‘AHU’ULA – THE POLITICS OF A SACRED GARMENT: REPOSITIONING MO’OLELO AND GENEALOGY TO EXTRACT INFORMATION ON HAWAIIAN FEATHER CLOAKS AND CAPES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN HAWAIIAN STUDIES

DECEMBER 2011

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Keywords: ‘Ahu’ula, Feather Capes, Feather Cloaks, Hawai‘i Feather Garments
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes out to all the Professors at Kamakakūokalani, especially to my Committee members for their guidance and patience. In addition, my sincerest aloha goes out to all my family and friends for their support and encouragement. Last but not least, a special mahalo to Dr. Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa for her enthusiasm and insight on Oceanic comparison studies; and to Dr. Paul Whitinui for his time, insight, and discussions on indigenous studies.

KA WELA O KA UA.

Warrior chiefs in feather capes and helmets. They are like little rainbows—rain “heated” by the sun.

#1664

ABSTRACT

Literature on the ‘ahu’ula reveals anthropologists employed euro-centric data-collecting procedures and protocols to aid in their study of the function and purpose of the ‘ahu’ula. Around mid-century, a number of sub-fields within anthropology blended approaches to further their research on the ‘ahu’ula and the people of Hawai‘i. Analysis of these approaches reveal a systemic bias develops during the midcentury, and without opposition, remained as the leading and authoritative discourse on ‘ahu’ula.

This thesis is a critique of the development of euro-centric frameworks used to analyze ‘ahu’ula. This investigation looks closely at the history of institutionalized research and opens discussion on issues of authority and what constitutes as non-culture based research methodologies. Research of Hawai‘i oral stories re-positions the ‘ahu’ula as a multi-faceted, socio-political tool of human endeavors. A comparison between oral stories and euro-centric viewpoints expose non-native positions that superseded a Kanaka Hawai‘i worldview of Hawai‘i chiefly feather capes.
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NOTES ON THE USE OF THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE

The use of the ‘okina and kahakō are necessary for the preservation of proper pronunciation of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i through a written format. However, in some instances, especially in early genealogy names, use of diacriticals was not always included when names were committed to paper. For the sake of consistency, the ‘okina and kahakō are not included in any names referring to historical figures, for example Kakaalaneo or Kalaniopuu. On the other hand, the diacritical markings are included for prevalent words commonly used today, in both everyday speaking and writing, like Hawai‘i or ‘ahu‘ula.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

One of the amazing things about studying art as an undergraduate student, outside the act of creating it, was recognizing art’s social importance to culture. When pens and paintbrushes are set down, the desire does not rest just because the tools are out-of-hand. Pages of an unfathomable number of images are thumbed and perused, combined with unending visits to museums, all in an exploration to define what is art.

An art student’s quintessential art history text is Gardner’s Art Through the Ages (Tansey, 1996). Personal undergraduate experience, as it related to native arts, entailed a brief introduction to an over generalization—clumping together “The Native Arts of the Americas and of Oceania” (552-940) into a simply defined but separate category. Gardner’s discussion is too short to be considered anything more than just a mere mention of its existence. As for the information on Hawai’i arts, Gardner’s text is not much longer than the length of a single image, an image of the War god, Kū, representing Hawai’i Native art. From a Kanaka Hawai’i perspective, this is an example of the use of a specific imagery, an image of Kū that is one of the strongest visual images that can be found in Hawaiian culture. It is also one that can be easily recognized by Westerners as non-European. Westerners typically consider images of the Hawaiian war god as a tiki because of rampant appropriation and commodification over the centuries. From the television episode Brady Bunch visits Hawai’i to the tiki beer taps and bobbing head novelties, the use of a Kū image, in the context of an art history textbook, easily defines what might look Native to the outsider.

1The term “Kanaka Hawai’i” translated refers to a Hawaiian person. The term Kanaka Hawai’i will be used throughout this work in place of the English language use of the term “Native Hawaiian”. In doing so, it is an attempt to emphasize distinctions made between Kanaka Hawai’i positions and Western framed cultural perceptions of Kanaka Hawai’i people and Kanaka Hawai’i culture.
Imagery without responsible cultural representation is an easy platform for latent and inert bias. The absence of Native authority and a Native voice perpetuates the very issues of domination and colonization of Native peoples and their culture, and this encompasses their arts. Kū is described as “majestic in scale and forcefully carved to convey vigorous tensions” (588). These types of descriptions reinforce misconceptions through its use of interpretative object-based conjecture. Words like: majestic, forceful, vigorous, and tension are descriptive of a Western portrayal of Native-ness and feeds into the perceptions of the imagery. This kind of positioning can be found in many disciplines attempting to describe and define Natives Peoples’ “objects” and their “art.” In many cases, it is also the scientists and academic doctors, the archeologists, the ethnologists, who are the authorities determining the art in the objects. In addition, Western institutions provide the spaces for these individuals to claim authority to (re) determine, and (re) define what is Native. In more instances than not, Western claims of authority over Native knowledge ironically misses critical social connections between the function of language and stories with the function of material culture (objects). The stories of a culture are the people. Disconnection between native stories—the people and cultural material gives way to misconceptions and misrepresentation, a common by-product of euro-centrism.

The magnitude of euro-centrism is rooted in centuries of philosophies and research that are perpetuated in the ideals of Western knowledge, academia, and institutions. Researching how and why a euro-centric point of view has dominated the

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2 The term material culture references Western approaches to contextualize objects and artifacts within its culture’s society. An in-depth discussion on material culture is relatable to the concerns of the ʻahuʻula but does not immediately fit into the scope of the current discussion. The term material culture is used here only to allude to awareness of additional Western framed discourses on the subject matter.
interpretation of Kanaka Hawai‘i museum-relegated objects\textsuperscript{3} is a process to diminish non-native narratives and authority. An analysis of Western discourses focused around one prominent museum object, the ‘ahu‘ula, will expose a history of bias and nonsensical conjecture rooted in Western methodology and thinking. To further emphasize the disconnection from an authoritative Native voice, a close analysis of the oral stories will be used to address concerns of euro-centrism and conjecture-based myths perpetuated around the object.

\textsuperscript{3} The term \textit{object} is preferred over the use of other terms, such as material culture, item, thing, or artifacts, because the term \textit{object} is defined as “something perceptible by one or more of the senses, especially by vision or touch.” The term \textit{object} will be used throughout this work to refer to “something perceptible to the senses”. See “The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language,” \textit{The American Heritage Dictionary Of The English Language}, ed. Anne H. Soukhanov, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), vol. Single.
CHAPTER 2
TRANSITIONS

To the purveyor of ethnographic collections, the ‘ahu‘ula is one of the most recognizable items of Hawai‘i manufacturing. Hawaiian feather cloaks have captured the minds of many foreigners since their introduction to the Hawaiian Islands, the people, and their culture. Historian John Cawte Beaglehole noted Captain James Cook remarks of “‘neat Tippets made of red and yellow’” and “splendid short cloaks, of similar feathers” (Beaglehole 578) in his work on Cook’s journeys. Beaglehole also included Cook’s perceptions of the “ingenious feather-covered ‘‘Caps,’…like helmets of old” and that “These and also the cloaks [the natives] set so high a value upon” but “[he] could not procure one, some however got” (580). These comments are from the very first of three voyages made to the Sandwich Isles by Cook and his men and are some of the earliest descriptions by foreigners found on the ‘ahu‘ula. These journal descriptions tell that feather garments were one of the first gifts bestowed upon the newcomers. Further descriptions also reveal that Cook considered the bark cloth “less splendid” than the feather garments, although very “elegant and pleasing beyond compare,” (580) and this gives evidence that the feather garments captivated the foreigners’ senses. This description also hints at the writer’s reminiscence and comparison to Western defined luxury and splendid beauty. This is better understood in Te Rangi Hiroa’s quote of Captain James Cook reflecting on the feather garments’ “‘surface might be compared to the thickest and richest velvet, which they resemble, both as to the feel, and the glossy appearance’” (Buck Arts and Crafts of Hawaii 215).

4 Anthropologies commonly use the term manufacture to discuss issues concerning the production of objects. The term manufacturing is used here to reflect the object’s impending value as a commodity and its appeal to foreigners. For more information on this subject see Jocelyn Linnekin.
Fineries were always welcome by European seamen because the items translated to money and during the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century they were unanimously attracted to these feathered garments. Detailed writings from Captain Cook, Captain George Vancouver, Lord Byron, and Richard Bloxam, to name a few, show that feather cloaks were regarded with enough magnificence to be considered well-worth trading for and even worth being purchased (Southworth 1-7). Later, with the arrival of merchants and missionaries, they too would have the same enthusiasm for the feather garments. Looking at the ‘ahu’ula through the lens of European sea journals, the impression is, without a doubt, feather capes were considered fabulous curio-novelties, a definitive item to return home with that others could easily appreciate for its finery.

European voyages continued into the following century, but the ever-increasing number of ships, captains, merchants, and missionaries who acquired novelties from Hawai‘i would seem to have created a surplus abroad. Their return home with more and more examples of ‘ahu’ula increased the frequency of Hawaiian feather capes in Europe as well as the overall collection size for private collectors. With the ever-increasing size of private collections, the novel feather capes and other objects were shifting from object-curios representing overseas adventures to becoming ethnographic examples fitting a growing and evolving purpose in collections.

At the same time as the Renaissance-to-Victorian intellectual shift from curios to ethnographic specimens is the rapid success and maturity of the Sovereign Hawaiian Kingdom. By the 1850’s the Hawaiian Kingdom was on a world stage engaged in international affairs and was also taking on social concerns that parallel the trends and style in its contemporary nations. As early as 1872, King Lot Kapuāiwa, Kamehameha V,
signed the “Act to establish a National Museum” and by 1875 the National Hawaiian Museum opened its doors ("Museums in Hawai‘i"). But, it should also be noted that the establishment of a museum in Hawai‘i is unlike its European counterparts because its inception was a focus on nationalism and cultural preservation ("Museums in Hawaiʻi").

The shift of objects from a curio to one of an ethnographic focus is undoubtedly a response to Enlightenment philosophies and rise of the Victorian era. As for the large private collections abroad, a new potential had to be envisioned or the collection would be impractical or become a financial encumbrance. The Leverian Museum, owned by Ashton Lever, is an example of such a situation. Most famous for the number of items collected from Cook’s voyages, Lever opened his private collection to the public in 1777. However, by 1786 Lever “had injured his fortune by the indulgence of his taste as a virtuoso” (Stone et al.). Shortly thereafter, the museum was sold by lottery and Mr. James Parkinson became the new proprietor. He then re-sold the collections in an 1806 auction that dispersed the items throughout Europe (Stone et al. 9). Another example of a museum that went to auction was William Bullock’s, which existed from 1765 to 1829. (Kaeppler "Cook Voyage Provenance of the 'Artificial Curiosities' of Bullock's Museum" 68). Bullock’s collection also incorporated items from the Leverian sales (Stone et al.).

Museums did not happen over night, or simultaneously throughout the world but generated through cognitive ideals combined with that of contemporary trends. The origins of the British Museum are found in the private collection of naturalist, physician, and collector Sir Hans Sloane. He gifted his collection to the nation in 1753, and the British Museum opened its doors in 1759 ("History of the British Museum"). In 1799, in Salem, Massachusetts, an early group of sea-faring captains made up the East
India Marine Society creating a “cabinet of natural and artificial curiosities.” The collections of “curiosities” in combination with contributions from philanthropist George Peabody, is now known as the Peabody-Essex Museum ("Museum History"). And last but not least is the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa with “humble beginnings” in the “tiny Colonial Museum” of 1865 ("Our History"). These are a few examples of private endeavors–collections that evolved into museums that represented the Westerner’s movements toward ethnographic concerns. The relevance of the objects was no longer framed around a captain and his benefactor or an individual private collector. The value and purpose of the objects, en mass, evolved from a space centered on an individual’s pleasure and observation of the objects to a space meant to educate the general public. The idea of large personal collections opening to the general public fed the development of the museums, addressed contemporary notions and issues of education, and established a perfect place of study for philanthropists, naturalists, archeologists, and the likes.

A Colonized Space

The Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum was established by the end of the 19th century After the National Hawaiian Museum ceased to exist. The new museum was a safe house for chiefly heirlooms and other items that represented Hawaiian cultural arts. The first director of the museum was William T. Brigham, 1899-1931, who was also the curator of the ethnographic collections to publish the first extensive analysis of Hawaiian feathered items.

Brigham remarks that the feather garments are “not only the most abundant” but they “have been gradually gathered into museums until there is not a large ethnological
museum that cannot show a specimen of some quality” (*Hawaiian Feather Work* 50).

Brigham recognized the beauty of these items that led to a comprehensive list of Hawaiian feather works in various collections. The discussions he left in the broad community eventually lead to the printing of two supplements, one in 1903 and a second in 1918. Both supplements included new additions to the first list for a final count of over one hundred known and located garments.

What is of interest here is that each one of these publications implemented a specific ethnographic method that was employed by Brigham. The method was a simple organization that relied on object-based observation. It included basic information such as: materials used, construction, design and color, measurements, and state of condition. Brigham also included measurements and noted on the shape of each object. In American Anthropologist William Henry Holmes’ book review, he commends Brigham on his “simple and direct” style and “[furnishing] a satisfactory idea of the scope of the art and [giving] some hints as to its significance and symbolism” (Holmes 155). The tone set by Holmes resonates like commentary on a daunting task uncovering the remains of a lost race. Ironically, it was Brigham’s three-part model of inquiry: *Construction and Assembly, Function and Purpose, and Ownership and Location* that is so disconnected from the living culture, his work is actually perceived as “thus another interesting group of facts [that are] available for use in the great work of building up the history of the race” (155). Brigham’s cultural disconnection is clearly evident in his remarks:

> It may seem strange that articles so highly valued should have so little history connected with them. To most of us it would add greatly to the interest which must ever attach to these beautiful examples of patient and
long-continued work by a primitive people if we knew what chief first
ordered the construction, how long the hunters collected, how many years
the deft fingers of the high chiefess plaited the precious feathers into the
network, what rejoicings at the completion of the long task, in what battle
it first was worn, and then the changing ownership when murder, fraud, or
theft transferred the garment; or when, in rarer cases the owner gave the
rich gift to a well loved friend; or, dying, left the ahuula to his heirs
(Hawaiian Feather Work 55).

Brigham’s frustration with studying the feather garments was the inability to access
relatable information to the field of ethnology. The information Brigham sought, he felt,
would further cultural understanding and importance. Tangible information that through a
Western scope was perceived important to the study of the object. Brigham attempts to
access stories and tales but quickly dismisses them with:

But the native meles and kaaos, while attesting the antiquity of the
manufacture, are not explicit enough to permit the identification of any one
specimen; as to the pattern and size, “aole i oleloia ma na kaaao kahiko o ko
o nei poe kanaaka—it is not told in the ancient legends of this people”
(Hawaiian Feather Work 55).

Besides his disappointment, Brigham continued to analyze and collect information with
an occasional contribution made by anthropologists John F. Stokes and Henry Usher
Hall. Brigham as lead investigator in the subject area, combined with his method of
analysis and role as Director of the Bishop Musem, laid a seeming precedent for
following researchers to be guided by. The disconnect between the material culture and
the Hawaiian people was so acute and entrenched in the philosophy of the museum that it was a serious point addressed in its 21st century remodel for the museum to “end the practice of viewing Hawaiian materials as objects of a “dying or lost culture” and instead highlight the connections between past and present that platform a living culture” ("Museums in Hawaiʻi").

Appropriating A Colonized Space

Brigham’s work was the lead authority on the ‘ahuʻula when, in the 1950’s, another shift in Western thinking became evident. In 1944, Te Rangi Hiroa authored a journal article known as the “Local Evolution on Hawaiian Feather Capes and Cloaks.” Hiroa’s theorizing broke from Brigham’s object-based data collecting method and incorporates conjecture in his analysis. Hiroa “attempts to show the significance of the rectangular capes and the ti-leaf rain-cape in the chain of local evolution in technique that led to the more complex circular capes and cloaks” (Buck Local Evolution of Hawaiian Feather Capes and Cloaks 1). This is the first type of analysis done purporting a link between different shapes and styles of objects that suggests evolution of an object’s function. The analysis is problematic not only because the conjecture is highly subjective but also the analysis, like Brigham’s, is reflecting on Native people through an object-based lens. The damage created by an object-based lens is the suggestion of insight into Native cognition without actually interacting with any Natives.

The shift towards conjecture and subjectivity in object-based research is subtle but can be understood through Alexander Spoehr’s foreword in “Arts and Crafts of Hawaiʻi.” As the Director of Bishop Museum, 1953-1961, Spoehr writes:

5 Also known as Sir Peter Buck.
A few comments should be made as to the relation of “Arts and crafts of Hawaiʻi” to contemporary anthropology. The book is a study of material culture. As a subject of inquiry, the study of material culture per se has virtually vanished from the ethnological scene, except where it impinges on the study of primitive art. Dr. Buck was one of the last of his generation to preserve an interest in the material culture of a non-Western people.

However, the value to anthropology of “Arts and crafts of Hawaiʻi” is not to be assessed in terms of the past interests of the discipline, but rather in regard to developing trends in the formulation of anthropology’s core problems. A central interest of anthropology has always been the culture history of man. Today it is the archaeologists who are perhaps most actively putting together the pieces of a world-wide history of human culture. Their efforts involve, of necessity, detailed analysis and description of objects and physical structures obtained from excavations. Through the comparison of these explicit and detailed descriptions, they then infer the course of past events to the degree their material allows. The manner in which Dr. Buck [Hiroa] pursued his study of material culture and his careful description of artifacts is more akin to the contemporary archaeological report than to the ethnological study. Archeologists will, I think, understand the purpose of the book better than ethnologists.

In its concern with culture history, anthropology has attempted to coordinate the knowledge of its component disciplines—archaeology,
ethnology, social anthropology, linguistics, and physical anthropology—and to focus such knowledge on common problems. Those pertaining to the culture history of the Pacific are very much in a state of flux, for this field is just emerging from a state of immaturity. Archaeology in particular, has until recently been sadly neglected in Oceania. When the data which archaeology is now procuring are joined with the increasing knowledge derived from ethnology and other fields, we shall have a new insight into the culture history of Oceania which was never before possible. It will be at this point that Dr. Buck’s book will achieve its greatest value, for it will provide an indispensable source for this future synthesis of knowledge.

Spoehr uses the term material culture that refers to the study of objects in relationship to its people and also speaks about the role of archaeologists interpreting material culture to uncover culture history. Spoehr relates Buck’s (Hiroa) work akin to an archaeologist’s who “infer(s) the course of past events to the degree [the] material allows.” The inference to a course of past events is exactly what Buck has done in the “Evolution of the Cape.” Buck’s work on the ‘ahu‘ula infers there is a recognizable connection between similar but different objects and the connection found uncovers culture history. Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes this kind of Western approach as research validated by ‘scientific method’ and ‘colonial affirmation’, having less to do with extending the knowledge of the people and instead leaves “a foundation of ideologically laden data” (170).

As reasonable as Buck’s logic may seem to Western approaches, Buck’s work further delineates a separation between the material culture and the living people by
using material culture to evaluate (or validate) consciousness and intelligence of the Hawaiian people. Buck’s work on the ‘ahu'ula has little to do with extending Hawaiian knowledge and has more to do with extending anthropology’s knowledge of Hawaiians. The work produced by Buck on the ‘ahu'ula supports “rationality in Western tradition” (170) giving license to subjectivity and thereby contributing to a declining Native authority on material culture.

**Non-Native Authority**

Social science research is based upon ideas, beliefs and theories about the social world. While it is acknowledged that people always live in some form of social organization, … Western forms of research also draw on cultural ideas about the human ‘self’ and the relationship between the individual and the groups to which he or she may belong. Such ideas explore both the internal workings of an individual and the relationships between what an individual is and how an individual behaves. These ideas suggest that relationships between or among groups of people are basically casual and can be observed and predicted (Smith 47).

Like Hiroa and those who preceded him, Adrienne L. Kaeppler was also employed by the Bishop Museum with the same access to Hawaiian material culture as her predecessors. Kaeppler’s areas of concentration are the objects related to Captain Cook’s voyages. In this capacity, Kaeppler’s work has closely affiliated her to Oceania’s material culture, and thus an authority by default on the subject matter. It was in 1969 when Kaeppler brought back what has been called the “Kintore Cloak” and shortly thereafter published a detail of it and another cloak more commonly known as the “Elgin
Cloak” (Kaeppler "L'aigle and Hms Blonde, the Use of History in the Study of Ethnography"). Her analysis of the two cloaks and their respective histories marked the beginning of a career verifying the material culture collected by Cook and his shipmen during his three Oceanic voyages.

During this time, Kaeppler comes to the conclusion that the documentation of objects collected during the voyages, most bought and sold thereafter, in many cases, were erroneously mislabeled. The importance of object authentication and accurate representation does not go unrecognized but Kaeppler’s work does not extend Hawaiian knowledge in the respect that non-Natives believe her work does. Kappler’s work on Oceanic art extends the knowledge of Captain Cook’s Voyages and the foreigner’s accumulation of Kanaka Hawai‘i objects. Kaeppler’s work authenticates objects and collections within a museum context framed around European History and Western ideas of importance. Counter to Western thinking, Kaeppler’s work does not actually provide meaningful information to a Kanaka Hawai‘i body of knowledge. Kaeppler’s work extends Western knowledge. Smith explains this kind of research “entraps the [native people] within a cultural definition which does not connect with either our oral traditions or our lived reality” (170).

Kaeppler’s ethnographic review is framed around the importance of the objects as it benefits European and American history. Kaeppler’s interest in material culture was the objects’ relationship to Captain Cook’s story. From a Western position, it was a necessity to verify authenticity of collections around the world and in doing so it would “help to reveal the nature of early trade in ethnographic artifacts among European and American ship captains, as well as 18th-century attitudes toward “curiosities” (Kaeppler "Feather
Cloaks, Ship Captains, and Lords" 96). The material culture focus is a non-native relationship and benefitted European culture history.

The next discourse taken up by Kaeppler’s publication was the development of her methodology using historical documents to “identify” ethnographic specimens for the necessity of historical accuracy and the importance of history in studying ethnography (Kaeppler "Cook Voyage Provenance of the 'Artificial Curiosities' of Bullock's Museum"; Kaeppler "L'aigle and Hms Blonde, the Use of History in the Study of Ethnography"). Kaeppler is very clear that her work is “part of a larger project of identifying Cook voyage specimens” (Kaeppler "Cook Voyage Provenance of the 'Artificial Curiosities' of Bullock's Museum" 68). Again, the focus of the information is framed around the objects’ importance of European and American history. Kaeppler points out in her following publication that her “intent” is to “stress the importance of historical accuracy for interpretation of ethnographic materials and to point out how "facts" can be bent by interpretations and wishful thinking and how easily historical detail can be lost by the withholding of information” (Kaeppler "L’aigle and Hms Blonde, the Use of History in the Study of Ethnography" 28). The logic of the research is pertinent to European interests and emphasizes the importance of Western history over a Native history.

The earlier half of Kaeppler’s body of work had yet to delve into the function and purpose of the ‘ahu‘ula because its focus was on material culture’s relationship in context to Cook’s voyages. Part of the responsibility in this kind of research is to gain knowledge of the function and purpose of the material culture as it functioned within its Native society. Kaeppler’s research does not represent a Native method, and regardless of her
research and breadth of knowledge of Oceanic arts, it does not qualify her as a Native voice on Hawaiian material culture. The very research lacks any framework that upholds any Native worldview that encompasses the material culture and the people from whom the items came.

The title alone in Kaeppler’s next publication “‘Artificial Curiosities’ An Exposition of Native Manufactures Collected on the Three Pacific Voyages of Captain James Cook, R.N.” single handedly perpetuates 18th and 19th century positional superiority. Smith quotes James Clifford on ethnography:

[a] form of culture collecting … [which] highlights the ways that diverse experiences and facts are selected, gathered, detached from their original temporal occasions, and given enduring value in a new arrangement (61).

“Artificial Curiosities” actually validates culture collecting and continues to legitimize its practice in an adapted, 20th century context--museums and exhibits. “The idea that collectors were actually rescuing artefacts from decay and destruction, and from indigenous peoples themselves, legitimated practices which also included commercial trade and plain and simple theft” (Smith 61). The title exemplifies the Western perception of Native material culture with the use of the words “artificial,” “manufactured,” and “curiosities,” marginalizing Native authority and reinforcing a sense of loss or extinction of the people. The mundane to the sacred have been re-presented in a Euro-American historical context significant to non-native interests and importance.

As if the concerns of authenticity for Cook related objects had been resolved, in 1980, Kaeppler published a piece that looks at the manner in which objects “express the social and cultural conditions and traditions of the Hawaiian people yesterday and today”

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6 See Edward W. Said Orientalism and Smith Decolonizing Methodologies “Colonizing Knowledges”.
(Rose and Kaeppler 57). Kaeppler sensitizes her position with words like “persistence” and “tradition”, and the idea of connecting “people yesterday and today” and begins to reframe objects as “visual representations of social relationships that have changed over time and are objectifications of the metaphors and concepts that are the essential elements of the persistence of tradition” (62). Addressing concerns for “social relationships” and “representation” academically portrays Kaeppler’s position as native-ized and sensitized to a Hawaiian-like worldview but Kaeppler is actually problematizing Hawaiian society through “metaphors” and “concepts”.

A clearer understanding of the problematization introduced is seen in the 1982, *Genealogy and Disrespect*. In this, she reexamined wooden sculptural images “in relation to Hawaiian conceptualizations about social, religious, and political relationships and especially how these conceptualizations changed with the rise of Kamehameha” ("Genealogy and Disrespect: A Study of Symbolism in Hawaiian Images" 83). Kaeppler states “Hawaiian religious images or sculptures in human form should be perceived and analyzed as religion, art, and social metaphor” (83). Using this framework, Kaeppler concludes that the work “is an attempt to unravel ... symbolism by relating human images to the important concepts of genealogy and respect and disrespect” and problematized that “Disrespect reached its logical extreme during the time of Kamehameha” and that “The objects, images, and clothing associated with Kamehameha illustrate the evolving world view of nineteenth century Hawaiians” (107). It is an absurd statement suggesting objects can legitimately replace a voice of the Hawaiian people. The real objects of research are the Hawaiian people, while the material culture is just the vehicle for that observation, and the Hawaiian people have been de-authoritized and removed from

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7 See Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies* “Defining the Indigenous ‘Problem’”. 
contributing to the discussion. As explained by Smith:

The objects of research do not have a voice and do not contribute to research or science. . . . the logic of argument would suggest that it is simply impossible, ridiculous even, to suggest that the object of research can contribute to anything. An object has no life force, no humanity, no spirit of its own, so therefore ‘it’ cannot make an active contribution. . . .

Thus, indigenous Asian, American, Pacific and African forms of knowledge, systems of classifications, technologies and codes of social life, . . . were regarded as ‘new discoveries’ by Western Science. These discoveries were commodified as property belonging to the cultural archive and body of knowledge of the West (61).

The presumptions made by Kaeppler in Genealogy and Disrespect exemplifies unaccounted intellectual interpretation. This kind of research is an intellectual version of 18th and 19th century commodification of objects. Since Kaeppler neglected to refer to living Hawaiian authorities on her presumptions, and since institutions were not held to cultural accountability, her research method legitimized Western notions of ownership and a Western position of authority.

Returning to the subject of the ‘ahu‘ula, an overview of Kaeppler’s earlier works is necessary to understand how she arrives at her research position on feather garments. It is also helpful in understanding the development of discourses on the ‘ahu‘ula following Kaeppler and the effects her work has on other writers on this subject matter. The article with the most damaging effect to the ‘ahu‘ula is Kaeppler’s 1985 article Hawaiian Art and Society: Traditions and Transformations. Like Hiroa, Kaeppler perceives the shape
and form of capes represents social development. Kaeppler excercises her now nativized approach to re-analyze and recontextualize the role of the ‘ahu‘ula. Kaeppler sees the shapes of the garments as examples and manifestations of Hawaiian societal changes. She determines that the stylistic differences in the cape forms reflect specific changes in Hawaiian perceptions of genealogy and politics. She even goes as far as to center her ideas around key historical figures in Hawaiian history, Kalaniopuu, Kamehameha, and Liholiho, as the representational causes of these changes. By doing so, Kaeppler reasons that her paper:

deals with prestige, power, authority and status in Hawaiian society and seeks to understand how material culture was an integral part of the social traditions that were transformed during the 18th and first third of the 19th centuries (105).

And goes on to say, regarding material culture, that:

During these 50 years a variety of precontact social traditions first took on what is often considered a “classic” form and were then reconstituted in an altered conceptual category. The three stages can roughly be associated with the chieftainships of Kalaniopuu, Kamehameha I, and Liholiho . . .

. The changes that occurred can be related to other Polynesian examples of genealogical interpretation and manipulation and their association with power, as well as with the desire to be “highest” rather than simply high . . . [and the] material culture used by those of rank . . . transformed and contributed to the acceptance of change (105).

Closing her introduction, Kaeppler states her “paper brings these strands together to
suggest that material culture is an aspect of social action that can help to explain persistence and change rather simply reflecting it” (105). Kaeppler’s object-based interpretation is a far stretch in the analysis of Hawaiian society and traditions. If there is any example of “colonizing knowledge,” it is found in Kaeppler’s Hawaiian Art and Society: Traditions and Transformations.

Categorizing the cloaks into shape forms was previously done by Brigham and also by Hiroa but Kaeppler’s attempt stipulates the ‘ahu‘ula was previously “metaphorical symbols of genealogical prestige in addition to their protective and sacred utility” (127) which then according to Kaeppler transforms the ‘ahu‘ula into objects of art. Her argument is that “at the time of European contact” the cloaks were “protective symbolic forms” (represented by Kalaniopuu) that became a “means of power verification” (caused by Kamehameha) and with the loss of their power to influence society (a result of Liholiho’s reign) transformed the ‘ahu‘ula into status objects equated to works of art (111,128). Kaeppler closes this article with the thought that:

This new way of thinking about these cultural forms (aesthetics) was a direct result of an altered conceptualisation of rank in which prestige, power, authority and status became interchangeable and traditional objects became simply objects of value for the enhancement of status (128).

Kaeppler may have native-ized her research with the use of historical figures, incorporating genealogy, and referencing 19th century Kanaka Hawai‘i historians; but, at no time does Kaeppler bring in a native voice to give authority or credibility to her position; i.e. 20th century living historians, Hawaiian cultural practitioners, or Hawaiian artisans. Instead, the accountability here, is an imposed Western positon claiming cultural

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8 See Linda Tuhiwai Smith “Decolonizing Methodologies”.
knowledge and institutionized expertise as the determining factors for authority.

From a macro perspective, the 1980 article is the first instance that cultural traditions are addressed; as if to ingratiate herself to the Native people with her knowledge of traditions, inclusion of a creation chant, and commentary on culture. Even with this recognition of cultural attributes, the article tends to mystify the objects and the people, and continues the romanticizing and marginalizing of Hawaiians. In her 1982 “Genealogy and Disrespect” paper, Kaeppler examines “images in relation to Hawaiian conceptualizations about social, religious, and political relationships and especially as these conceptualizations changed with the rise of Kamehameha” (83). The discussion is extensive, however, Kaeppler’s work continues to objectify Hawaiian culture through her notions of mysticism and sorcery, and she meticulously associates these ideas to a number of museum objects. In this manner, the presumptions made in “Genealogy and Disrespect” proceeds to an inquiry on feather garments in the 1985, “Hawaiian Art and Society: Traditions and Transformations”. The result of this article is a weak and convoluted argument that the stylistic differences of the ‘ahu’ula explains pivotal societal changes. The article failed to address guns, religion, and economics as prominent factors for any changes in Hawai‘i. These and other over simplified inferences trivializes Hawaiians’ intelligence. Through suppositions on tradition and history, the cultural role of the ‘ahu’ula was trivialized to fit Western ideas and understandings of Kanaka Hawai‘i.

The ‘ahu’ula is an easily identifiable as one of great social importance, and continuing research on it, according to Western research practices, requires implementing new and meaningful information on the subject matter. In regards to Brigham’s method
acquiring information on *ownership and location*, opportunities to address new or unanswered questions was considered difficult, at best because of the lack of information documented on ‘ahu‘ula. Brigham perceived primary references from Hawaiians as a main issue for the difficulty and considered it near impossible to provide historical clarification without proper documentation, verbal or written. Hiroa, on the other hand, was able to contribute new information on the ‘ahu‘ula by the integration of disciplines and opening doors to interpretations, objectivity, and conjecture. The new approaches made during Hiroa’s time would legitimize later researchers in their own creative approaches. In one respect, Hiroa’s contributions may have made it apparent for Kaeppler that her first course of action was the necessity to authenticate Cook’s collections. For Kaeppler, her early position reads that “ethnographic specimens in museums are of little value to anthropologists and historians through the absence of documentary evidence on their provenance and date of acquisition” (Kaeppler "The Use of Documents in Identifying Ethnographic Specimens from the Voyages of Captain Cook" 195). For Kaeppler, authenticating Cook collections provided new information to the knowledge pool as well as established a position of authority on Pacific materials. Once the authenticication for materials related to Cook’s voyage was established, evaluating and interpreting symbolism, religion, art, and politics of the objects was the next point of interest.

The ethnographic contributions made by Kaeppler is framed around European and American history and continues to benefit Western understanding. The research position to focus on the authenticication of Cook objects, benefits Western interests. Authentification of Cook related objects directly benefits an understanding of Cook’s
story and the importance of the story to Europe’s history. The authentification of Cook objects also helps the museums to authenticate their collections and objects in relation to events, voyages, captains, and collectors, as well as other museums. Kaeppler’s work is an ethnographic history of European and American history of bartering, trading, buying and selling, and the stealing of Native people’s objects, to become the foreigner’s object of curiosity. These objects continue to be housed in private collections, museums, and galleries and continue to be categorized according to their collector (Smith 61) and in no manner does the discourse extend Kanaka Hawai‘i knowledge for its people, culture, or history from this position.

It should be clear that the inclusion of Native topics of interests does not constitute a Hawaiian worldview. The inclusion of indigenous knowledge bases: Kanaka Hawai‘i historians, genealogies, or oral stories, does not make for a Hawaiian Native position or simply qualify it as being a Kanaka Hawai‘i position. Any assumption of a perceived native-izing, through the inclusion of indigenous knowledge bases, only perpetuates the non-native perspective and continual appropriation of indigenous identity.

Unfortunately, the inclusion of such indigenous knowledge bases, as done by Kaeppler on the subject of the ‘ahu‘ula, opens the doors to researchers in other fields. In response to Kaeppler’s last article, John Charlot writes The Feather Skirt of Nahi‘ena‘ena: An Innovation in PostContact Hawaiian Art. As if intrigued by “recent study” on featherwork as “postcontact transformation of artistic forms”, Charlot quickly points out the difficulty is “the problem of dating cloaks and connecting their symbols to surviving Hawaiian traditions” (119). For Western researchers, this is clearly an analysis problem. However, Charlot is able to resolve the issue with “a major innovation in
Hawaiian featherwork that is firmly dated and placed, for which we have contemporary sources, and which can be associated with Hawaiian literature”, (119) which is the feather ‘skirt’ of Nahienaena. As thorough as Charlot’s work is, it frames the feather garment in a Western postcontact construct--religiously, socially, and even perceives the garment as an ‘art object’, a concept-term that is fully invested in Western ideas of beauty. Charlot’s article problematizes the ‘ahu‘ula through a religious and social bent, extracts chants, references genealogies, and so forth, to the full extent of benefitting Western understanding of “innovative postcontact Hawaiian art.”

In response to the printed dialog between Charlot and Kaeppler, Tom Cummins is disheartening with his fanciful and clumsy input on feather garments. Cummins’ argument in the *Kinshape, the Design of the Hawaiian Feathercape* fabricates connections between symbolic concepts and definitions of Hawaiian words to establish ideas of ascension and power through his preceptions of meaningful symbolism. Similar to Kaeppler, Cummins is clearly not an authority on Hawaiian culture, unlike Kaeppler who gains her notoriety through the study of Cook Voyages’ objects, Cummins uses his academic prowess in art history to give credence to his artful opinions on the ‘ahu‘ula. The use of *kamoi* is translated as chief, *kuana* is translated as chief, an inappropriate character is consistently used in place of a glottal stop such as in ‘ahu ‘ula. And last but not least, Cummins consistently uses the word *kulelulu* and defines the word as “bending” or “arching of the rainbow” (175). The word does not make any sense to anyone with Hawaiian language knowledge, and worse, Cummins is citing the Lorrin Andrews’s dictionary and the word does not even exist in that dictionary. Upon further investigation, at best, Cummins obviously meant the term kūlele‘ula, as it has the closest
letter combination that is found in the corresponding area of the Andrews dictionary and the definition which he cited for his fictitious word.

Cummins’ insensitivity to the language is an example of poor accountability. By default as an academic, he is given authority to engage in academic discussions and by doing so he has provided a perfect example of the need for Native authority on Native research topics. In doing so, it provides a level of accountability to the non-researcher.

In the case of Cummins, the spelling errors alone, discredits his work. Kindly put, these gross errors are highly offensive and at best the article should be disregarded, not only for the inability to accurately print the ‘okina, correctly spell a word, but also the blatant insensitivity to a Native language. It is this kind of lack of accountability to Native peoples, that is too easily overlooked in Western institutions, and allows for the perpetuation of misrepresentation.

As Smith says:

The debates about intellectual and cultural property rights cast the contestation of knowledge in a new frame. The commodification of knowledge as intellectual property, of collective knowledge as public knowledge, and of knowledge as value-added takes the struggle into another set of cultural interpretations.

Public access to Hawaiian knowledge and interpretation of the information raises issues of intellectual property rights, control of knowledge, and accountability. The concerns raised over the works of Brigham, Hiroa, Kaeppler, Charlot, and Cummins are serious issues of interpretation that undermine Kanaka Hawai‘i culture, history, language, and arts. Kanaka Hawai‘i authority is a necessity for accurate representation of the Kanaka
Hawai‘i people, and their culture, history, language and arts.
CHAPTER 3
OVERLOOKED MISREPRESENTATION AND MISINTERPRETATION

When the overall research on the ‘ahu’ula is compared to one-another, it reveals a consistent, subtle thread of bias that runs throughout the different publications. Unlike the other issues addressed thus far, this bias is not blatant or obvious. It is a kind of bias that is myth-making, and because it is repeated enough times, it has become accepted as a truth and factual. There are two examples of this bias, or slant, on the ‘ahu’ula; the first example is the notion that the ‘ahu’ula was a protection device, and the second example is the translation of the word ‘ahu’ula.

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Scholarly consensus is the ‘ahu’ula functioned as protective wear for the bearer. Kaeppler is steadfast in this opinion and states it numerous times in her writings specific to the ‘ahu’ula. There are even suggestions that the ‘ahu’ula garments were a kind of magical item to the bearer, a notion reminiscent of its portrayal in the old stories, but a closer look at the inherent purpose of the garment may reveal there was less mysticism and protection associated to it than previously expected.

Structurally, the ‘ahu’ula is backed by a fine netting with hundreds to thousands of feathers meticulously sewn onto the netting. Even though the quality of the ‘ahu’ula is dense and weighty, it is not logical that a feather garment would be impenetrable to weapons. The garment base is a knotted mesh that feathers are sewn onto. Structurally, it is more similar in nature to the fabrication of dense fabric, like brocade, or the velvet it has been compared to, rather than the construction of armor. There is some kind of irony in the idea of feathered armor that adds to the illogic of its use as protection. Hiroa
depicts its evolution was initiated as a crude utilitarian object made of leaves instead of feathers and the basis of it was a need for immediate protection from the environment and its elements.\textsuperscript{9} Kaeppler too, believes there is a utilitarian evolutionary process, though her hypothesis goes one step further and is based on a concept of transformation in which it evolves into various stages of social representation.\textsuperscript{10} In either scenario both researchers believed the inception of the ‘ahu’ula was a utilitarian object with the purpose to be worn as protective wear. What does not seem to be taken into consideration is the impracticality of the netted backings and delicate feathers as objects of armor.

Like the approach used to circumvent disparities as discussed in the previous section, a similar presumptuous approach was employed to safeguard the notion of the ‘ahu’ula as protective wear. To quell any query, the reasoning given to add plausibility to the ‘ahu’ula functioning as protective wear was to mystify the garment. This response validated the researchers’ notion of feathers and sennit functioning as armor, and was then considered an acceptable explanation. Unfortunately, the undertone of this explanation is an offensive indirect mystification of those who wore the feather garments, as well as the Kanaka Hawai’i people.

\textsuperscript{9} Hiroa explains in his article for the Polynesian Journal that he gives “credit of invention to fishermen because their need was greatest, and the netting-foundation was part of their equipment; but it is possible that the idea may have occurred [sic] first to a fowler or an inland cultivator. A technical process having become established, it required no great mental effort for some craftsman to realize the decorative possibilities of substituting feathers for ti-leaf.” Peter Henry Buck, \textit{Local Evolution of Hawaiian Feather Capes and Cloaks} (1944). p8.

\textsuperscript{10} Kaeppler believes in a two part transformation based on “cloaks and capes which evolved from protective utilitarian objects to objects of power legitimisation [sic] and finally to status objects.” Adrienne Lois Kaeppler, "Hawaiian Art and Society, Traditions and Transformations," \textit{Polynesian Society} Memoir no. 45 (1985). p110. I disagree with both the idea of the cape evolving and with the idea of the ‘ahu’ula functioning as a protective utilitarian object. As for power legitimization and status object, she could have made a point if the evolutionary aspect of her argument was removed from her theorizing and a more in-depth understanding of genealogy was employed. If she went beyond just the three generations above Kamehameha it would then be more apparent that the ‘ahu’ula consistently functioned as objects for power legitimization and status, aspects inherent to the ‘ahu’ula and reason for it considered as an important and revered socio-political object.
Feather garments were too easily assumed as protective wear and too quickly determined as being imbued with mystical protective qualities. This is another example of the latent bias that exists, but also a kind of unrecognized sophistry interwoven into the research on the ‘ahu‘ula. The presumption of mysticism imbued into the garments has only contributed to the romanticizing of Kanaka Hawai‘i people, casting spells and charms, and has denigrated any impressions of an enlightened or advanced Native culture prior to 1778. In effect, this is a perversion and continuation of the ‘noble savage’ centering of a Native culture. This suggests the purpose of cultural items made, if it is not readily apparent, then it must have been used for/as magic—because magic is obviously systemic to the “native” world and worldview.

The main function of any weapon is to do bodily harm to the opponent with the purpose and intent to immobilize the opponent regardless of protective wear. The idea of highly trained chiefs and warriors considering an ‘ahu‘ula as a protective agent is a patronizing notion in so much that it deflects from the role of chiefs as leaders, demeans Native strategic knowledge, and belittles the prowess and skill of trained Kanaka Hawai‘i warriors. In addition to the belittling of the wearers’ intelligence, it is also an insulting attack on the intelligence of the creators and makers of these garments. In both instances, positioning the feather garment as a mystical object with magical abilities is a method to de-intellectualize the abilities of Native people. This is a prime example of Western perspectives continuing to characterize Native people as simple-minded.

Another point of consideration is if the garment was truly used for protective wear, then it would not have been reserved for only the chiefs. Protective combative wear would have been accessible to all ranks if the material successfully deterred injury. If
such a garment existed, it would seem plausible that a form of its manufacture would have been widespread for all ranks. However, nothing of the sorts was made with feathers and mass-produced for an army. If any conjecture can be derived from this information, it would be that the wearer of a feather cloak held a highly recognizable position in the battlefield, and it was worn as a visual insignia rather than mere protective wear. It would then be reasonable to believe that the chiefs were fully aware of the function and nature of their cloaks and their first line of defense, more reasonably, would be skilled warriors rather than a feathered cape. In all cases of war, a flank of men are always ready to protect the general. Basic strategies of war were equally known and applied in Hawai‘i.  

Counter intuitive to the art of war, Kaeppler, in *Hawaiian Art and Society*:  

> propose[s] an alternative hypothesis that hinges on their function, based on the observation that a shaped neckline enables the cape or cloak to fit the shoulders, leaving the neck free, whereas a straight neckline can extend upward to protect the neck” (114).

Via this statement, it is evident Kaeppler is removed from any understanding of combative arts. Kaeppler then proceeds to state:  

> My hypothesis, then, is that cloaks and capes with straight necklines were the true Hawaiian form and were important while indigenous warfare was conducted with sling-stones, spears and throwing clubs (115).

Kaeppler is offensively dismissing the effectiveness of Kanaka Hawai‘i warfare by attempting to persuade her audience that a feather garment is a sound form of armory.

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Her statement is inferring sling-stones, spears and throwing clubs do not have the capacity to bludgeon, lance, or gash through a feather cloak. Equally amusing is that Kaeppler qualifies her position by stating that with the advent of Europeans and arms, “cloaks no longer gave protection” (p116) as if to prove the premise that the ‘ahu‘ula functioned as protective wear for Kanaka Hawai‘i.

In addition to the unreasonable notions of the ‘ahu‘ula being worn as protective combative wear, Kaeppler also states, “not only that a feather cloak or cape offered some physical protection but also that the network with feather covering offered sacred or supernatural protection and that the designs were metaphorically linked to genealogical and sacred concepts” (p119). Kaeppler might be right about genealogical and sacred concepts but her commentary on the ‘ahu‘ula functions as supernatural protection is another example of her bias and slanted perception of Kanaka Hawai‘i. In this article, Kaeppler not only dismisses Kanaka Hawai‘i combative weapons as destructive, but also mystifies the ‘ahu‘ula as a magical talisman that is further insulting the intelligence of Kanaka Hawai‘i warriors in addition to the chiefs and the creators.

If feather capes were successful protective utilitarian objects, then it would seem unlikely damaged cloaks would be found. Coincidently, at least three examples have been found that speak to the ineffectiveness of the ‘ahu‘ula as protective wear and amusingly, the damage was documented by Brigham in 1899 but conveniently overlooked since then.

The first example is documented as “Cloak #44, Figure 85” (Brigham Hawaiian Feather Work 69). It was recorded this specific cloak has three holes, and no notes were documented that the holes were made because of deterioration. The state of condition
and deterioration was detailed on other garments, so it is reasonable to speculate an ‘object’ of some sort created the holes, something like a spear or dagger commonly used in battles. As the first example does not make for substantial evidence, there is a second example, Cloak #106.

My assistant, Mr. Allen M. Walcott, obtained from the claimant, Peleioholani, a carpenter by trade, the following particulars: The cloak was called “Eheukani” and was made in the time of Keeaumoku (the father of Kaahumanu) and finished shortly before the battle of Mokuohai (July 1782) between Kamehameha and Kiwalao. Keeaumoku’s wife gave it to Peleioholani’s grandmother….The cords at the neck were of human hair, an unusual thing. In the left side were seven spear holes that were never patched, and about which were blood stains. Keeaumoku was severely wounded in this battle, and it was rather a fancy with the old chiefs to retain the honorable scars in the ahuula, as in the cloak given by Kamehameha to Vancouver to be taken to England for King George (Brigham Additional Notes on Hawaiian Feather Work / by William T. Brigham. 15-16).

Seven spear holes with blood would seem like enough evidence to convey that the ‘ahu’ula did not function as protective wear. What is also of interest in this account is the perception of the tears as “honorable scars.” A third known example of honorable scars is

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12 This “carpenter by trade” is actually Solomon L. Peleioholani, son of Peleioholani and mother Piikeakaluaonalani, “one of the highest surviving chiefs.” This bit of information is not noted in Bingham’s work but is ironically depicted just a few years later in the newspaper article Companion of Prince. The close dates in publication reveals a sense of ongoing issues of authority. Brigham rudely dismisses the genealogy of Peleioholani and only recognizes him as a “carpenter by trade.” "Companion of Prince: A Hawaiian Chief Who Fought in Africa," Pacific Commercial Advertiser January 22 1902, "Companion of Prince: A Hawaiian Chief Who Fought in Africa."
the other ‘ahu‘ula mentioned in the above passage, a cloak that was given to Vancouver by Kamehameha for King George. Vancouver writes:

_Tamaahmaah_ conceiving this might be his last visit, presented me with a handsome cloak formed of red and yellow feathers, with a small collection of other native curiosities; and at the same time delivered into my charge the superb cloak that he had worn on his formal visit at our arrival. This cloak was very neatly made of yellow feathers; after he had displayed its beauty, and had shewn me the two holes made in different parts of it by the enemy’s spears the first day he wore it, in his last battle for the sovereignty of this island, he very carefully folded it up, and desired, that on my arrival in England, I would present it in his name to His Majesty, King George; and as it had never been worn by any person but himself, he strictly enjoined me not to permit any person whatever to throw it over their shoulders, saying, that it was the most valuable thing in the island of Owhyhee, and for that reason he had sent it to so great a monarch, and so good a friend, as he considered the King of England.

This donation I am well persuaded was dictated by his own grateful heart, without having received the least hint or advice from any person whatever, and was the effect of principles, highly honorable to more civilized minds (Vancouver and Vancouver 267-68).

Solomon Peleioholani’s statement that “it was rather a fancy with the old chiefs to retain the honorable scars in the ahuula” is fully supported by the clear actions of Kamehameha. Although this account would seem inconsequential to previous researchers, the
interactions surrounding the handling of ‘ahu‘ula really should be considered pertinent to the overall understanding of the ‘ahu‘ula.

The three examples make it apparent the garments were not effective as protective wear. Thus far, physical evidence indicates that the chiefs were aware of the fragility of the capes. Historical documentation does not refute this notion but nor does it substantiate the ‘ahu‘ula as being perceived as a protective or mystical garment. What historical documentation does indicate is that there was a strong political element associated to the capes. The essence of the ‘ahu‘ula as a symbol of status has always been agreed upon but what has not been closely looked at is the essence of its political role. To further understand the political element associated to the ‘ahu‘ula’s as value and function, additional information can be found in the translations of David Malo’s commentary on Hawaiian culture.

1. The feathers of birds were the most valued possessions of ancient Hawaiians. The feathers of the *mamo* were more choice than those of the *o-o* because of their superior magnificence when wrought into cloaks (*ahu*). The plumage of the *iiwi, apa-pane* and *amakihi* were made into *ahu ula*, cloaks and capes, and into *mahiole*, helmets.

2. The *ahu ula* was a possession most costly and precious (*maka-mae*), not obtainable by the common people, only by the **alii**. It was much worn by them as an insignia in time of war and when they went into battle. The *ahu ula* was also conferred upon
warriors, but only upon those who had distinguished themselves and had merit, and it was an object of plunder in every battle.

3. Unless one were a warrior in something more than name he would not succeed in capturing his prisoner nor in getting possession of the ahu-ula and feathered helmet of a warrior.

4. An ahu-ula made only of mamo feathers was called an alaneo and was reserved exclusively for the king of a whole island ali'i ai moku; it was his kapa wai-kaua or battle cloak. Ahu-ula were used as the regalia of great chiefs and those of high rank, also for warriors of distinction who had displayed great prowess. It was not to be obtained by chiefs of low rank, nor by warriors of small prowess (76-77).

It is very clear the role of ‘ahu‘ula is neither mystical nor protective. There is no argument that the garment represented rank, value, and was a mark of honor. It represented the individuals who were distinguished, held merit, and full of prowess and strength. The ‘ahu‘ula clearly represented something coveted as well as plundered, but equally important is the notion that the ‘ahu‘ula was important and significant when it was “conferred upon warriors”. The importance of the ‘ahu‘ula unarguably signified rank and therefore genealogy but it is reasonable to consider that the importance and value of the feather garments was not necessarily only in the ownership of the garment, but in the process of its acquisition. Unlike Western culture, the strict sense of material ownership was not a culturally acknowledged notion amongst Hawaiians. For example, if something was considered appealing and was acknowledged by another party as such, the proper
response to the compliment was to gift the item. The importance of this cultural behavior was the act of sharing and gifting, not the hoarding of them, in which case it would then be considered as stingy behavior. It is difficult to believe that such a defining cultural attitude towards materialism would be so drastically different for the Aliʻi. An example of this can be seen in a story about Kamapuaa while he is in Kauaʻi. Kamapuaa marries two sisters in Kauaʻi, and proceeds to help his brother-in-law, the Chief of Puna, in battle. While fighting, Kamapuaa takes the feather capes and other chiefly regalia of the fallen chiefs and hides-away the feather capes rather than sharing the booty with his brother-in-law. Eventually, Kamapuaa is discovered and is then banished for his behavior (Beckwith 205).

The importance of the ʻahuʻula is not in the ownership of it as materialism but the importance of it is in the acquisition and exchange of the ʻahuʻula. The significance of the role of the ʻahuʻula in these exchanges is another example of culturally important information often overlooked due to a bias against the validity and importance of stories and storytelling. Ignorance of a culture’s language and oral stories as important carriers of cultural information caters to misrepresentation of the people and their culture. Not recognizing the nuances of the political role of the ʻahuʻula as presented in oral stories have lead to an institutionalized pigeonholing of the ʻahuʻula. The resulting imaginative, hypothetical and tarnished understanding of feather garments has enshrouded them in mysticism and misrepresentation that adulterates the significance of the ʻahuʻula, and consequently, perpetuates subliminal negative criticism of the people and the culture from whence it comes.
As it stands, the current overall view of the relationship between ‘ahu‘ula and ali‘i more resembles Western notions of materialism and ownership rather than an insightful, culturally centered exposition. In general, representation of the ‘ahu‘ula is not reflective of an authentic Kanaka Hawai‘i worldview and is routinely obscured by Western discourses and assumptions. Current published insights on the ‘ahu‘ula benefits the observers’ frameworks and legitimizes the outsiders’ perceptions of the ‘object’ and Kanaka Hawai‘i rather than holding any sense of importance for responsible accountability and authentic cultural representation.

**Issues of Color**

Another rooted bias surrounding the ‘ahu‘ula is the translation of the term. In general, the translation of ‘ahu‘ula is typically given as a “red feather cape or cloak”, and the shorter ‘ahu are considered capes and the longer garments were considered cloaks. Additional English descriptive words used to convey the translation of the word ‘ahu were ‘mantel’, ‘robe’, or ‘tippet’, and each of these terms, in essence, describes a sleeveless, over-the-shoulder garment. In contrast, the term ‘ula was more definitive in its translation and consistently translated as the color *red*. Together, the translations determine the word ‘ahu‘ula translates to the ‘red cape’ or the ‘red cloak’ (inclusive of red mantel/robe/tippet) and this is a widely accepted translation. Without a doubt, it is a correct literal translation of the word ‘ahu‘ula, except, it is not the only translation.

If one is familiar with the many ‘ahu‘ula, then, it is known that the ‘ahu‘ula is not just red in color. Many of the garments were created in various colors using yellow, reds, and black; black and red-browns, some were dominantly black, some were vividly green, and others were only white. With so many examples, when the existing specimens are
compared to one another, the most widely used feather color on the ‘ahu‘ula is the yellow feather. With this in mind, an apparent and entertaining conundrum exists--the translation does not match the specimens.

What some suggested was that the color choice of the ‘ahu‘ula evolved over a course of time due to external influences. Hiroa writes:

> at some period in the development of the Hawaiian capes red was retained in the minds of the people as the chiefly color and the capes made mostly or entirely of red. Later, when yellow feathers became more valuable, owing to the difficulty of obtaining a sufficient supply, yellow superseded red as the chiefly color. However, the term ‘ahu‘ula had become so fixed that it persisted as the general name no matter what the principal color of the garment (Buck Arts and Crafts of Hawaii 216-17).

Hiroa’s statement re-defines what the term ‘ahu‘ula means to its audience. Hiroa denatures the term ‘ahu‘ula by insinuating the color change in the garment is a reflection of non-thought-out behavior by the Natives. This is a discriminative perception of Kanaka Hawai‘i people and imparts a damaging perspective of Hawaiian worldview. Larry Kimura explains:

> [the] descriptions of the indigenous Hawaiian aesthetic culture and base culture through the medium of the imposed English language cannot absolutely transmit a full picture of Hawaiian culture. English inevitably implies Anglo-American culture in direct proportion to that part of Hawaiian culture that is lost in the description. This has a negative impact on Hawaiians, not only in the impressions gained by outsiders, but also in
the self-impression gained by English-speaking Hawaiians using the descriptions (184).

Through word choice, Hiroa states the change in feather color is “owing to the difficulty of obtaining a sufficient supply”. The implication of the phrasing is the negative connotation that infers a problem exists and therefore, is the reason the color changed from red to yellow in the ‘ahuʻula. This is similar in concept to an earlier example brought up discussing the image of Kū and the word choice used to describe the image. In the context of feather color and aesthetics, although not focused around a specific image, the descriptive words used to define ‘objects’, is ultimately defining the Native, and not always in an authentic way that benefits Native perspective by both Natives and Non-natives.

In addition to suggesting that the rarity of the Mamo (the source of the yellow feathers) induced the stylistic change, it also imposing an outsider perspective of what is considered valuable. Hiroa’s statement steers his reader to believe Hawaiian aesthetics considered more value in one color over another. By Hiroa establishing feather color as a dominating factor in value, he is adapting Kanaka Hawaiʻi action and aesthetics into a Western paradigm. This new paradigm resolves any Western theoretical discrepancies that may arise regarding the translation of ‘ahuʻula.

As currently accepted by a general audience, rarity is the given reason for Hawaiians manufacturing feather garments, but a Western understanding of production and manufacture frames the analysis. The statement focuses around the ideas of inaccessibility of a product, and suggests a kind of consumption or hoarding-like
behavior for this product. This kind of behavior is centered-around Western constructs and presuppositions, rather than a Native worldview.

It is equally reasonable to consider that the desire for feathers and feather garments exalted ideas of beauty. The idea of items fabricated for beauty by Natives is not typically contextualized in Natives-being-researched materials because it lacks an issue to problematize for Westerners and infers Natives have conceptualized aesthetics. The idea that Natives would have conceptualized aesthetics would go against Western notions of Natives and thereby harming Western researchers’ positions. Issues of what constitutes as beauty are typically addressed from a Western perspective and is then imposed onto Native peoples. For example, Tyrian dye\textsuperscript{13} is a classic important Western aesthetic. The color was reserved for the Grecian aristocrats and its high demand was backed by the difficulty in processing it, which in return, gave the dye a high monetary value. The ideas of beauty and what constitutes as art, is a Western concept embedded in centuries of Western culture. Through a lens of consumer-based ideology, it is reasonable that Western researchers equate the ‘ahu‘ula through a consumer-based ideology because that is characteristic of Western knowledge and understanding.

It is outside the comfort of non-native discussions to perceive Native cultures having unique notions of aesthetics. If Natives have a conceptual understanding of the function and purpose of aesthetics, then the Western sentiments of native mysticism and symbolism would be invalidated. This would then negate their positional superiority on the subject matter.

\textsuperscript{13} Tyrian is the name for the dye that was used to create the magnificent purple Greek robes. It was laborious and time consuming to create the dye because only small quantities could be extracted from a single seashell, which is the source of the dye color. It required a multitude of small shells to create just a few ounces of the dye. The color was reserved for the aristocratic elite.
The rarity of the feathers was not so much the result of the limitations in the resources but in the laborious difficulty in acquiring the feathers and the skill to create the ʻahu‘ula. Complex ideas of sustainability and conservation were paramount in Hawaiian culture and an important issue that continues today. To suggest a bird hunted into extinction for its rarity does not portray a reasonable Kanaka Hawai‘i worldview of resource management. To suggest that the term ʻahu‘ula was ambiguous does not portray a reasonable Kanaka Hawai‘i worldview of the language.

The limited translation of the term ʻahu'ula has far less to do with finding applicable cultural understanding of the function, purpose, and art of the ʻahu‘ula in respects to the Kanaka Hawai‘i people, than it did with validating assumptions.

In addition to the idea of the color evolving, it was also suggested the various shapes of the ʻahu‘ula was significant of its development. Upon documentation, the different shapes were categorized into groups: rectangular, semi-circular, and trapezoidal. In this specific order, the stylistic differences perceived are showing an evolution in its geometric complexity. This reasoning creates a perceived comprehensive, straightforward analysis that determines the likely origins of the ʻahu‘ula were: simple rectangular-shape-all-red-feather cape that evolved into the more complex trapezoidal-shape with other-than-red-color (i.e. yellow) feather cape.

Again, like the translation of the word ʻahu‘ula, this description forces the idea of Kanaka Hawai‘i action into a specific Western construct. In doing so, this analysis re-defines Kanaka Hawai‘is’ perception of the ʻahu‘ula and changes the understanding of how and why the ʻahu‘ula was made. The additional Western analysis is an attempt to
diminish remaining disparity between translation and observation thereby, increasing the Western breadth of bias and imposed authority.

In essence, without any additional searching on the term it was hypothesized that the manufacturing of the ‘ahu‘ula evolved over time while the name, ‘ahu‘ula remained the same. The assumption that the cape needed a process to evolve is insulting and undermines Kanaka Hawai‘i culture, people, and art. It assumes there was a linear process to its development and insinuates this process is a reflection of Kanaka Hawai‘i cognitions. The presupposition is a ridiculous analysis based on subjectivity and cultural ignorance, indicating components of this Western bias.

In regards to clothing and garments, shirts regardless of their cut—chemise, blouse, pullover, tunic—have always been shirts; skirts, petticoat or mini are skirts; pants for men or for women-chaps, knickers, pantaloons, pedal pushers, are pants. In fashion, garments are perceived in context to era, culture, and aesthetics. From this respect, it appears feather garments are not worthy articles of inherent existence but ‘objects’ found by anthropologists to inform and define native manufacture, production, and value; another manner in which to enfeeble the intelligence and cognition of the Native people.

For a language that has half a dozen names recognizing growth stages in a single fish, named each wind that blew through the archipelago, and cultivated over 200 varieties of taro, it is hard pressed to believe that ‘ahu‘ula was a “generic” name for all feather garments. Come to find out, at least five other words have been found that describe a feather cape.
Table 1 - Descriptive Terms for the Hawaiian Feather Garment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaneo</td>
<td>Made of single color only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huluui iwi</td>
<td>Made of iwi feather.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lulu Alii</td>
<td>Garment of bird feathers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapa Waikaua/Waikaua</td>
<td>Robe used in war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halekea/Halakea</td>
<td>Descriptive of yellow capes, 2-3 fathoms in length.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:


These are just a few descriptive words that have been accessed and there could easily be more. Each of these words is descriptive of the cloak style and even with a limited list of names, it clearly hints to an apt comprehension of stylistic differences. This information easily weakens the notion “the name remained the same” while the color changed.

Further more, there are known cloaks ascribed with specific names that suggests an acute relationship between chiefs and feather garments.
Table 2 - Cloak Names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of ‘ʻAhuʻula</th>
<th>Description of Person Associated to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eheukani</td>
<td>Keeaumoku with spear holes and blood stains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halakea O ‘I ʻAhu</td>
<td>Not worn, associated to Nahienaena and King Liholiho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kekupuohi and Keakualapu</td>
<td>Associated to Kamehameha as gifts to Cpt. Vancouver in 1792.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poomaikalani, Kalakaua, Kamakahelei, and Apikaila</td>
<td>Kapiolani Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sacred one of Kahekili</td>
<td>Kahekili</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:


What can be deduced from this information is the term ‘ahuʻula indicates the feather garment’s role as ‘ula, that is sacred, rather than representing the feather’s color. Yes, ‘ula is the word for red but it is also the word for sacred. If additional definitions were taken into consideration then a more sensible translation to help understand the role and concept behind the term ‘ahuʻula would include the word sacred in its definition. It is clearly stated in Pukui’s dictionary that ‘ula is also a word for “sacred; sacredness; regal
(probably so called because red was a sacred color).” It is also defined as blood, “‘He ‘ula waiwai’, blood of great value, as royal blood”\(^{14}\) (Pukui and Elbert 339).

Misinterpretation of a concept word like ‘ahu‘ula is not an isolated event. Elsdon Best’s review of the word waiora states:

This word *waiora* is usually rendered by writers as “waters of life” and “life giving water” which error has been has been repeated in many works. In some cases, as in the Hawaiian Isles, natives really do speak of it as a lake or river whose waters are life-giving and will restore the dead to life. But the true meaning is “sunlight” (96).

The translation given for the term ‘ahu‘ula as a “red cloak” is technically accurate but the concept of the ‘ahu‘ula is in the sacredness of the feather garment. The “red cloak” theorizing is a partially made-up definition because of the way it was framed. The approach that was used to explain why there is a difference between the translation and the visual evidence is a specious argument that has never been questioned or contested. As logical as the explanation may seem, it lacks any meaningful insight. The explanation could be plausible if some kind of evidence was provided along with it, either verbal or written from Kanaka Hawai‘i accounts, that supported such a line of reasoning, of capes evolving in shape and design, but there is nothing of the sort provided. There are identifiable examples of different styles, shapes, and sizes but no evidence that connects them to each other to support the suggested linear evolutionary process of color and design.

Throughout Polynesia, the red feather can be found representative as a sacred symbol. John F. Stokes notes the use of red feathers was a symbol of sacredness, a
common development throughout Polynesia and “the use of feathers was confined, in
general to the chiefly or kingly caste and to worship” (75). If feathers are recognized
significant markers of chiefs and worship, then it is easiest to comprehend why the
translation of ‘ula should not be limited to a translation of color. ‘Ula is descriptive of the
garment quality and the wearer of the garment. The diversity of qualitative terms and
names found for ‘ahu‘ula makes it reasonable that the ‘ahu‘ula was made with intent and
much purpose. Furthermore, to add another conundrum to the “evolving red cape” idea, it
is documented as late as 1819 that although yellow is reserved, the “predominant color in
the feather capes, however, is red” (Freycinet and Kelly 61). Although the dominant color
is red, it does not qualify it as a “red cape” in the truest sense. Therefore, this is another
piece of evidence that further negates the idea of the ‘ahu‘ula “evolving”.

What is clear is that the cloak was developed, not over a course of evolution, but
it was made with intent, not from a ti-leaf cape or from a square-shaped cape that
evolved. It was created with a specific purpose to be made with feathers, to be highly
revered, and was considered as sacred in association to its wearer and to its existence. An
area that still needs discussion is how exactly is the diversity of the style significant of
familial lineage. If such a question can be answered, then the question remains to
determine what kind of information on the ‘ahu‘ula can be extracted from accessible
resources that would be creditable to extending Kanaka Hawai‘i knowledge on the
‘ahu‘ula.
CHAPTER 4

It would seem that for each account given on ‘ahu‘ula, there is a pressing sense of importance surrounding the nature of the interaction. Sigrid B. Southworth provides an excellent array of accounts detailing various exchanges of the ‘ahu‘ula. In one such excerpt found in Le Perouse’s 1786 journal details he “purchased of a cloak and a fine helmet, ornamented with red feathers (3). In another example, Richard Bloxam in 1826 remarks, “Feather tippets and cloaks, war-helmets, weapons, mother-of-pearl fish-hooks and even gods are brought to the market” (5). Indigenous researcher Linda Smith explains, “Clearly, in terms of trade indigenous peoples were often active participants, in some cases delivering ‘made to order’ goods” (61). Hawaiians were not an exception to this and did the same. Bloxam continues with “and as the latter article has been in much demand [gods], the handicraftsman have set to work and manufactured a few new ones, just as good as the old, but that they have never been worshipped – and do not the antique-makers in Rome do the same?” (Southworth 5-6). It is evident, value was set on the ‘ahu‘ula as trade and commerce took place, but this is only a reasonable response to the influx of foreigners and the foreign objects they brought. It was also a response to the foreigners’ desire to collect ‘curiosities’, although, this was not always the case. In earlier foreigner documentation of exchanges, specifically regarding the ‘ahu‘ula, there is a clear difference in circumstance that does not revolve around trade and commerce, at least on the part of Kanaka Hawai‘i chiefs.

When Cook initially arrives in the Hawai‘i, the first exchange is with the people of Kaua‘i. In Beaglehole’s review of Cook’s journal it is stated:
Some of their possessions called forth a good deal of admiration, like the ‘neat Tippets made of red and yellow feather’—no doubt the lei worn by distinguished ladies round the head or neck; the brilliant short cloaks, of similar feathers, attached to a finely woven network of vegetable thread—Cook on this visit saw none of the full-length garments, which rendered glorious the progress of the greatest chiefs; the ingenious feather-covered ‘Caps’, as he rather inadequately called them, ‘made so as to fit very close to the head with a semicircular protuberance on the crown exactly like the helmets of old. These and also the cloaks they set so high a value upon that I could not procure one, some were however got’ (580).

This clearly sets the newcomer’s perception of the feather items but it also expresses the manner in which the items were regarded, “so high a value upon that (Cook) could not procure one”. It is possible the chiefs and people were not aware of Cook’s leadership role amongst all of the shipmen but it is evident in the next interaction, especially through the manner in which they receive ‘ahu‘ula.

In the first excerpt, Kalaniopuu is meeting the foreigners off of Maui for the first time and gifts his very own ‘ahu‘ula.

Among those on board on the last afternoon of the month was a chief who was important indeed, handed up the side with great care by his followers, … he was observant and good-natured, visited the captain’s cabin, and presented Cook with the very beautiful cap of yellow and black feathers that he wore, and his feather cloak—princely gifts; Cook heard his name as Terryaboo (640).
The description is simple and non-dramatic and sounds as if routine in its nature. More importantly though, it is the description of the gifts as those “that he wore,” a ‘cap’ and ‘cloak,’ which were presented to Cook. It piques interest because it has enough significance for Cook to record the exchange and interesting enough to wonder if there is an underlying reason for Kalaniopuu presenting feather items to Cook. The obvious assumption is that Kalaniopuu perceives Cook as chief-like. However, there is a significant difference in the following exchange between the two of them.

On their meeting Kaleiʻopuʻu threw round Cook’s shoulders his own cloak, placed on his head a helmet and in his hands a feathered kahili or fly-flap, part of the royal insignia; and at this feet laid half a dozen more cloaks—a truly regal gift (654).

The two encounters are eight weeks apart and Cook is surprised to be visited in Hawaiʻi by the same chief he had seen earlier in Maui (653). This second encounter clearly shows a high level of familiarity, at least on the chief’s part regarding Cook because of the display of gifts given. For a second time, Kalaniopuu gifts the ‘ahuʻula from his back to Cook. In addition to this gift, a helmet onto his head, a ‘fly-trap’ into his hands and “half a dozen or more” ‘ahuʻula are presented “at his feet”. The manners in which the ‘ahuʻula are given in the two instances suggest a clear difference in each event’s significance.

The actions of Kalaniopuu evoke a sense of familiarity with Cook by presenting multitudinous ‘ahuʻula, including the one he is wearing, for a second time. No other incident transpired between the two men during the eight weeks the men had seen each other and Cook is clear, through his surprise, to see Kalaniopuu again. However, between the two incidents, when Cook arrived in Kealakekua Bay, the ships are crowded by the
people and canoes that lead up to events that may provide insight to the increase in gifts and familiarity by Kalaniopuu to Cook.

The *Discovery* heeled over with the number clinging to her side. I would have been impossible to do anything had not two handsome chiefs, Parea or Palea, and Kanina, come to the rescue and driven the mob, temporarily, overboard. There was one other visitor, at least, who did not get this summary treatment—‘a man named *Tou-ah-ah*, who we soon found belonged to the ‘Church’; Koaa or Koa, a little, old kava-affected, highly important priest. This man introduced himself with much ceremony, presenting Cook with a small pig, two coconuts, and wrapping a piece of red cloth around him, gifts supplemented with a long sort of prayer, a large hog and a quantity of fruit and roots (649).

Following the event, Cook, with two of his men, King and Bayly, are escorted to a heiau and a ceremony ensues. What transpires thereafter is an exalting of Cook, “there was something in the air far beyond the relatively simple veneration of Kauai in the preceding January” (651). The environment surrounding Cook is detailed, “To [him] continued to be paid the most remarkable observances, a quite extraordinary homage” (652). This is Cook’s first experience of the sorts, his acknowledgement and recognition by a priest, escort to a heiau and a consecration by the “Church”. Shortly after this is Cook’s second visit with Kalaniopuu. It is reasonable to think Cook’s consecration on the heiau is in part, an act that recognizes his rank as chiefly. It may also give reason for Kalaniopuu to consider Cook in a more respectable manner fitting to Cook’s now appropriately recognized rank.
The significance of gifting ‘ahu‘ula clearly recognizes rank but it may also reflect alliances and allegiance. If such is the case, then it may be reasonable to think the significance of the ‘ahu‘ula, beyond just beauty, may have a socio-political context associated to it.

Cook’s experience on the heiau marks an event that is typically associated to Cook being venerated as a god. Chiefs were god-like, and in this context, Cook’s veneration was god-like, but it is unlikely the Hawaiian Chiefs, like Kalaniopuu, actually considered Cook supernatural. If Kalaniopuu did consider Cook supernatural, one would expect Kalaniopuu to treat Cook in such a manner, but that is not the case. At no point does Kalaniopuu show any kind of veneration of Cook and his men. The only significant homage paid to Cook by Kalaniopuu is in the feather gifts, and only in a great form after Cook is recognized by the priest and taken to the heiau.

If a complex socio-political context is relevant to ‘ahu‘ula, then an analysis of other situations occurring around the ‘ahu‘ula may support the notion. There is another hint to this socio-political protocol that was employed by Captain Vancouver a few years later in 1793. Vancouver had returned to Hawai‘i and was trying to convince the Chiefs that peace was more beneficial than prolonged warring with one another. In March of the same year, after visiting with Kamehameha and other chiefs of Hawai‘i Island, Vancouver went to Maui to continue peace negotiations with Kahekili. “His first gift was a scarlet cloak, similar to those given to Kamehameha, and he also gave gifts to the chief’s entire Suite in accordance with their rank and position” (R. E. A. S. Hackler, Cummins E. 51). It is clear Vancouver understood a protocol with chiefs regarding ‘ahu‘ula as well as the appropriateness of gifts in accordance to rank, existed.
The few instances described thus far suggest a level of complexity associated to the importance of the ‘ahu‘ula. The three examples set up in a chronological order hints at the nature of the feather garment within a socio-political context. It seems very unlikely the context was something that developed with the onset of Westerner interaction. What does seem reasonable is the potential of an ‘ahu‘ula protocol having some kind of intrinsic cultural importance. If such were the case, then it is logical to consider oral stories retain the importance of the feather garments within such a context.

**The Story of Eleio**

The first story that stands out is the *Story of Eleio* that has also been titled as *Ahuula: A Legend of Kanikaniaula and the First Feather Cloak*. Eleio is the main character of this mini-story and he is a runner for the high Maui chief named Kakaalaneo. There are a number of versions to this story but the core of each version is that Eleio, sent by his chief, runs an errand and expected to be back by sun down. While on his retreat, Eleio encounters a woman, who unbeknownst to him is an apparition in need. As a healer of the arts, Eleio stops his errand for his chief, and tends to her body to bring her back to the living. Once the body returns to the living, the girl, now known as Kanikaniaula, gifts a most beautiful feather cloak to Eleio for his services and offers to marry him. Accepting the cloak, Eleio kindly declines her marriage but asks if she would marry his chief. Eleio’s return means imminent death for disobeying orders but hopes these gifts will win back his chief’s favor. Kanikaniaula agrees to marry his chief, and Eleio returns to his chief with the feather cloak and her hand in marriage.

At first sight of Eleio, Kakaalaneo is enraged but he immediately takes notice of the cloak and begins asking about it. This gives Eleio the opportunity to explain what
happened and the extraordinary beauty of both Kanikaniaula and the cloak and at last, both are gifts for his chief. Kakaalaneo, in amazement of the beauty of the cloak because no other has ever been seen like it, accepts the gifts, marries Kanikaniaula and Eleio returns to the services of Kakaalaneo.  

This story tells the adventures of Eleio and is also a device to explain the parentage of the well known rascal Kaululaau, the child of Kanikaniaula and Kakaalaneo. This is unquestionably about the genealogy of historical figures but it also hints at the socio-political role of the ‘ahu’ula and its genealogy. To begin with, the importance of the ‘ahu’ula is referenced in its god-like association as a gift worthy of exchange for reincarnation. Recognizing the ‘ahu’ula as extremely valuable, the receiver of the gift, who is a healer, gives it to his chief thereby, implying such a gift is a chiefly gift. It is also suggesting that the ‘ahu’ula is so valuable that it can win the opinion of a chief when in need. It is a gift for forgiveness but it is also a gift for alliance between Hawai‘i and Maui chiefs.

In this story, the origin of the ‘ahu’ula is by way of Kanikaniaula. In the version by Fornander, he writes Kanikaniaula is from a line of high chiefs from Hawai‘i (Fornander and Thrum 482). Fornander also records that she returns to Hawai‘i to procure more ‘ahu‘ula to take back to Maui (486). Looking into the lineage of Kanikaniaula, she is actually a descendant from the Kamaauua family of Moloka‘i. She is the granddaughter of Kamaauua who had four sons, Kaupeepeenuikauila, Keoloewa, Haili, and Uli-hala-nui. Kanikaniaula is the daughter of the third son Haili (Fornander and Stokes 31). Not much more is known about the Haili but in Fornander’s version of

\[15\] This is an abbreviated version of the story developed by the author. See appendix for information on the published versions of the story used to develop this abbreviated form.
the Eleio story, Fornander clearly states Kanikaniaula comes from a chiefly line from Hawai‘i island. If all is true, then it stands to reason that either the maternal line of Kanikaniaula is from Hawai‘i island, which is most likely and/or her father became a chief in Hawai‘i, which is also equally reasonable to believe. Clearly, there is an inference here to the socio-political union between Hawai‘i, Maui, and included Moloka‘i by way of lineage.

In addition to the socio-political suggestion, the direct reference to Hawai‘i is also stating that the level of finery achieved in the ‘ahu‘ula originated from that island. From the standpoint of artistry, this would seem very plausible because the finest of the feathers were from the Mamo. The color of the Mamo feather was unmatched. Although all birds and their feathers were valued, it is possible that some of the islands had a style and color that differentiated them from other islands and the unmatched color of the Mamo could represent an older now forgotten tradition.

**Origins in Polynesia**

One of the quandries with the idea that the ‘ahu‘ula evolved from a ti-leaf cape are the stories, like Keaomelemele and Laieikawai, that reference feather garments. The story of Eleio and Kanikaniaula would be considered a very young story in comparison to these two. It is clear through the story of Eleio that the ‘ahu‘ula was not something that evolved during the 18th century because the reign of Kakaalaneo was closer to the 16th century. It is also clear that Kanikaniaula’s cloak is not the very first ‘ahu‘ula but it is the first feather garment of its kind to have ever been seen. In addition, the stories direct its audience to understand that the first kind of cloak originates from Hawai‘i. Overall, the Eleio story is suggesting that a socio-political tie exists between Hawai‘i, Maui, and
Molokaʻi while also referencing genealogy. If oral stories are keepers of history, then through the use of oral stories, it is reasonable to believe more information can be found on the importances of the ʻahuʻula. It is reasonable to believe information on the development of the cloak and clues to the significance of the red and yellow feathers may be revealed that will further an understanding of the ʻahuʻula.

The first hint at the potential of feather garment’s socio-political need can be found in another story also based during Kakaalaneo’s reign. This one is about the Kahuna Kalaihaohiʻa. A likely reason for the developments in the ʻahuʻula could be due to a more practical socio-political need relating to governance.

It was during Kakaalaneo of Maui that the division of lands is said to have taken place under a kahuna named Kalaihaohiʻa which portioned out the islands into districts, subdistricts, and smaller divisions, each ruled over by an agent appointed by the landlord of the next division, and the whole under control of the ruling chief over the whole island or whatever part of it was his to govern. These were “land reforms and other means of strengthening the power of the ruling chief [and] stabilizing control over a growing population (Beckwith 383).

It is very reasonable to consider that a sophisticated society would develop a necessity to have refined accoutrements, like the tyrian dyed royal Grecian robes discussed earlier. The refined garments then reflected the socio-political delineations amongst the growing Aliʻi and Koa classes. These refined garments were marks of socio-political demarcations easily recognized in all cultures throughout Asia and Europe and the Americas.
To further contextualize the time period, Fornander remarks that the expeditions of Kaupeepee-nui-kauila\(^{16}\) younger brother to Keoloewa\(^{17}\) who are both the sons of Kamauaua of Moloka‘i are “nearly contemporary reigns of the “Kawulos\(^{18}\) on Kauai, Kakuhihewas on O‘ahu, the Kamalalawalu of Maui and the Keawenuiaumi and his children of Hawai‘i.” Kakaalaneo’s wife Kanikaniaula is the granddaughter of Kamauaua through his son, Haili (Fornander and Stokes 32) and Kakaalaneo was a contemporary with Kauholanui-mahu who was the sovereign of Hawai‘i, “the Kalonas on O‘ahu, and with Kahakuokane, the grandson of Manokalanipo of Kauai” (Fornander and Stokes 71).

In addition to understanding the development and role of the ‘ahu‘ula, another and more clear example of the developing socio-political role of the ‘ahu‘ula is found a couple generations earlier. This is during the time of the Maui Island Paumakua’s son known as Haho.

_Haho_, has gone down to posterity and been remembered by all succeeding ages throughout the group as the founder of the _Aha-Alii_, an institution which literally means “the congregation of chiefs,” and, in a measure, may be compared to a heralds’ college; and to gain admission and privileges to announce his name, either personally or through an accompanying bard, and his descent, either lineal or collateral, from some one or more of the recognized, undisputed ancestors (“Kupuna”) of the Hawaiian nobility, claiming such descent either on the Nanaulu or Ulu line (28).

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\(^{16}\) Kaupeepee lived in the impregnable area of Hā‘upu, Moloka‘i. Kaupeepee kidnapped Hina the wife of Hakalanileo of Hilo. Years later, Hina’s sons from Hakalanileo, Kana and Niheu-Kalohe, destroy the fortress, kill Kaupeepee, and rescue Hina from years of confinement in Hā‘upu.

\(^{17}\) Sovereign of Moloka‘i after his father Kamauaua.

\(^{18}\) Misprint of Kawelo.
When speaking of the Nanaulu and Ulu lines, Fornander is actually referencing the migrations from the South. During this time and the generations above there were a number of voyages taking place that also brought forth new lines and chiefs from afar. Fornander continues his explanation of the Aha-Alii and it gives insight to why the ‘ahu‘ula was necessary for the chiefs.

There were gradations of rank and tabu within the Aha-Alii, well understood and seldom infringed upon. No chief could fall from his rank, however his possessions and influence might vane; and none could rise higher himself in the ranks of the Aha-Alii than the source from which he sprang either on mother’s or father’s side; but he might in several way raise the rank of his children higher than his own, such as by marriage with a chiefess of higher rank than his own, marrying with a sister, or by their adoption into a family of higher rank than that of the father. The privileges and prerogatives of the Aha-Alii were well defined and universally known, both as regards their intercourse with each other and their relation to the commonalty, the Makaainana. . . . A chief of the Aha-Alii was of right entitled to wear the insignia of his rank whenever he pleased: the feather wreath, the Lei-hulu—the feather cloak or cape, the Ahu-Ula—the ivory clasp, the Palaoa; his canoe and its sail were painted red, and he wore a pennon at the masthead. . . . Such were some of the leading features of Aha-Alii, which all existing traditions concur in asserting was instituted by Haho about twenty five generations ago. [The Aha-Alii] arose, probably, as a necessity of the existing condition of
things during this migratory period, as protection of the native aristocracy against foreign pretenders, and as a broader line of demarcation between the nobility and the commonalty (28-30).

This is a significant migratory period of great socio-political activity. It correlates to the rise of governing political entities, advancements in the stonework of temple and fishponds, changes in religion, and peaks in agricultural sciences (Kelly 57). The governance of the land is expanding and rising and it is only sensible that the same attributions for these successes were equally applied to the craftsmanship and artistry of the ‘ahu‘ula. Undoubtedly, this is a time that influences advancements in the ‘ahu‘ula “which rendered glorious the progress of the greatest chiefs” (Beaglehole 580) and remain known as such until this today.

It is far from surprising to think that while the social structure was advancing, it corresponded with developments in the artistry and refinement of accoutrements.

[The] adventures and achievements of Hawaiian chiefs of the original Nanaulu line, who roamed over the southern and south-western groups of the Pacific [were] in quest of fame, of booty, or of new homes. Many of these returned to their native homes laden with rich and curious knowledge of foreign manners and foreign modes of thought, and thus aided not a little in overlaying the ancient condition, social, political, and religious, with the more elaborate but grosser southern cultus and more despotic rule of government (Fornander and Stokes 47).

The notion of feathers, birds, capes, and headdresses as symbols of gods and the elite was an inherent feature throughout Oceanic society. The effect of the migratory period was
the advent of change, development, and advancement in the society. From Paa to Moikeha a multitude of advancements were made due to the exchanges of ideas that came with Oceanic migrations. Kanikaniaula’s ‘ahu’ula is not the first ‘ahu’ula but is likely to be the first feather garment remembered for its distinctive achievements made in its art form by the competing lineages.

It is common knowledge that red feathers are significant throughout Polynesia and is part of the reason why so many were adamant that the term meant “red cloak or cape”. But what is not clear is why the ‘ahu’ula shifted in color use. For starters, there are a number of examples in various collections throughout the world that do not fit the reasonable “red” definition. In general, all feathers are significant but another reason may be a result of South Seas influences.

Teuira Henry translated a collection of Tahitian lore during the 1920’s. One particular event of interest is the poetical account of Tahiti splitting from Raiatea. Tahiti is perceived as a fish that has torn away from Havaii, the old name for Raiatea and a power struggle ensues between the Tahitians and the Raiateans and in the lore the Raiateans remark:

E i’a na matou Tahiti. A fish of ours is Tahiti.

E mautai ‘ura tea ta outou, Yellow feathers may abound with you,

Te pu‘e noa rara ta matou ura ‘u‘ute. But red feathers have we in abundance.

(Henry 437).
The people who are breaking away from Havaii, are the Manahune, or plebeian folk, who worship the god Tu. They set out to settle the new land called Tahiti to free themselves from the Opoa priests of Havaii (Buck Vikings of the Pacific 78-80). In a lecture on Hawaiian Mythology by Dr. Lilikala Kameeleihiwa, this break between Havaii and Raiatea is significant of the political and religious struggle powers happening between islands. (9/22/2011). In Henry’s work, Tahiti, the South Eastern island, is represented by the yellow feathers and the red feathers are represented by Havaii, North West of Tahiti, and are significant descriptors relating to socio-political issues of independence. Buck explains “the myths were composed from the verbal logs of deep-sea mariners”, in other words, the navigators during this time period (Buck Vikings of the Pacific 78). In this context, it stands reasonable to think the migrations North to Hawai‘i from the South Seas also brought significant representation as well as a symbology behind the yellow feathers and red feathers.

An in-depth look at the development of the ‘ahu‘ula reveals the significance of the yellow and the red feathers reach back to Havai‘i and Tahiti in the South. Haho is described as the first of the migratory descendants to implement the Aha Alii structure where the use of refined ornamentation, such as ‘ahu‘ula, is significant of lineage and rank. Later, an ‘ahu‘ula described as the first of its kind is remebered in the legend of Eleio—a clue in a path of oral stories that relinks feather colors to an older tradition, a time of navigation and migration in the Polynesia.

**Political Entice**

As in the story of Eleio, it is seen that the ‘ahu‘ula was something that agreements could be made over. An ‘ahu‘ula could sway opinions, regain favor, and create alliances,
including unions of lineages. This final section on the ‘ahu’ula brings the socio-political relationship into a more contemporary historical context. A closer look at earlier eighteenth century examples as well as a few additional ones from the later half of the century will further shed light on the inherent nature of ‘ahu’ula.

The first example can be found in the Kahahana story about two retainers, Kapohu and Kaakakai, who are in search of an ‘ahu’ula to gain entrance into ‘Umihale, the hale mua of Kahekili. The two men race each other to Hawai‘i Island and Kapohu hears a man from Maui has obtained an ‘ahu’ula from Keawehano. Kapohu wins the ‘ahu’ula from Ka’akakai through mastery of chant and thereby gains entrance to ‘Umihale.

In this instance, the political situation is building up to a siege of Kahahana by Kahekili. Keawehano is a supporter of Kahahana and would have been killed if it were not for Kapohu. Kapohu and Keawehano had a truce of sorts because of the ‘ahu’ula that Kapohu retrieved from Keawehano who thereby gained Kapohu’s entrance to ‘Umihale.19

This is the very kind of political set up that was put into practice by Haho, generations earlier. It is also a very subtle suggestion that Hawai‘i is the island to acquire a very valuable ‘ahu’ula. Just like in Eleio, the ‘ahu’ula is distinctly related to Hawai‘i, and then is taken to the Mō‘ī in Maui. In both stories, the ‘ahu’ula is functioning as an esteemed gift for a Chief. In both instances the gifting of an ‘ahu’ula has special privileges that come with it, from forgiveness to acceptance.

19 Samuel Manaiaakalani (Perreira Kamakau, Hiapo), "Ka Moʻolelo O Kahahana, Mahele 1/the Story of Kahahana," Ka Hoʻoilina/The Legacy 1.1 (March 2002).
Another similar political situation is when Kahekili sends two of his men to Kamehameha to retrieve canoes for him. The two men do not return because Kamehameha convinced them to stay with him and when Keawemauhili hears of this, he does the following:

[Keawe] sent some double canoes together with feather capes and ‘o‘o feathers as a gift of affection to Kahekili. When Kahekili saw these gifts of friendship, his heart warmed toward Keawe-ma‘u-hili, and he sent fighting men to Hilo (S. M. Kamakau 124).

Again, development of political loyalty is via the utilization of the ‘ahu‘ula as a tool in a practice of sycophancy-like behavior. As can be seen through the stories, this practice of ingratiating one self through the gifting of ‘ahu‘ula was a sophisticated process and existed as an intense tool in politicking. The ability to amass a supply of ‘ahu‘ula suggests prowess but, once amassed, it also infer the potential for opportunity and power to make alliances. The more ‘ahu‘ula in one’s authority, the more likely the person would use them for politicking, enticing allegiance from other chiefs, as well as gaining the confidence of well-skilled warriors. The acts of plundering the ‘ahu‘ula, then, more aptly reflected a socio-political importance associated to the garment rather than one of materialism, wealth, and mere greed.

The final examples of the ‘ahu‘ula functioning as a socio-political tool can be seen in the transactions between Captain Vancouver and Kamehameha I. In 1793

Kamehameha, boarded the Discovery and asked Vancouver most seriously if he and King George were his sincere friends. On being reassured,

Kamehameha touched noses with Vancouver and presented him with four

Following this event, prior to Vancouver’s departure, Kamehameha entrusted Vancouver with a superb yellow cloak, as the most valuable item in Hawai‘i, it was meant only for King George and directed no other person, than King George himself, may wear the cloak (49).

Vancouver’s objective was to build relations with the Chiefs in the Hawaiian Islands. Keeping to formalities and protocol, Vancouver was able to build a respectable rapport with Kamehameha. From the actions of Kamehameha, it is obvious he perceived Vancouver as a bridge to an alliance with King George. Before addressing the next example of Kamehameha’s gifting an ‘ahu‘ula, a brief overview of the history surrounding these events now follows.

The next year Vancouver returns and continues negotiations with Kamehameha. At this time, it is apt to say Kamehameha is focused on gaining political control of the Hawaiian Islands. During this last visit two critical events transpire. The first is that Vancouver promises a vessel with guns and other items to Kamehameha, and the second was, presumed by Vancouver, an agreement for the cession of Hawai‘i. Historian Rhoda Hackler confirms a letter dated in 1810 reveals there was “certainly no hint of subservience [was found] in this letter. It is a letter from one ruler to another.” Kamehameha was attempting to comply with maritime regulations and was requesting King George’s assistance. Kamehameha also made sure to note that he did not receive the vessel promised by Vancouver years earlier. In addition to this, Kamehameha apologizes
for the death of a Master Brown of the ship Jackall and a Master Gordon of the ship Prince Lee Boo because Kalanikūpule killed both. Kamehameha sends another feather cloak to King George (R. E. A. Hackler 7-8) as part of the apology for the deaths and this second time the ‘ahu‘ula is clearly seen being used as an esteemed agent for forgiveness. Hackler determines, “careful study of these letters leads to the conclusion that the compact which Kamehameha and Vancouver made aboard HMS Sloop Discovery in Kealakekua Bay on 25 February 1794 was not a cession; it was an alliance” (11). It is very likely that the cloaks gifted, represented an agreement to an alliance that was mistakenly, or not, misunderstood by Vancouver.

Hackler’s focus and conclusion may seem separate from any acts of Kamehameha gifting ‘ahu‘ula to King George III, but the actions of Kamehameha over a course of years clearly shows Kamehameha was not forgetful of the alliance he intended when he gave Vancouver the highly prized yellow ‘ahu‘ula for King George. Across the seas, the momentous transactions lost its importance and impact, and the gracious gift was far less significant for the British monarch than it was for a member of the Aha Alii.

It is resonable to say the novelty of the ‘ahu‘ula by the early eighteen hundreds was wearing thin for foreigners as philosophical trends were developing new purposes for collected ‘objects’. However, the cultural context of the ‘ahu‘ula remained the same amongst the ali‘i, but as the years progressed, it was steadily becoming apparent that the importance of the ‘ahu‘ula was not shared and would not be shared in the same manner by foreigners. For foreigners, it would remain a trendy curio.

The socio-political role of the ‘ahu‘ula, through the course of oral stories and historical accounts shows itself to have a consistent inherent nature that is unchanging
over the decades. From one great chief to the next, the council of all chiefs would have understood the value and worth of the `ahu`ula as a socio-political device relegated only to the Aha Alii. It represented alliances between chiefs and warriors and represented a means to accessing socio-political control.

The feather garments commanded social order, whether it was ceremoniously, or for a political meeting, whether it was worn into battle and war, gifted or plundered. The `ahu`ula represented more than just a garment of beauty that was worn by the Alii. It had a significant socio-political function in the society. It was a constituent of the Aha Alii and a political directive was assembled around it, it functioned as a masterful gift, with a multi-generational history of protocol.

The `ahu`ula always existed. It represents a lineage to the gods, a time of migration and navigation, the chiefly class. It also represented Hawaiian socio-political order at its height, embedded in the mastery of its construction, quality, and beauty. The advancement in its representation came during the height of navigation and the migrations of Oceania and with the cross-cultural exchanges happening, the art of the `ahu`ula escalated simultaneously as religion and politics were reaching its climatic point in Hawai‘i. The oral story of the Eleio and Kanikaniaula is the remembrance of the time and location where the making of `ahu`ula is mastered and connects the `ahu`ula back to its origins. Through various examples from oral histories it is clear the `ahu`ula is anything but simple symbolism. The `ahu`ula is laden with intellectual purpose reserved for the most distinctive of persons not just because historians and anthropologists presumed so, but because it can be found and understood through the oral stories preserved and perpetuated through generations.
CHAPTER 5
FINAL REMARKS

The main discourse on the ‘ahu’ula is its visual representation. Western academia routinely ignores the validity of oral stories as a source to extrapolate meaningful information. However, as in a 2009 case, Western scientists stated Maori oral stories provided evidence to support its scientific research. This sets an example of Western academia’s potential to bridge its sciences with culture into a meaningful manner.

Of all the comments and hypothesis made to determine what the ‘ahu’ula meant to Kanaka Hawai‘is, not one clear analysis of the designs and patterns was made. Assumptions were easily made but a collective visual analysis was not done on the existing ‘ahu’ula to support any conjecture and interpretation. Again, it may be the influence of Brigham, the forerunner on the subject, who spearheaded this line of thinking because he writes:

no great orginality has been shown, and the elements are generally triangles and crescents which in a flat design seem rather commonplace...
while there is no great variety, no two were exactly alike (Brigham Hawaiian Feather Work 50).

As discussed earlier regarding other areas of concern influenced by Brigham and researchers alike, it is unfortunate that such Western framed opinions were adhered to and it influenced the inability to see beyond the perceived “commonplace” of the ‘ahu’ula designs and colors.

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Most interestingly, Brigham writes “I have been told by aged Hawaiians that the pattern was sketched on white kapa, cords of olona or coconut fibre serving a radii of the curves which are generally arcs of circles” (52). This information supports the notion addressed earlier that the ‘ahu‘ula were created with great intent. It has already been suspected that the designs were symbolic of genealogy but there has never been an analysis of the graphic designs to determine what kind of information, if any, can be perceived through its imagery. More specifically, it has not been shown in what manner the designs can potentially be significant of genealogy. It is astounding that something that so many were interested in, and was so meticulously documented, so combed over with opinions and hypothesis, that little attention to none at all was paid to the imagery itself that was actually created on the ‘ahu‘ula.

To give any attention to this matter, it first required compiling and scouring the designs of the ‘ahu‘ula to determine if something could be found. As images of the ‘ahu‘ula were gathered the initial surprise was to see how many variations and colors were used. The degree of difference truly puts the common representation of the garment, as red and yellow, into a far too limiting description. Compositionally, there were capes that were mostly white, some were mostly black, while others were the “quintessential” red cape. One astounding cloak that was documented in Sarah Stone’s work, less known and rarely spoken of, is the yet to be located exquisite green cloak with a large “V” shape design on it. From an artistic perspective, this unrecognized artistry is significant of a high level of craftsmanship. In general the ‘ahu‘ula is an underrepresented example of mastery and magnificence. All of the designs, from the complex cloaks to the simpler capes, are far from anything that is commonplace.
Once the images were collected, it became obvious the graphic designs employed on the capes and cloaks could be organized into groups based on similarities. In some instances the elements of a design was easily determined and considered relatively uniform. In some instances the design has no counterpart to create a group and others were so fabulously unique, they just stand alone in their own marvel. One very exciting moment during the collecting of the images revealed two distinctive sets of the “malo” or “feather mats.” Fornander documents the first set in 1899 and it remains located in the British Museum, but there was another set detailed by Sarah Stone that was once a part of the Leverian Collection.

Upon closer inspection of the two unique sets, the designs are examples showing a sophisticated and exquisite level of color theory and design to create a perspective and dimensional effect. The color usage is vibrant and the patterns and dimensionality produces energy and movement of an exceptional level of mastery. If the texture of feathers and the refracted light are taken into consideration, the visual experience of these items, without a doubt produces a high and energetic feel. In a limited attempt to describe the patterning of these items, Brigham amusingly writes “the designs are much more Mexican than Hawaiian” (37). Such patterning was not commonly known at the turn of the century and has remained considered uncommon till this day. The examples show such great variance in designs and patterns and so little is known about them. It also provides the potential to understand Hawaiian designs and patterns, including the ʻahuʻula, were not limited, simple, or commonplace as it has been suggested for so long.

The following pages is not exhaustive but provides a few examples of potential groupings of the ʻahuʻula. In this respect, notions regarding designs and patterns, when organized
into groups, reflects a potential for future meaningful discussions on origins and lineages as perceived through the 'ahuʻula.
Solid Cloak - Alaneo

Solid Color Design with Stripe(s)-like Pattern

Solid Color Design with Full Border

Fig 1.1

Fig 1.4

Fig 1.9

Fig 1.2

Fig 1.5

Fig 1.10

Fig 1.3

Fig 1.6

Fig 1.11

Fig 1.7

Fig 1.12

Fig 1.8
Double Triangle Pattern with Double Crescents Joined at Center and Lower Border Design

Double and Multiple Triangle Edge Pattern with Multiple Crescents

Single Triangle Edge Pattern with Multiple Crescents

Multiple Crescents Pattern

Note the various uses of running border pattern with solid lower border on most examples above.

The two examples above do not have triangle edge pattern included in their design.
Crescent Design with Burst-like Pattern

Double Triangle Edge Pattern with Center Peak Crescent-like Design

Continuation of Previous with Variations

Fig 3.1

Fig 3.3

Fig 3.7

Fig 3.2

Fig 3.4

Fig 3.8

Fig 3.5

Fig 3.9

Fig 3.6

Fig 3.10
Variations on Crescent Design with and without Triangle Edge

Fig 4.1

Fig 4.2

Fig 4.3

Fig 4.4

Fig 4.5

Fig 4.6

Fig 4.7

Fig 4.8

Fig 4.9

Fig 4.10

Fig 4.11

Fig 4.12

Fig 4.13

Fig 4.14

Fig 4.15
Multi-Tiered Designs with Various Patterns

Fig 6.1

Fig 6.2

Fig 6.3

Fig 6.4

Fig 6.5

Fig 6.6

Fig 6.7

Fig 6.8

Fig 6.9
Solid Color Design with Three Side Pattern or Border

Fig 7.1

Fig 7.2

Fig 7.3

Double Triangle Edge with Solid Color Design

Fig 7.4

Fig 7.5

Fig 7.6

Fig 7.7

Fig 7.8

Fig 7.9

Fig 7.10

Fig 7.11
Various Unique Designs and Patterns

Fig 8.1

Fig 8.2

Fig 8.3

Fig 8.4

Fig 8.5

Fig 8.6

Fig 8.7

Fig 8.8

Fig 8.9

Fig 8.10
Color Plate 1

Unique Designs and Patterns
(object's purpose unknown, typically called a "mat" or "malo")

Fig 9.1

Fig 9.2

Examples of "Black" Capes

Fig 9.4

Fig 9.3

Fig 9.5

Fig 9.6

Fig 9.7
Color Plate 2

Fig 10.1

Fig 10.2

Fig 10.3
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APPENDIX

Collected Narratives on the story of Eleio and Kanikaniaula

Written by L. S. Kalama. This is a Kao, or a short story, in Hawaiian that tells the
adventure of Eleio’s encounter with Ahualii. It does not tell of Eleio’s encounter
with the spirit woman or about the cape.

Kuokoa Series. September 5 –November 21, 1863. “Ka Mooleo o Eleio.”
Written by W. N. Pualewa. This Moolelo is an extensive series of tales and
adventures put into a sequential order. Includes tales of Kakaalaneo, Eleio,
Kanikaniaula, and Kaululaau.

1907. “Ahuula: A Legend of Kanikaniaula and the First Feather Cloak,”
Written by E. M. Nakuina. From “Hawaiian Folktales: A Collection of Native
Legends” Edited by T. G. Thrum. This version’s focus is on Kanikaniaula and the
first cloak. Notes the name of the cloak as the “Ahu o Kakaalaneo.” This version
is written in English.

1916. “Legend of Eleio” in “Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-
lore” by Abraham Fornander. Volume IV. This version is written in Hawaiian and
includes an English translation.

This is a snippet of the story of Eleio. It can be located in Section 2 under *Maui
Stories*, subtitled *Eleio*. 