

THE HULA INDUSTRY:  
UNDERSTANDING THE COMMODIFICATION OF HULA IN JAPAN  
AND CULTURALLY GROUNDED HULA

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE HULA INDUSTRY

Illustrative of its people and culture, hula has become a symbol of Hawai'i. Stemming from the tourism industry, the stereotypical ideal of hula often aids in the construction of a destination paradise. For many of those that are interested in investing and internalizing hula as a deeper cultural connection, hula is understood as much more than that. This disconnect is one of many that proves to be problematic on various levels.

In the past decade, hula has become a widespread in places throughout the world and Japan has risen to host one of the largest industries of hula. This industry not only exists as an offshoot of our cultural practice, but as a major economic, social, and political mechanism as well. The apparent commodification of hula in Japan remains unexamined and unexplored. The purpose of this thesis is to analyze and discuss the impacts and influence of the commodification of hula in Japan as it serves as a cultural practice, epistemological storehouse, political expression, and social structure.

Hula, when appropriated solely for tourism's benefit, is often transformed to create the most ideal experience; forgoing cultural values and protocols normally attached to it. This disconnect is also found in the *hō'ike* (performance) aspect for hula in Japan. Often times, *po'e hula* are asked to adjust their performance in order to accommodate a promoter's particular vision; and when these requests are tolerated, we perpetuate the same paradisiacal paradigm upheld by acculturated hula. If we are not presenting culturally appropriate hula and if our hula is devoid of the depth it holds, we are displaying a false representation of ourselves and our practice. This not only affects the way we represent ourselves on an international stage, but also in the ways in which we practice hula and how this informs our identity. The second disconnect

then lies within the a'o (teaching) aspect of hula in Japan. Being geographically disconnected from the people and place it represents, how does this affect the practice? If hula is being taught in Japan, are the necessary cultural foundations also being taught with them? Is money – in this case, as a pre-requisite to learning – the standard by which we disseminate knowledge? How do we ensure that this knowledge – and the *mana* it entails – is cared for? And most of all, how does this phenomenon taking place overseas affect us, as a people, here?

Hula on an international stage reveals some important opportunities and connections to be capitalized on. If hula can serve as the face - and perhaps most “visible” representation of Hawai‘i, its resources, culture, and politics - isn’t this the ultimate educational tool? The opportunities to affect and educate others through culturally grounded hula are something that should be capitalized on. Furthermore, while money, instead of *pilina*, becomes the central agent for disseminating ‘*ike*, this industry can create economic autonomy to sustain our practitioners - and likewise, our communities throughout Hawai‘i – in a culturally responsible manner. While this may seem to create a dichotomy between culture and economy, I instead assert that this balance is not only possible, but necessary.

### *Finding the kumu: Tracing the Source*

When I was 16 years old, my Kumu posed a profound yet seemingly simple question to me: "To you, is Merrie Monarch the epitome of hula?" At that time, my answer was of course, "Yes." How could the esteemed "Olympics of Hula" and a competition with the highest honors not represent the peak of my hula career and illustration of success? Years later, I am coming to realize that this is indeed not the case. A competition and its specific parameters do not particularly define the purpose, intent, sanctity, validity, or sincerity of our hula - things in which true value lies. It occurred to me that many perhaps had the same incomplete understanding of

hula; just I once did. And if this was the case, we are not only overlooking pivotal aspects of the practice of hula, but we are failing to uncover the *waiwai* of a practice that can inform us as *kānaka*. Beyond that, this benefit not only influences those individuals who perform and/or practice hula, but extends to those who are attracted by and interested in it.

Even after two decades dedicated to hula, my gratitude continues to grow for a practice that undoubtedly directed my life and sparked a passion to which most devout *po‘e hula* can relate. Most importantly, hula allows me to uncover connections to my *kūpuna*, ties to our *‘āina*, love for *ali‘i*, and realize *kuleana*. All throughout my journeys, I was trained to understand my *kuleana* within *hālau* and to my hula, but I failed to recognize the importance and impact of this *kuleana* to those outside of *hālau*. I failed to see the capabilities of hula, its processes and structures not only to those who practice it, but to those who view it as well.

In today’s modern society, it is becoming increasingly important that we both understand, and ground ourselves in Hawaiian worldviews and ways of knowing. For *kānaka*, we continue to find ourselves at odds with foreign, disconnected, and oppressive structures within which we are to navigate within. The prolonged struggle for resources, *‘āina*, politics, policy and economic wealth are all illustrations of the perpetual clash of ideologies and leadership. Uncovering and maintaining extremely successful connections to our ways of knowing is difficult, but readily achievable. There have been various repositories of knowledge left for us to explore that make creating relevance in today’s context possible. This thesis argues that hula – in its full capacity – serves as a repository of Hawaiian history and epistemology accessible to us in today’s time. Noelani Goodyear Ka‘ōpua highlights this key process in terms of *‘āina* noting, “in the coming generation, it will be even more crucial to look to our ancestral storehouses of knowledge for how to relate in familial and mutually beneficial ways with our

lands, waters, and nonhuman relatives.”<sup>1</sup> This same ideal can be translated here with our practices. Just as our *‘āina* calls for reorganization in order to sustain our people in a changing world, it is important that we look to our own sources of *‘ike* to guide our behavior and practices – just as it has for centuries. This knowledge is a resource to accompany us as our people continue to innovate and create.

We see an early illustration of the profound interest in hula as documented in Poepoe's version of Hi‘iakaikapoliopole. In this *mo‘olelo Ka‘ao*, Laka proceeds to implement a hula in hopes of appealing to her mother, Pele's, estranged *kāne*, Wahieloa. Her performance soon successfully attracts a large interested audience.<sup>2</sup> As seen within this *mo‘olelo*, hula continues to appeal to and attract many people throughout the world. These days, we see illustrations of this phenomenon magnified in the ideals and images that many *malihini* have associated with their vision of a "paradise" that is Hawai‘i nei. The idea of mythologizing our culture and romanticizing the hula girl has ultimately constructed Hawai‘i's reputation as a destination paradise.<sup>3</sup> This fallacy relies heavily on the subjugated image of the Hawaiian hula girl "as the basis for a fictional, fantasy-driven culture"<sup>4</sup> completely disconnected and divorced from the depth and values imbedded in hula.

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<sup>1</sup> Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, *The Seeds We Planted Portraits of a Native Hawaiian Charter School*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press 2013). 246.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Poepoe, *Ka Mo‘olelo Ka‘ao o Hiikaikapoliopole*. (Honolulu, Hawai‘i: Kū‘oko‘a Home Rula, 1909).

<sup>3</sup> Lia O'Neill Moanike‘ala Ah-Lan Keawe, "Ki‘i Pāpālua: Imagery and Colonialism in Hawai‘i" (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2008). 38.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 15.

Hawai‘i's people and practitioners continue to carry on a sacred, intricate, and prestigious art form that is hula. It seems, however, that my sensitivity to the sacredness of hula does not correlate to that of the eight million tourists that visit Hawai‘i annually.<sup>5</sup> This important disconnect is another example of the perpetual misunderstanding of our people, culture, and practices. As compromised images of ourselves continue to represent our people and culture, we become "Native bodies, commodified objects, and imperial fetishes."<sup>6</sup> Clearly disconnected from the hula I understand and hold near, this threat to our practice and identities as *po‘e hula* should be thoughtfully considered and discussed.

### *Problem Statement*

Hula, as a significant cultural practice, epistemology, social and political structure, is being fueled by a significant stream of money in Japan. In an "industry" that has surely grown to become a multi-million dollar endeavor, *po‘e hula Hawai‘i* are consistently hired by Japanese business promoters to participate in shows, concerts, and/or workshops. For many practitioners and Kumu Hula, visits can occur multiple times a year. *Po‘e hula* take part in large shows and concerts that often tour various venues throughout Japan. Often times, Japanese students will pay large amounts of money for a single workshop with esteemed Kumu and *‘ōlapa* – anywhere from hundreds to thousands of dollars. Promoters and practitioners both stand to make large profits off of these various events - and for Japanese businesses, significantly more than the other participant, *po‘e Hawai‘i*. Besides compromising a significant social and cultural structure, this industry is a major economic engine operating on our *‘ike* and practices.

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<sup>5</sup> State of Hawai‘i, *Hawai‘i Tourism Authority: 2012 Annual Visitor Research Report* (Honolulu, HI: 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Adria L. Imada, *Aloha America*. (United States of America: Duke University Press 2009). 15.



In that sense, this unbalanced exchange of culture can be seen as a commodity. When an object becomes a commodity, it is ideologically and literally transformed into a commercial object. An object to be freely owned, consumed, bought, or sold for anyone's taking; available to any one individual who has the means to pay for it. As someone who has personally dedicated most of my life to this practice, I have witnessed the intense commitment and endurance that is necessary in order to earn this *'ike*, and am unable to ascribe a monetary value to it. When money becomes the motivation for the transmission of *'ike*, cultural processes and protocols normally attached are often overlooked, leaving a disconnect perhaps blinded by economic gain.

In 2007, Pacific Business News noted that “hula is a bigger commercial enterprise in Japan than in Hawaii. Top Kumu Hula can easily make six figures, a feat difficult to imagine in Hawaii, where few *kumu* can make a comfortable living even teaching full time.”<sup>7</sup> Many successful Kumu Hula have branches of their *hālau* located in Japan to accommodate to the large demand - and in return, create a vital stream of revenue for themselves as individuals and *hālau*. Though geographically disconnected from Hawai‘i, the industry in Japan also sustains Kumu Hula and *hālau* in the islands. This illustrates the difficult-to-define relationship between hula in Japan and in Hawai‘i. It is irresponsible to assume that each *hālau* and Kumu Hula does not deserve to benefit from income used to supplement their small – if any – tuition dues. As do many others in Hawai‘i, *po‘e hula* continuously struggle with the rising costs of living – often times affecting *hālau*’s ability to compete or go on *huaka‘i*. This supplemental income in Japan helps *kumu* and *hālau* to survive. Considering this, how do we ensure that we are taking care of our *'ike* and balancing monetary gain in a culturally responsible manner?

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<sup>7</sup> Chad Blair, *Japanese Hula Boom May Finally Touch Hawaii* (Honolulu: Pacific Business News, 2007).

*Purpose: Ua Hana ia a Pono a Pololei*

As dancers and practitioners, we are taught that we have a very important job. On one level, we are tasked with understanding and internalizing the *mele* and translating this through our hula. We then must deliver this to our respective audience, helping them to see the ‘*i‘o* (meat) of the *mele* and hula. On a multi-city tour around Japan, we continued to adhere to this task; hoping to translate our hula to our audience. After coming off stage, my younger hula sister looked at me and said, “Do they even understand what we’re saying?” to which, my reply was, “Probably not.” And with a very innocent and intent look on her face, she paused, and then said to me, “So why do we do it then?” It was this question that served as one of the most influential catalysts to this project. Why do we, as *po‘e hula* participate in hula in Japan? My intentions are to analyze the growing phenomenon of hula in Japan so that we are cautious of the negative impacts and capitalize on the positive opportunities. And most of all, ensure that this valuable resource and repository of knowledge is upheld for future generations of *po‘e hula* and *po‘e Hawai‘i*.

The status and appreciation of hula has undoubtedly risen in the last few decades. This widespread acceptance of and desire for hula is a long awaited accomplishment since its outlaw in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We now see the near opposite of its banning - the pervasive learning, practice, and yearning for hula all around the world. In this international context, we can examine hula as an educational, social, cultural, and political tool. Yet, hula’s journey into a contemporary context has not been without conflict. What remains constant is the accessibility to cultural knowledge made readily available through this practice. What is imperative – in both the cultural and academic sense – is that we engage in thoughtful discussions and consideration of a cultural practice with so much value to the individual *kanaka* and *lāhui*.

This thesis will address the following questions:

1. What cultural, economic, social, and political effects does hula - and its specific practice in Japan - have upon Hawai'i's people and practice?
2. What characteristics of the above aspects can be beneficial and/or detrimental to kanaka within Hawai'i's current context?
3. What *kuleana* do we – as *po'e hula/po'e Hawai'i* - have to discuss, evaluate, and regulate this phenomenon?

The *kuleana* to discuss this kind of topic comes with the communal sense of accountability, a characteristic of our society that has upheld *loina Hawai'i*<sup>8</sup> for decades. If we, as committed *po'e hula*, are not demanding a standard of practice from practitioners (both here and abroad), are we doing our part to '*auamo kuleana*? Taiaiake Alfred's work advocates that traditions "demand a higher standard of conduct,"<sup>9</sup> insisting that this communal sense of accountability is an important responsibility of each member of the community. Hula, a tradition, must indefinitely demand a higher standard of conduct, practice, and protection – for we have *kuleana* here – and thus, my *kuleana* in this project.

The disconnections and potential connections that arise from hula in Japan directly affect our identity, practice (of hula), and culture. I come to this project in hopes of starting a thoughtful discussion about an art/practice that is of utmost importance to us as individuals, community and *lāhui*.

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<sup>8</sup> Generally understood as Hawaiian customs, manners, rule, code, principles.

<sup>9</sup> Taiaiake Alfred. *Peace Power Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. (Canada: Oxford University Press, 2009) 89.

This project will endeavor to compare two aspects of the hula industry: one, the performance aspect, or *hō‘ike*, and two, the teaching aspect, *a‘o*. My research will be organized into two – sometimes overlapping – characteristics: one, “disconnections” and two, “connections”. Disconnects can also be understood as criticism of this industry. I highlight these so that we may be conscious and cautious of the various opinions shared throughout my research. The second, connections, can also be understood as positive opportunities to capitalize on. Additionally, I refer to “Culturally Grounded hula” as hula that is grounded in *‘ike*, structure, processes, and protocol; where above all else, the cultural content and context is paramount. While the analytical aspect of this thesis can be critical, the intent is that this discussion and sharing of *mana‘o* will be appreciated, respected, and thoughtfully considered as we move forward – not just as *po‘e hula*, but as a collective *lāhui*, as well.

As previously highlighted, the first disconnect involves the *hō‘ike* (performance) aspect of hula in Japan. In most instances, Japanese promoters have a vision of what kind of production they would like to create. This “vision” is based on each promoter’s individual context – what he understands Hawai‘i and hula to encompass. For some, Hawai‘i is appealing for coconut bras and cellophane skirts. This is not to say there are not those who wholeheartedly embrace the culture behind hula. In any case, because we, as dancers, are operating within their context – and contracts - we are often times faced with altering our hula to fit the desired mold. O’Carrol notes, “Fulfilling tourists’ expectations has an impact on performance through adapting a dance to cater to tourists expectations.”<sup>10</sup> In this, we risk forfeiting the opportunity to present culturally appropriate and culturally grounded hula – the thing in which we find true value.

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<sup>10</sup> Aschula O’Carrol. “Haka and Hula: Representation in Tourism” (MA Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2009). 96.

In failing to deliver anything less than culturally grounded hula, we are failing to effectively re-present our histories, people and practice to an international audience. There are various values that are continually taught within the *hālau* structure. Imbedded in cultural values, a sense of accountability and responsibility is also implanted. At very least, this responsibility through hula is to the "past, community, and audience...[while seizing] the opportunity to affect change."<sup>11</sup>

The second disconnect lies within the *a‘o* (teaching) aspect of hula in Japan, which seems to rely more on the quick exchange of money than the progressive building of relationships and *‘ike*. My own personal experience in *hālau* has created a *kahua* upon which I can stand in life. It provides me with constant *kuleana*, reminders, and context – to which I am still bound today. Much of the *kuleana*, *‘ike*, and hula that I have acquired in my young hula career have been earned through various trying instances that could not have been purchased or gained over a short period of time. My growth as a *haumāna* and individual has taken place over a long period of time, through invaluable relationships, and incredibly challenging experiences. It is concerning, to say the least, to think that invaluable *‘ike*, such as hula, is being given solely based on a short-lived interaction and the exchange of exorbitant amounts of money.

This disconnect occurs on the fundamental level of organizational structure. In most *hālau* in Hawai‘i, students are referred to as *haumāna*. In Japan, however, they are referred to as “*Okuyaku sama*” or customers<sup>12</sup> – alluding to the individual’s role within the Japanese *hālau* structure, which resembles a business organization more than an educational one. There are

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<sup>11</sup> Cristina Bacchilega. *Legendary Hawai‘i and the Politics of Place*. (United States of America: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) 2.

<sup>12</sup> Cody Pueo Pata, interview by Anela U‘ilani Tanigawa, Maunaloa, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, October 3, 2015.

perhaps two different ways in which hula is taught in Japan. Workshops are just as they sound – workshops. Most of the time, this short-lived contact does not establish a prolonged relationship between the *kumu* and participants. Customers may register and pay dues for a single or a series of workshops taught by a *kumu* (or in other times, *alaka‘i* or dancers). While these workshops host multitudes of interested people, what isn’t promised is what happens to these “dancers” (and hula) post-workshop. On the other hand, many Kumu Hula have established branches of their own *hālau* or may influence and guide Japanese *hālau* with their own designated “sensei”. Others graduate Japanese Kumu Hula.

Many *po‘e hula Hawai‘i* who belong to *hālau*, understand that commitment is an incredible investment. Through relationships, structure, processes, and protocol, learning hula in *hālau* instills an important sense of *kuleana*. It demands close knowledge, attention to detail, and connections to sacred places and language that is our people and history. Taiaiake Alfred explores this idea in asserting that "there is a spiritual base that connects us all and it is stimulated through ceremony"<sup>13</sup> and in my opinion, a type of ceremony that is evoked through hula. Ultimately, what these kind of “spiritual-cultural resurgences” provides us is a transformative experience that “recreates people,”<sup>14</sup> giving them the space and courage to understand his/her place in contemporary Hawai‘i.

Whereas the desire to learn hula in Japan has risen and many are opting to teach there, for various reasons explored here, there seems to be a lack culturally grounded hula based on my personal experiences. We ponder the appropriateness of teaching of hula to Japanese. Some

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<sup>13</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009) 35.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 23.

may suggest that teaching Japanese students the *‘ike* and ceremony behind the hula is necessary (as it should be for *po‘e hula* in Hawai‘i), but others are unsure if this same connection can or even *should* be made. On one hand, if we decide that this connection to *‘ike* cannot be made and we are equipping them with nothing but motions, we risk the misappropriation or devaluing of a practice that continually proves its invaluable role to our culture and people. If we do teach hula in its fullness, can we ensure that the recipient will *mālama ‘ike*? It is this very question that drives my research.

We have seen the continued misrepresentation and misappropriation of our cultural practice in venues around Hawai‘i, the largest of which is Waikīkī. Once an abundant *‘āina*, Waikīkī has now been transformed into a tourist hot spot, hosting the largest concentration of tourists throughout the *pae ‘āina*. It is here that one is promised a paradisiacal destination conveniently separated from any culturally influenced realities. Alfred also echoes that these “commodified artifices” are “worse than just a pseudo-cultural sham, the tourist performance presents a false face of [indigenous] life to the world, one that is completely different from the politics, spirituality, and truth of lived existences.”<sup>15</sup> The risk of creating another wealth-driven place like Waikīkī is also a concern for unmonitored commodified hula in Japan. While “tourism has become a source of economic prosperity on one hand,” it also has become “a threat to cultural and community identity on the other.”<sup>16</sup> If hula in Japan revolves around economic gain absent from its cultural context and importance, we – as *po‘e hula* – are responsible.

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<sup>15</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009) 35.

<sup>16</sup> Ramsay Remigius Mahealani Taum, "Tourism." *The Value of Hawaii Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future* (2010), 31.

On the other hand, the popularity of hula throughout the world offers us a very notable opportunity precisely because *po'e hula* are positioned quite visibly – and now garner the attention of an international audience. This point is critical on two levels. *Po'e hula* are in the position to both represent our people, culture, and stories and to educate. Examining these aspects of a cultural practice in an academic venue – as explored through interviews and conversations – aims to inform and empower *po'e hula*.

Furthermore, as we present culturally grounded hula, the opportunities are again, two-fold. The first, as previously mentioned, allows for external influence through the presentation of a culturally sound, culturally grounded hula externally – to our audience. The second layer is internal – an opportunity to practice and reinforce our own identity as practitioners, *po'e hula*, and *po'e Hawai'i*. As the popularity of hula - culturally grounded hula as this thesis advocates for – grows, so does hula's exposure, potentially resulting in a paradigm shift. A change in how others view and understand our world – not just as a paradise, but as our epistemologies highlight: as *'āina*. Though an unprecedented stretch to some, international exposure, education, and recognition could encourage and inspire political relationships informed on our issues – undoubtedly important as we negotiate our status and future as an occupied Hawai'i.

Finally, the ability to teach someone what certainly ties us to our culture and likewise, our *kuleana*, all encompassing, is potentially very powerful – thus my cautious demeanor. As *kānaka*, we acknowledge the power in the intentions of our voices and movements as illustrated through hula. If our purpose – as *po'e Hawai'i* – is to *ho'omana* or *ho'ohanohano*, through our hula, it could be twice as powerful if we teach Japanese to do *'auamo kuleana* as well. We, together, can intentionally evoke *mana* out of hula. We can encourage the understanding of hula with the depth that it offers us.



This thesis hopes to enlighten both mind and *na‘au*, through both academic means and practice so that we can collectively uphold our *kuleana* to the invaluable practice of hula.

### *Significance of Research*

"I don't see the hula being Hawaiian in the years to come. The people of Hawai‘i don't know the Hawaiian language so there is no stability. I don't want to offend any hula instructor...but there is no one around to keep them in line today. They are on their own. There are no boundaries or definitions anymore. You make the cake the way you want, I make the cake the way I want."<sup>17</sup>

Clearly representative of the dilemma we are facing today, the above quote reveals insight into the significance of my research. If hula – in its complete capacity and capabilities – loses touch with its cultural context and significance, we may forfeit a facet of ourselves as a people and culture. We lose a conduit to our *kūpuna*, *‘āina*, *akua*, our past, and future. The phenomenon of the Japan industry of hula is one of which to be cautious of lest we lose the very essence and core of this practice.

Lia Keawe also maintains the idea that "hula is something that belongs to Kānaka Maoli. No one person or individual owns hula. Period. It belongs to our culture, our people and therefore, we, mālama (take care of) Hula together as a collective body of kānaka."<sup>18</sup> How does hula in Japan align with these sentiments?

Alfred further focuses on the importance of our role as dancers stressing that "the dancers move to the sound, giving life to their people."<sup>19</sup> If this is true, what kind of life can we give to

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<sup>17</sup> Alice Ku‘uleialohapoina‘ole Kanakaoluna Nāmakelua. *Nānā i nā Loea Hula*.

<sup>18</sup> Lia O'Neill Moanike‘ala Ah-Lan Keawe, "Ki‘i Pāpālua: Imagery and Colonialism in Hawai‘i" (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2008). 36.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 91.

our people through our dances? The idea of traditionalism - which includes hula - is extremely important because "it is the basis of our claim to difference, and [this] difference is tied to sovereignty."<sup>20</sup> The greatest task in asserting ourselves as a thriving culture lies within education. As hula takes on the role as representing Hawai'i, our people and culture, we can use this as an opportunity to correctly educate and inform others internationally. Alfred echoes that restoring connections to our past and ways of knowing is the "force that will confront and defeat the defiant evil of imperialism in this land."<sup>21</sup> In this we see the importance of the dance itself, the active role of the performer, and its influence upon the audience. Performance of hula, is an "opportunity for an individual or group to take control"<sup>22</sup> of our own practice and identity "through an engagement with the past and to act to affect the future"<sup>23</sup> as noted by Bacchilega. Our hula can be a vessel through which we successfully serve our *kūpuna* while empowering our voices and educating others on behalf of our people.

The idea of an unchanging society, culture, and its practice is simply unrealistic and false. Culture and traditions are clearly dynamic, proving that hula will be too. Hula as a creative process undoubtedly continues to reflect our times and surroundings. It is, however, important that we are ensuring that these changes are beneficial to the larger *lāhui*. Dr. Kamanamaikalani Beamer introduces us to an idea that helps us negotiate this dichotomy. He highlights our *ali'i*'s brilliance in "selectively appropriat(ing)" foreign tools of governance "while

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>21</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009) 35.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Glassie. *Tradition*. (Journal of American Folklore, 1995) 404.

<sup>23</sup> Cristina Bacchilega. *Legendary Hawai'i and the Politics of Place*. (United States of America: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) 2.

modifying existing indigenous structures to create a hybrid nation-state."<sup>24</sup> In this, we see our people's ability to adapt to outside influence while maintaining that which is truly important. Translated in terms of hula, the selective and thoughtful appropriation – responsible use – of hula is critical to our wellbeing in a contemporary context. It is my hope that this research provides a foundation for understanding a modern phenomenon of hula while simultaneously seizing the opportunity to successfully move forward as a *lāhui*.

We are not simply just practicing the art and tradition of hula. Hula can, should, and is being used as an instrument to undermine the idea of paradise while encouraging and asserting positive practices of culture and tradition. By practicing hula in this fashion, we are preserving and taking care of hula's sacred lineage while asserting ourselves as a living, educated, and thriving *lāhui*.

#### *Methodology: Ma ka Hana ka 'Ike*

This thesis will examine the hula industry in Japan through an *'ike Hawai'i* lens. My methodology in doing so includes examining concepts that are discussed in the arena of Hawaiian studies, looking at *mo'olelo*, incorporating changes our culture has encountered in the past, and analyzing previously written work pertaining to our culture, people, and practices.

An ideal that is founded in *'Ōlelo No'eau* is the concept of "*Ma ka hana ka 'ike*" or, "in working one learns."<sup>25</sup> This thesis will also evoke this idea as a methodology. Our *kūpuna* recognized the importance of *both* work coupled with the valuable knowledge that accompanies it.

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<sup>24</sup> Kamanamaikalani Beamer. *No Mākou ka Mana Liberating the Nation*. (Honolulu: Kamehameha Publishing, 2014) 3.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Kawena Pūku'i, *'Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Sayings*. (Honolulu, Hawai'i: Bishop Museum Press, 1983), 2088.

The first part of this *Ma ka Hana ka 'Ike* methodology is derived from my role as a hula practitioner and participant of the hula industry. This aspect involves the actual *hana* (work) of hula. As a dancer/practitioner of hula, I incorporate personal experiences and lessons that have shaped my understanding of hula and its capabilities. I am whole-heartedly coming to understand the importance and necessity of coupling theory with practice.

The second part of this methodology, or *'ike*, will involve the academic aspect. I will look to various authors in Indigenous Studies and Political Science while approaching them with my lens as a *kanaka* and a practitioner. In this sense, I will analyze the practice of hula through an academic approach. With a thorough understanding of the intricate practice that is culturally grounded hula and education in *'ike Hawai'i*, I hope to deliver a well-informed argument that successfully incorporates the two above methodologies as one - *ma ka hana ka 'ike*.

### *Methods*

This thesis will extract majority of its *'ike* from existing works pertaining to hula, culture, identity, politics, and capitalism coupled with a series of interviews with Kumu Hula and individuals who take part in the "hula industry" in Japan.

As someone who has participated in this very industry, I am highly interested in examining and questioning those who frequent this area and industry. Furthermore, my work would undoubtedly be incomplete without the input of the experts, Kumu Hula, who have dedicated their lives to this practice – those who continue to inspire me with their breadth and depth of *'ike*.

### *Literature Review*

Various *Kānaka Maoli* and non-*Kānaka Maoli* authors have begun to explore the practice of hula outside of Hawai'i, its context, and effects. I look to these authors for supporting

evidence to my analysis, to emphasize the need for this research, and to provide a framework to which I can add more *‘ike*. Furthermore, I am choosing to incorporate other sources that discuss the importance of Indigenous practices and traditions as they impact individuals and communities. This thesis will contribute to the vast library of literature pertaining to hula that already exists and will potentially represent a smaller body of literature that critically examines modern phenomena of hula and encourages a culturally grounded representation and practice of hula.

Historically, hula has occasionally been used as a tool and/or vessel to represent a certain agenda. Besides the kinds of culturally grounded hula that aim to honor *akua*, *‘āina*, *ali‘i*, *a pēlā aku*, hula has been subjugated to fit various molds. Numerous authors provide a historical account of misappropriated hula and the importance of each instance.

While hula was widely re-accepted into society and revived during the reign of Kalākaua, in order to reinvigorate Hawaiian identity, hula took on a very different role in the late 19th century. Adria Imada's *Aloha America* "examines U.S. imperial interests in Hawai‘i through the circulation of hula."<sup>26</sup> In 1892, the first "major trans-local, if not global, tour of the hula"<sup>27</sup> took a group of hula performers across the North America and Europe over a four-year span. In what Imada calls "hula circuits", Hawaiians suddenly became "legible and largely desirable" to various Euro-American audiences. In this context, hula was used as a tool to solidify the United States' imperial interests in a colonial relationship with Hawai‘i.

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<sup>26</sup> Adria L. Imada, *Aloha America*. (United States of America: Duke University Press, 2009). 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

In considering Imada's work, we are presented with an example in which hula served as one of, if not the main, representation of Hawai'i, its people, and culture. Through these hula circuits, hula helped to market a paradisiacal Hawai'i as an "eroticized and feminized space disposed to political, military, and tourist penetration."<sup>28</sup> This representation was obviously dangerous to us as a people, but also to those who then view Hawai'i (and its people) as a valuable object that must be capitalized upon. The same opportunity to capitalize on our representation still continues to exist within hula.

The global tour of hula as researched by Imada is an illustration of the negative effects of representation through hula on our people. Imada develops an understanding of one of the earlier forms of the commodification of hula in places outside of Hawai'i. This idea provides a basis for my research. In a sense, my research will be a continuation of this particular work. I hope to build upon this and uncover the effects of representation and commodification of hula in Japan while considering its effects on our culture and people.

Though Imada successfully conveys an instance in which hula was commodified and served to represent and market Hawai'i to America, the cultural impacts of this appropriation on our people and culture falls outside of her scope of work. While she effectively conveys some of the negative aspects of this type of representation, her work lacks the intimate understanding of the multi-faceted, intricate, and arduous practice of hula. This gives me the opportunity to add my experience as a dancer and cultural practitioner.

Imada analyzes and emphasizes hula outside of Hawai'i and many authors also highlight the dangers of marketing our culture through hula. In 1999, Haunani-Kay Trask asserted the idea

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 6.

of "Cultural Prostitution" through which she discusses the total degradation of culture (including hula) through tourism.

Trask refers to the marketing of hula in tourism as "Cultural Prostitution" which helps us to "understand what has happened to [the] Hawaiian Culture" and to "convey the utter degradation of our culture."<sup>29</sup> We continually see a romanticized image and ideal of a hula girl aching to appeal to visitors throughout "Paradise".

Trask asserts that culture within the context of tourism results in a negative exploitation and representation of a sacred practice. Furthermore, this sacred and traditional practice is then mutilated into an eroticized package that is palatable to our visitors. Coupled with lū'au and the "Aloha Spirit", Hawai'i as a paradise is available to each tourist for the taking. "The place, the people, the culture, even our identity as a 'Native' people is for sale...The use of *aloha* is so far removed from any Hawaiian cultural context that is, literally, meaningless."<sup>30</sup>

Building on the work and insights of scholars like Trask, I approach my research of the hula industry in Japan. If "hula" in Japan is so far removed from its traditional intent, what effect does this have on the practice itself? What does it do to a practice when we no longer demand a standard of commitment to that practice and value instead of the financial windfall it promises?

Building on this treatment of hula as a commodity, Lia Keawe's *Ki'i Pāpālūa: Imagery and Colonialism in Hawai'i* provides various other examples of this occurrence and offers new insight into the importance of this representation. Throughout this work, Keawe highlights the use of stereotypical Hawaiian images throughout Hawai'i - more specifically, the image of the

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<sup>29</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter*. (United States of America: University of Hawaii Press, 1999). 140.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 144.

hula girl. Creating a "spatial imaginary, Keawe provides "cognitive maps for Kanaka Maoli to receive knowledge, awareness, understanding, recognition, comprehension to re-fresh the mind, and de-colonize the Hawaiian hula girl from its subjugation."<sup>31</sup> In unpacking this idea, we arrive upon a platform to reassert, re-present and empower ourselves as a people.

Lia Keawe insists that this colonially imposed image of the Hawaiian hula girl and of paradise forces a "history that does not belong to us but [also] rhetorically erases the realities of our people."<sup>32</sup> If this is statement proves true, then the opposite might uphold positive ideals for us. The imposition of "culturally grounded" hula and practices could act as a tool to restore our history and cultural identity while empowering and asserting ourselves as a thriving people. I reference "culturally grounded" hula not only as including the actual dance itself, but the 'ike, ceremony, and participating agents as well.

Keawe's purpose and problem statements also provide a framework and foundation for this thesis. She takes the time to remind us of our kuleana within hula. She asserts that hula is not and cannot be owned by any one person and it is our responsibility as a collective whole to mālama hula. Also important to the wellbeing of our practice is the continual engagement in thoughtful discussions with one another. I hope to both mālama a practice I hold valuable and engage in thoughtful discussions with those who share the same love.

While Keawe successfully highlights the importance of re-claiming the (still) image of Hawaiian hula girl, this thesis contributes to this analysis by emphasizing the importance of re-claiming and re-asserting the re-presentation of hula itself as sacred traditional practice.

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<sup>31</sup> Lia O'Neill Moanike'ala Ah-Lan Keawe, "Ki'i Pāpālua: Imagery and Colonialism in Hawai'i" (PhD diss., University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2008). viii.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., vii.



In this research, I analyze the influence and impacts of ascribing such large sums of money as the catalyst for the transmission of the *‘ike* of hula. I look to various authors for their supporting framework and theories. Acushla O'Carrol examines the impacts and influence of tourism on haka and hula. O'Carrol notes that many times in "fulfilling tourists' expectations [it then] has an impact on [our] performances through adapting a dance to cater to tourists' expectations."<sup>33</sup> As we continue to make compromises to our dance and practices, we are allowing outside forces to shape our identity, traditions, and representation. A disconnect related to the *hō‘ike* aspect, as previously mentioned.

I strongly believe that there is great importance in questioning and upholding standards of conduct. Various authors highlight this same importance and reiterate my interest in researching such a difficult topic. Although I do not intended to criticize practitioners and their decisions or condemn hula in all other venues beside Hawai‘i, it is a critical conversation to be had. Alfred also explores this idea in noting that "without criticizing, [it then] enables people who are basically rip offs to have the same status as devoted leaders."<sup>34</sup> In this I find true danger to our culture, wellbeing, and identity.

We look to the "industry" in Japan to reflect (or not reflect) these ideals, practices, opportunities, tools, ceremony, and spirituality as they practice hula. From there, we can then question the appropriateness and relevance of their hula, and decide whether or not we should be concerned.

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<sup>33</sup> Acushla O'Carrol, "Haka and Hula: Representation in Tourism" (MA thesis, 2009). 96.

<sup>34</sup> Alfred. *Peace Power Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. (Canada: Oxford University Press, 2009) 67.

Dr. Pualani Kanaka‘ole Kanahele emphasizes that "like nature, hula is rhythmic, inclusive, transformative, physical, spiritual, healing, and above all, it is Hawaiian."<sup>35</sup> With that being said, hula is a powerful all-inclusive tool that allows for various phenomena to occur. Lia Keawe notes a similar importance of storytelling as a "vessel that holds our experiences in the creation of memory."<sup>36</sup> For Kānaka Maoli, hula, mele, and oli are all indeed forms of storytelling. Through these things we call upon akua, realize our responsibility, honor our kūpuna, create new memories, and remember our past. Alfred expands on this idea: "the essence of the ancestors' message reveals itself not only in these songs, speeches, and dances but also in the faces and bodies of all who are assembled."<sup>37</sup> This is not only a heavy *kuleana*, but also a great opportunity. In this kind of interaction, we not only see the *kuleana* of the performer to the dance and knowledge itself, but to the audience as well. The performer's ability to connect and inform the audience is a valuable opportunity. It is clear that one must be steadfast in his/her *kahua* and knowledge of past as the performance acts to affect the future.

As we strive to re-own these images (and re-present ourselves in various avenues such as hula), we are re-claiming and re-covering the past and "illustrating the commitment and *kuleana* (right, responsibility, authority and privilege) to create art that is specific to Hawai‘i,"<sup>38</sup> as Keawe highlights. This *kuleana* is twofold: first, our own *kuleana* to uphold the value and worth within

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<sup>35</sup> Pualani Kanaka‘ole Kanahele. *Ka Honua Ola ‘Eli‘eli Kau Mai: The Living Earth, Descend, Deepen the Revelation*. (Honolulu, Hawai‘i: Kamehameha Publishing, 2011) 109.

<sup>36</sup> Lia O'Neill Moanike‘ala Ah-Lan Keawe, "Ki‘i Pāpālua: Imagery and Colonialism in Hawai‘i" (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2008). 30.

<sup>37</sup> Tiaiake Alfred. *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009) 35.

<sup>38</sup> Lia O'Neill Moanike‘ala Ah-Lan Keawe, "Ki‘i Pāpālua: Imagery and Colonialism in Hawai‘i" (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2008). 118.

this practice, and two, by holding those to whom we bestow this *‘ike*, accountable. The "indigenous concept of accountability demands an intimate knowledge of the particular culture of communication and a consistent dose of contact with the people"<sup>39</sup> and land, I might add. If this is true, then we must question the capability of our *hoa* in Japan wishing to dance hula.

The practice of hula calls upon a deeper understanding of one's cultural foundation of identity. Alfred supports this idea in exclaiming that "restoring these connections is the force that will confront and defeat"<sup>40</sup> imperialism. Hula is not simply a form of entertainment it is an important cord that binds us to our own epistemological foundations, from which we can then build upon. This cord is the connection that gives us strength and courage to confront oppressive structures and clear the path for a more ideal future. Hula can provide a "restored spiritual foundation, channeling that spiritual strength and the unity it creates into a power that can affect political and economic relations."<sup>41</sup>

Various *Kanaka Maoli* and non-*Kanaka Maoli* writers document hula's historical role in our Hawaiian community, society, and throughout the world. They highlight and emphasize the importance that inspires my research on hula in Japan.

What might, on the surface, seem to be a simple topic, hula in Japan reveals an intricately weaved structure of importance and meaning to be questioned and analyzed. Hula is not simply a form of entertainment within tourism, the *Kānaka Maoli* *po‘e hula* relies on deeply rooted

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<sup>39</sup> Taiaiake Alfred. *Peace Power Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. (Canada: Oxford University Press, 2009) 93.

<sup>40</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009) 34.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 22.

connections, understanding, *‘ike*, and *kuleana* to successfully and effectively deliver his/her hula and image through storytelling. Now, can the same be said about “hula dancers” in Japan?

### *Outline of Chapters*

Chapter one will introduce the basic parameters of hula in Japan as referenced within this thesis and the ways in which this thesis was formed. It will outline the purpose and significance of this research framed by existing literature, opinions, and lived experiences.

Chapter two will attempt to provide context to the basis of this project. It will endeavor to articulate the totality of culturally grounded hula and the opportunities it provides to the individual, community, and larger lāhui. It will highlight one’s opportunity to become grounded in a Hawaiian epistemology by investing in the repository and practice of hula. Furthermore, I will analyze culture as a “refining and elevating element”<sup>42</sup> in cooperation with hula as a cultural practice. We will examine hula in a historical context and the ways in which it has been appropriated in relation to this context.

Chapter three will highlight the various disconnections and criticisms of hula in Japan such as: altering performances, lack of accountability, negative representation, and being economically driven. This includes defining the existing structures in which acculturated hula has operated in and some of the outcomes of it.

The fourth chapter will highlight the potential opportunities and connections that can be made through the industry in Japan. It will furthermore discuss concepts that can be capitalized upon in order to successfully and selectively appropriate hula while in Japan – namely; re-presentation, identity, international recognition, *ho‘omana*, economic autonomy, education. Interviews will also be included in this chapter.

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<sup>42</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) xiii.

Finally, the conclusion will summarize and highlight key aspects of this research, including the impacts and influences of the commodification of hula in Japan.

## CHAPTER 2

### KA WAIHONA O KA NA‘AUAO

We have inherited a rich tradition of hula and mele oli, full of stories of gods and goddesses, ceremonies, prayers, protocol, imagery, wisdom, and intelligence. This tradition teaches how to respect family, appreciate natural phenomena, memorize lengthy chants, love the land, understand hierarchy, recognize life and death cycles, and acknowledge and honor the presence of life.<sup>43</sup>

A “*waihona*” is defined as a depository, a place for safekeeping. A place where one can store valuables, where one can both draw from and add to, for those to come. Hula, as described in the passage above, is an all-inclusive repository of knowledge, housing all of the content it protects. So much so, that the process to accessing this *‘ike* often begins with an *oli kāhea*; the spiritual key to access. Kumu Hula Kimo Keaulana discusses that “whenever there are things of *kapu* (“sacred”) nature, they must be guarded well...mele served as the “lock” to guard precious knowledge and secrets.”<sup>44</sup> Hula’s teaching abilities are far reaching, touching upon all aspects of *kanaka* life, just one illustration of the knowledge and wisdom of our people; just one illustration of the idea of “*na ‘auao*,” of enlightenment and knowledge. Hula, in this sense, is grounded and guided by the *pū‘olo* of cultural knowledge it houses. Such, hula, as referenced throughout this thesis, will be discussed as “culturally grounded hula.”

Hula presents unique opportunities to *kānaka* living in a modern society. Just as the space is prepared for a dancer, I aim to create an academically-based *kahua* from which we understand hula; and in the instance of this thesis, the function of hula in Japan. Examining hula through the

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<sup>43</sup> Pua Kanakaole-Kanahele. “History of Hula” in *Holo Mai Pele: Educator’s Guide* (Pacific Islanders in Communication and Edith Kanakaole Foundation, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> J. Kimo Alama Keaulana, “*Kūnihi Ka Mauna: Secrets Revealed*” (Unpublished work, 2010), 1.

lens of academia offers a different framework from which we normally view knowledge our *kūpuna* have passed down for generations through hula. This analysis aims to illustrate the depth and breadth of knowledge imbedded within this important cultural practice. Creating this *kahua* then allows us the opportunity to effectively evaluate the industry as a whole.

The practice of hula continues to hold restorative, educational, and transformative properties that perhaps go unrecognized. In this chapter, I will illustrate, by drawing upon both written accounts and personal experiences, that the present-day practice of hula plays an incredibly important role across social, political, economic, and cultural lines. In both the *hō'ike* and *a'o*, hula will continue to empower our people against an increasingly disconnected and changing society. Moreover, practicing culturally grounded hula serves to assert our people's ongoing resistance to, struggle against, and survival within oppressive colonial structures. In this role, hula proves to be nothing short of a testament to the survival of our culture, *'ike, nohona*, and epistemologies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and thus, contributing to active self-determination of *kānaka*. This chapter aims to trace the value of culturally grounded hula, highlighting its importance and relevance to *kānaka Maoli* in contemporary times, and creating a *kahua* from which we analyze the hula industry in Japan.

*I le'a ka hula i ka ho'opa'a: Finding Value in Mele and 'Ōlelo Hawai'i*

*Waiwai* is defined as value, worth, or riches.<sup>45</sup> The core of this word, “*wai*” and its reduplication is but one instance in which our *kūpuna* shed light upon the Hawaiian worldview, giving us a glimpse into their conceptual understanding of being. Here, I use “*waiwai*,” as means to identify the various elements that contribute to the value rooted within hula. These *waiwai* include *'Ōlelo Hawai'i* and *mele*, and their educational, restorative, and regenerative

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<sup>45</sup> Mary Kawena Pūku'i and Samuel H. Elbert. *Hawaiian Dictionary*. Honolulu: 1986.

properties. My examination of these concepts gives us a detailed view of the intricate web of knowledge woven to create this *waihona*.

At the core of the practice of hula is *mele*. Early 17<sup>th</sup>-century accounts of hula emphasize the importance of *mele* as “always the main focus of a performance.”<sup>46</sup> Esteemed *mele* practitioner and *Kumu Hula* Dr. Keawe Lopes describes *mele* as “poetic lyrical expressions”<sup>47</sup> that served and continues to serve as one of the main storehouses of ‘*ike* and “seem[ing] to be for the purpose of transmitting information.”<sup>48</sup> These *mele*, composed in ‘*ōlelo Hawai‘i*, innately binds the words and poetry to the body of ‘*ike* that this language represents. Across many fields of academia, language is revered as a highly valued carrier of cultural knowledge.

*Haku mele* required the skilled use of language, weaving words and their multiplicity of meanings into songs, often times with several layers of meaning. This expertise is an illustration of the intelligence of our *kūpuna* and testament to the value traced throughout *mele*. Hawaiian historian and scholar, Samuel M. Kamakau writes, “*O ka haku mele kekahi hana akamai a naauao o ke poe kahiko, a ua kaulana loa ia poe ma ia hana..he nui ke ano o na mele a he nui no hoi ka waiwai i loa ma loko o na mele a ka poe kahiko i haku ai.*”<sup>49</sup> Decades later, the same is still true. The *waiwai* of *mele* is not only found in the content of its composition, but also the

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<sup>46</sup> Nathaniel B. Emerson. *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* (Washington Government Printing Office, 1909), 22.

<sup>47</sup> Dr. R. Keawe Lopes. *Ka Waihona a Ke Aloha Monograph*: E Maui ai ka Puana. USA 2014. (x).

<sup>48</sup> Dr. R. Keawe Lopes. *Ka Waihona a Ke Aloha Monograph*: E Maui ai ka Puana. USA 2014. (x).

<sup>49</sup> Samuel M. Kamakau, “*Ka Mo‘olelo ‘o Kamehameha I*,” *Ka Nūpepa Kū‘oko‘a*, Kēkēmapa, 21, 1867. Translated: writing songs is a skilled and intelligent ability of the people of old. And those people were famous by that ability. There were many different kinds of *mele* and there was great value in the songs that the people of old wrote.



context in which it was written.

The focus on *mele* in culturally grounded hula extends our understanding beyond the music to which hula is danced, and puts weight in the text and context of each *mele*. Noenoe Silva's similar emphasis on *mele* urges us to view it as more than a poetic composition and as an avenue to accessing Hawaiian concepts and identities. "Mele communicate in the ways prose cannot. Mele functioned then (and now) both as carriers of messages and as signs of kanaka identity, in that they indicate mastery of cultural knowledge and poetic language. The shared understanding also bound the lāhui together."<sup>50</sup> The expert use of *mele* in hula not only familiarizes the individual with our people's poetic abilities, but more importantly, points to the conceptual understanding a Hawaiian identity.

*Mele*, as it utilizes 'ōlelo Hawai'i, and as a foundation of hula, allows the dancer and audience to rediscover *mo'olelo*, re-tell history, and re-live past experiences. In this, we see a truly invaluable opportunity. 'Ōlelo Hawai'i and the cultural history embedded within each *mele*, as Kumu Hula and scholar, Kahikina de Silva argues, become *piko*: "center, navel umbilical cord, summit...a convergence," and "a reconnection to our ancestral *piko*...as a source of mana."<sup>51</sup>

Because of the importance of language to the expression and assertion of Hawaiian concepts and identities, and because of the violent colonial history that continues to threaten the survival of Hawaiian language and worldview, 'ōlelo Hawai'i has become a *piko* around which our people gather and through which we engage in daily struggles for *ola*.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Duke University Press, 2004) 184-185.

<sup>51</sup> Kahikina de Silva, "Killer Mele" (master's thesis, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2005), 2.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

The same can be said for *mele*, as the informative sources behind hula, allows us the opportunity to remember and relive experiences preserved for generations. In this way, they form one *waiwai* of culturally grounded hula that I aim to highlight. Zachary Alaka‘i Lum addresses this value of *mele* by identifying them as “*kīpuka*-intellectual oases preserving the contexts of their composition. Like the *kīpuka* of vegetation formed by the fluid paths of lava surround a patch of forest, *mele* preserve a small but detailed view of what once was.”<sup>53</sup> When we bring life to a *mele*, through *leo* and/or hula, we are once again informed by the *haku mele*’s “*kīpuka* of experience”<sup>54</sup>, enlightening our present-day understanding of the past. We simultaneously find relevance and grounding in a Hawaiian worldview struggling to *puka* – to emerge.

#### *Hula: Physical Manifestation of Mele*

*Mele*, as an invaluable repository and historical storehouse, allow us to recall our people and place’s lived experiences. A second notable mark in the *waiwai* of culturally grounded hula are the physical motions and movements. The ‘*ōlelo Hawai‘i* skillfully woven into *mele* are then translated and illustrated through the dancer’s physical movements. On a fundamental level, the culmination of our motions and movements are a visual representation of the chants and stories they aim to illustrate, further informing the individual and again the respective audience. On a higher, more spiritual level, hula aims to create and maintain *mana*, to honor and bring life. To do all of these things effectively, the dancer must seek out an intimate understanding of the *mele*, the processes and protocol of hula, and the ‘*ike* innately bound within it.

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<sup>53</sup> Zachary Alaka‘i Lum, “Nā Hīmeni Hawai‘i: Enriching the Perspectives of Mele Expression in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century” (Unpublished work, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2014), 2.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 2.

The value *kānaka* ascribed to hula as dance and cultural practice is difficult to equate to the Western ideas of dance embodied in ballet, hip-hop, etc. Ethnomusicologist Adrienne L.

Kaeppler, discusses the Indigenous concept of dance as a system of knowledge:

Cultural forms that result from the creative use of human bodies in time and space are often glossed as dance, but the word itself carries with it preconceptions that mask the importance and usefulness of analyzing the movement dimensions of human action and interaction. Dance is a multifaceted phenomenon. It includes, in addition to what we see and hear, the ‘invisible’, underlying system, the processes that produce the system and the product, and the sociopolitical context.<sup>55</sup>

Collectively, these things amount to Indigenous types of dance like hula. What Kaeppler points out in this passage are things that I find of great importance, i.e., underlying processes that often go unseen, structure, protocol and spiritual elements that, in turn, affect the surrounding community the practice represents. The idea of “movement analysis” focuses on the fact that the social and cultural systems within hula make up the “creative processes that manipulate human bodies in time and space.”<sup>56</sup>

I stress that when we understand hula as a highly functioning structured movement, the individual is informed by time - both past and present -, space and place, those seen and unseen. Dancers simultaneously recall past experiences while creating a space for new experiences, learning, and restorative processes. Doing this creates a *kīpuka*, a contemporary space made by and for *kānaka* to empower the individual and his/her collective *lāhui* by building upon the *kahua* already preserved by our *kūpuna*. Hula, as it still exists, gives *kānaka* the tool to re-

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<sup>55</sup> *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, ed. Adrienne L. Kaeppler and J.W. Love (USA: Garland Publishing, 1998), s.v. “Understanding Dance: Dance as a System of Knowledge.” 311.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

connect to our conceptual origins as Hawai‘i.

*Hula: An Expression of Identity*

Our identities are inherently constructed through our knowledge of and connections to those to whom we attribute our being. Hula, as a combination of *leo* and movement, and of *mele* and ‘*ōlelo Hawai‘i*, is a uniquely Hawaiian method of restoring these connections. Utilizing hula in this quest for discovery is not only an effective means of expressing our identities, but of retracing its *kumu*, as well. As a dancer, I have known hula to continually enrich my understanding of our history and place. It is a dance that is informed by the context of the past – by history, the *haku mele*, and the passage of time – and then once again made relevant and informed by the dancer’s present-day context. Utilizing hula as a tool to reassert our identities gives us the opportunity to transcend time and space, giving us *mana* to live in contemporary time.

As we draw on the idea of a “*kīpuka* of experience,”<sup>57</sup> preserved in *mele*, we are given insight into the context – experiences, emotions, lessons, values, etc. – of those who came before us. “Part of the exercise is about recovering our own stories of the past. This is inextricably bound to a recovery of our language and epistemological foundations.”<sup>58</sup> Using hula as an agent of change – a method by which we induce change – we are able to restore connections to our own ways of knowing, giving us a solid foundation to stand on. Noenoe Silva reinforces this contribution to identity: “Hula (dance), mo‘olelo (history, legend, story) and especially

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<sup>57</sup> Zachary Alaka‘i Lum, “Nā Hīmeni Hawai‘i: Enriching the Perspectives of Mele Expression in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century” (Unpublished work, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2014), 2.

<sup>58</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 1999), 38.

genealogy contributed to that inner domain [of cultural identity], which was carefully guarded and preserved so that the Kanaka Maoli of today have a spiritual/cultural identity of their own on which to base their new anticolonial movement.”<sup>59</sup>

Our re-presentation of these *kīpuka* infuses our own individual experiences throughout our surrounding communities, creating new *kīpuka* of experiences. As we intimately study, theorize, and live hula and *mele*, we gain insight to a worldview that is increasingly important in today’s time.

Tales and chants were collected and memorized, so that individuals acquired a wide learning. Literary allusion to various traditions were a common device. The constant historical references in Hawaiian literature...encompass all districts, testifying to a consciousness of a common past. Philosophical concepts, fundamental thought models and methods of reasoning could also be shared widely. Difficult to characterize, although clearly important, non-verbal factors, such as special areas of sensitivity, psychological structures and psychic susceptibilities.<sup>60</sup>

All of these aspects above, encompassed within hula, illustrate a heightened level of cultural immersion, ultimately guiding the individual down a path to ‘*imi na ‘auao*.’<sup>61</sup> In *Ka Honua Ola*, Dr. Kanahele, an honored Kumu Hula and scholar, analyzes her compilation of work based on the epic of Pele and Hi‘iaka as a process towards consciousness through *mele*. “Culture anchors a people to a space-based reality. Hawaiian culture affixes a specific people to a specific set of islands”<sup>62</sup> and “reestablishes *meaning* into the Hawaiian things you do, even if you have to

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<sup>59</sup>Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Duke University Press, 2004) 7.

<sup>60</sup> John Charlot. *Chanting the Universe Hawaiian Religious Culture* (Emphasis International Limited, 1983), 36.

<sup>61</sup> Understood as seeking enlightenment; intelligence, learning, knowledge.

<sup>62</sup> Pualani Kanaka‘ole Kanahele. *Ka Honua Ola ‘Eli‘eli Kau Mai*. (Honolulu: Kamehameha Publishing, 2011), ix.

recreate meaning.”<sup>63</sup> Practicing culturally grounded hula fastens one to culture, inspiring a direct line to consciousness. The process of learning and presenting hula requires a commitment to Hawaiian learning: memorizing *mele* requires internalizing its context; preparing adornments, a familiarity with ‘*āina* and resources; ceremonies, to processes and protocols; and finally, re-telling this story requires an intimate understanding in order to embody all aspects of the hula. This vehicle, hula, holds the capability of transcending time and space, re-contextualizing culture for the contemporary *kanaka* identity.

I stress that this same journey towards consciousness through hula and *mele* is still available. In fact, I contend that it is more relevant and necessary than ever. The performance of hula in present-day context is a continual assertion of our autonomous identities – an identity constantly changing, but continually grounded in the stories and experiences of our *kūpuna* and ‘*āina*. I assert that this kind of performance is an incredibly important avenue to the wellbeing of individual *kānaka* and the collective *lāhui* and I encourage the continued expression of *Kānaka Maoli* identity through hula. As the stage on which we perform our hula changes, it is important that we continue to carve out the space for these restorative and transformative properties to take place. In doing so, we construct and reinforce a system of knowledge that informs, transforms, and empowers the individual – our own.

It would be irresponsible to say that hula was *only* done within a formal context. Though much of this analysis focuses on the formal structure and training in order to analyze a bigger phenomenon, hula also played a simple role: *le‘ale‘a* – for fun. Nathaniel B. Emerson’s detailed documentation of hula begins to highlight expression of hula in noting, “whole train[s] of feelings and sentiments that made their entrances and exits in the *halau* (the hall of the hula) one

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., x.

perceives that in this he has found the door to the heart of the people.” and the same is true until this day.<sup>64</sup> He further notes “as a pastime, the impromptu *hula* served not only as amusement, but very often as a means of venting emotions.”<sup>65</sup> Often times, the dancer’s feelings and personal connections further enrich her hula. And other times, hula provides an avenue by which one can express her emotions. At a simplistic level, the *le ‘ale ‘a* we experience in hula enriches the health and well being of our people.

#### *Hula: Ho ‘omana*

Though serving many diverse purposes, hula’s multifaceted role contributes to our overall understanding of a Hawaiian worldview and the ways our *kūpuna* operated throughout their lives. The concept of *ho ‘omana* represents the higher level of spirituality as a function in hula. Mary Kawena Pūku‘i describes *mana* “infused” within the individual body as an “integral part of the self”<sup>66</sup> which was identified as a characteristic that “brought high regard.”<sup>67</sup> Throughout the remainder of this work, I urge us to view hula as a *piko*,<sup>68</sup> encouraging us to evoke and manage *mana* from our *mo ‘olelo*, *‘āina*, *akua*, peers, *kumu*, and *kūpuna*. Hula, in this capacity, allows *po ‘e hula* a unique – and highly powerful – mechanism to affect change(s). Likewise, our *leo* serves as a one of these transformative mechanisms; with the ability to use *mana* for our benefit.

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<sup>64</sup> Nathaniel B. Emerson. *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* (Washington Government Printing Office, 1909), 11.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>66</sup> Mary Kawena Pūku‘i, E.W. Haertig, M.D. and Catherine A. Lee, “*Nānā i ke Kumu (Look to the Source) Volume II*” (Honolulu: Hui Hānai, 1972), 295.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 296

<sup>68</sup> Kahikina de Silva, “Killer Mele” (master’s thesis, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2005), 2.

In an oral-based society, the *leo* was given great importance by our expert orators to keep us connected to our past by recalling our ancient *mele* and *mo'olelo*. Our mentors today provide the *leo* that celebrates our present and is responsible for our ongoing mentorship, enlightening us with insight that is embedded within our memory. The *leo* then is that eternal link between our people that transcends place and time and is audible even from beyond the physical.<sup>69</sup>

Our *leo*, as a link to transcending “place and time”<sup>70</sup> is but one element in *hula*’s ability to evoke *mana*. Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua examines the practice of *ho'omana* as an “act of moving *mana* back and forth within a relationship”.<sup>71</sup> Understanding the ability to transmit *mana* collectively empowers twofold. First, in the subject/object that we are trying to bring *mana* to; and second, in the building and empowering of the individual, instilling and reinforcing his/her *mana*.

Though many may find this next aspect abstract, *hula* indeed serves a spiritual purpose through the movement of *mana*<sup>72</sup>. This spiritual aspect – which may be difficult for *malihini* to understand – likely resulted in Christianity’s condemnation of *hula* in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Aside from the fundamental purpose of story telling and entertainment, the dancer’s ability to manage his/her *mana* made *hula* incredibly significant<sup>73</sup>. This capacity is not only seen in the

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<sup>69</sup> R. Keawe Lopes Jr., “Ka waihona a ke aloha: Ka papahana ho'oheno mele; An interactive resource center for the promotion, preservation and perpetuation of mele and mele practitioners” (PhD Unpublished thesis, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2010), 72.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>71</sup> Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua. *The Seeds we Planted, Portraits of a Native Hawaiian Charter School* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 208.

<sup>72</sup> The idea of *mana* in this context, also alludes to *hula*’s role as it is a manifestation of *akua*, *kinolau*, etc.

<sup>73</sup> Pata, Cody Pueo. Interview by 'Ānela U'ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Maunaloa, O'ahu, October, 3, 2015.



process leading up to the performance, but is also illustrated through the way the we adorn ourselves as dancers:

The pliability of Laka's greenery possesses the dancers and encourages them in their movements to become the forest, the wind, the clouds, and the ocean. This is *hula* in its most spiritual mode. When dancing in the presence of Laka, the dancers become Laka...Laka's function is to possess and inspire the dancers to breathe life into the lyrics of past experiences.<sup>74</sup>

Hula, in its "most spiritual mode"<sup>75</sup>, allows us to call upon akua to inspire us through our hula, and we are in turn, granted access to a wide range of experiences and opportunities, to knowledge and understanding. Distinguishing the ways we see, hear, and feel Laka require an intimate understanding of what is required of us to invoke the a desired outcome through hula. Our knowledge of 'āina is enhanced as we identify cycles of life and elemental forces. The way we operate in relation to 'āina and kānaka are enhanced. We, in turn, understand our surroundings and overall Hawaiian worldview more intimately and in fact, we become the vessel of that *mana* itself.

This partnership between *mele* and hula spirituality and *mana*, contributes to the totality of culturally informed hula. As we dance, we are not only recalling and re-living these experiences so skillfully woven into *mele*, but we breathe new life into its old words, we illustrate the relevance of these words through the use of our bodies in time and space, and we entice mana through our physical motions and intentions. We are, through *mele* and hula, bringing attention to both animate and inanimate, to tangible and intangible, to those who are seen and unseen. It is not enough that we question the view of hula as an aesthetic expression of a misconstrued

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<sup>74</sup> Dr. Pualani Kanahēle Kanaka'ole, introduction to *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* by Nathaniel B. Emerson (Washington Government Printing Office, 1909), 1-2.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.,1-2.

paradise, but it is vital that we analyze hula in its entire capacity, including these essential spiritual functions it carries.

It is worth further acknowledging that part of the role of this academic thesis is to pinpoint, analyze, and articulate hula as a carrier and repository of culture. It attempts to only begin to encompass the vast cultural depth and breath that culturally grounded hula maintains. It in no way, however, completely amounts to the vast knowledge, teachings, and *mana* that hula – and its *kia'i* – house.

### *The Application of Culturally Grounded Hula in Contemporary Hawai'i*

Culturally grounded hula in contemporary Hawaiian society continues to play a pivotal role in the existence of *Kānaka Maoli*. Hula has and continues to traverse many distinct arenas, of which I will focus on four: cultural, social, economic, and political. Hula, and its dedicated practitioners, contributes to and often times, rub up against the larger social structure within and around Hawai'i.

On a cultural and social level, hula continues to teach and *mālama* traditions, processes, protocols, values, stories, relationships, and other elements that contributed to thriving and specialized Hawaiian society. Hula, with its processes, *'ike*, and structure serves as an agent of change simultaneously encouraging a social realignment. Hula as an expression and reinforcement of identity contributes to the larger community it represents. At the same time, hula continually attracts global attention offering both *po'e hula* and *kānaka* the platform to make pointed statements politically and economically. This characteristic of hula is often overlooked, but as I will illustrate, through historical and personal experiences, is a critical opportunity for the advancement of *po'e Hawai'i* on all levels stated above.

Hula as a cultural practice and tradition, is a *kuleana*. As with most *kuleana*, it may prove

to be *kaumaha*, heavy and burdensome, but is invested in with aloha, and therefore, almost always results in incredibly fruitful outcomes. Hula presents *kānaka* with unique and important opportunities – and needs to be recognized as such. Its value as a system of knowledge and agent of change continues to impact us not just by giving us insight into the past, but as an increasingly relevant orienting tool for *kānaka*. My role as a hula practitioner helps to enrich my analysis of hula in Japan and reinforces the various opportunities and *waiwai* that exist in our cultural practice of hula. I have seen first hand the ways in which hula continues to thrive and contributes to one’s cultural identity and worldview in Hawai‘i. Through the sharing of these experiences, I intend on testifying to hula’s capabilities as it traverses cultural, social, economic, and political lines.

*Hula: Noho ana i ka Uluwehiwehi*

“*Uluwehiwehi*” is defined as “lush a beautiful; a place where beautiful plants thrive.”<sup>76</sup> This abundance is most often a marker of flourishing life; and most importantly, an illustration of a healthy *‘āina*. Similar to this poetic description of *‘āina*, hula continues to prosper as a cultural compass, an illustration of life, and marker of our identity.

This has not always been the case. “One by one, the markers of Hawaiian identity as a people have been stripped away, starting with land, sovereignty, land, literacies (knowledge), histories, and connection to our ancestry.”<sup>77</sup> Inasmuch as these markers have been consistently and intentionally threatened, our people and practices have stubbornly survived; and even more so, have thrived. In fact, I contend that it is through hula that *po‘e Hawai‘i*’s successful reinstatement of these connections.

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<sup>76</sup> Mary Kawena Pūku‘i and Samuel H. Elbert. *Hawaiian Dictionary*. Honolulu: 1986.

<sup>77</sup> No‘eau Warner, “The Movement to Revitalize Hawaiian Language and Culture,” 133.

Here, I aim to hone in on and encourage these opportunities found in hula by illustrating that its cultural and social mechanisms are incredibly relevant and celebrated. Clearly our people and practices continue to thrive in a modern society. As illustrated through our expressions of art – including our hula. Hula continues to reflect the events taking place throughout Hawai‘i, revealing the dynamic creativity of our people. While its ability to traverse time and space only further illustrates its value as an avenue towards a stronger collective *lāhui*.

Hula’s relevance and creativity is particularly visible when our communities gather together around a collective cause. Hula can, and does, continue to serve as a testament to the life of our culture and people – past, present, and future. Hula, in its most spiritual form, can serve to bring life, attention, and most importantly, *mana*, to a specific subject. Hula can be used as an assertion of resistance. In 2014, Kumu Hula, practitioner, and musician, Nāpua Greig, realized a theme developing across *Hawai‘i pae ‘āina*: the threat to our *wahi pana*. *Wahi pana* are places that flourished because of the inhabitants who dwelled there, - our kūpuna - but perhaps more importantly, these places allowed those who lived within them to prosper. This *pilina* between *kanaka* and ‘*āina*, - which I personally realized through hula – made our *kuleana* blatantly apparent. As *kupa* and as *kama* ‘*āina* to Maui island, Greig saw the great *kuleana* that we – as hula practitioners – have to contribute to this battle for ‘*āina*, resources, and *ea*;- particularly regarding the threat to our own *mokupuni* and the four streams of Wailuku, Waiehu, Waihe‘e and Waikapū, collectively known as Nā Wai ‘Ehā.

For over 150 years, sugar plantations had almost completely diverted water for irrigation from all four of Nā Wai ‘Ehā’s rivers. Nā Wai ‘Ehā legal battles ended up at the height of Hawai‘i’s legal system, at the Supreme Court. Capitalizing on the power we have as practitioners, preparing to dance at hula’s most widely-known venue, the Merrie Monarch Hula

Competition, my Kumu Nāpua Greig decided to put our focus on a mele that would honor and *ho ‘omana* this *wahi pana* – “I Waikapū Ke Aloha”.

In the months leading up to this competition, the *haumāna* were tasked with closely studying the background of this *mele* and of this place. What was revealed through each journey and page of research was more insight and *pilina* to the land itself, and to the struggles it faced. Each *haumāna* visited the streams and saw first hand what had gone unnoticed for hundreds of years. They watched, listened, felt, and then knew each wind and rain that was mentioned in their *mele*. Ultimately, each dancer uncovered *pilina* to her own *‘āina*, enriching the meaning and intent of her hula. In this case, hula helped serve as a catalyst to our learning and understanding of the effects of the continued capitalistic ventures of Sugar Cane companies.

“Through our hula, we hope to *ho ‘omana* the *wahi pana* recalled in the lines of our *mele* and give life back to the *‘āina* that enables us to live.”<sup>78</sup> Our role as dancers brought global attention to this issue, and also allowed us to deliberately focus our *mana* towards these places and those unseen who would help us. Ultimately, after months of research, practice, *ho ‘omana*, and creating *pilina – ua lanakila*. After 150 years, and after a decade of legal battles, all four streams – Waikapū, Wailuku, Waihe‘e, and Waiehu – were once again flowing. The settlement between parties “establishes a new interim in-stream flow standard, or the minimum required flow” with all but one river witnessing *mauka* to *makai* stream-flow.<sup>79</sup> This landmark decision, though a compromise, was a victory in and of itself, a beginning to restoring this *‘āina*.

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<sup>78</sup> Hālau Nā Lei Kaumaka O Uka, “Merrie Monarch Fact Sheets 2014” (Hālau Nā Lei Kaumaka O Uka, Honolulu, 2014), 4.

<sup>79</sup> Wendy Osher, “Nā Wai ‘Ehā Agreement Calls for More Water Restoration at ‘Īao” Maui Now. April 21, 2014, <http://mauinow.com/2014/04/21/na-wai-eha-agreement-calls-for-more-water-restoration-at-iao/> (March 2, 2016).

Though we, of course, credit the victory to those who worked tirelessly to speak up on a different stage of *aloha ‘āina*, fighting the legal battles, we also like to believe that we as practitioners played a pivotal role in this success. Our hula brought widespread attention to the struggle we faced on behalf of our ‘āina and we gestured to the *kuleana* our collective community held.

In our own way, I think, as hula practitioners, without being so burdensome on our audience and without leaving them with the burden with the *kaumaha* of this great *kuleana*...we hopefully one, bring to life what those places were before, hopefully we leave it in your memory so hopefully you feel some sort of obligation.<sup>80</sup>

Through *mele* and hula as the catalyst, we brought joy to those who love Nā Wai ‘Ehā just as much as we grew to, we brought attention to this issue on a prestigious stage, and we were able to translate and express that *aloha ‘āina* through our hula. But if anything at all, this hula was an avenue to consciousness. This performance of hula allowed us as dancers the opportunity restore connections to our ‘āina and for the first time, perhaps for many, point to the oppressive nature of capitalistic ventures disconnected from the very ‘āina and people that sustained them. As we realize the capabilities of the *mana* behind our *leo*, *mele*, and hula, we find that our role as hula practitioners is increasingly unique and important.

#### *Hula: Socially*

Hula as a dance and as a system of knowledge opens our eyes to underlying social systems that are instilled through the practice of a particular dance; and in this case, hula. This underlying system includes processes, protocols, structure and values taught throughout one’s journey through learning. The etiquette taught within *hālau* subsequently translates to how we operate in larger society. This not only inform the individual and the way in which he/she

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<sup>80</sup> Jaye Greig Nakasone, “Merrie Monach 2014 Interview” April 2014.

sees/understands the world, but in turn, affects the status quo of our community. As we continue to learn and master Hawaiian ways of knowing that then infiltrate a modern society, hula contributes to a paradigm shift.

On a fundamental level, hula teaches us cultural values that have been upheld by the *hālau* structure for generations. While the forum of *hālau* has seen changes – *hula kapu* to *hula noa*. the foundational ideals behind this structure have remained in tact.

Most researchers simply use the term dance for bodily movement associated with music, but this is a Western term. The cultural forms produced, though transient, have structured content, are visual manifestations of social relationships, are part of complex aesthetic systems, have meaning that refer to deep structure of the society and the non-dance world, and may assist in understanding cultural values.<sup>81</sup>

A *hālau*, with stratified layers of *kūlana*, is a structure that teaches us how to approach relationships, learn from and take care of one another. The *haumāna* learns both explicitly and implicitly how to conduct him/herself in relation to others. It is through *hālau* that I learned how to carry myself on and off the stage, how and when to speak to elders, and when to quietly watch and learn. While these practices vary by Kumu and *hālau*, the values instilled within each *haumāna* uphold a Hawaiian understanding of social structure, relationships, and interaction. This kind of *waiwai* ultimately transcends the geographical place that hula is being practiced within.

### *Hula: Politically*

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<sup>81</sup> *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, ed. Adrienne L. Kaeppler and J.W. Love (USA: Garland Publishing, 1998), s.v. “Understanding Dance: Dance as a System of Knowledge.”

In 1998, following proposed state legislation that threatened traditional and customary gathering rights and that ultimately “criminalized us for simply being Kanaka Maoli”<sup>82</sup>, many proactive Kumu Hula entered a realm that was traditionally familiar to hula, but new to hula in Hawai‘i’s contemporary society: Politics. “It was traditional in our culture for the *ali‘i* (chiefs), who were the political leaders, to be experts in the chants, or oli, and the cultural protocols...but today, culture and politics are separate.”<sup>83</sup> I find this problematic as the decisions made within politics largely dictate the ways *po‘e hula* are able to practice. As politicians grow more and more disconnected from the people and practices they represent and serve, the laws and policies that govern the *pae ‘āina* make it difficult for practitioners to survive. This same *pilina* – or lack thereof – further begs for *po‘e hula* to be seen and *‘auamo kuleana* in this arena.

In response to the 1997 Hawai‘i State Legislature’s proposal of Senate Bill 8 and House Bill 1920, Vicky Holt Takamine gathered *po‘e hula* and the ‘Īlio‘ulaokalani Coalition came to fruition. These bills would essentially criminalize traditional and customary rights, requiring *kānaka* to register to carry out essential gathering practices on undeveloped land. As Manu Ka‘iama recalls, “she successfully planned a twenty-four-hour protest at the state capitol building. She brought together twenty-eight pahu (drums) and approximately 250 people for what would be a culturally appropriate protest.”<sup>84</sup> In this instance, hula directly represented Kanaka Maoli’s interests and made literal a stand in a political arena. Later the next year,

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<sup>82</sup> Manu Ka‘iama, “Kū i ka Pono: The Movement Continues,” in *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land and Sovereignty* ed. Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, Hussey and Wright (United States of America: Duke University Press, 2014), 99.

<sup>83</sup> Victoria Holt Takamine, “Kumu Hula Taking a stand in Hawaii politics,” interview by Kekoa Catherine Enomoto. *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. April 16, 1998.

<sup>84</sup> Manu Ka‘iama, “Kū i ka Pono: The Movement Continues,” in *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land and Sovereignty* ed. Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, Hussey and Wright (United States of America: Duke University Press, 2014), 99



‘Īlio‘ulaokalani again brought together Kumu Hula and *hālau* who were participating in the prestigious Merrie Monarch Competition. Through the popularity of hula and this competition, these Kumu Hula brought attention to the politics of this legislation. With massive amounts of eyes turned to the Merrie Monarch stage, the coalition choreographed new hula and made a stand for a political issue. Hula took the stage politically and played a vital role in education. In instances like this, hula teaches the dancer *kuleana* – in responsibility and in right – and in return, the dancer upholds this *kuleana* to hula.

More recently, hula has been visible in making a political stand for protecting *wahi pana*. As the esteemed annual Merrie Monarch Hula Festival 2015 was underway, construction atop Mauna Kea was set to take place for the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT). Though the *hālau* were there to present the culmination of months of practice for competition, the majority of the *hālau* found the utmost importance elsewhere – atop Mauna Kea. Hundreds of *po‘e hula* made the *huaka‘i* to Mauna Kea to do their part in offering their *leo*, *mele*, and hula. In this instance, our *‘āina* was threatened by capitalistic ventures without consulting or considering *kama‘āina*’s ties to this place; the hula community responded. *Mele* that extol the beauty and *mana* of this mountain lived again through *leo* and in turn, brought life to our people and the place. Our *hālau* presented a *mele* commemorating Queen Emma’s ascent to Lake Waiau to find healing and reconnection after the death of her husband and young son. “*E Ho‘i ka nani i Mānā*” honored Mauna Kea’s *wahi pana*, returning each person assembled there to the beauty that Queen Emma once saw. Though each *hālau* was there for a competition, together, these *hālau* collectively danced hula “staples” like “*Au‘a ‘Ia*” to encourage, reiterate, and reassert messages of *kūpa‘a* by means of *mele* and hula. New *mele* and hula continue to be composed to document this event creating new *kīpuka* that will once again inform others in the near future.



For us, it was a culmination of all that was learned through *mele*, *hālau*, and hula that made our decision to *kāko* ‘o a simple one. If we stopped short of speaking up for the importance of ‘*āina* we continually honor, adorn, and embody, we have failed at our *kuleana*. We realized that our role as *po‘e hula* offered a unique and valuable opportunity. Our physical beings, unprepared for the cold temperatures and tired from our preparations, were of course, a true demonstration of of *aloha* ‘*āina* through hula. This political stance – from people often dismissed as entertainers – was a testament to *po‘e hula*’s greater understanding of ourselves, our culture, ‘*āina*, and ultimately, all that is truly important.

*Nele i ka mea Poepoe: Understanding the Economics of Hula*

The economics of hula proves to be a much more difficult to define as hula makes the transition to contemporary society. The incorporation of money as a payment and/or motivation for hula introduces a difficult circumstance to navigate; and is no different in the case of Japan.

Traditionally, the engagement with hula was not hinged on the profitability of the practice.

Instead, learning hula was treated as a lifestyle, and one that was economically self-sustaining:

Some groups of trained dancers may have been permanently attached to the households of Hawaiian chiefs, receiving their entire sustenance from their patrons, but most late 18th and early 19th-century *hula* dancers seem to have been mainly self-supporting and to have depended on gifts from their audiences to augment their livelihood.<sup>85</sup>

This lifestyle certainly included an economy aspect. The difference, however, is that hula in this context, most often gave weight to the cultural values and importance within hula. As the tourism industry came to find “Paradise” highly marketable, hula’s function was reduced to that of purely entertainment. Hawai‘i’s tourism industry benefitted off of the ideal of romanticized hula. This kind of hula was strategically staged in *lū‘au*, stripping the performance – and performer – of the cultural *‘ike* it traditionally housed. Money and economic gain arguably became the driving force of hula, the protocol, *‘ike*, and structure were overlooked and pushed to the background. Pūku‘i notes:

The *hula* became a feature of carnivals and pageants and then became entrenched as standard entertainment fare catering to the growing tourist trade. But it was a quite different hula than that seen through the years when it was performed as Hawaiian entertainment for Hawaiians. It had undergone a radical change, from that of a dance form subordinate to the poetry of the chant to which it was danced, to a style of dancing in which gesture became the important feature. This was understandable in light of the audience it now attracted—an audience that had little or no knowledge of the Hawaiian language.<sup>86</sup>

As society shifted from a largely self-sustainable lifestyle, to a capitalistic market, the traditional model consequently became unsustainable. With more focus on the economic aspect,

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<sup>85</sup> Dorothy B. Barrere, Mary Kawena Pukui, and Marion Kelly. *Hula Historical Perspectives* (Bishop Museum Press, 1980), 13.

<sup>86</sup> Nathaniel B. Emerson. *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* (Washington Government Printing Office, 1909), 64.

money overshadowed *‘ike*. Likewise, the audience also shifted – perhaps less interested in the cultural context of hula and more concerned with the entertainment factor. Adjusting to cater to the audience, *po‘e hula*’s role as performers ultimately changed as well. Essentially, the attention on money rather than *‘ike* in hula undermines the value I outline earlier in this chapter. Creating a sustainable model for both the teacher and student continues to challenge traditional process of knowledge. This is, however, a difficult circumstance to navigate – yet an incredibly important one to balance.

I contend that balancing income and *‘ike* must continue to be done in a thoughtful manner honoring *kuleana* and honoring a commitment to preserve the opportunities upheld within hula. Expressing grief over the effects of “commercialized mass tourism”, Taum asserts:

Despite the rhetoric, Hawaiian culture has continued to be treated as a “value added” – like condiments rather than entree. The time has come to elevate culture to a more prominent place on the menu of offerings, and in doing so strengthens the product, its identity and the Hawaiian “sense of place.”<sup>87</sup>

This prominent place is not only important in the lens of *malihini* and/or Japanese, but most importantly, for individual *kānaka*. The focus, then, should return to being centered in the *‘ike* behind the hula rather than the compromised value of income that we struggle to reconcile. I do this by first, focusing on the *waiwai* of hula as a powerful mechanism and then using this as a launching point to analyze hula as it currently exists in Japan.

*I kuleana like: Importance of the Understanding Hula as a system in Japan*

Hula continues to traverse cultural, social, economic, and political arenas in incredibly significant ways. It is a *kīpuka* – a portal to uncover, remember, and re-live experiences. Accessing these *kīpuka* contributes to the transformation and rebuilding of our ways of knowing,

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<sup>87</sup> Ramsay Remigius Mahealani Taum, "Tourism." *The Value of Hawaii Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future* (2010), 37.

bringing consciousness and confidence to our people. The structure of *hālau* teaches us how to behave and interact socially – with fellow human beings and the *‘āina* that sustains us – in a culturally appropriate way. In that case, hula is a *piko* restoring and empowering our people as we struggle to reconnect to our own ways of know, and strive to be heard in an oppressive and disconnected. Economically, hula has adapted to the inclusion of money, perhaps even compromising culture for commerce. And politically, hula has asserted our collective voice as *kānaka*, our feelings, beliefs, and ways of knowing in an exceptionally visible and impactful way. This continued performance advocates for the importance and validity of our existence in contemporary Hawai‘i. Hula as a cultural practice and expression in the political arena is an illustration of a sovereign pedagogy, informing our modern-day context. Structured-movement systems, like hula, “are systems of knowledge, the products of action and interaction, and processes through which action and interaction occur.”<sup>88</sup> This larger system of activity, when used in a positive way is indeed a system of change; hula continues to impact individuals, communities, and our larger *lāhui*. I contend that every time hula is practiced in a culturally grounded form, whether publicly or privately, we re-present a vast system of multi-generational knowledge, remind others of the beauty and brilliance of our *‘ike*, manage *mana*, and assert our continued autonomy as *kānaka*.

Understanding the restorative and transformative properties of hula then helps us to critically examine the ways in which it is practiced. The purpose of our hula in Japan should be no different than its practice in Hawai‘i as it acts as a simultaneous system impacting cultural,

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<sup>88</sup> *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, ed. Adrienne L. Kaeppler and J.W. Love (USA: Garland Publishing, 1998), s.v. “Understanding Dance: Dance as a System of Knowledge.”

social, political, and economic arenas. Though geographically disconnected and occurring outside of Hawai‘i pae ‘āina, the hula industry in Japan acts as a nexus of the *hō‘ike* and *a‘o of* hula by *po‘e hula* and those in Japan – directly affecting our people, culture, and society in Hawai‘i. With this *kahua* in place, understanding the value embedded within hula, I move on to challenge the ways we are utilizing and/or compromising hula in Japan.

I argue that though the stage on which we perform our hula may change, the essential core of our hula should not. With this at the forefront, we must critically examine our actions to ensure that the restorative properties of hula are preserved. By understanding our *kuleana*, we aim to inspire an active engagement in self-determination through the assertion of the cultural practice of hula. I contend that doing this is now more critical than ever as we endeavor to live as *Kānaka ‘Ōiwi*.

## CHAPTER 3

### DISCONNECTS: UNDERSTANDING THE DISADVANTAGES OF HULA IN JAPAN

The hula industry in Japan is not only a significant cultural process, but also a vital mechanism in social, economic, and political realms. It is imperative that we take part in a discussion of the importance that such an industry holds. We have seen the *waiwai* that lies within culturally grounded hula. At the same time, we live in a society that requires economic stability to continue to practice our culture. This negotiation, however, should not come at the expense of our cultural and spiritual practice of hula.

*No laila, pehea lā e pono ai?* This chapter seeks to articulate the disconnects of the parameters of the Japan industry so that we can better evaluate the industry as a whole. Though this thesis is critical, by nature, of hula in Japan, it is also sympathetic to the predicament *po 'e hula* face. I look at the structure of *hālau* as a system of knowledge and as it is appropriated and adopted in Japan to fit its specific context. Comparatively, I stress that the historical methodological approach to learning as analyzed in *mele*. The *a 'o* of hula in Japan arguably disrupts the pre-established process by which we disseminate knowledge. I discuss the impacts of these compromises on the audience in Japan, the individual performer, and the *'ike* upheld in hula. As such, I use a communal sense of accountability as means to emphasize the literal disconnect that seemingly undermines the process of *mālama 'ike*. The process of representation, as producing and communicating meaning, is a critical disconnect in Japan. Finally, I advocate for our own agency in the participation of both the *hō 'ike* and *a 'o* spheres in Japan. Ultimately, what I encourage is the imposition of *Kānaka Maoli* sensibilities and stories through the performance culturally grounded hula. Furthermore, while this project indulges my

curiosity as a passionate lover of hula, my hope is that the ideas explored here help other *po‘e hula* to thoughtfully consider our collective *kuleana* both at home and abroad.

Critical to understanding the purpose of this thesis is the Japanese intrigue with hula.

Yoko Kurokawa analyzes the popularity of Hawaiian music in Japan as her work focuses on the “transculturation of Hawaiian performing arts in Japan”<sup>89</sup> and aims to:

Discover the nature of Japanese people’s fascination with Hawaiian music...and to examine how the Japanese appropriate Hawaiian music and dance on a conscious as well as subconscious level and mold it to fit their own socio-cultural context, appropriate to the sources of their particular fascination.<sup>90</sup>

While this thesis puts weight on the *Kānaka Maoli* participation in Japan, Kurokawa’s focus on Japanese participation and structure helps to inform this analysis. I use this research as a platform from which I base my own argument. I then aim to focus on our own agency as *kānaka* and *po‘e hula* within the parameters of this industry. This thesis’ scope not only gives *mana* to our actions, it should also challenge the reader/practitioner to evaluate his/her own *hana*. And lastly, I hope to encourage a sense of *kuleana* upon the reader that can inspire and transform.

### *Ia mea he kuleana*

*Kuleana* is central to a thriving *Kānaka ‘Ōiwi* society. Though most surface definitions gloss this *hua ‘ōlelo* as meaning “responsibility,” the cumulative definition of this theme widens our understanding of *kuleana* as a “right” or “privilege”. Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua expands on *kuleana* as being that “which is oriented towards relational obligations as shaped by genealogy

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<sup>89</sup> Yoko Kurokawa, “Yearning for a Distant Music: Consumption of Hawaiian Music and Dance in Japan” (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2004), iv.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 3.



and land.”<sup>91</sup> These genealogical and ‘āina based responsibilities stress the intimate and reciprocal relationship that *kānaka* share with family and land, space and place; above all, illustrating the *waiwai* of a Hawaiian world. This notion helps to frame our conceptual world and the way in which we choose to operate within it. In this, *kuleana* “not only suggests obligations and privileges but also can name the very relationship out of which such obligations and privileges might grow.”<sup>92</sup> The potential for growth through these privileges and obligations clearly exists; identifying them, however, is the challenging part.

*Kuleana* is an integral part of this thesis as I want to encourage this theme to remain paramount. Having understood the various layers of *waiwai* within hula, we turn to analyzing the hula industry in Japan. The *Kānaka Maoli* ideal of *kuleana* urges us to critically examine the ways in which hula in Japan is operating. *Kuleana* reminds us of our *pilina* to the rest of the world, our obligation to those who came and will come before us, giving us courage to *holomua* within the disconnected society we aim to transform.

### *Understanding Japan*

The *a‘o* of hula in Japan is one of the facets this thesis aims to analyze. Through an examination of the ways in which hula is practiced as a system of knowledge and body of ‘*ike* passed down for generations. Yoko Kurokawa’s analysis of Hawaiian performing arts in Japan reveals that Japanese “mold it to fit their own socio-cultural context, appropriate to the sources of their particular fascination.”<sup>93</sup> In this, we understand that hula in Japan is altered and

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<sup>91</sup> Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua. *The Seeds we Planted, Portraits of a Native Hawaiian Charter School* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 64.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>93</sup> Yoko Kurokawa, “Yearning for a Distant Music: Consumption of Hawaiian Music and Dance in Japan” (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2004), 4.

appropriated in accordance with their specific context as a people. I am left wondering, “how does this affect *po ‘e hula* in Hawai‘i?”

Kurokawa suggests that one of the reasons for the wide spread craving of Hawaiian music and hula in Japan is centered in the “‘economics of fascination’ – a kind of decision process fueled by yearning...the state of wanting and an unfulfilled approach to something unattainable. The joy of practicing other people’s art, out of a sense of yearning, stems from finding oneself incrementally closer to the model, while never becoming the model itself.”<sup>94</sup> My worry is perhaps eased in this statement as we see that dancers in Japan may never entirely appropriate our practice. However, this statement also implies that while the dancers may enjoy the *le ‘ale ‘a* of hula, he/she may never fully adhere and/or adopt the entirety of hula’s *waiwai*, or the attached *kuleana*. Hula and *Kānaka Maoli* identity are inseparable at the core; you cannot claim one just by being trained in the other. This conclusion can perhaps prove to be problematic to those *po ‘e hula* who invest in hula as a life-long commitment. While many of us find great *kuleana* and *waiwai* in hula, hula in Japan may prove to host a stereotype of hula; fueled by a yearning towards a particular idea of Hawai‘i. This is hinged on an economic business in some cases; like the single contact workshop model. The practice of hula in Japan is perhaps just a selective appropriation of a cultural practice imbedded with *waiwai*.

#### *‘Ike Hawai‘i: Kuleana Hālau*

One of the most important aspects of hula is the *hālau* setting. This structure requires first, a commitment to and then an investment in all aspects and *kuleana* of *hālau*: your *kumu*,

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 4.

hula sisters/brothers, *‘ike*, fundraising, service, etc. The culmination of those works – both in the *hālau* and outside –impress *kuleana* upon students through investment and sacrifice.

As Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua writes: “From a Hawaiian point of view, *kuleana* is also tied to the wellbeing of the *‘ohana* or learning community. Becoming a contributing member of the extended family and community is an essential part of the learning process.”<sup>95</sup> Understanding our role as *haumāna* in learning is specific to this Hawaiian worldview. My growth within *hālau* has been marked by notable milestones. As I assume a higher *kūlana*, so does my *kuleana* and contribution to the *hālau*. But ultimately, the reward is greater for me; for my humble role as a *haumāna*.

As Kurokawa shows, hula in Japan is taught mainly through workshops or through established branches of Hawai‘i *hālau*. Kurokawa’s work also analyzes the structures of hula schools through out Japan and helps us to better understand the circumstances surrounding the learning of hula in Japan. “Today, most of the large, established hula schools in Japan incorporate two teaching spheres: classes taught at culture centers, sports clubs, and municipal or prefectural community centers; and classes offered at the teachers’ private hula studios, which often use the Hawaiian term, *hālau*.”<sup>96</sup> According to Kurokawa’s analysis, there are two distinct models of schools by which one learns hula. The first, seems to host a rather casual environment, open to the public to enjoy the *le‘ale‘a* of hula separate from that of the *hālau* structure. These single workshops or series of workshops allow students to learn particular dances from a Kumu Hula. Often, the only pre-requisite for participation is money. The student

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<sup>95</sup> Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua. *The Seeds we Planted, Portraits of a Native Hawaiian Charter School* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 65.

<sup>96</sup> Yoko Kurokawa, “Yearning for a Distant Music: Consumption of Hawaiian Music and Dance in Japan” (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2004), 127.

and teacher may never see each other, or the hula, again. The second model, happens when Kumu Hula Hawai‘i have *hālau* in Japan, in which there is prolonged contact and relationship. The inclusion of the idea of a *hālau*, the title which Japanese hula studios recently began using, urges us to further examine the ways in which these hula studios in Japan adhere to the structures based in Hawai‘i.

Japanese *hālau* operate under a pyramidal structure with the Kumu as the authoritative figure, similar to that of how Hawaiian *hālau* operates.<sup>97</sup> The differences are most disconcerting as it touches upon the *waiwai* of hula. Learning of hula differs in Japan in the following ways: the *kuleana* of those deemed *alaka* ‘i, content/intensity of training, authoritative power of Kumu Hula, financial structure, and detached from religious ceremonies:

The Japanese organization fundamentally differs from the Hawaiian system in the sense that the former is primarily a business enterprise more than a cultural organization...In this sense, economic operation of the Japanese hula schools draws from the traditional *iemoto* system, which assume a quasi-family structure in order to perpetuate a business as well as the tradition.<sup>98</sup>

The fragmented focus on the physical motions of hula and business operations degrade the Hawaiian ideal of *hālau* and fail to incorporate various Hawaiian values normally taught throughout the structure. Modeled after the Hawaiian structure of *hālau* and appropriated to accommodate that of *iemoto* system, the standards by which hula operates in Japan deviates from the norms established in Hawai‘i. This is dangerous as we continue to enable such behavior and omit the *kuleana* normally attached to it.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>98</sup> Yoko Kurokawa, “Yearning for a Distant Music: Consumption of Hawaiian Music and Dance in Japan” (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2004), 4.

Turning to the workshop model, the Japan hula industry fails to incorporate the *hālau* structure all together. Without this process to transmit knowledge, the receiver is, essentially, anyone. In this case, most transmission of knowledge rides on the exchange of money. While this may seem harmless to dedicated *po‘e hula* in Hawai‘i, this thought process undermines the dissemination of highly valued knowledge. Historically, our *kūpuna* upheld a system in which we *mālama ‘ike* as explored in Dr. R. Keawe Lopes’ methodological approach.

As we understand the ways in which our *kūpuna* approached learning and dissemination of knowledge, we endeavor to practice methods already successfully outlined before us. Lopes’ analysis is critical to my argument in that the process of gaining *‘ike* is an intricate and detailed relationship. I use Lopes’ study as a platform to highlight the disconnects as practices in Japan fail to uphold the benefit and *kuleana* of prolonged *pilina* and *hālau* structure and to enforce the continued practice of culturally grounded.

Dr. Lopes uncovers the essential mannerisms and process by which knowledge is gained through a *Kanaka ‘Ōiwi* lens. Through analyzing Kalākaua’s 17<sup>th</sup> century composition, “Kaniakapupu Song”, Lopes examines attitudes that are “essential to the methodology by which research in general should be conducted.”<sup>99</sup> Understanding that hula is a vast storehouse of cultural knowledge also encourages us to approach the process of learning and sharing hula as we would research.

*Ua noho au a kupa i ke alo  
A kama ‘āina lā i ka leo  
Ka hi‘ona a ka mana‘o lā i laila  
I ‘ane‘i ka waihona a ke aloha*

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<sup>99</sup> R. Keawe Lopes Jr., “Ua Noho Au A Kupa I Ke Alo”, *Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Methodologies Mo‘olelo and Metaphor* (2016): 32.

Lopes first examines the idea of “*noho*” as is “reflective of one who has made a commitment to establish relationships with a place or person.”<sup>100</sup> Various structure(s) of teaching and learning hula in Japan do not always honor this sentiment. Those who are interested in learning from a celebrity-like individual often do not hold very long relationship – with such a Kumu. Instead of approaching Kumu Hula as a respected source and learning of hula as a commitment, the popularity and hype of hula in Japan is often home to a Hollywood-like setting. Lopes’ analysis encourages attitudes and demeanors where process, respect, and sanctity are paramount. The popularity and structure in Japan yields crying fans with signs and cameras. My concern with this type of transaction is the protection of ‘*ike*.

Kumu Pueo Pata highlights the spiritual aspect in the role of *akua* in hula in Japan, “if you’re going to call Laka, why would she want to reside there if she has no place to live? She is an *akua noho*.”<sup>101</sup> This simple sentiment points to one, the importance of using the totality of hula, and two, the ways in which we possibly overlook the potential of spirituality and religion in hula in Japan.

Critical to receiving knowledge is the idea of patience and sacrifice, the notion of “*kupa*” serves to enforce that “one must be a longtime resident, possessing personal and lasting relationships with the people and *mo‘olelo* of that place, both ancient and modern.”<sup>102</sup> In this *mele*, the idea of a reciprocal relationship is again reinforced with Kalākaua’s use of “*kama‘āina*”. These mannerisms are not only adopted when we look at the learning of hula, but

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>101</sup> Pata, Cody Pueo. Interview by ‘Ānela U‘ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Maunaloa, O‘ahu, October, 3, 2015.

<sup>102</sup> R. Keawe Lopes Jr., “Ua Noho Au A Kupa I Ke Alo”, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Methodologies Mo‘olelo and Metaphor (2016): 33.

also in the capacity that its participants are able to do so. The ability of students in Japan to grasp the totality of *mo'olelo* of place and people is difficult considering the literal geographical disconnection between the student and Hawai'i. This is not to say that this cannot be done nor is not important. I will seek to highlight the potential connections in doing so in the following chapter.

Just as a *kupa* intimately knows their *'āina*, likewise in hula, we invest in a long-term commitment to our Kumu. I stress the importance of this Kumu to *haumāna* relationship just as Lopes points to it as a research methodology. As one learns to “*noho a kupa*”, sit/dwell until he/she becomes a *kupa*, the journey and process behind it is one of the most important and valuable experiences. Through this, the student and *kumu* gain trust in their reciprocal, face-to-face relationship.

“Kalākaua’s mele informs us that it is not enough to spend time with someone, but that quality investment requires keen attention to the *'alo*’ and *'leo*’.”<sup>103</sup> As one accomplishes this process, there is more to be learned than a hula. The mannerisms, processes, *kuleana*, etc. are all embedded within the endless journey of sacrifice and commitment. As Kalākaua and Dr. Lopes indicate, the relationships formed and processes of gaining knowledge in a Hawaiian manner is detailed and extensive. As Lopes writes: “In conducting research within our communities, building relationship with mentors is vital to acquiring information. The quality of knowledge shared and gained is dependent on the depth of the relationship.”<sup>104</sup> In the case of hula in Japan, forming and maintaining such relationships are incredibly difficult as the *haumāna* are located in Japan. Geographically disconnected from the *kumu* – the people and places – that

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 35

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 31.

these *mele* and hula encompass, it is difficult to uphold this process of transmitting knowledge. Once more geographically disconnected from the *kumu* – the Kumu Hula – it is furthermore difficult to invest in the kind of relationship embodied in Kalākaua’s *mele*. These disconnections prove to be problematic as the practice of transmission of knowledge is interrupted and re-invented.

*Accountability: ‘O wai ke kumu?*

During a ceremony leading up to a notable event, my *kumu* revealed an unexpected, but valuable lesson on leadership. As we made our way to the beach on a night with not much moonlight and no flashlights, she stopped us and proceeded alone; we could not see what was in front of us, which also meant she couldn’t see either. Nonetheless, she carefully continued on, knowing that if there were danger/harm, it would meet her first. I remember this lesson distinctly as it is one of the many notable examples of profound leadership; one of many that contributes to my unbinding trust and *aloha* for my *kumu*. It is this kind of lesson that one cannot pay for. These invaluable experiences transcend the exchange of money. This is but one of many cultural values instilled through my commitment to hula, *hālau*, and my *kumu*.

These invaluable lessons are weaved throughout the experiences within the system of knowledge found in cultural practices. I aim to highlight the ways in which hula in Japan alters and affects our cultural practice. As such, we look to the ideas of accountability and representation as applicable in this context, how this industry one, influences others’ understanding of our culture, and two, how hula helps the performer to understanding his/her *Kānaka Maoli* identity. This portion of this chapter aims to dissect the latter: the implications upon the “self” when appropriated to fit the parameters of hula in Japan.



Representation, at a fundamental level, is defined as "to represent something, describe or depict it, to call it up in the mind by description or portrayal or imagination; to present also means to symbolize, to stand for..." and it goes on. Representation largely describes the way in which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. Hula in Japan is a nexus of economic, social and cultural mechanisms, which then begs us to examine the ways in which the representation of hula affects our identities. With the hula industry totaling billions of dollars, the economic aspect of hula largely contributes to this system. Hall asserts that "economic and social processes themselves depend on meaning and have consequences for our way of life, for who we are - our identity - and how we live now, they too must be understood as a cultural practice."<sup>105</sup> This means that in every performance of hula, and with every contract hinged on money, we are producing meaning not only for our audience, but for our own self identity. As such, hula in Japan is seen as a cultural practice producing and exchanging meaning not only with our respective audience, but especially with the "self".

Stuart Hall examines the idea of a "cultural turn" as being a crossroads in creating meaning within a specific culture. I argue that hula in Japan represents a cultural turn that can have effects upon our cultural practices both here and abroad. As we become accustomed to using money as the motivation and measure of success, we move away from the spiritual base of hula, and compromise the *waiwai* we normally ascribe to hula. When we unpack the idea of hula in Japan, as understood as a cultural practice, we find the economic and social "norms" are quite different from those of hula in Hawai'i, which in turn influence the way *kānaka* understand the "self" and the conceptual world he/she lives in. When we compromise the standards by which

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<sup>105</sup> Hall, Stuart, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications, 1997. 5.

we practice hula *in general*, this in turn, also tends to reflect in our practices and norms in Hawai‘i. This same ideal is discussed by Kumu Pueo:

[This behavior abroad] empowers that type of thinking to our people when were there. When we come back here, we feel the same type of entitlement in Hawai‘i when its undeserved. This could undermine/alters the evolution of us as Hawaiians and/or hula practitioners. Change isn’t bad, but in this aspect, does have the ability to change the cultural values.<sup>106</sup>

This industry is not only important hula informs the individual *kanaka* and once again, as it shapes the future of our cultural practices and social norms. The idea of accountability is a way in which the standard of practice is upheld throughout Hawai‘i. The communal aspect of accountability that I am speaking of largely contributes to the standards of practice of hula in Hawai‘i. By highlighting our surrounding community’s contribution to hula, we can understand the ways in which hula in Japan is easily compromised; in turn, compromising our understanding of the “self.” Glen Coulthard outlines that “it is within and against the horizon of one’s cultural community that individuals come to develop their identities and thus the capacity to make sense of their lives and choices.”<sup>107</sup> I argue that without a solid and consistent background by which we are able to evaluate ourselves, it is easier to stray from culturally acceptable norms and even easier to get away with it.

Taiaiake Alfred discusses an indigenous sense of accountability that “needs to be understood not just as a set of processes but as a relationship.”<sup>108</sup> This relationship, as explored throughout

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<sup>106</sup> Pata, Cody Pueo. Interview by ‘Ānela U‘ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Maunaloa, O‘ahu, October, 3, 2015.

<sup>107</sup> Coulthard, Glen Sean. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2014. 29.

<sup>108</sup> Taiaiake Alfred. *Peace Power Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. (Canada: Oxford University Press, 2009) 91.

this chapter, is to one's *kumu* and the line of knowledge that produced him/her. In the hula community, if someone does something inappropriately or incorrectly, there are always peers and/or fellow *kumu* to account for it. This sense of accountability is key to our cultural practices and social structure. For example, a general rule in our *hālau* is “no make your *kumu* shame”. This thought process is also essential to the way in which we respect and revere our knowledge sources – our *kumu*. Kumu Cody Pueo Pata further reminds us that as *haumāna*, we are not simply students of one source or one *kumu*, but representative of the *mo'okū'auhau* of *kumu* that have come before us.<sup>109</sup> We not only fail our *kumu*, but also the multi-generational teachings that have contributed to the growth of your *kumu*.

While this is not to say that our own Kumu Hula do not have the discretion to be able to *mālama 'ike* abroad, I simply highlight the difficulties and advocate for the continued practice of culturally grounded hula; as this *kuleana* is paramount. The ability to evaluate yourself based on your surrounding communities is a testament to the wellbeing of your practice. Similarly, Kumu Nāpua Greig stresses that we cannot change the core purpose of our practice based on our venue: “to me, I cannot change who I am for a Hawai'i audience versus a Japan audience...you still have to make sense to me.”<sup>110</sup> Similarly, I advocate for the imposition of culturally grounded hula even abroad. Though it may prove to be challenging without our surrounding communities from which we find balance, we must be sure that we are upholding our *kuleana* to hula.

One of the disconnects with hula in Japan is that there is a lack of this community-driven accountability. As we stray away from our *'āina* and arguably from the structures that

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<sup>109</sup> Pata, Cody Pueo. Interview by 'Ānela U'ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Maunaloa, O'ahu, October, 3, 2015.

<sup>110</sup> Greig Nakasone, Jaye Nāpua. Interview by 'Ānela U'ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Waiohuli, Kula, Maui, August 20, 2015.

successfully ground hula, we perhaps lose our cultural compass. Aunty Alice Nāmakelua speaks of this lack of accountability in saying “there is no one around to keep them [Kumu Hula] in line today. They are on their own. There are no boundaries or definitions anymore.”<sup>111</sup>

While Nāmakelua’s foresight may be in reference to hula in Hawai‘i, its applicability is certainly relevant when looking at hula in Japan. Being geographically disconnected from Hawai‘i creates a challenging paradigm for culturally grounded hula.

It would be irresponsible to fail to mention that the standards of practice for which I advocate in this thesis are not always necessarily practiced regularly here in Hawai‘i. I recognize that hula in Hawai‘i also stops short of capitalizing on the *waiwai* imbedded within hula. Regardless, I use Japan as a starting point to understanding this disconnect, ultimately encouraging us to see the value upheld within hula. I highlight these practices in Japan in detail to challenge our understanding of hula not only in Japan, but in Hawai‘i as well.

#### *Accountability: A ‘o*

Accountability also applies when we examine the *a ‘o* of hula in Japan either by po‘e hula or by Japanese dancers and to their (often) self-designation as Kumu Hula. Hula schools in Japan vary in size and structure, some with graduated Kumu Hula, stratified classes, and outreach branches. The compromised structure of *hālau* and lack of accountability pose a threat to the status and wellbeing of hula.

Understanding that the transmission of knowledge is a genealogical succession illustrates our regard for *‘ike*. Kumu Pueo Pata shares the similar sentiment regarding Kumu Hula in Japan: “So when you say to me in Japan, ‘I’m a Kumu Hula’ I learned from so and so. That’s

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<sup>111</sup>Alice Ku‘uleialohapoina‘ole Kanakaoluna Nāmakelua. Nānā i nā Loea Hula.

great, what *lineage* did you come from?”<sup>112</sup> This *kuleana* is incredibly heavy, but is also a great honor. When one is gifted with such valuable knowledge and responsibility, those who share a similar understanding and passion will be the compass to indicate right and wrong. *Po‘e hula* – Kumu Hula, *haumāna*, *‘ōlapa* – not only share the love of hula, but also recognize the vast importance behind taking care of such valuable cultural knowledge.

The geographical disconnection makes it easier for hula teachers in Japan to misappropriate the practice as they see fit. With such a large demand for hula, there is always need for hula teachers and dancers, with little oversight by expert Kumu Hula. This allows almost anyone to declare themselves *kumu* and able to teach hula. This is not only the case for individuals from Japan, but also for *Kānaka Maoli* who are not necessarily Kumu, but whom, as highly regarded dancers/musicians, teach hula as well. We must be attentive to these situations for “without criticizing, it enables people who are basically rip offs to have the same status as devoted leaders.”<sup>113</sup> Similar to the idea of communal accountability, the misappropriation of hula abroad is also due in part to the geographical disconnection and consequently, lack of accountability.

Of course, “to each his own,” as each *hālau* differ in standards of practice, values, and in both *hō‘ike* and *a‘o* of hula, and we respect one another across the hula community. It is perhaps, safe to say that if one deviates too far from the cultural norm, he/she will be held accountable for it. In essence, it is against our communities and peers that we are witness to a sense of accountability – no matter what school of thought one comes from. The continuation of the Hawaiian idea of accountability, perhaps at risk here, is critical to our wellbeing. As *po‘e*

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<sup>112</sup> Pata, Cody Pueo. Interview by ‘Ānela U‘ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Maunaloa, O‘ahu, October, 3, 2015.

<sup>113</sup> Taiaiake Alfred. *Peace Power Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. (Canada: Oxford University Press, 2009) 67.

*hula* dedicate their lives to hula, we all share a common ground as stewards of this practice. Collectively, we must hold each other and ourselves accountable for the ways in which we use a practice that has such *waiwai*. Lia Keawe points again to this sentiment in that “hula is something that belongs to Kānaka Maoli. No one person or individual owns hula. Period. It belongs to our culture, our people and therefore, we, mālama (take care of ) Hula together as a collective body of kānaka.”<sup>114</sup> Together, *po‘e hula* contribute to the continued progression and health of hula as a cultural practice, social structure, and repository of knowledge.

Another disconnect that potentially disrupts the idea of communal accountability in Japan-based *hālau* is the inability to see the *kumu*. With some models of hula in Japan, established Japan-based *hālau* have a “sensei” that essentially fills in as *alaka ‘i*-like role, a second-hand teaching of hula. Most times, these sensei answer to Hawai‘i-based Kumu Hula. These sensei, learn several songs in a one-on-one lesson with Kumu Hula Hawai‘i, and then return and teach their Japan-based *hālau* the choreography. With the heightened accessibility to videos on the internet and social media outlets, it is easy to see the hula taking place in Japan; even from Hawai‘i. When watching *hālau* and sensei that with whom we – as *po‘e hula* – are not familiar, we are often left wondering, “*O wai ke kumu?*” Who is their kumu? At face value, we are unable to recognize where their hula comes from. We do not see their *kumu* in their dance – in all aspects of the word<sup>115</sup>. This unfamiliarity makes the communal idea of accountability increasingly difficult.

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<sup>114</sup> Lia O'Neill Moanike'ala Ah-Lan Keawe, "Ki'i Pāpālua: Imagery and Colonialism in Hawai'i" (PhD diss., University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2008). 36.

<sup>115</sup> *Kumu*, used here in this reference explores aspects of the word that include: teacher, tutor; foundation, base; beginning, source, origin; reason, motive, purpose. Mary Kawena Pūku'i and Samuel H. Elbert. Hawaiian Dictionary. Honolulu: 1986.

### *The Literal Disconnection*

Hula, illustrative of our culture, will reflect the current events affecting our people, *‘āina*, and culture. Having understood the capacities by which we are able to educate through hula, we know that these events can inform not only the individual dancing, but his/her respective audience. Our positionality as *po‘e hula* then offers us the opportunity to educate an international audience on real issues affecting us. Unfortunately, this aspect is not always desirable by promoters and/or the audience.

Being that hula exists in places that are literally, - geographically - disconnected from the *‘āina* it represents, there will obviously be disconnects that interrupt the standard cultural norms and practices. On one hand, the appeal of hula is likely seated in the yearning for the same stereotypical image and ideal ascribed to our culture or practice. In this case, as Kurokawa highlights, it is also likely that this image is one of an unattainable exotic paradise.<sup>116</sup> Hawai‘i, largely marketable as a paradise poised for vacations, arguably loses its appeal as the problems that plague our society are revealed. As our hula caters to the stereotypical tourist desires of the audience, the stereotyped Hawai‘i is also upheld. Hula, without shedding light on the real problems our people and *‘āina* faces, fails to encompass the totality of our *kuleana* as practitioners. We enable the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of our people. I previously discussed the affect this has on the performer’s identity and the way we produce and exchange meaning. Failing to encompass an integral part of hula such as this disrupts the opportunity we have to reinforce the system of knowledge found in hula.

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<sup>116</sup> Yoko Kurokawa, “Yearning for a Distant Music: Consumption of Hawaiian Music and Dance in Japan” (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2004), 4.

I often wondered why more *po‘e hula* do not jump at the opportunity to educate audiences regarding our problems, to contribute to that which sustains them. Kumu Nāpua answers, “I think a lot of people are concerned with losing their fan base.”<sup>117</sup> This is an understandable concern in that these *pilikia* are not highly desired as marketable. Kumu Nāpua continues, “not only in politics, but in hula, and especially hula in Japan, there’s almost a penalty for being too strong and too smart. Ask too many questions and you don’t get taken on tour. But don’t insult my intelligence.”<sup>118</sup> Other peers also echo this sentiment. This disconnect is not only seen in Japan, but perhaps here in Hawai‘i too. Our own people don’t want to carry the heavy burden of these *pilikia*. And perhaps, our own audiences don’t want the wool over their eyes to be lifted, lest this *kuleana* come with it as well.

As *kānaka* living in Hawai‘i, it is increasingly difficult to practice within the restrictions of disconnected federal, state, and/or county laws. As such, hula’s *waiwai* in possibly educating on particular issues is increasingly valuable and important. Unable to reflect and represent the reality of our context, we find our hula disconnected to the real problems we face. We forfeit the opportunity to educate our audience on these problems.

This literal disconnect uncovers a variety of dilemma that *po‘e hula* find themselves navigating. For example, hula in a geographically distant land also has an affect on the allocation of our already scarce resources. While the demand for resources in Japan are high, it may have an adverse affect on *po‘e hula* in Hawai‘i. If Japanese dancers are participating in the plethora of competitions in Japan and importing foliage from Hawai‘i to make their *lei*, this

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<sup>117</sup> Greig Nakasone, Jaye Nāpua. Interview by ‘Ānela U‘ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Waiohuli, Kula, Maui, August 20, 2015.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.



lessens the resource for us at home. Furthermore, while Japanese dancers pay a high cost for lei and adornments, this in turn, drives up the market here in Hawai‘i. Not only are we struggling to gather resources in Hawai‘i, but now we are competing international dancers for professionally-made *lei* and *lole*.

What begs our attention, though, is the amount of time that *po‘e hula* often spend in Japan. Though a different kind of resource, time, invested in Japan – for whatever reason - takes away from the time *po‘e hula* spend in own home. When discussing the phenomenon of hula in Japan, Kumu Nāpua looks at “those who give more in Japan than here in Hawai‘i” and then finishes, “Our first *kuleana* is here.”<sup>119</sup> With so much disconnection between *kānaka* and ‘*āina*, *kānaka* and *malihini*, ‘*āina* versus capitalism, a *pēlā aku*, our work in Hawai‘i is far from accomplished.

Though separate from that of Hawai‘i-based hula, hula in Japan certainly presents a modern-day subset of hula. I argue that understanding the way we participate, share resources, ‘*ike*, time, and *mana* is important as we navigate the challenges of our reality as *kānaka*; our *kuleana* begs this of us.

#### *Mis-representation of kānaka and hula*

Stuart Hall focuses on the Theory of Representation as a "way in which meaning is given to things...and what they stand for".<sup>120</sup> Both the *hō‘ike* and *a‘o* of hula in Japan serves as a representation of our culture to one, the outside world and two, members of our culture. The question is then, how effective is culturally grounded hula, performed by Hawaiians as

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<sup>119</sup> Greig Nakasone, Jaye Nāpua. Interview by ‘Ānela U‘ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Waiohuli, Kula, Maui, August 20, 2015.

<sup>120</sup> Stuart Hall, *Representation and the Media*. (Media Education Foundation, 1997).

representation? Hall claims that representation is not only built in language, it is also contingent upon sounds and images that also carry meaning. In hula, then, elements like voice, costuming, and facial expression are a unique contribution to *po'e hula's* performance. A key aspect in maintaining the effectiveness of culturally grounded hula as representation by *po'e hula Hawai'i* is simple: its implementation by *po'e hula Hawai'i*. Asserting accurate displays of hula in spaces around this world will contribute to the overall understanding of first and foremost, our practice, two, our people, and three, the totalities of our lived existence.

Meaning can never be fixed, emphasizing the importance of continual representation and practice of our *'ike*. The implementation of culturally grounded hula by Hawaiians not only solidifies our *'ike* and identity inward on the performer, as discussed earlier, but also gives *kānaka* agency to assert themselves as authority figures representing the totality of our lived experiences.

The difficulty in asserting culturally grounded hula in Japan also lies within the structure and parameters within which we operate. First off, *po'e hula* are *hired* by Japanese businessmen whose main goal is capital gain. After all, people in Japan are clearly paying large amounts of money to consume both the *hō'ike* and *a'o* of hula. As these promoters hire *po'e hula* to *hō'ike* and/or *a'o*, they sometimes make requests to leave the *pilikia* out of it. Granted, these problems are *kaumaha*, as with *kuleana*, but they are indeed a part of our hula. While we may come to realize the importance of culturally grounded hula, performing such hula in Japan will prove to be difficult if these businessmen hold the authority.

Often times, *po'e hula* are asked to alter their hula in order to cater to the promoter's vision and/or agenda. The resulting performance, however, not only presents a false image of something we hold sacred, but also simultaneously offends and fails at representing the reality of

our people, *mo'olelo*, and *'āina*. In discussing the performance and subsequent compromise of Onkwehonwe dance for capital gain, Taiaiake Alfred points to the damage of this sort of representation:

The performance of dance shows and tourist 'art' is not real culture. These are comodified artifices designed, packaged, and practiced to entertain the rich and jaded bourgeois of the world, satisfying their craving for an 'authentic' cultural experience – something completely out of reach in their own lives. Worse than just a pseudo-cultural sham, the tourist performance presents a false face of Onkwehonwe life to the world, one that is completely different from the politics, spirituality, and truth of lived Onkwehonwe existences.<sup>121</sup>

While hula “has become a source of economic prosperity on one hand,” its commodification has become “a threat to cultural and community identity on the other.”<sup>122</sup> In this case, this not only becomes a problem of authentic representation, but of authentic implementation of a cultural practice. The negotiation between cultural stability and economic gain - or lack thereof – is indeed problematic.

Secondly, the difficulty of producing culturally grounded hula in Japan is basic: the language barrier. While Stuart Hall's argument of representation also references language as a signifying practice and one of the main aspects constitutive of representation, it is also difficult to bridge the language gap between *mele*, performers, and audience. Yet the success of performing culturally grounded hula in Japan as a representation of ourselves hinges on the filling this two-fold gap. On one hand, while we are able to create narrations in English/Japanese, the majority of our *mele* and hula are in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i. While we may be able to communicate

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<sup>121</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009) 43.

<sup>122</sup> Ramsay Remigius Mahealani Taum, "Tourism." *The Value of Hawaii Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future* (2010), 31.

certain things through translation in narration, we are most likely unable to translate our hula and *mele*.

*Advocating for Agency: Making Connections for hula in Japan*

On a multi-city tour through Japan, a hula sister of mine posed an innocent, yet profound question, “Do they even understand what we’re doing?” To which another replied, “Probably not.” She responded, “so why do we do it then?” We find ourselves at a disadvantage in the structure of hula performance and teaching in Japan. Though we are met with these challenges, it is still imperative that we insist on delivering culturally grounded hula in Japan. Hula’s *kīpuka* offer us *po’e hula* valuable opportunities to educate. Understanding this potential also urges us to take advantage of the opportunity. As we examined earlier in this chapter, as we invest in *kuleana*, of in this case, hula, the opportunities that grow from that *kuleana* also multiply.

The high demand for hula – both *hō’ike* and *a’o* – in Japan, is met by *po’e hula Hawai’i*. With so many requests for hula, it is no wonder that our participation has helped this industry grow to its current state – outlined in the following chapter. The interesting thing to focus on is that even if one Kumu chooses non-participation, there are others who will certainly jump at the opportunity to *hō’ike* and/or *a’o* in Japan.

*Po’e hula* must analyze our own agency and actions. I encourage the value of *kuleana* as instilled in the *hālau* structure and focus on the importance of *mālama’ike*. I dissect the appropriation of hula by schools/*hālau* in Japan, discuss its negative implications, and point to the lack of accountability. I contend that the *hō’ike* and *a’o* of hula must accurately represent the totalities of our people, stories, and places so that we not only inform our respective audience, but reinforce the values and ideals on the performer’s self identity. Together, these things not only challenge our representation in the *hō’ike* of hula in Japan, but especially challenges the

standards by which we *a‘o i ka hula*. If we fail to connect these current disconnections, we risk forfeiting a cultural practice and its respective *waiwai*; something for which we have *kuleana* to uphold. It is possible, if not absolutely necessary, that we take responsibility for our actions in a challenging time and advocate for the health and wellbeing of our people and practice. Through selective appropriation, discussed in the next chapter, we realize our agency in navigating a structure that may have obvious negative disconnects, but also has various connections that can advocate for our people, *‘āina*, and culture in a culturally responsible way.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONNECTIONS: UNDERSTANDING THE ADVANTAGES OF HULA IN JAPAN

‘Ōiwi have been farming lo‘i (irrigated pond fields) for generations. At some point in ‘Ōiwi history, sickles were introduced into the practice of mahi ‘ai kalo (taro cultivation). Sickles turned out to be great tools and enabled work to be accomplished with greater ease. Today it would be difficult to find a lo‘i farmer who does not have a sickle.<sup>123</sup>

Though this example talks about *mahi ‘ai kalo*, we can recognize themes that are applicable as we discuss hula in Japan. Through this metaphor, Beamer highlights that ‘Ōiwi strategically and successfully incorporated new tools into a traditional practice in creating the Hawaiian Kingdom. This negotiation, however, “does not necessarily represent a paradigm shift”<sup>124</sup> nor did it mean our *ali ‘i* forfeit traditional ways of knowing. Instead, by putting *mana* in the hands of our *ali ‘i*, Beamer asserts that *kānaka* not only upheld traditional ways of operating in the world, but also simultaneously appropriated contemporary structures to their best interest.

Beamer’s argument points to a similar navigation I attempt to steep in this thesis: economics versus tradition, hula in Japan versus hula in Hawai‘i. This negotiation, though challenging, is necessary, as outlined in the previous chapter. Though the structure of hula in Japan may be foreign, it is necessary that *po ‘e hula* assert their agency in a strategic, yet culturally responsible way. It is my hope that this research provides a foundation for understanding a contemporary structure in which hula operates while simultaneously seizing the opportunity to successfully move forward as a *lāhui*. Beamer asserts, “I believe that native appropriation is possible. In fact, as an indigenous scholar in the contemporary world, I would

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<sup>123</sup> Kamanamaikalani Beamer, *No Mākou ka Mana Liberating the Nation* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Publishing, 2014), 14.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

say it *has* to be possible.”<sup>125</sup> Likewise, as a *mea hula* living in a contemporary world, I argue that the responsible use of hula in Japan is increasingly necessary. By arguing this in a positive light and by emphasizing connections, we give *mana* and agency to *kānaka*’s ability to perform culturally grounded hula.

This chapter focuses mainly on the impacts of the *hō ‘ike* aspect of hula, its effects on international education, self identity, and the surrounding communities. While we certainly operate within structures where we are not the absolute authority figure, we must take ownership over the *‘ike* and mana we ascribe to it. For if we are unhappy with the direction of our cultural practice, we have a large *kuleana* in that. We must realize that “traditions demand a higher standard of conduct”<sup>126</sup> and this conduct is only enforced by our own accountability. Just as I encourage *mālama ‘ike* by means of accurate representation/*hō ‘ike*, I also urge us to recognize the ways in which we are able to reinforce our identities through *hō ‘ike*. Doing this allows us to draw on hula’s *waiwai* and makes *kīpuka* accessible in a culturally responsible manner.

#### *Hō ‘ike: Representing a Lāhui*

On a recent trip to Japan, our *hālau* made it a point to perform culturally grounded hula for various reasons. Upon conclusion of the show, various Japanese Kumu Hula expressed their wonder at our *hō ‘ike*. Surprisingly, this wonder in response to something other than what we’d normally suspect. As these kumu said, after watching the show, they felt the need to re-evaluate their conceptual understanding of hula. Coming from someone who held the title of "Kumu", this came as startling news to us. These kumu were surprised at the apparent disconnect between

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<sup>125</sup> Kamanamaikalani Beamer, *No Mākou ka Mana Liberating the Nation* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Publishing, 2014), 13.

<sup>126</sup> Taiaiake Alfred. *Peace Power Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. (Canada: Oxford University Press, 2009) 113.

what they had been teaching and what we presented as hula. As a result, these *kumu* were then forced to realign their understanding, teachings, and priorities as *kumu* in Japan. This was not only important to the integrity of our hula as a cultural practice, but also to these teachers' understanding of our people and practice. Our simple *hō'ike*, successfully challenged the dominant discourse. This example, an illustration of education through hula, further emphasizes the importance of our presence and imposition of culturally grounded hula in Japan.

In this section, I analyze representation in a different light, aiming to frame our *hō'ike* in Japan as a positive opportunity. As we understand, representation is the “way in which meaning is given to things...and what they stand for.”<sup>127</sup> This is the process by which meaning is produced through language/actions and how we - and others – “make sense of the world.”<sup>128</sup> By Hall's reasoning, we are not only creating and ascribing meaning to ourselves, but also influencing how others - in this case, those in Japan - make sense of the world, *kānaka* included. Our role and positionality as dancers allows an opportunity to influence others and assert a meaningful and authentic version of ourselves as both individual *kānaka* and as a collective *lāhui* to a global audience. Hula in Japan should be used to strategically re-present Hawai'i to the world. In any case, this may likely serve as one of the few - and important - opportunities in which individuals are open to learning about our people.

At times, the “performance and performativity are thus articulated in specific contexts,”<sup>129</sup> as means to normalize discourse. In this instance, the *hō'ike* of culturally grounded hula outside of Hawai'i is employed and contributes to normalizing the global discourse of hula.

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<sup>127</sup> Stuart Hall, *Representation and the Media*. (Media Education Foundation, 1997).

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.



When the audience chooses to pay to watch hula - done by *po'e hula* themselves - they are already coming with a high level of interest in hula; especially as based on the cost of these *hō'ike*. Capitalizing on this attentiveness is key, that we may influence the representation of our people, practices, and wellbeing through hula. Historically, hula has existed in many venues and agendas and has served as a face of Hawai'i. Culturally grounded hula, however, advocates for an in depth inclusion of all the *'ike* and *waiwai* that embodies our people and practices. This, in turn, affects the audience's education about Hawai'i; and when done effectively, pushes one to view hula as more than an aesthetic. In this instance, the *hō'ike* of culturally grounded hula in Japan, and challenges the existing paradigm by imposing and creating meaning through representation. When done effectively, the *hō'ike* of culturally grounded hula reaches across the gap of representation to connect an aspect of hula that may be currently absent in Japan; one that can contribute to our wellbeing as Hawai'i.

On a basic level, the simple existence of culturally grounded hula in Japan is representation enough. Hall argues that "absence is just as significant as presence"<sup>130</sup>. There are several approaches or "theories of representation" that indicate ways of making that presence known. The first, a "reflective" approach, occurs when action simply reflects the current paradigm. In the context of hula in Japan, this approach would uphold the current status quo; enabling the stereotypical consumption of hula. This approach is something that we are *not* advocating for with hula in Japan. As we have seen with over 200+ *hālau* in Japan, we are looking at a phenomenon of hula that I am not sure can represent the significance of our practice, or, culturally grounded hula. In fact, we, as *po'e hula*, aim to do the opposite, to challenge the current paradigm through hula. The second approach, an "intentional" approach is one that this

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<sup>130</sup> Stuart Hall, *Representation and the Media*. (Media Education Foundation, 1997)

chapter advocates for. In this sense, the performing individual and/or group represent an intentional display of representation, advocating for a specific outcome. As we encourage capitalizing on the opportunity to educate our audience, we are calling for an intentional approach to representation. The third approach is a “constructionist” approach in which meaning is constructed through language. Similar to an intentional approach, this thesis also advocates for culturally grounded hula as a method to convey accurate meaning about our practice.

It is through our *hō‘ike* of hula in Japan that we are giving our culture - and cultural practices - meaning *and* translating this to our audience at the same time. Capitalizing on the “intentional” and “constructionist” approach of representation offers *po‘e hula* a unique opportunity through hula. It is an “opportunity for an individual or group to take control”<sup>131</sup> of our own practice and identity “through an engagement with the past and to act to affect the future.”<sup>132</sup> Essentially, the opportunity of active representation of hula in Japan is twofold. While the performer actively reinforces his/her individual identity by drawing on the *kīpuka* of experiences, *po‘e hula* also educate the audience, building and fostering an accurate understanding of our lives as *kānaka*.

Through hula as a social action, we are informing the ways in which others define and create meaning of our people, place, and stories. This in turn, helps to construct the ways in which others operate, understand, and see the world; with *kānaka* included. This concept of social action is not only important in everyday life, but especially vital in instances where hula likely serves as the main representation of Hawaiians *by* Hawaiians in Japan. In unpacking this

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<sup>131</sup> Henry Glassie. *Tradition*. (Journal of American Folklore, 1995) 404.

<sup>132</sup> Cristina Bacchilega. *Legendary Hawai‘i and the Politics of Place*. (United States of America: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) 2.

idea, we arrive upon a platform to empower ourselves as a people. This type of social action is “that which is important to those who perform it and those who observe it; not ‘in itself’, but because of the many variable systems of meanings which human beings deploy to define what things mean.”<sup>133</sup>

Asserting culturally grounded hula as an intentional and constructionist form of representation aims to replace the misconstrued discourse of Hawai‘i and turn this very paradigm on its head. If hula can be used as an instrument to solidify occupation as Imada highlights, or as a mis-representation of the “hula girl” image as Keawe highlights, then hula can and arguably should be used as an instrument to erase these very same images it historically upholds. By practicing hula in this fashion, we are preserving hula's *‘ike* while asserting ourselves as a living, educated, and thriving *lāhui* to be acknowledged and addressed.

Returning again to Imada, she highlights the way that hula was used as a tool to solidify the United States’ occupation of Hawai‘i. As she writes, hula made Hawai‘i more appealing to those abroad, particularly residents and leaders of the U.S. who had a hand in the illegal annexation of the Hawaiian Kingdom; hula also informed their opinions, views and understanding of our islands. Through this representation, *Kānaka* became legible, less foreign, and easy to assimilate; ultimately making Hawai‘i became palatable to the larger United States. If hula, as a tool through representation, can be used effectively in this instance, can we not simply use the same tool to do the opposite? If Imada’s analysis can argue that the representation of hula worked to solidify the United States’ occupation, I argue that hula can be used to educate others on occupation and thereby challenge the U.S. presence itself.

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<sup>133</sup> Hall, Stuart, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications, 1997. 208.

When it comes to the particular conversation of occupation, there has been a continual call for education, not only locally, but also internationally. Without diving into depths about the historical background and significance of the occupation of Hawai‘i, I argue that hula can play a pivotal role in drawing international attention to our status as an occupied nation.

On one hand, hula plays a socio-political role in re-awakening consciousness that is critical to the success of political education like occupation. Here, however, I will give weight to the political arguments that can be made via education through the *hō‘ike* of hula. For example, in recent years, our *lāhui* has seen a re-awakening and made a call for the United States to address the historical injustices hindering Native Hawaiians in contemporary structures. This increased consciousness is due in part to the reconnections we have made to our ancestral memories and histories, which I argue is largely rediscovered through practices such as hula. The now-standard discourse of the illegal overthrow and occupation isn’t often included in history books, and if it is, conveniently framed to benefit the United States. As we become more aware of our history, we look ahead to finding justice for future generations. The highly contested debate over which future avenue to pursue includes advocates for independence, decolonization, deoccupation, federal recognition, and the status quo. Unfortunately, this debate, unfortunately often results in the division of our community. What seems to unify leaders of different models, is the call for education on the nature of our occupation.

In a commissioned study, Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy Professors, S. James Anaya and Robert A. Williams, Jr. wrote the “Study on the International Law and Policy Relating to the situation of the Native Hawaiian People.” This report, draws on International Law as means to advocate for the betterment of the Native Hawaiian peoples. In discussing the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007, Anadaya and

Williams articulates the rights equality and self-determination of Indigenous people; Native Hawaiians included: “The purpose of the Declaration is to remedy the historical denial of the right of self-determination and related human rights so that indigenous peoples may overcome systemic disadvantage and achieve a position of equality vis-a-vis herefore-dominant sectors of society.”<sup>134</sup> These kinds of efforts are not only important from a political standpoint, but also directly affects the social, cultural, and economic mobility of *kānaka* Hawai‘i. This wide-reaching political argument of occupation directly points to *kuleana* that *po‘e hula* must acknowledge. This political situation does, afterall, directly affect our wellbeing as practitioners as seen in examples like ‘Īlio‘ulaokalani and Mauna Kea.

Williams and Andaya’s report partly explores deoccupation as one of several models to improve the socio-political conditions and secure rights of Native Hawaiians as Indigenous Peoples. While International law points to acknowledging and implementing Indigenous Rights, enforcing these same rights prove to be difficult, especially as these remedies do not look to interrupt the exisiting stability of powerful nation-states such as the United States.<sup>135</sup> Part of Williams and Andaya’s strategy towards deoccupation includes education as one of the biggest factors. As the surrounding states are informed about the United States’ “historical denial of the right of self-determination,” it puts pressure on the U.S. to uphold their adoption of the UNDRIP – a legally binding treaty. As such, the U.S. has stake in their own political reputation as members of the United Nations. *Po‘e hula* are continually placed in an advantageous position;

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<sup>134</sup> Robert A. Williams, Jr. and S. James Anaya Study on the International Law and Policy Relating to the situation of the Native Hawaiian People June 2015.

<sup>135</sup> Andaya, James S. And Robert A. Williams Jr. “Study on the Internatioinal Law and Policy Relating to the situation of the Native Hawaiian People.” Presentation, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, August, 2015.

actively and accurately raising awareness on the situation of occupation. Hula internationally may likely be one of the most strategically effective platforms to educate on occupation.

*‘O Wau iho nō: Hō‘ike on the Individual*

The effectiveness of culturally grounded hula not only has a successful impact on others through *hō‘ike*, but is also manifested inward, upon the performer herself. Moreover, I especially argue that regardless of the “stage” of a *hō‘ike*, it is important that *po‘e hula* perform culturally grounded hula. As we continue to practice this, even while geographically disconnected from Hawai‘i, we in turn, continue to solidify hula’s *waiwai* and receive the benefits outlined before us. Practicing culturally grounded hula in Japan is therefore of the utmost importance in order to preserve the *waiwai* of our people amidst a world of compromises and to support the education of *kānaka* through hula.

Hall’s analysis of culture reveals to us that performance and representation of hula helps us to “organize and regulate social practices, influence our conduct, and consequently, have real, practical effects” upon our culture.<sup>136</sup> Essentially, Hall’s work helps this analysis to understand that the practice hula in Japan, has a significant affect on the wellbeing of our cultural practices, the social norms attached to them, and ultimately, our collective community that can find health in hula’s *waiwai*.

The impacts *po‘e hula* as a community of hula practitioners relate to the conversation of accountability, as this collective community largely dictates the socially and culturally acceptable norms of hula. As such, it is important that we continue to uphold the system of knowledge imposed through the *hālau* structure – even while in Japan. The voyage overseas

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<sup>136</sup> Hall, Stuart, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications, 1997. 5.

should not result in a compromise of culturally grounded *waiwai*. Though Japan and Hawai‘i may be physically disconnected, surely, our performance and behavior in Japan is very well connected to Hawai‘i and therefore reflect on our social practices and conduct. We cannot view our time in Japan as a vacation, an escape from our normal *kuleana*; it is but an extension of this same *kuleana*. And as I later argue in this chapter, this *kuleana* is multiplied as we capitalize on connections to be made through hula in Japan.

Similarly, Stephanie Nohelani Teves, through analyzing performance theory, as either “real” cultural forms or as a cultural commodity, examines these elements in contribution to the structuring of “contemporary Hawaiian performance identity.”<sup>137</sup> Culturally grounded hula, as *hō‘ike* in Japan, aligns with performance theory as both a “real” cultural form and/or cultural commodity. I have previously argued for the importance of *hō‘ike* to the collective community of *po‘e hula*. In this section, I highlight the ways that culturally grounded *hō‘ike* is an important representation upon the individual.

As explained by Teves and Hall, the performance of hula, whether it be compromised and disconnected or culturally grounded, has real implications upon our individual identities as *Kānaka Maoli* in a contemporary society. In response, I continue to encourage the practice of culturally grounded hula as an avenue to uncover the *waiwai* imbedded within hula. *Waiwai* with the ability to educate and empower *kānaka* that find themselves navigating structures that tempt us to deviate from our traditional ways of knowing.

Doing this continues to impose the system of knowledge imbedded within hula that reinforces the contemporary construction of a Hawaiian identity; binding them to the innate *waiwai* of culturally grounded hula. In *Ka Honua Ola*, Kanahale asserts that mele “reveal that

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<sup>137</sup> Stephanie Nohelani Teves, “We’re All Hawaiians Now: Kanaka Maoli Performance and the Politics of Aloha” (PhD diss., The University of Michigan, 2012).

word and sound have substance; the reverberation of traditional mele in today's settings create a venue for activation."<sup>138</sup> This kind of activation and social action, subsequently moves the individual closer to an intimate understanding of themselves as *kānaka*; and the most critical part: *through hula*. The *kīpuka* preserved within hula doesn't simply record a historical account of our *kūpuna*'s experiences, but practically demands that the individual give herself completely to understanding the *mele* in order to successfully embody this *kīpuka*. Hula, as practiced in this manner, is a higher level of cultural immersion. It involves calling on ancestral memory, demanding attention to detail, internalizing *'ike*, and taking action based on *kuleana*. In this, we see a journey to consciousness, reinforcing and reconnecting our traditional ways of knowing as relevant in a contemporary time.

To understand the many levels of mele, one must digest, believe in, invest in, defend and commit to Hawaiian cultural practices and Hawaiian language arts. The Hawaiian cultural knowledge one possesses, along with the clues presented in chants, creates a stage for enlightenment – a junction where memory and *na'au* meet and produce instantaneous moments when ancestral knowledge is reborn again<sup>139</sup>

Similarly, Keawe finds that a well-represented understanding of cultural images and meaning creates a “spatial imaginary”. This, in turn, reveals “cognitive maps for Kanaka Maoli to receive knowledge, awareness, understanding, recognition, comprehension to re-fresh the mind, and de-colonize the Hawaiian hula girl from its subjugation.”<sup>140</sup> Hula, as an all-encompassing system of knowledge pushes the individual's conceptual understanding of her

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<sup>138</sup> Pualani Kanaka'ole Kanahēle. *Ka Honua Ola 'Eli'eli Kau Mai: The Living Earth, Descend, Deepen the Revelation*. (Honolulu, Hawai'i: Kamehameha Publishing, 2011) xiv.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., xv-xvi.

<sup>140</sup> Lia O'Neill Moanike'ala Ah-Lan Keawe, "Ki'i Pāpālua: Imagery and Colonialism in Hawai'i" (PhD diss., University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2008). viii.



world as a *kanaka* to a new level. Whether this analysis includes social and cultural values imposed through *hālau* through *mele/hula*, I argue that any one of these is reason enough to illustrate the *waiwai* upon the individual. Likewise, as we reinforce consciousness through hula's *waiwai*, we move towards de-colonizing and re-informing the individual Hawaiian mind and identity.

Alfred further highlights the importance of our role as dancers noting that "the dancers move to the sound, giving life to their people."<sup>141</sup> If this is true, what kind of life can we give to our collective community through our dances? He continues, "there is a spiritual base that connects us all, and it is stimulated through ceremony. The songs and dances that we perform are like medicine...the essence of the ancestors' message reveals itself not only in these songs, speeches, and dances but also in the faces and bodies of all who are assembled."<sup>142</sup> The opportunity to educate, re-present ourselves, and assert ourselves politically also reveals itself. The greatest task in asserting ourselves as a thriving culture lies within education. As hula takes on the role of representative Hawai'i, our people, and culture, we *po'e hula* can use this as an opportunity to correctly educate and inform others internationally. Alfred supports this idea in claiming that "restoring these connections is the force that will confront and defeat" imperialism.<sup>143</sup> Hula is not simply a form of entertainment. It is also a political assertion of ourselves by drawing on connections to do so. "The link between spirituality and meaningful

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<sup>141</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009) 91.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 34.

political action is all but ignored in contemporary indigenous politics.”<sup>144</sup> Incorporating hula and its spiritual properties is necessary in retracing the fullness of our culture and its potential. In this we see the importance of the dance itself, the *active* role of the performer, and its influence upon the audience. Our hula can be a vessel through which we successfully serve our *kūpuna* while empowering our voices and educating others on behalf of our people.

*Hō‘a‘o: Educating through the A‘o of Hula*

The majority of this chapter has been dedicated towards highlighting positive opportunities and connections to be made through hula in Japan. Personally, I am wary of disseminating knowledge in a paradigm that may prove to be problematic and/or disconnected. This does not mean, however, that others will not answer the call to *hō‘ike* and *a‘o* hula. As with the native use of the sickle, I continue to uphold that we must actively engage a foreign structure, emphasizing the positive connections to be made, and appropriating the same tools for the benefit across socio-political lines. With that being said, I explore here the ways in which hula can be a teaching tool through the *a‘o* of hula to Japanese in Japan. It is imperative that *kuleana hālau* is still upheld as is the responsible dissemination of *‘ike* through hula. Similar to the *waiwai* that impact *kānaka* highlighted in the previous chapters, I also aim to incorporate its use and impact on the *a‘o* of hula in Japan. Doing so uncovers similar positive impacts that can be made by and the industry in Japan.

In an interview I conducted with one of my Kumu, he shared similar sentiments of discontent with the hula industry in Japan. He pondered on the intensity of his training as a Kumu Hula and was bothered by the lack of similar training by those given the title Kumu Hula in Japan. After adhering to instructions left to him by his kumu to teach in Japan, there was a

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 196.

shift in mindset. “My thoughts changed when it became a responsibility – what is my long term goal? It is an honor to have been considered by my kumu to take on this kuleana.”<sup>145</sup> Similarly, as we – or in this case, as I – simply change our mindset of understanding the parameters of hula in Japan as an unavoidable *kuleana*, we are able to critically examine the positive connections uncovered through the *a‘o* of hula.

Part of the previous chapter’s argument involved emphasizing disconnects derived from the widespread dissemination of knowledge. Approaching hula as one would approach research implores us to use discretion and follow a traditional system of values. This process, as I point out, is a means of educating the individual, translating this social change to the larger social structure of the community - even if this individual is not a *kānaka*.

Just as we understand the capabilities of *hō‘ike hula* for education and change, we can also implement this through the *a‘o* of hula particularly through the *hālau* model rather than that of workshop. Hula, as it exists in Japan, hosts hundreds of hula schools and millions of hula dancers. Informing these dancers of the accurate stories and meanings is often difficult, given the gaps of language, cultural/social norms, and understanding of place. I think if we are going to teach hula in Japan, we must do so correctly. Kumu Pueo Pata’s process of teaching hula in Japan closely aligns to that he implements in Hawai‘i; teaching from the ground, up. He requires a mastery of a list of skills with an “emphasis on language, procedure, history, mele, protocol, physical/spiritual functions, movements, genealogies, haku lei, kinolau, haku mele, all repertoire etc.”<sup>146</sup> For without these skills, dancers cannot perform not culturally grounded hula. He

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<sup>145</sup> Pata, Cody Pueo. Interview by ‘Ānela U‘ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Maunaloa, O‘ahu, October, 3, 2015.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

argues, “you *have to do that* in order for it to be culturally grounded. Most Japanese studio/hālau are not.”<sup>147</sup>

This is, however, a fine line to dance upon: negotiating the responsible dissemination of knowledge versus selling our practice short by only equipping them with motions. Kumu Nāpua echoes this sentiment, saying “our fault as a practitioner to not go there with them. We just do “Hawaiian Hula Eyes” and take our money and go home. Really, it’s our own boundaries, too. Should we teach songs like “Kaulana Nā Pua”? I had to really think about it. And I figured, why shouldn’t the whole world dance about the famous children of Hawai‘i?”<sup>148</sup> After realizing this disconnection, she made the decision to implement all-inclusive teaching of hula in Japan. “This last trip, I thought of songs that would enable me to educate on what [songs] I was teaching. And it did. They were very receptive and even emotional to what we were talking about.”<sup>149</sup> She explains the impact:

They were dancing “Kaulana Nā Pua” and I could see the struggle on their faces. So I asked them if they had any questions. I had a translator with me so he could help me communicate with them. One of them asked me, “Kumu, how should we be expressing?” So I asked her, “How do you feel?” She said, “Angry. I feel angry that this happened in Hawai‘i and now what is happening in Hawai‘i today.” Another lady answered, “I feel hurt. Hawai‘i and its culture are so beautiful”<sup>150</sup>

Realizing the impact of teaching all-inclusive hula encourages us to re-create more experiences like this. In a room full of Japanese students, my kumu not only educated them

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<sup>147</sup> Pata, Cody Pueo. Interview by ‘Ānela U‘ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Maunaloa, O‘ahu, October, 3, 2015.

<sup>148</sup> Greig Nakasone, Jaye Nāpua. Interview by ‘Ānela U‘ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Waiohuli, Kula, Maui, August 20, 2015.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

about the history surrounding the overthrow, but also evoked a familiar emotional response – by means of *mele* and hula. This type of education and response aids in spreading international awareness of our real culture, problems and historical injustices. In the case of occupation, can you imagine what can happen if we continue to evoke the same kind of emotional response by means of hula?

Taking this a step further we look at the use of the spiritual aspect of hula. As we understand, hula is a means by which we can manage and use *mana*, giving our role as *po'e hula* a significant part in a Hawaiian society. This same capability is available to those learning in Japan. While re-evaluating hula in Japan, a kumu revealed a profound thought - similar to that of education. If we understand our role as giving *mana* to our '*āina, lāhui*, etc., and if "*i mana i ka leo*", there is *mana* in the voice, then incorporating multitudes of people only strengthens said *mana*.

"We can use our hula to *kāko 'o* our *lāhui*...certainly, I'm not into teaching them *Au 'a 'ia* and important stuff like that. But I thought, 'if *i ka 'ōlelo nō ke ola*', why not make the world *kāko 'o* the movement with the voice? I help them understand. And even if they don't understand 100%, they're lifting up the same *leo*. The intent may not be as focused as ours, but *kāko 'o* is *kāko 'o*.'"<sup>151</sup>

The unique opportunities of the *a 'o* of hula in Japan are ones I perhaps overlooked in the inception of this thesis. It wasn't until after I had critical discussions with many of the kumu, musicians, and dancers participating in the hula industry in Japan that I realized the possible connections that can be made. In any case, I highlight these very connections in hopes of inspiring similar realizations. Or in the case of this thesis, in hopes of sparking conversation and thoughtful consideration of the appropriation of hula in Japan.

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

### *Economic Autonomy*

I admit that my concern for hula in Japan derives from the large economic engine that hula in Japan has grown to become. As a passionate lover of hula – directly benefitting from hula’s *waiwai* – my concerns was that money, instead of hula, its *‘ike* and *waiwai* were becoming paramount. As a foreign aspect, the economics of hula has been something with which *po‘e hula* have struggles to find balance; the line between sharing culture and commodification, blurred. Acknowledging these concerns, however, also gives us the opportunity to do the opposite, to analyze the positive connections in economic gain. Hula in Japan is an avenue toward economic autonomy for *po‘e hula*. What I continue to uphold though, is the *kuleana* that accompanies hula. I am confident that *po‘e hula* are entirely capable of negotiating this dilemma, of appropriating a foreign structure for our best interest.

There has always been some economic aspect to hula; it has always sustained its practitioner. But as times change, so does its role in hula. “Looking at a traditional *hālau* setting, paying \$30 is nothing compared to giving your life. Back in the day, you would life at the *hālau* and I would guess the kumu wasn’t washing their own clothes while training dancers. But today, the \$30 tuition doesn’t sustain us.”<sup>152</sup> As dancers, we pay a relatively small fee to learn hula from these sources of knowledge, from Kumu Hula. This is in large part due to the Japan industry serving as supplemental income to our *hālau*. Across the board, *po‘e hula* agree that the money from Japan helps to sustain the status quo practice here in Hawai‘i. Kumu Nāpua echoes, “Japan has allowed musicians and Kumu Hula to survive...without Japan, we wouldn’t

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<sup>152</sup> Greig Nakasone, Jaye Nāpua. Interview by ‘Ānela U‘ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Waiohuli, Kula, Maui, August 20, 2015.

be able to charge such a small fee to our students in Hawai‘i.”<sup>153</sup> Surely, we must recognize this advantage. Hula in Japan, as a source of sustenance and income, ensures the livelihood of the structures of hula in Hawai‘i.

Looking at Japan as a source of income *in addition* to the *kuleana* ascribed to both the *hō‘ike* and *a‘o* of hula in Japan ensures that we are actively engaging as agents of our own *‘ike* and wellbeing. Acknowledging the intricate and highly important system operating on hula in Japan is critical to the wellbeing of *kānaka* socially, culturally, politically, and economically.

### *Kākua a Pa‘a: Connecting Opportunities*

Regardless of the place in which we are practicing our hula, it is critically important that our function and purpose as cultural practitioners remain the same; that hula and its *‘ike* remain paramount. In short, culturally grounded hula as a practice is imperative to us inward just as it is outward - *regardless* of what stage it is on.

In this chapter, I focused on the economic stimulus of the hula industry as a positive connection, sustaining Hawai‘i *hālau*, *kumu*, and *po‘e hula*. Profit in Japan can create an avenue to economic autonomy, directly benefitting practitioners. This opportunity, nonetheless, should not overshadow *kuleana* and hula itself. Viewing this as an unavoidable *kuleana* also translates to the positive opportunities outlined in the *a‘o* of hula in Japan. Similar to the capabilities of *waiwai* to the construction of *kānaka* identities, teaching all-inclusive hula can also educate Japanese. This all-inclusive learning offers Japanese the opportunity to *ho‘omana pū*, to offer their collective *leo* and hula.

Most importantly, is the opportunity to represent our *lāhui*. One the first level, the performance and *hō‘ike* of culturally grounded hula reinforces hula’s *waiwai* on the individual

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

*kanaka* mind and identity. The practice of this type of hula pushes the dancer's conceptual understanding of the "self" to a new level, immersing him/her in *'ike*. On another level, *po 'e hula*'s positionality offers an opportunity to re-present an accurate image of Hawai'i, challenging the stereotypical paradigm of paradise. Hula, in this capacity, can be used as a tool to challenge the dominant discourse that misrepresents and miseducates others about our people, practices, and place. This type of social action can make pointed statements, educating an international audience about occupation, advocating for Hawai'i. But most of all, analyzing hula in Japan in this way gives *mana* and agency to *po 'e hula*, re-encouraging their capability to successfully and strategically appropriate contemporary foreign structures of hula in their best interest. Highlighting these connections hopefully inspire thoughtful and responsible actions, in ways that can only benefit our people and practices.

As I contemplated pursuing this project, the underestimation of hula's restorative properties made this an easy decision. As a cultural repository, hula has the ability to drive socio-political change. "We will self-consciously recreate our cultural practices and reform our political identities by drawing on tradition in a thoughtful process of reconstruction and a committed reorganization of our lives in a personal collective sense."<sup>154</sup> This thesis is a call to collectively realize and capitalize on these opportunities, not only in Japan, but on whatever stage our hula leads us to. Though a far-reaching conclusion, "restoring these connections is the force that will confront and defeat the defiant evil of imperialism in this land."<sup>155</sup> As pointed a statement as this is, restoring our cultural and spiritual connections to our traditions through hula

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<sup>154</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009) 34.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.



will ultimately aid us in challenging the dominant paradigms that oversee our political history, status, and future. Our identities, as they are strengthened through culturally grounded hula, give us the confidence to demand justice on behalf of our people.

Alfred offers Wasase – a war ritual and thunder dance - as a “the new warrior’s path” to “form a new politics in which many identities and strategies for making change are fused together in a movement.”<sup>156</sup> Likewise, this thesis advocates for hula as a path toward asserting traditional ‘*ike*; informing communities and individuals, *kānaka Hawai‘i* and Japanese; educating audiences and representing our *lāhui*, and achieving economic stability.

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<sup>156</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009) 19.

## CHAPTER 5

### ‘O KO‘U KULEANA PA‘A NŌ IA

In preparation for a prominent performance, my *kumu* became dissatisfied with our hula. It was clear to her that collectively, we were not strong enough and didn’t deserve to move on. The only way she saw fit to remedy this was for each of us to perform individually. One by one, we each took the big stage while she stood at the back of the stadium, unimpressed. If we failed to embody our hula, to transmit a message, one by one, she cut us from the line. Though we felt robbed and cheated, we deserved it – we cried anyway. That night, we sought comfort in an older hula sister, hoping she’d sympathize with us. In the midst of our concersation, my *kumu* found us, crying, and instead of showing us sympathy, my *kumu* was livid. It was at this point, in the dark of midnight, that we were then sent outside to practice until we were ready. The following day, we did the same thing. We continued the same routine until one by one, my *kumu* said we were ready. That was the only way we were going to get on the stage - when we could fulfill our *kuleana* as dancers, when we had proven ourselves worthy to each other. This experience is one I remember distinctly, a defining experience not only in my hula training, but shaping my entire life.

At the age of 13, my *kumu* taught me that individually, we had *kuleana* to each other; that I was responsible for my contribution to the larger group. At 24, my *kumu* still teaches me that I have *kuleana* to everyone. Only these days, my *kumu* has led me to understand that I have larger *kuleana* to our *lāhui*; that we have the opportunity as cultural practitioners to affect social and political change. I *only* understand this through hula - and I continue to learn more about my *kuleana* every year I continue to look to my *kumu*. ‘O ko ‘u kuleana pa ‘a nō ia.

This thesis traces its *kumu* to experiences like this – this thesis starts with *kuleana*. The entirety of nuanced arguments such as the ones made throughout this thesis aims to strike a difficult balance, one that most *po‘e hula* can empathize with, one that I’m sure many struggle with. I was aware of the sensitivity of such a highly debated topic but felt an impressing *kuleana* to discuss this in an academic arena. My experiences as a dancer have enriched my research and challenged my analysis, highlighting the value of this methodology. Together, in both theory and in practice, I aim to explore and fulfill *kuleana*.

### *Retracing the Journey*

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze and discuss the impacts and influence of the commodification of hula in Japan. Throughout this analysis, I have advocated for the restorative and educational properties of hula; and most of all, for culturally grounded hula. The dissection of each positive opportunity and negative disconnection was a plea to *po‘e hula* to engage in thoughtful discussion about this valuable cultural practice.

In chapter one I outlined the general parameters of hula in Japan as it currently exists. I described the economics of hula as a “commercial enterprise”<sup>157</sup> generating \$190 million in revenue over ten years ago in 2004.<sup>158</sup> I posed questions about hula as it applies culturally, socially, economically, and politically. For the comparative aspect of the thesis, I examined two separate – yet intertwined – aspects of the hula industry; one, the performance aspect of *hō‘ike* and two, the teaching aspect of *a‘o*. Furthermore, I organized my research based on two variables: one, as “disconnections” and two, as “connections. I identified the existing literature of

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<sup>157</sup> Chad Blair, *Japanese Hula Boom May Finally Touch Hawaii* (Honolulu: Pacific Business News, 2007).

<sup>158</sup> Keith and Carmen Haugen, *Hula Numbers in Japan are Staggering* (Honolulu: Around Hawaii, 2007).

which I've built my argument and then pointed to new grounds on which new arguments may be built upon.

In chapter two, I set the *kahua* from which we can understand culturally grounded hula as I intended to incorporate it. I trace the ways in which hula's *waiwai* can be seen as a repository of knowledge. This encouraged the reader to recognize the ways 'Ōlelo Hawai'i and *mele* play an integral role in understanding hula's importance as a "*kīpuka* of experience."<sup>159</sup> Utilizing *mele* – and likewise, hula – as a *piko*, "a reconnection to our ancestral *piko*...as a source of *mana*"<sup>160</sup> encourages the active and responsible use of such an invaluable resource. I further outline hula as a system of knowledge, informing and regulating social and cultural norms, and contributing to the formation of a contemporary Hawaiian identity. Finally, I utilize personal experiences as means to describe the relevant application of culturally grounded hula as it extends in cultural, social, political, and economic arenas in a contemporary Hawai'i. With this framework laid, I move on to analyze the two variables of disconnection and connection in chapters 3 and 4.

In chapter 3, I give way to the disconnections of hula in Japan in both the *hō'ike* and *a'o* spheres, primarily outlining negative characteristics to better evaluate the industry as a whole. I recognize that though this thesis is critical of hula in Japan, it is also sympathetic and optimistic to the structure that *po'e hula* continue to navigate. I first argue that the *a'o* of hula in Japan disrupts the pre-existing process by which we disseminate knowledge. I discuss the implications

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<sup>159</sup> Zachary Alaka'i Lum, "Nā Hīmeni Hawai'i: Enriching the Perspectives of Mele Expression in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century" (Unpublished work, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2014), 2.

<sup>160</sup> Kahikina de Silva, "Killer Mele" (master's thesis, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2005), 2.

of such compromises on the audience in Japan, the individual performer, and upon the *'ike* embedded within hula. I point to the lack of communal accountability as a disconnection as it undermines the process and relationships normally established to *mālama 'ike*. I reference Keawe Lopes' analysis of "*Kaniakapupu Song*" as a research methodology to approaching research, drawing parallels to hula as research. Understanding this process also urges all *haumāna* to recognize their *kuleana* not only to their *kumu*, but to their specific lineage of hula. This lack of accountability in Japan and elsewhere, coupled with the geographical disconnection makes it easier for others to freely misappropriate hula. I argue that the lack of focus on the *waiwai* of hula and emphasis on business operations degrade the Hawaiian ideal of the *hālau* structure and the values and mannerisms normally associated with it. I point to the process of representation as influencing a "cultural turn"<sup>161</sup> as we become accustomed to using money as the motivation and measure of success, in turn, influencing the cultural and social norms in Hawai'i. Finally, I highlight the gap of representation forcing *po'e hula* to alter our performances and compromise our role as practitioners.

In chapter 4, I outline the opposite, the positive connections to capitalize on, those which give *mana* and agency to *po'e hula*. I contend that *po'e hula*, through their positionality in *hō'ike hula*, have an incredibly unique *kuleana* to represent our *lāhui*. This opportunity, allows the international audience to connect the object of hula to the real people, place, and context(s) that hula represents. Through the "intentional" and "constructionist" approach of representation, *po'e hula* can educate "through an engagement with the past and to act to affect the future."<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Hall, Stuart, ed. *Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications, 1997. 5.

<sup>162</sup> Cristina Bacchilega. *Legendary Hawai'i and the Politics of Place*. (United States of America: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) 2.

In particular, as used in this context, hula can serve as a tool to delegitimize the image of paradise and educate on pointed political arguments such as occupation. Most importantly, however, I assert that the *hō'ike* of culturally grounded hula is of greatest significance upon the individual's self identity. As we practice culturally grounded hula regardless of what stage it is on, we continue to solidify hula's *waiwai* amidst the world urging us to pull away from our traditional sources of knowledge. Doing this encourages the journey towards consciousness, immersing one in *'ike*, and continues to contribute to the contemporary formation of a Hawaiian identity. Turning to the *a'o* of hula, I encourage the all-inclusive learning of hula, engaging in a foreign structure while upholding *kuleana*. In doing this, hula can serve as a learning tool to Japanese as well. Finally, I take a different stance on the economics of hula, acknowledging this as an avenue to economic autonomy for *po'e hula*, no longer depending on the oppressive and disconnected state for support. I recognize that hula in Japan, through both *hō'ike* and *a'o*, serves as an economic supplement to our activities in Hawai'i, sustaining both *kumu* and *haumāna*.

*'Au'a 'ia: Empowering kānaka through hula*

“‘Au'a 'Ia,” a prophetic chant, foresees that “Hawai'i would be overcome by people of foreign places.”<sup>163</sup> The *haku mele* uses this as a platform to encourage his people to remain steadfast. As with the many *kīpuka* of *mele* that we have access to, this mele almost seemingly speaks directly to our contemporary context. With 45% of our people physically disconnected, living in the continental U.S., it is abundantly clear that these prophecies have become reality.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Kimo Alama Keaulana, “‘Au'a 'ia” (unidentified handout).

<sup>164</sup> United States Bureau of the Census. *Native Hawaiian Population by Age and Gender in the United States, Continental United States, and Hawai'i: 2010*. Census 2010 Summary File 2 (SF 2).

Similarly, this thesis urges us to hold to the repository of ancestral knowledge in hula binding *kānaka* to our *kuleana* and empowering us to flourish in a challenging society.

Above all, I aim to place agency in *po ‘e hula*, equipping us with a full scope of positives and negatives to arrive at a complete consciousness, fully capable of navigating and appropriating foreign structures to our benefit. Together, aware of the challenges, we can collectively arrive at a place where the value of our practice, people, and place is acknowledged not only in Japan, but in Hawai‘i as well. Doing this not only honors our past, but also encourages and strengthens *kānaka* through our own ways of knowing. “The long process of strengthening ourselves begins with regenerating our indigenous intelligence to that we can begin to use our own conceptual framework to make choices as we move through the world.”<sup>165</sup> Hula’s restorative, regenerative, and educational properties provide a cord that binds us to ancestral brilliance.

Ironically, the catalyst for this project turns out to be the same as the conclusion of this analysis. It is critical that our function and purpose as practitioners remain focused on the opportunities to access *waiwai* within hula, upon our *kuleana*. Realizing and capitalizing on our potential as *po ‘e hula* comes at a critical time in a contemporary Hawai‘i. A time where foreign structures, capitalistic desires, and disconnected leaders, encroach upon our space; challenging our connections and our adherence to traditional ways of knowing. As Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua writes:

“In the coming generation or two, it will be even more crucial to look to our ancestral storehouse of knowledge for how to relate in familial and mutually beneficial ways with our lands, waters, and nonhuman relatives. As we look toward the likelihood of massive environmental and economic changes on our planet, largely precipitated by the rise and

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<sup>165</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009) 199.

growth of industrial and postindustrial empires and societies, we will need all the resources of our pasts and innovative capacities of our peoples to help us shape those transitions in ways that can bring us into preferred, nonimperial futures”<sup>166</sup>

Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua outlines the importance of accessing ancestral storehouses of knowledge. Hula is one of many vehicles by which we can do this, to successfully navigating difficult situations and evoking change. Hula can and should be used as a tool to ground oneself in Hawaiian epistemologies, as a cultural compass guiding us into a successful future as Hawai‘i. Similarly, Alfred describes “Wasase,” or in this case, hula, “is symbolic of the social and cultural force alive among Onkwehonwe dedicated to altering the balance of political and economic power to recreate some social and physical space for freedom to re-emerge.”<sup>167</sup> Drawing parallels with this statement, I outlined hula as a social force through *hālau* as a structure and system of knowledge instilling values, mannerisms, and processes. Hula, as a cultural force, finds its *waiwai* in *mele* and ‘*Ōlelo Hawai‘i*, whose ceremonial aspects also evoke the spiritual essence of our people. Using these two forces together initiates political change, whether it be through education on topics like occupation or through instilling *kuleana* upon the individual, and stimulating economic power from Japan to result in various avenues for “freedom to emerge.”<sup>168</sup>

While I acknowledge that these highly nuanced arguments do not exist independently as described, this thesis is an attempt to summarize and analyze the current situation, advocating for

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<sup>166</sup> Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua. *The Seeds we Planted, Portraits of a Native Hawaiian Charter School* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 246.

<sup>167</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009) 19.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.



social change in every venue available to us. Certainly, this academic project will not solve all of our problems and challenges, rather, it further challenges the reader, *po'e hula*, and the existing paradigms in hopes of inspiring thoughtful and impactful changes. As with any other change, the first step is identifying areas that need improvement – this thesis humbly aims to do so. When discussing our *kuleana* to issues such as this, my *kumu* responded, “I think we have a *kuleana* to discuss this. We can only regulate what we do, and hopefully gain the respect of our peers and set an example.”<sup>169</sup> Critical to this is our network of communities. Collectively, as *po'e hula*, we aim to set an example, working together towards a better Hawai'i.

*'O ko Kākou Kuleana Pa'a nō ia*

“A network of communities, like branches on a tree, decides they need each other in order to survive. So they work diligently to maintain relationships... These persons learn how to live in their place. Thus, they are learning individuals, in learning societies that form a learning civilization... Knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation and comprises a shared history of experiences, innovations, and inventions.”<sup>170</sup>

While the creation of this thesis finds its origin in my personal *kuleana*, I am convinced that it must end with a collective *kuleana*, a responsibility belonging to us all. Acknowledging the ways in which our ancestors worked together also encourages us to operate in a similar fashion, enhancing relationships and empowering one another against the influx of foreign faces and desires. Certainly, what we can do as *po'e hula* is to set a precedence, to place agency in our own people, ascribing *mana* to our actions.

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<sup>169</sup> Greig Nakasone, Jaye Nāpua. Interview by 'Ānela U'ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Waiohuli, Kula, Maui, August 20, 2015.

<sup>170</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009) 199.

Looking towards the future, a highly respected musician that has participated in the hula industry in Japan shared:

What I care about is what I can control and I know that when I go up there I appreciate the opportunity to express myself and that people appreciate the opportunity to express myself and that people appreciate it in an economic way but I also know that if that was the only place I was doing craft, I wouldn't feel fulfilled.<sup>171</sup>

Undoubtedly, I appreciate the opportunity we are given to express ourselves, and again, to be appreciated. After all, this is but an extension of what hula has historically done. But I acknowledge, just as this musician does, that this is not enough; that our true value is beyond the Japan industry. "We can never lose the *nani* of special moments. As long as you remember the stories and the connectivity. So I'm not threatened by Japan."<sup>172</sup> Whether this industry fails, or continues to prosper, our role as practitioners will ultimately remain the same. Realizing and capitalizing upon these *piko* is truly up to the individual. And similar to the *mahi 'ai kalo* and his sickle, *po'e hula* will continue to create, to express, to bring joy, and to honor, regardless of the existence of this academic composition.

Through discussion with highly revered *kumu*, both Kumu Hula and those who guide me academically on this thesis committee, I find myself incredibly lucky to have been allowed access to such brilliant *mana 'o*. Their leadership continues to serve as a source of inspiration and driving force to better myself as a *kanaka* navigating this contemporary society. These partnerships are but another testament to the wealth of knowledge residing within our *kumu*, urging us to carefully maintain these relationships. As only appropriate, their foresight brings

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<sup>171</sup> Interview with Hawaiian Musician, Interview by 'Ānela U'ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. 'Iwilei, O'ahu, December 1, 2015.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

this journey to an optimistic close; highlighting the bright future they continue to carve out for the rest of us following in their path.

When I asked Kumu Pueo, after several hours going back and forth discussing disconnects and challenges, two things were clear. The first, that my limited scope as a *haumāna* was but a fragment of the totality of *‘ike* and *mana* of hula; and the second, that the value behind hula was paramount. He reminds us:

What an incredible gift it is to be able to create *mana*, and manipulate it for whatever reasons. Whether it’s for your family or your community. That’s the gift of hula. To be able to manage it that way. And to have a goddess whose aggressive yet tame to our pule? What is your function of your hula?<sup>173</sup>

What an incredible gift indeed! After 18 years of learning under my *kumu*, I was given the opportunity to represent my *hālau* in competition as a solo dancer. At the end of the day, I had to evaluate what was truly important to me; where I found importance as a dancer. And at the end of the day, the greatest reward was bringing pride to my *kumu*, my *hālau*, and most of all, to the lineage of *‘ike* I represent. We all find honor and importance in different places. In a highly structured Hawaiian society, these roles were understood and respected. This thesis acknowledges and respects these differences. Frankly, this collective understanding and respect is what our society needs more of today. Most of all, this thesis humbly aims to make my *kumu* proud - urging us all to aim to be our best selves, to *‘auamo kuleana* in ways that honor our ancestors, clearing the path to a better *lāhui*, a better Hawai‘i. *‘O kō kākou kuleana pa‘a nō ia.*

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<sup>173</sup>Pata, Cody Pueo. Interview by ‘Ānela U‘ilani Tanigawa. Personal Interview. Maunaloa, O‘ahu, October, 3, 2015.

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