

Adria Imada. *Aloha America: Hula Circuits through the U.S. Empire*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012. Pp. 392. Paper \$24.99.

Adria Imada uses hula dancers as a lens for viewing the intricacies of Hawaii's integration into American culture. Hula practitioners engaged in a counter-colonial struggle by constructing alternative narratives of Hawaii's loss of independence, challenging prevailing notions of a romanticized cultural intimacy between America and Hawaii. While Hawaii's incorporation into the United States was presented as a peaceful and mutually-beneficial process, many native Hawaiians had a very different understanding. Hula gained visibility in the U.S. as an exotic practice during the 1890s, but its surge in popularity between the 1920s and 1960s allowed performers to showcase their political views. Imada, Assistant Professor of History at the University of California, Irvine, shows how hula performers acted as cultural ambassadors, negotiating the Hawaiian-U.S. relationship in their own way, rather than accommodating or directly challenging it.

Hula gave women an opportunity to be cultural actors who preserved traditional Hawaiian culture while establishing a new Hawaiian identity. Hula, a traditional art, was significant to the islands' culture as a way of preserving myth and history. This performance art underwent a process of commodification beginning in the 1920s, turning it into a highly-visible spectacle, making performers objects of both fascination and criticism by their audiences and in popular imagination. The rapid shift in Hula's popularity coincided with a reorientation of the military and political relationship between Hawaii and the U.S. The imperial American narrative of the acquisition of Hawaii hinged upon an "imagined intimacy." Hawaii was imagined in mainstream culture as a pliable, idyllic, feminine entity receptive towards the guidance and advance of the United States, a

narrative reinforced by Hula circuits. Imada investigates the role of Hula dancers in this context, and she affirms that they were self-aware cultural ambassadors that did not merely acquiesce to the role intended for them.

Hula performers challenged the status quo not by outright resistance towards U.S. imperialism, but rather by altering the official narrative to more clearly reflect their own past experiences and highlighting their role within the contemporary political environment. Hula circuits took performers across the United States, Europe, and to World's Fairs. In these places, as well as in luaus and performances for visitors to the islands, Hula was intended to portray Hawaii as receptive towards American advances, legitimizing American acquisition of the island nation while also providing a gendered and racialized understanding of the U.S.-Hawaiian dynamic. From this platform performers contested such views and contributed their own perspectives lamenting the loss of Hawaiian independence and the decline of traditional Hawaiian culture. They expressed unease about the Hawaiian-American relationship and questioned whether they were merely colonial subjects. These ideas were expressed through performance art, a unique though problematic source for historians. Imada notes her difficulties researching hula. Although hula performers are ubiquitous in popular culture, they also left few documentary sources in the archives.

With a background in American Studies, Imada's interdisciplinary approach is a unique contribution to the scholarship examining American imperialism and resistance to empire. Scholars and students alike will particularly enjoy her idea of counter-colonialism, rather than anti-colonialism. This describes the attitude of hula performers who did not accommodate proponents of the American imperial program, but also did not directly defy the integration of Hawaii into the U.S. Rather, they negotiated the status of

Hawaii and Hawaiians within the domain of American hegemony on their own terms.

John McDonough

Kathy Peiss. *Zoot Suit: The Enigmatic Career of an Extreme Style*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. Pp. 238. Paper \$19.95.

The zoot suit is tied to Mexican American and African American youth as a symbol of resistance to political authority. Kathy Peiss, Professor of American History at the University of Pennsylvania, argues that historians have too easily labeled the wide-legged pants and matching long coats as a mark of resistance. Instead, Peiss explores the circumstances that determine how style may or not may be political, honing in on this particular fashion. Drawing on newspaper articles from around the country, she focuses on reshaping how cultural historians have traditionally looked at the significance of the zoot suit before and after the Los Angeles Zoot Suit Riot of 1943. Rather than simply retelling the story of the riots, the book chronicles how this particular style appeared long before the disturbances, took over American culture, and only then drew attention to racial tensions, becoming a symbol emulated throughout the world.

Although its origins remain a mystery, it is known that the zoot suit style did not begin as a political statement. Following traditions of self-display, young men wore the suit to stand out. However, with America's entry into World War II, the zoot suit's oversized style conflicted with the War Production Board's restriction on textiles. Despite the WPB's limits on textiles manufactured for civilian use, the style continued to spread throughout American society. Men who wore these suits stood out at a time when Americans looked for savings wherever possible. The