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DRESSING THE HULA
Iconography, Performance and Cultural Identity Formation in late nineteenth century Hawaii*

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In 1897 the German medical officer and later famous Polynesian ethnographer and physical anthropologist, Augustin Krämer, undertook an extended tour of Oahu, the main Hawaiian island. Although he and his travelling companion had their minds set on 'bones' (the skeletal remains of the ancient Hawaiian dead, concealed in caves), the urge to see a 'real' Hawaiian hula was equally strong, the opportunities, however, apparently rare. Krämer records the following encounter:

> We were namely desirous of seeing a genuine Hawaiian dance for once. Because of its remoteness, I considered Wailuku to be particularly favourable for this plan and Mahelone was of the same opinion. He was most enthusiastic at the thought of this rare diversion, even though, as he said, dancing was prohibited. Like an experienced Cicerone he promised to arrange everything perfectly for a few dollars, and we were in eager anticipation. We proceeded down from Heiau to our cart and in a short time we had reached a grove of Kukui trees, in which we caught a furtive glimpse of a small wooden hut. The dancing party could certainly not be large, that was for sure; but in Samoa I had seen the natives perform the most delightful dances in quite unbelievably confined spaces. At the door we were welcomed by an elderly Hawaiian woman, and in the room there stood a large bed, a table and two chairs, on which two young girls were sitting, who rose as we entered and greeted us. There seemed to be no sign of dancing, but that could still come. They invited us to take a seat, but in view of the luxurious seating arrangements, we preferred to stand and ensure that the people were acquainted with the reason for our visit. "An old Hawaiian dance", I repeated. "Yes, certainly", the old woman said, "just be patient for a moment, we are still waiting for some girls". Soon enough, two slim shapes appeared, clad in straw hats and long, loose Mother Hubbard dresses, in which they then began to sway to and fro, in the style of a tarantella, to the accompaniment of a guitar. This was in itself quite nice, and a globetrotter would no doubt have been satisfied by it, if he could have added to it a somewhat piquant setting. We were not interested in that and I indicated to Mahelone that we desired to see a hula in old Hawaiian attire. However, the girls and Mahelone had as much idea of such things as an infant of the stock market and they probably thought that for us old Hawaiian meant nudity. As Mahelone continued his

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> negotiations, some of the girls removed their dresses intending to continue the dance in their indecent underclothes. We quickly indicated to them that they had misunderstood us and should get dressed immediately, to do which they did not need to be asked twice. We looked at each other like two duped Europeans and declared that we were satisfied and proffered payment. I considered two dollars for the whole performance to be sufficient, but there I was mistaken. Each of the four girls wanted a dollar at least and the old woman too, so we were lucky to get away with paying five. Mahelone put on an expression of neediness, whereupon I offered him a clip on the ear. I was so furious with these Kanakas, who always cost me money for nothing in return. But anger is no use with the Polynesians; you always have to smile: cry smiling, punish smiling; it is ridiculous! When we were back in the cart, with Mahelone seated proudly on the box, the two dancers came rushing out and asked to be given a lift, because they lived in town. We were kind enough to offer them a ride in our landau. Useless as they were, laughing mischievously, they sat beside us as we rolled towards Wailulu in the bright moonlight. Again and again they sang the song that had accompanied the dance, so often that I can still hear it in my ears: an example of that effusive, shallow but strange new Hawaiian music. (Krämer 1906:125–27; translation by C.B.)

Krämer's account of this 'command performance', riddled though it is with ethnocentrisms, cultural condescension and sexual innuendo, touches on a number of key issues regarding Hawaiian hula and its place in cross-cultural interaction between Hawaiians and *haole* (foreigners). While it would be very easy and 'rewarding' to read this text as an example of the exoticizing/eroticizing gaze, which conflates the touristic and the ethnographic perspective to the point where they are almost indistinguishable, (although Krämer is apparently keen to distinguish himself from common 'globetrotters'), it is also fruitful to focus on another aspect of it. The ethnographers' attempt to arrange (and pay) to have a 'traditional' performance staged for their personal delectation is met with the obvious counter-move on the part of the Hawaiians to cater to what they perceive as European expectations. Yet, the cultural exchange transacted here – money for performance – is interesting precisely because it fails. The two travellers cum ethnographers pay to see an old Hawaiian dance in appropriate costume. The Hawaiians, both the dancers and the interpreter-guide, equate this request, erroneously as it turns out, with (near) nakedness. What Krämer actually expects to see in terms of traditional hula costume is never made entirely clear. It is apparently neither lascivious nakedness nor certainly the ankle-length 'Mother Hubbard dresses'.

Despite the evident cultural confusions, the narrative is underpinned by a number of assumptions on both sides which point to very clear perceptions concerning the place and function of hula as a metonym of a larger problem. And within the larger cultural complex that hula is part of, it is neither the movements nor the music, both of which also evidently do not fully meet expectations, that provide defining characteristics. The question of its dress codes is the crucial criterion on which this performative encounter hinges. This assumption is based, it will be argued, on a performative genealogy that is only understandable within a broader historical context.

The excavation of this genealogy will be attempted via an analysis of iconographical material.

The second major assumption pertains to the 'place of performance'. Krämer's narrative is constructed as an ethnographic hunting trip with Romantic overtones. There is the journey into the wildnerness ('remote Wailuku') for the purposes of the ethnographic search. The further removed from the city, the greater the chance of finding unadulterated forms, so the apparent assumption. Krämer's description of the place of the performance, the remote little house secluded yet beckoning in a grove of Kukui trees, has strong connotations of German *Hüttenromantik* (romantic haven). In fact, it turns out that the performers themselves are not from the little haven in the forest but from the nearby town and have also made the journey out to the wilderness to meet the expectations of their well-paying guests.

This kind of situation, rife as it is with cross-cultural misunderstandings, expectations of authenticity on the part of the Europeans, and genuine attempts on the part of the 'natives' to cater to these expectations, which they in turn misread, is endemic to the history of cross-cultural performance situations. Failures of the kind recorded by Krämer provide, however, illuminating examples for performance research concerned with the history of such performative encounters. For such situations have a history: when they function they go unnoticed, when they breakdown, however, the cross-cultural performative code is probably involved in a process of 'renegotiation'. This process of renegotiation towards the end of the nineteenth century is linked to a complex process of redefining the hula on the part of the indigenous people, both for themselves and for the European colonists and visitors. The framework of this redefinition is defined, however, in the main by two interconnected European paradigms: folklorization and the creation of a national cultural identity on the part of Hawaiians. The failure of the performance recorded here can thus be attributed to a problem of choice on the part of the performers (they chose the wrong option) and expectation on the part of the ethnographers.

The following analysis will proceed in three main steps. In a short introductory section some of the main features of traditional hula (*hula kahiko*) will be outlined. This nutshell sketch attempts to synthesize something approaching an uncontested ethnographic conceptualization. The discursive means by which this knowledge came about will not be reflected on here.[1] This will be followed by a commentary on two sets of images. The first group represents the earliest iconographical documents relating to the hula, which reveal already considerable variation concerning movement and dress. The second group consists of photographs dating from the mid-1880s until around 1900. On the basis of the costumes depicted here I shall demonstrate the multiple functions hula was performing in the colonial situation of late nineteenth century Hawaii. The final section of the paper will discuss the implications of this evidence for

[1] For a discussion of this question see Buck (1993).

the wider and more theoretical question of the interrelationship between performance, corporeality and cultural identity formation.

HULA KAHIKO *(ANCIENT HULA)*

By the time Krämer made his journey into the Hawaiian countryside hula as it had been practiced in pre-contact times was a thing of the past. It had already become in fact an object of research and revival on the part of European folklorists on the one hand and Hawaiian artists and politicians on the other. While the two groups pursued different agendas in terms of their interest, both were united by the common goal of reconstructing the form as it had once been. The foremost scholar among the Europeans, the Hawaiian-born doctor and folklorist Nathaniel Emerson, published a major work on the subject in 1909 under the significant title "Unwritten Literature of Hawaii". Hula in pre-contact Hawaii he defined as:

> [...] a religious service, in which poetry, music, pantomime, and the dance lent themselves, under the forms of dramatic art, to the refreshment of men's minds. Its view of life was idyllic, and it gave itself to the celebration of those mythical times when gods and goddesses moved on the earth as men and women and when men and women were gods. [...] the material, in fact, which in another nation and under different circumstances would have gone to the making of its poetry, its drama, its opera, its literature (Emerson 1909:11–12).

Emerson's account of the hula is structured around its texts and chants. As the title suggests, it is an attempt to ennoble the oral tradition by rendering it in written form complete with the scholarly paraphernalia of philological commentary, a strategy made even more apparent by the frequent analogies with classical Greek tradition. This attempt to literarize hula leads Emerson to a very clear hierarchization of the various expressive modes employed in the pre-contact form. For him hula attains its aesthetic status on the basis of its poetry rather than its kinaesthetic forms: "For the purpose of this book the rating of any variety of hula must depend not so much on the grace and rhythm of its action on stage as on the imaginative power and dignity of its poetry" (Emerson 1909: 216).

Although all accounts of the hula, both past and present, are deeply embedded in various discursive agendas, certain elements of the aesthetic and institutional place hula occupied in Hawaii's highly stratified pre-contact society can be reconstructed with a fair degree of accuracy. The first important point to note is the high degree of institutionalization hula enjoyed. It was practiced by trained and paid performers who received instruction and performed in specially designed buildings *halau* (dance-house). Although the establishment of such a 'hula school' was in theory open to any-

body, in practice, troupes aimed to receive Royal or aristocratic patronage. Major performances were highly elaborate affairs bound by strict etiquette and rules of tabu, and were dedicated usually to a deity or chief (who might himself be a deity). A public performance consisted of "a series of dances chosen from a not very varied repertory, the significance depending upon the grace or passion of the rhythmical rendering and upon the novelties hit upon by the hula-master" (Beckwith 1916:410–11). The troupe was divided into two groups: those who recited and played instruments (drums, rattles, nose-flute) and those who danced. Dances could be performed individually or in groups of up to a hundred dancers. Aesthetic excellence was judged according to the subtle footwork and richly symbolic gestures. A hula (chant and dance) could be of a sacred, religious character, could include erotic and amorous themes or even parody and clowning. The interplay of chant (on both textual and musical level) and dance depended on what Beckwith terms "double symbolism". The richly metaphorical language is rendered by allusive steps and gestures which are both subtly mimetic but also metaphoric. So complex and indirect was the communicative and aesthetic code of hula that by the end of the nineteenth century very few Hawaiians were capable of appreciating the textual richness of the chants.[2] Outside such highly formalized performance situations hula was also practiced on a more everyday, informal level by the 'common people'.

When the missionaries arrived in force in the second decade of the nineteenth century there is no doubt that they encountered an institution of considerable religious, cultural and aesthetic significance. Their concerted and successful attack on it was therefore a tactically astute move, as hula provided an easy target in their strategy of conversion. The abolition or suppression of hula meant effectively the removal of a cornerstone of Hawaiian religious culture. The history of missionary opposition to hula (and to dance throughout the Pacific) is well documented and need not be re-rehearsed here. Suffice it to say, that the suppression of hula from 1820 onwards until about 1870 resulted in an almost total enculturative breakdown. Hula as a form depending entirely on the direct transmission of performative knowledge from teacher to pupil was hard put to sustain the loss of two generations of performance practice. When hula came to be revived under King Kalakaua in the 1880s it was within a substantially altered cultural and political context and, as we shall see, in new visual forms. The period has left us, however, with an interesting or even contradictory iconographical record which shall now be discussed.

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2 Beckwith notes: "Because of this artificial form of innuendo, many of the songs quoted by Dr. Emerson are today unintelligible without a key. Many depend not only upon knowledge of an historical allusion, but upon some specious analogy, either of sound or of image, which carries the trick of punning and metaphor to a very high pitch, and makes an art of riddling" (1916:412).

Iconography of the Hula

Even a cursory survey of the iconographical evidence – in the main photographs post-dating the hula revival under King Kalakaua in the 1880s – reveals a proliferation of costume forms. Judging by the outward attire hula had become different things for different people, a floating signifier of Hawaiian identity (or identities). The following comments are framed by the basic requirement of all iconographical analysis, i.e. that all pictorial images operate simultaneously on two communicative levels: a level of representation, the thing(s) depicted; and secondly, a level of conventionality determined by the pictorial media themselves, which is independent of the particular image depicted, but nevertheless impinges on it.[3] That the following comments focus on costume as an index of cultural and performative change has two main justifications. Firstly, costume can be regarded as one of the few elements in performance iconography which are subjected to a low degree of mediation through artistic perception and iconographical conventions, as Cesare Molinari (1991) has noted.[4] While the correlation between the depiction of costume in images and that worn in performance situations is relatively high, it is still not total and in fact, the following arguments are not predicated on any historistic attempt to 'reconstruct' hula, 'as it really was'. Rather the images to be considered will be approached in terms of their visual discourses and the way in which they constitute a *mise en scène* of the artist's perceptions of the phenomenon. Secondly, costume, both in everyday life and in performance contexts, can be regarded as a gauge of cultural self-fashioning. As Roland Barthes notes, clothing is both a social and a theatrical sign, "a kind of writing" with "the ambiguity of writing [...] a instrument in the service of a purpose which transcends it" (1985:92). This semiotic double function permits for a complexity of sign use which reveals a high degree of reflexivity and forms a privileged and productive site for cultural and aesthetic analysis.

We can preface our consideration of the iconographical evidence relating to hula by returning to Krämer's desire to see 'genuine Hawaiian dancing' and ask how he may have envisaged it. The image sought after by Krämer can be perhaps approximated by several pictures documenting the pre-contact or early post-contact phase of hula. John Webber, who accompanied James Cook on his third (and fatal) voyage, rendered the dance and its performance context in a number of images. His "Man of the Sandwich

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3 Criteria for a basic analysis of iconographical documents on the level of representation can be summarized and differentiated as follows: 1) object of representation: explication of image (iconography in Panofsky's sense); 2) medium of representation (drawing, lithograph, photography etc.); 3) context of representation (e.g. purpose of image). For a theoretical discussion of the problem of representation of performance and theatrical iconography see Balme (1997).

4 This is certainly the case when compared say to the analysis of movement, which requires a great deal of comparative material before one can arrive at any kind of generalized statements concerning movement styles and conventions. Molinari's caveat applies equally to early theatre photography, of course, with its studio contexts and painterly poses.

Islands, dancing" (1784) (fig. 1) depicts a near naked, heavily tattooed male dancer, adorned with leggings and holding a feathered rattle. The art historian Bernard Smith has emphasized Webber's ethnographic precision in depicting the various peoples that came under his gaze and brush:

> He is Europe's first serious ethnographic artist and his work stands at the threshold of ethnography as science. It was his business not only to draw native peoples as such but also to distinguish as best he could the visual differences to be observed between one ethnic group and another. He was the first artist to make Europeans aware of the great variety of peoples who inhabited the Pacific (Smith 1992:184).

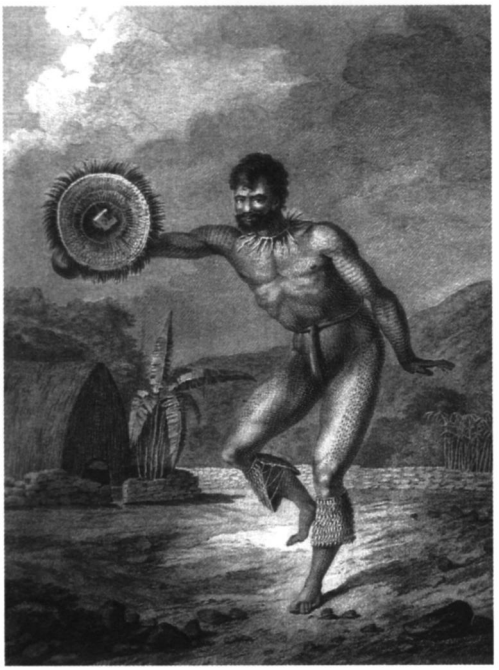

Fig. 1: "A man of the Sandwich Isles, dancing"; engraving by John Webber; 1784 (private collection Christopher Balme)

For this image we have also a rare example of direct verbal corroboration. In the official account of the voyage (Cook and King 1784) we can read that this dance, described as "buffooneries" was witnessed by the ship's company on the beach. The description of the costume entirely supports Webber's image and an attempt is made to characterize the dance:

> His style of dancing was entirely burlesque, and accompanied with strange grimaces, and pantomimical distortions of the face; which though at times inexpressibly ridiculous, yet on the hole [sic!], was without much meaning, or expression. Mr. Webber thought it worth his while to make a drawing of this person, as exhibiting a tolerable specimen of the natives (Cook and King 1784, vol.3, p. 27; cited in Rose 1980:186).

Unfortunately, this dance cannot really be considered hula in its institutional sense, although it doubtless has some relation to it. Hula was, and still is, primarily a group dance performed on a large scale for various religious and ceremonial occasions.[5] The verbal description in fact suggests some kind of parodic taunting and clowning rather than the measured solemnity characteristic of much hula. It is intriguing to consider just what this "tolerable specimen" was engaged in. Although the problem cannot be

[5] On this voyage Cook and his crew had little opportunity to witness actual hula performances (see Rose 1980:185).

pursued here, the short encounter raises a whole series of questions regarding cross-cultural performance and perceptions.[6]

If Webber's "Man of the Sandwich Isles, dancing" is a somewhat ambivalent image in terms of its relationship to hula (although it is frequently reproduced as an early visual document of it), this is no doubt due to the lack of direct observation of the performance as it was practiced on formal occasions. The same, however, cannot be said of the two famous drawings executed by Louis Choris while on board Otto von Kotzebue's Pacific voyage (1815–1818). Although not published until 1822, these drawings (figs. 2 and 3) refer to a performance Choris witnessed in 1816. Both male and female dancers are clad in what folklorists and ethnographers consider to be traditional costume: a skirt made of tapa cloth and anklets plus the hand-held rattle.[7] Choris makes an interesting gender distinction between women and men: the former, he says, performing it "as an amusement; the men, on the contrary, are professional dancers, and are paid" (Andersen 1934:103). Figure 3, depicting the womens' dance, includes European spectators, a feature not uncommon in the performance iconography of Pacific voyages. It also signals the beginning of a context for hula in which the dance is mediated through European representations, whether iconographical or written. Rather than attempting to conceal the context of the performance, these early representations make little attempt to disguise the fact that the dances performed were probably staged for them; in fact the European visitors are the occasion for the hula.

The next visual document of some significance is a drawing by Jacques Etienne Victor Arago (1790–1855), an artist accompanying the voyage of Louis de Freycinet (1817–19). Entitled "Femme de l'île Mowi dansant" (fig. 4) the woman is depicted performing a *hula noha* (seated hula). Naked from the waist up, her costume consists of a full skirt and her heavily tattooed breasts, chest and arms. Modern scholars have recognized in this image essential features of the *hula noha*. The scene was reproduced by Arago in three different versions with each one showing variations in hand movements, costume and position.[8] Together they provide a composite picture of essential features of this one dance and illustrate at the same time the principle of variation in performance.

Another striking feature of this image is a detail of the tattooing on the dancer's body depicting a line of goats (an animal introduced by the Europeans) on each breast.

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6 Such questions would include the discrepancies between the verbal and visual renderings, for example. King's stress on the grotesque, the distortion of movement and face, finds no expression in Webber's drawing, which renders graceful movement and rather finely drawn features. The perspective from the other side must also be considered. If the performance was indeed a parodic taunting, what was the point of it? This is perhaps interesting in the context of the tragedy to come: Cook's death.

7 For details of costume, see Emerson (1909:49–51).

8 See Andersen (1934:104), Rose (1980:186, fig. 142) and Kaeppler, who terms the image "*hula kuhi lima* in traditional attire" (1983:37, fig.13).

Fig. 2: "Danse des Hommes dans les îles Sandwich"; lithograph by L.C. Franquelin, after a drawing by Louis Choris; 1822 (courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives)

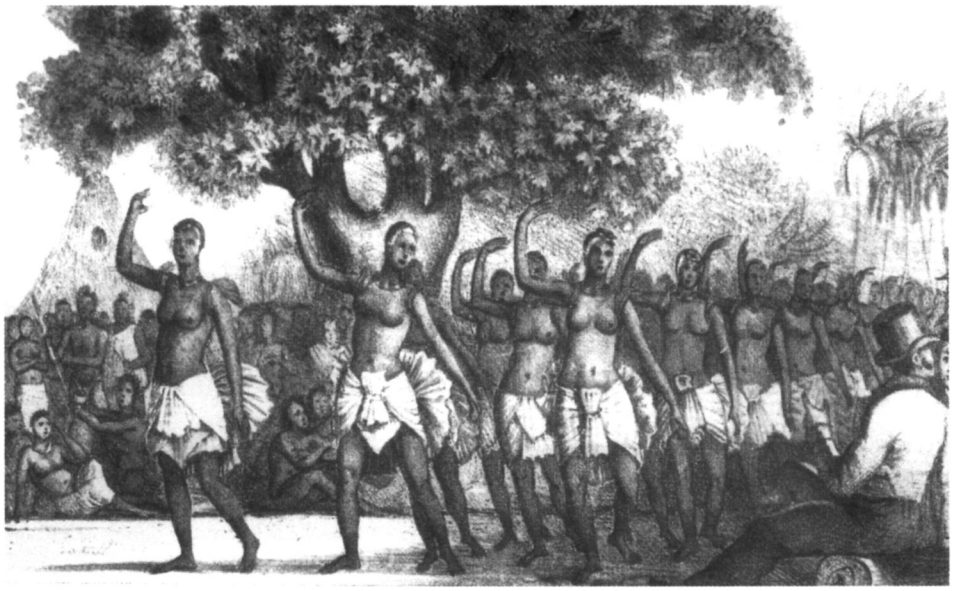

Fig. 3: "Danse des Femmes dans les îles Sandwich" by Louis Choris; 1822 (courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives)

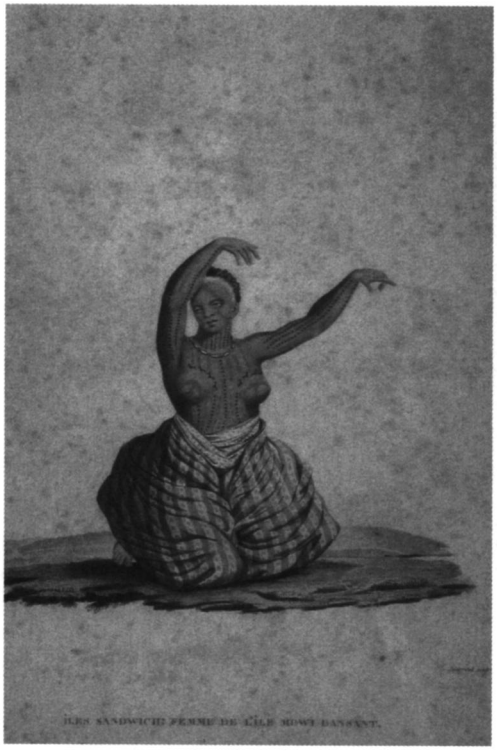

Fig. 4: "Femme de l'île Mowi [Maui] dansant"; engraving by Avgrand after a drawing by Jacques Arago; ca. 1822 (courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives)

Although traditional in most senses of the word, the body is already visibly marked by the European presence, albeit in a mediated form. The image of the goats, inscribed on the body, stands as a sign of autonomous indigenous response to a new cultural force, assimilating as it does, new perceptions into an existing cultural system. Whether the goats are totemized (i.e. integrated into the religious system) or are just decorative remains unclear. Nevertheless, they stand for an initial, albeit rudimentary transition of the dance into a cross-cultural communicative system. They stand also for the performativity of Hawaiian culture in Marshall Sahlin's definition of the term, i.e. its readiness to change rules and signs in response to an altered cultural situation. The question of performativity will be discussed below.[9]

A further step along the continuum of performative assimilation of new cultural signs within the framework of hula is illustrated in a dance scene rendered by the French marine painter Bathélemy Lauvergne, who visited the Hawaiian islands in 1836 on board the French ship Bonite. Bathélemy (fig. 5) shows a complex performance situation with a solo female dancer accompanied by seated drummers and watched by a mixed audience of Hawaiians and Europeans. This performance had been especially arranged for the European visitors by King Kamehameha III at his country residence. Roger Rose notes that by this time hula "had already entered a peri-

9 Arago provides quite extensive description of and commentary on Hawaiian tattooing practices. The bizarre nature of the motifs he ascribes to the inconstant, irresolute and fantastical nature of the Hawaiians while distinguishing between males and females. Especially for the women, tattooing in general and animal motifs in particular are a kind of 'rage'. A young woman without a line of goats on her body would be considered 'dishonoured'. Next to goats, he lists in order of importance the following motifs for women: chessboards, fans, and birds (Arago 1839:125). He also goes on to discount the theory that tattooing in Hawaii should be read as a kind of hieroglyphics by the aid of which the history of an individual is 'conserved'. He describes how he himself "decorated" numerous Hawaiian "flanks" with motifs from Greek mythology and that these in turn were imitated by indigenous artists (1839:126).

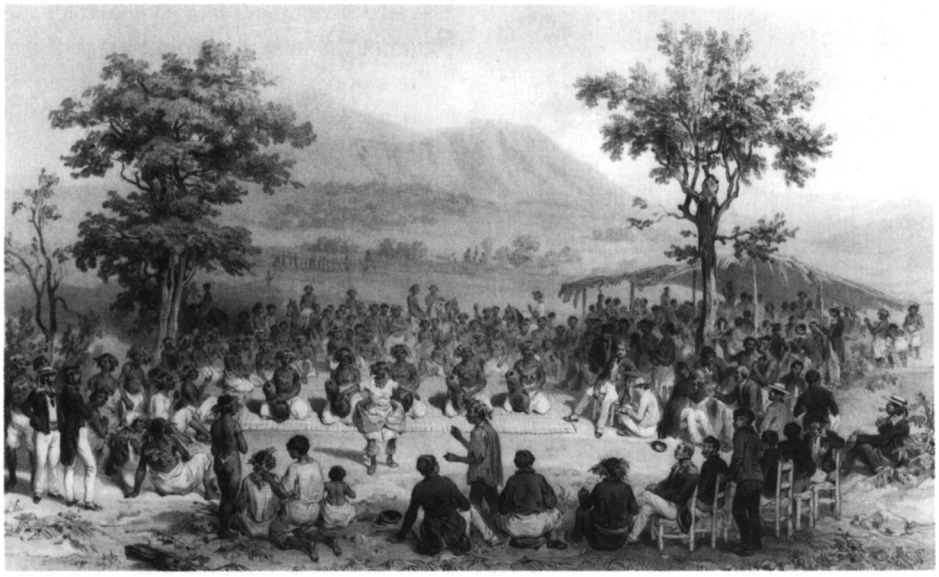

Fig. 5: "Scene de Danse aux Iles Sandwich"; lithograph by Barthelemy Lauvergne; ca. 1836 (courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives; negative number CP 76816)

od of decline" owing to missionary interference (Rose 1980:186). In this scene the European influence on costuming is already apparent. Not only the Hawaiian spectators but also the dancer are clad in elements of Western clothing. The French consul for Manila, Théodore-Adolphe Barrot, who witnessed the performance described the costume as a skirt made of calico, composed of "pieces of cloth, suspended from the hips, and hanging in graceful folds, [which] imparted a sort of originality to their movements" (Rose 1980:186). The female dancer is almost fully clad, in comparison to the drummers, who were, as another witness noted, "naked to the waist; their arms and breast were tattooed, and loose folds of tapa of various colours covered the lower part of their bodies" (Barrot 1978:50). Sixteen or seventeen years after Arago's depiction, hula is already revealing clear signs of assimilation on the level of costume and performance context into an altered, European paradigm. While Cook and his officers were never privy to formal performances of hula, perhaps because of religious tabus, by 1836 they were considered a part of Hawaiian hospitality to high-ranking visitors. A process of secularization was setting in which would ultimately lead to the touristic hula as a symbol of Hawaiian *aloha* (hospitality).

These earliest images of hula provide a framework in which to regard the proliferation of contexts for hula towards the end of the nineteenth century. The period following the establishment of the American mission under Hiram S. Bingham in 1820 – although missionary influence had been felt as early as 1802 (Costa 1951:58) – saw a

Fig. 6: Two women in hula outfits; ambrotype; ca. 1858 (courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives; negative number CP 76817-CP 74142-XC 95461)

severe curtailment in the religious function of the hula in particular.[10] As far as the iconographical record is concerned the next major changes in the middle of the nineteenth century coincide with the development of photography. The earliest photograph of hula, dating from 1858, an ambrotype, already prefigures the tradition of studio-produced studies for the tourist market (fig. 6).[11] The floor has been retouched to give the appearance of sand (Rose 1980:186). The costumes depicted here are also characteristic of one image of hula which was to persist throughout the nineteenth century. The wide cloth skirts, tightly buttooned blouses, fibre anklets represent the exact opposite of the image of scantily clad South Seas maidens. This picture was taken one year before the passage of legislation regulating public performances of hula. The dance was permitted provided it was "not of an immoral character, to which admission is obtainable by the payment of money" (Barrère, Pukui, and Kelly 1980:41; cited in Rose 1980:187). Against this background the image seems to be conveying a double message: on the one hand an image of tightly buttoned respectability – anything less likely to arouse 'immoral passions' is scarcely imaginable. This certainly holds true for the photographic image and it is only this particular function we can study. The effect of the dancers in motion, their kinaesthetic appeal, is, it would seem, deliberately effaced in this static pose. The other implicit message is a commercial one. Here we have to take cognizance of the context and purpose of representation. Already hula was being manœvred into a context of commercial exploitation as the tourist industry in Hawaii began to grow in the second half of the nineteenth century. Further legislation was passed in 1865 and 1870 to remove most restrictions, thus "opening the way for wide participation in hula per-

10 The history of hula, particularly its ill fortune under the missionaries has been extensively documented and need not be repeated here. For different perspectives see (in chronological order) Emerson (1909); Costa (1951); Barrère, Pukui and Kelly (1980); Kaeppler (1983); and, most recently, Buck (1993).

11 Ambrotype was one of the earliest photographic procedures which involved printing on glass a positive image on a wet plate collodion. It was superseded by negative plates and film.

formances throughout the islands" (Rose 1980:187). Within this context photography had already begun to establish itself as a purveyor of commercial interests, particularly in the realm of theatre and performance.

Multiple identities/multiple images

The final one and half decades leading up to the close of the century see an upsurge in the importance of hula within Hawaiian society and a multiplication of its functions. The photographs to be analyzed in the following section were all taken within a period of approximately ten years (between 1885 and 1895) and are roughly contemporaneous with Krämer's visit to Hawaii. The images should thus be regarded not chronologically (some of them cannot be exactly dated anyway) but rather as coeval and thus as demonstrations of multiple performative identities and functions.

Under King Kalakaua (1874–1891) hula flourished again, yet within a fundamentally altered cultural context. When Kalakaua, the 'Merrie Monarch' assumed the Hawaiian throne in 1874 he called *kumu hula* (hula teachers) to his court and revived the tradition of hula performers being part of the court retinue as had been the case in pre-contact times. With Kalakaua begins what might be called a conscious reinvention of tradition for the purpose of cementing Hawaiian national identity and reinforcing indigenous political aspirations which were coming under pressure from the white settlers. Although the reintroduction of ancient hula as a form of court entertainment was initially conceived as a demonstration of indigenous traditionalism, it led ironically (or perhaps logically) to major innovations in the performance form itself, it "became a breeding place for change" as Kaeppler notes (1983:23). These changes received dynamic public demonstrations during the 1880s when Kalakaua staged large hula festivals on various occasions. The celebrations were extensively photographed and we have a large number of photographic documents in different contexts. Figure 7 is taken from Kalakaua's 1885 birthday celebrations. It shows a line of women dancers performing outdoors to an audience standing around. The costume closely resembles that of figure 6, the long, calf-length dresses, long-sleeved voluminous blouses and head wreaths. This set the fashion and standard for ancient or traditional hula which has persisted with slight variations until today.

The various guises under which hula was demonstrated and promoted, even within the same courtly context, can be seen by comparing figures 8 and 9. Figure 8 shows the hula master Ioane Ukeke with three of his troupe. Ukeke was responsible for staging Kalakaua's festivals and earned the name "Honolulu Dandy". While the dancers are clad in 'traditional' attire, Ukeke presents himself in an intriguing mixture of top hat, jacket, *lei* (simple dress without decorative wreaths) and cigar. The backdrop is a painted view of Waikiki beach and Diamond Head, Honolulu's most famous

Fig. 7: Hula dancers at Kalakaua's birthday; November 1885 (courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives; negative number CP 74407)

Fig. 8: Ioane and his hula troupe; ca. 1880 (courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives; negative number CP 76818-CP 21257, CP 44723-XS 13075)

Fig. 9: Hula dancers, centre: Pauahi, court dancer for Kalakaua; ca. 1885 (courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives; negative number CP 59364)

landmark, quintessential touristland, even in the late nineteenth century. Thus we have a conflation here of a courtly dance troupe dedicated to the preservation and practice of ancient hula with a standardized, even stereotypical vista and a somewhat hybridized Hawaiian male presence.

Figure 9 also depicts hula dancers against a stereotypical South Seas backdrop. The central figure, holding the *ukelele*, is also a court dancer for Kalakaua, yet the costume could not be more different. The grass skirts and *lei*, commonly associated with Hawaiian hula, were introduced about this time. The origin of the grass skirts is uncertain. They may have been introduced by visiting Tahitian troupes, from whom the Hawaiians certainly learned the famous hip-rotating dance, synonymous with hula, but in fact entirely unknown to ancient hula. Other scholars identify Gilbert Islanders, present in Hawaii as labourers, as the source of inspiration for what was to become one of the most famous dance costumes of all time.[12] The *ukelele* is itself equally synonymous with hula and was incorporated into the hula performance tradition at this time within the context of Kalakaua's court dancers, along with hymn singing and band music. European music was refashioned and syncretized during these years to produce a distinctively Hawaiian music and dance tradition, which found acceptance by both Hawaiians and Europeans alike. This was introduced in one spectacular performance as Kaeppler notes:

> In Kalakaua's court all these influences converged and at his jubilee celebration in 1886 a famous Hawaiian dancer appeared in a hula accompanied by ukulele and steel guitar. The new music was sanctioned by the King, teachers, and performers, and loved by the audience. Soon most new compositions were in this style. [...] This new idiom is now known as "Hawaiian music." In truth it has little indigenous Hawaiian music in it, but is uniquely Hawaiian in that it was developed in Hawai'i by Hawaiians out of a combination of Western music ideas available to them in the second half of the 19th century (Kaeppler 1983:24).

Both process and performance document a moment of cultural and performative self-fashioning as a response to heavy acculturative influences. The picture of the girls in grass skirts, and the *ukelele* reveals, however, also the ambivalence of this process. Seen together with figures 7 and 8, a multiplicity of images and performative identities becomes apparent. Under the putative strategy of reviving ancient hula, the court dancers created a completely new form, incorporating new movements (Tahitian hip-gyrations), new musical instruments and idiom. Out of an initially folkloristic impetus arose a highly inventive syncretic performance form.

Finally we shall return to Krämer's inquiry, his search for ancient hula in 1897. As an answer we can offer two alternatives, both images coinciding within a year or two with Krämer's visit. His journey into the forest may have led him to a scene as shown

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12 For the origin of the grass skirts, see Barrère, Pukui and Kelly (1980:72).

Fig. 10: Hula dancers; ca. 1899 (courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives; negative number CP 32352)

by figure 10, dating from 1899: in a grove of trees somewhere, two bare-breasted hula dancers (or are they dancers even?) pose. They are accompanied by a woman in a sleeveless dress with a guitar and an elderly man in a loin cloth playing a noseflute. This photograph contains in one image the multiple identity of hula at the end of the century, encapsulating a range of projections. The forest setting corresponds with Krämer's intuition that genuine 'old hula' might be best found in a remote area, far from the madding crowd. The bare-breasted women correspond to the eroticized image of hula, one, however, which had more to do with European, especially missionary projections, than with the actual costume codes of the form, whether ancient or modern. The girl with the guitar suggests that for the Hawaiians or for the European photographer staging the photograph, the instrument introduced by the Portugese in the middle of the nineteenth century, had become synonymous with hula, to the point perhaps where it was inconceivable without it. The old man playing the noseflute is finally a marker of the pre-contact musical accompaniment and his presence is somewhat at odds with the guitar-playing women, at least in the context of staged primitivism, in which the photograph presumably fits. The image is written over with the whole genealogy of European projections regarding hula: the contradictions and impositions. It is a composite image trying in a sense to cater for all these desires. It is

Fig. 11: Backyard hula dancing on rug atop the grass; ca. 1900; Alonzo Gartley (courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives; negative number CP 90762)

perhaps the image that would have met with Krämer's approval, if he could have been convinced it was authentic.

The last image to be considered here (fig. 11) dates also from the late 1890s. It is a snapshot (as far as snapshots were technically possible at the time) of hula being performed in a backyard, probably somewhere in Honolulu. Although this performance would certainly not have met with Krämer's approval – the urban setting alone would have been a great disappointment –, it is 'authentic' to the extent that it appears to be an indigenous performance context. With the exception perhaps of the photographer, there are no European spectators. The dancers are clad in *lei* or anklets. They are accompanied by two men playing calabash drums, a sign of *hula kahiko*, dances performed in a broadly traditional way. The photographer has caught the characteristic but subtle sway and hand movements of ancient hula, as performed today. Of interest here, however, is less the question ancient or modern: the image suggests a conflation of both and the existence of a performance form integrated into indigenous society. It is a formal occasion judging by the attire of the spectators – a birthday or wedding perhaps – and hula dancers have evidently been employed or invited for that special celebration. We see here hula as part of a living tradition within the fabric of Hawaiian society. Performed neither for the tourist gaze nor for courtly delectation and political self-representation, it appears here to be in a third space, somewhere between the private and the public.

Theatricalization, folklorization, and performativity

On the basis of the material presented, it is clear that hula was by the end of the nineteenth century visible in many guises depending on the performance situation. These different 'images' are representative of two counteractive categories: theatricalization and folklorization on the one hand and performativity on the other. The term theatricalization is used here as defined by Edward Said in his study "Orientalism" (1978). The discourse of orientalism, according to Said, "theatricalizes" the East in the sense that it reduces and defines it, rendering it observable as though the East or Orient were "a theatrical stage affixed to Europe" (1978:63) on which the basically finite set of dramatic figures peopling the Orient made their exists and entrances for the delectation and edification of the Western beholder. Said's concept of theatricalization is both metaphoric and metonymic. It is metaphoric in the sense that he invokes the old *theatrum mundi simile*. It is metonymic to the extent that the process he terms theatrical or theatricalization embraces more that the old trope. It designates a particularly Western style of thought which ultimately was brought to bear on most of the colonized world.

Taking Said's use of the term one step further, we can postulate that theatricalization and colonialism are related phenomena. Theatricalization carries with it a number of concomitant processes involving fixture and closure necessary for or inherent in any kind of *mise en scène*. The *mise en scène* of a culture, country or ethnic group implies that they can be represented by a finite set of mostly recurrent props, costumes and corporeal signs. Within this limited repertoire dance is perhaps the form of expression the West most often used and adapted for the purpose of theatricalizing other cultures. In the context of Hawaii, the performance form of hula became synonymous with its dance component, which in turn came to stand for the indigenous people of the country: the process of colonization was concomitant with the theatricalization of the objects of colonization.

Performativity on the other hand is a process countermanding the closure of theatricalization, implying as it does constant change by the iterative force of repetition. The discussion surrounding performativity that has emerged over the past ten years – driven on the one hand by the performance studies and on the other by post-structuralist debates focusing on the decentering of fixed identities – can be usefully adopted to frame a set of problems revolving around the construction of cultural identity through performance, or the use of performance to help construct and communicate such identities.[13] The historical background of this paper – the relationship between hula, Hawaiians and European perceptions of both in the late nineteenth century – means also that the concept of performativity is framed within the contingencies of a specific period in time.

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13 For a discussion of the term "performativity", see Parker and Kosofsky (1995).

Performativity can also be applied to cultural codes. Hawaiian culture, at pre-contact time at least, was a performative one (as opposed to European culture, which was "prescriptive"), argues Marshall Sahlins (1985). "Performative" means for Sahlins that the culture was continually able to create its cultural rules anew and thus assimilate new cultural signs with relative ease. Hawaiian culture was performative in as much as it permitted a great deal of freedom for interpreting cultural rules or even allowed these to be created *in situ*.[14] Sahlin's concept of the performative is, however, by no means limited to ancient Hawaiian society but is applicable as a wider theoretical category with which to investigate cross-cultural performative encounters. Sahlins notes that processes of transformation and reproduction can be best perceived and investigated in situations of cross-cultural contact (1986:110). Cross-cultural encounters intensify even more the acute reflexivity characteristic of performance situations in general. A working hypothesis of this paper is that the changes and adaptations of Hawaiian cultural performances (rituals, songs, dances etc.) under the influence of colonial contact reflect the cultural flexibility implied in Sahlin's concept.

The counterweight to the processes of change by iteration inherent in the concept of performativity is folklorization, which I wish to consider here as a specific historical manifestation of theatricalization. For the purposes of this paper it can be regarded as a subset of the latter. It attempts to 'fossilize' cultural forms at one point of a continuum, usually a time regarded as predating the deleterious effects of European 'progress'. In its manifestations as performance (folk dances, folk music etc.) it is linked to theatricalization as defined above by its tendency to emphasize a fixed, unchanging performance tradition. Ideally folklorization in performance repeats the same performance procedures (choreography, dance steps, costumes etc.) as those enacted a century or more beforehand. In the European context folklorization was conceived of as a counter to modernization and industrialization and is a by-product of early nineteenth century romanticism. It is an early application of what James Clifford has termed the "salvage paradigm" (1987:121) in Cultural Anthropology. In fact, much early ethnography was conceived as an extension of folklore studies to other, non-European cultures. Krämer's request to see 'genuine Hawaiian hula' presumably before it was lost forever, was motivated by the folklorist's (and ethnographer's) desire to witness something unmarked by the European presence.

This desire is of course ultimately framed within an unresolvable aporia. Firstly, because the performance situation is by definition already marked – by their 'Middle European' presence. Secondly, because by 1897 traditional hula – in the sense of hula performed before missionary influence led to its curtailment and repression after 1820 – had been folklorized by the Hawaiians themselves, that is salvaged, resuscitated and

14 Sahlins differentiates between prescriptive and performative societies as follows: "The performative orders tend to assimilate themselves to contigent circumstances, whereas the prescriptive rather assimilate the circumstances to themselves" (1986:xii).

marked as 'traditionally Hawaiian'. The efforts of King Kalakaua in particular to revive hula were in part motivated by the desire to resituate hula in a discourse of preservation. Hawaiian culture and the monarchy as its political figurehead were under heavy pressure by the 1880s. The restoration of hula in its 'traditional' form functioned as a high profile indicator of cultural and national integrity that late nineteenth century European ideology required. The nostalgic European discourse of pure cultural forms required in a sense 'ocular proof' that indigenous Hawaiian culture was flourishing. Although the initial impetus of the renaissance was one of revival and restoration, the end result was a creative reinvention of the form under the auspices of a folklorizing justification.[15]

The photographs examined suggest, however, that the folklorization strategy was subject to contradictions and only partially successful. Overtaken by the creative iteration of performance and the need to adapt to heterogenous audiences (indigenous Hawaiians, European settlers, tourists), hula transcended its own folklorization by becoming various things for various spectators. The iconographical documents suggest furthermore that the opposition between theatricalization and performativity does not allow itself to be seen as a clear dichotomy of European versus Polynesian with the European representations tending toward theatricalization on the one hand and the Polynesian towards performativity on the other. By the late nineteenth century the Hawaiians were engaged in theatricalizing their own culture for political and commercial reasons with hula functioning as the central icon. At the same time the dynamics of cultural performativity resulted in the Hawaiians losing control of the phenomenon so that hula fractured into a multiplicity of functions and identities.

Summary

Hula today is a quintessential cultural sign, acting as a focal point for the cultural identity formation of Hawaiians. Of equal importance, however, is its function as a theatrical form, an act of performance combining music, narrative, lyrical poetry, symbolic and mimetic movement and costume. The title of this paper, "Dressing the Hula" points to the relationship between body and clothing as a particular form of embodiment. The hula costume is theatricalized in the semiotic sense that its constitutive elements are in performance 'signs of signs'. Whatever the dress and the movements may mean in the everyday world, they mean something else in the temporal-spatial nexus

15 The term 'reinvention of tradition' is being used here in the sense defined by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), although I am aware that it is a very contested term among Pacific scholars. As Hobsbawm and Ranger propose in their now classic definition, "invented tradition" is "a set of practices [...] of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition [and] [...] attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historical past" (1983:1).

of a hula performance. Such a performance always represents a particular manner of staging the body for a particular audience at a particular time and place. As such it is replete with cultural and aesthetic meanings which are invariably read differently by different spectators. This paper has tried to demonstrate some of these different readings during a particular period of substantial change in Hawaiian society. These include the strategic folklorization by King Kalakaua's court dancers who revived a putative traditional hula but paved the way for the commercialized touristic forms. The touristic manifestation of hula in turn reveals itself to be a curious composite requiring the form to be deliberately primitivized in a way in which it had never existed. Hula was also a form of danced entertainment by Hawaiians for Hawaiians utilizing the dress codes of the time and thus at odds with both folkloristic, ethnographic and touristic expectations and constructions of it. The photographs demonstrate that a clear binary of 'traditional' hula on the one hand and an 'inauthentic' touristic version on the other never existed. In terms of its physical presentation and cultural significance hula was subjected to a complex dynamic of cultural borrowings and redefinitions that incorporated historical exigencies, aesthetic innovation and cultural identity formation.

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