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Aloha Japan: Staging Hawaiian Culture

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Staging Hawaiian Culture

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Contents

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Figures

Introduction
Let's Talk Story

In 2017, there were an estimated two million performers of the Hawaiian dance hula in Japan (Flannary 2019). Since the early 1900s, there has been a constant interest in Hawaiian culture through the performance of hula, music, textiles, and other forms of cultural expression. Within the context of Japan, Hawai‘i does not always represent its physical location, rather it exists in its products and cultural expressions. Despite a global pandemic in 2020 and a subsequent travel ban, interest in Hawaiian culture remained through movies, festivals, and dance contests.[1] Performers of Hawaiian culture in Japan, regardless of nationality or ethnicity, produce meanings of Hawaiian indigeneity in a transnational context. These performances create the opportunity to reiterate harmful stereotypes like that of “the lazy native” and a “submissive” and “sexy hula girl” all of which continue to paint Hawai‘i as a playground for economic proliferation. To understand how Hawaiian culture is imagined in Japan, I looked at a movie, guidebook, tourism campaign, and YouTube channel, and “talk story” with my friend who is interested in learning hula.

As a young, mixed, Native Hawaiian scholar attending school in the continental United States, I am passionate about understanding images associated with Hawai‘i and how these images become a barometer to determine how Hawaiian[2] or local a person is. Native cultural studies, at its core, are based on identity, and “our attachments to culture are indications of our identity as significant as ancestry” (Osorio 2001). Growing up in a space dedicated to marketing Hawaiian culture both in the islands and at trade shows on the west coast of the United States I

[1] As of February 2023, tourism to Hawai‘i from the Japanese community is still down 77.9% from pre-pandemic records with 26,650, rivaling 2019’s 120,653 (HTA Monthly Visitor Statistics).

[2] Throughout this essay, I use the term ‘Native Hawaiian’ and ‘Hawaiian’ interchangeably, in doing so, I am referring to the Native people of Hawai’i

have witnessed firsthand, efforts to capitalize on Hawaiian identity from both those from the community and not. For some it is a form of cultural survival and a way to connect with diasporic Hawaiians, simulating a feeling of ʻohana or family. For those who lack an understanding of the importance of culture, history is ignored and stereotypes are reproduced for a chance of self-promotion, persuading consumers that Hawaiʻi is a paradise, one that consumers should hope to visit or retire to. But, Hawaiʻi has become a paradise that locals are constantly pushed out of because of housing prices, cost of living, and lack of career opportunities (Akina and Miro 2021). Hawaiian culture and by extension hula in Japan is praised by our local community for being innovative and celebrated by numerous delegations because of ancestral and sister-city relations.[3] I am interested in Hawaiian culture and its relationship to Japan because of the narratives that are produced for this audience, and what happens when it is performed mainly by Japanese people.

Hawaiian culture in Japan has faced three major waves of interest, and I would now argue a fourth because of the post-international travel ban of 2020. The first wave of interest occurred in the 1930s. During this period, performers coming from Hawaiʻi to Japan reinforced more general images of the United States. Musically, the United States at this time was represented through the music of Vaudeville and Tin Pan Alley[4] that portrayed Hawaiian music with the ʻukulele, slack key guitar, and singing in a falsetto (Lewis 1984; Yano 2015). Performers from

[3] As of right now there are 19 sister-city partnerships between cities in the state of Hawaiʻi and Japan

[4] Between 1915-1920 Hula was included in Vaudeville acts and were considered to be overtly sexual and kitschy (Connell and Gibson 2008, 51-75; Lewis 1984, 38-52)

Hawai‘i, both Native Hawaiian[5] and Japanese-Americans[6] alike, reproduced these sounds of Hawai‘i for Japanese audiences during this time period. The next wave of interest came after World War II when the sounds of Hawaiian music reminded communities of a pre-war era.[7] Hawaiian music became its own genre as *Hawaian Kayo* played in *Ongaku Kissa* or music tearooms and Japanese theaters (Kurokawa 2004). A third wave of interest occurred in the 1980s, when hula, an indigenous form of Hawaiian dance, was taught in recreational centers. It was introduced especially for women in their 50s and 60s as it offered a space to socialize, it met their needs for low-impact physical exercise, nostalgic Hawaiian music, and "colorful Hawaiian costumes in which older students might feel young again" (Kurokawa 2004). At the same time, Hawai‘i became an affordable tourist destination because of the bubble economy in the 1990s. Most recently, in a fourth wave of interest, Japanese people have opened up businesses in Japan that have a "Hawaiian-feel" to them through restaurants that serve plate-lunches, Hawaiian dance studios, clothing, and Hawaiian heirloom jewelry stores.

Given this history of Hawaiian culture in Japan, I analyze contemporary portrayals of Hawai‘i through two parts Chapter One I am Here! Imagining Hawai‘i in Japan is a play on the term "Wish you were here!" Typically seen on postcards, this phrase invokes a desire to share an experience that the recipient cannot be a part of. Postcards are authenticators, because the only way for the sender to obtain one, they must be in the location and in person (Linnekin 1997,

[5] The first documented Native Hawaiian to perform Hawaiian music in Japan was Ernest Kaai. His career began in Waikīkī, and in 1927 he left for the Japanese music scene (Fellezs 2019, 122).

[6] Two big groups at this time are accredited to beginning Japanese interest in Hawaiian music, both of whom are Japanese-American. The Haida Brothers began a Hawaiian glee club and Buckie Shirakata and his Aloha Hawaiians who won a trip to Japan to practice music (Yano 2015, 324).

[7] During World War II and late 1930s -1944, there was a ban on "enemy music." This was considered to be any music that did not come from Japan and this ban was heavily enforced on music that came from America or England (Kurokawa 2004). Through this ban and the nation of Japan's stance on only featuring patriotic songs, Hawaiian music was interpreted as pre-war music, creating a sense of it being reminiscent of an easy-going time.

470). In a similar way, the term “I am here!” represents the way images of Hawaii have been brought back and are created in Japan by non-Native Hawaiians to simulate Hawaiian culture through a film, guidebook, and tourism campaign.

Chapter Two, Watashi ni Totte, Understanding Hawaii Through Personal Experience represents the way Hawai‘i has been conceptualized for two people- my friend T-chan and Kapuanani Yumiko Greene the host of a YouTube channel in Hawai‘i about hula and Hawaiian culture. The term ‘watashi ni totte’ is an expression that can be translated as ‘to me’ indicating one's own opinion. In the same way, these two women have their own unique and interesting experiences of Hawaiian culture that share a similar feeling of familial relationships.

Hawaiian cultural expression in Japan is a form of cultural continuity, however, the meanings of being Native Hawaiian and the ideologies associated with performance differ depending on person. This thesis is not a rant about cultural appropriation versus appreciation, but an observation on how Hawaiian culture has been marketed to Japanese communities for the past ten years. I am interested in the Japanese ideologies of Hawaiian culture as expressed through hula and how Japanese interest has created a space for Hawaiian cultural practices outside of the geographic location of the Hawaiian islands, leading to transnational performance and belonging.

Chapter 1
I am Here! Imaging Hawai‘i in Japan!

During the Covid-19 pandemic between April 2020 and February 2022, international travel between Japan and the rest of the world was heavily restricted. This resulted in inaccessibility for those interested in visiting Japan and those from other countries. Within the guidebook *Aruco Tokyo de Tanoshimu Hawai*, the 2006 Japanese film *Fura Gāru*, and seminars hosted by the Hawai‘i Tourism Agency (HTA), viewers are able to access an idea of Hawai‘i without having to leave Japan. In both the film and guidebook, produced by Japanese people for a Japanese audience, Hawai‘i becomes a location of desire. Hawai‘i and by extension, hula can then be used as a form of escapism from daily life that is focused on relaxation and lightness. However, when Hawaiian culture is expressed by HTA, the message subtly changes to one of caring for the land or mālama.

Let’s Have Fun In Tokyo

Travel magazines and guidebooks play a large role in determining community interest in a location, promoting induced images of sites that come from promotions that will benefit the tourism industry (Nishimura, Siegenthaler). Within the context of Japan, the guidebook is heavily used as “Japanese tourists are characterized by a tendency to visit only “well-known ‘culturally approved’ attractions,” such as those featured in guidebooks or sanctioned by peer-group members (Sigenthaler, Graburn 1995:48).

As a publishing agency- *Chikyu no Arukikata*[8] has a variety of publications to help their readers access secret[9] or authentic spots.[10]One of their largest labels or series is called *Aruco*

[8] How to walk the earth

[9] ヒミツにしておきたかったマル秘

[10] BRAND NEW HAWAII リアルな最新ハワイガイド

which is marketed to women who are interested in traveling abroad or domestically. Beginning in 2021, during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic, when international travel was banned, *Aruco,* a guidebook publisher released a series of travel guides focused on finding ways to have an international experience while in Tokyo. A few examples of locations include the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Korea, France, Taiwan, Asia, Italy and Spain, and Hawai‘i.

On February 17, 2022, a 128-page guide called *Aruco Tokyo de Tanoshimu Hawai* was released. The cover is adorned with commodities that represent an idea of Hawaiian culture from spam musubis, mai tais, pancakes, orchids, and stand-up paddle boards. It also boasts 3 points that are covered in the guidebook: “Is this Waikiki? 3 nights/5-day food tours," hula, yoga, lei, ukulele, quilt, famous lessons,” and “miscellaneous goods and cosmetics to make you say aloha every day.” The guidebook suggests that readers use this book when they feel like all of the good places have been taken, or when they need to find something on their day off (地球の歩き方編集室 2022, 2). This guidebook is set up into seven sections ranging from food, beauty, and shopping, with maps of the Kanto region so readers can easily navigate the area. Within each chapter, the guidebook features staff recommendations, information to make readers question their knowledge about Hawaiian culture, stories from women who like to travel, and tips to make the reader's trip smoother. In *Aruco Tokyo de Tanoshimu Hawai, w*hen the physicality of Hawai‘i is removed, Hawaiian culture is represented by its proximity to the United States of America.

Proximity to America

In *Aruco’s* series of international experiences to take place in Japan, countries like the United Kingdom, Italy, and Spain are mentioned, the United States as a country is not mentioned, instead, Hawai‘i takes its place. Despite featuring a historical section of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Hawai‘i is depicted as a ‘stand-in’ for the U.S. They iterate a narrative that Hawai‘i is

no longer its own country with a diverse culture and history with Japan as a sovereign nation, rather, the monarchy and by extension Hawaiian indigeneity is relegated to a quiz question as seen on page 86. As part of a United States formation, Hawai‘i is exploited as a unique extension of American culture rather than interpreted as its own nation.

Hawai‘i’s relationship with the United States is most noticeable in its relation to food that “Americans adore.” Featured in the guidebook are descriptions like “foods that locals love[11]”, the American flag, and red white, and blue lettering, this page highlights Taco Bell, Cinnabon, and Panda Express, all of them being brands started in the United States. Then on pages 68 and 69, *Aruco* dedicates a section to shopping at Costco, a wholesale company, specializing in high-quality retail products for its consumers. Costco originally began in 1983 and has expanded globally to eight other countries. This section is dedicated to food and products that remind the *Aruco* staff most of Hawai‘i. These include Canadian honey, chocolate syrup, salmon poke, Ziploc bags, and garlic. The guidebook ironically says more about the history of Costco than it does Hawai‘i. By using brands like Costco and Taco Bell, all of which are not unique to Hawai‘i, the idea of what is Hawai‘i and what is a part of Hawaiian culture becomes confusing to the consumer. When Hawai‘i becomes a stand-in for America, and in representations that emphasize Hawai‘i’s American-ness, indigeneity tends to be forgotten in place for ‘regional diversity.’

[11] ロコの大好き物

Fig. 1 Pineapple Paradise, a twofold about products that have a pineapple motif on them (地球の歩き方編集室 2022, 58-59)

On pages 58 and 59 we are introduced to “pineapple paradise” a section dedicated to products ranging from tote bags, home decor, accessories, instruments, and scents, all of which remind the guidebook staff of Hawai‘i. The reader is greeted with a bright yellow page of how the pineapple is a motif of paradise. However, to those that are knowledgeable about Hawaiian history, it's exactly the opposite. The fruit represents the dark history of the Hawaiian kingdom and migrant labor exploitation. In the late 1880s, White businessmen “launched a company and empire of pineapples that, by affecting modernity, infiltrated the markets and homes of America’s heartland from the nation’s Hawaiian colony” (Okihiro 2009, 3). Pineapples are problematic because of what it represents, however, because of the fruit’s diplomacy as being

interpreted as “Hawaiian " it is typically used in ad campaigns and ways to picture Hawai‘i from afar.

Fig. 2 Brush Up, a subsection page in the guidebook *Tokyo de Tanoshimu Hawai*(地球の歩き方編集室 2022, 71)

On page 71, readers are encouraged to “brush up” on their daily lives by using a local girl narrative and is a way to differentiate popular conceptions of Hawai‘i from more general perceptions of “the United States.” This section is described “For girls who are raised in Hawai‘i, in everyday life they use traditional culture, naturally-sourced cosmetics, yoga, and music to prepare their mind and body to relax. This natural form can also occur in Tokyo, if she imitates

(being a local girl) it will improve her life [12](地球の歩き方編集室 2022,71). This form of being a local girl comes from practicing hula, using natural cosmetics, partaking in lomi lomi massages, and knowing the most about Hawai‘i and its culture. By using historical images of Hawaiian culture cultivated for Japanese audiences, Hawai‘i and its culture remains in the context of America, colonialism, and settler colonialism.

In this guide, the “local girl” and ways to authentically become one reflects the colonial legacy of performing richly imagined stereotypes of Hawaiian culture. According to this chapter, one can become a “local girl” by participating in yoga, taking hula dances, listening to and watching music and television that takes place in Hawai‘i, and taking quizzes to test their knowledge. By creating quizzes for Japanese readers, and removing Native Hawaiians from depictions of hula, being a “local girl” means being someone who is invested in testing their acquired knowledge about the area, despite not being raised in the culture. By establishing boundaries of who is considered “local” through markers of taking part in hula classes, or listening to Hawaiian music, the authors of the guidebook contribute to a double-binding pressure felt in Indigenous communities. This means that no matter what a person does to be seen as authentically Indigenous, they can’t win because the more their identity is globalized, the more its authenticity is questioned (Ludlow and others 2016). Being a “local girl” in this guidebook means finding ways to stake a claim in Hawaiian culture, however testing how much one is able to become Hawaiian, contributes to a process of removing Indigenous claims of being Hawaiian.

In *Aruco*, Hawai‘i is a scaled-down version of the United States, only using images of Hawai‘i when regional diversity is needed to explain how Hawaiian culture offers a sense of

[12] ハワイで育ったロコガールは、日常にある伝統文化や 天然由来成分のコスメで心身を整え、ときにはヨガや音楽で リラックス。 そんな自然体の暮らしを東京でもマネしてみたら ナチュラルに磨かれた自分にきっと出会える

paradise. Placing Hawaiian culture in broader narratives about America frustrates Native Hawaiians because it reflects how Hawaiian culture has been persistently co-opted and commodified. When Hawaiian culture is performed for non-Native audiences, the meaning of the performance is shaped by the desires of the target audience. Because of ties to a large number of Japanese businesses or large American corporations, those who profit from the performance are outside of the Native Hawaiian community. This is yet another example of economic dominance that contributes to Native Hawaiians' lack of economic mobility.

Hula Girls and Coal Mines

Fura Gāru is a Japanese film created in 2006, the movie is a dramatic retelling of the creation of the Joban Hawaiian center in Iwaki City, Fukushima prefecture, in 1965. It features a soundtrack by Okinawan-American‘ukulele artist Jake Shimabukuro, crew members who spent three months learning hula and the titular song of the film *Niji Wo.* The film won numerous awards at the 2007 Japanese Academy Awards and was Japan's entry for the 79th annual Academy Awards.

The plot of the Hula Girls movie dramatically describes how Hawaiian culture, through hula, can "save" a town from economic despair. Prior to 1965, the main export of Iwaki City was coal, however, as oil began to take its place, communal anxieties grew because of labor shortages and layoffs. As a response, the director of the mines, Mr. Yoshimoto informs the community that instead of focusing on revitalizing coal, they plan on opening a 'Hawaiian center' with a dance troupe specializing in hula. At first community members are apprehensive, questioning why they would use something so sexually explicit like hula to save them from economic despair. Then Ms. Hirayama, a professional hula dancer from Tokyo is hired and brought to Iwaki to teach women in the town how to dance. Originally, only four women join the dancing troupe daughters

of coal miners, however, after community members hear of how much fun these women are having while learning how to dance, more women join.

While practicing hula, troupe members face their own personal issues. A mother and brother of a girl in the dance troupe disapprove of her practicing hula, leading to her being kicked out of her house for two weeks, another's father dies tragically in a coal mine, while another is forced to retire from dancing because of her father's thoughts about the dance. Ms.Hirayama- the professional hula dancer has a run-in with a loan shark and succumbs to alcohol to deal with her problems. As the women continue to practice hula, their problems are addressed or solved, when hula is used for economic proliferation. For example, the family of the girl who was kicked out begins to accept her only when her brother realizes that change in Iwaki is inevitable- as his friends from the coal mines begin to work at the Hawaiian Center. In addition, Ms. Hirayama's problems are addressed when the director of the mines- Mr. Yoshimoto informs her of the importance of her position in the creation of the Hawaiian Center and how much her support means to her students. On a larger scale, community members place value on these performances only when they realize that it generates income for their community. The film then concludes with a publicity tour across the Tohoku region and the grand opening of the Hawaiian center with the hula girls performing. In the film, when the location of Hawai‘i is removed, hula becomes a product for economic proliferation based on sexualization that disregards the dance as a Hawaiian cultural practice.

Sexualizing Hawai‘i

In *Fura Gāru*, hula is depicted as a dance form that is the shaking of bums and stripping. When the dance was first introduced to women in Iwaki City, Mr.Yoshimoto showed a video recording of a woman dancing in a yellow cellophane skirt, a teal bikini top, and a red flower lei.

Various women from the crowd then yelp “I can’t shake my bum like that” or “No way am I getting naked” (9:00-9:09). Although Mr. Yoshimoto tries to console these women and make them understand hula is not sexual nature, all but two women leave. Similarly, when a hula dancer’s mother discovers that her daughter is rehearsing, she finds Ms. Hirayama and confronts her. Yelling at the hula teacher, “We don’t have time to shake our bums and spread our legs like whores” (26:38). Lastly, when the hula troupe enters the stage, they are greeted with hoots and hollers, one of which is translated as “enough dancing, now strip” (1:09:25). All three instances of hula are described as explicit in nature and echo historical sentiments around the practice from Japanese audiences.

The initial reaction of the women and girls in Iwaki City was of shock, hula seemed to be sexual in nature because of stereotyped assumptions that hula was a sexualized practice. In the 1920s, tourism became a major industry in Hawai‘i because of an increase in public funding for tourism promotion, standing as a well-known destination for cruise ships, and the popularity of “Aloha Festivals” that was promoted to introduce Hawaiian culture to the larger world (Mak 2015). In *Fura Gāru,* hula, and its sexualization, is inherited from mindsets held in the 1920s. For instance, Yaguchi and Yoshihara provide one account of a Japanese businessman writing a guidebook for others in Japan:

> The best part of the trip, however, was observing *"furafura* [hula hula]," a **"primitive dance"** in which "several girls showed the beauty of their sensuous bodies." This was not an opportunity to be missed. But the book quickly cautioned the reader "not to take his family along" because **it was a sexually explicit, titillating performance inappropriate for women and minors…Hawai'i itself was constructed as a sensuous and exotic woman offering deviant sexuality**. The use of the word "primitive," of course, also illustrates that the author—and presumably the Japanese reader and traveler—considered Hawaiians to be less civilized than themselves (Yaguchi and Yoshihara 2004, 83; emphasis added).

The film expresses various sentiments shared by this quote. For example, the fear of women having to show the “beauty of their sensuous body” is what encourages many of the women in

the film to reject learning hula. Hula is deemed as a sexual performance that is inappropriate for women and children, this is expressed through one of the mother's disapproval and verbal attack on the teacher- Ms.Hirayama. The gaze behind the performance as one dominantly for men is expressed through the first performance of the hula girls when the audience members were seen as calling for the performers to strip. In this film, the initial reaction from Japanese women and girls were of shock because of stereotypes that felt hula was sexual from forty years ago (the movie takes place in 1965 and the book was written in the 1920s). It disregards hula as an innovative Hawaiian cultural practice and instead portrays it as it was portrayed 40 years earlier: a practice that is by default sexualized.

In both the text and movie, Hawai‘i becomes an idea that reflects historical sentiments about Hawaiian culture. *Tokyo de Tanoshimu Hawai* expresses a variety of aesthetics of Hawai‘i but most importantly it focuses on Hawai‘i as an extension of the United States through the usage of regional diversity. In *Fura Gāru,* hula is imagined as a practice that is sexualized but offers a source of emotional and economic healing. What is ironic about this film is that hula can save a town from economic despair. When it comes to real, Native Hawaiians, hula can't remedy economic despair, because Native Hawaiians are either not consulted, have no ability to speak Japanese, or have had their businesses taken over by Japanese artists. The text and movie generate convoluted ideas about Hawai‘i that erase its dynamic history and focus instead on economic opportunities. Together, both the film and guidebook become visual representations of ideas challenging what it means for something to be "Hawaiian."

Revisioning Tourism in Hawai‘i

In both *Aruco* and *Fura Gāru,* there were points in time when Hawaiian culture, indigeneity, and the Hawaiian experience could have been addressed. Rather, both forms of

media ignore contemporary portrayals of culture for a focus on historical stereotypes of Hawai‘i that are damaging to indigenous survival. In 2015, the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority or HTA released a global campaign for a program named *Mālama Hawai‘i* that advocates for responsible tourism to the state of Hawai‘i. In the context of Japan, *Mālama Hawai‘i* represents a way to show sympathy and respect.[13]HTA claims that many steps have been taken in order to protect “Hawai‘i’s traditional culture” and the “beautiful natural environment for tens and hundreds of years”[14](Hawai‘i Tourism Japan and HIS 2022). Some of these steps towards protection include a collaboration with Gakken, a Japanese publishing company, to create comic books about Hawaiian culture for Japanese youth. HTA capitalizes on Japan’s current interest in sustainable goals (SDGs) to raise awareness about Hawai‘i’s own goals, and they produce webinars like Hawaiian language lessons and how to help create sustainable coastlines for those interested in the idea and concept of Hawai‘i while in Japan (Takahata 2022). Below, I offer ways in which *Aruco* and *Fura Gāru* could have similarly instituted and advocated for sympathetic and responsible displays of Hawaiian culture that would benefit the Hawaiian community.

In *Aruco*, mālama could have been explored through caring for lands and communities in Japan. First, in Hawaiian, the word for wealth- *waiwai* and water-*wai,* are closely related because of Native Hawaiians' relationship to the island. As Japan is also an island community, what would have been interesting to see in this guidebook are ways to give back to the land in regard to Hawaiian ideologies. For example, it shares ways to get involved in beach cleanups or caring for the environment through reusing products. Next, something interesting that *Tokyo de Tanoshimu Hawai* does is that it creates spaces for Hawai‘i-communities to be formed. The

[13] 思いやり

[14] 何十年後も、何百年後もハワイが待つ素晴らしい伝統文化や美しい自然環境を守っていくために、ハワイ州では様々な取り組みが言われています。

guidebook provides a link to a site by the tourism company, H.I.S., that documents a majority of Japan-based hula halaus by location and age. This ability to find others interested in Hawaiian culture contributes to an aesthetic of survival. Because of globalization, there is a constant exchangement of goods and ideas, and one reaction to this is through Japanese people practicing hula, which provides an audience and keeps the idea of Hawai‘i alive. However, presence is not enough because “survivance is the continuation of stories, not a mere reaction” (Vizenor 2009, 85). If there was a Native Hawaiian voice present in the guidebook, rather than just Japanese people explaining different meanings of Hawaiian cultural forms, it would continue the narrative of how hula is a cultural practice, rather than just a phenomenon that occurs in Japan.

In *Fura Gāru*, mālama could have been expressed stronger in the relationship between Hawaiian practitioners. In interviews, the film’s producers boast about their relationship with a Hawaiian hula teacher who taught the actresses how to dance. Although the teacher is seen on the second DVD explaining how the movie was made, she does not appear in the film. Her appearance in the film would have reminded viewers that this dance is originally a cultural practice for Native Hawaiians. Within the film, the script often expressed how hula was originally perceived to be sexual in nature, which was one of the only reasons why the community was disappointed with the girls who chose to dance. Rather than perpetuating this idea of hula and its sexual connotations, script writers should have done a better job explaining community resentment of hula being portrayed as an overtly sexual dance. Lastly, the visual representation of hula itself was heavily distorted. For example, while practicing, the lead teacher would wear ballet shoes and spin around in circles and during the final performance, the girls danced in outfits made for ‘Ōte‘a, a style of dance from Tahiti. However, if you were to watch

any performance of hula, not one performer wears ballet shoes or Tahitan regalia as they do in the film. Mālama in the context of *Fura Gāru* is needed in the form of cultural understanding.

These practices are a great way to decolonize the way Hawai‘i is thought about for Japanese audiences. HTA Japan provides experiences for Japanese audiences that reflect a picturesque experience full of care and amazement for this community. However, the fact is that this knowledge about the Hawaiian community, which is shared through seminars and books that are produced for Japanese audiences, is not similarly shared with Native Hawaiians both in the islands and in the diaspora. This idea of Hawai‘i interpreted for Japanese audiences is one constructed by an agency that does not reciprocate by sharing these images with the community it is representing, which raises an important question: where does this idea of *Mālama Hawai‘i* exist?

Overall, these visual representations of Hawaiian culture contribute to the ways that Hawaiian culture is viewed in Japan today. In *Aruco,* Hawaiian culture is one that is reminiscent of America through *Taco Bell, Costco,* and the images of a ‘local girl.’ In *Fura Gāru,* Hawaiian culture, and Hawai‘i are interpreted through sexualization and its usage towards economic prosperity. And with HTA’s *Mālama Hawai‘i* campaign, ideas of what it means to be a responsible tourist are heavily emphasized. However, this idea of responsibility does not benefit the community it seeks to represent and similarly projects a type of Hawaiian culture that can only be found in Japan.

Chapter 2
Watashi Ni Totte: Understanding Hawai‘i Through Personal Experience

Personal experiences shape the way we conceptualize the world we live in. Within the context of Hawaiian performance by those from Japan, the idea of ‘ohana shapes the way people think through their practices of hula. Through the experience of T-chan and Kapuanani Yumiko, I explain how conceptions of Hawai‘i are oriented around the understanding of a commercialized ‘Hawai‘i’ and how meanings of performance are formulated by the people these practitioners associate themselves with. To T-chan, her college’s circle prioritizes the meanings of songs while Kapuanani Yumiko is centered around an idea of family and ‘ohana, one that she later capitalizes on.

Minasan, Aloha! Beginning every video with a bright smile and enthusiastic energy, Kapuanani Yumiko Greene, host of the YouTube channel *Hawaii Hula TV,* entrances her Japanese-speaking audiences with the topic of the video of the week. The channel follows the life of Kapuanani, a self-described pro-hula dancer and Hawai‘i resident who moved to the islands 25 years ago. Born in Yokohama, Japan she came to Hawai‘i because a voice from heaven told her to[15](Greene 2021). Interested in sharing the wisdom and experiences she has learned about Hawai‘i, Kapauanani uses this channel as a way to disseminate the information she has received. With around 200 videos that vary in content, including local fashion, interviews with local musicians, real-estate walk-throughs, tutorials on how to dance hula, and live streams. Kapuanani creates a world of desire for her 10,000 followers by using nostalgic images of Hawai‘i for those who cannot physically travel there. She pictures Hawai‘i through an idea of family, creating a feeling of ‘ohana, but one you have to pay for.

[15] ここ「日本」から脱出せよという天の声を聞き海外留学決意

T-chan, is a nineteen-year-old, first-year student from Uji City in Kyoto, Japan. We met each other and became friends through a language program while I was studying abroad at a private university in Kyoto City that she also attended. We first became friends through interests in each other's culture, especially through the usage of dialects and languages like pidgin from Hawaii and Kansai-ben. After being friends for a while, she told me that she practiced hula with a club at the university we studied at. Within Japan, clubs are an important component of student life for undergraduates. At this university, students who are part of the college orientation committee run an Instagram account dedicated to helping their classmates find a club to join.[16]

Initially, what attracted her to learning hula was that it was a dance that is good for beginners and could be a place where she could make friends. As soon as she was accepted to her university, she began searching Instagram for clubs to join. She debated between joining the KPOP dance club and hip hop, however, she decided to join the hula club because it appeared that hula was good for beginners and the dances were beautiful and suitable for women. Although she has never visited Hawai‘i, she was interested in joining the club because of the ability to create friends and dance.

Both women were born and raised in Japan and began practicing hula at the same age. Kapuanani’s fascination and introduction to hula occurred around the same time as the ‘Hawai‘i boom’ in Japan during the bubble economy of the 1990s. During this period, a significant number of hotels were funded by Japanese investors, the government of Hawai‘i doubled the amount of money for destination tourism marketing, and nearly 60% of Japanese tourists were repeated visitors of Japanese investors coming to Hawai‘i to purchase hotels, solidifying Hawai‘i as a premier vacation destination (Mak 2008). T-chan on the other hand is currently studying

[16]Their Instagram says 「新入生向けの企画の運営などを通 して、新入生の新たな大学生活をサポートします」

hula in a post-Covid-19 pandemic world where travel to Hawai‘i was nearly impossible for two years. The situations in which they practiced hula were completely different: Kapuanani began her career at a time when access to Hawai‘i was easily available and for T-chan access to Hawai‘i was limited to social media sites.

Understanding Hawai‘i

At the time of our conversation T-chan was a first-year studying hula for about four months and practicing for a school festival coming up the following week. Her club consists of around 100 members, all of whom are women, separated into four separate groupings based on class year; she often practiced alongside 8 other first-year university students. Although she had only practiced for a few months when I initially met her, she had learned approximately 4 dances including the titular song from *Fura Gāru: Niji Wo, Ka Nohona Pili Kai,* a Hawaiian cover of the Okinawan song *Nada Sou Sou* and *Ka Nani A‘o Ka‘u,* a song about the southernmost district in Hawai‘i island. Although T-chan does not speak Hawaiian her halau conveys the meanings of these songs through translations and motions.

T-chan’s understanding of Hawai‘i comes through a variety of strategies, from literal translations, dance movements, and shared meanings of songs. Together they help create a meaning of hula—and of Hawai‘i—that shares the beauty and history of Hawai‘i. When introducing a new song, if the song is in Hawaiian, her senpai will translate the meaning of the song to her and her club mates in English and Japanese. As a form of communication, English is used between the senpai in Japan and the kumu back in Hawaii. A majority of the songs the hula circle performs begin in Hawaiian, they are then translated into English and then Japanese, for a majority of the songs they go through two rounds of translations. Later, as a group, they discuss

the meaning of the songs. T-chan mentioned that this has helped her immensely in understanding the meaningfulness of the performance.

When asked what her favorite Hawaiian song was, T-chan said it was Kealiʻi Reichel's *Ka Nohona Pili Kai* because of its shared melody with another song*, Nada Sou Sou*. Nada sou sou, is an Okinawan term for *"*great tears are falling" and is a song written by Okinawan band BEGIN and Japanese singer Ryoko Moriyama in 1998. The song describes Moriyama's feelings in the aftermath of the death of her older brother. The lyrics express her gratitude for how he encouraged her throughout life, and how she believes they will meet again one day (loochoo77 2014). This song has been covered by various people from across the globe in both its original language and translations into other languages. In 2003, singer Kealiʻi Reichel released *Ka Nohona Pili Ka,* his own cover of the song in Hawaiian. Echoing *Nada Sou Sou,* this song describes Reichel's relationship with a house where his grandmother lived and then later passed away in. He sings of this house, its relationship to the love he has had in his life, and the thankfulness he has had to the space (Paiva 2015). T-chan's knowledge of the *Ka Nohona Pili Kai* and the emotions it conveys is based on an extended familiarity and perceived meanings of the popular Japanese song- *Nada Sou Sou.*

During our conversation, T-chan demonstrated how she learned the meaning of *Ka Nani Aʻo Kaʻu* through the motions of her upper body. The song describes the beauty of the Kaʻu district in Hawaiʻi Island and the various ways the listener can experience that beauty. She explained the way she learned the terms hoʻolohe (to hear) and aloha noʻo Kaʻu (my love and affection for Kaʻu) through two separate motions. When she first learned the term hoʻolohe it was in the context of "Nanea i ka hoʻolohe/ Ka nalu nui e holu ana" when translated to English means Relax and listen to/ The waves that break at the beach (Valero, Reppun, and

Kanoa-Martin 1997). To symbolize the term “hoʻolohe” (to hear) she moved her right hand to cup her ear and brought her left out and then gently switched positions of her hands. Then, to describe “Aloha noʻo Kaʻu,” a recurring line in the song, she extended her two arms out, crossed them, and gently touched her two shoulders like a light embrace. Besides literal translations of songs, and recognizing its shared meanings, T-chan understands the meanings of the songs she dances to by noticing the motions and meanings of hand movements in her hula.

In this performance of Hawaiian culture outside the boundaries of Hawaiʻi, her senpai have found ways to convey a meaning of Hawaiʻi, one that T-chan considers to be focused on the beauty of nature and Hawaiian history. By using strategies of literal translations, finding songs with shared depictions in Hawaiian, and using dance movements to convey meanings, hula dancers like T-Chan, grasp an understanding of Hawaiian culture and hula, filtered through upperclassmen that highlight the nature and beauty of Hawaiʻi.

Hawaii Hula TV and Her Relationship to Hula

Kapuanani has practiced hula for the past 25 years and to her YouTube community, with a linguistic and monetary distancing, she portrays Hawaiʻi through a sense of familial belonging for followers. Her own personal relationship to hula is based on learning more about the dance practice while her knowledge about Hawaiian culture and performance comes from an apprenticeship under recognized hula teachers or kumu.

When she first arrived in Hawaiʻi in the late-1990s, she began to learn hula from someone she calls Kumu Kāla. Unlike the other teachers Greene has learned from, Kumu Kāla is not featured in her introduction video with a picture or biography. This kumu taught a twenty-year-old Yumiko Kawai the basics of hula, chanting, and the Hawaiian language. This led to her debut in 2000, as a professional hula dancer at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel. Under her first

teacher, she feels like the most important lesson she took was the understanding of hula and aloha (Greene, 2021). Then in 2001, she began to learn under Kumu Hula Chinky Mahoe who Kapuanani credits for giving her the Hawaiian name, ‘Kapuananimaikahaleokala‘ula.’ As a student of Kumu Hula Chinky Mahoe and an adopted member of this community, she was bestowed this Hawaiian name which she translates to 「赤い太陽の家からまい降りてきた美しい花」which means “beautiful flowers falling from the house of the red sun.” Kapuanani has continued to support Kumu Hula Chinky Mahoe and has interviewed him for her YouTube channel despite him being a registered sex offender, convicted in 1998, and facing another sexual assault charge in 2020 (HNN Staff 2020; State of Hawaii and Mahoe 1998). Within the comment section of both interviews she has completed with Kumu Chinky Mahoe, there has been no commentary or pushback about his past actions, but rather comments about how knowledgeable he is about Hawaiian culture. There has hardly been any pushback or commentary from followers in the Hawaiian hula community, and those in the Japanese hula community are still embracing him by flying him in to judge competitions.

In 2005, she moved to California and began to study under Kumu Hula Mark Keali'i Ho'omalu. To the broader world, he is known for his song *He Mele No Lilo*, featured in the soundtrack of the Disney movie *Lilo and Stitch* (2002). To the world of Hawaiian hula, he is known for producing skillfully beautiful hula dancers and storytellers through his boot camp style training.[17]To Kapuanani, he represents the beginning of her professional dancing career. When Kapuanani moved to California in 2004, she joined Kumu Mark’s halau as part of his pro team for four years, they competed in the Merrie Monarch, the largest hula competition in the

[17] Kapuanani says that she received this type of training as well 「ミリタリー並みのトレーニング受けて」（Greene 2001)

world, located in Hilo, Hawai‘i. In addition, to performing in various locations throughout California, and Japan.

Beginning in 2004, Kapuanani has found ways to connect her experiences learning hula and exporting portions of it to Japan through print and media. For example, right before leaving for California in 2004, she began posing for magazines distributed to Japanese audiences like ‘*Eheu.* While living in California, she began to notice that there was little that connected Japan-Hawai‘i-California’s hula practices and she started writing columns about hula's impact in California for Japanese audiences. After four years in California, she returned to Hawai‘i with her son as a single mother and she began both a Lomi Lomi massage business and her professional solo hula career. Now, she creates videos for her Youtube channel, Hawaii Hula TV, about her hula experiences, the Merrie Monarch, physical well-being, and more.

‘Ohana You Can Pay For

As a way to capitalize on her identity and share information about Hawai‘i and hula in an intimate community, Kapuanani has released a “hula cafe,” a virtual online format where members can be part of her ‘ohana. Through a monetary, physical, and linguistic distancing that occurs in paid subscriptions, she describes it as a place for everyone, regardless of gender, who loves hula and Hawai‘i, even if they have not had the chance to visit. She aims to create a welcoming ‘ohana or family-like atmosphere,[18]emulating a similar feeling she had when she first began to learn hula in Hawai‘i.

Within the Hawaii Hula TV fan cafe, members are able to choose between two levels of membership. An ‘ohana membership for $6.99 a month and a VIP membership for $49.99 a month. Upon purchasing a membership, ‘ohana members move up in a tiered, colored ranking, depending on how long they have been a fan. For example, new members begin on the level

[18] 「チャンネルのオハナファミリーとしてウェルカムいたします」(Greene 2022)

green, after a month they move to teal, and so on until they join the final red tier after 24 months. These rankings are called loyalty badges and they appear when the member comments on a video or in a live chat. Some privileges that paid members can enjoy are access to special live broadcasts. They are different from the other videos she has because they are more personal and are harder to discuss in public.[19]Another privilege that members are offered is cafe meetings on Zoom. They occur once a month and include bonus footage from videos she has previously uploaded. For those who are searching for a more intimate or more authentic experience of Hawaiian culture, Kapuanani offers an expression of it through a paid membership.

As a VIP member, the personal interactions with Kapuanani are even more enhanced. Members have privileges such as advanced notifications of Hawai‘i-based workshops, discounts, and access to special live streaming- of events such as the Merrie Monarch festival. The Merrie Monarch festival generally has a vast following worldwide, which Kapuanani taps into. On Kapuanani’s YouTube channel, her pinned video, or the first video followers see is a video about the 2023 Merrie Monarch Festival. And her most watched video with 59k views is about the 2021 Merrie Monarch Festival, the first one to occur since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, and where there was no live audience. Lastly, VIP members are welcomed to once-a-month hour-long lessons on topics such as how to move your hands while dancing hula.

By paying for an ‘ohana membership with Hawaii Hula TV, participants are able to feel like they belong in a community, intended to mimic the kind of intimacy with hula, practitioners, and a broader Hawai’i that Kapuanani herself experienced when she first arrived and began to dance hula. By using formalities and the physical distance between Hawaii and Japan to entice a

[19]Her hula cafe offers stories that cannot be offered in videos, a questions corner and a fun community 「動画では話せない「ここだけの話」やなんでも質問コーナーなど楽しいコミュニティにしたいと思っています。(Greene 2022)

paid membership, viewers are able to gain an intimate and almost familial relationship with Kapuanani by becoming part of her inner circle. She commodifies herself as much as she commodifies Hawaii, becoming an intermediary or broker to hula and Hawaii.

Kapuanani's journey to Hawai‘i came from hearing a voice from heaven telling her to "escape Japan" while she was commuting on a train in Tokyo. Living in the Hawaiian islands for the past 25 years, she has grown from someone learning hula non-competitively to dancing to win the Merrie Monarch competition to becoming a professional solo-hula dancer in Waikiki. By understanding that hula is something that can be exported, she has created a career of cultural exploitation for personal gain, marketing a feeling of family or ‘ohana.

In Hawaii, there's a complexity to hula performance. Hula has always been a way to document stories and history (Malo 1898, 180; Silva 2007). Beginning in the late 1800s it was seen as a form of performed resistance to Western ideologies surrounding sexuality, work-ethic, and later occupation and statehood of Hawaii (Silva 2007; Stillman 1989). Hula has become an icon of Hawaii, and now, in some places, in order to be considered "Hawaiian," dancing hula is a form of survivance. In identity appropriation, within the continental United States, being "Hawaiian" means being "local," ignoring the usage of colonialism and U.S. assimilation (Teves 2018; Kauanui 2007). Kapuanani's career as a broker of Hawaiian culture for a Japanese audience is dangerous because of the lack of Native Hawaiians in the performance, taking away the agency for Native Hawaiians to portray aspects of culture. "Without Hawaiians, this too is a form of cultural appropriation" (Kauanui 2007, 152). For Hawaiians in Japan, on their own agency, dancing there is a way to challenge the essentialized images of "the lazy native" and associate their own meanings to the performance. Hula, like the idea of aloha, is a performance that is met with the "history of ancestral knowledge and outsider expectations, manifest in the

daily contradictions and complexities of Kanaka Maoli[20] indigeneity" (Teves 2018, 2). Although Kapuanani has trained under familiar hula teachers and serves as a broker for Hawaiian culture for those, one has to ask, how does her performance effect Native Hawaiian agency in rewriting the narrative of how Hawaiian culture should be portrayed?

Performing Hawai‘i

‘Ohana is an act of belonging in Hawai‘i-based groups; it is not racialized or based on "blood." It is based on relationships. In *Listen but Don't Ask Questions,* Kevin Fellesz describes ‘ohana as a feeling of family, used to conceptualize belonging within a group. It "need not denote blood relations, but names intimate familial relationships" (2019, 11). Fellesz argues that performing slack key guitar is viewed as a means for non-Native Hawaiians to participate in Hawaiian traditions. It is not a transformative practice used to give claim for someone to be considered Hawaiian because being Hawaiian is an ethnic category. For slack-key players who are not Hawaiian or are not from Hawai‘i, ‘ohana is a term used to mobilize solidarity, collective political struggles, and belonging in a slack-key social group. Kimo West, for example, is a White Canadian whose livelihood is based on playing the Hawaiian slack key guitar for audiences outside of Hawai‘i. He views himself as a "messenger for sharing aloha." West relies on the slack key guitar ‘ohana to inform himself and others of what should be practiced and how traditional practices should be upkept. (Fellesz 2019, 207).

Similarly, in the case of Hawaii Hula TV and T-chan's hula circle, ‘ohana is a way of situating belonging to a community through Hawaiian cultural production regardless of physical location and race. In Kapuanani and T-chan's experience, what parts of Hawai‘i are being consumed in the name of ‘ohana? How does settler colonialism affect the way community members process information?

[20] Hawaiian term for Native Hawaiian

In Hawaii Hula TV, Kapuanani shares her lived experience through commercialized images of Hawai‘i, such as Ala Moana, Waikiki, palm trees, pristine beaches and lomi lomi massages. Like a Hawaiian cultural expert in tourism bureaus, Kapuanani performs and expresses a Hawaiian culture that is “neat.” Although she pays lipservice to social movements like Black Lives Matter (Greene 2020b), they’re performative. She fails to acknowledge the diversity of hula performances and meanings of “aloha.” In this case, her videos and the community she has created is an example of “inclusion under capitalism and settler colonialism…” that “...represents an additive model of multiculturalism that depends on and generates community by inserting the history of the oppressed into an American and increasingly global narrative in the name of commerce, not sovereignty or decolonization” (Teves 2018, 5). What is the purpose of this channel and the usage of hula if it is not towards working to Hawaiian sovereignty and decolonization? What does it say to feature a token Hawaiian who is a convicted felon for sexual assault? Where are the Hawaiians and why are we not consulted? Hawaii Hula TV in this case becomes a neatly packaged, online community that is commodified for the personal gain of Kapuanani. Similar to Kimo West, Kapuanani also places her own capitalistic needs above the Hawaiian community in the name of being a broker of Hawaiian culture for a broader audience. Both created a form of ‘ohana that is strategically formed to give insider access to practices of cultural world-making.

Prior to studying hula, T-chan had little to no understanding of Hawai‘i and had never visited. She only set out to join the hula club to make friends in a club setting. For example, she was under the impression that Hawai‘i only consisted of O‘ahu and Waikiki, but after learning *Nani A‘o Ka‘u*, she began to notice other physical attractions of Hawai‘i. She continues to practice hula because it is a way to express her own emotions through dance movements and

language. She also claims it brings calmness to her soul and is a great way to create friends. When I asked if she thought Japanese people can genuinely dance hula, she responded: “I think they can dance. However, when it comes to authentically dancing hula, I think that it takes decades of practice and understanding Hawaiian history.”[21] ‘Ohana for T-chan is not used to gather authenticity in the practice of hula or stake claim in the practice for the purpose of capitalism. Rather it is a space she uses to create friends.

Like people, ideoscapes or the flow of ideas cannot be constricted into one place and it rightfully should not. “Cultural Practices do not remain anchored to either places or people of origin” (Stillman 1999, 57). As consumers of Hawaiian culture, I feel as if we sometimes forget the influence settler colonialism has in Hawai‘i, especially on practices like hula. Hawai‘i’s relationship with Japan is often celebrated in the media and through political relationships through a plethora of delegations and campaigns. As the late Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask mentions:

> Thus, Hawai`i, like a lovely woman, is there for the taking. Those with only a little money get a brief encounter, those with a lot of money, like the Japanese, get more. The state and counties will give tax breaks, build infrastructure, and have the governor personally welcome tourists to ensure that they keep coming. Just as the pimp regulates prices and guards the commodity of the prostitute, the state bargains with developers for access to Hawaiian land and culture (Trask 1993, 144).

Settler colonialism and its narratives are still being reproduced and it exists in the way Hawaiian culture is marketed and performed in Japan by those who are not Native Hawaiian. In some spaces, Japan becomes a space that deracializes or removes its Hawaiian identity and culture for the sake of performance, giving anyone who is understanding of the performance opportunity to economically advance. Despite there being Hawaiian performers who consider places like Japan as a place to pay the bills,[22] brokers outside of Hawaii, forget their existence and instead find

[21] 踊れると思う。しかし本物のフラを踊るには何十年という時間が必要で、ハワイの歴史などを深く学ぶ必要があると思う。

[22] Fujii-Oride, Noelle. "Hawaii is Home for Many Musicians and Kumu Hula, but Japan Pays the Bills." . Accessed 11/08/19, . https://www.hawaiibusiness.com/smallbiz-hawaii-is-home-but-japan-pays-the-bills/.

others for the sake of sharing culture transnationally. Extracting a resource that is of use, value and a place of profit for Native Hawaiians.

Haʻina ʻia Mai Ana ka Puana[23]

Both Kapuanani and T-chan have distinct ways in which they found their interest in Hawaiian culture through a search for intimacy and belonging. These two women have similar experiences of dancing hula in a community-making experience, however, their own reactions to being a part of the performance and what they do with it is somewhat different. To T-chan, hula is somewhat removed from a completely Hawaiian context, becoming a place to perform and a way to create a friend group and express herself. While Kapuanani, who considers herself a professional hula dancer, uses this as an opportunity to monetarily advance in the world, creating a community for followers, and stripping away Native Hawaiian agency to control a narrative of Hawaiian culture. Both of their intentions may be for the betterment of, and for fostering interest in, Hawaiian culture, but I argue that what is more important is the impact they have on the community they are learning from.

[23] This is a term used in Hawaiian songs to reiterate the message or story that is being told

Conclusion
We Have No Dances If We Have No History[24]

In Japan there is a nursery rhyme called “King Hamehameha of the Southern Island”.

The king of the island of the South	南の島の 大王は
The mighty Hamehameha	その名もいだいな ハメハメハ
He is a romantic king	ロマンチックな おうさまで
All the wind is his song	かぜのすべてが かれのうた
All the stars are his dreams	星のすべてが かれのゆめ
Hamehamehamehameha	ハメハメハ ハメハメハ
The king of the island of the south	ハメハメハメハメハ
The queen is also called Hamehameha	南の島の 大王は
A very kind wife	じょおうの名前も ハメハメハ
She wakes after the sun rises	とてもやさしいおくさんで
She sleeps before the sun sets	あさひのあとで おきてきて
Hamehamehamehameha (Lyon, 2021)	ゆうひのまえに ねてしまう
	ハメハメハ ハメハメハ
	ハメハメハメハメハ (伊藤 1976)

The lyrics of the song talks about a King, Queen, children and everyone who lives on an island in the South Pacific, and how they have the same name, ‘Hamehameha.’ The King is described as romantic; his wife is very nice but she wakes up after the sun rises and falls asleep before the sun sets; his children hate school and do not attend when it is cold or rains. The song was first broadcast in 1976 as a children's song on NHK, on television programs for children. It has been reproduced for future generations on YouTube with caricatures of women singing and dancing to the words (Nash 2019; utastar 2020; 伊藤 1976). As of 2004, the nursery rhyme is still considered to be popular among children in Japan, and 90% of Japanese college students know the song. Along with the catchy and “funny” melody, what also remains are the images associated with the Southern Isles. The song suggests a place that lacks industry because its people live romantically in nature, amidst wind and stars (Yaguchi and Yoshihara 2004, 89). Hamehameha is a play on the name of the first King of the Hawaiian Islands, King

[24] A line from the spoken word poem *Kumulipo* by Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio

Kamehameha, and the descendants of the throne, from Kamehameha II Liholiho to Kamehameha V Lota Kapuāiwa. Hawaii, located in the South Pacific, bears heavy resemblance to the "Southern Island" depicted in the nursery rhyme.

Meanings of Hawaiian identity originate from people in Hawai‘i themselves and are translated to spaces like Japan as seen in the nursery rhyme above. To missionaries in Hawai‘i in the early 1800s, Native Hawaiians were much like the people of "the island in the South." They viewed them as lazy, uneducated, and disinterested in economic mobility (Silva 2007). Non-Native Hawaiians were not the only ones who imagined Hawai‘i this way. For example, one of King Kamehameha's chief counselors, Davida Malo wrote passionately about how the dance practice of hula was a form of heathenism, and "appealed largely to the baser instincts of people" (Malo, 304). In contemporary society, Hawaiian culture is represented in grass skirts and coconut bras sold at the swap meet and its moniker of being a "melting pot" of diversity.[25] Because these images are based in Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiians are able to accurately defend themselves and not be classified by these stereotypes.

However, when Hawaiian culture is produced for Japanese audiences by a Japanese community, the images associated are heavily stereotyped, subjecting Native Hawaiians to an idea that if they're Hawaiian, they will intrinsically participate in them. In *Fura Gāru*, this is seen in the misrepresentation of hula culture by suggesting that the purpose of the dance is only for economic mobility. Rather, hula is a traditional practice used for honoring family lineage, telling stories, and sharing feelings of love for the land (Stillman 1989). In *Aruco's* guidebook *Tokyo de Tanoshimu Hawai*, Hawaiian culture is associated with being a "local girl" and an extension of the United States of America. This ignores the complicated relationship Hawai‘i has with being a

[25] For more on the "melting pot" ideology and its misrepresentation of Hawai‘i, "Settlers of Color and "Immigrant" Hegemony: "Locals" in Hawai'i" (Trask 2000)

part of a United States formation and ignores the large presence of settler colonialism. Both types of media contribute to the idea of Hawai‘i as a place to take a break from one's hectic lifestyle. It simultaneously contributes to the erasure of Native Hawaiians through their own cultural practices. In the individual experiences of T-chan and Kapuanani Yumiko Greene, hula and by extension, Hawaiian culture is a form of familial belonging. However, for Kapuanani Yumiko Greene and *Hawaii Hula TV*, it is also a way to exploit Hawaiian culture for personal, monetary gain.

When Hawaiian culture in Japan becomes collaborative between Native Hawaiian and Japanese performers, there is an exchange of ideas that is based on Native Hawaiian values. For example, in 2019, the #WeareMaunaKea movement reached large, global recognition. It aims to end the desecration of sacred and religious lands, especially on Mauna Kea on Moku o Keawe also known as the Big Island of Hawai‘i as the mountain is the *piko* or center of all beginnings for Native Hawaiians. Organizers placed a call on Facebook for Indigenous solidarity through participation in a video and monetary donations. One way that the Japanese hula community responded was by dancing along to songs that were made by those actively protesting and performing in a video called “Worldwide #Jam4MaunaKea.” It was a ten-minute music video uploaded to YouTube that featured people from around the world and highlighted Indigenous groups in Taiwan and Aotearoa. Hawaiian culture in Japan is evolving as it has responded to calls for Indigenous solidarity.

In Japan, Indigenous Okinawans share similar rhetoric regarding the importance of being recognized. Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, “Okinawan activists began to pursue UN recognition of Indigenous status” as a way to “foreground their colonial past and presence” (Nishiyama 2021, 7). Indigeneity here is a “political ideology and social movement by which a

politicized awareness of original occupancy provides a principled basis for making claims against the state ... that helps to transform U.S. militarism and neocolonialism" (Ginoza 2012, 7). Similarly to Okinawa, Hawai'i too is faced with a large and extractive tourism industry and the presence of the U.S. military. In recognizing Hawai'i as a part of an Indigenous formation, what is at stake for other Indigenous groups in Japan such as Okinawans?

Hawaiian culture in Japan should not be analyzed in a binary of cultural appropriation versus appreciation as it erases personal experience, and communal belonging and minimizes intricate power dynamics. Rather than simply celebrating Hawaiian culture in Japan as a form of globalism, I argue that Hawaiian culture performed abroad becomes a place to speak about being indigenous. At the same time, it is a site for personal desires and capitalism, resulting in convoluted images of what Hawaiian culture is and the history it represents. Being Indigenous in the twenty-first century is a social movement based in tradition and is constantly evolving.

At the core of Hawaiian culture is its people.

Mai Poina[26]

[26] A Hawaiian term that means forget-me-not

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