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MULTIMEDIA REVIEW

Maiki Aiu Lake. Joy Chong-Stannard, director. PBS Hawaii, 2002.
Nā Kamalei: The Men of Hula. Lisette Marie Flanary, director. Lehua Films, 2007.

Savored by foreign cosmopolitans, derided by U.S. missionaries, and misunderstood by both, *hula kahiko* ("ancient," or traditional hula) assumed a contested, marginal, and necessarily clandestine space in nineteenth-century Hawai'i. Its decline in the face of religious prohibition was offset by perseverant tradition bearers and interrupted by brief periods of renewal and innovation. In the early twentieth century, hula gained global recognition as a tourist entertainment—its female practitioners, often highly skilled, proffering an *'auana* (modern) style, matched sonically to the diatonic stylings of the 'ukulele. Traditional hula's most enduring revival began only in the 1970s, helping to launch and sustain what is now referred to as the Hawaiian Renaissance. The Renaissance "recycling" of *hula kahiko*,[1] however, lay claim to a different set of aesthetic and social values: It reasserted the textual basis of hula gesture and the centrality of the dance in Hawaiians' spiritual lives. It also questioned the absence of men, and in so doing opened up a conversation about the gendered nature of Native Hawaiian identities. The films reviewed here document the contributions of two acclaimed individuals—Maiki Aiu Lake (1925–84) and her protégé Robert Cazimero—active in the Renaissance projects that revived *hula kahiko* and reimagined colonially shaped regimes of the body.

Director Chong-Stannard traces Maiki Aiu Lake's development from a young woman unversed in Hawaiian language and poetry, struggling to reconcile Catholic with indigenous beliefs, to one of the most influential hula pedagogues of the twentieth century. In the 1970s and 1980s, she graduated unprecedented numbers of *kumu hula* (hula teachers) and *'ōlapa* (dancers); fittingly, it is her student-successors—now leading chanters, dancers, Hawaiian language scholars, and musical innovators—whose voices are used to chronicle Maiki's life.

Viewers learn that the breadth of Maiki's pedagogical reach, her use of print literacy in the maintenance of oral tradition, and her choice of non-Christian rituals for her students' *'ūniki* (graduation) inspired both admiration and critique. Maiki relied on her own mentors (hula masters Lōkālia Montgomery and 'Iolani Luahine; instrument maker Kahea Beckley; monarchy-period chanter Pua Ha'aheo; Hawaiian scholar Mary Pukui, among others) to sustain her as she attempted to merge tradition with modernity. The dance "studio" that Maiki opened in 1948 later received official sanction as a *hālau hula* (hula school), but inviting participation from a broader paying public made her vulnerable to accusations of making a "business out of tradition" (Puakea Nogelmeier, interviewee, *Maiki Aiu Lake*). Despite rigorous training of a highly select group of students, some came to believe that she graduated too many, too quickly. Even her experiments with period dress invited painful scrutiny.

[1] Adrienne L. Kaeppler, "Recycling Tradition: A Hawaiian Case Study," *Dance Chronicle* 27/3 (2004): 293–311.

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The documentary's chronological, biographical narrative is richly augmented with moving and still images, including rare film footage. Although dense with information, the fairly rapid change of sights and sounds makes it easily digestible and appealing to a variety of audiences, including undergraduates. Maiki's students and family members provide nuanced insights into many facets of hula practice in the 1940s and 1950s especially, including its relationship to the tourist entertainment industry. They also generate a sympathetic discourse that is often absent in much "post-colonial" scholarship on Hawai'i.[2] That literature has often been rightly critical of hula in the tourist sphere, of non-Hawaiian cultural appropriations, and of Western pedagogies, but just as often, it overlooks the subject positions of *kūpuna* (elders) like Maiki. In Hawai'i, Maiki was negotiating one of many intense intercultural "contact zones" in the United States from the 1940s to the 1980s.[3] As her student, singer/composer/*kumu hula* Robert Cazimero observes, "Maiki didn't really have that . . . distinction between . . . a Waikīkī hula dancer or . . . a traditional *kahiko* dancer. And I think that has to do a lot with the fact that she was [both] those things." Her actions as a dancer and *kumu hula* raised questions that reverberated in the hula world (and revival scholarship) for many decades to come: Where does hula belong—in the tourist sphere, on the competition stage, in the classroom, at the altar? Which altars? What place do spiritual practices have in the commercial realm? To whom does hula belong—to Hawaiians alone, to anyone steeped in its poetic texts and expert in its execution, to women *and* men?

In many respects the gender question was settled in the mid-1970s, when Maiki's vision of an all-male *hālau* (school) was brought to fruition by her students. One of those *hālau*, Nā Kamalei, is the subject of the second film; the school was founded and continues to be led by Robert Cazimero, one of the most recognizable voices of contemporary Hawaiian music. Interviewee Wayne Chang, Nā Kamalei's co-*kumu* (1975–80), credits *hula kahiko*'s revival with repopulating the dance stage because so much of the poetry calls for male dancers. I would also add that *kahiko* choreographies possess and cultivate a distinct gestural vocabulary that is often read as "masculine";[4] *kahiko* does not include, for example, the undulating hands and fingers typically associated with women and the *'auana* style.

Whereas *Maiki Aiu Lake* mixes interview material with location and studio performance, and is aimed at a more scholarly audience, *Nā Kamalei: The Men of Hula* is largely filmed *in situ*, focusing on behind-the-scenes performance preparations. In its construction, director Flanary invokes many of the conventions of the aged artist comeback genre. Recalling the *hālau*'s beginnings through still photos, it follows, by way of reminiscence, the dancing lives of some of its oldest members and culminates in two stellar performances at Hawai'i's most prestigious hula competition, the Merrie Monarch Festival. Significantly, that occasion also marked the thirtieth anniversary of Nā Kamalei's genesis.

[2] Many Native Hawaiians assert that theirs is still a colonized society.

[3] Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* 91 (1991): 33–40.

[4] See Amy K. Stillman, "Hawaiian Hula Competitions: Event, Repertoire, Performance, Tradition," *Journal of American Folklore* 109/434 (Autumn 1996): 357–80.

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The cameras do not turn away from Cazimero's often brutal excoriations of his students. Unapologetic, Cazimero prefers to work with men because "it's *so* much easier to discipline them." An unflinching focus on Cazimero's tuition serves at least two purposes. First, showing that dancers have to be tough physically *and* mentally to withstand the demands of training serves as a defense of hula's "manliness"—in classical American terms, it should be noted. Second, it highlights the importance of personal awakening in the process. Cazimero's most extended critique, directed toward the youngest (seventeen-year-old) member of Nā Kamalei turns an observation about a "lazy" gesture into a meditation on character and mutual responsibility. Indeed, many of the men recognize the role of hula in shaping their affective lives, in expanding their capacity for love and gentleness. As the film progresses, viewers witness many tender exchanges among Nā Kamalei's "hula brothers."

Interviews with Nā Kamalei members and close associates reveal that the *hālau*'s early audiences diverged along heteronormative, gendered lines, especially with regard to its signature swaying hip movement. Men often derided it as feminine and labeled its practitioners "*māhū*" (gay, effeminate). Under a female gaze, however, the men were objects of delectation. Although the social dynamics of male hula are less charged than they were in the 1970s and 1980s, ambivalence lingers,[5] and that ambivalence leaks into the film itself. Throughout the documentary, we hear *hālau* members talk about the shame once associated with their passion for hula. While the heterosexual dancers' burdens are well elaborated, the film is silent on the personal effects of stigma on gay *hālau* members, perhaps reflecting the filmmakers' desire to protect them, or their camera subjects' unwillingness to be more forthcoming. This silence is, perhaps, an indication that the gender question has been only partially answered.

Hula is a serious movement discipline, and its transmission by figures like Maiki Aiu Lake and Robert Cazimero make for compelling stories—especially when told from the perspectives of their male students, whose voices are privileged in these two films. Viewers can learn much about the early days of the Hawaiian Renaissance (as well as the period immediately preceding) from those who lived it, as well as the powerful bonds that tie students to their *kumu hula*.

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[5] See also Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai'i* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

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