



Introduction

Pacific Textiles, Pacific Cultures: Hybridity and Pragmatic Creativity

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Throughout history, cloth has furthered the organization of social and political life... cloth helps social groups to reproduce themselves and to achieve autonomy or advantage in interactions with others.... [It has] an almost limitless potential for communication... cloth is a repository for prized fibers and dyes, dedicated human labor, and the virtuoso artistry of competitive artistic development. (Schneider and Weiner 1989:1-2)

In describing cloth as a metaphor for society (1989:33), Annette Weiner draws on an old, well-known Tongan proverb: 'humankind is like a mat being woven' (Weiner 1989:1, based on Rogers 1977). The ideologies indexed by this proverb are salient in the many Pacific societies whose people weave, plait, felt, beat, and otherwise construct textiles, many of whom our authors discuss in this special issue of *Pacific Arts*. The papers collected here document the ways in which, through textile arts, Pacific humankind 'weave' themselves, in the contexts of colonial, and more importantly, post-colonial and decolonizing eras. Recognizing the importance of practical, local motivations and inspiration for Pacific peoples' arts, we identify in these creative endeavors both 'hybridity' and what we refer to as 'pragmatic creativity'. Both concepts merit discussion.

Contemporary Pacific textile artisans conjoin, blend and re-imagine key traditional practices and ideologies, producing and deploying alternative materials, meanings, and encodings. The resultant 'hybridized' products offer reflexive modes for dealing with the rapidly changing political and economic realities experienced by Pacific peoples over the last century. These are some of the characteristics of what some have identified as hybridity - a syncretism of essences, forms, and practices. Yet, as the artists and artisans represented here demonstrate, hybridity is more than

mere syncretism. This is because, as we discuss below, 'pragmatic creativity' is an aesthetic particularly salient among Pacific peoples.

Hybridity, as Rosaldo (1995:xv) has described, "can be understood as the ontological condition of all human cultures." It is a way of knowing and being in the world that is based on ongoing creative borrowing, learning from, and merging of human ideas, forms, and practices. Hybridity occurs all the time, but it thrives in settings of creative openness, and the will to find artistic inspiration in a range of opportunities, from the most mundane to the most traumatic. 'Pragmatic creativity' is our term for a sense of willingness, an opportunistic investigation and awareness of the local environment, a perpetual openness to inspiration by the local, as it is applied in the production of artistic material. *Pragmatic creativity is a way of seeing, being in, and fashioning the world that is alert, flexible, pliable, open to modification, adaptation, re-adaptation and, yes, to hybridization.* In a sense, this is similar to Lévi-Strauss' notion of the bricoleur. For Lévi-Strauss, the 'bricoleur' described someone who made do with materials at hand, with what was found, and implicit; he contrasted that with the 'engineer', who plans first, then seeks the necessary materials.¹ Lévi-Strauss saw this as a means for describing ways of being in the world, and as an ontology that capitalizes on the heterogeneous. As we see it now, the process of bricolage depends on artisans' keen observations of the world around them, and willingness to consider any available object or event - within local cultural ideas of appropriateness - as potential for artistic creativity. Bricolage implies lateral thinking, the re-configuring of objects and ideas to new, different, but culturally appropriate uses. This sense that *anything* can be inspirational and can be re-deployed as a medium for aesthetic production is at the heart of



our concept of 'pragmatic creativity'.

To return to the proverb, the metaphor of the woven mat is extendable beyond the genealogical strands of humanity that over time weaves together a society and culture, to index the implicit hybridity and pragmatic creativity that makes culture vibrant. The papers in this volume provide varied examples of the particularities of contemporary Pacific identities that are as malleable and moveable as the textile mediums that encode them. While the forms of creative achievement may differ, we think what they have in common is courage in the face of change, a casual fearlessness in applying creative inspiration, and an assumption that anything (plant materials, found objects, foreign words, styles of dress, auto paint, crushed brick) can be adapted to a culturally meaningful creative pursuit: pragmatic creativity.

These issues are germane beyond the Pacific. By dealing with issues of textiles' materiality, gendered significance and production, relocation, ownership, value, and even authenticity, our authors open up avenues for discussion of a range of issues with which members of virtually all societies grapple.

Hybridity ≠ Inauthenticity

In this special issue, we've asked researchers to switch from the usual tendency to assess how people in indigenous societies have 'remained traditional' or been forced to 'change'. Instead, we asked them to consider material culture's relevance in the ongoing weaving of identity and culture under varying political, economic, and social circumstances, most especially the colonial and post-colonial contexts of Pacific diasporas. The questions addressed under this new perspective include: what qualities are inherent in textiles that make woven, beaten, and plaited cloth icons of a Pacific ethos that embraces modernization and tradition? What are the political contexts and the consequences of implying that there are (or ever were) 'pure' 'authentic' forms of any valued items in the Pacific? What is the efficacy of using material culture objects to ward away the sense of risk in the experience of modernity (Beck 1992, Giddens 1991) or the 'spectre of inauthenticity' (Jolly 1992)?

A major movement in art history and anthropology – two disciplines concerned with 'cultural origins' – is to understand why certain objects are said to index 'tradition' while others are considered 'modern'. This conceptual opposition of 'modernity' and

'tradition' is more assumed than real. As Latour has shown (1997), people of the early colonial era described themselves as 'modern' in opposition to a supposedly non-modern, traditional Other, namely 'the native' (in much the same way that Lévi-Strauss applied concepts of bricoleur and engineer). Where the 'modern' ontology was self-described as logical, scientific and free of poorly categorized ideas, those who were not modern ('primitives', 'natives') were seen as combining disconnected notions and superstitions (hybridities). In an argument structurally reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss', Latour argues that the colonial era 'moderns' were themselves as subject to hybrid practices, notions, and interpretations of the world as the so-called non-moderns (*i.e.*, 'natives'). In other words, the structural opposition of 'moderns' and 'natives' that was made on the basis of ontologies of scientific fact as opposed to accretions of 'hybridities' was always a false one — as mythic as Lévi-Strauss' engineer! While Latour's exegesis of 'modern' thinking shows that hybridization is, as the Tongan proverb implies, a normal, constitutive element of the human condition, that colonial-era epistemology is resurrected every time tradition is opposed to modern in the classification or description of an artisan's product.

In the Pacific, long-standing rules of sociality and the on-going efforts to elide the alien-ness of new cultural forms (so that they fit into local rules about gender, class, kin, and other categories of cultural appropriateness), mean that hybrid objects and 'new' artistic practices are simply the natural outgrowths of Pacific places and ontologies. Indeed, when Tongans refer to stir-fried noodles with soy sauce, meat, and vegetables as "*siopa siui faka Siani*" (Chinese chop suey) they are indexing their own cultural proclivity to take outside cultural forms and (re)make and (re)name them as Tongan forms. *Siopa siui* – not even Chinese in origin, but, reputedly, an American 'fusion' dish – is now naturalized as a Tongan (and Samoan) feast food. Samoan author Albert Wendt (1996) celebrates this cultural tendency for indigenization in his essay "Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body" and when he says "English is a Pacific language now. The colonists brought it, but now we've taken it over and made it ours" (personal communication to Young Leslie, 2006). The implication of this perspective for artists, anthropologists, and historians of art is that we need to adopt a more flexible definition of hybridity itself. Rather than holding on to notions of hybridity as a "space betwixt and between two zones of purity," or the grafting of one pristine origi-



nal to something other, we see hybridity as “the ongoing condition of all human cultures, which contain no zones of purity because they are undergoing continuous processes of ‘lending and borrowing’” (Rosaldo 1995:xv). In this view, ‘zones of purity’ essentially constitute false dichotomies.

Thus, we reject the notion that modified, hybridized, re-localized, commoditized, or politically transnational forms occupy some sort of inauthentic space located somewhere between the poles of a ‘tradition or modernity’ continuum. Given this cultural tendency to indigenization, when Pacific ontologies naturalize hybridity, what constitutes a culturally viable ‘original’? We argue that pragmatic creativity – as a socially sanctioned, culturally embedded process – allows us to recognize these hybrid textile products as authentic innovations. Pacific peoples’ inclusion of these hybrid textiles in their communities’ ritual and quotidian practices, including identity negotiations vis-à-vis members of non-Pacific communities, also makes these innovations authentic. In other words, aesthetic vision and cultural use define authenticity. While it may seem redundant to re-argue the point that innovation does not gainsay cultural authenticity, tensions that emerge in discussions of how ‘new’ forms articulate with ‘old(er)’ or ‘other’ types indicate a widespread discomfort with hybridity as ontology.² The authors in this issue demonstrate, overtly or implicitly, that hybridity is a normal result of a shared and dynamic ethos of pragmatic creativity.

Like Jolly (1992) and Watson (1990), we note that Pacific people’s *modus operandi* has been to create cultural forms and identities in accordance with individual engagement in the local environment. Fox (1997) demonstrates that Austronesian language speakers in general (the Pacific peoples described in this collection speak Austronesian languages) tend to conceptualize identity in terms of narratives about origins and journeys in relation to place. This has its own logic, given the thousands of years of voyaging that presage Pacific peoples’ cultures, up to and including the present. Such a mode of identity construction allows for relocation and optative re-incorporations of (new) members in a social milieu. In this, Fox and the other contributors to that edited volume reinforce earlier arguments about Pacific peoples’ consociality: while genealogy and ‘blood’ may be important political symbols, Pacific peoples construct identity through practice, in relation to local social, ecological, and economic environments (Linnekin and Poyer 1990). Certainly, as the contributors

to this special issue demonstrate, Pacific peoples themselves are comfortable with (and good at) adapting to new physical, political, and social environments. Their adaptations are often enabled by the adaptation of ceremonials and re-creation of culturally significant objects, such as textiles. Thus we argue that the range of forms and uses that makers of barkcloth, mats, baskets or other textiles produce while retaining culturally aesthetic principles, demonstrate that there is agency in hybrid identities and in the production and cultural ownership of hybrid objects.

Beyond Syncretism: the Legacy of Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk

The papers in this issue result from a long series of academic meetings inspired by the importance of textiles, and particularly women’s textile production, in the Pacific. Some of the participants originally began their discussions in 1994 at an Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania session organized by Heather Young Leslie, called “Weaving the World.” Some of those papers were published as part of a special issue of the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* (June 1999). A subsequent ASAO session organized in 2001 by Phyllis Herda, Ping-Ann Addo, and Jane Horan, was called “Hybrid Textiles of the Pacific.” Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk was a participant in “Weaving the World” and wanted to participate in “Hybrid Textiles.” Her illness, which we knew at the time to be terminal, prevented her. The participants in that session unanimously chose to dedicate their papers to Jehanne, in honor of her contribution to the study of popular forms of traditional arts, her devotion to her students, and to Pacific peoples (we refer you to the second paper in this volume, Samantha Fisk’s biographical sketch of her mother). After her death in August 2002, participants in that session decided to publish their papers as a collection in her memory. To this end, several participants met again in Vancouver at the 2003 ASAO. The session organizers, who now included Heather Young Leslie, also invited contributions from others who had developed personal and scholarly connections with Teilhet-Fisk and her work on Pacific textiles. Thus this collection of papers represents perspectives framed by, or in relation to, the insights and enthusiasms of Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk.

In particular, we were inspired by Teilhet-Fisk’s papers on Tongan barkcloth and the waist garments called *kiekie* (1991, 1992a, 1992b). Those papers dealt primarily with cultural prac-



tices and forms that Teilhet-Fisk researched in the Tongan islands in the 1980s and 90s. The issues she flagged as important for Tongans in their kingdom then apply to Pacific Islanders in all their diasporas now. Ethnographically fundamental to what we now call hybridity, her work continues to have important implications for understanding Pacific peoples' experiences of, and ideas about, modernity.

Teilhet-Fisk documented and contextualized commoner women's experience of the arduous and tedious processes of textile production. In her article on the controversy over a bark-bast beating machine (Teilhet-Fisk 1991), she noted that the value of Tongan barkcloth for commoner women was not determined solely by the form of the final product, or even by associations with high-ranking individuals and families, as was then commonly asserted for Tongan textiles (Kaeppler 1978; Gailey 1987; James 1988). Today, in reading her paper "To Beat or Not to Beat" (1991) one should know that the tensions surrounding the acceptance of the *tapa*-beating machine that she identified in the early 1990s persist; her recognition of the valuation of *ngatu* also remains true. Addo's investigation of the use of interfacing fabric as a raw material for Tongan barkcloth, Young Leslie's emphasis on commoner women's production of plaited fine mats, Kamehiro's recognition of the democratization of once-elite Hawaiian motifs, Hermkens' analysis of commoditization and masculinization of Maisin barkcloth — all are part of Teilhet-Fisk's academic genealogy.

In her analysis of Tongan *ta'ovala* and *kiekie*, Teilhet-Fisk (1992a and b) noted that *ta'ovala* are restrictive, but *kiekie* sway as the wearer moves. Thus, while it is proper dress and, like a *ta'ovala*, is suitable for formal occasions, a *kiekie* serves as a medium for allowing fluidity into what might otherwise be a restrictive form of traditional practice. While the *ta'ovala* has long served as the crowning layer of the appropriately dressed Tongan body and is perceived by Tongans as a way of "binding their country around them" (Teilhet-Fisk 1992b:62) at the same time, she argued, the actual material forms of the *ta'ovala* are not stagnant. In this, she pointed to the fluidity with which Tongans alter their daily bodily practices as they move between the demands of ritual and everyday modern life. Teilhet-Fisk argued that for commoners, the freedom afforded by the *kiekie* made that style of 'garment' a popular alternative to the more confining *ta'ovala*. In retrospect, we note that Teilhet-Fisk had identified

one of the key elements of hybrid material culture in the modern Tongan ethnoscape: contemporary *kiekie* may be made of pandanus or hibiscus bark, or out of videotape, imported peacock feathers, or lacquered coconut shell. They may be knotted using macramé techniques, crocheted, or machine sewn or drilled. While clearly syncretic, the *kiekie* are equally historic and traditional — directly analogous to the 'aprons' and other waist garments identified in Cook's 18th-century collections (Kaeppler 1978a). They are even today, 'artificial curiosities' but also, and ultimately, material expressions of pragmatic creativity.

The *kiekie*, as described by Teilhet-Fisk, is metonymic of Pacific peoples' supple approach to identity across Pacific ethnoscapas (a term we borrow from Appadurai to refer to Pacific peoples in the widely varied geographic locales where they currently live. Despite geographic distance, ethnoscapas are connected by virtue of people holding to identities grounded in specific ancestral or natal locations and shared devotion to common cultural ideologies). In subsequent sections of this paper, we expand this discussion of Pacific cloth as a genre of material culture that welcomes, indeed thrives upon, innovation in form and technology across the Pacific ethnoscape. We then outline some of the key themes that we see arising from the papers included in this special issue.

Pacific Cloth

Pacific cultures are made up of people interested in keeping *people*. This is in contrast to Western, capitalist 'culture' that emphasizes *the things* that are kept. As Wagner (1981:26) says (of Euro-Americans), "we keep the ideas, the quotations, the memoirs, the creations, and let the people go." The opposite is true in the Pacific. Describing these ways of organizing valuable things as "styles of creativity," Wagner makes a point about Papua New Guinea that we believe is relevant for the entire Pacific: "It is people, and the experiences and meanings associated with them, that they do not want to lose, rather than ideas and things." Yet how are people, experiences, meanings, ideas, and things connected and kept? Textiles are especially useful for creating ties that bind (Schneider and Weiner 1989). The very materiality of textiles encompasses a range of physical and symbolic potentialities that people continually use and adapt. Capitalizing on this capacity, people render textiles into socially enduring objects. Textiles endure because, and so that, their people endure.

Pacific textiles are often made of elements from varied cultural



settings, and can be re-deployed in varied contexts. The papers in this issue probe the reasons behind the apparent readiness of Pacific peoples to explore hybrid potentialities and to privilege textiles in their creativity. It is precisely because Pacific textiles are renewable – in their materiality, symbolism, and contexts – that they are durable in their sociality. Through a range of processes, some of which are discussed in this issue, the people who make, use, exchange, and admire them can continually imbue these textiles with social lives. In return, textiles wrap, enfold, and bind people and their memories together across time and space. Textiles are polysemic and cognitively open – they are ‘good to create’ (with).³ Through their production, deployment, and malleable physical form, they lend themselves to metaphor. They are, quite simply, wonderful mediums for demonstrating pragmatic creativity.

The objects our contributors investigate are made with materials sourced from within the Pacific and beyond: leaves, bark basts, roots, pods, shells, soot, cotton fabric, strips of plastic, video or audio tape, car paint, and other materials readily available through local means. Pacific-based textile technologies are based on repetitions of beating, knotting, tying, weaving, plaiting, looping, twisting, pasting, dyeing, painting, and appliquéing. Making these technologies socially meaningful depends on hands, tools, seawater, fire, smoke, memory, stories, songs, chants, and prayers. As completed pieces, textiles are materially predisposed to being folded, tied, rolled and draped, and for enveloping things, places, and bodies (Schneider and Weiner 1989:2). As ceremonial clothing, they protect, beautify, identify, and can turn human corporeality into sculpture (Addo 2004a), adding social weight (Young Leslie 2004) where it is due.

Textiles’ physical and social malleability makes them attractive media for artists whose processes index issues of identity (Mallon and Pereira 1998 and 2002) in contexts of journeys and genealogies. Just as one can turn a body into sculpture using textiles, so too can one sculpt, mould, or (re)fashion a textile, or the media that constitutes a textile object. The Māori who settled first in what we now call Aotearoa/New Zealand had access to the *herekeke* plant [flax], but not the pandanus of their ancestors; they adapted their knowledge and skills to the local medium (flax) producing a new, different, and clearly special corpus of textiles and textile-making techniques that are quintessentially Māori. Likewise, contemporary Niuean women living in Aotearoa/New

Zealand have embraced ‘new’ materials like flax, but also plastic packing strips and coloured ribbon as materials for weaving hats, baskets, and mats. They’ve also applied the styles learned on Niue, or adapted other styles (Thode-Arora, this issue).

Pragmatic creativity flows in all directions: in Tonga, women are plaiting imported gift-wrap ribbon into very modern *ta’ovala* (Young Leslie, this issue).

We view this readiness to re-envision mundane objects, and to see them as having artistic potential, as a clear example of pragmatic creativity. In a certain past, when local environments were rife with shells and plants, processing and artistic manipulation of leaves and flowers led to the forms stereotypic of Pacific textile arts today. However, those media were essentially local household objects whose artistic potential were identified and transposed into *objets d’art*. Today, members of the Pacific ethnoscape live in environments equally urban and rural, with different types of household and found media as resources. Hundreds of years after women adapted pandanus-processing techniques to invent the fibers used for Māori woven cloaks, the part Samoan, part Māori, part Irish, part Tuvaluan, part French, Auckland resident Rosanna Raymond patched her Levis with Tongan barkcloth and created a very special, different and new type of ‘fashion activism’ (Raymond 2003:197). New, different, yet somehow the same: *Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose!*

Given this reality, why would using auto paint or ground red brick to decorate a Tongan barkcloth be, as Jolly (1992) asked rhetorically “not Pacific” or somehow culturally inauthentic? In other words, the availability of particular materials has always affected the end product, and has expanded the aesthetic vision and inherent bricolage that influences the aesthetics, function, and meaning of the objects. As we see it, and playing off Lévi-Strauss’ (1963) famous ‘good to think’ dictum, textiles and textile technologies are ‘good to hybrid’.

The Papers

The essays in this issue explore the form, function, and aesthetics of textiles in and from the Pacific Islands. The contributors provide diverse cultural examples of textiles within Pacific Islanders’ ethnoscares – wherever they may be. Collectively, the papers begin to probe the idea of a pan-Pacific cultural ethos of pragmatic creativity by highlighting the borrowing of ideas, and the similarities and differences in methods, materials, meanings



and uses of cloth. In our application of hybridity as a theoretical concept, we follow warnings to eschew the uncritical celebration of cultural syncretism because, as Coombes and Brah (2000:1) argued, to do otherwise elides economic, political and social inequalities and assumes some sort of symbiotic relationship between people and cultural forms. While many cultural forms are considered 'authentic' because they promulgate particular political and cultural agendas, it is important to acknowledge forms that index alternative experiences of shared cultural histories. As such, many of the papers in this volume highlight the elision, as well as the entrenchment, of rank and power through material culture. As repositories of human experience, cultural forms also index a range of locations and social eras. It is therefore obvious – and, arguably, obligatory – to stretch our locations of concern/analysis and consider Pacific ethnoscaapes in their geographic variability.

Several contributors to this volume show that quilting, a technology from England and her colonies, has been localized and elaborated by Pacific women. Sowell, Kamehiro, Hermkens and Herda explore the ways in which barkcloths and quilts serve as useful commodities and as treasured and inalienable gifts, but also as templates for considering empire and post-colonial relations. Elsewhere, Herda (1999) describes Tongan-American women participating in rituals that formally substantiate Tongan state hegemony. While 'pristine' cultural forms are customary in such events, these women use machine-sewn quilts as gift items rather than the historically prescribed plaited pandanus and beaten barkcloth. In so doing, they situate themselves as both Tongan and Tongan-American; hybrids equally invested in, and free of, specific cultural hegemonies. Refocusing on the Hawaiian islands, in this issue Herda extends her interest in state influence on textile deployments to argue that, in the shadow of the American annexation of the Hawaiian islands, and in the ongoing context of Kanaka Māoli sovereignty issues, Hawaiian quilt motifs are 'politically safe' icons because they do not appropriate images of indigeneity. Daily-use items like mugs, stamps, and home decorations, as well as tourist items such as postcards and key chains are embellished with inoffensive quilt motifs such as breadfruit and frangipani. Kamehiro notes that such symbols are understood as traditional, Hawaiian, and even chiefly: they have long been connected to practices of gift exchange, and imbued with spiritual and personal significance from people who worked the designs

on the quilts. Yet, as Herda points out here, as insignia on tourist objects that are mass-produced and hurriedly bought, these contemporary arts are consumed by both individuals searching for a taste of the so-called authentic traditional Pacific past, as well as by local Hawaiian people who understand that contemporary artistic forms *are* traditional. Quilted breadfruit and frangipani motifs become vehicles for a range of ways of entering and leaving Hawaiian culture.

Kamehiro's paper synthesizes archival information on a range of Hawaiian discourses about quilts, quilt patterns, and technologies, and highlights the adaptability of Hawaiian aesthetics and valuation of material forms such that cotton quilts made from an 'imported technology' became, and abide as, the predominant traditional Hawaiian textile form today. In her historical analysis of several popular Hawaiian quilt motifs, Kamehiro argues that they validated discourses of elites' rule and ascension in the context of 18th-and-19th century monarchy – itself a fragile attempt to hybridize pre-Christian and post-mission social forms – and the peri-annexation period, now thought of with nostalgia by Kanaka Māoli and sovereignty advocates. Quilting technologies, as well as oft-used designs, were once chiefly prerogatives that have now been democratized. Both Young Leslie and Addo make similar points in their papers about commoner artisans' control over textile design and production. However, in the production of historic Hawaiian quilts as gifts, how, when, and for whom they were produced, are actions imbued with protocols and social responsibilities that indexed their chiefly origins. Kamehiro's essay complements Sowell's and Scothorn's work in historically mapping the influence of hierarchy and elites on art forms such as quilting and, in the case of Samoa and Tonga, barkcloth making. At the same time, Kamehiro's interest in the multiple messages that quilts encoded for Hawaiians during the turbulent times of the last Hawaiian sovereigns resonates in both analytical technique and trans-cultural scope with Sharrad's analysis of the inter-textuality and the mnemonic coding of a piece of barkcloth from Tahiti. In all three analyses, cloth is textual and can be read across time, space, and cultural boundaries (although it is not always read accurately).

Sharrad's theoretically sophisticated article draws on hybrid sources – Tahitian poetry and British embroidery – to demonstrate how an analysis can adhere to Coombes' and Brah's (2000) warning to avoid uncritical celebrations of syncretism, while pay-



ing attention to economic, political, and social inequalities. In his discussion of Elizabeth Cook's embroidered Tahitian barkcloth, intended to be a waistcoat for her husband, the explorer Captain James Cook, Sharrad coins the term "pragmatics of modification" – a concept semantically congruent with our notion of pragmatic creativity. Elizabeth Cook was widowed, and the waistcoat was never completed. But in Sharrad's analysis, it remains a textile while becoming a readable text. Sharrad compares the waistcoat's embroidered surface to Tahitian and Cook Islands poetry, written in French and English: both signify 'meaningful significations on textured (white) surfaces'; both are layered 'texts'; both can be 'read' as situations in which imperial power and Pacific meanings are layered and re-configured, but not in simplistic ways. In Sharrad's analysis, colonial and post-colonial artifacts are cognitively open, ripe for re-reading and re-interpretation. Just as the barkcloth from Tahiti was originally embroidered into an artifact we can use today for reading the complexities of colonialism, so is it subject to (intellectual) re-embroidering. Likewise, Tahitian poet Flora Devatine layers hybrid textile and signification, and re-embroiders meanings when she uses French and Ma'ohi words as text on paper. Reading Sharrad's essay in relation to Addo's essay on *ngatu pepa* leads us to recognize the ways in which paper can be a textile and *vice versa*. Today, the unfinished waistcoat, Devatine's poems, and *ngatu pepa* speak to moments of rupture, beauty, love, loss, identity, and gendered forms of responsibility.

Indeed, one area in which Pacific textiles seem to have abiding significance is as gendered symbols of belonging and demonstrations of role and responsibility. The shorthand qualifier 'women's wealth' has referred to textiles of any kind: quilts, fine mats or paper. Yet, while the Pacific peoples considered in these papers generally consider textile making to *not* be men's work *per se*, men often do participate in production, help to organize ceremonial exchanges, receive presentations of textile wealth (Young Leslie 1999), and use textiles in mundane and ceremonial contexts. However, as Hermkens' essay highlights, in the context of appropriation, monetization, and modernization, textiles can also be gendered as male products. After a brief discussion of the symbolism of decorative designs, bark processing, dye pots, and dyes in Maisin barkcloth production, Hermkens details the shifts in relations of barkcloth production that have taken place in the last half century in Collingwood Bay, Papua New Guinea (see

also Addo and Besnier, forthcoming). While barkcloth commercialization creates a space for female agency, it also creates a space of tension as men seek to control and dominate women's production. At the same time, outside forces, including Greenpeace and the local Anglican Church, are brokering for the tourist market and helping to accelerate changes in the gendered relations of production and control. Once so specifically the work of women – to the point where a woman could be identified by the designs on her cloth – barkcloth in Maisin now includes barkcloths beaten by women, decorated by men, and marketed by Greenpeace.

Hermkens' detailed explanation of the metaphorical significance of *dun* (red dye symbolic of blood) and dye pots (symbolic of wombs) relates to another important area of gendered significance of Pacific textiles. In many contexts cloth production and deployment are closely associated with mothers and the love and responsibility that they bear their children and family (Addo 2004b; Schneider and Weiner 1989; Hoskins 1989; Forshee 2000; Young Leslie 1999, 2004; also see Addo, Thode-Arora, Young Leslie and Sowell, all in this issue). These maternal concerns cross Pacific ethnoscapas and are carried into diasporas. Thode-Arora and Addo discuss how cloth production by women from Niue and Tonga, now residents and citizens of New Zealand, find ways to demonstrate to their children and grandchildren some of the most salient aspects of being mothers in their ethnic traditions.

Concerns about appropriate motherhood and social obligation overlap with concerns about cultural authenticity in, and of, Pacific diasporas. Addo (this volume) addresses this issue in her paper on Tongan barkcloth production in New Zealand. '*Ngatu pepa*' – barkcloth made, not from *hiapo* (paper mulberry or *broussonetia papyrifera*) bark but from vylene, a synthetic fabric used for garment interfacing - is contentious because it is not made of *hiapo* bark and because the most intense and laborious stages of bark beating are avoided. Yet Tongan women involved in *ngatu pepa* production adhere to the ideology that good Tongan mothers (in fact all adult women) should labor to produce barkcloth. This is difficult in the diaspora, where *hiapo* bast is unavailable. Thus, the "pragmatics of modification" (Sharrad's term) challenge such an ideology when diasporic Tongan women consider, and contest, just what amount, kind, and intensity of labor they can remove without affecting the meaning and role of *ngatu pepa*



in how they craft their identities. Their *ngatu pepa* therefore embodies concerns about gender roles, religious responsibility, cooperative labor, community development, and cultural cohesion, and debates about identity and location of authentic culture. “*Ko ‘emau ‘aati pe*” (“it is our art”), say Addo’s interlocutors about the *ngatu pepa* they have ‘invented,’ simultaneously evoking its rightful place as an object of tradition and affixing Western notions of ‘art’ in an expanding discourse about cultural production among contemporary Tongans. However, as Addo indicates, what is not (yet) fixed is the territory over which *ngatu* has significance: *ngatu pepa* continues to be somewhat suspect, for some.

In many Pacific Island societies, cloth is associated with gender and high-ranking women; maternity is connected to genealogy, social reproduction, and the transference of inheritance and privilege (Kaepler 1971, 1978, 1999; Weiner 1992; Herda 1999; Schoeffel 1999; Bolton 2003). As Young Leslie (1999, 2004) has demonstrated, for commoner Tongan women, maternity and cloth production are also about the transference of opportunity, moral fiber, and the fulfillment of familial obligations that lead to social wellness. Where elite women bestow on their children blood rank, commoner women give their children and families their industry, including the labor required for textile production. In this issue, Young Leslie details commoner women’s experiential knowledge, perspectives, and strategic deployments of traditional cloth, and discusses the symbolic allusions associated with plaiting textiles – allusions that do not necessarily replicate those associated with transference of privilege. This culturally iconic form of knowing – *lālānga* – is preserved only through practice – the work of weaving (or plaiting) pandanus. Without support for the commoner women who make ceremonial textile production their life’s work, this knowledge may be lost from the cultural repertoire, as has been the know-how for *lalava*, the traditional men’s knowledge of wrapping and binding with cordage. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in an area that is often stereotyped as the heartland of traditional Tongan cultural practices, Young Leslie argues that deployment rationales, the non-scripted, embodied nature of the knowledge, plus the epistemology of the traditional production technologies, means it is commoner women who are underwriting ways for contemporary Tongans across the ethnoscape, especially the elites, to be hybrids: both traditional and modern, worldly and indigenous.

Like Young Leslie, Allen extends our understanding of hybridity in cloth’s deployment: adopting an art historian’s perspective on the application of store-bought cloth where other ‘traditional’ textiles may have been used before, Allen describes how trade store calicos and other purchased fabrics may be deployed to instantiate social and ceremonial spaces in contemporary Samoa. The general emphasis on Samoan ceremonial space, as epitomized by the village *malae*, is essentialized as an empty center surrounded by a demarcated barrier (Mageo 2002; Wendt 1977). One might assume that the application of cloth in creating this social space would be to contain the center, as Tongans do with barkcloth at a burial, for example (Young Leslie 1999; Addo 2004a). However, Allen describes situations where trade store cloth is now unfurled across that supposedly empty space, connecting participants and visually mapping social obligation and mutual recognition.

Change, we note, is a normal part of Pacific ontology. After examining several museum collections of Samoan barkcloth, Scothorn demonstrates this point clearly as she challenges the idea that the barkcloth designs currently essentialized as ‘Samoa’ or ‘Tongan’ represent historical continuities and territorial, national specificities of the past. Samoan barkcloth from 19th century Samoa, of the particular style called *siapo tasina*, is very similar to barkcloth produced in Tonga in the same era. In fact Scothorn says, even contemporary Samoans cannot distinguish *siapo tasina* from Tongan *ngatu* produced in the late twentieth century. The reasons that Samoan *siapo* is aesthetically so similar to Tongan *ngatu* is, Scothorn argues, that 18th-and-19th century Tongans traded barkcloth to Samoans as part of traditional cycles of marital and mercantile exchanges, and Samoan women were influenced to emulate Tongan styles and forms, thus creating *siapo tasina*. Contemporarily, Tongan *ngatu* is a suitable, indeed highly desirable, replacement for *siapo tasina* among Samoans. Thus, in addition to Samoans’ willingness to insert Tongan barkcloth into their ceremonies, Scothorn argues the high recognition factor associated with Tongan barkcloth is related to Samoans’ high regard for Tonga’s ability to resist colonization. We would add the point that Scothorn’s work demonstrates how these textiles resist the supposed ethnic purities or national essentialisms associated with concerns over cultural authenticity.

In previously published work, Sowell discusses continuities, borrowings, personalizations, and contemporary elaborations of *siapo*



designs both on barkcloth surfaces and tattooed skin (Sowell 2000). Here, she continues this focus on hybridity in identifying three pillars of Samoan barkcloth-making: motifs, composition, and natural material. Echoing the implications of Scothorn's work, Sowell demonstrates in greater detail and complexity how open Samoan artists have remained to forms that constitute contemporary barkcloth while modifying various aspects of production and design. Their pragmatic approach to creativity, as Sowell emphasizes in her historicization of techniques, shows that Samoan barkcloth and barkcloth-making equipment cannot be justifiably categorized as traditional, modern, or even neo-traditional. Her work reiterates Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk's (1991) caution about the problematic nature of categorizing cultural forms and practices as anything but hybrid.

Conclusion

In this special collection of essays, our intention is to make the following a standard view in studies about the Pacific: *across the far flung regions of Pacific ethnoscaples, artists and audiences, creators and consumers employ personal and cultural agency in supporting, suggesting, and sanctioning the hybridity of artistic forms. They build on a cultural ethos of pragmatic creativity in the service of expressing individual voices and bolstering collective identity.* While in some cases, these hybrid forms or deployments are contested (see Addo, Hermkens), in most cases hybridity is, and has always been, embraced, indigenized, and made local (see Kamehiro, Scothorn, Sharrad, Young Leslie). The specters of inauthenticity are gainsaid by the pragmatic, fundamental reality of hybridity as a constitutional feature of Pacific cultural creativities. Textiles, as fluid mediums for metaphorization, encode, document and allow Pacific peoples to read, and re-read, re-embroider and re-weave their worlds. Society is just like a mat being woven. **PA**

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Notes

¹ Like Iwabuchi, we employ the term 'bricoleur' (Iwabuchi 1998), but we reject the associations of intellectual progress, of primitive vs. modern mentality that are sometimes mistakenly associated with Levi-Strauss' (1966) notion of the bricoleur (see Geertz 1973:345-359). As Levi-Strauss himself says, the engineer is a myth. Latour, whom we discuss below, makes a related argument.

² For literature on innovation, tradition and authenticity see: Wagner 1975, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, and contributors to Linnekin and Poyer 1990.

³ See Lévi-Strauss' (1963: 89) well-known statement: "The animals in totemism cease to be solely or principally creatures which are feared, admired or envied: their perceptible reality permits the embodiments of ideas and relations conceived by speculative thought on the basis of empirical observations. We can understand, too, that natural species are chosen not because they are 'good to eat' but because they are 'good to think'."

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