremen and clerks were crushed brutally by police.<sup>54</sup>

For those who left the plantations, a racialized labor and wage system awaited them. The cleaner clerical and government jobs were reserved for *haole* and some Hawaiian workers. Some Chinese and



Japanese immigrant laborers started small businesses; Japanese also worked as small farmers, tradesmen, and domestics.<sup>55</sup> In tourist-related industries, workers sometimes worked six-day weeks and seventeen-hour days and were paid according to their race. Filipinos who worked in the kitchen or in cleaning earned \$50 a month, compared with Japanese housekeepers, who earned \$56, and *haole* desk clerks, who earned \$102.<sup>56</sup>

As for Native Hawaiians, they often worked in low-level government employment, civil service, or construction or as stevedores.<sup>57</sup> Hawaiian women could plot their futures as cannery workers, waitresses, or domestics—or, if they were college-educated, perhaps as schoolteachers or secretaries. Many entertainers saw themselves as wage laborers and made an effort to regulate their own labor practices. In 1939, for the first time in Hawai‘i, hula teachers formed a hula teachers’ *hui* (association), having been influenced by union organizing in the islands. Representatives of fifteen hula troupes chose George Mossman as their general chairman. The *hui* sought to “control the fixing of fees, rotate assignments, and generally act as a central ‘casting agency’ for hula performers.”<sup>58</sup> It is understandable that performers would organize to avoid exploitation, especially since Hollywood studios had begun to shoot many films on location in Hawai‘i in the 1920s and 1930s. The films *Bird of Paradise* (1932) and *Honolulu* (1939) relied heavily on the labor of local dancers and musicians.

### Hawaiians on Tour

The island tourist industry developed an infrastructure of performance sites and a pool of trained entertainers, which paved the way for Hawaiian entertainment ventures in the United States. We are led from Hawai‘i to New York City through the very movements of George Mossman’s daughter. In 1938 the Hotel Lexington’s Hawaiian Room recruited Pualani Mossman to dance hula in New York City.<sup>59</sup> Located on the corner of Forty-eighth Street and Lexington Avenue in New York City, the Hawaiian Room was opened in 1937 by Charles E. Rochester, the president and managing director of the Hotel Lexington.

The Hawaiian Room was the first major showroom for live Hawaiian entertainment in the United States and the most renowned.<sup>60</sup> Although a temporary experiment, it operated until 1966 and was the longest-lasting U.S. commercial venue for Hawaiian entertainment. In its first

two years, the popular showroom grossed more than a million dollars—a 22 percent increase over its previous incarnation—and served a half million patrons.<sup>61</sup> The Lexington Hawaiian Room was but one site along U.S. hula circuits that included showrooms in California, Ohio, and Florida. While numerous American showrooms featured live Hawaiian entertainment, the Hawaiian Room served as the industry standard to beat. In many cases, performers in other American showrooms appeared at the Hawaiian Room sometime during their careers.

Located in the basement of the hotel, the Hawaiian Room was a supper club for dining, dancing, and live performance (fig. 3). Walking into the large circular room decorated with tropical palms and murals of Diamond Head and Waikiki Beach, patrons were greeted with a flower lei, albeit it a paper one, by the hostess.<sup>62</sup> One New York restaurant reviewer wrote in 1938: “The Hawaiian Room . . . has all the tricks even down to swinging the Island’s music for dancing. They have native dancers as part of the show and native dishes are on the menu.



**Figure 3.** Lani McIntire’s orchestra with hula dancers, Hotel Lexington, Hawaiian Room, New York City, ca. 1940. Women left to right: Kahala McIntire, Luana Poepoe, Momi Kai (Mary Jane Hair), Tutasi Wilson, Jennie Napua Woodd. Courtesy Gilliom Family.

It's become very popular and well worth a visit, if you like to be taken out of yourself and transported, by the aid of a few drinks to the dreamy romantic beach at Waikiki."<sup>63</sup>

The key to the Hawaiian's Room's success was the "liveness" of the experience. Along with the palm trees and tropical rainstorms, the imported Hawaiians supplied the "true Island atmosphere."<sup>64</sup> President Charles Rochester insisted on Hawaiian musicians, preferably from the islands. Rochester's talent scout signed the part-Hawaiian and part-Irish tenor Ray Kinney of Honolulu as the Hawaiian Room's orchestra leader in 1937 (fig. 4). Hotel management also contracted steel guitarist Andy Iona and composer-singer Lani McIntire, but because "McIntire and Kinney" sounded too Irish, the opening billing read "Andy Iona and His Twelve Hawaiians" at first.<sup>65</sup> As orchestra leader, Kinney became responsible for finding more Hawaiian talent. In 1938 he brought his cousin, the baritone George Kainapau, from Honolulu. The Hawaiian orchestra members were invariably men, but the hula dancers brought to New York were women.<sup>66</sup>

These "Aloha Maids," as the Lexington hula dancers were billed, became the faces of Hawai'i in New York. Kinney assembled his dance troupe in Honolulu: the solo dancer Meymo Ululani Holt, plus Pualani Mossman, Mapuana Bishaw, and Jennie Napua Woodd (figs. 5, 6). All



**Figure 4. Ray Kinney, Hawaiian Room Orchestra Leader. Courtesy Gilliom Family.**



Figure 5. Meymo Ululani Holt, ca. 1938. Courtesy Carol Mae Vanderford.



Figure 6. The “Aloha Maids”—Jennie Napua Woodd, Pualani Mossman, and Mapuana Bishaw—at the Hotel Lexington’s Hawaiian Room, New York City, ca. 1938. Courtesy Gilliom Family.

four original “Aloha Maids” were *hapa-haole*. The light-skinned *hapa-haole* woman represented the idealized look for hula dancers beginning in the late nineteenth century; this partiality persisted in 1938, when judges selected *hapa-haole* Kealoha Holt and her fellow “hula queen” finalists.<sup>67</sup> Most of the dancers who performed in the Hawaiian Room or in other U.S. showrooms in the 1930s and 1940s had *hapa-haole* backgrounds, but even if they did not, they fulfilled the preferred phenotype, with their brunette hair, slim figures, and light skin.

In 1937 twenty-two-year-old Meymo Ululani Holt arrived in New York and became the “leading lady,” or solo dancer. Ray Kinney was married to Holt’s older sister. Holt hailed from a wealthy and prominent *hapa-haole* family. Her mother’s family, the Lemons, once owned the large Waikiki estate upon which George Mossman built the Lalani Hawaiian Village. Her socialite grandmother was a close friend of the Hawaiian royalty, and Holt had graduated from Punahou School, an elite missionary-founded school in Honolulu. In addition to Holt, Kinney found three other “Aloha Maids” in Hawai‘i through kinship networks and friends. Pualani Mossman was already a recognized hula dancer and model. Selected for Matson Navigation Line’s national advertising campaign in 1937, she became known as the “Matson Girl” and “the most photographed girl in the islands” for her pictures in *Time* and *Life* magazines. Mossman went to New York with her cousin Mapuana Bishaw in 1938. Jennie Napua Woodd, a friend of theirs who danced hula at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Waikiki, completed Kinney’s dancing line.

For many Hawaiian women, hula presented a dream ticket out of Hawai‘i, promising fame, glamour, and middle-class status difficult for them to achieve in the plantation and service industries. Hula dancers could earn between fifty and one hundred dollars a week, compared with four to ten dollars a week in the pineapple canneries. Talent recruiters from the U.S. continent took advantage of the ample labor pool in the islands. Orchestra leaders, Hollywood film studios, and American nightclubs periodically scouted for dancers in Hawai‘i, where women often faced stiff competition for coveted hula contracts.

Dubbed “Hawaiian Cinderellas” by the Honolulu press, three young high school graduates won auditions in 1940 to dance at the Hotel Lexington’s Hawaiian Room.<sup>68</sup> Ray Kinney picked Edna Kihoi of Waimea, Peggy Nani Todd of Hilo, and Lehua Paulson of Honolulu to join fourteen other dancers and musicians in New York City. Kihoi had

been a finalist in the MGM “Inter-Island Hula Contest” in 1938. Kinney had spotted Todd dancing at her Hilo high school dance and invited her to an audition, which she later won. In this island version of the allegory, Kinney—the veritable Prince Charming—whisked young “Cinderellas” who fit his glass slipper off to a fairy-tale life in New York.<sup>69</sup>

Upon their arrival in the United States, the women were treated as novelties and minor New York celebrities. As city and suburban newspapers announced their romances, marriages, and children’s births, New Yorkers became intimate with the women’s lives. The gossip columnist Walter Winchell gave the Aloha Maids a coveted orchid in his *Daily Mirror* column, and after dancer Napua Woodd married trombonist Lloyd Gilliom, Winchell reported the arrival of their first child. The appearance of a new song or performer fascinated audiences. The *New York World Telegram* profiled leading lady Meymo Holt with five large photographs of her dancing hula in a bikini top and thigh-baring silk hula skirt.<sup>70</sup>

How were readers to make sense of Hawaiians and decode them? Not only were their bodies exposed close-up, articles scrutinized their racial backgrounds and biographical details: Napua was German-English-Hawaiian; her name, pronounced “Nap-OO-ah,” meant “the flower”; she was the daughter of a hula dancer; and she enjoyed sightseeing at the George Washington Bridge (fig. 7).<sup>71</sup> While each dancer had distinguishing features, the women nonetheless stood in for all of Hawai‘i and Hawaiian culture. “Hawaiian girls are famous for their clear, brown skins, their flashing smiles, their beautiful, dark hair, and their full yet graceful figures,” read a newspaper caption below a photograph of the three Aloha Maids. Almost never photographed in contemporary Western dress, they wore Hawaiian costumes instead. The women were framed as foreign curiosities but not too alien. Presented as sexually available, their bodies also marked Hawai‘i as desirable and unthreatening.

Islanders back home also expected these women to properly represent Hawai‘i to the United States. Hawai‘i newspapers eagerly tracked their movements and progress. The *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* credited hula dancers as “good will emissaries” who spread *aloha* spirit far and wide: “These singing and dancing islanders who invade mainland night spots provide splendid advertising for Hawaii. They take with them the charm and grace of an island paradise where two thirds of America longs to visit.”<sup>72</sup>



**Figure 7. Jennie Napua Woodd at the Hotel Lexington's Hawaiian Room, ca. 1938. This photograph accompanied Woodd's profile in the *New York World-Telegram*. Courtesy Gilliom Family.**

Newspapers printed photographs of the Lexington hula dancers with the caption, "Broadway Goes Hawaiian."<sup>73</sup> Islanders appreciated the stature that the Hotel Lexington conferred on Hawaiian performers on the U.S. continent. Since the late nineteenth century, Hawaiians had performed at world's fairs and on entertainment circuits in the United States and Europe, but often in sideshows and on the vaudeville stage.<sup>74</sup> The white-suited Hawaiian musicians and the celebrated Aloha Maids of the Hotel Lexington presented middlebrow art different from the vaudeville performances the New York public had been exposed to in previous decades. In 1928 "Prince Lei Lani and the Royal Samoans," with the *hapa-haole* hula dancer Aggie Auld, presented a vaudeville act at the New York Hippodrome, along with an acrobat and "Peter the Great, Educated Ape."<sup>75</sup> In the opinion of some Hawaiians and islanders,

Hawaiian performers could do a great disservice to Hawai'i's image by participating in "cheap sideshow entertainment."<sup>76</sup> In the Hawaiian Room, however, Hawaiians were respectable headliners and stars.

The clever packaging of a feminine, sensual, and uncomplicated Hawai'i put the Hawaiian Room on the map in Manhattan, and its success spawned a Polynesian fever in the city, which spread across the country to Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, San Francisco, Buffalo, New Orleans, Minneapolis, Detroit, Fort Lauderdale, and Hollywood. Hawaiian shows opened at the Roosevelt Hotel in Chicago, the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, the Statler Hotel in Buffalo, the El Dorado Club in Cleveland, and the Hotel Roosevelt in New Orleans.<sup>77</sup> In 1939 a rival Hawaiian room—the Maisonette Hawaiian—opened at the St. Regis Hotel in New York. Owned by Vincent Astor, the St. Regis hoped to cash in on the lucrative formula of Hawaiian entertainment, with comic hula dancer Clara Inter ("Hilo Hattie") as headliner.<sup>78</sup> Broadway also caught on to hula. *Hellzapoppin*, a musical by vaudeville veterans Olsen and Johnson, featured Kinney and his "Aloha Maids" in one act. The dancers rushed across town to Times Square from the Hawaiian Room and returned in time for their last floor show at the Lexington.

Who frequented these Hawaiian showrooms? Like many other nightclubs in the 1930s and 1940s, the Hawaiian Room likely barred or discouraged African Americans as patrons.<sup>79</sup> Offering middle-class white American audiences easily digestible hula and Hawaiian music, the Hawaiian Room catered to a growing market for consumer culture and cultural commodities between the Depression and World War II. During this period, white spectators eagerly consumed other exotic performances at jazz, Cuban-themed, and "Spanish" nightclubs in New York City. Jazz clubs like the Cotton Club and the Kit Kat Club offered an "all colored . . . doggondest set of entertainers" to their white clientele.<sup>80</sup>

Unlike the Ritz-Carlton, the Hotel Lexington was not a luxury hotel; the Lexington was a second-tier establishment and not prohibitively expensive. Whereas a single room with bath cost seven dollars and up a night at the Ritz-Carlton, a similar room cost four dollars at the Lexington in 1939.<sup>81</sup> The Hawaiian Room occupied a similar niche among hotel entertainment in the city. *Esquire's New York: A New York Guide Book for World's Fair Visitors* recommended the Hawaiian Room to its young male readers in 1939. The Room had a \$1.25 cover "but reasonable prices throughout."<sup>82</sup> In *Where to Take Your Girl in New*



*York on One Dollar to \$20*, college men suggested the Hawaiian Room as a way “to get by on a small pocketbook.”<sup>83</sup> Younger men and women, as well as their parents, frequented the Hawaiian Room; if one did not want to dance to live music on the expansive floor, one might be content watching the Hawaiian show.

Much of the Hawaiian music played at the Lexington Hawaiian Room, the Maisonette, and other nightclubs on the U.S. continent was *hapa-haole*: songs blended with U.S. popular musical styles and usually featuring English lyrics and Hawaiian themes, so that *haole* audiences would be able to understand them. In the 1920s and 1930s *hapa-haole* songs were jazz and blues influenced.<sup>84</sup> Notable hits from the Lexington included Ray Kinney’s “Across the Sea” and “Song of Old Hawaii.” The Hawaiian Room avoided Tin Pan Alley songs like “Yaaka Hula Hickey Dula” and “They’re Wearing ‘Em Higher in Hawaii,” which had been composed by New York composers with no connection to Hawai‘i.<sup>85</sup> Hotel Lexington president Charles Rochester prided himself on the Hawaiian Room’s authentic Hawaiian musicians and music. He protested, “Don’t let Hawaiian music go modern!” and rallied for “sweet” Hawaiian music like “Ua Like No a Like” and “Song of the Islands.”<sup>86</sup>

### Imagined Intimacy

The Hawaiian showroom imprinted an indelible image of Hawai‘i, a sunny land populated by lissome maidens and jovial men. Appealing to the taste and imagination of mostly *haole* American audiences, male and female entertainers alike were required to perform a particular kind of “Hawaiian-ness” on stage: docile, ever welcoming, and ever desirable. But “Hawaiian-ness” was signified primarily through the spectacle of women’s bodies. While male musicians were fully clothed in white suits in the far background, hula dancers danced in the front row wearing bikini tops, glittering skirts, and flowers in their hair.

Eroticized on commercial stages, hula and the young women who performed this dance served as metonyms for the Hawaiian Islands. Hawaiian women’s bodies made the faraway territory intelligible to Americans. Spectators could imagine themselves transported to the islands by watching women dance to songs that whispered, “See the surf, comes rolling ever onwards, meets the land and melts in creamy foam.”<sup>87</sup> Even figured as the uniting of “surf” and “land,” the encounter

between (male) visitor and (female) islander was represented as a sexual coupling. The islands were not so subtly coded as sexually submissive spaces, waiting to be exploited and conquered.

These live performances were also intimate encounters between Hawaiian performers and American audiences, although the intimacy I refer to was not literal. These performances produced what I call an “imagined intimacy” between Hawai‘i and Americans: an imagined relationship in which Hawai‘i and the United States were inseparable and dependent on each other. By consuming these shows, Americans came to possess Hawai‘i in their dreams and imaginations. The vast majority of Americans never were to visit the islands directly, yet a powerful fantasy of Hawai‘i—as America’s exquisite escape and untouched playground—came into being through these intimate encounters. This Hawai‘i was not so much an *antithesis* of America, but a better version of it—a respite from the harshness of urban life and industrial capitalism, yet not too foreign and different. By association with their colony, Americans could believe that they belonged to an optimistic, playful, and tolerant nation.

This intimacy was realized best via floor shows: live bodies delivered a stronger and more direct impression than radio programs, news photographs, or even movies, although mass media circulated widely and complemented the visceral associations produced in the live shows.<sup>88</sup> Showrooms like the Lexington Hawaiian Room and others around the country were crucial instruments in the circulation of Hawai‘i in the American cultural imagination before World War II. Fantasies of Hawai‘i, however, did not remain within the shows. The imagined intimacy between Hawai‘i and the United States continued to be amplified after spectators left the hotel shows and nightclubs and returned home. Americans learned to immerse themselves in “Hawaiian”-ness by buying ukuleles, Hawaiian sheet music, and grass skirts. These showrooms were based in hotels in cities like Chicago (Hotel Roosevelt), San Francisco (St. Francis Hotel), and New Orleans (Broadmoor Hotel). As out-of-town visitors saw these shows and returned to their homes, interest in Hawaiians and “Hawaiian-ness” spread. Hawai‘i became a larger popular cultural phenomenon: school-children attending summer camp in the 1930s performed plays about Hawai‘i and pretended to eat *poi*. Words like *aloha* and *luau* entered the American vernacular.<sup>89</sup>

As images and projections of Hawai‘i circulated in the American cultural imagination, they also produced very real effects: the islands

became feminized spaces for U.S. commercial and military domination. The dreams produced by Hawaiian floorshows helped to enable the American tourist and military penetration of Hawai‘i during and after World War II. As “flesh and blood representatives” of Hawai‘i, Hawaiian performers on the U.S. continent promoted Hawai‘i’s tourist industry in a way no advertising company could have afforded.<sup>90</sup> The Aloha Maids played a critical role during the 1939 World’s Fair in Queens, New York, publicizing Hawaiian sugar and tourism during the fair’s “Hawaii Day.” They danced at the fair’s Hawaiian Village, where the territorial governor, Joseph B. Poindexter, exhorted Americans to import Hawaiian sugar without foreign tariffs.<sup>91</sup> They greeted visitors with paper flower *lei*, evoking the warm treatment tourists could expect to receive in Hawai‘i. By 1938 tourists arriving in Hawai‘i reached a high of 23,043, and tourism continued to grow until the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941.<sup>92</sup>

The U.S. military presence in the islands developed in tandem with tourism. Hawai‘i’s economy was increasingly supported by U.S. defense spending; between 1930 and 1940 the armed forces population had increased 61 percent, from 16,291 to 26,233, and made up more than 15 percent of all employed adults.<sup>93</sup> Strategically positioned between the United States and Asia, military bases on the Hawaiian Islands deployed millions of American soldiers to the Pacific Theater after the Pearl Harbor bombing. In another “Pacific theater” that stretched across the U.S. continent, hula dancers like Pualani Mossman familiarized Americans with the Pacific outpost that would become the flash point of the war. Hawai‘i was to provide safe shores and fortified military bases for the U.S. throughout World War II and the Cold War. Most Americans did not know about specifics of the American military presence in Hawai‘i and the Pacific, but they did not need to know; the projection of Hawaiian culture and its women stood in for the entire region.

### Erasing Asians

Besides binding Hawai‘i to the United States, Hawaiians performing in the “Pacific theater” also accomplished another critical function: they erased Asians from the territory. The hula circuits of Hawaiians and islanders in the U.S. performed the symbolic act of cleansing the territory of Asians. The Asian population of Hawai‘i posed a chronic

problem for the *haole* territorial government and the U.S. nation-state. Japanese were the largest single segment of Hawai‘i’s population in 1930, at almost 38 percent, or 140,000 people.<sup>94</sup> Although members of the *haole* oligarchy in Hawai‘i required Asian labor, they expressed an intense fear of being outnumbered by Asians. The alleged influence of “Orientals” in the territory damaged Hawai‘i’s chances for statehood and Americanization in the 1930s. Public statehood hearings in Hawai‘i in 1935 concentrated on the unproven loyalty of Japanese in the territory and their threat to U.S. national security.<sup>95</sup>

Furthermore, the “Oriental races” were feared to contaminate the blood of Caucasians and Polynesians in the islands. A *Paradise of the Pacific* editor wrote in 1924: “The Oriental races are practically all of small stature, slight physique, yellow or brown color and, in the case of the Japanese, . . . flat features, protruding teeth and short legs. We have a right to ask ourselves whether we want to incorporate such characteristics into the American body.”<sup>96</sup> This argument about the unsuitability of Asians for American citizenship was far from unique. Asians were treated as alien and unassimilable to the U.S. national body, as demonstrated by restrictive immigration acts in 1882, 1917, 1924, and 1934 and the incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans on the U.S. continent during World War II. During the 1930s the United States had begun mobilizing for a possible armed conflict with Japan. The large presence of alien—and suspected enemy—Japanese in Hawai‘i also had to be contained.

The Hawaiian shows domesticated Hawai‘i for the approaching war by removing traces of this alien presence. On the U.S. continent, Hawai‘i was packaged and presented as wholly Native Hawaiian, not Asian. Only Hawaiian songs were performed; no references were made to the existence of large Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino communities in Hawai‘i. Listening to songs that referenced Hawaiian people, landscapes, and history, an observer would get the impression that only Native Hawaiians resided in Hawai‘i. Yet some performers from the islands were part Japanese and part Chinese. Part-Asian dancers sometimes did not reveal their Asian backgrounds to the public and were marked as “Hawaiian,” although the performers knew everyone’s ethnic backgrounds.

The hula dancer Momi Kai, who was *haole* and Japanese, was profiled in a New York newspaper as “a native Hawaiian now living in Flushing.” After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, she did not talk about her

Japanese background and even participated in a “Beat-the-Jap” hula campaign to purchase a bomb. Not only did Momi Kai escape detection as a Japanese woman, but ironically she was identified as “the perfect Polynesian type . . . with pearl-white teeth and shoulder-length black hair.”<sup>97</sup> By passing as Hawaiian, at least via their public personae, Asian and part-Asian dancers escaped scrutiny and gained mobility on the U.S. continent. Being “Hawaiian” was relatively benign, while being Japanese or looking Japanese meant risking incarceration and racist treatment.

The erasure of Asians through the shows was also critical for a tourist industry that promoted Hawai‘i as part of Polynesia. Hawai‘i could not be too “Japanized,” “Filipino,” or “Chinese” if American tourists were to visit. The marketing of Hawai‘i depended on an image of islands populated primarily by Native Hawaiians and sustained by Hawaiian practices, although Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians made up less than 15 percent of Hawai‘i’s population in 1930.<sup>98</sup> In order for Hawai‘i to become the “Paradise of the Pacific,” Asians had to be absent from the picture. Indeed, an imagined intimacy was produced between Americans and those perceived as “Hawaiians,” not between Americans and Asians. The circulation of indigenous Hawaiian culture in the United States—writ large as all of Hawai‘i—facilitated this removal.

### Hawaiian Intimacy

The imagined intimacy between the United States and Hawai‘i produced by these live encounters involved the experiences and imaginations of Hawaiians as well. While Americans made sense of their colony in the Pacific through live performances, Hawaiians and other islanders also were imagining their relationship to the United States and Americans at the same time (fig. 8). How did Hawaiians experience this imagined intimacy? Did they embrace the United States as warmly?

The women were enthusiastic about the opportunities they had on the U.S. continent: they wanted to make money, feed their families, and perhaps return home, although some settled on the continent. News coverage presented the women enjoying life in big American cities, but they found themselves surviving an often alienating environment. Far away from Hawai‘i, they had to learn basic living skills: how to hail



**Figure 8. “Au-we!!! [Oh dear!] Something I’ll *never* forget. Aloha, Mapuana”:** Mapuana Bishaw and Jennie Napua Woodd leaving Hawai‘i for New York City, ca. 1937. Courtesy Gilliom Family.

cabs, feed themselves, and keep themselves warm during winter. In the 1930s and 1940s an intimate islander community of entertainers developed in New York City. With the help of older Hawaiians, they learned how to negotiate life in the city. This earlier generation of Hawaiians taught dancer Betty Puanani Makia and her friends to make an improvised version of *poi* (a Hawaiian staple made from taro root) out of wheat flour.<sup>99</sup>

While owned and managed by Americans, the Lexington Hawaiian Room itself served as a central gathering scene for Hawaiians and islanders. They shaped the room into their home away from home.

Backstage the performers were free to “talk story,” cry, laugh, and argue. They could relax around people who ate the same food, spoke Hawaiian or pidgin English, and together ward off the inevitable homesickness. Even if their “real” extended families were back in the islands, Hawaiian entertainers adopted more than enough family in the Hawaiian Room and created fictive kinship networks. Many women considered themselves “closer than sisters” in a place where they had few other friends and family.<sup>100</sup> When some of the women eventually had children, the infants never wanted for “aunties” and “uncles” to change diapers, baby-sit, and take them for walks.

The experiences and backstage lives of these entertainers destabilize the spectacle of “Hawaiian-ness” performed in the United States. More than “Cinderellas” or “hula queens,” the women created spaces for themselves within these imperial hula circuits and struggled to hold on to their own dreams and aspirations. Pualani Mossman danced for a year or two at the Lexington Hawaiian Room and founded a hula studio in the city with her sister Piilani. Mossman married a New Yorker in 1939, had her first baby in 1940, and moved with her husband to Florida in 1950. There she taught hula and started a Polynesian party business with her husband. The solo dancer Meymo Ululani Holt had dreams of her own beyond hula. An ambitious actress and writer, she saw herself as a dramatic actress more than a hula dancer. Holt spent her spare time at the Lexington writing a musical comedy called “Paradise Preferred.” She eventually married and had a daughter. Holt worked in insurance before becoming an executive secretary for a manufacturer in Michigan. The nineteen-year-old Marjorie Iaea from Maui, known professionally as Leilani, appeared regularly on the Hawaiian Room program and helped produce the floor show. Like Holt, she had other dreams; Iaea hoped her hula career would later allow her to attend business school on the East Coast and pursue other opportunities after school.<sup>101</sup> She eventually returned to Hawai‘i, married, and had a family.

Jennie Napua Woodd had the longest career as a hula teacher and entertainer after the Hotel Lexington. As a comic hula dancer, she opened up Hawaiian shows in Cleveland, Reno, and Los Angeles, eventually moving with her young sons to Hollywood in the early 1950s. There she opened a hula studio, danced in nightclubs, and acted in movies. Working from six in the morning to midnight, Woodd was the social and professional center of a Polynesian diaspora in Southern

California. She opened her family home to islander entertainers and arranged for them to be cast in movies and play in nightclubs.

Yet the women's private lives often belied their onstage personas. Several dancers suffered through personal sorrows like divorce and separation from their children. A few were single mothers who had to leave their children behind with family in Hawai'i. One woman divorced her *haole* American husband, who then took custody of their baby. Her ex-husband granted her visitation only once every other week. Her very public career at the Lexington was punctuated by the pain of missing her young child.

In the long run, male musicians like Ray Kinney fared much better than the younger female hula dancers. Hawaiian men enjoyed longer careers, while the "island girls" had a shelf life. Most of the women had never left the islands before and arrived from Hawai'i under six-month to yearlong contracts. As contract laborers subject to the whims of the market, hula dancers were most popular as young adults. Gendered occupational hierarchies developed in the workplace as Hawaiian men served as agents and negotiators with management for the women. Some men received a cut of the women's pay. By the early 1950s, however, Hawaiian women such as Leilehua Becker and Gloria Manu Kanemura had assumed more control over their employment and were often even co-managing and producing floor shows, working with male orchestra leaders.

While Americans were able to indulge in a fantasy of Hawai'i, Hawaiians found themselves coping with the lived racial realities of life as minorities in the United States. Many experienced American racism firsthand, for offstage Hawaiians could be read as "colored," rather than as Polynesian. One segment of Ray Kinney's U.S.O. tour in the 1940s led his hula troupe to the South and less metropolitan areas. White Southerners told Hawaiians—who were dressed in street clothing instead of costumes—to move to the back of the bus with the rest of the "coloreds." Hawaiians avoided public rest rooms, not knowing whether to use the "colored" or "white" facilities. In Ohio a restaurant refused to take orders from the Hawaiians, arguing that it did not serve "colored" people. The group later entertained at a theater next door to the restaurant. Looking out from the stage, they saw only whites in the audience, while African Americans sat in the segregated balcony.<sup>102</sup> Hawaiians in the flesh could be less appealing than Hawaiians onstage.



## On a Jet Plane

In the 1930s and 1940s hula dancers and Hawaiian entertainers proved their usefulness in establishing an imagined intimacy between the territory and the United States. As ambassadors of *aloha* on the U.S. continent, they promoted and sold Hawai'i as a friendly American outpost in the Pacific. But the prominence and utility of Hawaiian performers only grew after the Pearl Harbor attack. The American embrace of Hawai'i became more urgent during the critical years of battle in the Pacific Ocean. The Pacific Theater of war and the "Pacific theater" of Hawaiian performance converged. Hula performers labored in the service of the state during the war; dance troupes met military troops on naval bases and tarmacs. In Hawai'i "hula girls" danced on airplane runways and piers for American soldiers headed for battle-grounds in Asia and the Pacific. The "volcano hula" made famous at Mossman's Lalani Hawaiian Village was unveiled—this time at a *lū'au* for military officers and their families at Hickam Air Force Base on O'ahu.<sup>103</sup> Smiling islander and Hawaiian women entertained soldiers on R&R at Kilau'ea Military Camp on the island of Hawai'i. The camp's regular Saturday night feature was the "hula hula dance."<sup>104</sup> Meanwhile, on the U.S. continent, "hula girls" from the Lexington Hawaiian Room and other floor shows also had a job to do. Many joined U.S.O. tours to entertain troops at military bases during and after the war.<sup>105</sup> Hawaiians' agreeable performances would help to disguise the violence and social turmoil experienced in Hawai'i and other U.S.-militarized zones.

Spaces for Hawaiian cultural activism shrank in the 1940s, as illustrated by the fate of Mossman's Lalani Hawaiian Village. During World War II the military took over the Mossmans' prime real estate and used it for army bathhouses and a post exchange. The Mossmans finally reopened the village in 1946, and it stayed open until 1955, experiencing closings and reopenings with different teachers at the helm.<sup>106</sup> Hawai'i was solidly in the hands of the United States even after the war ended in 1945 and martial law in the islands was lifted. World War II had alleviated most doubts about the necessity and suitability of Hawai'i to the U.S. nation-state.

Statehood would be Hawai'i's reward in 1959 after its citizens' contribution to World War II, although many Hawaiians opposed this final political consolidation under the United States.<sup>107</sup> Statehood

ultimately quickened the flow of American and multinational corporate investment in the tourist industry. Hula and Hawaiian music had domesticated Hawai‘i and would continue to be invaluable commodities in the booming postwar tourist economy. The year Hawai‘i became a state, the Mossman estate was sold for \$700,000, approximately ten times its value only a decade earlier, and a large hotel was subsequently built on the site. That year jet planes began flying routes between Asia, the U.S. West Coast, and Hawai‘i, bringing more tourists to the islands. At every public social and political event in Hawai‘i, hula performances created the impression of Hawaiian consent for American imperial incorporation. Hula dancers were on hand to greet tourists disembarking from the commercial jet planes, as they were on the day Hawai‘i became a state. As a new American flag with the fiftieth star was raised at the statehood ceremonies, a large group of young Hawaiian girls danced.

### NOTES

Note on language: Following modern Hawaiian orthography, I use diacritical marks—the ‘*okina*, or glottal stop, and the *kahakō*, or macron—for Hawaiian words and names (e.g., Hawai‘i). Words such as Hawaiian are English words and therefore do not require diacritical marks. I have, however, preserved the spelling of Hawaiian names and words in original sources and have not added diacritical marks.

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1. “Hawai‘i’s Hula Queens Vie for Hollywood Trip: Inter-Isle Hula Contestants Prepare for Honolulu Final,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, September 11, 1938.

2. “Hula Queen Back Today: Kealoha Holt Completes Work in Musical ‘Honolulu,’” *Honolulu Advertiser*, December 28, 1938.

3. Throughout this article I use “Hawaiian” and “Native Hawaiian” to identify any person of indigenous Hawaiian background, not to indicate residence in Hawai‘i. Thus in my use “Hawaiian” is *not* analogous to the term “Californian.” Instead I use “islander” or “local” to refer to people born and raised in Hawai‘i who are not necessarily indigenous Hawaiians.

4. The infamous 1931 Thalia Massie rape case in Hawai'i inflamed America's fears of Hawai'i's majority nonwhite population. Massie, a navy lieutenant's wife, accused five working-class islander men of rape despite evidence to the contrary. After the rape trial ended in a mistrial, Massie's mother and husband lynched one of the defendants. During the sensational trials, American cartoonists depicted the Native Hawaiian, Japanese, and Chinese male defendants as dark-skinned sexual predators in loincloths and as gorillas leering at white women. The national press declared the islands unsafe for white women and urged martial law. The Massie publicity threatened Hawai'i's claims for statehood; only three days after a mistrial was declared in the rape case, a territorial delegate to Congress introduced a Hawai'i statehood bill, but the bill failed. See Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1968), 317–27, 333–38, and John P. Rosa, "Local Story: The Massie Case Narrative and the Cultural Production of Local Identity in Hawai'i," *Amerasia Journal* 26, no. 2 (2000): 93–116.

5. The Caucasian population would have been only 14.8 percent, if one excludes Portuguese, who sometimes fell out of the racial category of "white" due to their immigrant status, occupation, and class. Robert C. Schmitt, "Table 26, Ethnic Stock: 1900–1960," in *Demographic Statistics of Hawaii, 1778–1965* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), 120.

6. *Kama'āina* translates to "child of the land," which implies having been Hawai'i-born and raised. The Big Five companies were Castle & Cooke, Dillingham, Amfac, Alexander & Baldwin, and Bishop Company.

7. Bryan H. Farrell, *Hawaii, the Legend That Sells* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1982), 12. The Reciprocity Treaty of 1876 removed trade barriers between the United States and the Kingdom of Hawai'i but also paved the way for the transfer of Pearl Harbor to the U.S. Navy by 1887, as well as for a sugar monopoly by a select group of *haole* businessmen.

8. See chapter 6, "Big Five Territory," in Noel J. Kent, *Hawaii: Islands under the Influence* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), for a detailed description of life under the Big Five.

9. After Hawai'i was annexed by the United States in 1898 and became a territory in 1900, the Big Five and Washington decided that a powerful governorship would be necessary to manage the islands (*ibid.*, 74).

10. *Ibid.*, 80.

11. "Selected Employment Statistics: 1878–1960," in *Historical Statistics of Hawai'i, 1778–1962* (Honolulu: Department of Planning and Research, State of Hawaii, 1962), 17.

12. Harold H. Yost, "Hawaii's Leading Crop of the Future," *Paradise of the Pacific*, April 1921.

13. By the late 1930s Matson had shut down all of its rivals and had direct corporate "interlocks" with fifty-eight Big Five-controlled corporations (Kent, *Hawaii*, 81).

14. Don Hibbard and David Franzen, *The View from Diamond Head: Royal Residence to Urban Resort* (Honolulu: Editions Limited, 1986), 125.

15. Tourism suffered a setback after the 1929 stock market crash. During the Great Depression, visitors dropped from 22,190 in 1929 to 18,651 in 1930; by 1932 only 10,370 tourists visited. The industry took until 1935 to return to pre-Depression levels. "Visitor Arrivals, Visitors Present, and Visitor Expenditures: 1922–1961," in *Historical Statistics*, 15.

16. This hula troupe performed at a Hawaiian village in the "Midway Plaisance" section of the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. Consisting of three female *ʻōlapa* (hula dancers) and two male *ho'opa'a* (drummers/chanters), the troupe

departed Honolulu in May 1893. One of the three *‘olapa* was Kini Kapahu, who later became known as Jennie Wilson and was the wife of a long-serving Democratic mayor of Honolulu.

17. Participation in the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 87.

18. John R. K. Topolinski, “Hula,” in *Hawaiian Music and Musicians: An Illustrated History*, ed. George Kanahele (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1979), 147. See also Dorothy B. Barrère’s “The Hula in Retrospect,” in Dorothy B. Barrère, Mary Kawena Pukui, and Marion Kelly, *Hula: Historical Perspectives* (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1980), 1–67, for an overview of pre-Western contact and postcontact hula practices.

19. Amy Ku‘uleialoha Stillman, *Sacred Hula: The Historical Hula ‘Āla‘apapa* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1998), 23.

20. See Noenoe K. Silva, “*He Kānāwai E Ho‘opau I Na Hula Kuolo Hawai‘i*: The Political Economy of Banning the Hula,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 34 (2000): 29–48. Silva reveals how the banning of hula helped to discipline Hawaiians into wage laborers who would be useful for colonial capitalism. Some converted Hawaiians also urged the prohibition of hula.

21. Mazeppa King Costa, “Interview with Mary Kawena Pukui,” in “Dance in the Society and Hawaiian Islands as Presented by the Early Writers, 1767–1842,” (M.A. thesis, University of Hawai‘i, 1951).

22. See J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, “‘For Get’ Hawaiian Entitlement: Configurations of Land, ‘Blood,’ and Americanization in the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921,” *Social Text* 59 (summer 1999): 123–44, for an analysis of the effacement of Hawaiian entitlements to land. The 1921 federal Hawaiian Homes Commission Act positioned Hawaiians as “beneficiaries” and wards of the territorial and federal government; furthermore, only “native Hawaiians” who could prove 50 percent blood quantum were eligible for Hawaiian homestead lands. Ultimately this act effectively secured Hawaiian lands for large sugar and ranching interests.

23. See Paul F. Nakoa Lucas, “E Ola Mau Kākou I Ka ‘Ōlelo Makuahine: Hawaiian Language Policy and the Courts,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 34 (2000): 9.

24. Barrère, Pukui, and Kelly, *Hula: Historical Perspectives*, 64.

25. Jane Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 13.

26. “Folk Dances of Polynesia,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, September 24, 1911.

27. “Are We Ready for the Tourist,” *Paradise of the Pacific*, September 1920; “Hawaiian Music as Publicity,” *Paradise of the Pacific*, March 1921.

28. “Telling the World,” *Paradise of the Pacific*, July 1935, 1.

29. “Ware the Hula!” *Paradise of the Pacific*, November 1922.

30. “Hula of Hawaii,” *Paradise of the Pacific*, December 1937, 53.

31. Renalto Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 69. While Rosaldo uses “imperialist nostalgia” to analyze postcards from colonial Philippines, this concept also informs a colonial Hawai‘i context.

32. Lalani Hawaiian Village was a precursor to contemporary ethnographic tourist displays, such as the Polynesian Cultural Center in Lā‘ie, O‘ahu, where tourists wander through re-created Pacific Island “villages” and observe live cultural activities. The PCC is operated by the Church of Latter-Day Saints.

33. *Hapa-haole* literally means “half-foreign.” When referencing a person, *hapa-haole* often describes someone of Hawaiian and *haole* background. George Mossman’s father was Scottish and his mother Native Hawaiian. See Harold Coffin, “Hawaiian Village, 1936,” *Paradise of the Pacific*, September 1936, 15.

34. N. R. Farbman Photograph Collection, Bishop Museum, Hawai'i.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Composed by the "Hawaiian King of Jazz," the *hapa-haole* musician Johnny Noble, the song "For You a Lei" became a hit in Hawai'i in 1929.

37. See Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), for a discussion of the construction of Pacific Islanders as "soft" and "hard" primitives during European voyages. For eighteenth-century European explorers like Captain James Cook, the Pacific could be capable of both beauty and savagery. As created through paintings, "soft" primitives were noble savages like Tahitians and Hawaiians, who were shown living in a natural state of paradise without having to work. "Hard" primitives were Maori or aboriginal Australians, who were depicted as heathens practicing strange funeral rites or cannibalism.

38. *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, February 23, 1934.

39. Bishop Museum anthropologist Kenneth Emory recorded many of Kuluwaimaka's *oli* (chants) in 1933.

40. *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, February 23, 1934. Mossman had reason to fear Hawaiian extinction, for the Native Hawaiian population was decimated by Western-introduced syphilis, smallpox, cholera, and measles. While figures vary, the Hawaiian population is estimated to have fallen from as much as 800,000 to 40,000 after a century of Euro-American encounters, which began in 1778. See David Stannard, *Before the Horror: The Population of Hawai'i on the Eve of Western Contact* (Honolulu: Social Science Research Institute, University of Hawai'i, 1989).

41. N. R. Farbman Photograph Collection, Bishop Museum, Hawai'i.

42. Richard Handler, "On Sociocultural Discontinuity: Nationalism and Cultural Objectification in Quebec," *Current Anthropology* 25 (1984): 55–71.

43. By "traditional hula," I refer to hula performed with indigenous instrumentation and associated with precontact dance performances, like the *hula pahu* (sacred drum dance used in *heiau* or temples) or *hula 'ala'āpapa* (dance performed with the gourd that honored rulers and gods or relayed historical epics). See Topolinski, "Hula," 149. Although ethnomusicologist Adrienne L. Kaepler documents in detail this renaissance of *hula pahu* in the 1930s, she does not account for its appearance at that particular historical moment. See Kaepler, *Hula Pahu: Hawaiian Drum Dances* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1993), 28.

44. In 1913 Mormon missionaries estimated that 22 percent of Hawaiians were Mormons. See R. Lanier Britsch, *Moramona: The Mormons in Hawaii* (Lā'ie, Hawai'i: Institute for Polynesian Studies), 119.

45. Kaepler, *Hula Pahu*, 106. David and Lydia Bray were two of Ha'aeo's other students.

46. Believing that Polynesians were a lost tribe of the House of Israel, the Church of Latter-Day Saints had developed deep ties in the Pacific Islands since the mid-nineteenth century. Mormons were more sympathetic to Polynesian cultural practices and managed to make more inroads than the Protestant missionaries who preceded them. Mormon interest in genealogy matched well with Polynesian genealogical traditions, and Mormon prohibitions against coffee, tea, and alcohol also fit into the *kapu* (taboo) system that Hawaiians had lived under until 1820.

47. Kaepler, *Hula Pahu*, 107–8.

48. The Mossmans were not the only Hawaiian family to merge commercial culture and hula practice. The Bray family, who had staged the 1919 hula trial, debuted as the Bray Troupe at the 1927 opening of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Waikiki. Daughters Odetta and Kahala Bray later danced and toured with orchestra leader Harry Owens

and the Royal Hawaiians for four years in Colorado Springs, Los Angeles, and New Orleans. Both daughters remained on the U.S. continent and danced in Hollywood films. See Tony Todaro, "Island Personalities: Mama and Daddy Bray," *Paradise of the Pacific*, 1954 Holiday Annual, 114–16.

49. See Annette Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). As Weiner discusses, these "inalienable possessions" were cultural objects primarily made by women. Given as gifts, they facilitated cultural reproduction and exchange networks in the Pacific.

50. Bonnie Beach, "Teaching Hula Dancing Becomes a Big Business in Hawaii," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 24, 1937.

51. Tourism would remain a distant third until after World War II, when local corporations aggressively built a tourist infrastructure with U.S. and later multinational capital. See Lawrence Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono: A Social History* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 378.

52. Milton Murayama's fictional account of Hawaiian plantation life in the 1930s depicts this stark hierarchy; see *All I Asking for Is My Body* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 96.

53. Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono*, 236.

54. Plantation owners colluded with the local police to suppress strikes. During the bloody 1938 "Hilo Massacre" shipping strike, fifty men and women were wounded. See Daws, *Shoal of Time*, 359–60, and Edward D. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 265–66.

55. Chinese immigrants were recruited as plantation laborers in the 1850s, but Kingdom of Hawai'i acts passed in 1887, 1888, 1890, and 1892 restricted Chinese immigration. See Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, vol. 3, 1874–1893: *The Kalakaua Dynasty* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), 142–85. Japanese immigration began in the 1880s and continued sporadically until the 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement between the United States and Japan. Portuguese and Puerto Ricans arrived in the islands in the 1870s, followed by Koreans and Filipinos in the early 1900s.

56. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*, 251.

57. Kent, *Hawaii*, 83.

58. "Hula Teachers Join to Standardize Craft," *Honolulu Advertiser*, January 19, 1939.

59. Piilani Mossman does not seem to have performed regularly at the Hotel Lexington, although she joined Pualani in New York City. By 1939 the two sisters started their own hula studio in the city.

60. George Kanahale, "Hawaiian Room (Hotel Lexington)," in *Hawaiian Music and Musicians*, 120–21.

61. As of 1953, the formula was still successful: the Hawaiian Room had entertained almost four million patrons, given out two million paper leis, and used four hundred thousand coconuts. "Hawaiiana in New York: Authentic Polynesian Entertainment Is Basis for Success Story," *Paradise of the Pacific*, April 1953, 32–33.

62. Kanahale, "Hawaiian Room (Hotel Lexington)," 120.

63. Scudder Middleton, *Dining, Wining, and Dancing in New York* (New York: Dodge Publishing, 1938), 119.

64. Gurre Ploner Noble, *Hula Blues: The Story of Johnny Noble, Hawaii, Its Music, and Musicians* (Honolulu: Tongg Publishing, 1948), 101.

65. Noble, *Hula Blues*, 102. Throughout his career Kinney referred to himself as the "Irish Hawaiian."

66. Although in the islands both men and women traditionally practiced hula and Hawaiian men continued to practice and teach hula, commercial hula in the United States from the 1930s to the 1950s almost always featured women.

67. See Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, 66, 103–4, for analysis of the racialization of hula dancers like Tootsie Notley.

68. “Island Girls Win Chance for Fame in New York,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, March 21, 1940.

69. On Maui in 1940, Kinney found a new addition, Marjorie Leilani Iaea, at Harriet Kuuleinani Stibbard’s hula studio. The same year Kinney asked his wife’s friend Tutasi Wilson to join the dancing line (Carol Mae Vanderford, interviews with the author, 1999; Tutasi Wilson, interviews with the author, 1999).

70. William D. O’Brien, “Meymo Holt Dances an Authentic Hula Mostly with Her Weaving Hands,” *New York World Telegram*, October 16, 1937.

71. Douglas Gilbert, “Those Hula Dancers Don’t Mean What You Think; at Least, Some of Them Don’t, Declares Napua,” *New York World-Telegram*, n.d.

72. Betty MacDonald, “Our Envoys of the Hula,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, September 30, 1939.

73. *Honolulu Advertiser*, June 16, 1940; *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, March 1, 1941.

74. Hawaiian hula dancers and musicians began performing in the U.S. as early as the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition and appeared at U.S. world’s fairs in 1899 (Omaha), 1901 (Buffalo), 1909 (Seattle), 1915 (San Francisco), and 1939 (New York). Hawaiians often could be found in the Midway section of the fair with other live ethnographic spectacles and sideshows.

75. Milton Epstein, *The New York Hippodrome: A Complete Chronology of Performance, from 1905–1939* (New York: Theatre Library Association, 1993).

76. MacDonald, “Our Envoys of the Hula.” Although published accounts of the touring performers were highly flattering, it is likely that some Hawaiians remained critical of commercial Hawaiian performances in the United States in the 1930s. Some hula teachers disliked commercial hula because of its emphasis on creativity and departure from traditional forms. Hula offended some strict Christians, including Hawaiians, for whom it was still associated with Hawaiian religious worship. Furthermore, the American emphasis on Hawaiian women’s sexuality and semiclothed bodies in the performances may have offended some islanders and resulted in the refusal of some families to allow their daughters to participate in the auditions or in the jobs themselves.

77. “Lexington Hotel Onetime Mecca for Island Sound,” *Hailono Mele*, January 1979, 4.

78. Clara Inter (“Hilo Hattie”) appeared on stage with dancers Leo Lani, a Ho’olaule’a (festival) pageant princess, and Lily Padeken, a former dancer with the Royal Hawaiian Girls Glee Club. Inter had learned how to dance hula at the Lalani Hawaiian Village in the early 1930s. Mapuana Bishaw, previously at the Lexington, later joined the line.

79. After 1919 many newly opened nightclubs in Harlem catered to whites, and some explicitly barred African Americans. One of the most prominent, the Cotton Club, which opened in 1923, upheld a whites-only policy (see Jim Haskins, *The Cotton Club* [New York: Random House, 1977], 23–26).

80. Middleton, *Dining, Wining, and Dancing*, 109.

81. *A Souvenir Guide Book of New York City*, 1939

82. *Esquire’s New York: A New York Guide Book for World’s Fair Visitors* (New York: Esquire-Coronet, 1939).

83. Frank C. Davidson, *Where to Take Your Girl in New York on One Dollar to \$20* (New York: Robley Service Press, 1940).

84. See Elizabeth Tatar, *Strains of Change: The Impact of Tourism on Hawaiian Music* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1987), 5, for a description of historical and contemporary categories of Hawaiian music, including *hapa-haole*.

85. After around 1915, non-Hawaiian composers and lyricists began writing humorous songs that presented the islands as paradisiacal escapes. See Tatar, *Strains of Change*, 11–12.

86. Quoted in Kanahale, “Hawaiian Room (Hotel Lexington),” 122.

87. The song “Across the Sea” was composed by Ernest Kaai, Ray Kinney, and John Noble in 1919 but was performed at the Hawaiian Room in the 1930s.

88. Hawaiian music was broadcast nationally once a week from the Hawaiian Room in the late 1930s.

89. The Orchard Hill Camp in Illinois for children, for instance, had a popular Hawaiian program in 1933. PP20-6, Photographs, Folder (Exposition: Chicago, 1933), Hawai‘i State Archives, Honolulu, Hawai‘i.

90. MacDonald, “Our Envoys of the Hula.”

91. “Leis Worn at Fair as Crowds Join In,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1939.

92. *Historical Statistics*, 15.

93. “Selected Employment Statistics: 1878–1960,” *Historical Statistics*, 17.

94. *Demographic Statistics*, 120.

95. See Daws, *Shoal of Time*, 333–38. A subcommittee of the House of Representatives Committee on Territories came to Hawai‘i to investigate Hawai‘i’s statehood potential and heard public testimony in 1935 but did not make a recommendation for or against statehood. The testimony pointed to Japanese in Hawai‘i as “aliens” and potential conspirators with imperial Japan.

96. Edward P. Irwin, *Paradise of the Pacific*, December 1924, 54–56.

97. “Pearl Harbor Inspires Hawaiian to Dance for Beat-the-Jap Funds,” *Long Island Star-Journal*, April 23, 1942.

98. *Demographic Statistics*, 120.

99. Some of these older Hawaiians had been performers on vaudeville circuits or stevedores on mid-Atlantic ports. Betty Puanani Makia, interviews with the author, 2000.

100. Wilson, interview.

101. MacDonald, “Our Envoys of the Hula.”

102. Makia, interviews.

103. 18 CS 1299, “Luau Hickam Field, May 6, 1944,” National Archives, Motion Picture Division, Maryland.

104. 111 M 1201, “Kilauea Military Camp, Hawaii,” 1945, National Archives, Motion Picture Division, Maryland.

105. Ray Kinney toured 157 U.S. military bases and clubs with his dance troupe during the war (Kanahale, “Hawaiian Room [Hotel Lexington],” 218).

106. “Lalani Village Is Purchased by G. P. Mossmans,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, May 27, 1944; “Luau Features Reopening of Lalani Village,” July 15, 1946; “New Hotel Is Planned at Waikiki,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, December 28, 1958; “Firm Seeks Lease on Lot for Hotel,” September 14, 1967. One of the last teachers to assume the helm at the Lalani Hawaiian Village was the twenty-year-old Eleanor Hiram in 1947. Hiram’s grandmother was Keaka Kanahale, who also learned hula from Mormon elder Samuel Pua Ha‘aheo.

107. Hawaiian statehood was established in 1959 via a plebiscite in Hawai‘i that enabled U.S. military personnel to participate. This plebiscite did not follow international law or the decolonization protocol of the United Nations.