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He Kānāwai E Ho'opau I Na Hula Kuolo Hawai'i:
The Political Economy of Banning the Hula

IN 1859 A LAW WAS PASSED in the Hawaiian kingdom that virtually banned the performance of hula. This essay examines why, how, and by whom a legal ban was sought at that particular time. My method for this examination is to read not only the legal documents in the archive but also the newspaper articles and letters concerning hula leading up to the ban, and during the time the ban was in effect, in both the Hawaiian- and English-language newspapers in Honolulu.¹

In 1820 puritanical missionaries arrived, who, we suppose, were shocked by the Kanaka Maoli's (Native Hawaiians') unabashed expressions of sexuality. Hula performance can be viewed as suffused with sexual expression, especially *hula ma'i* (genital-celebrating hula). It is reasonable to suppose that the missionaries sought to silence this rather obvious public demonstration of sexuality on the grounds that it was vulgar, savage, and a violation of their Christian morals. It was no doubt part of the civilizing process.²

After a few years, the missionaries succeeded in converting some powerful *ali'i*, such as Ka'ahumanu. The first ban on hula occurred in about 1830, when Ka'ahumanu was traveling about O'ahu with the missionary Levi Chamberlain and others.

The purpose of this famous circuit was to encourage the people to learn to read and write, to instruct the land agents to take care of the

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teachers and use the resources of the chiefs' lands to maintain the teachers, and not to overburden them.³

During this trip Ka'ahumanu gave several laws verbally, including prohibitions on murder, robbery, theft, adultery, and polygamy. She pronounced Jehovah the one God and forbade the worship of "ancient gods, and all untrue gods." Hula, 'awa drinking, and liquor were all likewise outlawed.⁴ These laws did not remain uncontested, however.

Not many months after Ka'ahumanu's death, Kauikeaouli (Kamehameha III) turned to sinful pleasures. . . . The natural impulses of the old days—prostitution, liquor drinking, the hula—came back. The liquor distilleries were again opened. . . . [O]n Oahu the marriage laws were not observed.⁵

After a time, which included profoundly tragic events such as the death of his sister-wife, Nāhi'ena'ena, and their child, however, King Kamehameha III (Kauikeaouli) was persuaded of the necessity of accommodating Christian mores. At this time, William Richards left

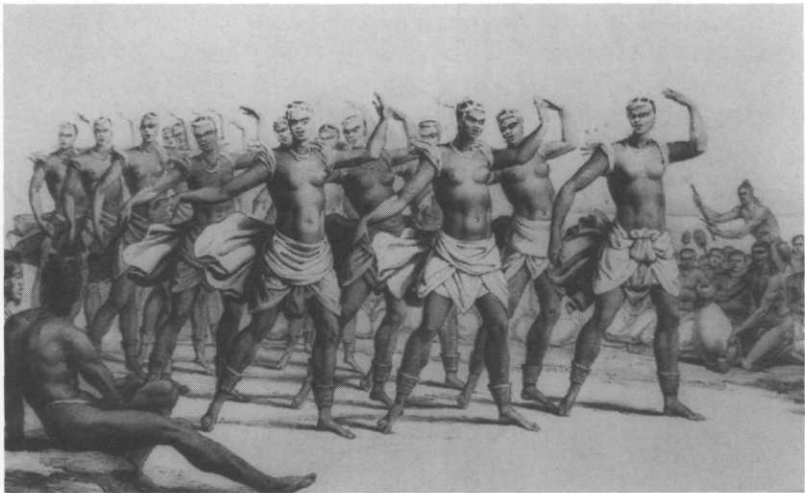


FIG. 1. Female dancers of the Sandwich Islands depicted by Louis Choris, the artist aboard the Russian ship *Rurick*, which visited Hawai'i in 1816. Notice the women's costumes. (Bishop Museum)

the mission to teach political economy to the Hawaiian nobles. He then assisted them in composing a constitution and instituting written laws. Even with this missionary influence, no written law forbidding the practice of hula was enacted during Kamehameha III's reign. He died in 1854.

Why then did the Hawaiian Evangelical Association (HEA) decide to seek legal restrictions on hula in 1857? Did hula suddenly become more widespread with the ascension of King Kamehameha IV (Alexander Liholiho) to the throne? What was the association's objection that it believed could be addressed through legal prohibition? Why not leave this question of morality to their work in their churches? Some answers may be found in an examination of the political economy of the time. When Noel Kent assesses the political and economic changes in this period, he quotes Samuel N. Castle advocating the establishment of sugar plantations "to benefit workless Hawaiians." According to Kent,

The missionaries' . . . response was to expunge those Hawaiian customs that seemed to undermine the grand objective of material accumulation—in effect, most of the indigenous culture: traditional art, language, dance, sexual mores, nudity, etc.⁶

The missionaries and their descendants came to have "an interest in the plantation economy that was emerging as the result of a new land tenure system."⁷ The missionaries benefited from the establishment and growth of the capitalist economy in at least two ways: first, they were appointed or elected to positions of power and influence in the privy council, the cabinet, and the legislature; and, second, they were given large tracts of land, which a number of them converted to sugar plantations. In Kamakau's description, under missionary influence, Hawai'i became something that

could be cut up, salted down, hung out to dry; it filled the big drying frame, the little drying frame until the smell of it was wafted from one end of the islands to the other end. This was the result of the land-giving fishermen of the chief. The hands trembled with eagerness to give with the right hand, with the left hand, until the head nodded, the chin swayed wearily. It was grabbed openly and passed on behind the back. Great lands were theirs [the missionaries'] until they were full of pride;

they built little houses, big houses, fine wooden fences, grand sleeping houses; there was not a grain spared by the plover, the bird from Kahiki. All was included in the saying, "I give my kingdom to God."⁸

The plover (*kōlea*) is a metaphor for those who come to Hawai'i, get rich on its resources, then take their treasures elsewhere, since the plover migrates to Hawai'i nei in the winter, gets fat, and returns to Alaska in the spring to give birth. Kamakau is condemning missionaries who get rich on Hawaiian land at the expense of the people they supposedly came to serve.

By mid-century, the plantations had serious problems with Kanaka laborers. Kent quotes a haole luna "overseer" as saying that the Kanaka are "worthless" as laborers: ". . . lacking what they regarded as an adequate, disciplined, domestic workforce, the planters turned to the systematic importation of foreign labor."⁹ Examination of the discourse preceding and accompanying the legal ban on hula reveals clearly that the exhortations against it were related to the problem of cheap labor needed for the plantations. The puritan work ethic and disdain

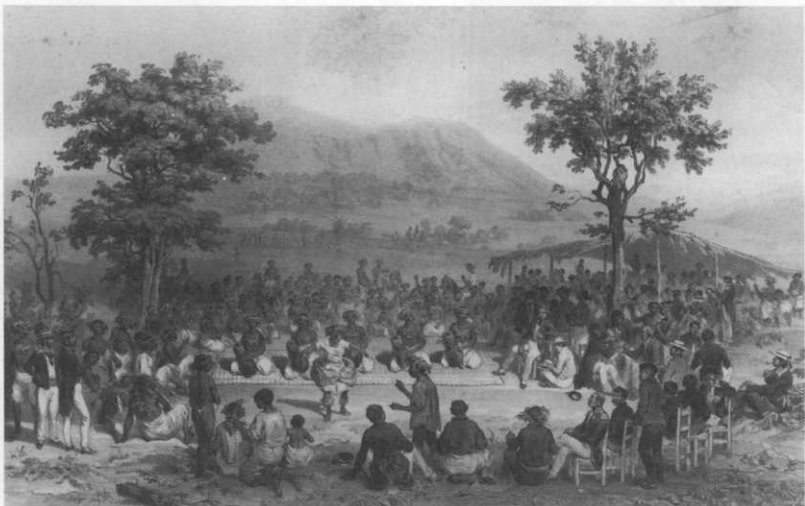


FIG. 2. An artist's rendering of a hula performance presented during the visit of the French ship *Bonite* in 1837 shows the female dancers now covered in European-style clothing, likely indicative of the missionary influence on women's clothes and customs. (Hawaiian Historical Society)

for traditional Kanaka Maoli practices dovetailed seamlessly with the attempts to exploit Kanaka Maoli labor. The “myth of the lazy native,” as Syed Alatas terms it, also serves to “justify compulsion and unjust practices in the mobilization of labor.”¹⁰

According to Kent,

[T]he politics of Hawaii [were] the politics of the rising bourgeoisie of Honolulu, anxious to use government expenditures to further its own capital accumulation. . . . [G]overnment coercion was used to enforce a harsh law-and-order regime on the plantations.¹¹

In other words, people were compelled to work by law. “The ‘Act for the Government of Masters and Servants’ passed in 1850. . . . if [a person] refused to work, he could be committed to prison at hard labor until he consented to serve, and the costs of court action were assessed against him.”¹² Contracts were not limited to imported workers; Kanaka Maoli were also compelled to sign at least one-year contracts. Up until as late as 1874, Kanaka Maoli were still being prosecuted for *haalele hana*, abandoning work.¹³

In 1857, newspaper editorials began calling for a legal ban on hula. For example, on July 2, 1857, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* ran an editorial claiming that hula exhibitions “have been slowly reviving around this city, until they are now to be met with in nearly every village on this island.” The editors were concerned not merely about the shows, “but it is the consequences following them.” They asserted

that natives care little for anything else than witnessing them by day and night. They are in fact becoming a nuisance, fostering indolence and vice among a race which heaven knows is running itself out fast enough, even when held in check with all the restraints which civilization, morality and industry can hold out.

The danger, as represented in this editorial, was that the Kanaka would not work: “so infatuated do males and females become under [the hula] that it will be in vain to urge them to industry or to any efforts to raise them above brutes”¹⁴ It is clear here that the *Advertiser* is concerned about Kanaka Maoli refusing to work.

A week later, a letter protesting the revival of hula in Kaua’i was printed in *Ka Hae Hawaii*, the government paper in the Hawaiian

language. The letter writer, J. W. G. Kaihianu, of Kōloa Komohana, Kaua‘i, objected to the growth of the hula in Hanapēpē. He wrote that the readers should listen to the advice of the *Hae Hawaii* and take up farming. “Perhaps some folks are thinking that performing hula will bring them money, but,” he says, “hula performers (po‘e hula) don’t have money. People who farm or ranch have money. . . . Farming is the best occupation.”¹⁵ Kaihianu was clearly concerned here with work and money, rather than a violation of a sexual code of behavior. Then on October 7, 1857, in *Ka Hae Hawaii*, this announcement appeared among the advertisements:

OLELO HOOLAHA. NO KA MEA, ua oleloia mai wau e na Luna Kanawai o keia Mokupuni, no ka olelo ana a kekahi poe Kumu Hula na‘u i ae aku lakou e Hula, a me ka olelo ana na‘u i haawi aku ka Palapala Ae Hula ia lakou. Nolaila, ke hoike nei ka mea nona ka inoa malalo nei penei. Aohe i haawi ia‘ku kekahi Palapala Ae Hula mai keia Keena Kalaiaina aku i kekahi Kumu Hula; a ke hoakaka hou ia nei, Aohe he mana i waiho ia mai e ko ka Moi mau Kanawai ia‘u, e ae aku i kekahi Aha Hula; koe nae na Hale Hula i oleloia ma ke Kanawai.

L. KAMEHAMEHA

Keena Kalaiaina, October 3, 1857.

Here is my attempt at a close translation:

ANNOUNCEMENT. WHEREAS, I have been told by the Judges of this Island, that certain Kumu Hula have said that it was I who agreed that they could Hula, and also that it was I who gave a document of agreement (license) to Hula to them. Therefore, the undersigned says this: There was not given any document of agreement to Hula from this Interior Ministry office to any Kumu Hula; and it is hereby clarified, there is no power given by our King’s laws to me, to agree to any Hula Assembly; except the Hula Halls specified in the law.

L. KAMEHAMEHA

Office of the Interior, October 3, 1857.

This is a wonderfully ambiguous statement by Prince Lot; since there is no provision in the law that licenses are necessary for hula, he did not and could not have granted any. It could be read as, “I would not grant such licenses,” that is, “I agree that hula should not

be allowed." But he does not say that the *kumu hula* should not perform hula; indeed he might have approved of the hula performance itself, but he could not have issued a license for it because the law made no provision for that kind of license. The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* reacted to the ad like this:

So far as the above notice conveys the impression that no licenses have been issued from the Department of the Interior, for hula, it is doubtless correct. But does Prince Lot, in publishing it, intend to give the idea that the revival of these dance-houses has been without any coun-



FIG. 3. Kamehameha V (Lot Kapuāiwa), as minister of the interior, thwarted a complete ban on hula, reducing the bill to a licensing requirement. As *mō'i* (king), he had hula performed at 'Iolani Palace. (Hawaiian Historical Society)

tenance on his part? We hope not. It was only on the accession to power of his Majesty and his present Ministry, that the revival of hulas was permitted, and it is said that they have been ever since specially patronized by Chiefs high in authority, whose verbal sanction, among the natives and under the old regime, is of equal authority with any written law.¹⁶

The editors of the *Advertiser*, then, claim that the hula revival is sanctioned by Prince Lot and King Kamehameha IV (Alexander Liholiho). They go on to deplore this development:

Now, we suppose that no one objects to the native dances as simple amusement; but when . . . these assemblages, out of town as well as in town, become hotbeds of sensuality and licentiousness . . . and when they become the resort of the idle and vicious, all law and religion must oppose them as productive only of evil.¹⁷

Here the editors' language indicates that they objected on moral grounds but also expresses concern about work: that young men will become idle, and that the dance is "productive only of evil." The editors' paternalistic attitude toward Kanaka Maoli shows up next: "The least that can be said of Hawaiians is, that they are grown-up children, and they require the guardianship of the law." They continue to advocate a legal remedy for this perceived socioeconomic problem. The representation of Hawaiians as children serves, once again, to justify making laws that would be considered oppressive, unacceptably stringent, and infringements of basic rights were they applied to people of European descent. Their last statement was "it only remains now for the Government to issue another notice, discountenancing the hula schools throughout the islands." It is clear here that the *Advertiser* was not concerned about the performance halls and bars but, rather, about the hula schools. This might be related to the forthcoming exemption of Honolulu from the ban. It indicates, perhaps, that they thought it acceptable for sailors and travelers to enjoy hula shows, but the same would be unacceptable for the Kanaka Maoli, who should be working at more productive occupations. The notice from Prince Lot prompts another letter from Kaihianu of Kaua'i, complaining about a hula performance at which audience members were allowed to kiss dancers if they paid a *hapawalu* (12 1/2 cents).¹⁸

This is the beginning of a long-running concern that hula is being performed for money, but also that kisses are given in exchange for money during the performance, as a sort of prostitution. The letter continues with a concern that men, women, and young children were all mixed together in the audience, some of them being members of the church. Kaihianu complains, “aohe mau bakeke wai e ninini iho ai iluna o keia enaena e pio ai la hoi” (there are no buckets of water to pour atop this heat to extinguish it). Then he goes on to suggest that Prince Lot’s aforementioned advertisement might be the bucket needed. He wants to know if this particular hula is not one that is specifically allowed under the law, as written in the ad, whether the king has agreed that country folks may indeed perform hula.¹⁹ The editor replies to Mr. Kaihianu, again using language that refers to work as beneficial and to hula as a form of idleness:

Ina ua ae like kekahi alii, a luna o ke Aupuni paha i ka hula, nona no ia; aole ona mana ma ke Kanawai e ae i ka hula. . . . O ka pono ka mea e kiekie ai ka lahuikanaka, aole nae o ka pono o ka hula e like me keia no ka noho malie, imi ola ma ka hana maikai; hana pololei, hana loko-maikai kekahi i kekahi; olelo me ka oiaio, oia ka pono e pomaikai ai.²⁰

If a certain ali’i who is at the top level of the government, has agreed to the hula, he is responsible; he has no power in the law to agree to the hula. . . . Right behavior (pono) is the thing which uplifts the people (lahuikanaka), but not the pono of the hula like this because it is idleness[;] [people should] seek a living through good work[,] correct work, generous actions towards each other; speak the truth, that is the right behavior (pono) by which to benefit.²¹

Ka Hae Hawaii, while an official government paper, was edited by the Rev. Richard Armstrong, who “arrived from New England with the fifth company of missionaries in 1832.”²² If he composed the above editorial comment (it is unsigned), the meanings of *pono* are likely those associated with Christian ideas of righteousness and morality, rather than the other possibilities, such as order, balance, equity, or life’s necessities. In May, 1858, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* ran another editorial expressing worry over the increase of hula.

It seems that the practice of hulas, or native dances, is becoming more universal every day. To the countenance and support of the government, through the columns of the *Polynesian* . . . is clearly due this ret-

rograde movement of the nation towards heathenism. Under the plea of allowing the native a harmless amusement, long diatribes are written by the government editor upon the benefits of physical education, and the most shameless and licentious conduct is practically licensed by the government itself.²³

When I tried to find the offensive column in the *Polynesian*, all I found was an editorial advocating physical education in the schools and suggesting gym equipment should be a fixture in all the schools. There is no mention at all of hula. Obviously, there is some subtext that the *Advertiser* is aware of or is reading into the *Polynesian* column. The editorial continues to deplore the hula, using a terrifying disease metaphor to make its point:

But the disease is not confined to Honolulu alone—the leprosy is spreading into the remote districts and attacks the previously industrious and moral among the people, inevitably leading to idleness and all its attendant vices. Startling as it may seem, a return to *idolatry* is only a natural result of the *hula*. [Emphasis in the original.]²⁴

Once again, the concern over labor is unmistakable: this problem “attacks the previously industrious” and “inevitably lead[s] to idleness.” Worry over religion is only a secondary concern. The editorial goes on to quote an unnamed correspondent from Waialua (O‘ahu):

This part of Waialua is *lilo* [lost] to the hula. One of the leading deacons in the Protestant Church has now a class of twelve whom he is instructing in the songs and art. He receives \$10 per scholar. Idols, as I am informed by an intelligent native, are worshipped. In one of the houses which are *lilo* to the *hula*, there are three idols, (2 feet high, so says report.) Votive offerings have been made to them and the deacon above mentioned is said to have sacrificed a pig. One of our enterprising natives complains that his children have all left him and gone to the hula. He has three yoke of oxen, &c., and his family leave him to work alone.²⁵

The same tune is played: the hula is adversely affecting the willingness of Kanaka Maoli to work. This is also offered as evidence that natives are returning to pagan religion. At last, the editors call for government action: “We trust that this subject . . . will be taken up by

the Legislature of this year, and prompt and energetic action be had upon it. With all true friends of the Hawaiian race, there can be but one opinion in this matter."²⁶

The Polynesian (May 15, 1858) replied to these accusations, first claiming that the constitution guarantees people the right to obtain happiness, but also freedom from slavery. "[S]lavery is something which does not consist merely in a necessity to cultivate cotton fields but in a restriction of social and domestic rights."²⁷ They go on to accuse the *Advertiser* of elitism, in that it is "anxious to apply a measure to the poorer classes which, if applied to its well-to-do subscribers, it would represent as a vile infringement of the social compact." The *Polynesian* says that the common people cannot afford the

more intellectual recreations which fall to the lot of the wealthy. . . . Yet still they have the right to amuse themselves, and to seek what they call happiness (so the Constitution says), and happiness consists as much as anything in what to the individual taste appears a pleasant occupation of the fleeting hour.²⁸

It goes on to point out that "Those are but a handful, after all, who adhere to the ascetic doctrine that all pleasures are wicked save the acquisition of material wealth." Under the missionary influence of Armstrong, perhaps, the writer cannot leave it at that—it sounds too straightforward a defense of the hula, which is deplored, despite the people's constitutional right to it. In an about face, the article goes on to agree that

[T]he principal objection to the *hula* is that it encourages idleness; the spectators who go to see it too often abandon their work. . . . it creates a furor that leads to a neglect of the more serious concerns of life and consumes the hours that should be devoted to work by those who make the audience.²⁹

By now, of course, we are not at all surprised that the "principal objection to the *hula* is that it encourages idleness" and that even the audience has been taken away from work. The editorial goes on to mourn that the natives are "reverting to an old amusement which is essentially national."³⁰ This is important to note, because, as Kent points out, "The 1850s brought annexationist sentiment to a fever

pitch.”³¹ That fever is no doubt about selling sugar, and too much nationalist sentiment on the part of the Kanaka might jeopardize either a proposed annexation or reciprocity treaty.

In June 1858, a petition from the missionaries (the HEA) appears in the House of Representatives as a request for legislation.³² The HEA asserts that hula is a sin that is causing disturbance in the land (“*kekahi hewa nui e hoohaunaele nei i ka aina*”). The missionaries give a list of reasons that hula should be legally banned. Reasons one and two are that because people become absorbed in hula, many are not working, and that because they are not working, the land becomes unproductive and the people become poor and starving. The third reason is that it encourages *kolohe* (licentiousness?). At the end, they claim that people who go to hula do not go to church, and that hula encourages adultery.³³ An English-language version offers similar reasons. The hula diverts people from “all industrial and intellectual pursuits”; will “lay waste their fields and gardens”; will “interfere materially with the prosperity of the schools”; and will “foster idleness, dissipation, and licentiousness.” Toward the end, they mention the “spiritual welfare” of the people. Once again, a violation of the code against sexual expression is presented only as a secondary concern.³⁴

The charge that hula will “interfere materially with the prosperity of the schools” stems from a worry that hula, as “exercise” will replace the student labor in the schools. At the time, for students “in every native school on these islands . . . physical education is an exercise for at least two hours a day.” But students were not actually exercising, rather they were required “to pay their own way by the sweat of the brow . . . in digging taro or planting potatoes.” The editors of the *Polynesian* objected to this practice; they wrote that they understood “The utile for the school . . . but the *dulce* for the scholar is very problematical.”³⁵ Once again, the concern from the missionary organization was over the possible loss of the students’ labor.

A bill in the House of Representatives was evidently generated as a result of these petitions. The bill was referred to a select committee for revision. The committee appointed was Sheldon, Dowsett, and Kalama. On December 29, 1858, an “An Act to suppress the Hawaiian Hula Kuolo” was presented to the House of Representatives in English and Hawaiian. Rather than the “very great public evil” that hula was described as previously, the new act called hula “a common

nuisance" ("he mea ino wale"), punishable by law.³⁶ On December 31, 1858, the bill passed second reading.³⁷ For some reason not noted in the record, however, it did not pass the full House. A revised bill appeared in January.³⁸ This version, more detailed in its naming of the various hula to be outlawed, passed and crossed over to the House of Nobles. This act would have completely outlawed any hula performance. The Nobles apparently were not happy with this version: "On the motion of Prince Kamehameha [Lot], seconded by Nahāolelua it was resolved to appoint a Select Committee to draft a new bill in relation to Hawaiian Dances. Nominated: Prince Kamehameha, Nahāolelua and Piikoi."³⁹ Judging by the names, this was an all-Kanaka committee. It may have been easier with such a committee to redraft the bill in order to weaken its effect on Kanaka Maoli. Subsequently, a joint committee of the two Houses was formed, but the records do not contain any further notes on the issue.⁴⁰ The Civil Code of 1859 was subsequently published with these new laws:

TO THEATERS, CIRCUSES AND PUBLIC SHOWS SECTION 96. The Minister of the Interior may license any theater, circus, Hawaiian hula, public show or other exhibition, not of an immoral character, to which admission is obtainable by the payment of money . . . provided, however, that not less than ten dollars shall be required for each performance licensed. SECTION 97. The Chief of Police in any town or district where any theater, circus, Hawaiian hula, or other public show shall be exhibited, may regulate the same in such manner as he shall think necessary for the preservation of order, decorum and the public peace and morals. SECTION 98. Any person who shall set up or promote any such theater, circus, Hawaiian hula, show or exhibition . . . without a license first obtained . . . shall be fined a sum not exceeding five hundred dollars, or imprisoned at hard labor not exceeding six months. SECTION 99. No license for a Hawaiian hula shall be granted for any other place than Honolulu, and no license for any theater, circus, or other public show or exhibition, shall be granted for any other place than Honolulu or Lahaina.⁴¹

Now the common nuisance crime that would have been prohibited everywhere by the House of Representatives has been further reduced to the requirement for a license, with a clause that this requirement applies to shows that charge admission. This explains why Barrère says that "While . . . letters imply that there were laws prohibiting [hula]

schools, no such laws have been found in the civil code of the period.”⁴² Even so, the restriction of licenses to Honolulu constitutes a ban on performances everywhere else in the Islands. What is a hula school if it can not perform? Indeed, what is hula if not performance? Furthermore, the *Polynesian*, as we see below, believed the law to be the death of the hula.

Strangled to Death. The great *Hula* question has been laid to rest at last, or rather such is its fate in all probability. . . . It appears that an arrangement was made between the two Committees of Conference by which the immaculate town of Lahaina was saved from the curse of native Hawaiian dances. . . . The hula has very probably received its deathblow by being made the subject of legislation. A license of \$10 for each performance will take the cream off the profits . . . and it seems not unlikely that the art will gradually fall into perfect desuetude. Had hulas been entirely prohibited we doubt if there could have been found constables enough in the whole country to put them down.⁴³

This seems to have put an end to the public discussion of hula for several years. It also indicates the strength of the quiet resistance: were the government to actually put forth a ban, the *Polynesian* expected the people to fight back. In the meantime, resistance to the deliberate destruction of Kanaka traditional culture arose in the form of a newspaper, *Ka Hoku o Ka Pakipika*, which printed traditional *mo'olelo* (stories; histories) and *mele* and was edited by the future king, Kalākaua.⁴⁴

Three years later, in September 1862, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* ran a short item decrying a hula performance in Honolulu:

SHAMEFUL EXHIBITION.—On Saturday evening last, an exhibition of the hula dance was given at the Theater—the first of the kind ever publicly attempted here. . . . the exhibition of the licentious native dance was about as beastly a performance as could be got up. We pity those who are so far lost to reason and humanity as to resort to such public exhibitions for a livelihood, and trust the public will frown upon every attempt to popularize performances which no man or woman can witness without shame, or permit their children to witness.⁴⁵

The following year, the first case against hula practitioners was prosecuted. Eight men and a woman were convicted in Waimea District

Court of performing hula without a license. They were fined three dollars each, or sentenced to two weeks in jail should they fail to pay the fine. The case was appealed to the Fifth Circuit Court (Kaua'i). Judge H. A. Widemann heard testimony in the case. The defendants maintained that the law did not apply to them because "Ua hula makou me ka uku kala ole ia e ka poe makaikai" (We danced without monetary payment from tourists) and "Aole makou i hula ma kahi akea, aka, ma ko makou hale pono'i" (We did not dance in a public place, but in our own home). All the testimony centered on whether or not money changed hands. Widemann apparently interpreted the law as pertaining to paid performances only. He judged for the defendants after testimony by one witness that someone (the police?) had tried to coerce his false testimony against the defendants.⁴⁶

On November 30, 1863, Lot Kapuāiwa took the throne as Kamehameha V.

In 1864, another case was appealed to Judge Widemann. Once again, the question was not whether or not hula was performed but whether or not money was taken for the performance. Several witnesses testified that money was paid; Keliikipi was convicted and fined five dollars, which he paid.⁴⁷

The following year, another case was prosecuted on Kaua'i in Fifth Circuit Court. Four men and a woman were convicted of performing hula; the four men played the *pahu* (drum), and the woman danced. The woman admitted taking money, about two dollars total, but she said, "There was fish and poi, money was given for that, not for the Hula. I did not go there for money, went there so that the Kumu might teach me." Duncan McBryde convicted them all, based on the testimony that they had been paid. Kalauwalu, a man, was fined ten dollars or three months' hard labor; the others, including the woman, were all fined five dollars or one month hard labor, plus court costs.⁴⁸

While the *maka'āinana* in the country districts of Kaua'i were being prosecuted and fined, apparently King Kamehameha V (Lot) was allowing hula under special circumstances at court. In July 1866, *Nupepa Kuokoa* ran an editorial condemning the hula performed as part of the mourning ceremonies for Ke Kamāli'i (Princess) Victoria Kamāmalu Ka'ahumanu. Hula as mourning ceremony, the editorial asserts, is only for pagans, and the *lāhuikanaka*, Hawaiian people, are no longer pagan.⁴⁹ We can see here how traditional Kanaka practices

were despised by the missionary establishment and haole ones elevated as Christian and civilized. We can also see that Lot Kapuāiwa contributed to keeping traditional practices alive in the face of sure condemnation by the haole élite.

It must be remembered that the *Kuokoa*, although a Hawaiian-language newspaper, was published by missionary son Henry M. Whit-



FIG. 4. Ke Kamāli'iwahine (Princess) Victoria Kamāmalu Ka'ahumanu, *kuhina nui* under Kamehameha IV and probable heir to the throne. Although hula was banned at the time of her death in 1866, Kamehameha V (Lot Kapuāiwa) included hula as part of the mourning ceremonies at 'Iolani Palace. (Charles L. Weed, Bishop Museum)

ney, publisher and editor of the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*. As Helen Chapin has noted, Whitney had “love for the Islands and the Hawaiian language; contempt for the Hawaiians.”⁵⁰ She quotes him from the *Advertiser*: “Though inferior in every respect to their European or American brethren, they are not to be . . . wholly despised. . . . They are destined to be laborers in developing the capital of the country”⁵¹ Whitney’s two papers functioned as sites where the discursive power of the European-American élites was exerted against the Kanaka Maoli. These papers had power to widely condemn hula as one facet of a despicable traditional culture and to promote the idea that Kanaka Maoli should labor for the cause of European and American capital.

The banning of hula as I have reconstructed it here began with newspaper editorials excoriating a supposed increase in the public performance of the dance following the death of Kamehameha III (Kauikeaouli). At the same time, sugar was becoming a source of wealth for mostly U.S. entrepreneurs and missionary sons. Sugar plantations require steady and cheap labor. The puritan values of hard work, chastity, and wealth as a sign of spiritual well-being were promoted in discourse whose aim was to persuade the Kanaka Maoli to work and to thereby enrich the missionaries cum planters. The simultaneous representation of all things Kanaka as belonging to a pagan, unenlightened past and the representation of Kanaka as lazy and pleasure-seeking worked to rationalize harsh and unjust legal practices that forced Kanaka Maoli (along with immigrants) to labor on the plantations.

The crown both resisted and assisted in the ban—the editorials in the *Polynesian* are indicative of the ambivalence of King Kamehameha V and his court. The crown was inferior, however, in the eyes of the Euro-Americans because it was Kanaka. So, while hula might be performed for so important an occasion as the mourning of Ke Kamāli’i Kamāmalu, the court was not held in high enough esteem to prevent a holier-than-thou critique from being published. Although the Euro-Americans were not yet formally holding political power, they were asserting a moral and cultural superiority through the pages of the newspapers, as well as through the churches, mission societies, schools, and, most strongly, through economic means. The future king, Kalākaua, was, at the same time, already under attack for pro-

moting traditional culture in his newspaper. Eventually, he was to lose his powers to these same forces.

The banning of hula had as much or more to do with establishing colonial capitalism, and thus with establishing control over the labor of the Kanaka Maoli, as with religion and the repression of sexuality. Power was being exerted in a multiplicity of ways by a number of different agents. The sugar planters were a formidable force in the political economy of the time; they nearly forced annexation to the United States at this time. The Hawaiian Evangelical Association was another force: a voice that provided a moral argument against the hula that the *ali'i* found impossible to counter verbally (at least publicly). The newspapers of the haole élite, both controlled or influenced by the missionary establishment, demanded that the legislature effect a ban, and the government papers protested but little. The police were willing to engage in surveillance, simultaneously in the service of repressive power and for their own enjoyment.⁵² At the same time, commercial establishments exerted their power to exempt themselves from the ban. All of these forces to a greater or lesser extent contributed to the erosion of traditional Kanaka culture that facilitated the economic and political colonization of Hawai'i.

When the licensing law went into effect, both the minister of the interior and the attorney general were haole élites who were willing to enforce it. It seems, though, judging by the scarcity of cases prosecuted, that either the regional judges were not or the police were not making many arrests. Besides the cases mentioned above, only three other cases were found during a search of all criminal cases from 1843 to 1893: one on Kaua'i in which the accused were cleared; one in Puna, Hawai'i, in which a man was convicted of "hula, olioli, mele a me na hana lealea e ae i ka la Sabati" (hula, chant, song, and other amusements on the Sabbath); and the last in North Kohala, Hawai'i, in which a woman was sentenced to ten dollars or two months' hard labor in jail.⁵³

In the Session Laws of 1870, the restriction of licenses to Honolulu was repealed. Hula continued to be performed at the palace from time to time. Editorials against the hula continued to run in the newspapers and establishment press until as late as 1918.⁵⁴

NOTES

- ¹ This method was inspired by the work of Michel Foucault, particularly in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).
- ² For an excellent discussion of the role of “civilizing” in the colonization of Hawai‘i, see Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i: The Cultural Power of Law* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000).
- ³ Samuel M. Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*, rev. ed. (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools P, 1992) 298.
- ⁴ Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs* 298–99.
- ⁵ Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs* 334–35.
- ⁶ Noel J. Kent, *Hawaii: Islands Under the Influence* (Honolulu: U of Hawai‘i P, 1993) 28.
- ⁷ Kent, *Hawaii* 29.
- ⁸ Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs* 426.
- ⁹ Kent, *Hawaii* 39.
- ¹⁰ Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (Forest Grove, Oregon: Frank Cass, 1977) 2.
- ¹¹ Kent, *Hawaii* 43–44.
- ¹² Ralph Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom 1854–187: Twenty Critical Years*, (Honolulu: U of Hawai‘i P, 1953) 185.
- ¹³ Records of the Third Circuit Court, Criminal Cases, Case no. 940, 1874.
- ¹⁴ “Hulahulas,” editorial, *PCA* July 2, 1857.
- ¹⁵ J. W. G. Kaihianu, “No ka Hula ma Hanapepe, Kauai,” *Ka Hae Hawaii* Aug. 5, 1857.
- ¹⁶ “Hulas, or Native Dances,” editorial, *PCA* Oct. 15, 1857.
- ¹⁷ *PCA* Oct. 15, 1857.
- ¹⁸ J. W. G. Kaihianu, “Hula ma Kauai,” *Ka Hae Hawaii* Feb. 24, 1858.
- ¹⁹ Kaihianu, “Hula ma Kauai.”
- ²⁰ Untitled editorial, *Ka Hae Hawaii* Feb. 24, 1858.
- ²¹ Untitled editorial, *Ka Hae Hawaii* Feb. 24, 1858.
- ²² Helen Geracimos Chapin, *Shaping History: The Role of Newspapers in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: U of Hawai‘i P) 29.
- ²³ *PCA* May 13, 1858.
- ²⁴ *PCA* May 13, 1858.
- ²⁵ *PCA* May 13, 1858.
- ²⁶ *PCA* May 13, 1858.
- ²⁷ Untitled editorial, *The Polynesian* May 15, 1858.
- ²⁸ *The Polynesian* May 15, 1858.
- ²⁹ *The Polynesian* May 15, 1858.
- ³⁰ *The Polynesian* May 15, 1858.

- ³¹ Kent, *Hawaii* 41.
- ³² The following members of the HEA signed the petition: A. Thurston, S. N. Castle, D. Dole, W. P. Alexander, C. B. Andrews, D. Baldwin, Samuel C. Damon, Titus Coan, D. B. Lyman, John D. Paris, John F. Pogue, B. W. Parker, A. Bishop, W. S. Turner, L. Smith, W. A. Spooner, J. S. Emerson, and E. W. Clark.
- ³³ House of Representatives 1858.
- ³⁴ House of Representatives 1858.
- ³⁵ *Polynesian* May 1, 1858.
- ³⁶ House of Representatives 1858.
- ³⁷ House of Representatives 1858.
- ³⁸ House of Representatives 1858.
- ³⁹ House of Nobles, Jan. 6, 1859, 141.
- ⁴⁰ House of Nobles, Jan. 8, 1859; House of Representatives, Jan. 7, 1859, 145–46.
- ⁴¹ Hawai'i, *Civil Code* (Honolulu: Kingdom of Hawai'i, 1859) 26.
- ⁴² Dorothy B. Barrère, Mary Kawena Pukui, and Marion Kelly, *Hula: Historical Perspectives* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum, 1980) 1.
- ⁴³ *Polynesian* Apr. 4, 1859.
- ⁴⁴ See Noenoe K. Silva, "Ke Kū'ē Kūpa'a Loa Nei Mākou: Kanaka Maoli Resistance to Colonization" (Ph.D. diss., U of Hawai'i, 1999).
- ⁴⁵ *PCA* Sept. 25, 1862.
- ⁴⁶ Records of the Fifth Circuit Court, Criminal Cases, Case no. 334, 1863.
- ⁴⁷ Fifth Circuit, Case no. 361, 1864.
- ⁴⁸ Fifth Circuit, Case no. 412, 1866.
- ⁴⁹ Untitled editorial, *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* July 7, 1866.
- ⁵⁰ Chapin, *Shaping History* 57.
- ⁵¹ Chapin, *Shaping History* 57.
- ⁵² Hawai'i, Interior Department Files, AH.
- ⁵³ Fifth Circuit, Case no. 433, 1867; Third Circuit, Case no. 920, 1868; Third Circuit, Case no. 95, 1871.
- ⁵⁴ Thomas G. Thrum, "Must We Countenance the Hula," *HAA* 1918 (Honolulu: Thomas G. Thrum, 1917).