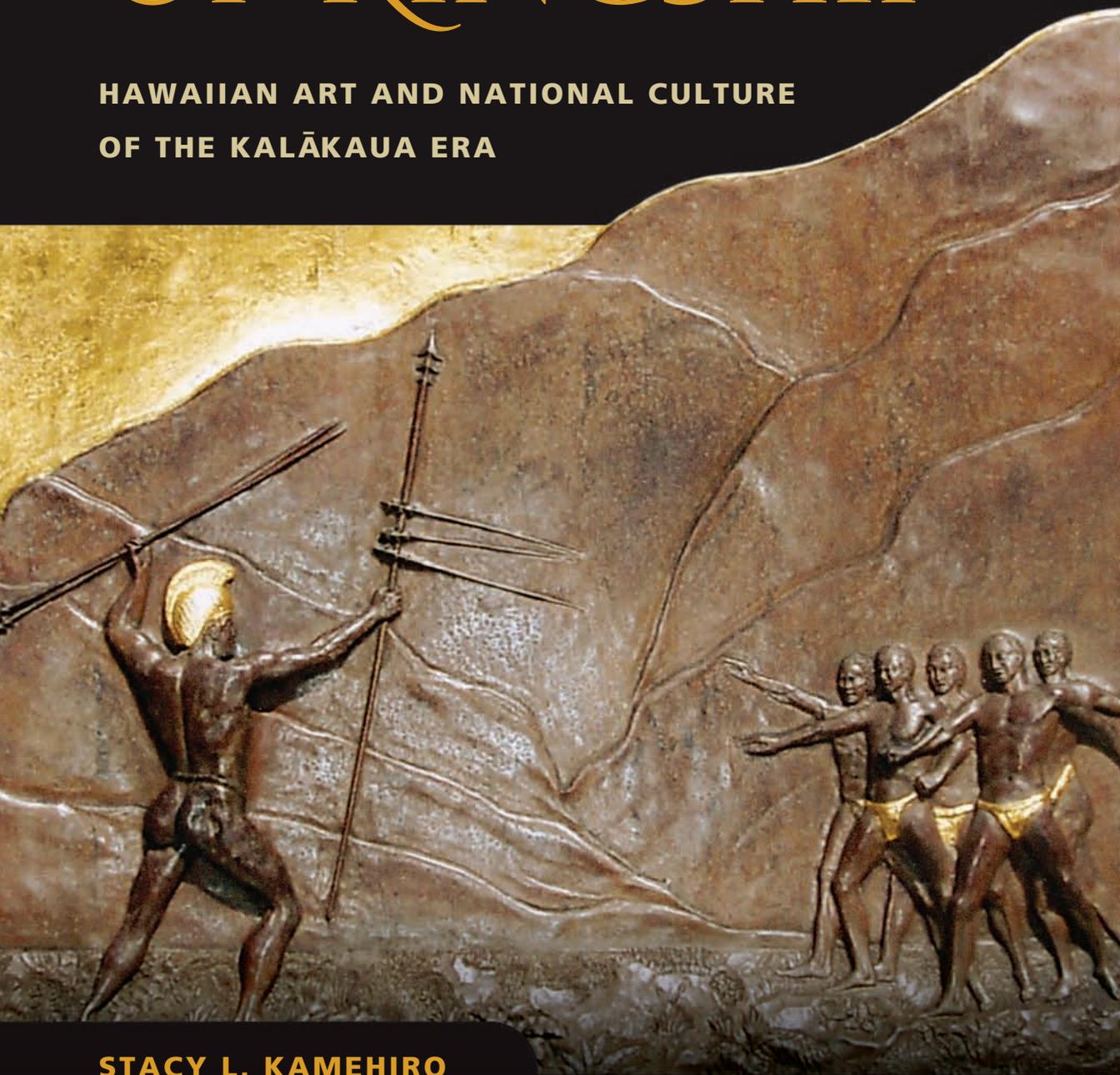


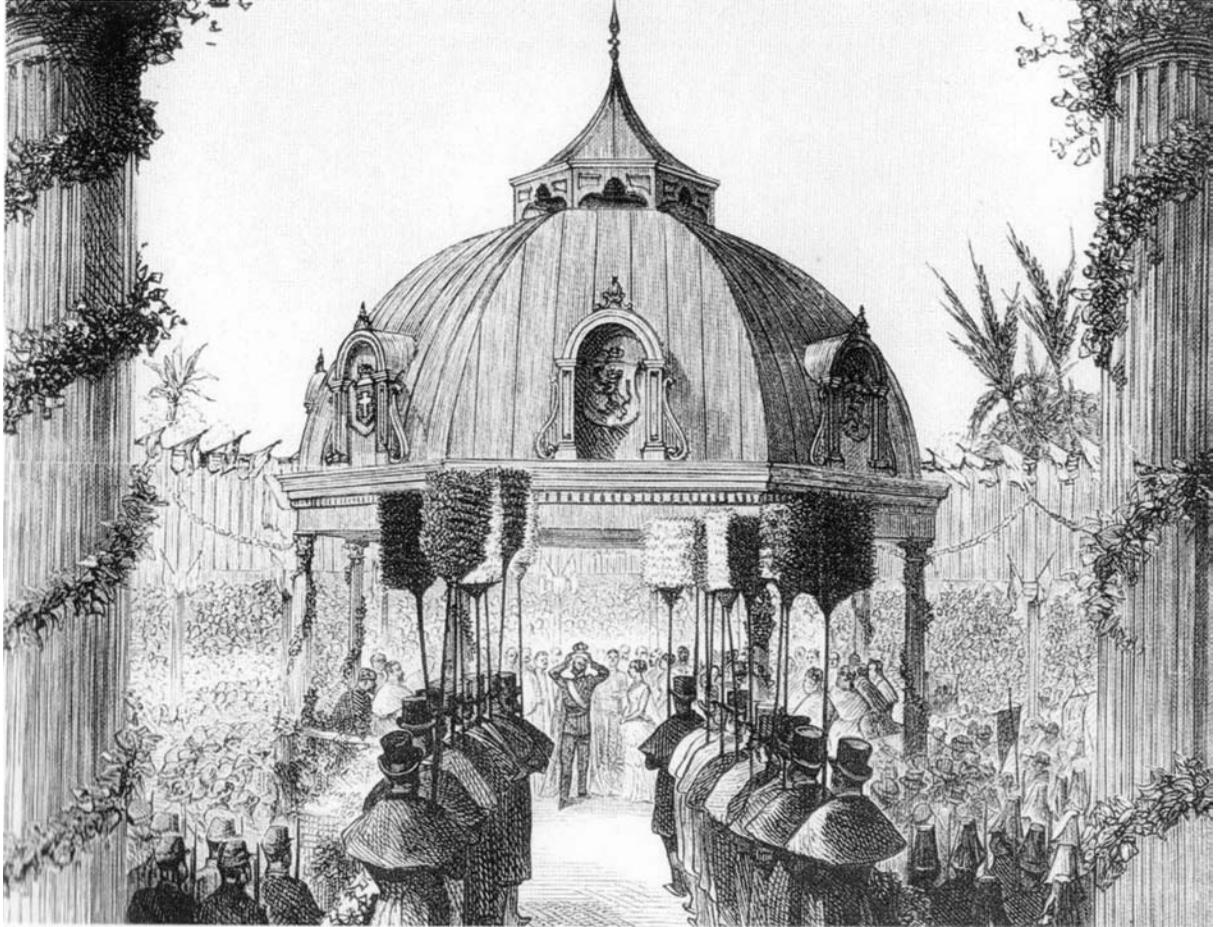
THE ARTS OF KINGSHIP

HAWAIIAN ART AND NATIONAL CULTURE
OF THE KALĀKAUA ERA



STACY L. KAMEHIRO

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For Bob, Kai, and Maia
Dedicated to the memory of
Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk

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INTRODUCTION

Hawaiian National Art

Kalākaua and his period have served as the necessary link joining the past—the long history of Oceania and its endless legends, the centuries of Polynesian slumber—to an ultra-modern present. It was he who above all first envisioned the Hawaii of today with its exigent demands, its swift changes in ideas. . . . During Kalākaua's reign modernity has been superimposed upon Hawaiian tradition but without destroying it, so that a curious combination of [foreign¹] and Polynesian elements has been effected. The sovereign himself has been the most perfect model of his period: the dual character, the grafted tree in bud before it first bears fruit.²

In 1874, David Kalākaua (Plate 1) was elected seventh monarch of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, founding the Kalākaua (Keawe-a-Heulu) Dynasty. Born David La'amea Kamanakapu'u Mahinulani Nalōia'ehuokalani Lumialani Kalākaua in 1836, he matured as an intellectual, musician, art patron, and politician in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Described by Mark Twain as “an accomplished English scholar,”³ he received a New England–styled education at the American missionary–run Chiefs' Children's School in Honolulu, was trained in law, and enjoyed artistic and scientific pursuits throughout his life. His political career began during his teens when he served as aide to a former king and member of the Privy Council, and continued in the 1860s as postmaster general, royal chamberlain, leader of a political and military organization called the Young Hawaiians, and, from 1864 to 1873, a noble in the Legislative Assembly. Kalākaua was eligible to be elected *mō'i* (king) through his rank as an *ali'i nui* (high chief). His ancestors had served Kamehameha I (ca. 1758–1819), the first ruler of the unified Hawaiian archipelago, who, in essence, established the Kingdom of Hawai'i.

Kalākaua assumed leadership of a nation burdened with many difficulties caused by foreign settlement—a declining and increasingly landless Native Hawaiian population, division among the Native elite, and threats of colonization—and vigorously worked to preserve his nation's sovereignty. While his reign of seventeen years was not the longest in early modern Hawaiian history, it witnessed an explosion of creative activity centered in the kingdom's capital, Honolulu. This king sought to instill a sense of cultural and national

pride among Native Hawaiians, notably through literature and the visual and performing arts. In fact, his reign has been described as “The First Hawaiian Renaissance.”⁴ Some of the cultural and national projects associated with his reign—such as ‘Iolani Palace, the King Kamehameha Monument, the Hawaiian National Anthem, and the reinstitutionalization of public hula performances—have had lasting impact on Hawaiian communities and are today cherished symbols of Hawaiian culture and history. The Merrie Monarch Festival, for example, an annual hula competition begun in 1964 and named for Kalākaua, who was instrumental in reviving and preserving Native Hawaiian dance and chant, is a source of cultural pride and accomplishment. The Kamehameha Day Festival, centered on the monument to Kamehameha I commissioned by Kalākaua, also brings Kalākaua’s art patronage to bear on the present, as it remains a state holiday and major cultural event.

To describe the historical contributions to art that were made during the Kalākaua administration, this book analyzes four public manifestations of national culture produced during his reign: Kalākaua’s coronation regalia, ‘Iolani Palace, the King Kamehameha Monument, and the Hawaiian National Museum. The king and his advisers devised an array of royal regalia consisting of innovative and ancient forms and displayed them in grand form during his coronation ceremony in 1883 to an audience of Native Hawaiians, the local haole (white, or non-Native) elite, and international consuls; together, these insignia of Kalākaua’s chiefly and royal office expressed the legitimacy of his station and the excellence of his rulership. ‘Iolani Palace, completed in time to provide the stage for Kalākaua’s coronation and ensuing festivities, was designed and spatially situated to mark the modernity of the kingdom and demonstrate the sanctity of the king’s rule. Associating his reign with that of the first monarch of Hawai‘i, Kalākaua’s patronage of the bronze monument to Kamehameha the Conqueror emphasized his continuation of the nation’s distinguished tradition of wise and farsighted leadership. The Hawaiian National Museum, while modeled on ethnological and natural history collections, materialized historical and scientific claims to a long tradition of national achievement and progress. These cases are of particular interest because each articulated Hawaiian national identities and navigated the turbulence of colonialism in distinctive ways, and, in some form, they have endured as key cultural symbols for well over a century.

The visual examples explored in this study were produced during the mid-1870s to mid-1880s, the height of Kalākaua’s reign, and were products of the monarchy’s conscious, concerted efforts to promote a national culture in the face of colonial pressures, internal political divisions, and declining social conditions for Native Hawaiians, which in combination posed serious threats to the sovereignty and survival of the Hawaiian nation. During this period, formal colonizing efforts in the Pacific Basin intensified. Previously, the major colonial powers in the region—France, England, and the United States—had maintained an informal presence.⁵ The impetus to firmly establish colonial holdings escalated when Germany entered the region as a colonial power in the 1880s, causing other nations to make definitive territorial claims.⁶ England and France annexed Pacific Island states such as Fiji and Tahiti, respectively, and the autonomy of others such

as Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Tonga was severely compromised. These colonizing efforts, combined with the race to secure trade passages to markets in East Asia, added fuel to pro-annexation opinions in the United States and among non-Native settlers in Hawai'i supporting American allegiances. These political pressures clearly alarmed the Hawaiian rulership, which responded to growing threats to sovereignty in part by promoting a national culture that boosted positive international relations and appeased foreign agitators in the kingdom.

At the same time, symbols of Hawaiian rulership and identity also addressed the internal cleavage in Hawaiian politics involving competing chiefly lineages. Basing their arguments on lineage seniority, Kalākaua's rivals argued that he lacked sufficient genealogy to properly lead the Hawaiian people. Before monarchical rule was established, the islands and districts of Hawai'i were governed by a chiefly system based on genealogical purity through which members of the high chiefly class proved their divine lineages. Chiefs of the highest ranks (*ali'i nui*) were responsible for the productivity of their lands and the well-being of the general population, oversaw lesser chiefs, and performed religious duties required to maintain the life of land and people or secure political power. Prior to Kalākaua assuming the throne, members of the Kamehameha chiefly line occupied the kingship, a lineage recognized as holding sacred mana, or power, originating to a great extent from its founder, Kamehameha the Conqueror.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Kamehameha, a usurping, conquering chief from Kohala on the island of Hawai'i, wrested power from his cousin and named ruler, Kiwala'ō, and forcefully expanded his lands until they encompassed the islands of Hawai'i, Maui, O'ahu, Lāna'i, Kaho'olawe, and Moloka'i. Later, in 1810, Kamehameha negotiated with Kaumuali'i, the paramount chief (*mō'i*) of Kaua'i, through diplomacy rather than battle (though strained by the threat of future violence) to secure acknowledgment of Kamehameha's sovereignty. This event brought Kaua'i and the neighboring island of Ni'ihau into his domain and signaled the unification of the major islands of the Hawaiian archipelago under a single, centralized rule. Thus began the Kingdom of Hawai'i and the Kamehameha Dynasty.

Kamehameha was succeeded by his sons Liholiho (Kamehameha II, 1796–1824) and Kaiuikaouli (Kamehameha III, 1813–1854) and grandsons Alexander Liholiho (Kamehameha IV, 1834–1863) and Lota Kapuāiwa (Kamehameha V, 1830–1872). When the last Kamehameha died without naming an heir, William Charles Lunalilo (1833–1874), a grandson to Kamehameha's half-brother, was elected to the throne. He too died without designating a successor, requiring another royal election in which Kalākaua was elected over his rival Queen Emma, wife of Alexander Liholiho.

Upon his assuming the throne, the legitimacy of Kalākaua's kingship was called into question by some Native communities. Effective, proper leadership was central to the continued existence of the kingdom, especially in light of the rapidly diminishing Native population, which was succumbing to low birthrates, high infant mortality, and the impact of introduced diseases. While the precise Native Hawaiian population prior to

the arrival of Europeans is unknown, estimates range from about five hundred thousand to one million; these estimates indicate a depopulation of about 90 to 95 percent by the end of the nineteenth century.⁷ Meanwhile, the number of non-Native residents was growing, with their population concentrated in Honolulu; here, the number of foreign settlers increased from about eighty to one hundred in 1800 to well over eight thousand in the 1840s.⁸ Declining social and economic conditions additionally impacted Native Hawaiian health and morale. Foreign settlers alienated land and exploited resources with a seemingly unquenchable appetite, prompting historian Samuel Kamakau to describe *haole*, in a petition to *Kauikeaouli*, as “devastat[ing] the land like the hordes of caterpillars the fields.”⁹

Native welfare continued to decline in the latter half of the century. In 1887, former U.S. minister resident to the Kingdom of Hawai‘i Rollin M. Daggett described Native Hawaiians as

landless, hopeless victims to the greed and vices of civilization. They are slowly sinking under the restraints and burdens of their surroundings, and will in time succumb to social and political conditions foreign to their natures and poisonous to their blood. Year by year their footprints will grow more dim along the sands of their reef-sheltered shores, and fainter and fainter will come their simple songs from the shadows of the palms, until finally their voices will be heard no more for ever.¹⁰

Hope for the survival of Native Hawaiians lay principally in the faith they placed in their leaders. A significant portion of the Native Hawaiian constituency doubted that *Kalākaua*, who was not of the *Kamehameha* line of chiefs, possessed adequate genealogy to assure their survival. *Kalākaua* therefore promoted national culture forms that supported the authority and efficacy of his rulership in indigenous political terms and looked to Hawai‘i’s tradition of chiefly rule and to the successes of his distant and recent predecessors for guidance and inspiration.

The four manifestations of Hawaiian visual culture analyzed here are distinctive in that they circulated as public forms that generated different meanings for different viewers. They resonated with cultural and political agendas—some shared and others conflicting—pursued by various communities interested in the future of Hawai‘i: Native Hawaiians, *haole* settlers, and international actors. While this study acknowledges that images and spaces produced, in important ways, meanings and contexts for non-Native audiences, I concentrate on how these visual statements articulated Native Hawaiian conceptions of history, chiefly rule, and nationhood, which were shaped by a century of contact with foreigners and the ways Native Hawaiians responded to their presence. I discard notions of cultural purity that suggest national culture represented an essential, fixed core of Native beliefs and practices and instead focus on how Hawaiian cultural integrity moved through complex interactions and creative engagement with the world.

Colonial Hawaiian Art and History

Despite their permanence as cultural and political icons, the examples of nineteenth-century Native Hawaiian visual culture examined in this study have received little art historical study. The same is true for Kalākaua's visual arts patronage. This lack of attention is due in part to the nature of Hawaiian historiography. Numerous published accounts of colonial Hawai'i, which are recognized as authoritative accounts and enjoy broad circulation, have made substantial contributions to the study of Hawaiian history. Many, however, largely represent Western points of view and draw heavily on Western written and visual sources.¹¹ With important recent exceptions, little critical analysis has been directed to Native texts, visual or otherwise, of the colonial period. Despite a Native Hawaiian scholar community established at Lahainaluna, Maui, in the 1830s, which pursued a keen interest in recording Native Hawaiian histories and customs, nearly universal literacy among the Native population by mid-century, and Native presses active in the second half of the century, indigenous contributions to political, social, and cultural history have often been overlooked, marginalized, or dismissed.¹²

Conventional histories frequently paint a particularly cursory or unsympathetic portrait of Kalākaua and his public art projects, variously representing him as a naïve leader who followed the counsel of mischievous foreign advisers, an ineffective ruler whose biased policies roused ethnic conflict, or a king who preferred merrymaking and pursuing various spectacles and entertainments to serious politics. Political scientist Noenoe K. Silva goes so far as to suggest that he is perhaps the most reviled and ridiculed of the Hawaiian monarchs.¹³ The cultural and political history of the Kalākaua period continues to be largely mystified in the non-Native imaginary, in which visions of Hawai'i's "toy kingdom" persist, emphasizing, for example, the miniature charm of 'Iolani Palace or the quaintness of the Kamehameha Monument—delightful historical ornaments of modern, cosmopolitan Honolulu. Conditioned to a great extent by the visitor industry, popular conceptions of Hawaiian history reflect profitable images and obscure others, sustaining indifference to colonial and neocolonial histories in Hawai'i.¹⁴

Some scholars and biographers have authored more evenhanded accounts of the Kalākaua period, eliciting complex social and political issues of the time and indicating the degree to which the criticisms and biased treatment of Kalākaua's reign are largely the legacy of this king's political opponents.¹⁵ As histories of nineteenth-century Hawai'i are histories of colonialism, recent scholarship addresses the struggles for control over power and knowledge that moved through cultural representations (such as performances, novels, poetry, scientific reports, and historical narratives) that were inseparable from "real" power struggles.¹⁶ Native and non-Native writers have infused Hawaiian historiography with consideration of a broader range of sources and perspectives on land, religion, literature, journalism, politics, government, and society. In addition to Hawaiian language texts, expressive forms such as music, dance, and oral histories are now centered in historical analyses.¹⁷ The effect of this recent history writing is not merely to recuperate lost

voices and cultural forms, but it also indicates contemporary engagement in a cultural process that is inseparable from its audience(s) and is always tied to the present.¹⁸ Historical representation, as Geoffrey M. White remarks, is a political practice whose “ability to make certain stories real, true, public, and collective, not only empowers some political futures and disables others but also discursively creates the very subjects of history.”¹⁹ Writers have not simply discovered the value of Native Hawaiian texts and images; they surface as cultural documents and practices that matter, seriously and urgently, in current historical consciousness. A society is what it remembers, and history is a practice of memory and remembering. Histories are certain objectifications of certain memories that inform the present and shape the future; they involve, like some Polynesian conceptions of time, a backing into the future, a facing toward the past that is conditioned by the present to chart the future. As Paul Sharrad states, “We become history’s creatures and write from its archive.”²⁰

The present-day archive of Hawai‘i, however, privileges literature, oral texts, and performance. Indigenous visual culture of colonial Hawai‘i has not received serious, sustained scholarly attention. Nuanced art historical inquiry has instead been primarily confined to studies of precontact cultures, contact encounters, or postcolonial representations. Colonial visual studies related to Polynesia principally focus on Western imaginings—images produced in the context of colonial settlement, missionary activity, and travel/tourism—that tend to render invisible contemporaneous indigenous visual cultures.²¹ Few scholars have scrutinized the cultural processes and effects of sustained contact on indigenous visualities after contact and prior to more recent independence or postindependence movements. Anthropologist Nicholas Thomas notes that while it is precisely during the temporal span of prolonged intercultural interaction that colonial expansion has been most intrusive and had the greatest impact on cultural change, little attention has been devoted to its study.²² This historiographic discontinuity has led to a significant art historical gap that assents to nineteenth- and twentieth-century fictions of disappearing indigenous cultures (seemingly visible only as apparitions in colonial representations) and hinders a more complex historicizing of Native visual cultures. Intercultural entanglements were as complex in colonial Hawaiian history as in the postcolonial cultural processes they shaped.

Visual culture of the Kalākaua era provides key historical documents that lend insight into how Native Hawaiian rulers met social and political challenges while mapping a path of modernity. Objects and images, and their public display, played a significant role in cultivating Hawaiian nationness. Examining visual culture is particularly important to understanding cultural change in Hawai‘i—a culture with a rich tradition of visual arts playing communicative and symbolic roles in making history and formalizing political, social, and religious ideologies. Objects associated with the hereditary chiefly class were infused with *mana*, a fluid divine power derived from the ancestors, and like chiefs, these objects were considered inherently powerful. Art historian Anne D’Alleva describes the historical value of objects and their preservation as key aspects of Polynesian material culture:

In these highly stratified societies, where most titles are hereditary, genealogy is of paramount importance, and objects passed down as heirlooms create connections between the living and the dead. Artworks can embody *mana* and make it active in this world, facilitating the transfer of *mana* from one generation to the next. As artworks are used by succeeding generations, they gain more *mana*, prestige and luster, characteristics that also accrue to the lineage and the individuals that own them.²³

The emblems and institutions cultivated by the Kalākaua administration preserved and activated the chiefly and divine *mana* inherent in specific images, objects, spaces, and individuals and did so in modern, innovative ways. Colonial-era image production cohered with conceptions of *mana*, and *mana* was also evidenced and channeled through creative activity, and it therefore encouraged rather than suppressed innovation.

While objects and images convey historically contextualized meanings for a given audience, they also have transformative potential, playing creative, active roles in cultural production. Material forms and spaces—and their production and circulation—comprise historical processes. In promoting or contesting national cultures, whether as individualized symbols, collections, or as formally arranged items in a museum, objects are instrumental in shaping identities, articulating national agendas, and representing the spirit of a particular community.²⁴ “Charismatic symbols” or “key symbols”²⁵ articulate what are proposed to be the essential characteristics of a given people, nation, or tradition that function to order, explain, and guide human experience and sociocultural change, as well as to galvanize action. Anthropologist Antonio Marazzi argues that public consensus is better achieved through the visual than through the oral or written, and that during moments of rupture such as social conflict or colonization, sensitivity to visual symbols is heightened.²⁶

The public national projects promoted by Kalākaua and his supporters advanced symbols that communicated broadly, connecting in different ways with the cultures, histories, and expectations of different audiences in attempting to unite members of the nation. Visual representation is therefore an important venue through which to examine constructions of nationness in colonial Hawai‘i. Public art and architecture related collective identities to objects and images; in an environment of prolonged cultural interaction between Native Hawaiians, non-Native settlers, and foreign states, new art forms and meanings emerged and indigenous forms and meanings were revalued and recontextualized, mobilizing a visual vocabulary that contracted in some ways and expanded in others.²⁷ Counter to urban historian Nezar AlSayyad’s suggestion that particulars of form (which might include style, iconography, technique, and media) in cultural representations are of less consequence than the basic fact of their existence or implementation,²⁸ the poetics of visual texts—the way they are constructed, viewed, and interpreted—contextualize and substantiate representations. The details of visual images are key to understanding how symbols produce meanings. The chapters that follow examine the specifics of images and spaces, as well as the circumstances of their production and circulation,