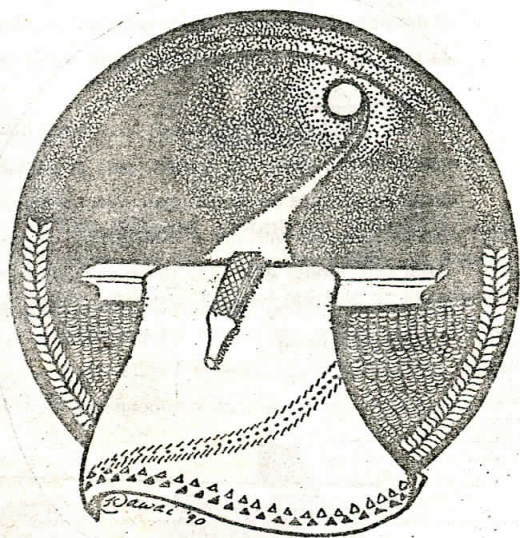


KAPA ALOHA



THE
FINE ART
OF
HAWAII'IAN
KAPA

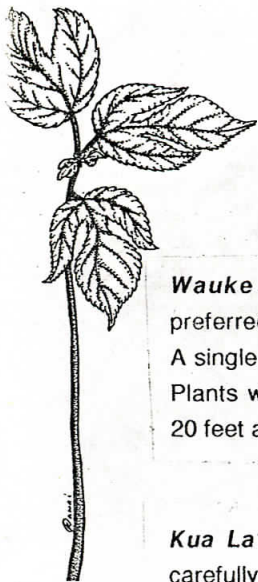


The fine art of Hawaiian *kapa* stands out from that of other bark-cloth making cultures because of its fine quality and complexity of design, as well as the depth of meaning it represented for the Hawaiian people.

Hawaiian *kapa* bore a watermark design which was imbedded in the cloth's fibers by the beating process. It could be seen when the *kapa* was held up to the light.

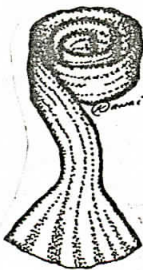
Individual *kapa* designs were intricate and small. There was symbolic significance to every element of each print. *Kapa* making was a profound artistic means to express one's *mana'o* (thoughts) about *akua* (god), *aumakua* (guardian), and *'ohana* (family). Respect for and harmony with the earth was always present.

Kapa Making Materials



Wauke (Paper Mulberry) was the preferred plant for Hawaiian *kapa* making. A single plant took 1 to 2 years to mature. Plants were cultivated to a height of 10 to 20 feet and a diameter of 1 to 3 inches.

Kua La'au (tools from native logs) were carefully hand crafted. One straight, 6-foot by 2-foot hardwood log could be used to make these primary tools: one 5-foot *kua* (anvil), one 1-foot *hohoa* (rounded beater), and at least one 1-foot *'ie kuku* (squared beater). The log was aged for a year to minimize cracking.



The Kapa Making Process

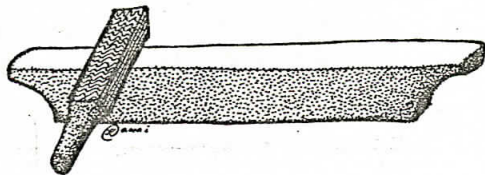
'Ili La'au (bark) was harvested from the mature *wauke* by cutting close to the root and removing the top, leafy area. The branchless stalk could be anywhere from 6 to 15 feet tall. A continuous line was sliced down and through the bark and the bark was removed from the branch in one piece.

The bark was rolled and soaked in gently running water or in a container of water that was changed every day. After a week or 2 of soaking, the bark was cleaned by separating the *'ili-lepo-o-waho* (outer, green bark) from the *'i'o-o-loko* (white inner bark).



Ho'omo'omo'o (first beating) of the bark was done to soften any bark that was still tough. A *hohoa* (rounded beater) and a *kua pohaku* (smooth, stone anvil) were used to loosen the fibers of the cleaned, wet bark. This was called *mo'omo'o*. At this point, the bark could be dried, rolled and stored for future use.

The freshly beaten *mo'omo'o* strips were rolled into *poho* (bundles). In a shady part of the yard these *poho* would be placed upon a bed of banana leaves, covered with more leaves, and weighed down with stones. After 7 to 10 days of maturation this strong smelling *mo'omo'o* would be ready for the second beating.



Kuku (second beating) of the bark was done to extend the *kapa*. The steady and patient beating with the *'ie kuku* (square beater) upon the *kua kuku* (anvil) spread the *wauke* 4 to 6 times its original width. The *kapa* maker was aware of the fibers' thickness and worked for an even spread. The wider the *mo'omo'o* stretched, the thinner and more fragile it grew.

The bark strips were overlapped and beaten together to cover holes and flaws. The *pepehi* (beater with wide spaced lines) was used first, for the thicker *kapa*, and the *ho'opa'i* (beater with closer



Ho'oki (final beating) was performed when the *kapa* reached the desired width and thickness depending on the purpose for which it would be used. This final beating would impress the desired pattern into the finished *kapa* cloth. It was then spread out to dry. At this time a *mōle* (smooth surface) could be used to iron out the *kapa* and create a perfectly smooth surface for printing.



'Ohe Kāpala (bamboo printers) were used to print the decorative pattern on finished *kapa*. Hawaiian bamboo provided an ideal length and density for carving the stamp printers. The intricate designs were sometimes carved on a .2-inch x 1-inch surface of an 11-inch long bamboo sliver.

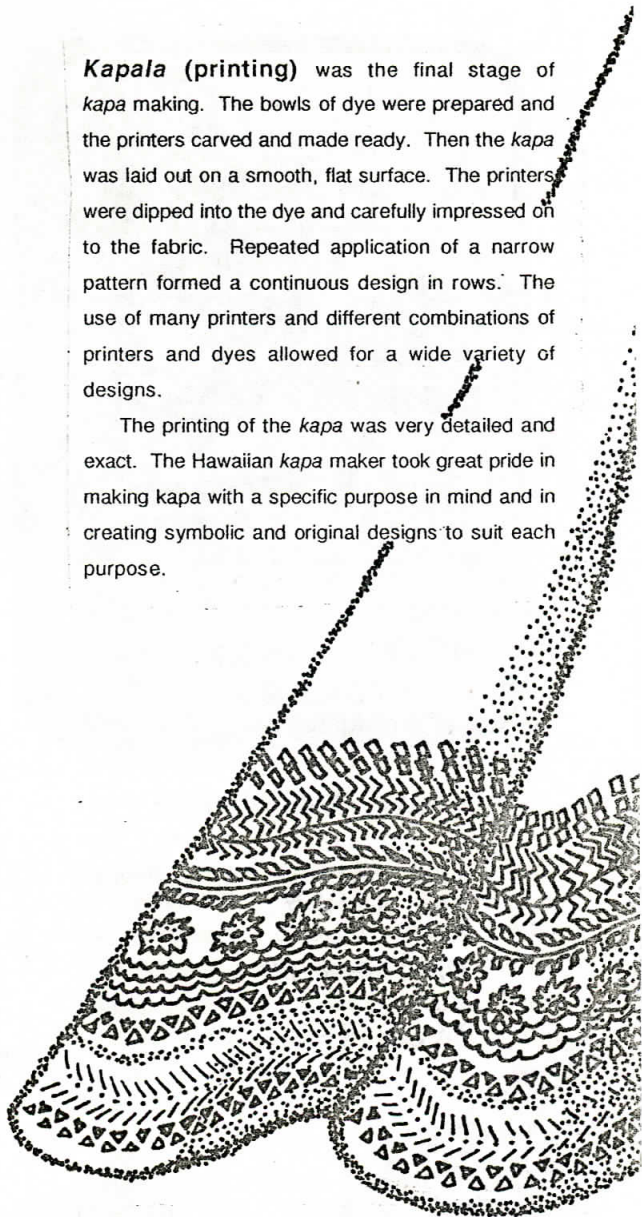


Waiho'olu'u (dyes) were prepared from plants and other natural elements according to treasured formulas. *Kukui* was used for brown, *olena* for yellow and ash for black. *Pa'akai* (salt), *mimi* (urine), *lepo* (mud) and *ko'a* (coral) were some of the mordants used to fix the dyes to the *kapa*.

Many of the dye materials were difficult to gather and prepare. The process of dye making was complicated and challenging. It required patient experimentation and research to produce the stable, consistent and durable colors of the Hawaiian *kapa*.

Kapala (printing) was the final stage of *kapa* making. The bowls of dye were prepared and the printers carved and made ready. Then the *kapa* was laid out on a smooth, flat surface. The printers were dipped into the dye and carefully impressed on to the fabric. Repeated application of a narrow pattern formed a continuous design in rows. The use of many printers and different combinations of printers and dyes allowed for a wide variety of designs.

The printing of the *kapa* was very detailed and exact. The Hawaiian *kapa* maker took great pride in making *kapa* with a specific purpose in mind and in creating symbolic and original designs to suit each purpose.



The uses of finished *kapa* were many. The *malo* (loincloth), *kikepa* (wrap) and *kapa moe* (blankets) were some of the practical usages of *kapa*. These items were very personal and never shared except within a most special and intimate relationship. Important articles of *kapa* were created under strict, *kapu* (sacred) traditions. It was of the utmost importance to impart the correct *mana* (power) into cloth that would serve a religious or ceremonial purpose.



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ALOHA MAI !

My name is **KawaiKaula'au Aona-Ueoka**. My *kupuna* (grandmother) Mary Pua'ala Aona nurtured me on a Hawaiian homestead in Nanakuli, leeward O'ahu. Many are the *kumu* (teachers) who have helped me to grow.

Presently I am teaching Hawaiian culture, language, chant and dance in the Hawai'i public school system. As founder and *Kumu* of *Halau Ho'oulu Mau Ka 'Ilima* (The School of the Continually Growing 'Ilima Flower) I enjoy teaching, and perpetuating, Hawaiian dance, arts and culture. The support of my family and friends, especially my husband, Roy Ueoka, and my children, 'Ilima and Hapaki, makes all this possible.

Hawaiian kapa is the medium through which I express myself both traditionally, within my culture, and as a contemporary artist.

I use Hawaiian symbolism, ancient designs and patterns, as well as my own representational style to communicate Hawaiian values.

Hawaiian poetry, chant, legend and hula inspire and infuse my work.

The foundation of my Hawaiian heritage teaches me to do this with *ho'ihii* (respect) and *aloha* (love).

Mahalo e ke Akua,

*Kawai
Aona-Ueoka*

