3179

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PACIFIC ISLANDS PEOPLE

WHO HAVE USED TAPA (KAPA) IN RITUAL

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

The use of bark cloth, *kapa* in Hawai'i and *tapa* in many parts of Polynesia and the rest of the world, as a practical material may have diminished over the last century. However, there is no doubt that it has played an important and key role in the lives of Pacific islanders, from Easter Island in the east to Papua New Guinea in the west, for several thousand years. In fact, its importance in everyday life has been well documented, starting with the earliest European visitors (Cook & King, 1784), to the turn of the 20th century (Brigham, 1911), and to present-day studies (Abbott, 1992; Barker, 1999; Kamakau, 1991).

Polynesian Introductions

Historically, archaeological and ethnobotanical evidence shows that people coming out of South-East Asia brought not only bark cloth making skills with them when they migrated toward the South Pacific Islands during the early Holocene epoch, but also the actual tree most commonly used for making bark cloth. This is the paper mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera* L. *Moraceae*) which is originally native to Eastern Asia, specifically Taiwan and Japan. It is considered one of 72 pre-European contact intentional Polynesian plant introductions with a pattern of distribution from Western Melanesia to Easter Island (I.A.Abbott, October 2004, personal communication; Whistler, 1991;). Known variously as *malo* or *masi* (Fiji); *hiapo* (Tonga); *siapo* (Samoa); *aute* (Cooks,

Societies, New Zealand); *ute* (Marquesas); *wuwusi* (Papua New Guinea); and *wauke* (Hawai'i), the tree does not seed in Polynesia and must be reproduced through cuttings or root shoots. Once rooted, the plant grows well along streams in upland areas and in the lowland field systems along the banks of wet taro fields. Best of all, it requires little care once planted.

Design origins

The early explorers, an aboriginal people called *Lapita*, came into the region from Southeast Asia. They were named after a site on the West Coast of New Caledonia, where their distinctive pottery was first discovered. The Lapita may have been producing cloth from bark for some 2,000 years in their original homelands (Neich & Pendergrast, 1997). It is also argued by some, that the unique Lapita pottery designs are similar to those used for body tattooing. These designs are more or less those still employed in Polynesia at the present time for the creation of traditional tapa (Neich & Pendergrast, 1997).

Tapa As Art

Today, the making of bark cloth is considered one of the most distinctive features of the Pacific Island cultures. While bark cloth is produced in various other parts of the world, including South and Central America, Africa, Southeast Asia, the Philippines, and Indonesia, it is considered to have reached its pinnacle of variety and quality in the Pacific Islands. So important is the Polynesian product that the word tapa, of Samoan origin, meaning the unpainted border of the bark cloth sheet, has come to be used for bark cloth around the world. The practical uses of tapa have diminished with the introduction of modern woven cloth products. Perhaps more significantly, its use in ritual and religious ceremonies has also been greatly reduced. Masks, mats, clothing, wall hangings and other

products made of bark cloth however, are still in great demand among collectors, museums and art institutions. (Furthermore, true tapa is a symbol for many islanders returning to their ancestral values and ways.)

For example, The Trout Gallery of Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, recently displayed a tapa wall hanging that is said to commemorate the opening of the Queen Charlotte Airport in Tonga. (Queen Charlotte, *Salote* in Tongan, passed away in 1965.) One of the tapa's nine panels contains a structural diagram of an airplane with the letters "*Kui Ni Salote*" written in the center. The relevance here stated by Hazard (n.d.) is that the only difference

> between the late-twentieth century and traditional tapas is the imagery used to decorate the cloth. Traditional cloths often contained geometric images repeated in series while tapas produced in the late twentieth century tend to contain images that reference modern culture (p.1).

The role of tapa material as an art form became more pronounced while the United States military occupied much of the South Seas during World War II. Akin (1988) notes that; "the [indigenous] artists came to realize the extent to which their works were valued by people from outside of the islands and, in many places, art became an important source of cash ... from sales to soldiers" (p.5).

Tapa And Religion

While this development may have helped the local economy in the area, it has led to some battles between those arguing for the supreme importance of cultural values and those who believe that intrinsic artistic merit should override any attached cultural beliefs.

Prown (1982) for example, argues that objects such as *tapa* cloth need to be defined in terms of their cultural value: "The underlying premise is that objects made or modified by man reflect ... the beliefs of individuals who made, commissioned, purchased or used them" (p.1).

Here, a part of the argument that is often neglected lies in the fact that many of the objects that non-Polynesians would consider as either purely utilitarian or of artistic merit have other meanings within the culture in which they were created. For example, it is well known that in traditional island cultures, the making of tapa for ritual use often involves some type of religious ceremony. Some of the dyes used to stain the cloth, for example, are the by-products of very specific and strictly followed rituals that have been (until very recent times) religious practices (Mead & Kernot, 1983).

Many Polynesian cultures have addressed this problem in one way or another. The Maisin who live in the southeastern region of Papua New Guinea, for example, make a distinction between sacred and non-sacred *tapa*. According to Rinder (1998):

> The sacred works are painted with so-called clan designs. These designs, repeated from generation to generation by strict convention, are the exclusive intellectual property of particular groups or clans. Many are representational, depicting images seen in dreams or other items pertinent to the history of a particular clan ... Clan designs are typically used—that is, worn—only on ceremonial occasions. They may not be sold, traded, or worn by someone from another clan. In recent years, this taboo has sometimes extended to photography and non-ceremonial display (p.63).

Creating Tapa

While there are many variations on a theme and the details differ for different cultures, the actual process of the making of the tapa itself has not changed very much through the centuries, although some of the tools have. Bark from very straight young mulberry trees about three inches in diameter is stripped with the outer layer removed and the inner bark, or bast, used. The bast is sliced lengthwise and peeled from the stalk. After removal of the dark outer skin the bast is soaked in water so that the fiber becomes softened. Typically, a grooved rounded club, followed by a rectangular club with longitudinal grooved patterns is then used to beat the bark. Each side of this four-sided tool has different-sized grooves with the fourth side being flat. Beating the bast against a wooden anvil causes the bark to increase in size, as it becomes thinner, with progressively smaller grooved patterns being used until the flat side of the beater is used for finishing.

The separate strips are then joined together. They may be felted together, such as in Hawai'i, or glued using a pasty material made from fermented breadfruit or the starch of the arrowroot as in Fiji and Samoa. Natural dyes, made from vegetable byproducts and minerals, are used to decorate the tapa. The actual dyeing process differs across the Pacific. It ranges from brush painting and pattern stamping, to rubbed-in impressions. One of the most intriguing processes involving wrapping the bark around a log and submerging it into boiling water with dye. Because the bark has been treated in places with dye-resistant material, the dye only adheres to areas with an untreated surface and the patterns slowly appear during drying (Guiart, 1963).

Tapa Today

While tapa has an historical value, the present-day use of tapa is not consistent throughout the Pacific Islands. For example, by the late1800s, kapa (as it is called in Hawai'i) was used in the Hawaiian Islands mainly as a caulking material in the shipping industry. Today, most bark cloth sold in Hawai'i is manufactured elsewhere and then shipped into the state for finishing. Although there are excellent examples of kapa produced in Hawai'i today, Hawaiian kapa makers do not have the resources of an ongoing industry for guidance. They must rely on other Pacific Island areas such as Fiji, Samoa and Tonga where bark cloth continues to be produced for use both culturally and as a trade resource.

Tapa Mythology

This is in stark contrast to the way kapa was treated in the past in Hawai'i. In fact, the origin of Hawaiian bark cloth has its own legend: that of *Ma'ikoha* who served as the *aumakua* or guardian of the wauke plant from which kapa is made. When he was about to die, he instructed his two daughters to bury him by the side of a stream and said that a plant would sprout from his grave. That plant could be used to make clothing. Thus, in traditional Hawaiian mythology, Ma'ikoha is known as the guardian of the men who grow wauke and his daughters *Lauhuki* and *La'ahana* are ancestral craft gods who protect the makers of kapa, who are mostly women (Kamakau, 1991). Another legend has to do with Maui, the trickster god, and his mother *Hina-kawea* who made kapa in a cave. The story goes that, because the sun raced across the sky so quickly in those days, her kapa did not have time to dry. So Maui fashioned a huge fishhook and, when the sun came racing across the sky, he

threw the great hook at it. The hook caught the first ray of the sun and broke it off, causing the sun to limp across the sky and allowing the *kapa* craftspeople to dry their bark (Kamakau, 1991).

Tapa And Ritual

It is not surprising, considering the respect with which tapa was treated across the Pacific Islands, that bark cloth has been an important part of numerous religious and cultural ceremonies and rites—from the very largest, village-wide celebrations to daily household rituals. It should be noted that, in a culture such as Hawai'i's, for example, kapa played a strong role in the worship of the numerous gods, from the four main ones, (*Kanaloa, Kane, Ku,* and *Lono*) to groups of other, lesser gods who presided over various events (Buck, 1957). Kapa was graded for the purpose of being used in these religious ceremonies. For example, only the finest white kapa could be used in the ritual of *kuehu* where a spirit had to be forcibly exorcised. In the rite, the possessed person lay down while the *kahuna* (priest) struck him or her from head to foot with the kapa to absorb the spirit. Then, the kahuna shook out the kapa and released the spirit. To keep the spirit from returning, the kapa was spread under the person's sleeping mat (Pukui, 1972).

Other ritual uses for extraordinary kapa included being:

- Wrapped around the head of a child after the priest performed the rite whereby the foreskin of the child's penis is split (Pukui, 1972).
- Used as clothing for carved representations of the gods.
- Used during religious ceremonies to invite the attendant spirit into the person or item that had been wrapped.

- Wrapped around the oracle tower of the Hawaiian temple in order to channel spiritual influence into the personal domain of the priest.

This last manifestation was even described by Cook & King (1784) when he writes that the oracle tower "had originally been covered with a thin, light, gray cloth; which these people, it would seem, consecrate to religious purposes" (vol.2 p.200). As well, the area where kapa was made was considered a highly sacred place and a strong taboo system surrounded it and everything in it. John Whitman (1979), who visited the islands in the early 19th century, says in his journal:

> The tarboo system descends even to the minutia of this business for the hut, tools and every thing belonging to it in any way connected with the making of tarpers or maros for the kings are tarbooed and are never suffered to be used for any other purpose ... As they are particularly careful that no one may ever wear a tarbooed tarper after it has been cast off by the person for whom it was tarbooed, they either burn such immediately or have them made into match rope for the purpose of keeping the fire which is tarbooed to the use of the person who wore the garment ... (p.242).

Thus, it is very clear that kapa in Hawai'i had two very different roles. The first, that of clothing, bedding, and similar utilitarian uses, would seem very sensible and pedestrian to us. Its ritual use, however, is far more difficult to perceive. This is also the area that often was, and perhaps is today, kept secretive. There may be some general understanding on the existence of certain ritual methods; the question is in how to account for its cultural logic. In this sense, kapa was considered a representation of the "spirit world," a way to channel

and distribute divine power through its physical manifestation. For example, in the *Kumulipo*, the Hawaiian creation chant, the wauke plant is listed as the earthly guardian for the *weke* fish (Beckwith, 1951). There is no clear line between the spiritual and the priest. The implication is that the spiritual and the physical world both exist, and can interact in very meaningful ways. Kapa simply acts as a visible entry point for spiritual power.

European Contact

The rapid changes that have occurred in the Pacific Islands since the arrival of Europeans have also impacted on the making of bark cloth. The impact on tapa has been immense in terms of its practical uses and also in terms of its religious or sacred meanings. For example, Malo (1987) wrote about some of the dramatic social, political, economic, and religious changes that he saw taking place in Hawai'i as far back as the early 1800's,

> "Now come new kinds of axes from the land of the white man ... The stone ax is laid aside. New species of birds have been introduced, also new kinds of cloth, so that the former tapa cloth has almost entirely gone out of use" (p.145).

Tapa and Oceanic Culture

With this has come the loss of some of the cultural identity and heritage shared by Pacific Islanders. This is especially tragic in that some experts believe that tapa usage and wear is seen as one of the main agents through which kinship identities are converted and translated into political authority (Weiner, 1991). This could be the case both within any particular Pacific Island society and encompassing the entire social structures and systems in the region.

In this study, an attempt is made to examine and document the relationship between tapa making and its ritual significance. Closely connected with ritual, are tapa uses throughout the Pacific Islands and their religious implications; and the various links among the variants of these tapa religious rituals, i.e., the similarities and differences to be found from island to island and from region to region. We may assume that clear relations in somewhat later periods should not be dealt with as isolated phenomena. We *may* consider them as hints about permanent traffic routes, which had already been responsible for earlier diffusions. With this and continued study, a small portion of the ritual and culture surrounding tapa, will be preserved for future Pacific Islanders.

Statement Of The Problem

There is an acute fear today that the traditional use and cultural significance of the making of bark cloth might soon be lost. With this possibility, the connection among the various island groupings, and what that means for the continued cultural identity of the islands will also be lost.

Because of colonization, political climate, acculturation, and pressures from Western-type manufacturing and religious practices, there is no longer the time or the practical desire to continue with cultural practices such as the making of bark cloth for the majority of Pacific Islanders. However, there is a difference between losing the art itself, as tragic as that might be, and actually creating a situation where no one is any longer aware of the tremendously creative history of such practices. And perhaps more importantly, how those practices impacted on both the economic and spiritual well being of a particular culture.

While individual studies have been done on the production of tapa and ritual practices connected to the making of bark cloth, rarely have these studies been comprehensive or inclusive. And rarely have attempts been made to connect the various ritual practices Pacific wide. These are the connections that determine what the traditional relationship has been between tapa production and those who produced it. They also have the potential to show us what the migratory movements of those producers has been, and third, what the connections are among the Pacific Island peoples who have created tapa goods specifically for ritual purposes.

Hidden Knowledge

Part of the problem, has been the secrecy in the way certain traditions relating to bark cloth ritualistic practices have been conducted. While women usually made clothing, blankets, and other common tapa items, and there is a great quantity of information related to that, the same is not true of the manufacture and ritual use of tapa by men. This obviously was specialized knowledge considered mysterious to the average Pacific Islander. This knowledge was probably known and shared only by the initiated and functioned in a hidden or confidential manner. These tapa connections may have been central elements of the Pacific Island cultural or religious heritage. For one thing, it is known that many plants in early Pacific Island religious beliefs were considered the earthly representations and transformations of the bodies of gods. This was especially true of the finely worked bark cloth.

Modernization

Another part of the problem has to do with more inevitable processes such as globalization and its insidious spread of cultural hegemony, especially among the younger people. Together these two conditions are making it increasingly difficult for future generations of Pacific Islanders to procure, let alone relate to, this part of their cultural past. For example, in the Pukui Elbert Hawaiian Dictionary (1986), many terms dealing with traditional matters, sacred objects and rituals are listed as obscure or as having no data associated with them. Consider also that in 1992, Benton Pang was able to locate 45 single spaced pages of Hawaiian terms specifically concerning tapa, which were used in the past.

There is no doubt that cultural practice often evolves and is modernized. In fact, cultural practices that remain stagnant soon go out of date and are lost. Modification of traditional cultural events may be caused by the intrusion of pressures outside the control of contemporary leaders. Changes to a traditionally prescribed form of ceremony, such as tapa making by priests for religious ritual, are often the result of a blending of desired cultural or economic changes in traditional cultural values. While this sort of modernization or progression might be desirable (in the sense of helping to preserve the overall culture or economy), there is the side effect of a potential loss of specific and specialized knowledge. Relinquishing traditions in this way has left many Pacific Islanders aliens in their own lands, more familiar with American hip hop than with their ancestral cultural patterns.

Tapa Availability

For example, today Hawaiian bark cloth, which may be needed for the re-internment of disturbed burial plots could no longer easily, be found. Instead, bark cloth

has to be imported from Samoa or Tonga. The problem here is that bark cloth in those areas is not made in the exact same way as it is in Hawai'i (Abbott, 1992; Brigham, 1911). While this might not be a problem if the bark cloth were being used for house matting, it is definitely a sensitive and delicate matter when it comes to funerary practices. As seen from the traditional point of view (and only the traditional point of view would insist on a bark cloth burial in the first place), bark cloth produced under a different protocol and therefore perhaps not of the same ritual purity is being used to wrap Hawaiian remains. This may negatively affect the sensitivities of those responsible for the reburial and those related to the descendants.

Maintenance of Tradition

In another example, a documentary study of Tongan production of bark cloth (or *ngatu* as it is called in Tonga) described how several generations worked together and how the cloth had become such an integral part of Tongan society (Ostraff & Ostraff, 2001). On the video, the elders describe the importance of continuing the traditional method of producing bark cloth used to meet family obligations. They teach the manufacturing process to young children as an important function of family culture. They also believe that the tradition will never die. However, some members of the younger generation do not show the same enthusiasm, especially because the process is so labor intensive. In an interview, the granddaughter of one of the elders said that she would prefer to purchase rather than to produce the cloth in the traditional way. This documentary film study is an excellent example of the process by which modernization may cause the traditional ways of doing things to be modified over time. It is only after several generations and the gradual achievement of this change that there is the realization that the original traditions are no

longer what they used to be. At this point, it may be too late. Many of the particulars and details in the way of doing things would have been lost.

Community Based Knowledge

The final problem is that touched upon in the Ostraff & Ostraff (2001) documentary, concerning the passing down of knowledge from generation to generation and how that transmission is being cut or garbled. This knowledge is not just individual. There is often a community-based level of knowledge needed in the traditional making of bark cloth for ritual purposes (i.e. the proper chants to use, sacred tools, ritualized areas of work, etc.). It is still common, in some parts of the Pacific that the transfer of techniques, chants and mythologies is passed from old to young as cloth is made. This knowledge transfer makes the traditional production by each community especially important to that particular community. It also allows formation of a close nurturing relationship among its members, thus strengthening the society as a whole. All of this is in danger of being lost.

Economics of Tapa

There are other impediments to the maintenance of cultural tradition. For example, the market value of bark cloth has increased greatly in recent years because of its increasing popularity as an art craft. This has brought about increased production and use of bark cloth (such as bookmarks that are carried in the University of Hawai'i bookstore) for tourist-related income and a shortage in the availability of traditional materials. Tonga, as a major producer of bark cloth, is suffering from an over-exploitation of the trees used to make bark cloth dye. This may cause the process to change in order to facilitate the use of new materials. Because Tonga supplies some areas that have lost their ability but not the

desire to continue their own tradition (such as Hawai'i in the case of funerary *tapa*), Tonga suffers environmental damage due to over-harvesting of natural materials.

In many areas of Oceania, including Hawai'i, imported bark cloth is employed in the tourist trade due to an insufficient availability of locally produced material. As far as tourist trade requirements are concerned, it is probably not of any real consequence where the cloth is produced. On the other hand, as seen above, in important ritual and customary uses such as birth and funerary wrapping, the manifestations of godly power that are forged directly into the material by the maker, come into play.

Transmission of Knowledge

In the past, there has been a large degree of tension, caused by the need to keep certain rituals secret, and in the private domain of only a few initiates. This secret knowledge has always remained within the community itself so that it was under firm community control. Today there is a need to prevent stagnation by making these traditional cultural rites known and disseminated to a wider circle (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 1999). But it seems that this tension is no longer as valid or so much in play today. In most cultures, the need to prevent stagnation overrides any concerns about having such information made known to a wider audience. In fact, in French Polynesia, the decision has been made to promote the transmission of such knowledge through various methods. These methods include direct information, the publication of documents related to specific areas of culture, the establishment of schools where such knowledge can be taught, and actual training programs (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 1999).

The forum secretariat, concluded that:

- Economics and finance should not be the only criteria when discussing Pacific Islands heritage since cultural identity is also important.
- The collection of heritage's is a must if that heritage is to be preserved and passed along to future generations, especially those that are bombarded by cultural images from the West.
- The right of future generations to have access to their own cultural inheritance goes beyond economic and or intellectual property rights—it is a human rights concern.
- While traditional knowledge and culture definitely must be protected from external attacks, there should also be an effort to make these rituals and rites viable for today, i.e. not to marginalize them or consider them merely ancient history.
- Traditional practices need to be documented in detail before those who possess them, the tribal elders, are no longer able to pass the information on.

Goals

For Pacific Islanders, the importance of bark cloth (making, use, and ritual significance) in the past can be assessed by the number of linguistic terms directly or indirectly associated with it. As stated earlier, in Hawai'i alone, close to 500 words have been associated with its manufacture and function in the past (Pang, 1992). Today, much of the lore and knowledge behind those words is in danger of being lost. It is the hope that the research accomplished in this paper will:

- Help preserve information that may be used in part to reattach a portion of a conceptually severed past for future generations of oceanic people;

- Help stimulate further interest in this particular area of Pacific Island culture and traditional lore;
- Help further an understanding of the significance of these traditions—both for Pacific Islanders in the past and those to come;
- Help present a better picture of the significance and meaning of these specific traditions in the hope of bringing forth a better overall understanding of Pacific Island culture in general;
- Help break down the barriers between and among various academic disciplines (archaeology, anthropology, ethnobotany, sociology, culture studies, cultural geography, history, etc.) in their approach to Pacific Island culture.

The tendency for various disciplines to all go off into their own little world when it comes to Pacific Islands study is outlined and attacked succinctly by Handy;

> "Neither the whole nor any part of Pacific Island systems are subject to isolation within the narrow confines of any academic pigeonhole without loss of much of its essential significance, for no item is to be fully understood except in the light of the whole complex of thought and custom of which it was a part" (Handy, 1965).

It is this belief that drives this study. Because tapa making and use was so pervasive within the Pacific Islands culture, it formed the basis of so much else that took place within those societies. Examining such practices (even the narrow ones pertaining to ritualistic use by men) will prove to be significant much beyond the practices themselves. Uniting the dots between past ritualistic practices among the various tribal groups who are still connected oceanicly, may produce significant results in terms of associating these scattered

groups under a more holistic cultural umbrella. An umbrella that might serve as a better shield against Western hegemonic cultural intrusion, than present-day efforts by individual groups who are in imminent danger of being swallowed up. In effect, the idea would be for the Pacific Islands to create their own "Free Trade Area" for the sharing of cultural histories. For certainly they are systems of ideas in there own right. This might help re-create the original shared culture that started it all in the first place.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is a multi-leveled one:

- First, it is designed to explore the traditional uses of bark cloth by men in Pacific Islands societies.
- Second, it examines the connections among various groups spread out over the Pacific who make and use tapa for ritual purposes—both the similarities and the differences.
- Third, it examines and traces themes and patterns with respect to the evolution of these traditional uses, defining how they may reflect upon and influence the development of contemporary society (as well as general theories on the evolution of culture).

- Fourth, it explores how tapa manufacture and ritual use fit into the general theme of culture diffusion and transmission as laid out by numerous scholars

("genetic," epidemiological, mathematical models, memetics, contagion theory, etc.).

Finally, it is hoped that, by analyzing mythologies and early historical documents, as well as the commentaries of modern scholars and participants, the research might generate an exposition of the essential elements of belief and practice characteristic of these rituals among Pacific Islanders.

Hypothesis/Research Question

The underlying idea that patterns found in culture, cultural evolution and cultural diffusion are narrative rather than strictly scientific is the basis for the central hypothesis of this paper. It is that information with respect to ritual tapa making and uses by Pacific Island men can be uncovered by departing from the normal frame of certainty that surrounds current academic expertise. In other words, it is hypothesized that a combination of archival research and present-day interviews can retrieve information that will show a connection between the ritual use of tapa, men and the evolution of culture in the Pacific Islands.

It is hoped that what will be uncovered are "good stories" so that they are neither boring nor random. According to Dennett (2001):

> The perspective from which we can understand these narratives is what I have called *the intentional stance*: the strategy of analyzing the flux of events into *agents* and their (rational) *actions* and *reactions*. Such agents—people, in this case—*do things for reasons*, and can be predicted—up to a point—by cataloguing their reasons, their beliefs and

desires, and calculating what, given those reasons, the most rational course of action for each agent would be (p.306).

Among the research questions that the paper will attempt to answer are:

1. What were the values, meanings, and symbolic patterns used in the past structure of Pacific Island culture with respect to men and tapa?
2. When it came to the manufacture and use of tapa in ritual situations, what were the differences and similarities between and among the various sub-cultures that made up the Pacific Island cultural group?
3. How well have these values, meanings and symbolic patterns survived in today's culture?
4. How can these patterns be used to shore up Oceania's indigenous cultures?
5. Is there a more general lesson to be learned, a lesson that could be useful for endangered cultures throughout the world?

Methodology

The study's research design consists of a qualitative methodology: a descriptive ethnological study. Given the nature of the subject, this design appeared to be most appropriate. In a qualitative research study, a broad-based and inclusive approach is taken to the subjects and to the research findings. Specific measurements may be expressed, but quantitative analysis of the resulting data is less important than the degree of insight or understanding that the material provides (Bell, 1999).

The testing of the research questions listed in Section 1.4 above (Hypothesis/Research Questions) is done through a study sample that includes:

- Archival research of Pacific Island personal writings, newspapers, mythology, chants and legends from antiquity;
- Review of contemporary versions of mythology, chants and legends from videotapes, songs, and interviews;
- Review of both historic and present-day literature related to the subject matter;
- Interviews with anonymous contemporary stakeholders.

The procedures of data analysis include:

- Analyzing the study sample and extracting significant statements that relate to the traditional significance and importance accorded to the manufacture and use of bark cloth—both in general and specifically in terms of its ritual use;
- Formulating the meanings of metaphors and significant statements within an original context, with every effort being made to be bounded by the interpretative exposition of the native philosophy;
- Clustering of themes to allow for the emergence of common themes; and validating common themes by comparing them with original stories to ensure that the clusters accounted for all significant information;
- Comparing the contemporary themes concerned with men and bark cloth with the themes of antiquity to indicate how such relationships may have changed.

Overview of Remaining Sections

Chapter Two consists of a literature review on several subjects. First, the manufacture and ritual use of tapa, both historically and in contemporary times, with emphasis on ceremonies and rites where tapa was employed. Second, interpretative essays on culture in general and that of the Pacific Islands; and third, material related to theories on the transmission of culture.

Chapter Three details the methodology of the paper as outlined above. In this chapter are included: (1) the qualitative analysis of the literature review materials as indicated above; and (2) a set of interview questions used in the conversations with present-day carriers of the knowledge needed.

Chapter Four presents the results of the analysis of the data resulting from the archival material and the interviews. As well, the common theme clusters are presented and validated.

Chapter Five presents a summary of the research, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter consists of a review of the literature, grouped under three main headings and laid out so that the subject matter proceeds from the general to the particular. The main headings are:

(a) Culture Transmission Theory: Material related to a discussion of several theories on the acquiring and transmission of culture;

(b) Pacific Islands Culture: Interpretative essays on Pacific Islands culture; the significance of tapa in that culture; and the connections among cultures;

(c) Tapa and Ritual: The ritual manufacture and use of tapa in the Pacific Islands, both historically and in contemporary times, with emphasis on ceremonies and rites where tapa was and is employed.

Materials for the literature review were garnered from a variety of sources, including print manuscripts, journals and essays, as well as on-line academic databases (*InfoTrac SearchBank General Reference Gold, Expanded Academic ASAP,* and *Questia*), and on-line articles.

Culture Transmission Theory

For Richerson & Boyd (1992.p62), the transmission of culture both within certain areas and across those areas can be compared to the transmission of the evolving human

gene pool. The argument is that any cultural variants that emerge have a better chance of being inherited and passed on than variants that are learned in an individual manner. They are quick to stress the difference, however, between cultural and genetic transmission because "culture allows inheritance of acquired variation" while genetic transmission does not. However, it can be argued that our genetic make up somehow predisposes us to more readily acquire certain types of beliefs and values and not others. Among those who have pushed this theory in general are:

- Campbell (1975): because of the similarities between genetic and cultural transmission, one could use the general methods of evolutionary biology to help describe culture;
- Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman (1981): used population genetics techniques to set in motion cultural studies;
- Wilson (1975): argued that human behavior could be seen in adaptive terms no matter how it was originally acquired;
- Pulliam & Dunford (1980); Rogers (1989): used population genetics models to try to understand how culture can work as a system of adaptation.

What was unusual for the majority of these researchers is that they tried to use mathematical modeling as a way to show not only cultural evolution but also any interaction between genetic and cultural transmission. Among the most important of these can be listed Lumsden & Wilson (1981), the above- mentioned Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman (1981), Boyd & Richerson (1985), and Richerson & Boyd (1992). Lumsden & Wilson (1981) defined what they called "culturgens" as simplified units of culture as the basis for their modeling. These "culturgens" defined a set of behaviors and artifacts that were fairly

homogeneous, and could be compared to the "memes" proposed by Dawkins (1976). Their argument is that the rate at which culture can be assimilated and transmitted is subject to genetic predisposition. There are rules that represent the constraints genes put on development—so that something in natural selection keeps culture "on a leash" as it were.

Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman (1981) argue that what have come to be accepted as givens in biological evolution theories—mutation, selection, migration and genetic drift—can be used in an analogous manner to describe cultural changes. Their research distinguishes three different types of cultural and social transmission: (1) strictly vertical: from parents directly to offspring; (2) oblique: from previous generation (but not parents) to offspring; (3) strictly horizontal: peer-to-peer transmission. Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman (1981) were able to show that, as long as the data is available, the spread of some culturally transmitted traits can be formally predicted for the vertical model.

The most explicit expression of a so-called "dual-inheritance" model can be found in Boyd & Richerson (1985) and Richerson & Boyd (1992). These two researchers believe that culture can only be transmitted by either imitation or teaching. At least, this is the "cheapest" way to get information, store it, and then reproduce it when necessary. They list three processes, forces, or agents that might help to change cultural perceptions within a population:

- Guided Variation: the unbiased linking of one generation to the next through cultural transmission leading to adaptive change from originally individually learned behaviors;

- Biased Transmission: the picking and choosing of what to believe and adopt and what to reject. In other words, transmission that is biased in favor of one or other of variant options.
- Natural Selection of Cultural Variants: where individuals are picked according to their variant rather than through a cultural selection of these cultural variants.

According to Rogers (1989), social learning allows populations to combine the best of genetic adaptation and individual learning. In his model, he notes three ideas. First, social learning is favored over individual learning. He reasons that it is easier to copy something than to create it, but there is also a greater possibility that errors in learning will be copied and spread. Second, social learning allows individuals to lessen the chance of learning errors because social learners can be more selective. Third, in equilibrium, there is a mix of social and individual learning (more social earning when the environment is less variable; more individual learning as the environment increases in variability).

Bruner (1961) provides a good example of both the differences between social and individual learning processes and relative effectiveness of the two methods within a tribal society. In his study of kinship systems, Bruner found that, within the aboriginal Mandan-Hidatsa population of the southwestern U.S., kinship relationships were part of every child's education. This began from an early age and even today, children know those relationships and how to behave towards those relatives, despite the fact the actual system may have collapsed. Religious instruction, on the other hand, did not occur until relatively late in life so that a "man under the age of thirty did not, and was not, expected to know the traditions, origin myths, or religious rituals of the tribe" (p.114). As well, this instruction was conducted on an individual basis and "was not freely given: it had to be purchased

from selected ceremonial fathers" (p.114). Today, unlike kinship, this religious knowledge has largely vanished.

Another approach taken to culture change and transmission is that of Barth (1990). According to Barth, in non-literate societies, cultural change goes largely unacknowledged for the most part because it is stored in memory rather than in texts. In other words, during a ritual, the details of the rites are slowly, imperceptibly changed for each performance—because of (a) failing memories; and (b) having only a small number of people who are responsible for keeping the knowledge. Barth refers to cultural "melting pots" where cultural materials are unintentionally altered and remade (p.29). Whitehouse (1992) points out, however, that this theory would make the transmission of non-literate culture over either long distances or long periods of time problematic. As well, it implies a logical order of ideas that need to be held together to make sense. In fact "the messages which are transmitted are not concerned with something so dull and forgettable as the logical implications of ideas, but with the intense experience of mortal danger, mystery, pain and other extreme or abnormal sensory stimuli" (p.787). In a like manner, Lacey (1981) describes how Melanesians are pre-occupied with great mythic-heroic leaders who traveled tremendous distances spreading culture and religion (as both exemplars and actual teachers or gurus).

Sperber (1985, 1994) and Hirschfeld & Gelman (1994) argue that we have certain mechanisms built into our neural hardwiring that pre-disposes us to certain types of cultural representations rather than others. Thus, culture not only needs to fight its way through its own logical and political-economic systems but also through the "micro-mechanisms of cognition" (Sperber, 1985 p.78). The mind acts as a kind of computer here with modules

defined as "a genetically specified computational device in the mind/brain that works pretty much on its own inputs pertaining to some specific domain and provided by other parts of the nervous system" (Sperber, 1994 p.40). Whitehouse (1996) presents several arguments against this view of cultural transmission:

- The difficulty of showing that how well certain representations are remembered is always the result of a fixed feature in cognition;
- The need to use very different theories to explain what we might intuitively feel are similar sets of representations;
- The obvious lack of emotional content within the theory. Perhaps natural in Western culture where we often divide concepts and feelings but not so natural in other cultures where this split between intellect and emotion might not exist. (see Toren (1994) for a discussion of this in terms of Fijian child development).

Turner et al. (1997) point out that a biological approach to cultural transmission does not in itself mean that this type of transmission can be reduced to genetic processes or Darwinian evolution. Instead, the emphasis is on the ability to use similar Darwinian methods as are used in genetic evolution to study cultural transmission. The difference lately has been that these often-imprecise genetic-cultural metaphors have been elevated to mathematical models. This is what Boyd & Richerdson (1985) meant when they said, "social learning and cultural transmission can be modeled as a system of inheritance" (p.430). As Mulder et al. (1997) argue, this new emphasis on a dual-inheritance theory makes cultural transmission not so much a matter of some type of "mental template" but rather as a series of traits affected by some sort of selection. Interestingly, several researchers, led by Brunton (1989) speculated that cultural transmission is easier in more

authoritarian societies rather than egalitarian ones. True egalitarianism can never provide a way to determine whether what is being communicated is the correct version: evaluation implies inequality, in other words. According to Mulder et al.: "On this view, authority relations are necessary for the transmission of culture, and egalitarianism can only be maintained by according little value to cultural products" p.44).

One of the more unusual theoretical approaches to cultural transmission in recent years has been that of transference through contagion. One example might be analogues between germs and cultural ideas, "Carriers are those who are in possession of a cultural item; there are occasions of contact among individuals that can result in transmission of cultural items; and forgetting serves as the counterpart of recovery" (Kitcher, 2001 p.369). Similarly, Forguson (2001) speculates on a metaphor that can equate tracing the origins and transmission routes of a cultural item to that of a medical epidemiologist "faced with the task of tracing the spread of a disease throughout a population" (p.326). Forguson goes on to say:

> The epidemiologist must determine that there is a genuine, single disease to be studied, rather than several distinct diseases with similar symptoms. It is also important to identify the locale where the disease first appeared, to trace the direction in which, and the rate at which, the disease has spread, and if possible to discover why it has spread in this direction and at this rate (p.326).

Goldman (2001) argues against imitation theories of cultural transmission, such as that proposed by Dawkins (1976). Goldman points out that (a) not all replication actually

involves imitation, and (b) not all imitation necessarily involves exact copying. As well, it is argued that when it comes to cultural transmission, there are really very few examples or cases of actual replication. Instead, one can see examples of influence in the reproduction. A distinction also needs to be made between behavior and belief: it may be plausible to argue that behavior is often mimicked (for example a young infant mimicking his or her parents) but the situation may be different when it comes to belief. As Goldman says:

> One does not, in general decide to believe (endorse, assent to) a given proposition and then execute that decision. Belief isn't a matter of deliberate choice. One can choose whether to communicate a belief, but a hearer doesn't (generally) choose whether to adopt a belief that has been proffered in such a communication (p.355).

Goldman (2001) argues that some researchers confuse imitation and "contagion" but the first is voluntary and normally has a defined purpose while the latter is considered as automatic. Cultural transmission might be seen better as some type of contagion in that the person doing the transmitting "exposes" the receiver and the person at the receiving end "catches" it: "Unlike the imitation model, there is no assumption that acceptance versus non-acceptance is a matter of voluntary choice" (p.356).

Similarities in Pacific Islands Cultures

Similarity in ceremonies and rituals is one way to determine whether separate cultural groups have connections with each other. Among the questions to be asked might be, What are the origins of the various Pacific Islands people? How did voyaging from island to island influence the spread of culture? What cultural development was mainly influenced by past contacts with others and what was mainly of an internal nature? Bellwood (1970) and Cachola-Abad (1996) both have found that stone structures throughout much of Polynesia show similarities that seem to reflect a shared history and activities. This is especially true of ceremonial architecture. The fact that interaction and group relatedness will produce similar artifacts is nothing new in anthropology and archeology. However, as Lyman et al. (1997) point out, a distinction must be made between artifacts as well as rituals that are similar because of interaction (homology) and those that are similar because of similar culture and/or natural environments (analogy). This makes a difference when analyzing two societies for similarities and differences in cultural practices. Commenting on the work of the majority of archeologists, Cochrane (1998) says:

> The work ... is founded upon the notion that similarity equals interaction and relatedness. This similarity is homologous similarity and must be separated from affinities due to other processes. This separation is often implicit and thus underdeveloped in archaeological analysis. Explanatory frameworks that incorporate this distinction and contain methods for separating homology from analogy, style from function, may improve the application of interaction analyses. Additional tools are required to

> differentiate spatial and temporal interaction or the transmission of material culture traits in these dimensions (p.295).

In a series of studies on the traditional religion of Melanesia and Melanesian secular socio-cultural systems (Lawrence & Meggitt, 1965), it was concluded that the various island societies are generally similar when it comes to:

- The organization of a political structure (generally stateless and lacking in central authority);
- The stressing of kinship when it comes to forming local groups;
- Their occupations (agriculturalists first, pig-herders next, and lastly hunters and fishermen);
- Their religious views (the gods and spirit-beings are usually nearby rather than in another realm, and they play a direct role in the lives of the villagers);
- Their rituals for the dead (involving feast exchanges and dances).

However, Lawrence & Meggitt (1965) point out that, while there is similarity and concordance on a general level, that is not always the case when one gets down to details.

> Years of experience have taught us that the pattern in one community will not necessarily be repeated in the next, and that beyond the next mountain or the next river—even in the next village—we must be prepared to record, analyze or come to terms with the completely unexpected (p.25).

As well, Sillitoe (1998) makes the point that so-called Melanesian culture is actually a combination (in various proportions) of two originally distinct cultures: that of the Papuan migration (over thousands of years), and the more recent Austronesian.

It is the assumption of most scholars that Pacific Oceanic culture arises from a single source, and that differentiation within the culture, is due to local variations rather than the building of a new culture. Sahlins (1971) calls this "adaptive differentiation" which he says has close analogous ties to genetic evolution (p.46). However, this is merely an assumption because we do not really know for a fact how any such evolution might have taken place. As Fosberg (1991) points out:

> The saddest thing ... is that the many Polynesian cultures, by all accounts among the most interesting and attractive developed by human populations, which showed the remarkable capacity to adapt to an originally difficult environment, are mostly forgotten and have largely disappeared (p.23).

The ritualized body

One of the areas where these oceanic cultures are most unique is in how they treat the body (be it the individual human body or the body politic or social). In this sense, the body is seen not so much as a biological organism but as a type of social construction created in the image of the enveloping society. This social body is viewed as "a highly restricted medium of expression" (Douglas, 1982 p.93). Perhaps one of the keys to understanding Pacific Oceanic culture is through the concept of the "ritualized body." Bell (1992) defines the ritualized body as "a body invested with a 'sense' of ritual. This sense of ritual exists as an implicit variety of schemes whose deployment works to produce sociocultural situations that the ritualized body can dominate in some way" (98).

This does not mean that a person consciously sets out to create a ritualized body or that there are explicit rules laid out for this sort of thing. Instead, it is basically the result of the body as it interacts with an environment that supports such a structure.

The opposite is also true. "It is in the dialectical relationship between the body and a space structured according to mythico-ritual oppositions that one finds the form par excellence of the structural apprenticeship which leads to the em-bodying of the structures of the world, that is, the appropriating by the world of a body thus enabled to appropriate the world" (Bourdieu, 1977 p.89).

Waite (1997) reported how the so-called "socialization of the body" in the islands of Mangavera is carried through as a way to connect individuals with both their society and their ancestors and gods. Most important was the ceremony performed at death where the body "was prepared for the final journey of the spirit to the afterworld" (p.75). One of the major components of the ceremony, which included washing, dressing, and oiling, was the wrapping of the body in bark cloth. As well, *eketea* sticks, composed of bark cloth strips with curved legs, were used by priests to cure disease or to wave over the bodies of chiefs.

It has been argued that there is a strong difference between the way Western culture perceives the notions of body and selfhood and the way Pacific Island people have seen it. Becker (1995) argues that the way Fijians, for example, view "self and body boundaries, agency, identity," differs profoundly from the way Westerners would see it (p.2). According to Geertz (1983):

> Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background, is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures (p.290).

The body as the anchor for selfhood is not something that is clearly understood as a focus in other societies—and especially not in Pacific Island societies. Among the views of the self most often expressed are:

- A "composite site of relationships" (Strathern, 1988 p.13)
- A "locus of shared social relationships, or shared biographies" (Lieber, 1990 p.74)
- Not "coterminous or even synonymous with individual bodies" (Foster, 1990 p.432)
- "Fundamentally interpersonal" with the "assumption that sociability and relatedness underlie personal existence" (Kirkpatrick and White, 1985 p.25)
- "Based on interpersonal bonds of emotional exchange and reciprocity" and "self is a socially interactive concept tied to correct social behavior" (Ito, 1985 pp.301, 320).

As Becker (1995) puts it: "[S]elf-experience is intimately grounded in its relational context, its kin and village community. Individual action is ideally aimed at engaging and inculcating social relationships and promoting community interests ... Social action is guided by notions of persons' embeddedness in their communities" (p.5). Goudie (1998) analyses the difference between Western concepts of self and community in Melville's *Typee*. In it, the Western narrator finds himself trapped in the interior of a Marquesan island and completely misunderstands how social exchange works. For one thing, he hopes "to purchase the good will of the natives" using cotton and tobacco (Melville, 1964 p.51). When the narrator tries to present a chief something from his gift box, the chief "quietly

rejected the proffered gift, and, without speaking, motioned ... [Tommo] to return it to its place" (p.87). The narrator's own body then becomes commodified, his skin being examined and felt "much in the same way a silk mercer would handle a remarkably fine piece of satin" (p.90). The narrator not only misunderstands how exchanges work; it is impossible for him to understand. He is the ultimate outsider. While someone from another Pacific Island tribe might not necessarily understand a specific ritual, use of apparel or tattooing detail, they will know what the significance is. As Geetz (1983) points out, these semiotic systems "are ideationally connected to the society in which they are found, [as] primary documents ... that seek—or for which people seek—a meaningful place in a repertoire of other documents" (pp.99-100). A misinterpretation of what the body represents is something natural for the narrator, given that Western definitions of what natives are all about center around the shocking nakedness so often encountered. Spurr (1993) says:

> Under Western eyes, the body is that which is most proper to the primitive, the sign by which the primitive is represented ... The colonialist gaze proceeds from the visual to various kinds of valorization: the material value of the body as labor supply, its aesthetic value as object of artistic representation ... its erotic value as the object of desire" (p.22).

Losch (1999) in a thesis on tattooing speaks of the inability of Western academic approaches and language to fully grasp the concepts of *ta moko* and *uhi*. This leads to numerous problems in written work including:

- Unreliability of written sources.

- Poor translation of indigenous texts into English.
- Lack of understanding of the subtleties of indigenous culture and society.
- Misinformation provided by informants—either inadvertently or deliberately.
- Lack of personal experience or training in the various tattooing arts.

Oral sources

As for oral sources, these are also not without problems, including: the degradation and corruption of sources over long periods of time; the lack of solid access to oral sources and the distances that need to be traveled; the inconsistency related to language skills, experiences, backgrounds, training, etc., among practitioners. Nevertheless, and despite all these problems, it is now more important than ever to try to record these practices. In her thesis, Teaiwa (1998) speaks of doing a "re-reading" and a "re-presenting" of the Banaban culture. Taking it away from "the writers, scholars and colonial administrators who represented Banabans in the last hundred years" and who "helped create a sad, complicated History that continues to dialogue with Banaban self-image and histories today" (p.3). The first thing Teaiwa (1998) does is outline a new way of looking at the connection between land and blood which she says are "metonymies for the person and the group" (p.3). Unfortunately, many of the sources related to Pacific Island rituals are still a result of foreign studies. An important example of this concept is found in studies of tattooing.

Lapita

In Pacific Island cultures, one of the prime examples of the ritualized body can be seen in the face and body tattooing practiced by most societies in the region. It has been shown through archeological evidence that tattooing was common among the Lapita on Tonga as far back as the late second millennium BCE (Bellwood 1986 p.253). That

tattooing is a very old custom in Oceania can be seen in the fact that it demonstrates some of the same motifs that have been found on Lapita pottery, as well as on bark cloth in more recent times (Green, 1979). As well, it has been shown that tribal boundaries often did not serve as a way to distinguish between one decorative element and another. Skinner (1974) speculates that these motifs or designs were most likely a result of broad prehistoric regions based on the original migrants to the area. Gell (1993) makes an interesting connection between the temporary wrapping in bark cloth and the permanent wrapping of the skin through tattooing: "[B]ark cloth and tattooing might seem to be functionally equivalent; the Vitian warrior is encased in swathes of bark-cloth, his Samoan equivalent is marked by protective tattooing. But tattooing and wrapping are also mutually exclusive, to the extent that if the body is wrapped in cannot ... be tattooed" (p.89).

Ancestral spirits

Another aspect of Pacific Island rituals that is extremely important lies in the significance of ancestral spirits within their religious practices. In his dissertation on the people of East Kwaio in the Solomon Islands Akin (1993) made sure to stress one fact. These ancestral spirits "are best understood as members of the social groups of those descendants who propitiate them ... Like living people, ancestors have personalities, moods, egos and jealousies" (pp.25-26). The head of the household normally performs private ceremonies, but in most cases, the more important rituals come under the purview of priests connected to the descent groups. While alive, a priest would train an assistant—a son or younger brother in most cases. This person would replace the priest upon his death. Interestingly, routine rituals (from which women are excluded) consist of a combination of clowning and joking, and serious rites:

> Close friends drop in to partake in the pork. They may banter with their hosts, asking why they bother with such "rubbish ancestors." Except when speaking to ancestors or performing specific ritual operations, priests themselves sometimes are pointedly irreverent, joking about the spirits and how greedy or sneaky they are (Akin, 1993 p.29).

Initiation rites

Another aspect of ritual can be seen in the initiation rites practiced in the region. Although they differ in detail, the purpose of these rites seems to be to initiate young boys into the world of adult men, weaning them away from a female-centered universe and preparing them for the manly arts of war. It is also at this time that the initiates are instructed in the knowledge that only the initiated are allowed to have. This creates a type of hierarchy and leads to a violent separation between male and female domains. But the basic purpose seems to be the way that these initiations create strong social ties and identities.

As Sillitoe (1998) points out with respect to initiation rites in Melanesia:

> The initiation experience operates on an individual level, contributing to the molding of the social identity of persons. Before initiation males are juveniles; after it they are adult persons, with all that that change of status implies for rights and obligations. Their masculine identity is impressed upon them (p.208).

Tapa and Burials

One of the traditional ritual uses for bark cloth across the Pacific Island region was in burial ceremonies. In Hawai'i, the king of Kauai sent a message to Kamehameha when he heard about the imminent invasion of his land: "Wait until the black kapa covers me and my kingdom shall be yours" (Brigham, 1911 p.211). In archaeological excavations of burial caves, more than 40 corpses have been found wrapped in layers of black kapa (Kepler, 1983). As for red kapa and the wrapping of images during ceremonies, the story goes that the newborn daughter of *Pili* was thrown into the rubbish heap because she had been born in the shape of a taro root. After being wrapped in red kapa for 20 years, she attained perfection of form. She later found the lover of her dreams and, from their union, an image was born. It was this image that provided the idea of carving god forms out of wood and in wrapping those images in kapa (Fornander, 1920). Among other ritual uses of Hawaiian kapa mentioned are:

- Marriage ceremonies and taboo symbols (Blitman, 1973)
- Offering of kapa to gods (Dunford, 1980)
- Using kapa and chants to drive off sickness (Gutmanis, 1983)
- Kapa worn around the neck to induce milk flow in women (Handy, 1972)
- Kapa used in purifying rites (Kamakau, 1991)

- Kapa used in consecration (Valeri, 1985)

In Samoan culture, bark cloth was used more as a way of manifesting wealth than as actual clothing. According to Arkinstall (1966): "Bark cloth was mainly used in ceremonial gift exchanges and when worn was worn most often by those of chiefly rank ... all others were prohibited from wearing it upon pain of heavy chastisement" (p.125). Ceremonial uses in Samoan society included: white bark cloth as a representation of a spirit or god; as offerings at the funeral of headmen and chiefs; as gifts during wedding gift exchanges. In Tikopia, tapa (*fakamaru* or *mami*) is associated with the "ultimate ancestress, when the land was first discovered, found sitting beating bark-cloth" (Firth, 1947 p.70). Here, one of the uses of bark cloth is as a ritual neck-cloth worn by female relatives of those who are extremely sick or of boys who must undergo their initiation rites.

For the ancient Polynesians, the fact that they fanned out from a central area to distant lands served to solidify their main mythological systems. For example, the story of Hina, the woman who beat tapa cloth in the moon, is known in its variants throughout Polynesia. The gods were not in some distant paradise but right there on Earth, and much of what the Polynesians did had to be consecrated:

> The success of planting, fishing, canoe-making and house-building depended not only on correct technique but also correct ritual. The master-craftsman of every occupation therefore taught his successor both his technical skills and his collection of spells, invocations, genealogies and legends ("Polynesian Mythology," n.d.).

For example, Kooijman (1972) has shown that the techniques and patterns in the making and use of bark cloth in Eastern Indonesia are homologous to those in Polynesia.

While similarities do abound in the rituals, there are some differences. Filihia (1999) describes how the rituals, sacrifices and offerings in Tonga were directed towards an entire host of gods, while those of Tahiti were aimed specifically at one god, Oro the god of war. Green (1979) has provided evidence that bark cloth traditions of the non-Austronesian-speaking peoples of New Guinea differ from those in Polynesia.

When it comes to using bark cloth in a ritual manner among the people of New Guinea, it is not so much as a soft textile for wrapping, but rather to be tied to frames and carried shield-like (Birnbaum & Strathern, 1990). It is also stretched over frames to produce masks, such as those of the Baining (Corbin, 1986). Wigs and hats made at least partly of bark cloth are also common with the Highlands Waghi wig meant to serve as a disguise (O'Hanlan, 1992).

Several researchers (Valeri, 1985; Schneider & Weiner; 1989; Hoogerbrugge, 1993) have put forth theories related to the production of cloth and its connection to ancestors or gods. For example, Schneider & Weiner (1989) list three areas where objects such as bark cloth can have symbolic meaning and are used to seal relations or deals:

1. The making of the cloth and the ritual around it, "cloth as a convincing analogy for the regenerative and degenerative processes of life, and as a great connector of their past and the progeny who constitutes their future" (p.3).
2. For gift giving and exchange as a way to bind either two kinship groups or generations.
3. The transmitting of the authority of a cloth's previous wearers during investiture and ruler ceremonies.

According to Valeri (1985), cloth represents an important way to change something common into something unknown and mysterious during rituals—and also to symbolize the passing on of ritual knowledge to initiates. This explains the wrapping of plants and statues in Hawaiian temple rituals, for example. Hoogerbrugge (1993) describes how bark cloth was previously used in order to indicate ritual and sacred spots. According to Gell (1993): "Wrapping in bark cloth or in fine mats ... is a basic element in the ritual system throughout the area which extends from Viti to Samoa-Tonga, and indeed beyond in central and east Polynesia" (p.88).

In the Society Islands in the 18th century, bark cloth was used as part of the ritual that followed the death of an important chief, considered an "intersection between the human and the divine" (D'Alleva, 1996 p.28). Because of this, "[g]reat care was exercised in safeguarding a titleholder's mortal remains ... The preserved body ... was bathed in coconut oil, wrapped in fine bark cloth, and displayed in a shelter" (pp.28-29).

Conclusion

While many of the traditional rituals have been lost, there are others that are still being used today. Pickering (2000) describes a modern Fiji funeral. During the funeral, a coffin is laid out on a pile of mats and bark cloth, the coffin is wrapped in bark cloth as it is lowered into the ground. The grave is then covered with bark cloth, and finally, the grieving wife of the deceased is dressed in bark cloth. In Tonga, it is still a very integral part of life—used during everything from weddings to funerals.

One may argue that, even today, bark cloth provides a profound connection among the various cultures spread across the islands of the Pacific Ocean. Although the cloth may

have been used in different ways when it comes to specifics, the importance of bark cloth, and its connection to the spirit world, cannot be denied.

However, there is one area where the research has been extremely scarce and where very little is known. That has to do with the men-only rituals conducted for the making and use of bark cloth and the passing on of that sacred knowledge. In the next chapter, a methodology is set forth that allowed me to briefly delve into these secrets.

CHAPTER 3.
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The intent of Chapter Three is to present the research methods that are used in the paper to help answer the research questions as detailed in Chapter One. The basic philosophical idea is that patterns found in culture, cultural evolution and cultural diffusion are narrative rather than strictly scientific. Thus, the central hypothesis that information with respect to ritual tapa making and uses by Pacific Island men can be uncovered through a combination of archival research and present-day interviews.

The research questions answered (or potentially answered) using this methodology are:

1. What were the values, meanings, and symbolic patterns used in the past structure of Pacific Island culture with respect to men and tapa?
2. When it came to the manufacture and use of tapa in ritual situations, what were the differences and similarities between and among the various sub-cultures that made up the Pacific Island cultural group?
3. What was the pattern through which pacific culture in general and tapa in particular spread?
4. How well have these values, meanings and symbolic patterns survived in today's culture?
5. Is there a more general lesson to be learned, a lesson that could be useful for endangered cultures throughout the world?

The qualitative method used consists of a descriptive ethnographic study. This allows a broad-based and inclusive approach to be taken to both the subject matter and to the research findings (Bell, 1999). The testing of the research questions is done through a study sample that includes:

- Archival research of Pacific Island personal writings, newspapers, mythology, chants and legends from antiquity;
- Review of contemporary versions of mythology, chants and legends from videotapes, songs, and interviews;
- Review of both historic and present-day literature related to the subject matter;
- Interviews with anonymous contemporary stakeholders who are willing to speak on the research question subject matter.

Data analysis

The procedures of data analysis include:

- Analyzing the study sample and extracting significant statements that relate to the traditional significance and importance accorded to the manufacture and use of bark cloth—both in general and specifically in terms of its ritual use;
- Formulating the meanings of metaphors and significant statements within an original context, with every effort being made to be bounded by the interpretative exposition of the native philosophy;
- Clustering of themes to allow for the emergence of common themes; and validating common themes by comparing them with original stories to ensure that the clusters accounted for all significant information;

- Comparing the contemporary themes concerned with men and bark cloth with the themes of antiquity to indicate how such relationships may have changed.

Because the majority of the research is archival, it is not obtrusive with respect to the protection of the rights of the human subjects. As for the contemporary research, the author uses a casual, anonymous open-ended interview technique with three informants who are knowledgeable about the contemporary uses of bark cloth. The respondents are chosen as a non-random convenience sample, due to the esoteric nature of his knowledge (Bell, 1999). The protection of the subjects' rights is further assured by first obtaining appropriate and informed permission, and by assuring anonymity in reporting the results of the interviews.

The Research Design

As indicated in Chapter One and the introductory remarks above, the methodology of this paper consists strictly of qualitative research, in a combination of the literature review pertaining to the research questions and the set of open-ended interview questions. This interview section of the methodology is being conducted with three people found by the author to be personally knowledgeable with respect to some or all of the research questions being asked and also aware of the ritual uses of *tapa* cloth both present and past.

As indicated, these interviews are not designed to deal with specific quantitative material and testing. Rather, the focus will be on a more in-depth examination of thoughts, opinions and feelings as to the relationship between tapa cloth and the rituals within Pacific Island societies and cultures.

It is the belief of the researcher that the combination of an examination of secondary literature related to this subject and the qualitative methodology will offer an important way of looking at how Pacific Island peoples are connected both in their ritual use of tapa and in their cultures. It is hoped that the research conducted in the field will be of help in several areas. One being ethnology, in terms of trying to understand the origins, distribution and distinctive characteristics of the original Pacific Islands peoples. Second, being behavioral sciences, in terms of trying to determine what behaviors arise from internal tribal and communal pressures and which arise from cultural migration. Third, sociology, in terms of understanding the similarities and differences among the various tribal and island regions and theories as to why such similarities and differences exist. And social anthropology, in terms of helping to understand the kinship systems, traditional political and economic practices, rituals and beliefs within the Pacific Island grouping and to determine whether they are the product of internal development or a result of external forces and influences, or a combination of both.

Kirk & Miller (1986) define qualitative research as a "particular tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on watching people in their own territory, and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms" (p.9). Qualitative research explores people's subjective understandings of their everyday lives and of the events that take place around them. It relies more on thoughts, feelings, concerns, suppositions, etc., than on any quantifiable facts or level of expertise. Qualitative research

> [E]ntails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for study, that values participants' perspectives on their worlds and seeks to discover those perspectives, that views

> inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, and that is primarily description and relies on people's words as the primary data (Marshall & Rossman, 1989 p.11).

Criteria And Overarching Support

At the same time, qualitative research has worked out a series of criteria that work as an overarching support for the analysis being done—and for ensuring that the research has some type of basis. These criteria consist of:

- The need for researchers to situate themselves and their assumptions (Stiles, 1993 ; Elliott et al.., 1999).
- That it is clear whether the analysis aims to provide a general (i.e., representative) understanding or one which is of specific instances (Elliott et al., 1999);
- That the analysis is set in the context of previous research and study (Stiles, 1993; Turpin et al., 1997);
- That the account of the analysis is linear, coherent and structured (Coyle, 1995; Turpin et al.,1997; Elliott et al., 1999)
- That the account is persuasive and can be trusted.

Although the different disciplines use qualitative methods in very different ways, broadly speaking, the methods used in qualitative research include direct observation, questionnaires, interviews, and the analysis of texts or documents and of recorded speech or behavior.

Development of Research Model

The basic steps in the development and implementation of the research model were the following:

1) Formulate the problem statement in terms of either the hypothesis or research questions;

2) Develop the research methodology, and prepare the tentative interview questions;

3) Conduct the interviews;

4) Collect the data—both from the literature review and the interviews;

5) Analyze the data.

The Literature Review

The literature review consists of an examination of the major sources of information which have either already been researched or are being researched presently by the writer of this paper. That literature consists of material with respect to Pacific Islands migration patterns especially theories on the spread of culture in general and Pacific Islands culture in particular. And second, of the manufacture and use of tapa cloth in the Pacific Islands, with the use further divided into utilitarian and ceremonial, as well as the similarities and differences in manufacturing and use within the region.

The limitations of such a strategy, the qualitative analysis and historical review of literature, have been well documented. These lie mainly in two areas, as far as the relatively narrow scope of this paper. One is the inability to quantify the variables within the assumptions and research questions. That is, the method does not present a verifiable hypothesis or set of hypotheses that can be tested quantitatively. Second is the vast number

of unpublished documents that exist in many languages. However, the strategy does allow the researcher to create an overall picture, which includes results and conclusions from studies already performed, and to further examine primary and secondary sources of information such as mythologies, oral histories, and the passing down of ritual and ceremonial knowledge. Thus, the literature review analysis may not be rigorously quantitative, and might not be accepted as completely scientific by some researchers. This is of no great consequence in studies such as this where the purpose is to present an alternative viewpoint to the traditional scientific approach, a viewpoint that can be said to be based on the narrative tradition.

Interview Strategy

Measurement in qualitative research is usually concerned with classification, rather than quantification, with answering questions such as, "what is X, and how does X vary in different circumstances, and why?" rather than "how big is X or how many Xs are there?" Qualitative research is concerned with the meanings people attach to their experiences and how people make sense of the world as opposed to any objective analysis of that world or the conducting of repeatable experiments.

It therefore tries to interpret social phenomena (interactions, behaviors, etc.) in terms of the meanings people bring to them, given the large number of variables. In this case, the social phenomenon of how ritual tapa use came to be, its meaning and its influence, would be unfolded through a series of narratives provided by informants being questioned on the subject. The use of direct communication between the researcher and the subject, most often through the face-to-face interview (formal or informal, structured, semi-structured, or completely open-ended) is a standard qualitative strategy.

Beliefs And Perceptions

The purpose of the interview is to gather more information and interpret findings that have resulted from preliminary surveys and examinations of research materials. The researcher's understanding of the information may be incomplete and imperfect, because subjects are describing beliefs and perceptions as well as facts. The dispassionate and purely objective approach used by the scientist is abandoned in some respects, in the hope of finding a new level of communication. The idea is that a purely scientific method cannot capture the full nuances of a subject's feelings, intentions, priorities, etc. In other words, the interview is seen as a way of increasing the complexity level. Harper (1994) sees the strength of interviews as "lying in enabling an exploration of: the different ways discourses can work together to produce novel and surprising positions; the different effects such positioning can have; and the possible interests at work in shaping those accounts"(p.131). The interviewer sacrifices the notion of absolute truth for one which is relative to the situation at hand (Ward-Schofield, 1993). The researcher's personal involvement in the process of investigation and interpretation helps increase the depth of understanding of the subject matter.

Stiles writes "good practice recommends disclosure by the investigator of his or her expectations for the study, [as well as] preconceptions, values and orientation" implicit in the research (1993 P.602). Stiles continues on to say:

> ... [D]eep personal involvement and passionate commitment to a topic can bring enmeshment, with its risks of distortion, but they can also motivate more thorough investigation and a deeper understanding. Detachment and

> distance can distort too. Revealing an investigator's personal involvement and commitments in the process of investigation allows the investigator's part in the story into their understanding, and helps to adjust their understanding to compensate for the investigator biases. The strategy of revealing rather than avoiding involvement is consistent with the broader shift in goals from the truth of the statements to the understanding by participants and readers (Stiles, 1993 p.614).

Validity

However, this does not imply that criteria are non-existent when using the qualitative interview strategy. Among the criteria are included: situating the researcher and sample, transparency, clarity of aims, contextualization, linearity and coherence, and persuasion. At the same time, there is no assumption that another qualitative researcher who examines the same material needs to come up with the same interpretation. This would lead to an overly positivistic view that goes against qualitative analysis because it ignores all the theoretical work as well as cultural and historical analysis done before the interviews, theoretical work and analysis that could very well provide the background for an entirely different conclusion. For example, a test for the transparency criterion, in this sense, is not that this researcher's interpretation could be duplicated within some pre-determined margin of error but rather that it could be understood and serve as a potential explanation among many (depending on the context). As Sherrard (1997) points out, one must not sacrifice validity for repeatability and reliability. This strategy is consistent with the broader shift in goals from the absolute truth of the statements being

made to the relative understanding of those statements as objects upon which further statements may be built—and eventually some form of truth may be discovered.

The steps to creating an effective open-ended interview session are as follows:

- Come up with a number of broad, overall questions which you feel need to be answered in order to determine why the study is being conducted and what the researcher hopes to achieve from it.
- The translation of these broad questions into elements that can be measured in some way or other in order to examine the research questions.
- The identification of a target group.

The questions need to be:

- Relevant to the study: In this case, they need to be mainly those which can solicit information and other data related to (a) the ritual manufacture and use of tapa cloth within the Pacific Island region; and (b) the connection between the spread of tapa cloth ritual use and culture.
- Asked of the right people: The questions need to be directed at those who possess first-hand information (or have had contact with those who have such first-hand information) with respect to ritual tapa cloth use.
- Easy to respond to: It is important to ensure that the person being interviewed does not become confused because of the question. As well, an effort may need to be made to have an interpreter available in case an informant is more comfortable in his native dialect or language.

Creation Of The Interview Session

An open-ended interview is preferable in studies of this type to either semi-structured or completely structured. The open-ended question allows the person being interviewed to engage in a wide range of narrative, one of the keys to this study. Because of the nature of the informants and the material being discussed, there is no need to keep the interviews semi-structured while the strictly structured question runs the risk of missing relevant information.

It is also important to develop a rapport with the person being interviewed so that there is the greatest potential to get as much information out of the person as possible. This means that the ordering of the questions is important. The first few questions being used to establish the identity of the person as well as his qualifications as a capable informant when it comes to ritual use of tapa cloth and/or the spread of culture across the Pacific Islands. Once that is established, allowing the person to recite his narrative follows.

I conducted the actual interviews either in the homes of the respondents or at my home. Interviews were conducted in an informal way in order to keep stress and anxiety levels down and to make the participants feel at ease. In other words, they took the form of one-on-one conversations that were taped so that I did not have to interrupt the flow of the narrative.

Data Collection

The survey instrument consisted of face-to-face interviews with 3 informants knowledgeable with respect to the ritual making and use of tapa cloth across the Pacific Islands, and the role played by men in the secret societies where tapa initiation rites were both conducted and passed on to future generations. These respondents have been willing

to speak on this subject matter, provided that they themselves remain anonymous. Thus the interviews were conducted separately and in private and all personal information for individual participants suppressed. Participants were given the opportunity to verify statements when the research was at the draft stage. They will also receive a copy of the final report. Those who agreed to be interviewed were scheduled as per a mutually agreeable time and signed an informed consent form.

Face-to-face interviews were preferred to either telephone or mailed open-ended questionnaires in this instance for several reasons:

- Compared to a telephone interview, the face-to-face lets the interviewer see as well as hear;
- The questions can be more complex in a face-to-face as opposed to the telephone and the direction of a conversation can be steered more easily;
- Many who would not bother to answer a mail questionnaire or who would only answer certain questions will be more likely to cooperate in a face-to-face;
- A face-to-face helps establish a rapport, which cannot be otherwise gained.

The open-ended interviews and conversations that followed were taped and later transcribed for analysis by the researcher. Data collection consisted of tape recording the interviews while taking notes and documenting any interviewer observations. A set of interview questions is shown in the Appendix. Please note that these questions were merely guidelines and could face revision on an ongoing basis depending on the circumstances in individual interview situations and the particular direction each of the participants wished to take during the conversation.

- In other words, the questions serve only as the basis for an ongoing dialogue which may take many different turns and avenues before the interview session is over, so that not all the questions are asked of all the interview subjects.

The face-to-face interview is a much faster way of obtaining information. Table 1 below offers a comparison of the various data collection techniques. In order to determine the extent of the advantage, the numbers 1 through 5 have been used.

1: little or no extent
2: some extent
3: moderate extent
4: great extent
5: very great extent
N/a: not applicable

Table 1. Data Collection Technique Comparison

Characteristic / Advantage	Extent of Advantage				
	Interview			Questionnaire	
	By Phone	Face to Face	By Mail	Group	Audit Of Records
Can overcome unexpected events in data collection	4	5	2	3	4
Makes feedback easier	4	5	2	5	2
Allows oral and visual inquiry	1	5	2	5	N/a
Allows oral and visual response1	1	5	2	2	2
Evaluator can control collection procedures	3	5	1	4	5
Facilitates interchange with source	4	5	2	5	N/a
Complex subject matter to be presented or derived	3	5	3	4	4
Relevant universe to be sampled can be identified	4	5	4	5	4
Allows identity of source to be verified	4	5	3	5	3
Maximize rate return of data	4	5	3	5	N/a
Minimize follow up	5	5	3	4	5
Increase chance source will be accurate	4	4	4	4	3
Facilitate recall of data by source	4	5	3	4	N/a

The set of data consists of the responses to interviews conducted with 3 respondents willing to pass on their knowledge with respect to ritual use of tapa cloth. These narratives will serve as a pilot approach to future study. They will be analyzed in the next Chapter to determine which aspects of the topic are of particular importance to the respondents. Examining the stories will also point out whether they intersect with research material already available on the subject matter, and whether the respondents corroborated the various stories told or each had a different approach and response.

The interview data was organized for interpretation by marking sections of the narratives bearing on the study questions, then compiling a separate list of these responses in a summary of the most significant results. The interviews were individually reviewed to check for remarks of potential significance for the study. The notes compiled in this manner were appended to the front of the interview transcript. These will form a guide for a later review of the material.

Conclusion

The combination of the historical review and analysis of the literature, and the qualitative method open-ended question (interview) strategy presents a comprehensive methodology for examining/evaluating the set of research questions within a descriptive ethnological study. As indicated above, the study is based on the belief that such a qualitative approach is the best one in this particular instance.

Once that examination/evaluation has been done, a determination can be made as to (a) how the ritual manufacture and use of tapa has both similarities and differences across

the Pacific Islands; and (b) what was the pattern of culture migration in the area. As well, significant comparisons can be made between the archived and literature review material and the narratives provided by the informants. Results from the data gathered through this methodology are shown in Chapter Four where they will be analysed.

CHAPTER 4.
RESULTS

Introduction

Ka pala po'omuku no'u iki, aka 'ane'i keia. Mine is a short daub of knowledge, but here is this.

I hypothesized that a descriptive ethnographic study consisting of a combination of archival research in terms of a relevant literature review, and informal interviews with those knowledgeable on the subject can retrieve valuable information. I expected to show a connection between the ritual making and use of tapa, and the evolution of culture in the Pacific Islands. I also expected to be able to get a feel for future study that may shed light upon the use of tapa as it spread from island to island, i.e., creating a culture that is for the most part homogeneous in that area. With that in mind, this chapter presents results from this literature review as well as the open-ended interviews (more like conversations and story telling rather than formal interviews).

Those interviewed on the subject were selected because of the special knowledge they brought with respect to the topic for this study. It was felt that, in keeping with the qualitative methodology of the study, such "conversations" would be more productive than a more straightforward question-and-answer format. As well, because of the extremely specialized knowledge required, knowledge acquired from the actual practice of the rituals connected with the manufacture and use of tapa, the three experts being interviewed have acknowledged anonymity. However, it should be noted that one of them comes from Hawai'i, a second from New Guinea (specifically the Baining), and the third from Tonga.

It is the belief of the researcher that this geographical spread between the three experts being interviewed allows for the widest range possible in their conception of the

making and use of tapa for sacred purposes. As well, the choosing of one person from Papua New Guinea provides the ability to make a minimal sort of contrast between Polynesia and Melanesia in their approach to the use of bark cloth.

As well, the idea is not to impose any pre-conceived theoretical notions on the material—be it in the form of framework or definitions. Thus, the feeling is that such research has for its primary purpose the cataloguing and description of a specific worldview without the imposition of some external theoretical platform. As Downes & Rock (1986) point out:

> The interactionist takes his job to be the documentation of the social worlds that constitute a society. He methodically plots the connections between communication, meaning, symbolism, and action. He would claim that there is little profit in imposing alien interpretative schemes on a world: people do not build their lives on the logic of sociology or the sensibilities of foreign groups. They have their own methods of doing things together (p.143).

Results from the Literature Review

In the literature review conducted in Chapter Two, it was found that there is no question that the use of tapa in ceremonial and/or sacred settings is universal across the Pacific Islands. Among the numerous ceremonial or sacred uses of tapa the literature included burial ceremonies where the body was wrapped in bark cloth. There were also instances of the wrapping of images during ceremonies, and wrapping of people during marriage ceremonies, as well as in the offerings to the gods. Other treatments were to ward

off sickness, for the inducement of milk flow in women, in purification rituals, and in ceremonial gift exchanges. Examples of these uses can be seen in widespread areas: Fiji, French Polynesia, Hawai'i, New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and others. It was also shown that much the same manufacture and use of bark cloth could be found in Eastern Indonesia.

As for differences, while these do exist, they are definitely less pronounced than the similarities, according to the literature. For example, while Tonga bark cloth rituals are directed at groups of gods, in Tahiti they are directed at one specific god. Similarly, the making and use of bark cloth in New Guinea differs in that it is made mostly to be tied to frames as shields or to produce ceremonial masks. As well, there are some differences in how tapa was made between Western and Eastern Polynesia. In the West, the bark was only briefly soaked and a pasting technique was used; in the East, there was a long soaking of the bark, and a felting technique was employed (Burrows, 1938).

Nevertheless, despite some differences, it is the contention of most researchers that some bark cloth in the Pacific Islands is directly connected to efforts on the part of the people, to make contact with ancestral spirits or gods. There is a strong symbolic meaning to the cloth, a meaning that crosses tribal boundaries to become universal. This meaning can represent a number of things. These include a way to show the regenerative-degenerative processes that take place during the cycle of birth, life, and death. There also appears a connection between sets of kinship groups or generations and the passing on of authority. Last, and perhaps most importantly, the passing on of ritual knowledge from elders to initiates as a representation of the place where human and spiritual elements cross.

Thus, while the literature review can be brought into question with respect to how well "outsiders" can ever actually understand the internal workings of any particular society; it can be said that, in this case, there is general agreement as to the use of tapa for ritual purposes. That general agreement, at least among modern scholars, can be brought into play to create some type of basis for a further understanding. This is especially true in the constructivist tradition where there is no canonical representation of one privileged definition or meaning of culture.

Groundwork

However, there is no doubt that, in an ethnographic study, any literature review must be used solely as a way of building such groundwork. This must be with a view to the setting up of alternatives, such as the scholarly speculation on how the Polynesians arrived and spread out in the first place and the method by which Polynesian culture was transmitted from one zone to the next. These are questions still being argued today—both on a theoretical level and within the specifics of a particular societal structure.

These are also questions that show the limits of both archival research and literature review. It is in the "thick description", provided by those who are intimately knowledgeable with respect to the subject matter, that some type of edifice can be constructed. It also needs to be kept in mind that any such construction is individually done (as the "individual" is understood in Pacific Islands society) and thus not fully repeatable or replicable. As Ward-Schofield (1993) has pointed out:

> [A]t the heart of the qualitative approach is the assumption that a piece of qualitative research is very much influenced by the researcher's individual attributes and perspectives. The goal is not to produce a standardised set of

> results that any other careful researcher in the same situation or studying the same issues would have produced. Rather it is to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on a situation that is based on and consistent with detailed study of the situation (p.202).

Interview Results

Conversation #1: Hawai'i

[Note: This first respondent, aged 70 or so, says he is a member of the Hawaiian ceremonial priesthood. While no longer officially involved in the traditional ceremonies connected with the birth, legitimization, and death of a chief, he says that he still performs private ceremonies involving the use of kapa in sacred ways. The respondent refused to divulge any of the secret processes involved in the making and/or use of sacred kapa, saying those were reserved for initiates only. He also stressed the point that any such revelation would completely negate the power of the ceremony. Below are presented some highlights of the conversation, material felt to be pertinent to the study.]

I have learned the ritual use of kapa from a Kahuna la'au lapa'au who was my uncle on my father's side. He did not have any children of his own and I was selected because I was the eldest of the male children in the family. This took place when I was a young man and it was considered a great honor. These elders are very rare these days and I myself will not be passing on this knowledge to any individual. That is why I have chosen to speak here and tell some of my story and the story of kapa, which some consider bark cloth but which I think of as the root tree to our most ancient ancestors and gods.

Many are interested in the "tourist" version of kapa ceremonies—the so-called "healing" and "wedding" rites. That is good. But they are not interested in finding out what is behind such ceremonies. There is also much confusion by mixing our true gods, the Akua or gods of our ancestors such as Kanaloa, Kane, Ku, and Lono, with those brought by the Europeans such as Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. This serves to weaken our traditional ceremonies and make them less strong.

Ceremonies such as Ho'oma'ema'e (cleansing of body, mind, emotions and spirit), Ho'opono pono (forgiveness ceremony), La'au Lapa'au (Hawaiian healing methods and herbs), and Ho'okupu (offering to ocean or land) are no longer pure because the people who do them do not know the reason for it. For example, what does it mean when strangers come from other lands and pay a fee so that they can wrap themselves in fine kapa during their wedding ceremonies? This is supposed to help them take advantage of the power that flows through our islands, the center of the earth. But if they do not know how that flow works, how will it help them? One needs to be part of the community that believes in such things. Otherwise, it is an empty gesture. It is hollow.

So, when you ask me if the sacred use of kapa has gone down today, the answer depends on what you mean. Before, the people who took part in such ceremonies knew what their true meaning was and why things were the way they were. Today, that is no longer true. Thus, I would say that, while some of the traditional uses of kapa seem to be alive today and while many people take part in such ceremonies, the traditions and beliefs behind that use are no longer very important. They have been forgotten.

I have personally been involved in hundreds of ceremonies and rites that included kapa—both as a priest and as someone taking part. Because I have only taken part in rites

on this island, I cannot speak of others on other islands. But I can say that each ceremony on this island is the same, although a few words may be changed. But it is not the words that count. It is the spirit behind them. Kapa was given to us by the gods so that the powers of the spirit world could reach into our world. That is the way it has always been and that is the way it will always be.

There are those who say that the kapa traditions were brought to our island by those from other places and that the wauke plant was brought here. That may be true. But the gods are our gods. They are our ancestors. If they came from somewhere else, it does not matter. They are still the same gods and ancestors. This is the meaning of the story of Maikoha and how kapa was first created.

As for the future, I do not think it is good. There are fewer and fewer of us carrying on the genuine traditions. Too many are now making and using kapa for tourists. They do not understand the old ways. Nor do they wish to. It would be better if kapa were to disappear altogether.

Conversation #2: New Guinea

The second respondent is an initiated Baining man, initially from the Gazelle Peninsula of Papua-New Guinea but currently living in Port Moresby. Even among neighboring tribes, the Baining have always been considered wild and primitive. However, they also seem to be among the earliest inhabitants of the peninsula, having resided there for thousands of years. This is shown through a lack of myths involving migration and numerous myths having to do with creation and ancestors. Initiated men are the only ones allowed to create the various art pieces, headdresses, spears, masks, etc., used in the sacred

ceremonial day and nighttime dances. These materials are made away from the village in taboo areas—with signs or markers indicating that women, children and those males who haven't been initiated should avoid these areas. It is believed to this day that those who violate these taboos by venturing too near the places where creation is taking place will be struck with serious illness and may even die. As the respondent did not speak English, a translator was needed and what follows is a paraphrasing of some of the key points he wished to make.

The first thing he indicated was that bark cloth was used to create art forms that were only used once—and then they were thrown away or destroyed. At least, that is what should happen although many are now being pressured into selling these artifacts. They are used for ceremonies such as the celebrating of the harvest, birth, commemorating the dead and initiation rites where young men and women achieve full adult status. The ceremonies are split into day and nighttime, the day being female and the night being male.

We make bark cloth in the traditional way. We beat the bark until it separates. We spread the fibers out and then soak the pieces in water. These pieces are laid out on stones and dried in the sun. Then it is stretched and sewn on bamboo frames. We paint it red and black. The red comes from chewed tuber roots, sometimes blood from the tongue with sugarcane water. Black we get from burning the husk of a coconut and then scrapping that off and mixing it with sugarcane water.

During the day ceremony, the men put on the headdresses and masks but they are actually playing at being women. They become women to show that this is the planting time and the time for making babies and growing things. Everything is slow during the day because it is the village where things are calm and slow, where it is safe. When they take

the headpieces and masks off, they go back to being men again. During the day, women and children take part in the ceremony because it is safe.

At night, things are wild as we are now in the bush. The men are hunting. The men wear materials and forms that are the spirits of the forest—the animals and the flowers. Some men wear a covering to resemble their male parts; others wear a covering to resemble female parts because the spirits can be either. The dancers also have a bark-cloth tail. This tail is tied to a piece of skin where the spine ends. Every initiated male must have this hole in his skin to attach the tail. The night dance has lots of fast movement and shouting. We jump into the fire with our bare feet. The night ceremony is not for women or children to see. When it starts, the women and children run and hide in their huts so that the bush spirits do not get them. The men win the battle against the night spirits by chasing them away back into the bush.

The respondent stated that the use of tapa in the dances and other ceremonies had not come from some other place or island, despite the fact that some other peoples claimed as much. He was adamant that the Baining had created those rituals with the guidance of the original gods and their ancestors. Those who said any different were simply jealous because they did not have any rituals of their own. The proof was that their dances and ceremonies were so different from others he had seen elsewhere.

As well, he stated that the dances and ceremonies would last forever because the gods were forever and they wouldn't allow the worship to disappear. There would always be animal spirits both good and bad—and human beings to fight against those spirits.

Finally, he stated that the selling of masks, headpieces and other ceremonial material to tourists was a sure way to get the ancestors and spirits angry. He went so far as

to speculate that this was the reason why the Baining magic was no longer as strong as it had been in the past. But he felt confident that, when a mask or spear or shield was sold to a tourist, it quickly became useless, or as he put it, it *"lost its guidance"* and could no longer cause either good or bad.

Conversation #3: Tonga

The third respondent was from Tonga, an elder of indeterminate age who was the most adamant about how sacrificial and sacred use of tapa had gone downhill with the coming of the Europeans. He indicated that, while the traditions of tapa making were still alive (witness the creation of the giant tapestry for King Taufa'ahau's 80th birthday in 1998), the reasons behind such use were no longer clearly understood. He, too, also said that the passing on of such knowledge would soon be coming to an end as fewer and fewer were being found worthy of receiving such knowledge. This respondent spoke English.

Yes, we still bury people with tapa. And we cover our wedding beds with it. And our chiefs use it during special times. But if you ask that person why he or she is doing so, they will not be able to answer. They forget that tapa was made and used to honor the gods. Tapa was also used during human sacrifice and during the ceremony of the cutting off a finger as an offering to the gods for someone to be cured of an illness.

Human sacrifice was abolished on Tonga during the first quarter of the 19th century. However, this respondent stated that he was told by his grandfather, who was told by his own father, that some sacrifices were still being carried out as late as the middle of the 19th century.

My grandfather said that, because of a terrible storm that destroyed the crops, it was decided that a human sacrifice was needed. A three-year-old child was chosen. My grandfather said that his father told him they had no choice. They felt very bad for the child. But the gods and ancestors needed to be venerated and they feared them. Thus, the child was placed on a tapa cloth blanket. She was strangled with a cord by two of the priests, each pulling from one side. The child died very quickly. Then the body was carried on a stretcher to the houses where the gods dwelt. A prayer was said asking for forgiveness for killing the child and asking the gods to take responsibility upon their shoulders. Then the child was buried on sacred ground wrapped in the tapa cloth blanket.

That was the natural order of things. That was what our ancestors wanted. Today, there is no natural order. Killing is done without the blessing of the gods. We have lost our old ways and we are being punished for it.

The respondent pointed out that, just because tapa still continues to be used, it does not have the same power as it once did. It has lost its ability to channel the energy from the spiritual world into the ordinary world and vice versa.

Themes Identified from the Interviews

Some of the major themes identified from the conversations with the three respondents included:

- Highly Secret Nature of the Making/Use of Sacred Tapa (Kapa): All three respondents stressed that they would not reveal any of the secrets that went into the initiation rites. These were to be kept secret under penalty of death. While this was disappointing for the study, in a way, it confirmed the serious nature of

the making and use of tapa for sacred reasons. It also meant that all three still felt some connection to the ancient gods and their ancestors.

- Differences Between True Tapa Sacredness and that Used During Tourist Ceremonies: Only the respondent from Hawai'i even admitted to having performed such ceremonies for tourists (a wedding) or for those who did not have an understanding of what the ceremonies meant. And he was quick to point out that many tend to confuse these ceremonies, mixing religious elements from the ancestral religion with that of Christianity.
- Respect For Tapa Sacredness: Despite the decline of the rites and ceremonies (or the use of those ceremonies erroneously), all three still believed in what tapa truly meant—for them and for their ancestors. All three referred to tapa in connection with gods, spirits, and ancestors. This was highlighted by the respondent from Tonga talking about human sacrifice while the respondent from New Guinea discussed the differences between day and night ceremonies, male/female dances, and the village/bush duality.
- Differences in Tapa Ceremonies: Appropriately, the ceremonies discussed by the two respondents from Tonga and Hawai'i had much more in common than those discussed by the respondent from New Guinea. No doubt a further and closer examination of the Tonga-Hawai'i ceremonies would uncover some differences between them as well. But the form of the rites and ceremonies seem similar. This was also shown when describing rites from Tahiti, for example (see Filihia, 1999), burial ceremonies in modern-day Fiji (Pickering, 1999), and the Solomon Islands (Akin, 1993).

- Traditional Origins of Tapa Ceremonies: Each of the respondents was adamant that the making and use of tapa for sacred purposes originated on their particular island. Of this, there was no question. The respondent from Hawai'i went so far as to insist that the first humans originated in Hawai'i and then went forth to conquer the rest of the world from there. The respondent from New Guinea was also insistent that his people were the first ones there and that others came later.
- Future of Tapa Sacredness and Belief: Once again, the dominant theme from all three respondents is that the future does not look all that promising. This attitude stems from a lack of interest on the part of most people to adhere to the old religions; a lack of passing down the sacred traditions; and a clash between the old ways and the new, with the new winning out. In fact, as the Hawai'i respondent pointed out, it might be better for kapa worship and rituals to die out entirely rather than become adulterated. The most optimistic was the respondent from New Guinea who felt there would always be those to carry forth the traditions—because there would always be forests and animals and spirits.

Summary of Findings

In keeping with the descriptive ethnographic methodology, I chose not to report quantitative findings. Instead, an examination of the results of the literature review showed that it did build a framework for a further study by way of conversations with those intimately familiar with their own particular culture. However, despite the traditional secrecy of many of the tapa rites and ceremonies, the results of the three conversations

made it possible to cement some of the assertions with relation to how the various rites and rituals may be connected throughout the Pacific Islands. This was shown by the strong correlation in the themes used by the respondents when "telling their stories."

The results found in this chapter support the notion that there are still a sufficient number of people in the Pacific Islands who are aware of their cultural history to the point of being able to speak intelligently about them. All of the respondents spoke about numbers of others who were able to participate in certain rituals. They did however, lament that the traditional ceremonies are less "powerful" today. To this is added the fact that the majority of the actual rituals and ceremonies took place in the past and are no longer considered an integral part of the total ecological system.

With respect to the research questions asked earlier, some potential answers have been discovered, at least for some of the questions.

The questions, along with answers where available, are:

1. What were the values, meanings, and symbolic patterns used in the past structure of Pacific Island culture with respect to men and tapa?

While no definitive answer is available for this question (in lieu of the fact the respondents were not willing to discuss that aspect of the rituals), it can be stated in general that the values, meanings and symbolic patterns were all of a religious and cultural nature. And it appears that these patterns are the primary ones, rather than the more utilitarian uses of tapa.

2. When it came to the manufacture and use of tapa in ritual situations, what were the differences and similarities between and among the various sub-cultures that made up the Pacific Island cultural group?

As indicated previously, there are very noticeable differences between some of the groups as well as similarities. The specific differences, as shown both through the literature review and the conversations, are most obvious for Polynesian versus Melanesian groupings. They are least obvious within the groupings.

3. How well have these values, meanings and symbolic patterns survived in today's culture?

There is a gradient of survival—most obvious survival has occurred in the least affected societies (such as the Baining of New Guinea). Societies such as Hawai'i and Tonga have seen a less favorable climate for the survival of genuine tapa rituals, with a subsequent loss in the ability of even the priests and chiefs to be able to correctly identify these rituals.

4. How can these patterns be used to shore up indigenous cultures?

There is one area where it is still possible to use these patterns to shore up indigenous cultures—and that's in the art of storytelling itself. Being able to harness the storytelling abilities of the respondents might be a way to revive such cultures.

5. Is there a more general lesson to be learned, a lesson that could be useful for endangered cultures throughout the world?

It is important to keep the past alive through those who can recall it or who have had certain knowledge handed down to them. It is equally important to pass that knowledge on to others. As these ritualistic ceremonies are passed on to new generations, even if they remain completely intact, it does not mean that acceptance has been passive and non-creative. These rites are often modernized and dropped into a new and completely different social structure that resembles, but can never be the same as the one from which it was taken. Further study is required in order to ascertain what we can now only assume, that as these rituals evolved over time, many other changes occurred in a similar manner.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary and concluding remarks on the results obtained through the qualitative methodology described in Chapter Three and with results shown in Chapter Four, with specific reference to the hypothesis presented earlier. Also presented are the implications of the study for fields such as sociology and ethnography, and some recommendations for further research.

Summary of Results

The results from the conversations with the three anonymous respondents show that the central hypothesis for this paper has been supported partially but not completely. That is, departing from the normal frame of certainty surrounding current academic expertise can discover that information with respect to ritual tapa making and uses. While it has been shown that patterns found in culture, cultural evolution and cultural diffusion are narrative rather than strictly scientific, the actual knowledge that should result from this did not materialize. In part, the reason for this had to do with the narrative rather than scientific approach. In other words, the very notion of narrative and storytelling as a way of passing on knowledge is different from the notion of using storytelling so that others can learn about the secrets of a particular process or cultural attitude. The first refers to initiation rites and the sort of stature they confer on those being initiated. Only then are they allowed to receive the knowledge. But initiation is not generally something that is available to someone outside the tribal group.

The hope is that those who have received such an initiation would agree to pass the knowledge on to those who might not have in the fear that otherwise such knowledge would be lost forever. That did not happen in this case. The study captured some key elements of the ritual use of tapa but it was not able to delve into the fundamental mysteries of such creation and use. The three respondents all felt that the dangers involved in revealing such secrets to the uninitiated surpassed the benefits.

The three respondents did however, supply the researcher with their stories and that, in itself, can be valuable. For the purposes of this study, the stories have been reduced for the most part. It does not seem appropriate for the stories to take over the study. The study itself needs to consist of the traditional chapter breakdown as has been done here. It also needs to come up with some sort of conclusion with respect to the hypothesis and the research questions. The best answer is that the results are mixed. The hypothesis is supported in that the usual methods of scholarship do not seem to capture the essence of the cultural patterns behind the making and use of tapa for sacred purposes. At the same time, it is not supported for the simple reason that no hypothesis can actually capture what does not exist. Thus, it would seem that Dennett (2001) could be wrong when he says:

> The perspective from which we can understand these narratives is what I have called *the intentional stance*: the strategy of analyzing the flux of events into *agents* and their (rational) *actions* and *reactions*. Such agents—people, in this case—*do things for reasons*, and can be predicted—up to a point—by cataloguing their reasons, their beliefs and desires, and

calculating what, given those reasons, the most rational course of action for each agent would be (p.306).

Even "analyzing the flux of events" and "cataloguing their reasons, their beliefs and desires" does not result in a revelation of some essential truth with respect to these cultures. Perhaps the reason is that what we consider "the most rational course of action for each agent" is not the way the three respondents here would look at the world. Another limiting factor was the number of respondents to the survey. With a larger sample, surely better comparisons could be made across a larger area, thereby providing the strongest possible data sets.

Implications

We have seen how similarities in ceremonies and rituals can help determine the connections between cultures. But how far are researchers willing to go to push these similarities? It seems that, for a narrative view to work, it must be the stories themselves that are of the most importance. Thus, while the structures of the stories can be examined and broken down, there is a definite limit to this kind of framework. The story itself has to be unique in its telling. This uniqueness is not replicable to the extent that Western scholars in these areas would like.

In the testimonies given by the three respondents, each claimed that he was telling the true story—of the creation of the earth, of the spirits, of the ancestors. For example, modern Western researchers would claim that all Polynesian oral traditions are fundamentally the same that they come from the same source. But the various people themselves thrive on the differences, and would argue that these differences are fundamental. In Chapter Four, we went to some lengths to determine what some of the

dominant themes were in the stories being told by the respondents. This is part of the categorizing urge exhibited by humanity. The three respondents would not agree that they were being "thematic" or "symbolic" in what they were saying. To them, there are no symbols. The Baining masks do not "represent" male or female dancers, the spirits of the village or bush, or birds and other creatures. They literally are.

Thus, we are approaching these things from completely different ways of looking at the world. One of the attempts in this paper was to see if these two different ways could be brought together somehow, in the stories being told by the respondents. However, the mere attempt at categorizing these stories renders them less powerful, and in this sense, less valid. This is similar to the fear held by all three respondents that revealing the secrets of tapa making and use would render its magic powerless.

It may be that both sociology and ethnography will have to make do with a simple collection of the stories, rather than trying to categorize them or break them down to "discover" some cultural essence that then allows a calculation as to the flow of cultural transmission. The three respondents make no such claims, and any such claims would require independent verification in any place. The passing down of the knowledge has to do with magic, with ancestors who mingled with primeval gods and spirits. Once an attempt is made to trap that magic or pin it down, the essential chemistry is altered, as the tapa makers themselves appear to recognize. Like all good stories, it is the tale itself that signifies, not the explanations built around it. And it is in the participation within the story that knowledge is gained.

Recommendations

The major recommendation resulting from this study is that future studies will want to take a divergent approach to the examination of cultural transmission and the passing on of knowledge under these circumstances. When it comes to secret knowledge and initiations, in my opinion, the usual approach does not seem to work very well. Instead, researchers in the future might look for unique ways to capture the stories of those with this kind of knowledge. Granted that some efforts have already been made in the past in this direction—the filming and/or taping of rites and ceremonies, for example, or the taking down of stories. But these were usually done with an ulterior motive, the attempt to generalize that ritual or story. Perhaps the door is open to bring in over-arching theories and philosophies, but future researchers would do well to focus more on the rites and stories themselves.

APPENDIX

Interview Questions

1. What are your qualifications to be able to speak about the manufacture and use of tapa in a ritual sense?
2. What experience have you yourself had in the ritual making and use of tapa?
3. How do you feel about people who say that this ritual making and use of tapa has gone down considerably today?
4. How about those who say that the traditional beliefs that support this use of tapa are in decline or are no longer important today?
5. Could you describe in your own words the first time you encountered the ritual making of tapa?
6. What were the circumstances? How old were you? How did you become involved?
7. How many people were there? How did they become involved?
8. To the extent that you feel comfortable about it, could you describe exactly what went on during the ritual?
9. Could you describe in your own words the first time you encountered or took part in the ritual use of tapa?
10. Could you describe exactly what took place during this ritual?
11. What was the purpose of the ritual?
12. Who else was involved or took part?

13. How many other times have you taken part in either the ritual making of tapa or the use of it in a ceremony?
14. Can you tell me any similarities or differences you have noticed between one group's rituals and another's—on the same island? Among other islands?
15. Why do you take part in these rituals?
16. Why do you think others take part?
17. What is your belief in relation to your ancestors?
18. What are your thoughts on the idea that the ritual making and use of tapa may have come from some other place? From some other island? Or even from further away?
19. What are your thoughts on the idea that the beliefs of the various people in the islands may have been brought here from some other place?
20. What do you think of the stories told about the first people to come to the islands and how they brought the paper mulberry tree with them?
21. What do you think the future of ritual tapa making and use will be?
22. How do you feel about tapa being sold to tourists?

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