

***The Arts of Kingship: Hawaiian Art and National Culture of the Kalākaua Era.*
Stacy L. Kamehiro. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009. 280 pp.***

Reviewed by Holly K. Coleman

In *The Arts of Kingship: Hawaiian Art and National Culture of the Kalākaua Era*, Stacy L. Kamehiro explores the historical contributions to art made by the administration of King David Kalākaua. Kamehiro focuses her analysis on four significant manifestations of visual art: Kalākaua's coronation and regalia, the King Kamehameha Statue, 'Iolani Palace, and the Hawaiian National Museum. The monarchy's patronage of these and other public art projects during the mid-1870s to the mid-1880s consciously articulated a syncretic national culture that reinforced and legitimized Kalākaua's authority as ruler in the face of political dissonance and colonial pressures.

The Arts of Kingship consists of five relatively short and easily read chapters. While Kamehiro offers descriptions of the selected art and architecture, her primary concern is with placing their production and employment within dynamic historical, political, and cultural contexts. Kamehiro is at her best when discussing the ways in which these visual art projects produced shifting layers of meaning, simultaneously employing Native Hawaiian and international concepts of sacredness, power, and rule. The first chapter on Kalākaua's coronation and regalia, as well as the fourth chapter on the formation of the Hawaiian National Museum, are the most immediately relevant to those interested in museum anthropology and related material culture studies. Kamehiro's discussion of the coronation regalia as embodiments of both ancient and innovative forms of art is insightful. Additionally, Kamehiro places the development of the Hawaiian National Museum within the context of the contemporaneous development of national museums across the globe, though she also emphasizes how the form and ordering of the museum and its collections were deeply rooted in Hawaiian historical and cultural knowledge. Ultimately, both projects worked in distinctive ways to reinforce the importance of Hawaiian national identity. Of particular academic value is Kamehiro's compilation of a working catalog for the Hawaiian National Museum, which is meant to facilitate further academic study of the museum's collections, now held by the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Additionally, a series of black and white figures and 16 color plates enhance the narrative, allowing the reader to see the specific works under discussion while reinforcing the importance of visual art analysis in contemporary historical scholarship.

While Kamehiro at times deftly acknowledges the multilayered contexts of production, representation and employment surrounding Hawaiian visual art promoted by the Kalākaua administration, there are significant problems with *The Arts of Kingship* that should not be overlooked. Mistakes in the spelling and usage of Hawaiian words and names are few and far between, although they are noticeable to readers familiar with the Hawaiian language, culture and history. For example, Kamehiro gives the phrase "*aikane punahele*" as the Hawaiian language equivalent of "foreign advisor" when discussing Isaac Davis' service to Kamehameha, relative to the service rendered to Kalākaua by Walter Murray Gibson (p. 123). While Isaac

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Davis did indeed serve as an advisor to Kamehameha, the term *aikāne punahele* refers to the intimate relationship between the two, rather than Davis' official position as a foreign advisor. Examples such as this demonstrate the limits of Kamehiro's cultural literacy.

Furthermore, many contemporary scholars of Hawaiian history will take issue with the assertion that all of 19th century Hawaiian history is colonial history, and that all art produced during this time period is colonial art. While Kamehiro is careful to note in parts of her text that colonial pressures were but one force influencing Hawaiian society at this time, her intense overall focus on colonialism, and even the wording of her narrative in places, suggests that all endeavors undertaken by Kalākaua's administration, artistic or otherwise, were solely responses to colonial pressures. Kamehiro's extensive utilization of colonialism as an analytical frame undercuts her careful construction of other factors that prompted the production of art during this time period.

Particularly problematic is Kamehiro's assertion that her work differs from existing pieces on the visual art of the Kalākaua era because her analysis "articulate[s] Native Hawaiian concepts of history, chiefly rule and nationhood" (p. 4). Curiously, accounts produced by Native Hawaiians, particularly those produced during the Kalākaua era, do not make up a significant portion of Kamehiro's source base and are conspicuously missing in places where they should be. Instead, Kamehiro relies heavily on conceptions of Hawaiian culture and history filtered through the writing of anthropologists, ethnologists, and historians, among others. While these secondary accounts are unquestionably valuable for gaining an understanding of the complexities of Hawaiian society, they must not be the only sources utilized when producing contemporary scholarship, particularly in one that purports to engage and represent Native Hawaiian conceptual frameworks. Ironically, Kamehiro notes the importance of utilizing the large body of sources produced by Native Hawaiians within her narrative, but still fails to engage them in a significant way. In neglecting primary sources, and particularly those sources produced by Native Hawaiians during the Kalākaua era, Kamehiro constricts her analysis of material culture and the socio-political contexts of their formation and deployment, duplicating problems that she herself acknowledges exist in the current Hawaiian historiography.

Recognizing these fundamental limitations, however, Kamehiro's analysis illuminates the importance of the cultural and historical study of late 19th century Hawaiian visual art. Her discussion of the conscious use of shifting layers of traditional and innovative art forms and the resultant articulation of a national culture by the Kalākaua monarchy is perceptive and provoking; with much more research and targeted analytical development, the points raised in Kamehiro's discussion will give greater insight into the reign of King Kalākaua and Hawaiian history.

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