

Family Resemblance? Colonialism, Sovereignty, and the Global Royal Family in Nineteenth-Century Hawai‘i and Johor*

NICHOLAS B. MILLER

On 10 May 1881, just across the Johor Strait from Singapore, two monarchs pondered family resemblance. Abu Bakar, maharaja of Johor (1833–95, r. 1862–95), held a lavish reception for King Kalākaua of Hawai‘i (1836–91, r. 1874–91) at his recently built palace, the Istana Besar, in the new capital city of Johor Bahru. Complimenting each other’s proficiency in English, enjoying a game of billiards, and touring the maharaja’s recently established tea and coffee plantations, the two engaged in an emergent type of regal sociability that combined reciprocal recognition of customary paramountcy with the mutual mastery of contemporary hallmarks of elite Anglo-Saxon social life. Writing to his wife, Kapi‘olani (1834–99), and to John Owen Dominis (1832–91), the American-born husband of his sister and successor, Lili‘uokalani (1838–1917, r. 1891–3), Kalākaua expressed his enjoyment of the visit, including the rulers’ joint identification of similarities between the Hawaiian and Malay languages. Kalākaua

* This is a draft of a chapter that has been accepted for publication by Oxford University Press in the forthcoming book *Global Royal Families* edited by Robert Aldrich, Cindy McCreery and Falko Schnicke due for publication in 2023-2024.

This essay was completed via a project funded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme grant agreement No. 889078, MIGKNOW: Migrating Knowledge: The Global Knowledge Networks of German Medic, Botanist and Migration Commissioner Wilhelm Hillebrand in Hawai‘i (1821-1886).

I thank Falko Schnicke, Robert Aldrich, and Cindy McCreery, organizers of the Global Royal Families conference held at the German Historical Institute London on 16–18 January 2020, for their vision in putting together this volume.

added that Bakar, ‘a fine looking man’, closely resembled William Pitt Leleiohoku I (1821–48), a Hawaiian *ali‘i* (noble) who was the namesake of Kalākaua’s recently deceased younger brother and first heir apparent, Leleiohoku II (1855–77). ‘If he could have spoken our language, I would take him to be one of our people, the resemblance being so strong.’¹

The meeting between Bakar and Kalākaua occurred at the behest of Hawai‘i, and was integrated into the route adopted by Kalākaua on his celebrated global tour of 1881 to reach Europe from East Asia.² Officially justified as a means for Kalākaua to evaluate different potential sources of labour migrants, the tour also demonstrated recognition of Kalākaua’s position as sovereign and by extension the sovereignty of the Hawaiian Kingdom. It was Kalākaua’s first international journey to a destination besides the United States, where he had travelled in 1875 to secure congressional approval of a treaty permitting duty-free imports of Hawaiian sugar.³ Kalākaua arrived in Johor via Singapore, where he stayed for four nights following royal receptions in Japan and Siam, and meetings with government officials in Shanghai and Hong Kong. Bakar hosted Kalākaua for a single night, after which the Hawaiian king returned to Singapore for a night before proceeding to Burma and India.⁴ Kalākaua’s visit in one sense conformed to a common practice whereby visiting dignitaries to the Straits Settlements were unofficially co-hosted by the British governor of Singapore and Abu Bakar as monarch of Johor.⁵ Yet their encounter was neither accidental nor ordinary. It had been arranged three months before Kalākaua embarked on his global tour, brokered by Hawaii’s

¹ Hawai‘i State Archives, Honolulu (hereafter HSA), FO&Ex Chronological Files, 1881, King Kalākaua’s Letters, Trip around the World, Feb.–June 1881, Kalākaua to Dominis, Singapore, 12 May 1881.

² Douglas V. Askman, ‘A Royal Traveler: American Press Coverage of King Kalākaua’s 1881 Trip Around the World’, *Hawaiian Journal of History*, 51 (2017), 69–76.

³ Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu, 2002), 167.

⁴ *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 12 May 1881, 2.

⁵ Timothy P. Barnard, *Imperial Creatures: Humans and Other Animals in Colonial Singapore, 1819–1942* (Singapore, 2019), 103–47.

acting consul in Singapore, Henry Herwig.⁶ It was the first time Bakar received a non-European royal visitor from beyond South-East Asia, and the first modern encounter between two leaders from Polynesia and the Malay world, whose ancient historical links were only then being remembered.⁷

At the time of their meeting, both monarchs were seasoned rulers, aged in their mid 40s, and recognized internationally as exercising internal autonomy over their domains. Bakar had nearly reached his twentieth year in power, while Kalākaua had been on his throne for seven years. Of the two realms, Hawai‘i was more fully integrated into the contemporary international system, having signed treaties with all major powers and possessing consular representation around the globe, including in Singapore.⁸ Johor’s position was more ambiguous, defined by the primacy of relations with Britain. While not recognized internationally to the same extent as Hawai‘i, Johor did feature in an emerging Islamic international and inter-court network led by the Ottoman Empire. Bakar visited the Ottoman court at least twice and also visited Egypt. Patterns of imperial submission, to Britain in the case of Johor and to the United States in the case of Hawai‘i, were emergent but not yet settled.⁹ It was still four years before Bakar transferred control over foreign affairs to Britain in 1885 and six years before a White settler-led coup forced Kalākaua to accept the Bayonet Constitution of 1887, which greatly restricted monarchic privilege in Hawai‘i. Their meeting

⁶ HSA, FO&Ex 410, vol. 98, no. 10, Hawaiian Consuls: Hong Kong, Singapore, and Shanghai, Singapore, W. L. Green to Henry Herwig, Honolulu, 18 January 1881, 399–400.

⁷ Virginia R. Dominguez, ‘Exporting U.S. Concepts of Race: Are There Limits to the U.S. Model?’, *Social Research*, 65/2 (1998), 369–99. Particularly important for Kalākaua was Abraham Fornander, *An Account of the Polynesian Race, its Origin and Migrations, and the Ancient History of the Hawaiian People to the Times of Kamehameha I*, 3 vols. (London, 1878).

⁸ Nicholas B. Miller, ‘Trading Sovereignty and Labour: The Consular Network of Nineteenth-Century Hawai‘i’, *International History Review*, 42/2 (2020), 260–77.

⁹ Regarding the similarity of foreign challenges to Kalākaua and Bakar, see Iza Hussin, ‘Misreading and Mobility in Constitutional Texts: A Nineteenth Century Case’, *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, 21/1 (2014), 145–58.

thus occurred at a moment pregnant with political possibility, in which both rulers were pursuing the opportunities of reciprocal monarchic recognition on a global scale.

Western observers noted both rulers' facility in crossing cultural boundaries. They interacted comfortably with Westerners and were held in high esteem by most, if not all, of their indigenous populations. Both were proficient in English, following their education at Protestant mission schools during their youth. Kalākaua's education at the Chiefs' Children's School, first established in 1839 by a Congregationalist missionary couple under royal patronage, featured Anglophone socialization at an early age, bringing together descendants of American missionaries, other resident Westerners, and young Hawaiian *ali'i*.¹⁰ Bakar, like most other Johorean elites of his generation, attended the Malay mission school of Benjamin Keasberry in Singapore, which was affiliated with the London Missionary Society.¹¹ One of the richest landowners in Singapore, Bakar became tightly immersed in colonial social life and travelled frequently to Europe, particularly to London, where he maintained a residence and legal team in the mid 1880s.¹² Although criticized by traditionalists as Westernizers, both rulers also embraced local traditions of rule. Bakar remained a devout Muslim throughout his life, offering alcohol to his guests but personally abstaining from its consumption.¹³ While the Hawaiian monarchy had formally converted to Christianity in the 1820s, Kalākaua gave much greater space to pre-Christian beliefs and customs than his immediate predecessors, including patronizing the revival of hula and establishing commissions to preserve traditional Hawaiian

¹⁰ Linda K. Menton, 'A Christian and "Civilized" Education: The Hawaiian Chiefs' Children's School, 1839–50', *History of Education Quarterly*, 32/2 (1992), 213–42.

¹¹ J. M. Gulick, *Rulers and Residents: Influence and Power in the Malay States, 1870–1920* (Oxford, 1992), 102.

¹² Nurfadzilah Yahaya, 'Class, White Women, and Elite Asian Men in British Courts during the Late Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Women's History*, 31/2 (2019), 101–23, at 103.

¹³ Farish A. Noor, *The Other Malaysia: Writings on Malaysia's Subaltern History* (Kuala Lumpur, 2003), 54; Gulick, *Rulers and Residents*, 110.

forms of knowledge.¹⁴ Because of their worldliness, the two monarchs are fascinating personalities for assessing what motivated non-European rulers to seek membership in a Europe-based global royal family during the final decades of the nineteenth century.

Both rulers were able to participate in global circuits of royal travel in part through the financial rewards of their adoption of plantation-friendly economic policies. These not only generated significant revenue but also brought about demographic transformations in their dominions. In 1881, Johor and Hawai‘i were relatively small tropical territories (19,000 sq. km and 16,000 sq. km, respectively) possessing indigenous populations numbering only in the tens of thousands. Hawai‘i had been quite densely populated prior to first Western contact, but the cataclysmic spread of foreign diseases diminished the population from at least 300,000 in 1778 to 57,985 in 1878.¹⁵ During the 1830s, Johor had at most 25,000 inhabitants, residing principally in small river-facing settlements.¹⁶ High rates of labour migration, beginning in Johor before Hawai‘i, provided the manpower for nascent plantations in both territories. Buoyed by extensive indentured labour migration from China and Portugal, Hawai‘i’s population increased by nearly 40 per cent between 1878 and 1886, reaching 80,578. Native Hawaiians fell below 50 per cent of the total population that year.¹⁷ While no comprehensive census was undertaken in Johor before the twentieth century, James Meldrum, a Scottish businessman in Bakar’s orbit, estimated in 1892 Johore’s population to be approximately 200,000, 75 per cent (150,000) of whom were Chinese, 17.5 per cent (35,000)

¹⁴ Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, NC, 2004), 108.

¹⁵ David A. Swanson, ‘The Number of Native Hawaiians and Part-Hawaiians in Hawai‘i, 1778 to 1900: Demographic Estimates by Age’, in Billystrom Jivetti and Md. Nazrul Hoque (eds.), *Population Change and Public Policy*, (Cham, 2020), 345–55.

¹⁶ Nicholas N. Dodge, ‘Population Estimates for the Malay Peninsula in the Nineteenth Century, with Special Reference to the East Coast States’, *Population Studies*, 34/3 (1980), 437–75, at 439, 467.

¹⁷ *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual for 1887* (Honolulu, 1886), 8.

Malay, and about 7.5 per cent (15,000) Javanese.¹⁸ Despite Bakar's attempt to attract Western investors, the economic basis of Johor remained small-scale Chinese pepper and gambier plantations until the end of the century; in Hawai'i, Western-owned sugar plantations that began opening under Kalākaua's reign soon came to dominate its economy and eventually its political life.

The monarchies headed by Kalākaua and Bakar were of relatively recent creation, intertwined with Western and specifically British colonial expansion. The modern state of Johor ruled by Bakar must be distinguished from the older, larger sultanate of Johor, which emerged as a regional power following the demise of the Melaka Empire in 1511 at the hands of the Portuguese. The old sultanate was dismembered when Sir Stamford Raffles recognized Bakar's grandfather Abdul Rahman (1755–1825) as 'legitimate ruler' of Singapore.¹⁹ In 1811, Rahman, still subject to the old sultanate, whose capital was in the Riau–Lingga islands in the Strait of Singapore, had established a base in Singapore in his capacity as *temenggong*, a Malay aristocratic title according customary responsibilities in the domains of public security and military defence. The Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 formally recognized the separation of peninsular Johor from Riau–Lingga, though rival claims would persist for decades. Hawai'i likewise had traditionally been subject to disaggregated royal politics. After Tahitian migration in the fourteenth century, each of the four main islands of Kaua'i, O'ahu, Maui, and Hawai'i were conventionally ruled by an individual *ali'i nui* (supreme ruler), with district *ali'i 'aimoku* (subordinate chiefs) beneath them. A single monarchy emerged only after Western contact, when Kamehameha I (1736?–1819, r. 1795–1819) united all islands under his authority through the strategic use of European armaments, military tactics, and advisers.

¹⁸ W.A. Taylor, 'Geographical Notes', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine* 8, no. 1 (1892): 322–332, at 323.

¹⁹ Nesalamar Nadarajah, *Johore and the Origins of British Control, 1895–1914* (Kuala Lumpur, 2000), 11.

Founding the kingdom in 1795 after his conquest of O‘ahu, Kamehameha I took control of the entire archipelago in 1810, when the western islands of Kaua‘i and Ni‘ihau submitted. In coming decades, the newly established Kingdom of Hawai‘i would exhibit commitments to a form of sovereignty individually embodied in Kamehameha’s descendants in strategic engagement with resident Westerners.²⁰ While both of the rulers drew on pre-existing traditions of royalty in their respective territories, a basic fragility existed at their courts, given that neither was even a century old.

The many similarities between Kalākaua and Bakar have often been noted, yet not investigated at length. Lately, this comparison has emanated from considerations of King Kalākaua’s ultimately unsuccessful attempts to stave off challenges to his authority by Western settlers in Hawai‘i during the 1870s and 1880s. Most recently, Tiffany Lani Ing has pointed out that Kalākaua and Bakar were ‘educated by missionaries in their formative years’, ‘spoke English as well as their native tongues’, ‘built ornate palaces for themselves, encouraged immigration, travelled widely, and sought to advance the development of their nations’.²¹ When projected onto a global historical plane of analysis, these similarities reveal much about the imbrication of kingship, international recognition, and colonialism in defining small Asia–Pacific indigenous monarchies during the late nineteenth century. Highlighting the converging backgrounds, social personas, and domestic politics of Kalākaua and Bakar, this essay uses their common pursuit of recognition as members of a coalescing global royal family as a yardstick to survey the fused history of colonialism, state building, and indigenous rule in the late nineteenth century.

²⁰ Noelani Arista, *The Kingdom and the Republic: Sovereign Hawai‘i and the Early United States* (Philadelphia, 2019).

²¹ Tiffany Lani Ing, *Reclaiming Kalākaua: Nineteenth-Century Perspectives on a Hawaiian Sovereign* (Honolulu, 2019), 69.

To study the family resemblance between Kalākaua and Bakar is not merely to probe the margins of the late nineteenth-century global royal family; it is likewise to understand how elective royal kinship radiated domestic and international power. Both monarchs intimately experienced the contradictions between contemporary notions of universalism, education, and civilization on the one hand, and the shifting politics of empire on the other.²² Particularly in British imperial contexts, native political authority was increasingly limited to the realm of custom, as was the case of ‘native states’ in South Asia under the British Raj. Yet neither Kalākaua nor Bakar were content to serve as mere guardians of tradition. Both embraced the political possibilities of reciprocal recognition as monarchs in their specific historical moment and signalled their status as members of a global royal family through selective adaptation of elements of Western monarchy. To the extent that this permitted both rulers to navigate challenges to their authority, status within the global royal family was antagonistic to new forms of Western imperial overrule that developed during the late nineteenth century.

The Legibility of Global Royal Status at Home and Abroad

Existing scholarship on Kalākaua and Bakar’s meeting has emphasized its latent possibilities of anti-colonial resistance rather than its explicit testimony to an emergent pattern of global monarchic networking particular to the period often termed that of the ‘new imperialism’. Much attention has been paid to Kalākaua’s creative deployment during his global tour of 1881 of notions of racial consonance, both pan-Asian and Malayo-Polynesian. Rebecca Karl

²² Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York, 2007).

and Sebastian Conrad have highlighted Kalākaua's pan-Asian discourse while in Japan and China, where he argued that Hawaiians 'are Asians, just like you', and that solidarity was needed among 'our brown Asian peoples' to combat common threats to sovereignty posed by Euro-American intrusion. Li Hongzhang (1823–1901), then minister of the Zongli Yamen (the late Qing dynasty's foreign ministry), remained distinctly unconvinced.²³ Farish A. Noor has suggested that Bakar was pursuing a type of regal subaltern politics in inviting Kalākaua to Johor for two days during the latter's week-long stay in Singapore.²⁴ More recently, Kealani Cook has speculated that in Johor Kalākaua and Bakar explored 'shared connections not just as monarchs, but as "long-lost brothers"' by 'discussing the theory that the people of Polynesia had migrated from Malaysia', but offers no new evidence besides the patronizing travelogue of Kalākaua's travel companion, William Armstrong.²⁵

As compelling as the prospect of late nineteenth-century anti-colonial kingship is, more attention should be dedicated to Kalākaua's explicit interest—in his writing, as well as in his actions—in positing family resemblances with Bakar. Kalākaua's and Bakar's multiple social, spiritual, and educational identities rebelled against any easy dichotomy between Western and indigenous worlds, positioning the two rulers in a unique way to serve as intercultural mediators of diverse sources of power, including that of monarchical power. Adopting a more nuanced appraisal of their relationship with both contemporary colonial capital networks and imperial sources of power, an additional type of resemblance can be identified: their common attempts to establish identities as brothers in what this volume terms the global royal family.

²³ Sebastian Conrad, *Globalgeschichte: Eine Einführung* (Munich, 2013), 266–8. Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC, 2002), 58–9.

²⁴ Noor, *The Other Malaysia*, 39.

²⁵ Kealani Cook, *Return to Kahiki: Native Hawaiians in Oceania* (Cambridge, 2018), 24–5; Maile Renee Arvin, *Possessing Polynesians: The Science of Settler Colonial Whiteness in Hawai'i and Oceania* (Durham, NC, 2019), ch. 1.

Discussion of the concept of the stranger-king in historical anthropology, as classically elaborated by Marshall Sahlins in *Islands of History* (1985), can constructively inform analysis of the family politics of the two monarchs considered in this essay.²⁶ Revisiting the concept in 2008, Sahlins drew on the work of Mary Helms to argue that the mode of political authority exerted by kings in so-called ‘traditional societies’ depended on their capacity to tap into otherworldly sources of power, as perceived by local peoples who believed themselves to be children of the soil, or Earth people.²⁷ Far from exclusive appeals to what would be understood in a Weberian sense as traditional authority, this included the cultivation of identities of alterity, pursued through affinal (marriage-based) kinship between a glorious outsider, often male, and a high-ranking daughter of a local paramount.²⁸

Drawing on early post-contact Hawai‘i, Sahlins provocatively contended that this could also take the form of fictive or elective kinship with outsiders, whereby ‘local rulers became stranger-kings—by assuming foreign identities’.²⁹ As evidence, he highlighted how in late eighteenth-century Hawai‘i, ‘ambitious chiefs who could not claim by ancestry the authority to which they now aspired by power and wealth’, adopted the names of leading British and American leaders, including John Adams (Ki‘iapalaoku Kuakini), William Pitt (Kalanimoku), and, in particular, King George, after whom sons to three rival paramount chiefs on the islands of O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, and Maui were named within fifteen years of James Cook’s death in 1779.³⁰ Crucial for the analysis here is Sahlins’s suggestion that ‘as indigenously formulated, stranger-kingship may be a structure without an event’—that is, that

²⁶ Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago, 1985), 73–103.

²⁷ Marshall Sahlins, ‘The Stranger-King, or Elementary Forms of the Politics of Life’, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 36/105 (2008), 177–99, at 188–9.

²⁸ Mary W. Helms, *Access to Origins: Affines, Ancestors and Aristocrats* (Austin, 1998), 174–9.

²⁹ Sahlins, ‘The Stranger-King’, 189.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

the political effects of alterity can follow from merely elective, rather than genealogical, kinship.³¹

Sahlins proposed that elective kinship with foreign monarchs might be discernible in Hawai‘i as early as Kamehameha I, who addressed the British monarch King George III, via English translators, as ‘Dear Brother’.³² Court historians might be tempted to interpret this as little more than the replication of Western conventions of royal correspondence. The letters, after all, were written in English, and Kamehameha retained two British travellers whom he elevated to *ali‘i* rank, John Young and Isaac Davis. This might however betray a certain Eurocentrism in perspective. Shifting the focus, the question becomes how Kamehameha I might have interpreted this suggestion of kinship to the sovereign of the world’s pre-eminent maritime power.

Anthropological insights into the stranger-king can thus unsettle the seemingly paradoxical characterizations of Kalākaua and Bakar as committed modernizers yet defenders of tradition, and as embodiments of ancestral power structures yet facilitators of capitalist intrusion.³³ Kalākaua and Bakar’s talent in strategically bridging different rationalities—Western and indigenous, regal and commercial—to boost their own power made them potent targets of ire for colonizers and traditionalists alike.³⁴ But this lay at the heart of their genius. The outward adoption of features of Western monarchy did not imply the abandonment of indigenous traditions of power; instead, it was assimilable within them, while also signalling commensurability to foreign contemporaries.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ A. Rahman Tang Abdullah, ‘Modernisation or Westernisation of Johor under Abu Bakar: A Historical Analysis’, *Intellectual Discourse*, 16/2 (2008), 209–31; Ing, *Reclaiming Kalākaua*, 69.

³⁴ As an example of the former, see William R. Castle, ‘The Future of Hawaii’, *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian and Other Dependent Peoples*, 23 (1905), 142–3.

The Prestige of Travel in Indigenous Court Narratives

Kalākaua and Bakar’s blending of indigenous and Western sources of regal power is best demonstrated by long neglected eulogistic histories. As Noelani Arista has recently underlined for the context of Hawai’i, the commonplace absence of indigenous written sources from standing historical accounts derives not from a lack of possible sources, but rather their ‘structural and attitudinal . . . devalu[ation] by scholarly praxis’.³⁵ In both Hawai’i and Johor, highly educated members of the indigenous elite, Joseph Poepoe and Mohd. Said bin Sulaiman respectively, were charged with chronicling the lives and deeds of their late monarchs in indigenous language publications. Poepoe rapidly assembled *Ka Moolelo o ka Moi Kalakaua* in 1891, between Kalākaua’s sudden death in San Francisco and his burial in Honolulu.³⁶ Combining new text with previously published obituaries, articles, and pamphlets in Hawaiian and English, the *Moolelo* served, according to Ing, as Poepoe’s ‘kanikau, or funeral dirge’, for his fallen monarch.³⁷ Sulaiman’s *Hikayat Johor* was published nearly two decades later in 1908, thirteen years after the death of Abu Bakar. Reflecting the divergent paths of sovereignty taken, the *Hikayat* served distinctly different purposes: rather than a valedictory expression of royalist sentiment, it was intended to function as a type of official

³⁵ Noelani Arista, ‘Ka Waihona Palapala Mānaleo: Research in a Time of Plenty. Colonialism and the Hawaiian-Language Archives’, in Tony Ballantyne, Lachy Paterson, and Angela Wanhalla (eds.), *Indigenous Textual Cultures: Reading and Writing in the Age of Global Empire*, (Durham, NC, 2020), 35–59.

³⁶ Joseph M. Poepoe, *Ka Moolelo o ka Moi Kalakaua I* (Honolulu, 1891). Substantial portions of the text were translations of the pamphlet *Kalakaua Dead: The King Dies on a Foreign Shore. Passes Away at the Palace Hotel at San Francisco, Cal., January 20, 1891* (Honolulu, 1891).

³⁷ Poepoe, *Moolelo*, 5, 7. Ing, *Reclaiming Kalākaua*, 14.

history for use in Johor's emerging school curriculum.³⁸ Because of their intercultural complexity, these sources defy easy categorization. Poepoe and Sulaiman were not merely replicating customary modes of historical narration. In memorializing the distinctive achievements of their leaders, pride of place was awarded to their global itineraries and relationships with other monarchs, reflecting the dynamism of indigenous historical narration amidst contemporary global interactivity.

Evident in both works is the prestige loyal native elites perceived in the international and inter-court recognition of their monarchs. This demonstrates the political impact of their global travels, which, in the case of Bakar, Tim Harper has described as global performances not merely of 'Malay sovereignty' but also of 'Malay world modernity'.³⁹ Kalākaua's 1881 tour around the world featured as the defining moment of his reign in Poepoe's *Moolelo*, with the section entitled 'Ka Moi Kaapuni Honua no ka Hoolaupai Aina' (The King's Journey around the World to Revive the Land) running to twenty pages, the lengthiest piece of original content in the seventy-four page pamphlet.⁴⁰ Here, Poepoe drew upon the voluminous coverage in Hawaiian- and English-language newspapers from 1881, supplementing it with previously unpublished Hawaiian-language correspondence from Kalākaua to his wife, Kapi'olani.

Likewise, Bakar's international travels and connections were a focal point of the *Hikayat*, mirroring the dominant role they play in public memory and contemporary scholarship on his reign.⁴¹ Sulaiman recounted the sultan's relationship with the British court

³⁸ Mohd. Said bin Sulaiman, *Hikayat Johor dan Tawarikh Almarhum Sultan Abu Bakar*, ed. and trans. A. Rahman Tang Abdullah (Johor Bahru, 2011), 151.

³⁹ Tim Harper, 'Afterword: The Malay World, besides Empire and Nation', *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 41/120 (2013), 273–90, at 276–7.

⁴⁰ Poepoe, *Moolelo*, 13–33.

⁴¹ A. Rahman Tang Abdullah, 'Sultan Abu Bakar's Foreign Guests and Travels Abroad, 1860s–1895: Fact and Fiction in Early Malay Historical Accounts', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 84/1 (2011), 1–22; A. Candilio and L. Bressan, 'Sultan

in particular detail, including Bakar's first encounter with Queen Victoria and the prince of Wales (later Edward VII) in London in 1866 and his subsequent meeting with the latter in Calcutta in 1875.⁴² Sulaiman knew this terrain well, as he had previously written a two-volume Malay-language history of the reign of Queen Victoria.⁴³ The *Hikayat* characterized the encounter with the prince of Wales in Calcutta as a great success, claiming it led to Bakar being held 'in high esteem' by the other Asian 'kings and aristocrats' present.⁴⁴ The *Hikayat* also noted his regal reception in Japan in 1883, where he met the 'Emperor of Japan and was graciously welcomed', and, a decade later, in the Ottoman Empire, where Bakar 'was honourably and warmly welcomed and graciously celebrated'. For example: 'The Sultan of Turkey was highly impressed at the ruler from the east who was a dignified and noble Muslim.'⁴⁵ Less mention was made of Bakar's role as host to itinerant royals: the *Hikayat* did not mention the visits of Kalākaua and Prince Henry of Prussia in 1881.⁴⁶ The absence of Kalākaua from the text reflected the changed political stature of the Hawaiian monarchy after its overthrow in 1893. Moreover, it was consistent with silence about Bakar's frequent visits to royals in Siam and the broader Malay world: Sulaiman emphasized connections to more powerful courts, rather than those facing similar challenges to their authority.

The power of inter-regal favour to secure political recognition despite the small scale of the two monarchs' territories also featured in both accounts. In the introduction to the *Hikayat*, Sulaiman celebrated Bakar's success in enhancing 'the standing of the state and his Malay subjects so that they were able to cope with the modernized states even though Johor was very small at that time', with Britain seen as an unproblematic source of power,

Abu Bakar of Johore's Visit to the Italian King and to the Pope in 1885', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 73/1 (2000), 43–53.

⁴² Sulaiman, *Hikayat Johor*, 170.

⁴³ Mohd. Said bin Sulaiman, *Hikayat Queen Victoria*, 2 vols. (Singapore, 1904–5).

⁴⁴ Ibid. 182.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 202.

⁴⁶ Abdullah, 'Sultan Abu Bakar's Foreign Guests', 7.

particularly in Bakar's elevation in status from temenggong to maharaja and then to sultan of Johor in 1885.⁴⁷ Poepoe even concluded his account of Kalākaua's world tour with a four-stanza reflective chant written by Kalākaua after returning to Hawai'i, entitled 'Ka Momi' (The Pearl).⁴⁸ His world travels, continuing beyond Asia to Egypt, Italy, Britain, Belgium, Germany, Austria, France, Portugal, and Spain, had a double effect upon the ruler. On the one hand, he observed that his own power was 'small and weak', with a 'throne established on a heap of lava'. Yet he then considered himself fortunate to be able to

. . . boast

That of all beauties

Locked within the embrace of these shores

One is a jewel more precious than any owned by

My fellow monarchs

I have nothing in my Kingdom to dread

I mingle with my people without fear

My safety is no concern, I require no bodyguards

Mine is the boast that a pearl of great price

Has fallen to me from above

Mine is the loyalty of my people.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid. 151.

⁴⁸ Poepoe, *Moolelo*, 32.

⁴⁹ Translation in Mary Kawena Pukui and Alfons L. Korn, *The Echo of Our Song: Chants and Poems of the Hawaiians* (Honolulu, 1973), 153–5.

Given that Tsar Alexander II was assassinated close to the beginning of Kalākaua's world tour, while he was in Japan, the notion that there was safety in his territory's small scale was perhaps reassuring.⁵⁰

The Strategic Adoption of European Monarchical Conventions

Global travel and the reception of other itinerant royal visitors were only two of the several forms of recognition that defined the emplacement of Kalākaua and Bakar in an emergent global royal family during the late nineteenth century. As with other aspirational monarchs across the Asia–Pacific, including Chulalongkorn of Siam and Meiji of Japan, we see a convergence of architecture, aesthetics, rituals, practices, and networking that reshaped historically diverse ways of expressing hereditary authority, with new signifiers possessing explicitly Western elements. In other words, this was a period defined by an outward global homogenization of monarchical symbolic culture.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Bakar and Kalākaua oversaw the construction of new palaces adopting Western architectural elements, contemplated international (and inter-court) marriages, pursued strategic ties with Queen Victoria, travelled (or sent royal representatives) to foreign coronations and anniversaries in Russia and Britain, staged their own coronations, and invented new monarchical orders.⁵¹ In the case of this latter practice, Bakar may have been following the example of Kalākaua, who had conferred a set of newly invented orders upon himself and his court in 1881. Bakar created two sets of orders

⁵⁰ For more on this point see Cindy McCreery's essay in this volume.

⁵¹ On the matter of monarchical orders in Hawai'i, see Cindy McCreery, 'Orders from Disorder? King Kalākaua's 1881 Global Tour and the Hawaiian Monarchy's Late Nineteenth-Century Deployment of Royal Orders and Decorations', *History Australia*, 18/2 (2021), 219–40.

in 1886 after his coronation as sultan, which followed Kalākaua's coronation of 1883. Kalākaua had commissioned the production of his orders in Paris before his tour, and he reflected upon the political utility of exchanging royal orders after visiting Bakar and Chulalongkorn.⁵² The hybrid character of these practices, which combined traditional titles, symbolism, and motifs with Western structures, embodied sources of cultural power legible to indigenous populations in both territories, who had experienced increasing colonial intrusion during the long nineteenth century, as well as anti-monarchical Western actors, who for both Kalākaua and Bakar tended to be White Americans.⁵³ Importantly, this uptake of foreign court practice by non-Europeans—usually Western, though in Bakar's case also Islamic—was constitutive of the distinctive, historically specific form of cultural globalization implied by the global royal family.

Bakar and Kalākaua revelled in recognition from more powerful foreign monarchies as a signal of their own potency. During Kalākaua's stay in Japan in March 1881, he wrote to Charles Coffin Harris, a close confidant and chief justice of the Hawaiian Supreme Court, that the Meiji emperor had 'extended the hospitality of being his guest during our stay in the City of Tokio [*sic*] occupying the same buildings that General [Ulysses S.] Grant did when he was here and other distinguished guests, Prince Henri of Germany and the Duke of Genoa'.⁵⁴

Kalākaua's coronation of 1883 made full use of the potential to showcase his status as

⁵² HSA, FO&Ex Chronological Files, 1881, King Kalākaua's Letters from Trip around the World, Feb.–June 1881, Kalākaua to Dominis, Singapore, 12 May 1881; FO&Ex 410, vol. 98, no. 10, Hawaiian Consuls, Hong Kong/Singapore/Shanghai, Letterbook, pp. 399–400, W.L. Green to Henry Herwig, Honolulu, 18 Jan. 1881.

⁵³ In the case of Johor, a legal battle over a land concession in Muar issued to Adolph G. Studer shortly before Bakar's annexation of the region in 1878 lasted for decades, ultimately reaching League of Nations arbitration in 1925. Studer, a naturalized American of Swiss origin, served as US consul in Singapore during the 1870s. 'Adolph G. Studer (United States) v. Great Britain (19 Mar. 1925)', in *Reports of International Arbitral Awards*, 34 vols. (New York, 1948–2022), vi. 149–53.

⁵⁴ Richard Greer (ed.), 'The Royal Tourist: Kalakaua's Letters Home from Tokio to London', *Hawaiian Journal of History*, 5 (1971), 75–109, at 76.

sovereign and, conjointly, the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i. The local consular representations for Britain, the United States, France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Mexico, and Russia were all in attendance, but Japan sent a sizeable entourage on the invitation of Hawai‘i, headed by Sugi Magoshichiro.⁵⁵ Kalākaua’s global tour would be the only time he ventured abroad beyond the USA, given Hawai‘i’s remote geographical position and acute challenges to his rule at home. Bakar on the other hand embraced global travel throughout his reign, since he faced little opposition at home and had ample resources at his disposal. Beyond Europe, he frequently also toured the Islamic world, including numerous visits to the Ottoman Empire, and an 1883 tour of Asia included visits to Aceh and Java in the Dutch East Indies.⁵⁶ Anthony Reid has characterized Bakar’s recurrent visits to Queen Victoria as well as successive Ottoman sultans as a balance between ‘two modern monarchies from which he sought “civilised” and Islamic legitimacy’.⁵⁷

Both monarchs pursued close ties with Queen Victoria, aiming to secure international recognition and political advantage from the global royal family’s pre-eminent matriarch. They sought to strengthen pre-existing links with the British sovereign in view of the particular local conditions of their rule and the nature and intensity of British colonial intrusion. Bakar used his relationship with Victoria and the prince of Wales to subvert repeated attempts by governors of the Straits Settlements to corral him through the appointment of a decision-making adviser. This would not occur until 1910, well after his death. In Hawai‘i, ties with Victoria were pursued congruent to the evolution of the modern Hawaiian state as an independent monarchy featuring high-ranking British individual actors who served as court advisers and government ministers. In 1849-50, future Kamehameha IV

⁵⁵ *Coronation of Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Hawaiian Islands, at Honolulu, Monday, February 12th, 1883* (Honolulu, 1883), 2.

⁵⁶ Abdullah, ‘Sultan Abu Bakar’s Foreign Guests’.

⁵⁷ Anthony Reid, *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads* (Chichester, 2015), 229.

(1834–63, r. 1855–63) and his wife Emma Rooke visited the British court in response to French and American designs on the islands. Between 1859-1860, a correspondence was maintained between Kamehameha IV, Victoria, and their respective ministers to secure an Anglican bishop to lead the establishment of an Episcopal church for Hawai‘i, which was founded in 1862 under the name of the Hawaiian Reformed Catholic Church, or the Church of Hawai‘i for short.⁵⁸ A close relationship with Victoria was further seen as a direct channel for promoting the political interests and prestige of the Johor and Hawai‘i courts.

Victoria’s Golden Jubilee of 1887 marked the climax of Kalākaua’s attempt to buttress monarchical claims to sovereignty and power in Hawai‘i through global royal recognition. On the invitation of British officials, Kalākaua sent a delegation to the jubilee headed by his wife Kapi‘olani, his sister and successor Lili‘uokalani, her husband John Owen Dominis, and Curtis Pi‘ehu Iaukea, who had previously represented the kingdom in 1883 at the coronation of Alexander III of Russia.⁵⁹ In her memoirs, published during her attempt to sway American public opinion towards her restoration after she was deposed in 1893, Lili‘uokalani emphasized the equality of treatment and respect she perceived to be shown by European courts to the Hawaiian entourage during her European tour. She also reminded her opponents that she was no mere chieftain: she had been treated as a member of the global family of monarchs that had converged in London to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Victoria’s accession.⁶⁰

Bakar did not join in the festivities of the Golden Jubilee as he was still negotiating the scope of his perceived sovereignty following a treaty negotiated with the British in 1885.

⁵⁸ Robert Louis Semes, ‘Hawai‘i’s Holy War: English Bishop Staley, American Congregationalists, and the Hawaiian Monarchs, 1860–1870’, *Hawaiian Journal of History*, 34 (2000), 113–38.

⁵⁹ Sydney Lehua Iaukea, *The Queen and I: A Story of Disposessions and Reconnections in Hawai‘i* (Berkeley, 2012), 28.

⁶⁰ Lili‘uokalani, *Hawaii’s Story, by Hawaii’s Queen* (Boston, 1898), 142–70.

The agreement essentially established Johor as a British protectorate, with Bakar retaining full autonomy over internal affairs. Bakar, however, still pursued international recognition as a global rather than feudatory royal, declining invitations that positioned him as akin to native rulers under the British Raj. Informed by a strong legal team in Singapore and London, he cleverly avoided concessions in status. A key victory for Bakar in the treaty was recognition as sultan, rather than mere maharaja, of Johor, aiding his goal of drawing a line between himself and British Raj native rulers. When asked to participate in the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, Bakar offered to submit materials, but ‘without marking them with the name of Johor, so that the interests of the Colonies represented in the proposed Exhibition will not be intruded by a foreign State like mine’.⁶¹ In this vein, in 1893, he was delighted to submit an exhibition of Johor royal treasures to the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago.⁶² As the *Hikayat* rendered it, ‘The items shipped from Johor for the exhibition were highly commended and awarded several prizes for the display and thus enhancing His Royal Highness Sultan Abu Bakar and Johor’s reputation’.⁶³ Even after the turn of the twentieth century, the Johor crown continued to assert its status as an independent rather than subject monarchy.

Family Politics at Home and Abroad

Bakar’s and Kalākaua’s claims to membership in an emergent global royal family were founded upon a double appeal of cosmopolitan sociability and the personification of

⁶¹ Archives of Johor, Maharajah of Johor Letter Book, 1885–88, Transliteration, 4 Feb. 1885, Bakar to Cecil C. Smith, Acting Governor, S.S.,.

⁶² Sulaiman, *Hikayat Johor*, 201.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 202.

indigenous customary authority. Imperial tolerance of the authority of non-Western rulers was similarly rooted in their perceived legitimacy within indigenous society and their willingness to permit the greater exploitation of their territories' natural resources. Yet in a twist particular to both rulers, foreign recognition as members of a global royal family buttressed their local prestige and power, given that neither held uncomplicated titles to local lines of succession. On the contrary, both were seen by some as upstarts who managed to attain positions of local primacy through personal charisma, clever politicking with native and foreign actors alike, and some measure of luck.⁶⁴ To resolve these potential challenges to the legitimacy of their rule, both rulers established genealogical commissions to explore their lineages at the beginning of their reigns and pursued familial politics that embraced local and global sources of power.

While Bakar inherited his position as temenggong of Johor, Kalākaua's status as king of Hawai'i originated in a series of royal elections after Kamehameha V died without an appointed successor in 1872. Kalākaua became king only after his second candidature, having lost a first election against Lunalilo, who died only a year after being invested as king in 1873.⁶⁵ Kalākaua's victory in 1874 was hotly contested, and prior to his voyage around the world, he established Ka Papa Kū'auhau Ali'i o Nā Ali'i Hawai'i, or the Board of Genealogy of Hawaiian Chiefs, in 1880.⁶⁶ The function of the board was to preserve the Hawaiian oral genealogical tradition, including transcribing the Kumulipo, a creation chant which included a genealogy of Hawaiian rulers.⁶⁷ This not merely revealed Kalākaua's genuine commitment to preserving traditional Hawaiian forms of historical narration, but likewise served to buttress

⁶⁴ Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui*, 148–55.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 153–5.

⁶⁶ Stacy L. Kamehiro, *The Arts of Kingship: Hawaiian Art and National Culture of the Kalākaua Era* (Honolulu, 2009), 27–8; Cook, *Return to Kahiki*, 112.

⁶⁷ Katharine Luomala, 'Foreword', in Martha Warren Beckwith (trans. and ed.), *The Kumulipo: A Hawaiian Creation Chant* (Honolulu, 1972), pp. ix–xix; Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 103.

his claims to legitimacy among Native Hawaiians at a moment when it was being brought into question. The surviving minutes of the board testify to a particular concern with Kalākaua's own genealogy coincident to the White settler-led *coup d'état* of July 1887, after which Kalākaua was forced to sign a new constitution severely limiting the scope of his authority.⁶⁸

In Johor, Bakar in 1868 charged his cousin Ungku Haji Muhammad to work with the leading historian of the Bugis, Raja Ali Haji, to explore his genealogical claims to titular elevation as maharaja.⁶⁹ The surprise finding that Bakar's father was a matrilineal descendant of the founder of the Bendahara dynasty, Abdul Jalil Shah IV, secured recognition of his new title of maharaja not only from the British government, but also from other Malay sultans, including the sultan of Riau–Lingga, the Dutch-aligned successor state to the old Johor empire.⁷⁰ While secure with the British in his elevation to sultan in 1885, Bakar nevertheless encountered resistance among certain elements of the Malay population of Johor who were suspicious of his Bugis heritage and enthusiastic adoption of Western ways.⁷¹

In any analysis of Kalākaua's and Bakar's familial and marriage practices, we are confronted with the interweaving influence of tradition and conversion. Substantially more is known about the inner life of Kalākaua and his wife Kapi'olani than about Bakar and his wives, reflecting doubly the comparatively dynamic Hawaiian print market and fundamental differences in the social and political place of women in the two societies.⁷² The religious hegemony of Christianity in Hawai'i by the time of Kalākaua's succession forced him to display at least outward conformity to its strictures, though his commitment to reviving Hawaiian cultural practices such as the hula dovetailed with his continued observation of

⁶⁸ HSA, Board of Genealogy of Hawaiian Chiefs, Minutes of the Board, 2 May 1887–4 Aug. 1887.

⁶⁹ R. O. Winstedt, *A History of Johore, 1365–1895* (Kuala Lumpur, 1979), 108–9.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 108–9; Donna J. Amoroso, *Traditionalism and the Ascendancy of the Malay Ruling Class in Colonial Malaya* (Singapore, 2014), 89.

⁷¹ K. G. Tregonning, *A History of Modern Malaya* (London, 1964), 153.

⁷² *Kalakaua Dead*, 23.

indigenous kinship practices. Further, women holding status as high *ali'i*, the caste of hereditary nobles and rulers in ancient Hawaiian society, featured prominently in Hawaiian politics even during the second half of the nineteenth century, including Dowager Queen Emma, widow of Kamehameha IV and Kalākaua's primary challenger in the royal election of 1874, and Ruth Ke'elikōlani, at one point the wealthiest landowner in the kingdom, and widow of the *ali'i* whom Kalākaua described Bakar as resembling during his visit in Johor.

Bakar likewise cemented his power using cultural practices with currency in the greater Malay world. Bakar possessed both Malay and Bugis heritage; the latter group, prominent in the anthropological literature for possessing five distinct gender categories, were native to the island of Sulawesi, and converted to Islam after initial Portuguese and Dutch commercial intrusion in the region.⁷³ Like his immediate predecessors, Bakar practised elite polygamy in line with Muslim practice, taking a total of four wives as well as maintaining a harem.⁷⁴ While he often travelled with large entourages, it does not appear that he ever took his wives along with him, thus avoiding a dimension of his family life that would have stirred controversy in Christian settings.

Dynastic marriage within the emergent global royal family was contemplated though not achieved by both Kalākaua and Bakar. Nevertheless, a marked turn to global considerations in royal marriage is discernible over the course of the reigns of both Kalākaua and Bakar, coinciding with the consolidation of the notion of a global royal family. The politics of their initial marriage choices, undertaken in the 1860s, were principally local. Yet in the succeeding decades, the marital strategies pursued by both leaders—and in Bakar's case, his eligibility to take up to four wives—reflected increasingly broader horizons.

⁷³ Christian Pelras, *The Bugis* (Oxford, 1996), 160–5.

⁷⁴ Miriam Koktvedgaard Zeitzen, *Elite Malay Polygamy: Wives, Wealth, and Woes in Malaysia* (New York, 2018), 245–9.

Just over a decade prior to his election as king in 1874, Kalākaua married Kapi‘olani, granddaughter of Kaumuali‘i, the last independent king of the island of Kaua‘i, in a small Church of Hawai‘i ceremony in 1863.⁷⁵ While their wedding ceremony may have been Christian in form, their practice of family life was defined by a cultural hybridization of Hawaiian kinship and globalized royal titles. After their marriage, Kapi‘olani adopted two of her sister Kekaulike’s sons in the tradition of *hānai*, a form of customary adoption particularly common among *ali‘i* wherein a strong relationship emerges between adopting parent and adopted child according to the scope of care rendered, without extinguishing affective recognition of the biological parents.⁷⁶ At his coronation in 1883, Kalākaua bestowed the title of prince upon both of these young men, David Kawānanakoa and Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole,⁷⁷ though he maintained his sister Lili‘uokalani as heir apparent.

Kalākaua’s marriage to Kapi‘olani would be his only one, but the formally Christian and Polynesian character of the Hawaiian monarchy did not limit the scope of possible partners he envisioned for his kin. At the beginning of his world tour of 1881, Kalākaua famously proposed a union between Princess Ka‘iulani, then aged 6, and Higashifushimi Yorihito (later known as Prince Komatsu), aged 14, heir to the high-ranking Japanese princely house of Komatsu-no-miya.⁷⁸ Kalākaua’s vision here embraced a globalizing scope of regal alliances, with the Hawaiian monarchy gaining an increasingly powerful ally through a subordinate royal marriage. Likewise, it reflected his creative use of contemporary racial discourse. Beyond Polynesia, Kalākaua argued that Native Hawaiians were related to Asians

⁷⁵ Helena G. Allen, *Kalākaua: Renaissance King* (Honolulu, 1995), 33.

⁷⁶ E. S. Craighill Handy and Mary Kawena Pukui, *The Polynesian Family System in Ka-‘u, Hawai‘i* (Rutland, VT, 1993 [not 1972? See <https://www.worldcat.org/formats-editions/618829>]), 71–3. This book has gone through several reprints: that which I consulted is the ninth printin from 1993. The copyright date however indeed remained 1972.

⁷⁷ Edward Joesting, *Kauai: The Separate Kingdom* (Honolulu, 1984), 252.

⁷⁸ Donald Keene, *Emperor of Japan: Meiji and His World, 1852–1912* (New York, 2002), 349, 406; Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, vol. iii: *The Kalākaua Dynasty, 1874–1893* (Honolulu, 1979), 230.

as well as Native Americans. While nothing came of his marriage plan, both Ka‘iulani and Higashifushimi Yorihiro ventured to Europe in the late 1880s for educational purposes, participating in a growing tendency for high-placed non-European royals and elites to study on the Continent.⁷⁹

Meanwhile, Bakar’s marital choices more clearly reveal shifting political horizons, with local emplacement merging with global aspirations. The population demographics and ethnic–political hierarchy established over the course of Bakar’s rule in Johor was perhaps most cogently revealed at his state funeral, where the *Hikayat* reported that the entire right side of Zahra Hall was reserved for Chinese subjects; ‘the left was for people of various origins’, and the very front reserved for ‘the loyal and true Malays’.⁸⁰ While the surviving evidence does not permit us to judge whether it was a deliberate strategy, Bakar’s choice of spouses reflected the transformation of Johor’s population through mass migration from beyond the Malay world. Each of his four wives were associated with distinct communities, and the chronology of his marriages matched changing exigences and emerging possibilities in Johor politics.

More is known about Bakar’s calamitous relationship with Londoner Jenny Mighell than his relationship with any of his wives, as their liaison became public in a court case after she charged Bakar with breaching a promise to marry her during his treaty negotiations in London in 1885. Nurfadzilah Yahaya has recently demonstrated how British courts ultimately sided with Bakar rather than Mighell, in view of his status in the eyes of the Foreign Office as a foreign monarch not subject to British jurisdiction.⁸¹ The scarce record on Bakar’s relationships with his wives was in keeping with conventions of Malay historical narration, in

⁷⁹ Rotem Kowner, *Historical Dictionary of the Russo-Japanese War* (Lanham, MD, 2017), 193; Marilyn Stassen-McLaughlin, ‘Unlucky Star: Prince Ka‘iulani’, *Hawaiian Journal of History*, 33 (1999), 21–54.

⁸⁰ Sulaiman, *Hikayat Johor*, 214.

⁸¹ Yahaya, ‘Class, White Women, and Elite Asian Men’, 101–5, 110–16.

which women were usually named merely in relation to dynastic alliances, marriage, and childbearing, with the important exception of queens regnant.⁸² Silence also prevails regarding his harem, which was often mentioned though rarely described. A characteristic reference is found in the travelogue of Florence Caddy, who travelled with the duke of Sutherland across South-East Asia in 1889. In response to her inquiry about whether Bakar had a sultana, Scotsman Robert M. W. Swan (1858–1904), a railway engineer in the region, replied ‘Just now he has only three wives . . . But he is building a new harem—a fine place.’⁸³

Prior to succeeding his father Daeng Ibrahim (r. 1841–55) as temenggong of the state of Johor, Bakar was married to his first wife, Engku Chik, daughter of Raja Bendahara Tun Mutahir of Pahang, in 1857 or 1858, in the midst of a civil war caused by a succession crisis in Pahang. This was consistent with the customary horizons of regal marriage as a tool of alliance-building between rival claimants to particular Malay courts, and was brokered by Daeng Ibrahim. Bakar’s father, along with the Straits Settlements government, supported the Tun Mutahir’s claim over that of his brother, who was supported by the Siamese and the Malay sultanate of Terengganu.⁸⁴ Ibrahim’s strategy, which also included the marriage of Bakar’s sister to Engku Chik’s brother, proved fortuitous.⁸⁵ After prevailing, Tun Mutahir affirmed the autonomy of Pahang from the old Johor empire, confirming the latter’s disintegration. Further, the state of Johor’s northern borders were secured by the alliance, and Pahang went on to reflect the increasing influence of Johor and Britain during Bakar’s reign.

⁸² Cheah Boon Kheng, ‘Power behind the Throne: The Role of Queens and Court Ladies in Malay History’, *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 66/1 (1993), 1–21; Ruzy Suliza Hashim, *Out of the Shadows: Women in Malay Court Narratives* (Bangi, Malaysia, 2003).

⁸³ Florence Caddy, *To Siam and Malaya in the Duke of Sutherland’s Yacht ‘Sans Peur’* (London, 1889), 222.

⁸⁴ William Linehan, *A History of Pahang* (Kuala Lumpur, 1936), 71–2.

⁸⁵ Winstedt, *History of Johore*, 100–1.

Eight years after succeeding Daeng Ibrahim, in 1870, Bakar took his second wife Cecilia Catherina Lange, aged 22. Daughter of a Bali-based Danish trader, Mads Johansen Lange, and a Cantonese mother, she embodied an older phase of colonial interactions in the Malay world preceding the segregationist late nineteenth century. Born in 1848, Lange grew up on Bali until the age of 7, when she was sent to a convent school in Singapore.⁸⁶ Her half-brother, Andreas Emil, had been sent some years earlier to attend the Raffles Institute in Singapore, and would later move to Sarawak, where he served as private secretary to Rajah Charles Brooke and married a Chinese woman.⁸⁷ Following the death of her father a year after she was sent to Singapore, Lange was adopted by an Englishwoman and toured Europe and India during her youth. While the particular circumstances remain unclear, Bakar seems to have made Lange's acquaintance once she had returned to Singapore. After their marriage Lange took the Muslim name of Zubaidah and lived well into the 1930s. Much of what we know about her derives from her interviews in old age with the Danish travel writer Aage Krarup Nielsen, who wrote a biography of her father.⁸⁸ She lived on in a palace in Johor, rarely appearing in public, and was described by Nielsen as an 'animated little lady with white hair, blue eyes, and aristocratic features'.⁸⁹ She was the mother of Bakar's successor, Ibrahim (r. 1895–1959).

Bakar's third and fourth marriages further reflect his widening horizons of power, including a recognition of the plural nature of Johor's population as well as the rise of pan-Islamic thought. Curiously, it was Bakar's third wife, a Hakka Chinese woman named Wong Ah Gew, whom he chose as his first sultana within two years of their marriage. She was

⁸⁶ Peter Bloch, *Mads Lange: The Bali Trader and Peacemaker* (Batuan, Bali, 2007), 166–71.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 166.

⁸⁸ Aage Krarup Nielsen, *Mads Lange til Bali: En dansk Ostindiefarers liv og æventyr* (Copenhagen, 1925); Paul Andresen, *Mads Lange fra Bali og hans efterslægt sultanerne af Johor* (Odense, 1992).

⁸⁹ Williard A. Hanna, *A Brief History of Bali: Piracy, Slavery, Opium, and Guns. The Story of an Island Paradise* (Rutland, VT, 2016), 125.

formally invested as sultana several days after his own coronation, though with a more restricted audience. Only those of regal status were permitted: ‘neither outsider nor any Englishman was invited’, as Sulaiman noted.⁹⁰ She took the name Fatimah upon her conversion to Islam. P. Lim Pui Huen contends that she was elective kin to Wong Ah Fook, a highly prominent Chinese contractor and businessman who served as a close confidant to Bakar from the 1860s onwards.⁹¹ What little evidence remains of Bakar’s private sentiments towards his wives exists for Wong Ah Gew. The *Hikayat Johor* noted his great sorrow at her death in 1891, which caused him to return from Europe to oversee her funeral service in Johor.⁹² In her travelogue, Florence Caddy asserted that ‘the Sultan esteems her highly, and consults her in everything. It is true that he has other, younger, wives, but only the Sultana is a power in the state.’⁹³ Bakar’s fourth and final marriage occurred in 1893 with Hatice Hanım, a Circassian concubine.⁹⁴ While scholars have speculated that Hatice and fellow concubine Rukiye Hanım were gifted to Bakar by the Ottoman court as part of a policy to channel pan-Islamic power, Mehmet Özay and Ekrem Saltık have instead suggested the centrality of Johorean political motives.⁹⁵ The extent to which either concubine was connected with the Ottoman court is unclear, and it appears they arrived in Johor as teenagers, either in the late 1860s or early 1870s.⁹⁶ Neither were married before 1889, several years after the scope of Johor’s international sovereignty was constricted by the treaty of 1885, in which Bakar surrendered control over foreign policy. The political calculations surrounding Hatice’s

⁹⁰ Sulaiman, *Hikayat Johor*, 193.

⁹¹ P. Lim Pui Huen, *Wong Ah Fook: Immigrant, Builder, and Entrepreneur* (Singapore, 2002), 36–7.

⁹² Sulaiman, *Hikayat Johor*, 199.

⁹³ Caddy, *To Siam and Malaya*, 237.

⁹⁴ Ismail Hakkı Kadı and A. C. S. Peacock, *Ottoman–Southeast Asian Relations: Sources from the Ottoman Archives*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 2020), i. 363–4.

⁹⁵ Mehmet Özay and Ekrem Saltık, ‘The Myth and Reality of Rukiye Hanım in the Context of Turkish Malay Relations (1864–1904)’, *İnsan & Toplum Dergisi / Journal of Humanity and Society*, 5/9 (2015), 55–74.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 64–5.

elevation to sultana in 1894, three years after Wong Ah Gew's death, thus remain ambiguous. Rather than cultivating an anti-colonial alliance with the Ottoman court through dynastic intermarriage, Bakar was more likely staking claim to Islamic sources of cultural prestige and power. While Bakar was perhaps signalling consent to pursue a hierarchical connection with the Ottoman court for the purpose of local prestige, his last marriage above all spoke to that arena of customary authority still awarded to Bakar in the treaty of 1885: religion.

The global turn taken by Bakar in marriage choice was sustained by his descendants and was evident also in Hawai'i. However, this demonstrated more how monarchical status enabled select non-Europeans to cross the colour bars of high imperialism, and the local prestige and power attainable through interethnic connections, rather than the existence of an increasingly intermarrying global royal family. Among the wives of Bakar's successor Ibrahim were Hasana, daughter of the other Ottoman concubine brought to Johor by Bakar; Marcella Mendi of Romania; and Helen Bartholomew of Scotland, whom he eventually named as sultana.⁹⁷ In Hawai'i, Kalākaua's successor Lili'uokalani married John Owen Dominis, son of an Italian mariner and an American mother, with whom Lili'uokalani had been educated at the Royal School.⁹⁸ Like her brother, she would have no biological children. Before the overthrow of the monarchy, she appointed as heir apparent her niece Ka'iulani, whose father was the Scottish businessmen Archibald Scott Cleghorn. While internationally recognized royal status functioned for these dynasties as a source of power, their marriage partners tended to exhibit not so much a royal connection as a source of cultural and economic clout, particularly before the turn of the twentieth century.

⁹⁷ Nurulwahidah Binti Fauzi, Ali Mohammad, and Saim Kayadibi, 'The Religious–Intellectual Network: The Arrival of Islam in the Archipelago', in Saim Kayadibi (ed.), *Ottoman Connections to the Malay World: Islam, Law, and Society* (Kuala Lumpur, 2011), 1–31, at 20.

⁹⁸ Lili'uokalani, *Hawaii's Story*, 10–16, 22–9.

Conclusion: The Global Royal Family as a Vehicle for Sovereignty amidst Empire

What did non-European monarchs seek to achieve via membership in the global royal family? In both cases studied here, recognition as members of the global royal family shored up defences against indigenous and foreign rivals at home. Neither Kalākaua nor Bakar held unchallenged title to ascendancy in their respective domains, and the diminutive size of their states emboldened individual Western actors to pursue colonial advantages. In articulating an elective kinship with monarchs around the globe and blending Western and indigenous features in their regalia, Kalākaua and Bakar were staking claims to sovereignty in one of the few ways left for non-Western rulers in the late nineteenth-century Asia–Pacific. Kalākaua and Bakar’s cultivation of a global monarchical identity was thus a situationally coherent political intervention, providing a fleeting means to retain local sovereignty and power. Their success surely paled compared to that of Japan—which enjoyed a far more favourable position in the contemporary balance of interstate power—though Kalākaua and Bakar eagerly attempted to engage in global royal networking with the Meiji emperor and his court in the early 1880s for precisely this reason.

Kalākaua and Bakar’s monarchical stylizing—their coronations, flags, anthems, bands, travels, honorary orders, and correspondence—was thus intended for foreign and local audiences alike. It fused stranger-king elite alterity with cosmopolitan status signifiers. By the onset of both rulers’ reigns, local politics in Hawai‘i and Johor were defined by a complex mix of indigenous structures and colonial intrusions. Yet these two latter factors were not entirely antagonistic. To adapt one of Marshall Sahlins’s points about the stranger-king to a later historical moment, overtures to foreign sources of power—symbolic as well as material—continued to provide in the late nineteenth century an ‘arena from which local

powers-that-would-be extracted goods, identities, and other novel means for achieving authority within their own society'.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Sahlins, 'Stranger-King', 189.