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A Gift from Afar: Madeiran Emigration and the Emergence of the ʼUkulele in Hawai'i

Um Presente que Veio de Longe: A Emigração Madeirense e a Emergência do ʼUkulele no Hawai'i

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Abstract

The history of Hawai'i would have followed a markedly different course without the presence of Madeiran emigrants, whose contributions extended across economic, social, and cultural spheres. This article reexamines the specific impact of Madeiran music and string instruments within the Hawaiian cultural context, with particular attention to the emergence of the ʼukulele. The study results from a collaborative effort that brings

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together expertise in the history of Madeiran emigration and the musical legacy of this diaspora, alongside a specialized focus on the development of the ʻukulele and its significance in Hawaiian culture. Through this combined approach, we aim to provide a rigorous and nuanced understanding of the instrument's genesis and evolution, while also highlighting the broader cultural ties that unite Madeira and Hawai'i.

Keywords: Madeiran Emigration; Hawai'i; ʻUkulele; Traditional Music; Musical Instruments; Cultural Exchange; Music History.

Resumo

A história do Hawai'i teria seguido um rumo marcadamente distinto sem a presença dos emigrantes madeirenses, cujos contributos se estenderam às esferas económica, social e cultural. Neste artigo, reexaminamos o impacto específico da música e dos cordofones madeirenses no contexto cultural havaiano, com particular destaque para a emergência do ʻukulele. O estudo resulta de um esforço colaborativo que alia a investigação sobre a história da emigração madeirense e o legado musical desta diáspora a uma especialização centrada no desenvolvimento do ʻukulele e no seu significado na cultura havaiana. Através desta abordagem conjunta, procuramos oferecer uma leitura rigorosa e aprofundada da génese e evolução do instrumento, sublinhando em simultâneo os laços culturais mais amplos que unem a Madeira e o Hawai'i.

Palavras-chave: Emigração Madeirense; Hawai'i; ʻ*Ukulele*; Música Tradicional; Instrumentos Musicais; Intercâmbio Cultural; História da Música

The history of Madeiran emigration to Hawai'i can be told in as many languages as the destinations that received these islanders across the globe. Among the various waves of Madeiran migration to the four corners of the world, the one to Hawai'i was, without a doubt, among the most significant in terms of its cultural and economic impact on the host society.

Government-sponsored emigration to Hawai'i began with a group of 120 Madeirans who arrived in the archipelago on 29 September 1878 aboard the barque *Priscilla*. At the time, the wine trade – then the backbone of Madeira's economy – was in decline. Natural disasters had led to famine, the abandonment of vineyards, and widespread unemployment. These factors, combined with rapid population growth on an island with limited arable land and no room for agricultural expansion, caused a significant decline in living standards. For many, especially the rural workers devastated by the collapse of the local economy and enticed by labor recruiters, emigration became a matter of survival – just as it had in the 1830s, when thousands of Madeirans emigrated to Demerara after the abolition of slavery in the British colonies[3].

[3] For a more detailed account of Madeiran emigration to Hawai'i, see CALDEIRA, 2010, *Da Madeira para o Hawai'i: A Emigração e o Contributo Cultural Madeirense*.

While the Madeirans left for Hawai'i in part to escape the severe economic and social crisis of the early nineteenth century, this migration was also closely linked to transformations taking place in the island kingdom halfway around the world. These changes created a renewed demand for labor and a perceived need to attract immigrants who could help increase Hawai'i's declining population. Furthermore, the presence of a small Portuguese community of around 400 individuals in Hawai'i prior to the era of organized emigration – characterized by their reputation as hard--working, climate-adapted, peaceful, and family-oriented – helped shape the ideal profile of laborers and settlers sought by the Hawaiian government in Europe[4].

Thus, between 1878 and 1913, thousands of Madeirans set sail for Hawai'i on months-long sea voyages marked by pain, hardship, and longing, but also by dreams and hope for a brighter future on the other side of the world, in the land they came to call the "Terra Nova". Although conflicting records and unrecorded stowaways make it difficult to determine their exact number, 1890 census figures show that the Portuguese accounted for 9.5% of the population of Hawai'i, almost twice as many as all other Europeans and Americans combined[5].

The musical culture Madeiran emigrants encountered in Hawai'i was one that had been transformed since the arrival in 1820 of American Protestant missionaries, who complained of the «unearthly and inhuman […] howlings» of a people with no conception of western harmony. Sixty years later, native Hawaiians were being described as natural musicians, passionate about music and «wonderfully pleasing» singers[6].

Pre-contact Hawaiians had no European-style music. In an entirely oral culture, «chanted poetry that communicated the births and achievements of the chiefs, recorded the genealogies of the high chiefs […] and relayed Hawaiian epics» was of critical religious, historical and cultural significance, according to historian Adria L. Imada. The famous Hawaiian hula, today often seen as a mere tourist entertainment, relied on dancers, formally trained in demanding *hula halaus*, or schools, to perpetuate these legacies. «Through the late 19th century, hula was a highly venerated, selective and restricted form of religious and political praxis. Its practitioners were guardians of Native historiography, cosmogony, and genealogies, undergoing ritualized training

[4] For examples of the favorable perception of the Portuguese in Hawai'i, see «Wednesday November 8», *Hawaiian Gazette*, 8 November 1876, p. 2; «San Antonio's Society», 16 June 1877, in *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, p. 2; «Azores Association», 15 June 1878, in *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, p. 3. Most of the early Portuguese residents of Hawai'i were from the Azores and Cape Verde. See «Portuguese Seamen», 1 May 1861, in *The Friend*, p. 36; WARRIN, 2010, *So Ends This Day: The Portuguese in American Whaling 1765-1927*, pp. 53-62; 93-94; 103-105.

[5] «Census of 1890», 10 August 1891, in *The Daily Bulletin*, p. 3.

[6] Rev. Lowell Smith, quoted in FREAR, 1934, *Lowell and Abigail: A Realistic Idyll*, pp. 102-103; STODDARD, October 1883, «Lazy Letters from Low Latitudes», p. 340.

to reproduce and transmit knowledge for high-ranking chiefs. […] Spanning the sacred and secular, hula also provided entertainment for both chiefs and commoners»[7].

Different forms of chant required their own forms of hula and instrumentation. «*Hula pahu*, danced for religious purposes and thus the highest form of dance, was accompanied by the drum [*pahu*]. *Hula 'āla'apapa*, dances related to the achievements of past and present rulers, honored the gods or told of historical epics, accompanied by *ipu heke* (double gourd percussion instrument)», notes *kumu hula* (hula teacher) John R.K. Topolinski[8]. Other instrumentation included the *uli-uli*, or rattle; the *ililii*, similar to a castanet; the *ohe*, or nose flute; and the *ukeke*, a three-stringed bowed instrument played against the mouth[9].

With the arrival of Europeans and Americans to the Hawaiian Archipelago, beginning in the late 18th century, native Hawaiians had their first contact with Western instruments and harmony. While the *kanaka maoli* [native Hawaiians] first encountered European music with the arrival of James Cook in 1778, it wasn't until the arrival of the first missionaries in 1820 that the new musical practices began to take root. For Queen Lili'uokalani, one of Hawai'i's best-known and most prolific composers, this aptitude was not surprising. «The Hawaiian people have been from time immemorial lovers of poetry and music», she wrote[10]. The first book printed in Hawai'i, in 1824, was a book of hymns, *Na Himeni Hawaii*; what became known as the Royal Hawaiian Band was formed in 1836; and by 1880s, what historian John Troutman called «a distinctive guitar culture» had been established throughout the islands[11]. At the same time, Hawaiian and western dance vocabularies and western stringed instruments were blended into a new form of hula, known as *hula ku'i*[12].

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7 IMADA, 2012, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits Through the U.S. Empire*, pp. 11, 32.

8 TOPOLINSKI, 2012, «Hula», p. 327.

9 EMERSON, 1965, *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula*, pp. 140-149.

10 LILI'UOKALANI & FORBES, 2013, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*, p. 44.

11 FORBES, 1999, *Hawaiian National Bibliography 1780-1900*, pp. 396-397; BANDY, 1990, «Bandmaster Henry Berger and the Royal Hawaiian Band», p. 70; TROUTMAN, 2016, *Kīkā Kila: How the Hawaiian Steel Guitar Changed the Sound of Modern Music*, p. 24.

12 IMADA, 2012, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits Through the U.S. Empire*, p. 42.

Image 1 – In a ca. 1890 studio portrait by Honolulu photographer J.J. Williams, members of King David Kalākaua's Hui Lei Mamo dance troupe pose with (left to right) a 'ukulele, a guitar, and a five-string taro patch (rajão)

Source: Hawai'i State Archives, Series PP, Box 32, Folder 9a, Image 016.

The valuable and meaningful gift to Hawaiian music, which accompanied the Madeiran emigration to Hawai'i, reached the islands on 22 August 1879, with the arrival of the English barque *Ravenscrag*, after a journey of about 123 days covering approximately 15,000 nautical miles. This ship, in addition to 133 men, 110 women, and 176 children, also carried aboard a popular instrument of Madeiran origin, the *braguinha* – then known as the *machete* – which would in less than a decade become widely regarded as the national instrument of Hawai'i[13].

[13] *Machete* was the term used consistently in 19th-century Madeira for the small four-string chordophone; the term *braguinha* wasn't used until the early 20th century. Cf. TORRES & CAMACHO, 2024, *Instrumentos Musicais da Madeira*, pp. 76-77. One of the first known uses of "braguinha" in Hawai'i was in 1910: «O velho Augusto Dias (Santinho) ainda faz dos melhores instrumentos de corda; violas, machetes e especialimente 'O Braguinha,' na rua Union», «Noticias Locaes», 5 March 1910, in *O Luso*, p. 5.

Only one eyewitness account of the arrival of the *Ravenscrag* in Honolulu seems to have survived – that of João Fernandes[14] (1854-1923), then a 25-year-old plumber who had traveled from Funchal with wife Carolina and baby daughter Amália. In a 1921 interview with the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Fernandes described how he celebrated the end of their four-month voyage with a machete borrowed from fellow funchalense João Gomes da Silva: «When we landed here everyone was amused at the little instrument», Fernandes said, «and they wanted to hear me play it, which I did. […] The Hawaiians gave to the little instrument which I played the name ukulele, which is translated as "jumping flea"»[15].

Despite the presence of Portuguese in Hawai'i since at least 1798, no evidence has come to light that the machete had made an appearance prior to 1879[16]. Less than two weeks after the arrival of the *Ravenscrag*, the novelty of the new Madeiran music caught the eye – and ear – of a reporter for the *Hawaiian Gazette*.

> «During the past week a band of Portuguese musicians, composed of Madeira Islanders recently arrived here, have been delighting the people with nightly street concerts. The musicians are fine performers on their strange instruments, which are a kind of cross between a guitar and banjo, but which produce very sweet music in the hands of the Portuguese minstrels. We confess to having enjoyed the music ourselves and hope to hear more of it. "Music hath charms to sooth the savage breast," it is said, and although not savage ourselves, we plead guilty to the soothing influences of the Portuguese music»[17].

[14] Born in the parish of Sé, Funchal, Madeira, on 10 May 1854. See Madeiran Regional Archive and Library (Arquivo e Biblioteca da Madeira – ABM), Registos Paroquiais, Livro de Batismos da Sé, Book 37, fl. 146v. He was married to Carolina Augusta, who was born in the same parish on 10 December 1857. From this marriage, a daughter named Amália was born on 4 February 1879, in Santa Luzia, where the couple was then residing. See ABM, Paroquiais, Livro de Casamentos da Sé, Book 1312, fl. 14, and ABM, Governo Civil do Funchal, Processos de Concessão de Passaporte, Box 20, Folder 97, Process 301. According to this passport record, at the time of embarkation João Fernandes, then 25 years old, was recorded as a *picheleiro* – a term which, at the time, could refer either to a plumber or to a pewterer (a craftsman who makes or sells pewter vessels). On his way to Hawai'i, he was accompanied by his wife, then 22 years old, and their infant daughter Amália, just a month and a half old.

[15] «Portuguese Who Brought First Ukulele to Hawaii Reminisces of Olden Days», 5 December 1921, in *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, p. 8. Gomes da Silva is listed in University of Hawai'i, Hamilton Library, *Livro de Matrículas de Cidadãos Portuguezes 1878-1934*, entry 125, 22 August 1879, as a 37-year-old bachelor from São Pedro parish, Funchal.

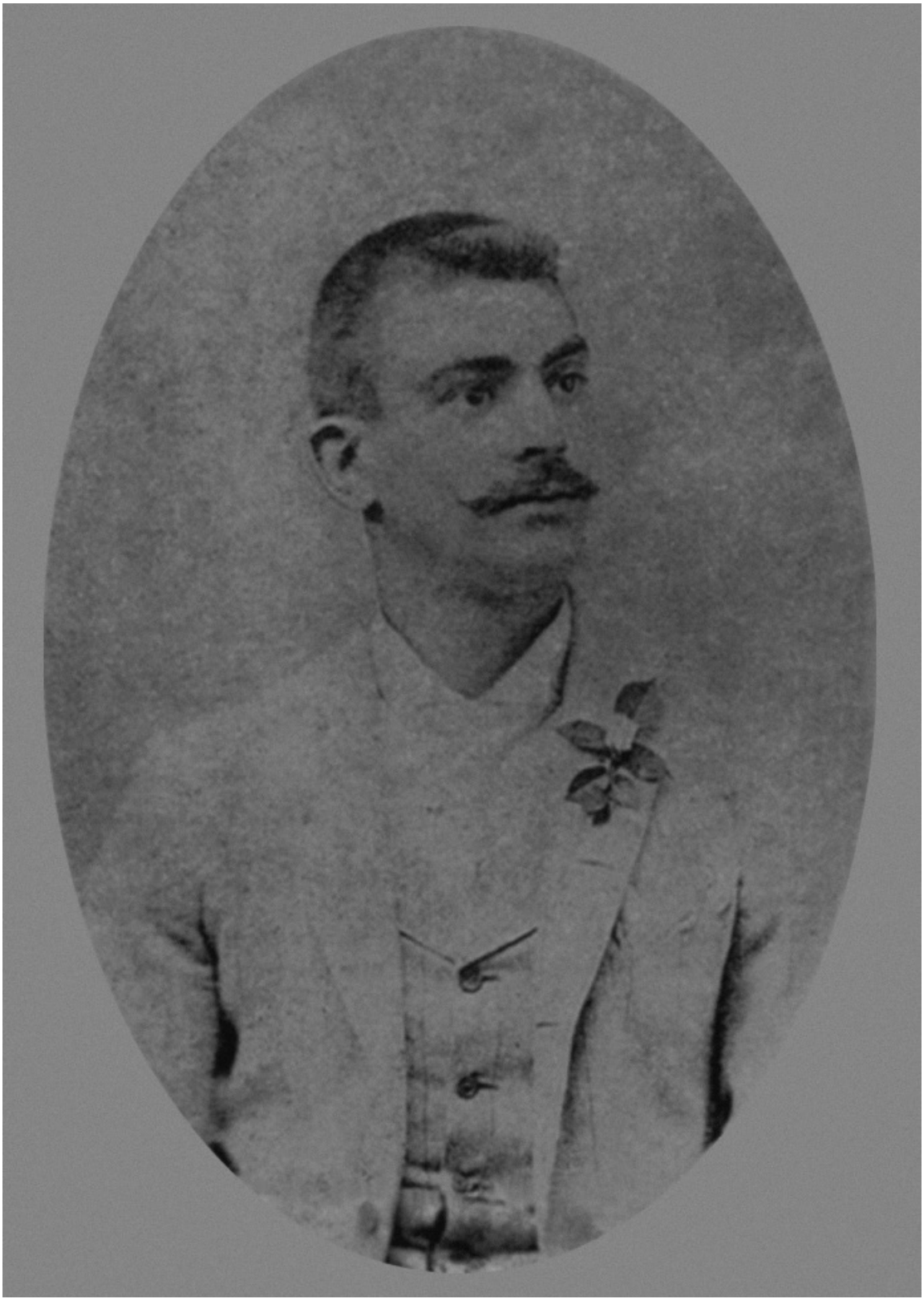
[16] The previous year, Madeiran emigrant João de Freitas reportedly brought a machete with him aboard the *Priscilla*, but there is no record of it being played in Hawai'i. According to de Freitas, «the instrument could not make good harmony unless played with another larger instrument of five strings», i.e. a rajão. Cf. «First Ukulele», 5 December 1921, in *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, p. 8. Jose Passos Rodrigues (1865-1955), another *Priscilla* passenger, also claimed that machetes were brought to Hawai'i in 1878. «Jose Rodrigues Recalls Ukulele's Arrival in 1878», 29 September 1936, in *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, p. 8; «A Salute from a Pioneer», 29 September 1941, in *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, p. 8.

[17] «Portuguese Musicians», 3 September 1879, in *Hawaiian Gazette*, p. 3.

Image 2 – Portrait of José do Espírito Santo, Honolulu studio of Gonsalves & Silva, ca. 1893

Source: Personal collection of Ronnie French.

Image 3 – Ca. 1886 portrait of Augusto Dias



Source: Personal collection of Jim Tranquada. Digital restoration by John King.

Among the *Ravenscrag*'s passengers were three men who would play key roles in the development of the 'ukulele: Funchal cabinetmakers Manuel Nunes (1843--1922), José do Espírito Santo (1850-1905), and Augusto Dias (1842-1915)[18]. Like most of the men aboard, Nunes, Espírito Santo and Dias had signed contracts as plantation workers and were officially listed as *trabalhadores*, or laborers[19]. In keeping with their contracts, after their arrival the three men were shipped off to work – Nunes to Maui and possibly Hawai'i and Dias to Hawai'i and then to Kaua'i. (Where Espírito Santo and Fernandes lived during their first years in the islands is unclear[20]). Like many other Portuguese contract workers, Nunes, Espírito Santo and Dias left the plantations as soon as they had fulfilled their contracts. They moved to Honolulu, which as the kingdom's largest city and commercial center promised the best opportunities for pursuing their trade.

Dias appears in the 1884 Honolulu directory – the first of the 'ukulele pioneers for whom there is any documentation. Augusto Dias, «guitar and furniture maker», was listed as living and working at 11 King Street in Honolulu's Chinatown. «Emanuel Nunes» is listed as a cabinetmaker with C. E. Williams' Pioneer Furniture Store; there are two listings for a Jose or J. Santos, one working as a porter and the other a

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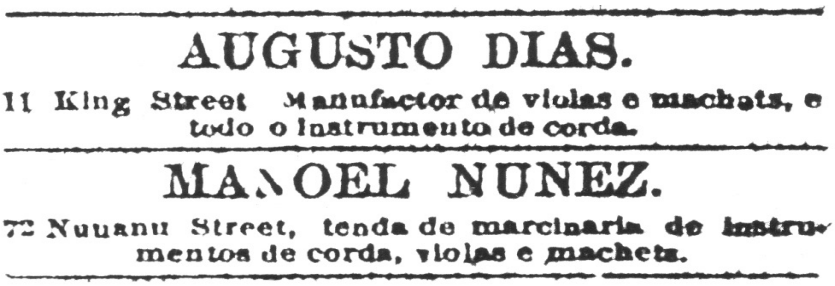
[18] University of Hawai'i, Hamilton Library, *Livro de Matrículas de Cidadãos Portuguezes 1878-1934*, entries 170, 185 and 193, 22 August 1879; Hawai'i State Archives (HSA), Department of Interior, Bureau of Immigration Financial Records, Series 519, Box 1, Folder 1, «List of Passengers per 'Ravenscrag'», entries 200, 358, 383. Dias, Nunes and Santo all were born in the parish of Santa Maria Maior, Funchal. Dias was born on 3 October 1842; Nunes on 14 June 1843; and Santo on 27 August 1850. See ABM, Registos Paroquiais, Livro de Batizados de Santa Maria Maior, Book 283, fl. 32v and fl. 49; Book 1241, fl. 43v.

[19] While no contracts have been found for the three men, the names of Santo, Nunes and Dias appear on a «List of debts to be paid monthly at Honolulu, HI» dated 12 June 1879; Santo owed 18,000 reis and Nunes and Dias 24,000 reis, apparently for advances on future wages. Cf. HSA, Department of Interior, Bureau of Immigration Financial Records, Series 519, Box 5, Folder 4. Nunes' name also appears on a separate list of passengers who had signed promissory notes. Nunes owed "116.00", presumably dollars.

[20] According to grandson John Nunes of Wailuku, Maui, Nunes worked on the Big Island. Larry Ikeda, «Ukulele from the Portuguese», February 1977, in *Maui Today*, p. 7. The 1909 marriage certificate for Santo's 26-year-old daughter Emilia (Emily) lists her birthplace as Maui, which places her family there ca. 1883. HSA, Judiciary, First Circuit Court, Marriage Certificates, Marriage Certificate no. 174, 23 August 1909. The 1900 U.S. Census for Honolulu lists November 1882 as the birthdate for Emily and her twin brother Manuel. Cf. Twelfth Census of the United States, Census of the Hawaiian Islands, vol. 10 Oahu Island, E.D. 12, Sheet no. 19-20, available at https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-DTL3-RV?view=explore&cc=1325221&lang=pt&groupId=M9LK-FQK. Dias' daughter Caroline testified that her father worked on Hawai'i and Kaua'i. Cf. HSA, Office of the Secretary of Hawai'i, Petition for the Registration of the Hawaiian Birth of Charles Francis Gilliland, Application 27587, 26 November 1947. "Augusto Diaz" is listed on tax assessment records as an employee of Lidgate's Plantation in Laupahoehoe on the island of Hawai'i in 1880. Cf. HSA, Department of Taxation, 3rd Taxation Division, Hilo District, Series 224-2-1880, vol. 2, p. 91.

steward on a local steamer[21]. By the following summer, Nunes had opened his own «cabinetmaker's shop of string instruments, guitars and machetes» on the edge of Chinatown three blocks away, and Santo had also taken out a newspaper ad to announce he was «prepared to undertake any job in connection with his Profession of Guitar and Cabinet Maker» just a few doors down from Nunes[22].

Image 4 – First known newspaper advertisements by violeiros Augusto Dias and Manuel Nunes


AUGUSTO DIAS.

11 King Street Manufactor de violas e machets, e todo o Instrumento de corda.

MANOEL NUNEZ.

72 Nuuanu Street, tenda de marcinaria de instrumentos de corda, violas e machets.

Source: *O Luso Hawaiiano*, 15 August 1885.

Instrument repair was prominently featured in Espírito Santo's half-page display ad in the 1888-1889 Honolulu directory – the first directory in which all three men were listed as guitar makers. «Jose do Esp'to Sante [*sic*], Nuuanu Street near Beretania, Guitar Maker and Repairer», announced that «I make a specialty of repairing all Musical String Instruments, and solicit orders from all the Islands. Any work sent in will be attended to immediately. I guarantee first-class work in all respects. Special orders taken to make Guitars of all sizes»[23].

Santo's phrase «guitars of all sizes» underscores the difficulty of tracing the earliest evolution of the 'ukulele. For example, the taro patch fiddle, or taro patch, has been generally understood since 1916 to be a large 'ukulele based on the rajão, only with four courses, double or less commonly single[24]. But taro patch also was a term that was applied to the 'ukulele for years. In 1892, an Ohio tourist described the taro patch fiddle as «a diminutive guitar of four strings», and as late as 1918, in describing the 'ukulele, collector Albert A. Stanley could confidently state that «"taro-patch fiddle" is a

[21] BAGOT, 1884, *McKenney's Hawaiian Directory Including a City Directory of Honolulu*, pp. 113, 188, 204.

[22] Both Dias and Nunes (*tenda de marcenaria de instrumentos de corda, violas e machetes*) advertised in the 15 August 1885 edition of *O Luso Hawaiiano*, Honolulu's newly established Portuguese-language newspaper. Santo's advertisement appeared in the *Hawaiian Gazette*, 23 September 1885, p. 3. The ad ran repeatedly through December of that year.

[23] LANE, 1888, *Hawaiian Directory and Hand Book of the Kingdom of Hawaii*, opposite p. 256.

[24] KEALAKAI, 1912, *Self Instructor for the Ukulele and Taro-Patch Fiddle* (Revised Edition), p. 3; KIA, 1914, *Self Instructor for the Ukulele and Taro-Patch Fiddle*, p. 31.

name frequently applied to the instrument»[25]. Both Nathaniel Emerson in his *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii* and ethnomusicologist Helen Roberts made a clear distinction between the immediate ancestors of the taro patch and 'ukulele. «The taro-patch fiddle in its original home had five strings, as it has here [in Hawai'i], and was known as the "rajao"; while the ukulele with four strings had its Portuguese representative in the "braga"», Roberts wrote in 1924[26].

Further complicating matters is the fact that 'ukulele tuning – the re-entrant, my-dog-has-fleas G C E A tuning known today – is quite different than the tuning described for the machete in 19th-century Madeira: intervals of thirds and a fourth in descending order, or D G B D[27]. The earliest published tuning for the 'ukulele, in Edward Holstein's pioneering 1894 publication, *Chords of the Taro-Patch Guitar*, makes clear that 'ukulele tuning was borrowed from the rajão, D G C E A, «the tuning of which is the same as the Taro-Patch deprived of the fifth string»[28]. Twenty years later, Angeline (Silva) Nunes, a daughter-in-law of Manuel Nunes, co-authored a 'ukulele method unique in its insistence on tuning a 'ukulele like a Madeiran machete: D G B D. «The original way of tuning the Ukulele has not been put into print, consequently it is unknown to most people», Nunes and co-author A. A. Santos wrote. «There are several methods in circulation which are adapted to the taro patch instead of the Ukulele. In fact, it is the taro patch method which has been applied to the Ukulele»[29].

The earliest known appearance in print of 'ukulele as a musical term is 1888[30]. By the turn of the century, 'ukulele was commonly understood to mean leaping or jumping flea – a definition first seen in print in 1892[31]. Hawaiian 'ukulele virtuoso,

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[25] SLIVERS, 1892, *The Land of the O'O. Figures, Fables, and Fancies,* p. 96; STANLEY, 1918, *Catalogue of the Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments*, p. 161.

[26] EMERSON, 1965, *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula*, p. 251; Lorin Tarr Gill, «Portuguese Were First to Introduce Ukulele in Hawaii Says Miss Roberts», 10 August 1924, in *Honolulu Advertiser Magazine*, p. 3. An 1893 newspaper correspondent made the distinction clear: «the ukalele, which is a sort of baby guitar, with only four strings all the same size and instead of picking the strings the[y] are strummed; [and] the taro patch, a stringed instrument a little longer than the ukalele, but with five strings, as the guitar». Cf. «Stories on Kanaka Land», 30 January 1893, in *Tacoma Daily News*, p. 1.

[27] TORRES & CAMACHO, 2024, *Instrumentos Musicais da Madeira*, p. 78; VASCONCELOS & MORAIS, 2003, *Colecção de Peças para Machete (1846)*, p. 81.

[28] HOLSTEIN, 1894, *Chords of the Taro-Patch Guitar. A New System for Learning to Play the Chords of the Taro-Patch Guitar Without a Teacher*, p. 3.

[29] SANTOS & NUNES, 1915, *Original Method and Self-Instructor on the Ukulele*, p. 3.

[30] At a concert at the Hawaiian church in Lihue, Kaua'i, by the combined glee clubs of the area, the men of the Lihue club played "Yankee Doodle" on violin, guitar, banjo and 'ukulele. Cf. «A Rural Fete», 11 December 1888, in *Hawaiian Gazette*, p. 1.

[31] «[The female Hawaiian] can take down her ukililli – 'jumping flea' – a machine of the guitar breed, almost eighteen inches long, but like a four-year-old boy, very noisy for its size […]». Cf. Conflagration Jones, «Kanaka Melody», 6 March 1892, in *Chicago Sunday Inter Ocean*, p. 22.

teacher, and musical impresario Ernest Ka'ai provided the first known explanation of the name in his 1906 method book: «The Hawaiians have a way of playing all over the strings at the same time, strumming and skipping their fingers from one side of the instrument to the other, hence the name, Ukulele (a bouncing flea)»[32]. A more poetic version of the origin of the name 'ukulele has been attributed to Queen Lili'uokalani, who is said to have named the instrument 'ukulele, meaning "the gift" (*uku*) "that came from afar" (*lele*)[33].

One of the most frequently cited accounts of how the 'ukulele got its name focuses on Edward William Purvis (1857-1888), a former English army officer who arrived in Hawai'i in 1879 and subsequently served four years as vice chamberlain to King Kalākaua.[34] Because Purvis was «slight of stature, agile, and light on his feet, […] rather a contrast to the large-bodied and slow-moving Hawaiians», he was reportedly tagged with the nickname "'Ukulele"[35]. However, Purvis resigned on 31 August 1886, the day after Chamberlain Charles H. Judd was abruptly dismissed for "improper conduct". Both Judd and Purvis were suspected of feeding derogatory information about the government to the *Hawaiian Gazette*[36]. Three months later, Purvis published The *Grand Duke of Gynbergdrinkenstein*, a notorious political satire of Kalākaua and his ministers. It seems unlikely that the nickname of a man who sought to undermine the King in the politically charged atmosphere of the time would have been applied toan instrument favored by native Hawaiians. Purvis died in Colorado in 1888[37].

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[32] KAAI, 1906, *The Ukulele: A Hawaiian Guitar and How to Play It*, p. 4. This was the first 'ukulele method.

[33] This version first appears in the first edition of KANAHELE, 1979, *Hawaiian Music and Musicians: An Illustrated History*, p. 396.

[34] HEDEMANN, 1994, *A Scottish-Hawaiian Story: The Purvis Family in the Sandwich Islands*, pp. 176, 264.

[35] Gill, «Portuguese Were First to Introduce Ukulele in Hawaii Says Miss Roberts», 10 August 1924, in *Honolulu Advertiser Magazine*, p. 3; HEDEMANN, 1994, *A Scottish-Hawaiian Story: The Purvis Family in the Sandwich Islands*, p. 276. Helen Roberts' account of how the 'ukulele got its name is the first version of this story to appear in print, and the first to cite Purvis' role. Another possibility is that Purvis got his nickname from the instrument, rather than the other way around, just as James "Kimo" A. Wilder was nicknamed "'ukulele" by his Harvard classmates in 1890-91 (although a Boston newspaper reporter heard it as "kukai"). Cf. «Skirt Dance and High Kicking», 13 April 1891, in *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 3.

[36] KUYKENDALL, 1967, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Volume III: 1874-1893, The Kalakaua Dynasty*, p. 346; HEDEMANN, 1994, *A Scottish-Hawaiian Story: The Purvis Family in the Sandwich Islands*, pp. 319-321; ADLER & BARRET, 1973, *The Diaries of Walter Murray Gibson*, p. 65. Gibson's entry for 8 August 1886 reads, «At [former attorney general Paul] Neumann's house. He intimated that he could prove the authorship of hostile articles in the Gazette – Purvis. The King at my house – will remove Purvis & Judd too, if he has proof».

[37] FORBES, 1999, *Hawaiian National Bibliography* 1780-1900, p. 215; MATHER, *One Summer in Hawaii*, pp. 159-160; HEDEMANN, 1994, *A Scottish-Hawaiian Story: The Purvis Family in the Sandwich Islands*, p. 359.

The first Hawaiian name applied to the machete has been reported to be *pila li'ili'i*, or little fiddle[38]. An early Espírito Santo business card (ca. 1898) suggests that the name *pila li'ili'i* may have referred to an instrument larger than the 'ukulele – the rajão, or taro-patch fiddle. The card identifies Santo as a manufacturer of large guitars, small guitars, and 'ukuleles (*Mea hana i na Pila Gita Nunui Pila Gita Lii Lii a me na Pila Ukulele*) consistent with his previously advertised readiness to build guitars of all sizes[39].

Image 5 – Business card of José do Espírito Santo, ca. 1898, giving his address as the corner of King and Alakea streets in Honolulu [Kihi o na Alanui Moi me Alakea]

Source: Personal collection of William Voiers.

Regardless, by the turn of the century the name 'ukulele had taken firm hold – as had the instrument itself on the musical culture of Hawai'i.

Hawai'i's rapid adoption of, and identification with, the 'ukulele is nothing short of astonishing. In 1886 Honolulu newspaper editor Augustus Marques commented in

[38] "Doc" Adams, «Old Fisherman Tells How Steel Guitar Originated; Also How Ukulele Got Name», 24 January 1932, in *Honolulu Advertiser*, p. 5; first cited in *Hai'ilono Mele*, 1 July 1975, p. 6.

[39] Original Santo business card in the possession of William Voiers of North Egremont, Massachusetts. In the 1898 Honolulu directory, Santo advertised the manufacture of «guitars, ukuleles, and taro--patch fiddles». HAWAIIAN GAZETTE CO., 1898, *Husted's Directory and Hand-Book of Honolulu and the Hawaiian Islands*, p. 251.

the *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual* that Hawaiians «of late […] have taken to the banjo and to that hideous small Portuguese instrument now called "taro-patch fiddle"»[40]. The following year, a Boston newspaper correspondent reported Hawaiians' fondness for nocturnal serenades, usually accompanied by an instrument «of the Portuguese variety, carrying four strings, and with no great volume of tone, but fitting enough for this simple lay»[41]. The 'ukulele's ubiquity was such that a visitor who took a trip aboard an inter-island steamer in 1888 described how the native Hawaiians camped out on deck sleeping, smoking, and «playing the taropatch fiddle – the national instrument of Hawaii»[42]. During the winter of 1896-97, while in Washington, D.C., Queen Lili'uokalani described how the daughter of California congressman Samuel Hilborn sang some of the Queen's songs to the accompaniment of «our instrument, the ukulele, [and] gave me that joy, so sadly sweet, of listening to the sounds of home in foreign lands».[43]

The patronage of King David Kalākaua played perhaps the most visible role in popularizing the 'ukulele and fostering its new identity as a native instrument.[44] The earliest direct evidence of its use in the royal circle can be seen in an 1889 photograph of the King with Robert Louis Stevenson: behind them are ranged the King's Singing Boys, one of whom is playing an 'ukulele.[45]

[40] MARQUES, 1886, «Music in Hawaii Nei», p. 58.

[41] «In Kalakaua's Kingdom», 12 July 1887, in *Boston Daily Advertiser*, p. 4.

[42] MERIWEATHER, 1889, *The Tramp at Home*, p. 264.

[43] LILI'UOKALANI & FORBES, 2013, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*, p. 379.

[44] King David Kalākaua reigned from 1874 to 1891. On 19 August 1881, he visited Portugal – a fact that was reported in the Madeiran press («Varias Noticias» in *A Voz do Povo*, 26 August 1881, p. 3). He was received by King Luís I, to whom he proposed a treaty aimed at regulating Portuguese emigration to Hawai'i. The treaty was subsequently ratified. See «His Majesty's Speech, Delivered at the Opening of the Legislative Assembly, April 29, 1882», 1 May 1882, in *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, p. 2; «Provisional Convention Between Portugal and the Hawaiian Islands», 4 September 1882, in *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, p. 7.

[45] HSA, Wallace Rider Farrington Collection, Photo Album 87b, Photograph 100, «Iolani Days».

Image 6 – The King's Singing Boys, accompanied by 'ukulele, entertain King David Kalākaua (left), author Robert Louis Stevenson (second from left), and other guests, ca. 1889

Source: Hawai'i State Archives, Box PNS-41, Negative No. 22713.

The Singing Boys were «that little group that played for him at our suppers and private parties», wrote Stevenson's stepdaughter, Isobel Field, who lived in Honolulu from 1883-89 and was a frequent guest at Iolani Palace. «There were five of them, the best singers and performers on the ukulele and guitar in the whole islands». Kalākaua himself learned how to play and occasionally performed during late supper parties at Iolani Palace, according to Field[46].

Kalākaua's most public endorsement of this new musical innovation was likely during the celebrations surrounding his birthday jubilee in 1886. A photograph of a jubilee *hula ku'i* performance – the blend of old and new musical and dance styles accompanied by guitar, 'ukulele, taro-patch, and sometimes piano, rather than by traditional instruments – shows five dancers, two kneeling chanters, and behind

[46] FIELD, 1937, *This Life I've Loved*, p. 175.

them, a violinist and a ʻukulele player[47]. David M. Kupihea and João Fernandes both claimed to have played the ʻukulele at the King's jubilee celebration; Fernandes also reported playing for Queen Emma Kaleleonālani, widow of Kamehameha IV, and for Lili'uokalani. Other members of the royal family embraced the ʻukulele, including Princess Victoria Kaiulani, Kalākaua's and Lili'uokalani's niece and the queen's official heir[48].

Image 7 – Princess Victoria Kaiulani (right, in kimono with parasol) and an unidentified woman (left) pose with Kaiulani's sister, Annie Cleghorn, who holds a taropatch, ca. 1884

Source: Hawai'i State Archives, Series PPWD, Box 15, Folder 3, Image 008.

[47] Photograph attributed to Walter M. Goffard, from the Ray Jerome Baker Collection at the Bishop Museum. Reproduced in SEVERSON, HORIKAWA & SAVILLE, 2002, *Finding Paradise: Island Art in Private Collections*, p. 241.

[48] Julius Palmer, Lili'uokalani's private secretary during a portion of her 1897 trip to Boston and Washington, D.C., reported from Washington that «Her Majesty is pleasantly entertaining friends with her own beautiful voice and the accompaniments of guitar, ʻukulele or autoharp». «Hawaii's Queen», 10 April 1897, in *The Independent*, p. 3. Kaiulani played as part of a ʻukulele trio in January 1889. «Reception», 26 January 1889, in the Honolulu *Daily Bulletin*, p. 2.

Both Dias and Nunes crafted instruments for the royals; Christina Dias Gilliland, Dias' oldest daughter, remembered translating for her father when Kalākaua visited her father's shop[49].

However, there was more to the royal family's patronage than personal preference. Kalākaua's 17-year reign, during which the 'ukulele was introduced and rose to popularity, was a period of convulsive political conflict that pitted native Hawaiians against the islands' powerful haole [foreigner or non-native Hawaiian] elite. At stake was nothing less than the fate of the monarchy and Hawaiian independence. Fueled by the explosive growth of the sugar industry, haole economic clout was joined with a contempt for Hawaiians and Hawaiian culture, a firm conviction in the inevitability of annexation by the United States, and that as an "inferior" race Hawaiians were doomed to extinction[50].

The machete's adoption by the *kanaka maoli* as the 'ukulele and its new identity as a uniquely Hawaiian instrument was inextricably bound up with the revival and politicization of Hawaiian culture – particularly the new music, or *hula ku'i*, for which it increasingly provided the accompaniment. Songs of the period were often a form of political discourse. Koa (*Acacia koa*), a large evergreen hardwood unique to Hawai'i, long had a special significance for native Hawaiians as a symbol of *aloha aina*, or love of the land. Koa was intimately associated with Hawaiian ali'i, literally from the cradle to the grave. The first royal throne, commissioned for Kamehameha III in 1847, was built of koa; the cradle for the heir of Kamehameha IV was made of koa; Hawaiian royalty slept in koa bedsteads and were buried in koa coffins[51]. These facts could not have been lost on the Madeiran instrument makers. Trained in European techniques, they used spruce or pine for the tops of their earliest Hawaiian-made instruments –

[49] «Aunt Tina of Kailua Helped Kalakaua Direct Making of Island's First Uke», 31 July 1963, in *The Pali Press*, p. 8. Nunes made a guitar for Prince Kalaniana'ole that is now part of the Hawaiian Music Archives collection in Honolulu. See PACIFIC STRING MUSEUM, s.d., *The Guitar of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole*.

[50] OSORIO, 2002, *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887*, pp. 146-147; ING, 2019, *Reclaiming Kalākaua: Nineteenth Century Perspectives on a Hawaiian Sovereign*, pp. 23-26.

[51] For Kamehameha III's throne, see JENKINS, 1983, *Hawaiian Furniture and Hawaii's Cabinetmakers*, pp. 105-106; for the heir apparent's cradle, see JENKINS, 1983, *Hawaiian Furniture and Hawaii's Cabinetmakers*, p. 115; for royal coffins for Kamehameha III and IV, Lunalilo, Queen Emma, Kalākaua, Liliu'okalani, and Bernice Pauahi Bishop, see JENKINS, 1983, *Hawaiian Furniture and Hawaii's Cabinetmakers*, pp. 116-117, 146; IRWIN, 1960, *I Knew Queen Liliuokalani*, p. 108; BRIGGS, 1926, *Experiences of a Medical Student in Honolulu, and on the Island of Oahu 1881*, p. 204; and KROUT, 1908, *The Memoirs of Hon. Bernice Pauahi Bishop*, pp. 225-26; for royal bedsteads, see JENKINS, 1983, *Hawaiian Furniture and Hawaii's Cabinetmakers*, pp. 78, 121, 159, 174, and IRWIN, 1960, *I Knew Queen Liliuokalani*, p. 107.

softer woods they knew would produce a more traditional sound. Yet they quickly began to make all-koa instruments – the single most important innovation in the transformation of the machete into the 'ukulele[52].

Royal patronage and a patriotic Hawaiian market did not make the 'ukulele makers royalists themselves, however. In 1894, one year after the illegal overthrow of the monarchy, both Dias and Espírito Santo pledged their loyalty to the new Republic of Hawai'i, swearing they would not «either directly or indirectly, encourage or assist in the restoration or establishment of a Monarchical form of Government in the Hawaiian Islands»[53].

Taken home by American tourists, many of them women, the 'ukulele began to grow in popularity in the states along the Pacific coast after the turn of the century. Appearances by Hawaiian musicians in a series of world's fairs – Chicago in 1893, Omaha in 1899, Buffalo in 1900, Portland, Oregon in 1905, Seattle in 1909 – in vaudeville and in Richard Walton Tully's play, *The Bird of Paradise*, which toured the United States for years following its Broadway debut in 1912 – set the stage for San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exhibition in 1915. Hawaiian music featured at Hawai'i's French Renaissance-style pavilion and elsewhere on the grounds that attracted the attention of many of the 19 million attendees turned the 'ukulele into what one national music house called «the most popular instrument of the day […] Society fad of the hour»[54].

[52] Superb examples of these early kingdom-era instruments can be found in the private collection of Shawn Yacavone of Honolulu.

[53] Santo signed (by mark) his oath on 3 September 1894; Dias signed his eight days later. HSA, Judiciary, First Circuit Court, Oath Book 24, Oath 44 and Oath Book 28, Oath 20. Most Portuguese did not support the monarchy. See UNITED STATES SENATE, 1894, *Hawaiian Islands. Report of the Committee on Foreign Relations* […], vol. 1, p. 791, vol. 2, p. 1137. «The Portuguese are the only race which is undivided on this question», J.M. Vivas of Honolulu was quoted as saying in 1893, after the illegal overthrow of the monarchy. «They favor annexation because they know it will benefit every one of them. […] They support [the provisional government] enthusiastically», in «Vivas Talks», 25 April 1893, in *Hawaiian Gazette*, p. 4.

[54] «Lyon and Healy advertisement», November 1915, in *Cadenza*, p. 41. For an overview of this period, see TRANQUADA & KING, 2012, *The 'Ukulele*, pp. 92-113.

Image 8 – A Hawaiian quintet featuring Henry Kailimai (center) was a popular feature in the Hawaiian Building at San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915

Source: Hawai'i State Archives, Series PP, Box 19, Folder 8, Image 018.

Although they claim it as their own, the Hawaiians have not forgotten that this «gift that came from afar» originally came from the island of Madeira. Nor have they forgotten the Madeirans who made it popular in their "Terra Nova" and who, through their hard work, left their names written in the history of Hawaiian music. Nunes, Espírito Santo and Dias all have been inducted into the 'Ukulele Hall of Fame, now housed in the Hawaiian Music Archives, part of the Hawai'i State Archives in Honolulu. Associated with luaus, sweet moonlit nights, and the romance of the islands, the 'ukulele is today the quintessential Hawaiian symbol, the calling card of the Hawaiian archipelago, and, without a doubt, one of the most striking elements of the musical legacy of the Madeirans in the world, serving as an integral part of a culture and thus contributing to the mosaic that is irrevocably and unmistakably Hawai'i.

The earliest 'ukuleles built by the Madeirans are still highly sought after by collectors, who continue to debate which of the three original makers should be credited with building the first 'ukulele, or who currently owns the oldest of these instruments. While questions remain – questions that may never have a definitive answer – we do know that today, from this geographical and temporal distance, we are able to answer the question from the 1921 interview with João Fernandes, the Madeiran who is believed to have played the machete/braguinha for the first time in Hawai'i: «Do you think Hawaii liked my music?»[55].

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[55] «Portuguese Who Brought First Ukulele to Hawaii Reminisces of Olden Days», 5 December 1921, in *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, p. 8.

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