

## **PUBLIC PRESENTATION**

### THE HULA INDUSTRY: THE COMMODIFICATION OF HULA IN JAPAN AND CULTURALLY GROUNDED HULA

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Thursday, April 28, 2016  
2:00pm  
Ka Papa Lo‘i o Kānewai Resource Center

Illustrative of its people and culture, hula – in contemporary times – has undoubtedly become a symbol of Hawai‘i. Stemming from the tourism industry, the stereotypical ideal of hula often aids in the construction of a misconstrued image of a destination paradise. In recent years, hula has become widespread in places throughout the world and Japan has risen to host one of the largest industries of hula. This industry not only exists as an offshoot of our cultural practice, but as a major economic, social, and political mechanism as well. The comparative aspect of this thesis uses the idea of “Culturally Grounded hula” as hula that is grounded in ‘ike, its underlying structures, processes, and protocols; where above all else, cultural content and context is paramount. Hula’s restorative, regenerative, and educational properties provide a cord that binds us to ancestral brilliance – an increasingly important tool for kānaka navigating contemporary times. The apparent commodification of hula in Japan remains unexamined and unexplored.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze and discuss the impacts and influence of the commodification of hula in Japan as it serves as a cultural practice, epistemological storehouse, political expression, and social structure. Above all, I aim to place agency in po‘e hula, equipping us with a full scope of positives and negatives to arrive at complete consciousness, fully capable of navigating and appropriating foreign structures to our benefit. While the analytical aspect of this thesis is, by nature, critical, the intent is that this discussion and analysis will be appreciated, provoking, and thoughtfully considered as we move forward – not just as po‘e hula, but as a collective healthy lāhui in contemporary Hawai‘i.