

*Pills, Potions, Products:
Kava's Transformations in New
and Nontraditional Contexts*

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It is 3:00 on a Friday afternoon, and I am seated on a stool in the back corner of a science lab on Mānoa campus of the University of Hawai'i (UHM). Several of the regulars are here, waiting for the kava preparation to be complete. In Pohnpei, kava roots are pounded on basalt slabs that ring like bells, and the sound foreshadows the evening of kava drinking. In Skip's lab, Kava Circle is announced with the sound of a Vita-Mix blender. We shout over the sound of the blender to continue our conversation. The kava is mixed with warm water and run through the blender twice, the water is strained out, and the process is repeated two more times. The combination of all three extractions is then poured into the serving bowl, from which individual cups are scooped.¹

This article focuses on kava (*Piper methysticum* G. Forst, Piperaceae) in its various forms: plant, beverage, medicine, and dietary supplement. In the Pacific, where it was discovered by the ancestors of present-day Pacific Islanders, kava is grown to make a traditional drink that is used ceremonially, religiously, and socially; secondarily, it is a cash crop. The cultural significance of kava in Oceania, and in the Pacific Islander diaspora, is well documented (Lebot, Merlin, and Lindstrom 1992; Winter 2004). Here, however, I examine a relatively unexplored dimension of kava: the ways in which both its form and use are changing as it is introduced into new and different cultural contexts. Kava's popularity outside Oceania has led to changes in how and why it is used, as well as transformations in the form in which people consume it. The best known of these is the manufacture of kava-containing pills and tinctures, which are (or were, and may be yet again, depending on the country) marketed for treating anxiety in Western

countries. But in addition to this, kava is undergoing a transformation into an alcohol-like recreational analogue, and it is being incorporated into a range of food products as well. There are variations in the degree to which kava's physical form is changed in these nontraditional uses as well as in the meanings associated with them. In this article, I first seek to document some of these transformations and describe the contexts into which kava has been introduced. Second, I analyze the transformations and attempt to frame them in larger discourses about medicines, recreational intoxicants, and notions of authenticity and exoticism.

Finally, I speculate about the future face of kava. With the collapse of demand for kava for use in dietary supplements in 2001, Pacific Islanders and others involved with kava production and marketing have been given a second chance to consider how they want kava to be represented and sold to the wider world. I conclude by outlining some of the ongoing efforts to shape this future, while trying to highlight some of the lessons that might be learned by considering the problems associated with the previous kava boom.

In this article I draw on ethnographic observations made at various sites where kava was present, and I utilize visual material I collected to illustrate the representations of kava in these contexts. Much of the visual material described comes from advertisements for kava products or from the products themselves. Methodologically, I draw on previous research on the metaphors and narratives associated with pharmaceuticals, research in which advertising imagery has been analyzed extensively (Hawkins and Aber 1988; Montagne 1992, 2001; Vener and Krupka 1986).

This article is based primarily on my dissertation research (Baker 2008), which was conducted in Hawai'i and studied points rather far removed from traditional contexts of kava consumption. I focus on the movement of kava into social settings where few have any detailed knowledge about it. Given this focus, the coverage of other regions of the Pacific in this analysis is relatively narrow. There are significant traditional and contemporary differences in kava use across the region that are only marginally addressed here. In particular, I only briefly discuss the introduction of kava drinking into places in the Pacific where it was not traditionally consumed, notably Australian Aboriginal communities in Arnhem Land as well as Kiribati and Solomon Islands.² Further ethnographic research in each local context is needed to better understand how kava use may or may not be changing. That being said, it is hoped that this analysis of kava's transformations as it moves into cultural contexts farther

afield will add a new dimension to our understanding of the larger global kavascape.

BACKGROUND: CROSSCUTTING "SCAPES"

This section situates the discussion of the changing form and use of kava within a wider scholarly discourse about consumption and the global flow of people, commodities, and ideas. Kava use can be thought to exist on a continuum from traditional to nontraditional in terms of form and use as well as associated knowledge. In the Pacific, kava is still primarily used to make a drink; outside Oceania, it is mainly used as a pharmaceutical analogue (although this may be changing). In between, there are various stages where understandings of kava are a mix of both traditional and nontraditional; thus a simple traditional/nontraditional dichotomy is too simplistic. Further, "traditional" is a problematic term that must be unpacked, and I return to this point in the conclusion. For the purposes of this first section, "traditional" is used as a descriptive term for the basic details about kava's preparation and use as a beverage. In this sense, it can be said that traditionally kava is mixed with water, is not extracted with some other solvent, is strained by hand, and is prepared as a social drink. This section of the article details shifts away from this norm, and some changes are more radical departures than others.

Kava is being transformed along several different axes simultaneously, but unevenly. This observation is reminiscent of Appadurai's delineation of various crosscutting "scapes" (eg, ethnoscapes, financescapes) to describe the complexity of globalization and global interactions (Appadurai 1996). Kava root extract may be consumed as a beverage in traditional form, but the water extract may also be consumed in decidedly nontraditional contexts, as illustrated by this article's introductory vignette. The scene described there took place in Dr H C "Skip" Bittenbender's laboratory; Dr Bittenbender is the UHM agricultural extension agent for coffee, chocolate, and kava and hosts a regular kava circle in his lab to help introduce people to kava in a somewhat traditional form and context.

Kava in nontraditional form (eg, ethanol or acetone extract made into capsules, pills, and tinctures) is not being used in what would be considered traditional contexts; however, the distinction is blurring a bit with respect to kava products (other than powdered kava sold to make beverages) that are sold with the intent of producing the psychoactive effects of kava. In this case, while form and context are nontraditional, the purpose

of consumption is to some extent consonant with one of the traditional reasons for consumption.

It is not surprising that these transformations are happening. Previous research on both foods and medicines demonstrates that novel comestibles are to a large extent interpreted through the lens of the culture into which they have been introduced. Though the substance can be readily moved from one place to another, the associated meanings and practices are not inherent to the object. Cultural and social information is less evenly transmitted than the substances themselves and plays a variable role with respect to how novel foods and medicines are perceived. To help distinguish different aspects of kava's transformations, the processes of indigenization, pharmaceuticalization, and recreationalization are briefly described below.

The research on pharmaceuticals demonstrates that medicines are frequently interpreted locally and integrated into local beliefs about illness etiology, therapeutic intent, and benefits and risks to health. In this sense, it can be said that they are indigenized into local ethnomedical systems (Etkin, Ross, and Muazzamu 1990; Etkin 1992). This reinterpretation involves assessment of the medicine's properties in terms of indigenous understandings of illness causation and in comparison to other elements of the local pharmacopoeia. What a new medicine should be used for is based on its observable characteristics (eg, color, shape, taste) and bioactive effects (eg, diuretic properties, antipyretic effects), which are correlated with known therapeutics and illness models. This anthropologically informed approach to pharmaceutical use characterizes indigenization as a rational cultural process with a coherent logic that shapes how these medicines are used. This contrasts sharply with the attitude of Western manufacturers and biomedical authorities, who frequently consider this modification of pharmaceutical use as irrational behavior, originating in ignorance, which might pose health risks to consumers.

Botanically derived medicines undergo similar processes of translation as they are introduced into Western contexts; for the purposes of this discussion, I employ the term "pharmaceuticalization" to describe this process. Pharmaceuticalization can be seen as the reciprocal process of indigenization: a substance consumed in some indigenous context is incorporated into the pharmaceutical context.

Plant material and extracts can end up in a variety of medicines. While plants are the source for a substantial proportion of pharmaceuticals,³ the majority of botanical medicines on the markets in Western countries

fall into a different category. In the United States, these are referred to as dietary supplements, and while the terminology varies from country to country, most Western countries have an analogous category into which botanically derived medicines fall. For the sake of brevity, I will use the US term for these products, but bear in mind that there is a degree of national-level variation in this category. The vast majority of kava products sold in Western countries fall into this category of dietary supplements, though a handful in Europe were developed into pharmaceutical-grade, single-compound pills.

Dietary supplements are typically less refined than pharmaceutical products, and are governed by different regulations.⁴ Plant materials incorporated into pharmaceuticals are reduced to chemical extracts, usually comprised of a single isolated compound. They are stripped of their botanical identity and are fully pharmaceuticalized. For the less refined botanical medicines, the process is actually quite similar, and they too are transformed to be more like pharmaceuticals. The obvious transformation is form: plant medicines are turned into capsules, pills, and liquid extracts that look like other Western medicines. But transformations of substance are equally important. Botanicals are frequently extracted by solvents such as acetone or ethanol, and individual active constituents are sometimes isolated and concentrated.⁵ Botanicals move toward a form that mimics the single compound standard dose of the pharmaceutical. While this discussion focuses on botanicals incorporated into dietary supplements, since this is the form most kava takes in nontraditional medical contexts, the process of pharmaceuticalization is largely the same for all botanically derived medicines.

Finally, perhaps most similar to the concept of indigenization, botanical use is translated and transformed. Botanicals are commonly sold with instructions detailing the number of milligrams to be taken and how many times a day (standardized dosage), and the literature on botanicals describes their use for Western medical conditions. The conditions for which botanicals are recommended (and toward which they are marketed) are usually explained and classified in biomedical terms. Additionally, the broader cultural and affective dimensions of these illnesses are also important. For example, St John's Wort is commonly recommended for mild to moderate depression. The supporting literature for its use discusses the biomedical definition of depression and St John's Wort's possible effects on neurotransmitters, and compares the supplement to antidepressant pharmaceuticals. The social and psychological aspects of depression are

also discussed, and they are used in the marketing of both supplements and pharmaceuticals (Baker 2000). Local narratives (in Western countries) about illness and associated therapeutic measures are strongly informed by biomedicine but incorporate other cultural beliefs and understandings as well. Botanicals are integrated into these Western cultural contexts.

For the purposes of this article, “pharmaceuticalization” is defined as the process of non-pharmaceutical medicines being introduced into the pharmaceutical-dominated medical systems of Western countries. This process is characterized by transformation of the form, substance, and use of the medicine to be more like that of a pharmaceutical.

The definition of pharmaceuticalization used here is meant to be value-neutral, in that the term simply describes the process of botanical medicine transformation. It is necessary to mention this because the medical anthropology and other social science literature often applies “pharmaceuticalization” to situations where a therapeutic course of action has been transformed from a more complex multimodal approach to one focused solely on pharmaceuticals. Also, this term is sometimes used to describe biopiracy and the mining of indigenous therapeutic systems for leads on bioactive substances.⁶ My use of this word is not meant to imply these meanings.

Parallel to the process of pharmaceuticalization is the notion of “recreationalization,” referring to the incorporation of a substance into a context of recreational use. Recreational drug use is itself a problematic concept fraught with cultural assumptions and value judgments that cannot be addressed in full here. “Recreationalization” is meant to be a descriptive term for the process by which something is translated into a context of use primarily focused on inducing intoxication or inebriation. This does not imply that such use is devoid of meaning or solely secular. Indeed, the substantial body of literature on cross-cultural drug and alcohol use clearly demonstrates the complex social role intoxicants play (see, eg, Douglas 1987; Goodman, Lovejoy, and Sherratt 1995; Hunt and Barker 2001; Lindstrom 1987). The point here is to focus on a specific type of transformation—that of kava, and other psychoactive botanicals, into the somewhat overlapping “recreational” contexts of alcohol consumption and the more fringe “legal high” recreational use. Kava has been introduced into both these contexts.

This process is by no means unique to kava. A good example of another plant that has undergone a similar process of becoming recreationalized as it is introduced into new contexts is khat (*Catha edulis* Forsk), a plant tra-

ditionally chewed as a stimulant in East Africa, primarily Ethiopia, Somalia, and Yemen. To achieve the desired effects, consumers must chew *fresh* khat, and this formerly had the effect of limiting consumption to the areas where khat could be grown and distributed fresh. However, a number of factors have combined to dramatically expand the geographic range of khat use: improvements in roads in the khat-growing regions, expansion of markets in urban areas of Ethiopia and Somalia, increased connections between these regions and Western countries, and a large population of refugees who have migrated from the Horn of Africa to Europe and North America (Anderson and others 2007). In the diasporic communities in the United Kingdom, for example, khat chewing shifted from something that took place in homes to something that occurred in cafes, and khat use became embroiled in national debates about immigration and drug use.

There are many other examples. The transformation from the indigenous consumption of coca to the commercialized consumption of cocaine is quite dramatic. Likewise, psychoactive substances such as peyote, San Pedro cactus, psilocybin-containing mushrooms, morning glory seeds, and (more recently) *Salvia divinorum*—all of which have significant indigenous cultural and religious uses—have found their way into the commercial (legal and illegal) drug trade. Other examples include “soft drugs” like coffee, tea, chocolate, and tobacco, which, once removed from their traditional contexts and modified to match the cultural tastes of Europe, became immensely popular by the early 1700s. They have been global commodities ever since (Goodman 1995).

In sum, pharmaceuticalization and recreationalization are specific facets of transformations and translations of comestibles as they are introduced into new contexts. The goal here is to describe some of these changes to kava, while also situating them in much larger patterns of trade, transformation, and translation of the substances people consume.

Kava is transported around the globe and introduced into many different contexts. Each context has its own set of associated beliefs and practices; kava fits into each context differently. In some cases, kava is dramatically transformed, while other contexts demand less of a change. In all the cases discussed here, kava is treated as an analogue to something else already in use. It is seen as “like” something else, and that association shapes how kava is perceived, adopted, and transformed.

The transformations are occurring along several axes at once, but they are not necessarily linked or uniform across these different variables. The most dramatic change—kava's conversion to a pharmaceutical ana-

logue—involves extensive transformations along all axes. Recreational use, however, is more variable. In some contexts, kava's form is relatively unchanged, whereas other contexts radically alter kava's form. The shift toward more recreational use of kava is an ongoing but uneven process in the Pacific as well, though a full discussion of this is beyond the scope of the present research. In the following section, I seek to describe some of these transformations in location, context, form, use, and meaning.

FROM POTION TO PILL: KAVA AS PHARMACEUTICAL ANALOGUE

Kava's most profound change, in terms of context, location, form, and use, is its full transformation into a pharmaceutical analogue in Western countries. This section describes kava's "pharm form" and briefly discusses the details of how it is used. Demand for kava supplements to treat anxiety or depression is what drove the boom in kava sales in the mid to late 1990s. Concern over potential liver damage from these supplements resulted in a crash in the export market in 2001 (the debate about kava's potential toxicity is discussed in more detail in Baker 2011).

The primary physical difference in this form of kava is the solvent with which it is extracted. Kava dietary supplements and medicines are extracted with alcohol or acetone, whereas traditional kava beverages are water extractions. The reason for using ethanol or acetone is that kavalactones are more soluble in these solvents than in water, and it is therefore easier to get a higher yield of kavalactones from the root material. The potential problem, from a toxicity standpoint, is that the ratio of constituents extracted differs depending on the solvent used; the differences might be clinically significant (see Baker 2008, chapter 5). At the very least, it is clear that Western kava supplements and medicines are not merely the equivalent of a cup of kava in a pill.

In addition to the possibility of a fundamentally transformed chemical profile, kava supplements are significantly transformed outwardly. Kava supplements take the form of capsules, tablets, and alcohol tinctures. Dried whole extract is transferred into gelatin capsules that are standardized by weight; kava products consisting of individual kavalactones are made into white tablets. The latter form, primarily sold on the European market, is fully pharmaceuticalized kava, outwardly indistinguishable from any number of pharmaceuticals prepared as white tablets. The packaging of capsules and tablets resembles that of pharmaceuticals, with plastic bottles, blister packaging, safety seals, and so on. This is for legal reasons,

as kava products must meet quality control guidelines for marketing. But the effect, visually, is that their containers appear similar to those of the pharmaceuticals for which they serve as an analogue. Tincture packaging, in small vials with eyedroppers built into their caps, looks less like that of pharmaceuticals. But all three forms are standardized with respect to how much kava is supposedly in each pill or dropper of extract; the standardized form assists the consumer in measuring consistent dosage.

By contrast, dosage consistency of kava beverages is more difficult to gauge. Volume of liquid consumed can be tracked, but in typical drinking contexts the amount consumed is not as precisely measured. Additionally, the strength of the beverage varies depending on the preparation technique, variety and age of kava used, ratio of water to kava, length of time kava is mixed with water, and temperature of water, among other possible factors. The point is that, in comparison to kava supplement users, most kava drinkers are not assessing their consumption in terms of the milligrams of kavalactones they are consuming.

However, botanical supplements may actually be less standardized than assumed or advertised. Analyses of botanical products on the market have demonstrated wide variability in the amount of botanical extracts they contain, despite efforts to achieve consistency; some contain less and others more than is stated on the labels (Lang and Wai 1999; Krochmal and others 2004; de los Reyes and Koda 2002). While botanicals are approaching the standards of pharmaceuticals, they have not entirely reached them. In that sense then, standardization might carry more symbolic weight than is warranted based on the existing variability.

The rationale for kava use is also entirely transformed (*vis-à-vis* traditional use) in this context. The therapeutic goal is to treat depression and anxiety. In both clinical and popular literature about this Western use of kava, the dosing regimen and contraindications for use mimic what is found for pharmaceuticals. For example, the Commission E monograph on kava recommends 60–120 mg per day of kavalactones, which should be taken for no longer than three months (Commission E 1990). Popular books also tend to faithfully report these guidelines. In keeping with the role of providing consumers with information about how to use botanicals in self-care, these books give tips for diagnosing the medical problem as well as guidelines for calculating dosage. The style of the dosage recommendations and the conditions for which it should be used are thoroughly Western.

The following example shows the popularization of the Western sci-

entific approach to medicinal kava use. First, symptoms of anxiety are described, then a scientific trial comparing kava to a benzodiazepine is discussed. Note that this example was published in 1997 one year before the first cases of liver injury associated with kava were reported:

Anxiety is a state of uneasiness, characterized by worry, apprehension or fear. It begins as a normal reaction to a threat against emotional or physical well being. Anxiety is usually accompanied by physical sensations. It becomes problematic when it persists, or is not readily attributable to a known cause, and interferes with normal daily functioning.

Anxiety attacks may provoke any of the following symptoms:

- Breathlessness
- Choking sensation
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Hyperventilation
- Intense feeling of apprehension or fear
- Pupils widely dilated
- Racing or pounding chest
- Spasms of the stomach
- Tremors

Clinical trials in Germany used D,L-kavain, a purified kavalactone, at a dose of 44 milligrams daily. Scholing conducted a formal trial of eighty-four patients who displayed symptoms of anxiety. Kavain improved a number of measurable factors, including: memory, reaction time and vigilance.

Lindenberg, directly compared kava with the pharmaceutical, oxazepam (a member of the more familiar group of Benzodiazepines) which is still available in the U.S. under the brand name: “Serax.” The kavain group scored just as well as the oxazepam group but was free from the known complications of this family of drugs, including addiction and side effects, such as: dizziness, drowsiness and even hepatitis! (Walji 1997, 66–67)

Another example follows the same trend of discussing dosage and clinical evidence. Kava is directly compared to benzodiazepines in terms of function and efficacy:

Kava pills come in different strengths, usually from 100 to 250 mg, and the percentage of kavalactones (the active chemicals in kava) in the extract can vary from 30 to 70 percent. The dosage used in most clinical studies for anxiety is three daily 100-mg doses of kava extract standardized to 70-percent kavalactone content, which research has shown can be as effective as the benzodiazepine drug Serax (oxazepam), 15 mg daily. (Bloomfield 1998, 79–80)

While the producers of kava products strive to make kava resemble pharmaceuticals, they also attempt to differentiate kava from these other medicines. Primarily, this is through representations of symbols of nature and the exotic in their advertisements and on their packages. Advertisements typically include such scientific imagery as Ehrlenmeyer flasks and graphs of chemical analyses juxtaposed with imagery evoking nature, such as leaves, flowers, tropical settings, as well as images of traditionally prepared kava. The message is that kava is natural, with a long history of safe, efficacious use in traditional cultures, while at the same time its use has been subject to rigorous scientific examination. This comes across as a theme in the popular texts about botanicals too. The message is that botanicals are like pharmaceuticals, but they do not have the latter's associated side effects. What is implied is that botanicals are just as effective, but safer.

One advertisement, produced by the company Herb Pharm for their product Pharma Kava, draws on the authenticity of the remote villages from which they collect their kava. A man, presumably the kava collector, is shown with villagers in Papua New Guinea, and the advertisement states, "We go the extra 8000 miles to find the kava that effectively promotes relaxation & relieves stress." This is an alcohol extract of kava being marketed for treatment of anxiety, but here the guarantee of efficacy is provided by the connection to the authentic kava gathered from a remote (and therefore, it is implied, pure) locale. The villagers serve as a marker of both authenticity and the exotic—they strengthen the manufacturer's claim that its products are linked to a "real" tradition. Yet, the choice of Papua New Guinea as the source of kava and the link to tradition is interesting, since Papua New Guinea is neither a major kava-drinking society nor a major producer.⁷ I argue that this choice illustrates that a connection to actual, present-day cultural practices is less important than a connection to an implied or suggested tradition, through which consumers will (hopefully, from Herb Pharm's perspective) come to associate authenticity and efficacy with the products being marketed.

These products look like pharmaceuticals, and I argue that the producers want consumers to see their supplements as analogous to drugs, but at the same time they want consumers to be cognizant of certain differences; they are marketed as both like and unlike drugs. "Tradition" is used as a way to convey the message of safety and efficacy, while the scientific imagery invokes notions of standardization and purity.

Kava in "pharm form" is significantly transformed in terms of space or

locality as well as context of use. Kava root material is shipped to Western countries, where it is processed into capsules, tinctures, and tablets. These value-added products are in turn distributed throughout the world. It is possible, for example, to buy kava supplements in Honolulu—the kava goes full circle and returns to the Pacific transformed. In terms of context of use, kava supplements are for the most part used as self-care by individuals. This fits with the way botanical medicines are used in complementary and alternative medicine in Western countries. It likewise matches the pattern of self-administration of both over-the-counter and prescription medications prevalent in the United States (Vuckovic and Nichter 1997).

BUZZ IN A BOWL: RECREATIONAL KAVA USE

Recreationalization of kava primarily involves drinking it in a form similar to how it is prepared in the Pacific, though some recreational use is more creative. In this section I first discuss recreational kava drinking and then provide examples of more inventive recreational modifications. One common theme is a shift toward thinking of kava as an intoxicating substance. The focus on this varies to a certain degree depending on context. And though there are significant changes in the contexts in which kava is consumed recreationally, it is important to note that in nearly all cases it is still consumed socially. But the nature of the social interactions and norms are shifting.

Much contemporary kava drinking is what is defined here as quasi-traditional. Generally, the drink is prepared in a more or less traditional manner, as a water extract, and it is served from a large common bowl into smaller serving bowls or cups. In many of these contexts, there is an awareness of the traditions associated with kava, even if little of this knowledge is incorporated into the actual protocols of drinking. The purpose of consumption is largely consonant with less formal, social consumption in Pacific Islander communities. The kava circle that meets in Dr Bittenbender's lab is an example of a quasi-traditional drinking context that is significantly informed by the history of kava drinking in the Pacific. That being said, despite the partial continuity, there are important differences between traditional and quasi-traditional consumption. The lack of formal protocols or ceremonies associated with drinking is the primary difference. But, depending on context, the structure of the drinking event can also vary considerably. While some informal kava circles are indeed circles around the common kava bowl, others are not. Other variables

include whether each person has his or her own cup or shell for drinking, and the form of that container. In addition, the purpose of drinking varies, with a trend toward more secular use designed to produce intoxication.

The most transformed social context for quasi-traditional kava drinking is the kava bar. Commodification of kava in *nakamal* (the name for kava bars in Vanuatu, which has also been adopted by some Florida-based kava bars) is well documented in urban centers in Vanuatu (Lebot, Merlin, and Lindstrom 1992), as well as in New Caledonia.⁸ In Honiara, Solomon Islands, there are now two *nakamal* as well.⁹ One major difference in the way kava is consumed in kava bars—in Hawai'i and in the continental United States, as well as in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands—is the practice of selling kava by the shell or bowl to the drinker. Kava (in Hawaiian, 'awa) sold in Hawai'i's kava bars is served to patrons in individual containers—sometimes coconut shells, sometimes small plastic bowls—from a *tanoa* (a large, wooden bowl traditionally used for serving kava) kept behind the bar. The kava is then consumed back at the patrons' tables. At Honolulu's kava bars, by special arrangement, larger parties can purchase a large *tanoa* for a group, but this is not the norm. The price per cup in Hawai'i is relatively high—roughly US\$5 per 400 milliliter serving (one shell or cup) during the period from 2000–2008. By comparison, price is determined by the size of the serving in Vanuatu, with a smaller serving costing 100 vatu (a little over US\$1), and a larger serving costing 200 vatu (roughly US\$2).¹⁰

I know of five kava bars in the continental United States—three in Florida, one in North Carolina, and one in Oregon—and at least one place in California that sells kava but does not call itself a kava bar. It is possible that other places in the continent sell kava, but I am unaware of any others as of August 2011. Because I have not yet had the opportunity to visit these kava bars, I cannot offer an explanation for why they were established where they are and whether there is, in fact, any direct connection with Pacific Islands.

It is fairly evident, however, that part of the appeal of these establishments for some is precisely that they offer something unfamiliar from a place that seems very remote from the continental United States. The kava bars in Florida largely use kava's exotic cachet to help market their product. But the foreign or exotic components are packaged into a format that is analogous to something more familiar as well. These bars offer drink specials similar to those at alcohol-serving establishments, and they appear to be marketing themselves primarily to the college-aged crowd.

For example, Kahuna ‘awa, in Fort Lauderdale, offers two-for-one drink specials, and Nakava, in Boca Raton, has a designated “Ladies Night” with reduced kava prices for women. Both of these are marketing strategies employed by bars offering alcohol.

The line between respecting kava’s traditional Pacific use and employing exoticism to attract interest is somewhat blurred in Florida’s kava bars. For example, both Kahuna ‘awa and Nakava provide details about what kava is, where it originates, and how it is traditionally used. Yet, both places also employ notions of the exotic and the traditional to market kava. Nakava’s website, among other marketing tools, features photos of people trying kava, often making faces due to the bitter taste, and in the background, are walls decorated with wooden masks and other exotic art. Another example of this fetishization of the exotic occurred during a Halloween party at Kahuna ‘awa, where patrons were encouraged to dress as headhunters, and allusions to cannibalism were featured on their flyer. While it is clear that the owners mean no harm and are generally respectful of Pacific Island cultures and traditions, it is nevertheless hard to imagine holding a party like that anywhere in the Pacific without upsetting people. Similar to the advertisements for kava supplements, these elements draw on an imagined exotic other, rather than on connections to actual Pacific Island cultures.

I argue that in the kava bars in Hawai‘i as well as those in the continental United States, kava functions as an analogue for alcohol consumption. It is still a social beverage, but the norms of social interaction are to some extent akin to what would be seen in a bar serving alcohol. Furthermore, I suspect that this is more pronounced in kava bars on the continent than in those in Hawai‘i, though further research is necessary to verify this. There is also an apparent shift in focus toward the intoxicating aspects of kava. Some kava bars represent this shift more dramatically than others. At Hale Noa, a now-defunct kava bar in Honolulu, the staff tried to foster an atmosphere respectful to the traditions associated with ‘awa, and attempted to keep patrons from getting too intoxicated. They also jokingly acknowledged the intoxicating effects with their “AllBus Pass,” a frequent customer punch card that, when filled, entitled the customer to a free bowl of ‘awa (see figure 1). “All Bus” in Hawaiian Creole English is short for “all bus’ up,” meaning messed up or drunk.

The focus of my research does not allow me to comment on the extent to which these trends are occurring in other parts of the Pacific. In particular, the role of alcohol in changing the dynamics of kava consumption

is a topic that warrants further research. In many Pacific Island contexts, especially informal kava-drinking gatherings, kava and alcohol are both consumed. Kava drinking is often followed by an alcohol chaser. In Pohnpei, the beer chaser is known as “kapopo”; in Vanuatu, following kava with a few alcohol beverages is called “kale”; in Fiji, this is called a “wash down.”¹¹ The addition of alcoholic beverages likely changes the social context of kava drinking, and it might suggest that the goal of such consumption is focused more directly on intoxication. However, it is important not to overgeneralize about these trends without further ethnographic research (but see also Perminow 1995; Toren 1994; Urbanowicz 1975).

Beyond the quasi-traditional kava consumption, with its variation from informal circle to alcohol-analogue bar, is nontraditional recreational kava use. Much of this occurs through Internet sales and happens outside the Pacific. The primary transformation in use is from the traditional context—where the effects of kava are appreciated but where the associated ceremony is often more significant—to a context where recreational drinking occurs, with one aim being intoxication. The farther removed recreational consumption is from the Pacific, the less informed it is by actual historical and present-day kava drinking practices. Much like what is seen in idealized versions of “tradition” for the marketing of kava sup-

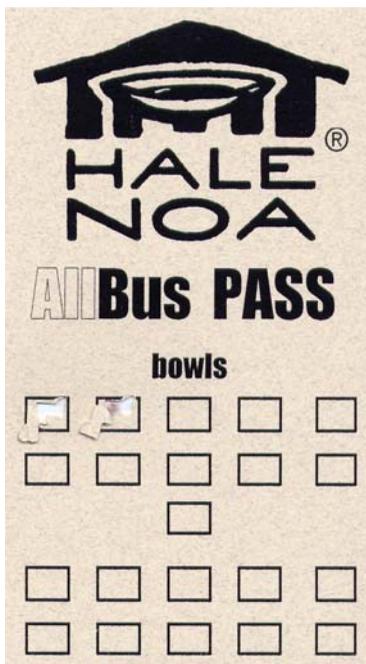


FIGURE 1. The AllBus Pass from the Honolulu kava bar Hale Noa.

plements, the history of use functions discursively to legitimize consumption and provide assurances of safety.

Examples help illustrate the nature of recreational kava consumption in its most transformed state. These are drawn from publicly available “trip reports,” a body of information published online detailing individuals’ experiences of recreational drug use. The publication of trip reports is a feature of recreational drug culture in the West; it serves to provide experiential information, preparation techniques, and other advice or warnings for other would-be “psychonauts.” A full analysis of this body of information is not presented here, and no known analysis of it has been published from an anthropological perspective. The examples are provided simply to illustrate the degree of change in kava consumption among some circles.

The first example is a recipe for a “kavanilla shake” using kava gelcaps and ice cream:

Here’s my favorite way to ingest kava. In this recipe I use kava emptied from gelcaps containing 425 mg ground kava root each. I usually empty between 20–30 gelcaps for use in the recipe, although I have done up to 60 gelcaps worth to no ill effect, outside of a drunkenness [*sic*] and lethargy [*sic*] leading into sleep. Usually, I enter a nice trance like state. My thoughts settle down and my mind grows quiet . . . Add the contents of 20–30 kava gelcaps into a blender with 3 large scoops of vanilla ice cream and about 8–12 oz milk. Add a few drops of vanilla extract and a few shakes of cinnamon and blend for about 5 minutes. Simple as 1, 2, 3. . . Of course, any ice cream flavor can be used. Milk works best at 2% or higher. Also, the more liquidy you make the shake, the more kava powder that will settle at the bottom of your glass. Adding a teaspoon or so of vegetable oil seems to help better emulsify the kava. I find this an extremely easy, yet effective manner in which to sit and speak with the kava gods. Enjoy! (Rivers 2001)

This recipe is similar to the food forms of kava discussed in the next section, but it differs in that here kava supplements are being used to create a kava food/beverage. The boundary between recreational drug use and the consumption of kava foods is fuzzy, and it is one of the issues looming on the horizon with respect to marketing of kava.

The second example illustrates the extent to which kava is sometimes transformed in these contexts. The author, having read about another person’s successful experience of smoking kava, makes his own kava extract. He extracts the kavalactones from an ounce of dried Vanuatu kava using acetone:

Taking an ounce of fresh Vanuata Kava Kava (well okay, a month old, but I had it stored well)¹² and placing it in a jar, I covered it with just enough acetone to bring the level up, that is make just a little of the Kava Kava powder float. I then sealed the jar with a lid and shook it for a solid two minutes. Having a plug-in coffee cup warmer (wow what a great idea!), I placed the sealed jar of acetone soaked Kava Kava on it for about 10–15 minutes. I did this in a vented area, the bathroom by an open window, fan blowing the vapors out. . . . The jar was quite warm so I took it off the coffee cup warmer and set it aside, removing the appliance for better work space. I put a “dust mask” on and, using a towel, slowly opened the jar. When the oxygen (air) hit the solution, it began to bubble and boil. This continued for almost 2 minutes then settled down. I then took the hot acetone/Kava Kava powder and poured it (with the help of a spoon for all the powder) into another jar with a coffee filter in place. (August 2001)

The author evaporated the acetone from the filtered mixture using a hair dryer, mixed the remaining yellow powder with a bit of dried basil leaf, and smoked this mixture with his wife from a pipe. Regarding the effects, he wrote, “After only 2 hits, I indeed felt the familiar calming effects. . . . The effects were nearly identical to the 1/2 cup Vanuata Kava Kava ‘milk-shakes’ I used to make, without having to endure all that peppery taste. It obviously works” (August 2001).

The extraction process is similar to those published for other psychoactive plants and widely available on the Internet. The goal of this process—to develop something that “obviously works” while avoiding “all that peppery taste”—illustrates the focus on kava’s psychoactive effects. This transformation is quite different from the quasi-traditional kava drinking that occurs in Hawai‘i. By contrast, kava use in these recreational contexts is only minimally informed by historical use, much like kava’s pharmaceuticalized medicinal use; they are both situated at the nontraditional end of the continuum of kava’s various transformations.

BROWNIES, CHOCOLATE, AND SODA: KAVA’S FOOD FORMS

During the course of this research, I sampled many kava-containing foods. Part of this was because I know some of the people who are trying to develop shelf-stable kava products and other vehicles through which kava could be marketed to consumers uninterested in drinking traditional kava beverages. Some of the ones I personally sampled include kava-chocolate brownies; kava smoothies; kava butter; kava batter (used to coat foods

prior to frying); ginger-flavored kava-extract-containing drinks; and kava bread. Other attempts developed by various members of Dr Bittenbender's lab included Bloody Marys; mustard; muffins and pastries; popcorn (topped with the aforementioned kava butter); and chocolate. Dr Bittenbender pioneered the kava java drink, consisting of kava and coffee in equal measures. At the 2010 Hawai'i Pacific Islands Kava Festival, I found kava brownies and popsicles; kava-infused coffee beans (to be brewed like regular coffee); and two brands of drinks containing kava extracts. Chocolate containing kava is also on the market (see figure 2).

Some of the more unusual food experiments were only half serious. But the larger goal of all these food forms is to try to develop new kava-containing products that might have wide appeal. The underlying assumptions of these experiments are that (1) most Western consumers do not like the taste of traditionally prepared kava, but (2) they might like its pharmacological effects, if only they could consume enough kava to experience them. People are trying to design a kava delivery vehicle with enough kava in it to feel the effects without having to deal with the taste. In short, as one of the developers of these food experiments explained, they are trying to create "tasty, effective kava foods." In some sense, these are pharmafoods, similar to those that have developed from other medicinal botanicals used in complementary and alternative medicine (Etkin and Johns 1998). However, these products in many ways have more of an affinity to the recreational drug preparations discussed in the previous section. The medicinal qualities of these kava pharmafoods are not stressed, though the pharmacological activity is a primary consideration. To the extent that the psychoactive properties are seen as therapeutic, however, the distinction between these categories blurs.

At the risk of offending those who prepared these experiments, it should be noted that almost none of these experiments tasted good to me. Of course, this is entirely subjective, but the general consensus among both kava drinkers and those who do not like kava was that most of these experimental foods were less than delicious. In some cases they were okay (reportedly, the mustard and the kava popcorn were especially good), but would have been better without the kava. The worst combinations (which, in my opinion, was the kava and chocolate) ruined the taste qualities of both the kava and the food to which it had been added. If the kava content was high enough, the food numbed the mouth and tasted bitter and earthy; if it tasted good, the kava content was likely low. As implied by some of the quotations here, kava's flavor is an acquired taste



FIGURE 2. Package of kava chocolate.

for Westerners. The challenge, from a marketing perspective, is to develop something that does not taste bad according to Western standards, while still retaining kava's psychoactive effects, so that it will be palatable for a wide range of people. Amusingly, among the experienced kava drinkers who sampled these kava foods, most actually preferred the flavor of "real" kava to that of kava-containing food or beverage experiments.¹³ This suggests that kava products that appeal to mainstream Western palates might not be popular with experienced drinkers. But since the latter comprise a small percentage of the population of Western countries, this is not a concern for would-be kava marketers.

An exception to the rule that kava foods and drinks taste like kava (and therefore taste bad) is a series of products containing kava that is extracted with high-pressure liquid carbon dioxide. The resulting powder, mixed with stevia as a sweetener, is added to beverages such as 'Awa₂O (see figure 3 below). These products do not taste like kava, but they do contain high levels of kavalactones. In addition, the extract itself is also sold.

At the annual Hawai'i Pacific Islands Kava Festival, held in Honolulu each October, some of these food experiments are available, along with several types of traditionally prepared kava beverage made from kava from throughout the Pacific. A kava taste test is conducted each year (see figure 4), where attendees sample multiple types of kava and rate them based on preference. The participants also indicate whether they are experienced kava drinkers or not. The tasting booth is always popular because it is often the only place at the festival where people can try kava for free. Some people go through the line several times. At the 2007 festival, 'Awa₂O received the highest rating (among experienced and inexperienced drinkers alike, though with more pronounced preference among inexperienced drinkers), primarily because it does not taste like kava.

The future of kava food forms is uncertain, but the beverage market seems to have been the most successful to date. The 'Awa₂O beverages sold well in Hawai'i, but ultimately did not survive. The producer subsequently introduced a new formulation under the name Ozia, and has also developed a line of candies containing kava extract. In 2009, a Denver-based company began selling Mary Jane's Relaxing Soda, which contains passionflower and kava extracts. Another company, based in Utah, is distributing a cola named Bula, also made with kava extract. The interesting feature of all these beverages is that they are meant to produce the effects of kava without the taste.

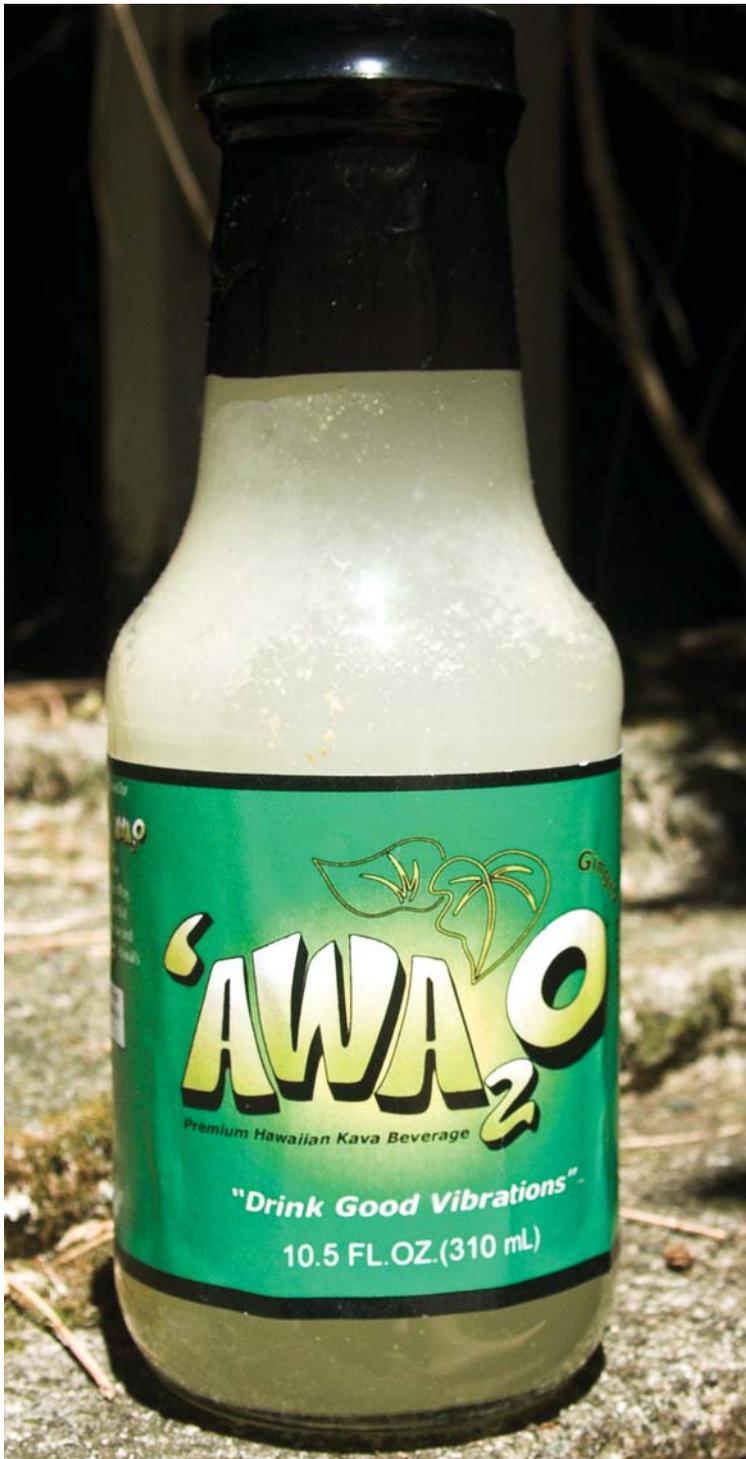


FIGURE 3. Kava-containing beverages such as 'Awa₂O continue to appear on the market.



FIGURE 4. Dean Meason and Shawn Steiman pouring kava for the tasting booth at the 2005 Hawai'i Pacific Islands Kava Festival, Honolulu. Photo by author.

One concern is whether kava products focusing on psychoactivity will remain legal. Right now, recreational consumption of kava remains unregulated, although officials are aware of it. The scale of consumption is small, and the unappealing taste acts as a limiting factor on its popularity. Kava-containing products, including traditionally prepared kava beverages sold at kava bars, are legal in the United States in part due to the freedom allowed through the laws regulating dietary supplements. In the European Union (EU), kava for traditional use is likewise legal, though it is not available for purchase within EU countries. The availability of a concentrated kava extract that does not taste bad might attract regulatory attention, especially if it becomes more widely consumed (the comparison to the transformation of coca into cocaine comes to mind again, though it is doubtful that kava extract would show the same addictive potential). For now, kava continues to be available, while occupying this regulatory gray area.

As some kava products fail, others appear. For example, dried kava leaves mixed with lemongrass in teabags recently appeared on the Hawai'i market (see figure 5), and new formulations of kava as a supplement were recently sighted in China (figure 6).¹⁴ However, it is difficult to predict the



FIGURE 5. Kava leaf and lemongrass tea.



FIGURE 6. Packages of kava capsules for sale in a hotel room in China.

The English text on the display case reads:

Masculine fire of desire To Strengthen the Sexualit [sic]

The English text on each package reads:

Limp block to the knees of erectile dysfunction,
 premature ejaculation frequency of urgency urinary
 excretion of unclean amnesia insomnid [sic] symptoms,
 such as prostate. Photo by Adam Lauer.

longevity of these products, and it appears that no one has yet developed a form with sustained popularity.

THE FUTURE OF THE KAVASCAPE

The argument being made throughout this article is that kava is subjected to the norms and standards of the contexts into which it is introduced. Kava is viewed as being like something else already in existence in that context—benzodiazepines, alcohol, recreational drugs, or food. It is transformed to better match the new context. The degree of difference from kava’s “home” tradition of Pacific Islander kava drinking varies. Yet, these transformations are occurring across several dimensions simultane-

ously and unevenly. In addition, the traditions associated with kava are themselves shifting over time and in different situations. I am not placing value judgments on these processes; the goal here is merely to describe and analyze these changes.

One of the problematic themes running through this analysis is the role of tradition. The word "tradition," as it is frequently used in popular culture and narratives, suggests behavior or beliefs from the past that have a stable form. The sign value is positive; that is, generally, traditions are presented as something valued. But, overwhelmingly, social scientists argue that traditions are performative, dynamic, and subject to reinterpretation and strategic reconfiguration based on present political and social contexts. They are not static representations of the past. In some cases, traditions are invented from elements that have little or no basis in historical fact (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Hanson 1989). The concept of tradition is a common element in narratives of ethnic tourism and the construction of tourist entertainment (Bruner 2005). In response to colonialism in its various guises, including tourism, notions of tradition and authenticity are employed in political constructions of ethnic identity (Hanson 1989; Linnekin 1990, 1997; Bruner 2005).

"Traditional" likewise is problematic as an adjective. In addition to implying a fictional stability for cultures, it also alludes to the continued discourse about human societies ranked on a continuum of development. Traditional cultures are juxtaposed with modernity; sometimes being traditional is portrayed as positive, whereas other times traditional societies are characterized as backward or primitive.

Further, as has been illustrated in many of the kava products presented in this article, the concept of tradition or traditional is used in product promotion. The connection to tradition is a guarantee of authenticity, even if that link itself is rather tenuous in a radically transformed product. Another closely linked aspect of how tradition is commercially employed is the idea of the exotic. Both the exotic Other and the remote locale of Pacific Islands are used to increase the appeal of kava products. The themes of authenticity and exoticism extend well beyond botanical supplement marketing and can be seen in tourism advertisements as well as the promotion of such things as bottled water (Etkin 2009; Kaplan 2007) and "ethnic" foods in the United States (Johnston and Baumann 2010).

But mixed with the capitalistic dimensions of kava tradition are genuine concerns expressed by consumers regarding the authenticity of what they are consuming. In part, this is a concern over safety, and this is a highly

salient matter due to the controversy over liver injury purportedly induced by kava (see Baker 2011 for more discussion of the kava safety debate). Among kava drinkers in Hawai'i, as well as among those involved in promoting kava as a water-extract beverage, there is also a sensitivity to the ongoing, and to some degree revitalized, consumption of 'awa in Native Hawaiian cultural practices. In these ways, concerns about authenticity can be interpreted as expressions of respect as well as attempts to negotiate the tension between "traditional" cultural practices and commercial interests in kava.

The future of kava is rather uncertain. The goals of many involved with kava, such as the 'Awa Development Council in Hawai'i (the organizers of Honolulu's annual Kava Festival), and the work of Vincent Lebot in Vanuatu, focus on promoting kava as a beverage in its water-extracted form, as close as possible to the way it has been consumed in the Pacific. They are seeking to improve quality control as well as to develop national branding and a sense of kava's taste being derived from and associated with a specific place (a concept known as *terroir*). It seems likely that kava in this form will always have a relatively small niche market, but it is an open question as to how big it might become with sufficient promotion and marketing.

The kava supplement market is greatly reduced when compared to its peak in the late 1990s through mid-2001, and it is unclear whether this market will rebound. But would we want the market to return as it was in the past? Certainly, it could be improved along a couple of fronts. First, better quality control over every stage of the process from plant to pill would help ensure safety. More discerning selection of raw material, as well as more precise chemistry, would also help in this regard. But second, and perhaps more significant, in terms of the economic impacts on the Pacific region, it would be good to consider ways in which Pacific Island nations and the producers of kava material for the market could better control the production of value-added products. S G Aporosa (2006) and Nancy Pollock (2009) have both commented on the incredible markup in the price of kava in its retail supplement form compared to the price at which Pacific Islanders sell the raw material. The past boom and bust is another example of regions on the periphery of the global market supplying raw materials to the core, where value-added products are created (and where profits are concentrated), while remaining vulnerable to shifts in the market dictated elsewhere. Perhaps further developments in branding and development of regional cachet shielded by trade protections would be a

partial solution to address the social and economic issues of intellectual property that this phenomenon raises (see Aporosa 2006 and Lindstrom 2009 for further on intellectual property concerns related to kava).

The transformations of kava are discussed here in a neutral manner, and the goal is to document and describe the apparent trends. But for those involved with kava, either personally or economically, it is well worth considering the impact these trends might have on the future of kava in the various contexts in which it is consumed.

Notes

1 This anecdote is drawn from my 2006 field notes.

2 In particular, see Brunton 1989 for an examination of the extent and distribution of kava consumption extending back to the nineteenth century, and see Pollock 2009 for an overview of some of the recent changes in kava consumption throughout the Pacific region. With respect to the Australian context, see Prescott and McCall 1989 and Urquhart and Thomson 2009 for representative reviews. Kazama 2006 describes the recent (beginning in the 1990s) introduction of kava drinking in Kiribati, a non-kava-producing region with no history of use. Also, Merlin and Raynor 2005 addresses the effects of increased demand for sakau—and the clearing of upland forests for cultivation—on Pohnpei watersheds and ecosystems.

3 Farnsworth and colleagues estimated that 25 percent of all pharmaceuticals are derived from plants (1985). See also Raskin and others 2002 for a discussion of how this is changing over time.

4 The manner in which botanically derived medicines are regulated from country to country varies significantly. In the United States, botanical medicines are classified as dietary supplements and are regulated primarily as foods; if there is evidence of traditional use of the supplement ingredient(s), manufacturers are not required to seek the same approvals as newly proposed pharmaceuticals from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for their products. However, they are also not allowed to advertise that their products cure or treat medical conditions. By contrast, Germany has integrated natural products (including botanical medicines) into its larger medicines regulatory system. These differences have ramifications for whether kava can be sold in each country. For example, despite bans in other countries beginning in 2001, kava is still available in US health food stores and other retail outlets selling dietary supplements. This is because the law governing regulation of dietary supplements stipulates that the FDA is responsible for demonstrating that a product is unsafe before it can be removed from the market. As the bans are being lifted in various places, the possibility for a resump-

tion of kava exports to these markets is emerging. However, to understand how this will develop will require an examination of the legal aspects as they apply to each country.

5 Note that whether a medicine is considered a pharmaceutical or a dietary supplement depends on the means by which the manufacturer has decided to move the product to market. Many plant-derived dietary supplements contain an extract of the plant that includes a mix of all the chemicals soluble in the solvent used to make the extract. Others contain dried plant material only. Kava supplements range in composition. Some are capsules containing dried, ground kava root; others are capsules with dried root extract; still others are sold as liquid extract in bottles. Products containing individual kavalactones were sold on the European market (Lebot, Merlin, and Lindstrom 1992). The process of pharmaceuticalization is the same for each category of medicine, and the difference of degree of refinement and transformation is one dictated by cost and legal regulations.

6 The *Oxford English Dictionary* (3rd edition, online) defines biopiracy as “the practice of obtaining commercially valuable genetic material, biochemicals, etc., from plant or animal species without fairly rewarding the country or community of origin, esp. by obtaining patents that restrict future use.” There are definite moral and political overtones to this word, and because of the partial synonymy between biopiracy and pharmaceuticalization in the literature, I feel it is important to note that my use of the word pharmaceuticalization does not carry these overtones. Biopiracy is part of the larger issue of ownership of intellectual property; I briefly discuss this with respect to kava, but Lindstrom 2009 and Aporosa 2006 address it more fully.

7 I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this observation.

8 In Fiji, most kava drinking occurs in homes or communal locations, and there are no kava bars or nakamal. Likewise, there are no nakamal in Kiribati, where kava drinking is a newly acquired pastime. This is because many of the initial kava drinkers there acquired a taste for it from Fiji and follow the Fijian style of drinking. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for these details.

9 One is named Car Wash and the other Kavacino. I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this information.

10 Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this information. Regarding exchange rates, as of 4 August 2011, 100 vatu is equivalent to US\$1.14.

11 Thanks to two anonymous reviewers for these observations.

12 By “fresh,” presumably the author means that this kava has not been sitting around for a long time. By contrast, in the Pacific, fresh kava would mean that the roots had not been dried. If he had let this type of fresh kava sit around for a month, it would have turned into a fermented, rotted mess!

13 This is far from a scientifically conducted survey. However, in discussions with the people who tried these various concoctions, the consensus was that the kava flavor was present, but tended to ruin the flavor of the food. In isolation, the

kava flavor wasn't too bad, but it didn't taste good or "right" when mixed with the other food flavors. Had there been any really successful recipes, it might have been worth testing them on a larger population and more carefully documenting the level of experience each taster had with kava. However, none of the experiments warranted repetition.

¹⁴ Thanks to Adam Lauer for this photo, taken in the lobby of his hotel in China.

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Abstract

This article focuses on kava (*Piper methysticum* G. Forst, Piperaceae) in its various forms: plant, beverage, medicine, and dietary supplement. Specifically, I examine a relatively unexplored dimension of kava's use: the ways in which both the form and the use of kava are changing as it is introduced into new and different cultural contexts. Kava's popularity outside Oceania has led to changes in how and why it is used, as well as transformations in the form in which people consume it. The best known of these is the manufacture of kava-containing pills and tinctures, which are marketed for treating anxiety and depression in Western countries. But kava is also undergoing a transformation into an alcohol-like recreational analogue, and it is being incorporated into a range of food products. In this article, I first seek to document some of these transformations and to describe the contexts into which kava has been introduced. Second, I analyze these transformations and attempt to frame them within larger discourses about medicines, recreational intoxicants, and notions of authenticity and exoticism. Finally, I speculate about the future face of kava. The collapse of demand for kava for use in dietary supplements provides a second chance for kava growers and wholesale distributors to consider how they want kava to be represented and sold to the wider world. The article's conclusion outlines some of the ongoing efforts to shape this future, while highlighting some of the lessons that might be learned by considering the problems associated with the previous kava boom.

KEYWORDS: kava, *Piper methysticum*, globalization, commoditization, pharmaceuticalization