Chapter Three

We are the Pacific:
Pacific Islander Culture in a New Setting

Ta'ahine Tonga - Tongan Maiden)
Societal Structures

Many different political, societal and familial structures existed in the pre-contact Pacific. However most structures were based on extended family units and were generally a type of chiefdom. Societal structures were also influenced by the typographical environment. On smaller coral atolls there might be one or two chiefs. A chain of atolls might each have a chief who may or may not form alliances with other chiefs within the chain.

On hilly or heavily forested islands, chiefdoms might follow natural boundaries such as rivers, valleys or forests but if such barriers are traversed with relatively little difficulty, chiefdoms might form alliances. Very often, such alliances were formed along familial lines with lesser and higher chiefs, rank being determined by age and seniority of family. The society might be divided into the ruling class and commoners and within each division there might be stratification.

Political Structures

In pre-contact Hawaii, islands were divided into valley chiefdoms that extended from the mountaintops to the ocean. People in the chiefdom lived in extended family groups and at all elevations, each group generally harvested what was available at that elevation. The ali'i or ruling class would mediate exchange of resources between the different groups so that all within the chiefdom might benefit from all resources available. A high chief might occupy a position akin to that of king with jurisdiction of an entire island. Although chiefliness might be based in lineage, it was sometimes achieved by conquest.

The Marquesas Islands consisted of valleys separated by rugged ranges, and accessible usually with difficulty by ocean. Here, chiefdoms remained separate and autonomous and were often at war with each other.

Maori society in Aotearoa-New Zealand was divided into waka or canoe groups, tribes, subtribes and extended families. For example, all tribes descending from people who immigrated to New Zealand on the Tainui canoe are now called Tainui and have a paramount chieftainess. Each tribe has a number of chiefs of varying ranks according to senior family lines.

Pre-contact Tonga consisted of several chiefdoms that were somewhat united by Ahoeitu, the first Tui Tonga, in about the tenth century. The Tui Tonga dynasty lasted until 1865 when George I Tupou from the Tui Kanokupolu line of chiefs became the King of Tonga. It is perhaps
the most complex of all Pacific Societies with no two people holding the same rank. However Tongans recognize three classes of people. These are the chiefs or *houeiki*, chief's attendants or *matapule*, and commoners or *tua*. All Tongan subjects would be considered commoners in relation to the King and his viceroys.

In Samoa people lived in villages, the head of which was the matai. The matai had a council of chiefs who facilitated the functions of the village, the distribution of resources and the resolution of conflicts. Members of the community contributed to the matai in labor or wealth and the matai took care of the community.

Samoa is politically divided in western terms. Western Samoa is politically independent and American Samoa is a territory of the United States. However some Samoans maintain that Samoa is one nation. Certainly it is culturally united and the matai system is maintained not only in Samoa but also where Samoans in overseas communities live in substantial numbers. Such places are Auckland and Wellington in New Zealand, and Hawaii and Western State cities in the United States.

**Genealogy and Kinship**

Genealogical lineage was of prime importance in most Pacific Islands and much time was devoted to memorizing genealogy. It was always desirable to marry within one's rank or into a higher rank. Often betrothals were made with this in mind. In Hawaii's ruling class, siblings were sometimes married to keep the lineage pure. While chiefs were most often men, this did not mean that women had no power. A male chief may preside over gatherings and ceremonies but it is quite possible that his mother or oldest sister outranks him. In some cases chiefs made decisions only with a woman's (sometimes public) approval. Rank and status might also be inherited through female lines.

In Tongan society, the head of family is called the ulumotua and is usually a man but he must show respect to his mehekotanga, his paternal aunt and is outranked by his sister. A brother and his children must show respect to his fahu, his sisters and their children. His wife’s brothers and their children must likewise show respect to his wife and children. The eldest sister of any family is respected as the family matriarch and may exercise influence over the entire family.

Another important Tongan custom is the brother-sister tapu. This applies to siblings and cousins. Traditionally, males were not permitted to converse with familiarity with their sisters and female cousins. They were discouraged from being in the same room and especially could not sit next to each other. It is probable that Tongan males will not enter the bedrooms of their
sisters or female cousins.

The Extended Family

Always at the base of Pacific Islander societal structures is the extended family. While this generally ties three generations together into a close unit, the extended family in the Pacific may extend to four or five generations. The extended family shares all responsibilities and resources. In such a structure, aunts and uncles are treated with the same respect as biological parents, cousins are treated as biological children or siblings, and grandparents are most revered. Children are raised and disciplined by parents, parents’ siblings and cousins, and by older siblings and cousins. When parents die, the oldest son assumes the role as head of the family and the oldest sister assumes the place of family matriarch. As more generations are born, extended families may divide into separate groups forming new extended families.

Furthermore, though we live under and acknowledge the political structure of the United States of America, we respect island societal structures. Extended family relationships and loyalty to political and other societal structures persist to varying degrees. While many Pacific Islanders live as independent nuclear families in single-family dwellings, it is not unusual for three generations to live under one roof. A family unit may consist of any combination of grandparents, aunts or uncles, parents, children, and nieces and/or nephews. Pacific Islanders tend to thrive, or at least, are happiest when they are surrounded by family. Formal and informal adoptions are not uncommon. Children may be raised by biological parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, older siblings or all the above.

Reciprocity

Heads of households, may assume without question, financial responsibilities for all members of the household. Likewise, when parents die, the eldest son may assume certain financial responsibilities for his siblings and their children. A matai may assume certain financial responsibilities for his aiga or extended family, or other groups within the Samoan community. Under an American system of economics, this is an awesome burden, and sometimes it is a strain on Pacific Islander families, but under a Pacific Islander system, this does not always result in undue stress. Essential to traditional political, social and familial structures is reciprocity. In a reciprocal system, resources are allocated according to need. When a family member or a family group enters situations of need ranging from sickness or bereavement to sponsoring celebratory
events such as weddings, birthdays or graduations, other family groups share this burden by contributing money, food, and gifts for exchange with the belief that when they themselves are in similar situations, this group and other groups will in turn help them out. Reciprocity means that when the head of a household assumes financial responsibility for the entire household, or the eldest son assumes responsibility for his family on his parents’ death, members of the beneficiary group contribute in any way they can to the financially responsible head. Should young people leave their biological families to live with relatives in other areas where opportunities for employment are better, they would be expected to contribute to the welfare of that family. They may also be expected to share their income with their family at home. In Aotearoa-New Zealand, reciprocity is obvious at tribal gatherings, weddings and especially at funerals. Relatives often contribute to such gatherings in the form of money or food so that all share the responsibility.

When reciprocity breaks down, as it may do when Pacific Islanders move into U.S. society, stress and financial strain may result. Pacific Islanders not raised with traditional values may tend to become a little selfish and take advantage of the extended family system. Although relatives may take care of them, they may not contribute back to the family group. As western economic values infiltrate Pacific Islander societies, societal structures are compromised. Capitalism, which is based on individual accumulation of wealth, is diametrically opposite Pacific Islander communalism. Goods and services may move only in one direction so that the ruling elite accumulate wealth rather than use it to take care of their communities. Commoners become poor and discontent and rulers become wealthy and greedy. The community takes care of the chief but the chief does not take care of the community. Individual welfare and the welfare of the nuclear family are prioritized. Traditional social structures break down and the culture changes.

Communalism

Extended family values, reciprocity and communalism have affected relationships with non-Pacific Islanders throughout history both in and out of the islands. When friendly relationships were established between explorers, settlers, missionaries or visitors, Pacific Islanders were very giving. Families, converted to Christianity, often gave very valuable possessions and gifts to missionaries. Missionaries and other visitors returned home with items that were valuable then and are now priceless. Even today both here and in the islands, when a visitor admires something in a Pacific Islander household, that article is often given to them.
Families have been known to give away their children to admiring visitors. It would not be unusual for a child to bring home a non-Pacific Islander friend and that child be treated with the same kindness as anyone in the family.

As Pacific Islanders move away from the islands, they tend to take with them their values and beliefs. Consequently they tend to develop new support systems. These may include distant relatives, people that they are not related to, but from their home islands, other Pacific Islanders, other people of color, or any neighbors and friends they meet. In other words, Pacific Islanders tend to be open to developing friendships with most people. Most like to welcome other people into their homes and try their best to be hospitable. They are willing to share what they have with others. Some may be puzzled when non-Pacific Islanders do not reciprocate and show the same kindness but it would be rare that they would say anything.

Communalism may also account for the fact that some Pacific Islander children shy away from being too successful in school academics. Such success may be perceived as someone thinking he or she is better than everyone else. Pacific Islander parents seem to be supportive of their children's academic pursuits, but to a child's peers, success may be seen as "selling out" or becoming too white. More and more Pacific Islanders are entering University and this is met with differing response throughout the community. Some feel that success in University and maintaining a traditional Pacific Islander identity are not compatible. Pacific Islanders who are successful in University are sometimes seen as "not really being a Pacific Islander." Others rejoice when Pacific Islanders succeed in mainstream society, especially when that success is used to help the community.

Family ties remain strong even as Pacific Islanders strive to adapt to life in Mainland U.S.A. Pacific Islanders tend to be fiercely loyal to extended family groups. Utah's Pacific Islander communities are not free of conflict and from time to time, altercations erupt. To outsiders, these conflicts appear to operate along ethnic lines, usually Samoans fighting Tongans. Historically, there have been many times when Samoa and Tonga have been at war and it is often assumed that history of conflict continues. Indeed political history can be an explanation. Cultural conflict is not a viable explanation because of the similarities between both groups. Family loyalties may also be plausible explanation. Families, rather than ethnic groups, might be in conflict.

Often, children born and/or raised away from the islands do not have the same sense of
connection to their families and communities. They may feel alienated by their family culture and may resist it. Many times these same children may feel alienated in schools and in the greater society and yet their need for a support group similar to extended families continues.

Finding no refuge at home, in school, or in the greater society, such children may turn to gangs. Also, children who do not connect with their families may turn to gangs because they believe that is the only way to survive school and street. In traditional societies, children were often raised and acculturated by their older siblings and cousins and by their peers. In fact, peer relationships were common. Gangs, therefore, have the potential to replace peer groups.

Individuals, families, and family groups consciously or unconsciously try to renegotiate their individual and collective identities in this new society with its different values and ways of doing things. Many understand the need for change and try to make wise choices as to what traditional ways need to be abandoned and what needs to be held on to. Often we make the mistake that we must give up all our traditional ways. Fortunately culture is more resilient and may survive attacks from within and without. Certain core values do survive and enable us to maintain conscious or unconscious connections with our ancestral past.

Many younger Pacific Islanders who leave their island and move to Hawaii or the mainland, especially those coming from smaller islands and villages, are often plagued by severe homesickness. Those leaving the islands for the first time to go to college also often struggle with different living conditions and a lack of experience in dealing with a capitalistic driven society. They do not come equipped with the experience of budgeting dollars, negotiating western time and its values, or how to have healthful intercultural relationships.

Finally, it is important to reiterate that perpetuation of "traditional island values" varies from island group to island group, from generations to generations, from community to community, from family to family, from individual to individual, and from context to context.

Suggested Activities
1. What is reciprocity?
2. What are some differences between Pacific Island traditional political systems and the political system in the U.S.?
3. What are some extended family activities that your family participates in?
Reflective Activities
1. Why might practicing reciprocity be a problem in U.S. society?
2. What might be advantages of having an extended family? What might be disadvantages?

Poster Activities
1. Create a poster showing your nuclear family and your extended family.

Education and Knowledge
Because their societies were oral, Pacific Islanders developed oratory to a fine art and good orators were highly respected. Speech making is part of every occasion. Speech making represented abstract thinking and intellectualizing at its finest. Speech making was an important method by which knowledge was passed on. Knowledge was also passed on in the form of stories, songs and dances. Much of this took place during formal ceremonies and during the evenings. Singing and dancing also made young people aware of their position in society.

Another important form of education was when parents taught their children the social and economic skills necessary to survive. Fishing, hunting, carving, cooking, weaving, planting - all these were learned on the job. In traditional Pacific Island societies learning was connected with life activities.

Language
Western scholars place Pacific Islander languages in the Malayo-Polynesian division of the Austronesian language family. Melanesian languages are in the Proto-Oceanic group and the Micronesian and Polynesian languages in the Proto-Eastern Oceanic group. Languages diverged over time as groups lost contact with each other but I would argue that for Polynesian groups, the greatest divergence took place when languages were written down. Prior to contact, although some Pacific groups claim to have a written language, orality was the dominant form of communication and information transfer. In other words, Pacific Islander societies were considered oral societies. Christian missionaries were very instrumental in moving Pacific Islander languages from oral form to written form. This was partly because the Bible needed to be translated into indigenous languages to facilitate conversion to Christianity and the education of colonized groups. How languages were written down often depended on how they were heard by early Europeans who first wrote them down. It is possible that the rolled R sound was heard
and written down as an R in Aotearoa-New Zealand and as an L in Hawaii.

While teachers should not be expected to learn Pacific Islander languages, at the very least they should learn how to pronounce Pacific Islander words and names. Children will not be inclined to change their names because their teachers and friends can not pronounce them. Teachers could also instigate better relationships with their student by at least learning their greeting words.
Polynesian Vowels are the same as the English vowels and pronounced the same as Spanish and Japanese vowels. The vowels are:

- a  pronounced as the a in father
- e  pronounced as the e in egg
- i  pronounced as the e in me
- o  pronounced as the aw in law
- u  pronounced as the ou in you

When two vowels appear together in a word the sounds are rolled together. For example nou would be pronounced as now. Tei would be pronounced as tay. An apostrophe appearing between two vowels is called a glottal stop and the vowel sounds are separate and abrupt. O'o would be pronounced as aw-aw (aw is pronounced as in law)

Consonants are:

- b
- c  (Fijian) pronounced as "th"
- d  (Fijian) pronounced as "nd" so that Nadi would be pronounced Nandi
- f
- wh (Maori) pronounced as a f' by some Maori tribes and sometimes a wh in the word white
- g  pronounced as ng in ring
- h
- k
- l
- m
- n
- p
- q  (Fijian) pronounced like ng in the word ring but with a hard g sound in front of the vowel sound following
- r  pronounced as a rolled r
- s
- t  traditional sounded as a soft almost d sound so that tuku almost sounds like daku. The true sound is probably somewhere between the English t and d
- v
- w  pronounced as a English w but in Hawaii, is pronounces as a w in some words and a v in other words. The author does not know of any rules that govern when a w is pronounced as a w and when it is pronounced as a v although such rules might exist. Such use is learned from practice
- y

Some Pacific Islander greeting words

Hawaii:  Aloha (also means goodbye, welcome, love and much more)
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiji</th>
<th>Bula Vinaka (or just Bula)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guam</td>
<td>Hafadai</td>
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<td>Maori</td>
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<td>Aotearoa-New Zealand</td>
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<td>Cook Island/Rarotonga</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>Kia ora</td>
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<td>Tahiti</td>
<td>Kia orana</td>
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<td>Iorana</td>
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<td>Malo'elelei</td>
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Some Pacific Islander words of appreciation or thanks

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hawaii</th>
<th>Mahalo</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>Vinaka, vinaka vaka levu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maori</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aotearoa-New Zealand</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>Kia ora</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tonga</td>
<td>Fa'a fētai</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malo 'Aupito</td>
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In homes where grandparents are part of the household, native languages are often heard. In some homes only the native language is spoken. In others, parents may converse mostly in the native language and children speak mostly English. Sometimes both parents and children operate in both the native language and English. Regardless of the level of native language use, some common native words are used and understood by all. Now, when bilingualism or multilingualism is seen as enhancing cognition, native language use should be encouraged (Crawford, 1999).

**Suggested Activities**

1. What languages are spoken in your home? In your extended family?
2. Practice pronouncing the "greeting" words and "thank you" words of the Pacific.
3. Collect "greeting words" and "thank you" words from as many languages as you can.
The Importance of Food

Any Pacific Islander would probably agree that food is the most important part of Pacific Islander experiences. Food is the most important part of any occasion. Food is always considered an appropriate gift. Food represents the height of hospitality and unselfishness. Food should be well prepared but well prepared food means nothing if there is not enough. Whereas in some cultures, preparing food is an art, in most Pacific Islander societies, the art is in the eating. Pacific Islanders enjoy eating just as much, if not more than, anyone else. Pacific Islanders are said to have large appetites and large builds. In pre-contact Polynesia, largeness was equated with beauty and wealth yet the pre-contact Polynesian tended to be healthy. Pacific Islanders still have big appetites, like rich foods, and are usually big in stature but it can be argued as to whether they are as healthy as their ancestors. What has changed is their tendency to eat more meat more often because it is so readily available and we are not as active as our ancestors were.

Although we enjoy the different types of foods that different cities and states have to offer, our traditional foods remain the favorite. Many of our traditional foods are available but they are often more expensive than foods that make up the average diet. On special occasions such as weddings, birthdays, and graduations and other family celebrations, Pacific Islanders tend to spare no expense. The preparation of the food tends to be as much a social event as an eating event because families get together to help each other out. Explicit organizing is very seldom observable. People just seem to know what to do. After the eating is over, leftover food is distributed and taken home by those in attendance.

Sina and the Eel – a story about a staple food

Sina was a beautiful maiden whose devotion to an eel that lived in her pool was rewarded when the eel took on the appearance of a handsome young man. He was Tuna, god of all eels and he and Sina fell in love but no one knew of this affair. After a time of happiness, Tuna told Sina that he had to go away forever. He would resume the form of an eel and Sina was to cut off the eel's head and bury it in a plot of the land behind her house. Sina did as Tuna had asked and after a while, a plant grew from the spot where the head had been buried. The plant grew tall and strong and bore nuts. When the nuts were husked the remaining shell resembled the face of Tuna
with two small eyes and a mouth.

Tuna had given to the world the *niu*, or coconut palm, one of the most important plants in the Pacific. Coconut palms are used to make baskets and walls of houses. The husk was used to make twisted cords strong enough to be used as lashings on houses and canoes, fishing lines and fishing nets. The shells were used to make bowls and water bailers. Trunks were used to make house posts or canoe paddles. The juice made a very refreshing drink and the flesh inside the nutshell was eaten, dried to make oil, or grated and squeezed to make coconut cream used in cooking. Coconut is one of many staples in the Pacific.

"Niu - Coconut"

Other important staple foods are:

Bananas: these were harvested when green, peeled and cooked similarly to potatoes, or harvested when ripe and eaten as a fruit.
Seaweed: harvested from the ocean and dried or eaten fresh to complement fish dishes
Sweet Potato
Tapioca: the tuberous root was eaten similarly to the potatoes
Taro leaves: Taro leaves were cooked with coconut milk and meat
Taro Root: the bulbous root of the Taro plant was boiled or roasted and eaten similarly to potatoes or it was pounded into a paste called poi. Poi was eaten alone or with tasty or salty meat and fish dishes.
Yams: similar to a sweet potato

In pre-contact times the Pacific Islander diets tended to consist of a lot of green and starchy vegetables. Everyone in the group or village worked in the gardens. Protein
came from various fish and shellfish, birds, fruit-eating rats, bats, dogs and nuts. Men fished from canoes and men, women and children participated in netting fish and the catch was shared by the entire village or group. The best fish was often given to the chiefs and the elderly. Men hunted for birds and animals. Pork and chickens were domesticated in some, but not all, Pacific Islands. For some groups certain types of meats and fish were eaten only on special occasions or only by people of a certain status. In some groups, women were not allowed to eat certain foods. Who prepared what types of food varied from group to group but men, women and children were involved. Men often performed the heavier tasks such as husking coconuts or pounding poi. The most common way of cooking food was in earthen ovens. Rocks were heated in pits and food was wrapped in leaves and put in baskets on the rocks. When whole pigs were being cooked, rocks were also put inside the carcass and all food was covered with enough leaves or woven mats so that the steam could not escape. In some groups, these leaves and mats were also covered with dirt to help keep the steam in. This part of cooking usually fell to the men.

Not all food was cooked. Fish and shell foods were often eaten raw. Fish was marinated in coconut milk and spices, seasoned with rock salt, seaweed, or oils, or not seasoned at all.

The order in which each family member ate varied from group to group. In Hawaii, men did not eat with women. In Tonga and Samoa women and children ate last. In Aotearoa-New Zealand, elders and children ate first. Because cooking was such an involved process, food was cooked once each day although people ate more than once during the day. Many Pacific Islanders are comfortable eating with their fingers although most are also comfortable eating with western utensils. Many also do not hesitate to share their food with others regardless of where they are. In fact most Pacific Islanders feel uncomfortable unless all present are eating.
"Kava Ceremony"
(A Fijian man carries a coconut bowl with kava as part of a kava ceremony)

A Tongan couple cooked their daughter because they had nothing else to offer a visiting chief. Perceiving their devotion, he did not eat but advised them to
take the head and bury it in one place and the body in another and to watch these spots carefully. In time, a kava plant grew in one spot and a sugar cane plant grew in the other. When the plants were both almost fully grown, the couple observed that when a rat gnawed at the kava plant, its behaviors became erratic and uncontrolled and when it gnawed on the sugar cane, its behavior became normal. From this, Tongans learned that partaking of kava made one act silly but eating sugarcane could counter that effect.

Kava, known as Awa in Hawaii and Yaqona in Fiji, refers to a beverage that is made from pounded powder from the root or stem base of a pepper plant and mixed with water. It has an affect similar to alcohol but is non-alcoholic. It numbs the tongue and relaxes the muscles. The imbibers might lose control of their muscles but the mind is not clouded. In some groups, men would partake of kava to relax after working all day. Kava is also part of a ceremony and is often served when chiefs meet together in council or when visitors are being welcomed. Casual kava drinking occurs with regularity and kava can be purchased at local stores in communities where there are a lot of Pacific Islanders. Often, long kava parties are filled with much discussion.

**Suggested Activities**

1. What foods are native to your state?
2. What are some of the foods that your family eats? Where did these foods come from?
3. Who usually prepares meals in your house? Who prepares meals on special occasions?
4. Who is served first in your house?

**Poster Activity**

1. Prepare a map or poster showing where dishes that are regularly eaten in your house come from.
Clothing

"Tupou"
(The Taualuga is a Samoan Dance usually performed by an unmarried daughter of the village chief. The Tupou would demonstrate her grace and beauty while young men would dance around her demonstrating their strength, coordination, and agility in an effort to attract the attention of the tupou and other eligible young women.)

At the time of contact, Pacific Islanders did not encumber their bodies with excess and unnecessary clothing because of the tropical climate in which they lived. Everyday attire generally consisted of simple wraparounds draped securely around the waist. These were made from woven fabrics, finely woven mats, or tapa cloth. Tapa (Kapa) was common through much of Polynesia and parts of Melanesia and Micronesia. The paper mulberry bark was stripped and pounded into thin sheets. These were glued into larger pieces and wrapped around the body as clothing or used to decorate walls of houses and furnishings. Pacific Islanders cut long leaves
such as the Pandanus into narrow strips and wove these into very fine mats that were also used as clothing. Some Pacific Peoples wove fabrics with and without looms. Aotearoa-New Zealand Maoris pounded flax leaves into soft fibers that they used to weave fine cloaks and fabrics. Generally men and women went topless.

On special occasions, people wore their more decorative finest clothing. These were decorated with leaves, feathers, shells, whalebones, human hair, or highly decorative designs. Ceremonial and everyday skirts were made from barks, grasses, and other natural fibers that were stripped and shredded.

Early Christian missionaries in the Pacific affected dress and morality. They taught many Pacific Islanders that the body needed to be covered. However, the Christian sense of modest dress was very out of place in the Tropics. Pacific Islanders were not used to covering their bodies with restrictive clothing. Wearing such clothing made them susceptible to disease and death. The Hawaiian muumuu developed as an item of clothing that met Episcopalian modesty standards but that allowed ease of body and air circulation under the garment. Dress in Tonga was affected by the nation’s allegiance to Christianity. In Tonga, it is rare for you to see men without shirts and women with bare shoulders except when traditional dances are being performed. The Sulu or Lavalava, a piece of clothing wrapped at least one and a half times around the waist is very popular in the islands and in homes of Pacific Islander Americans.

When Pacific Islanders perform their songs and dances, their regalia reflect both traditional and modern materials and styles. Decorated Tapa and fine woven mats are often replaced by modern fabrics with Pacific motifs and designs. Our brown skin tones allow us to feel comfortable in brightly colored clothing with vivid designs. On Sundays, you may see Pacific Islanders going to church in conservative skirts or wraparounds, white shirts and blouses, and fine mats secured around their waists or you may see bright and flowery dresses and shirts. At formal gatherings, Pacific Islanders may complement formal western attire with touches of the Pacific such as flower, shell or nut leis; pendants carved from bone, whale bone or jade; fine mats with beaded and jeweled belts and hair decorated with flowers.
Gift Giving

Pacific Islanders rarely go to social gatherings empty handed. At weddings, funerals, birthday parties, graduations and other celebrations, it would not be usual to see a variety of gifts exchange hands. Formal gift giving would usually include the exchange of fine mats, large pieces of Tapa, decorated quilts and crocheted blankets, money and food. Money and food are often used to defray the cost of sponsoring the event. Fine mats, tapa, quilts and blankets may be retained by the family group or given away as gifts at this or future occasions. That way, resources circulate through the community.

Conflicts between families are often resolved by the exchanging of fine mats as tokens of regret or respect and a desire to end the conflict.

Social Gatherings

Food is an important part of Pacific Islander gatherings but so also is ceremony. Gatherings often go beyond rhetorical handshaking, exchanges of greeting, and refreshments to include formal speech making and elaborate gift exchanges.

Weddings

At weddings, it would not be unusual to see both the bride's and the groom's families involved in wedding preparations. This often goes beyond the immediate family and the extended family to include other related family groups. It is considered important by some people that immediate families on both sides respect the wishes of related family groups to participate. It is possible for the bride to be given a wedding gown by more than one family group and she may change more than once during the reception. Also there may be more than one wedding cake. Both the bride's and the groom's families often pay careful attention to the selection of the wedding party. Such choices are often sociopolitical. Such sociopolitical needs are resolved by having large wedding parties. Many people will contribute uncooked food or already prepared dishes for the reception and families might never know how many people are going to attend or how much food there will be until the event actually happens. Representatives from different families might be asked to speak or might ask to speak and in some cases, are given gifts or money for their participation. Receptions often include entertainment and dancing.

At Maori weddings, one of the layers on the wedding cakes is cut up and distributed to a
representative of the different iwi (tribes) and hapu (sub-tribe). Representatives are required to recite their genealogy or sing. A Maori wedding usually includes a speaker who will recite the bride and grooms’ genealogies showing how they are related. At Tongan and Samoan weddings, wedding gifts are sometimes shared with female members of the extended families, usually cousins or aunts.

Bereavement for Pacific Islanders is not satisfied by a two-hour wake or the typical funeral service. Here and in the islands, funerary rites begin as soon as the news of a death circulates through the community. Even before the viewing, people go to the home of the deceased to pay their respects through formal speeches and gift exchanging. Tapa cloth, fine mats, quilts, blankets, food and money are considered appropriate gifts. Black is the color of mourning for most Pacific people although in Hawaii, white is the color of mourning. Members of the bereaved family will wear the color of mourning during the entire funerary process and sometimes for days or weeks after the burial.

Other Social Events of Interest

The Hawaiian concept of luau, which describes the feasting and entertainment that goes with celebrations such as weddings or birthdays, are now part of Pacific Islander American life. Not unlike island celebrations, luaus now have become an occasion to perform all Polynesian dances and serve Polynesian food. When a Hawaiian child turns one, the family sponsors a big birthday luau. This is because after contact with foreigners, many children died before they were a year old. In countries influenced by the British, age 21 is reason for a big birthday celebration.

Pacific Islander families like to celebrate when one of their family graduates from high school or college.

Sports

Competitive sports are still very popular with Pacific Islander Americans. At the school and community levels, Pacific Islanders participate and compete in football, basketball, volleyball, track and field, tennis, rugby and Samoan cricket and are visible in other sports. At the college level, Pacific Islanders are seen on basketball, football, volleyball, gymnastics, and
track and field teams. Most Pacific Islander children seem to be able to pick up a variety of sports with relative ease.

"I ka nalu e he'e ana - Waves to go surfing"

Surfing, a Polynesian invention, became a worldwide sport in modern times.
"Te Bino - Kiribati Sitting Dance"

Tapa making, mat weaving, woodcarving, bone carving are traditional art forms that continue to be practiced in varying degrees. Many Pacific Islander women also participate in
different styles of quilt making. Traditionally, families would take gifts to social gatherings. Along with fine mats and tapa cloth, quilts are considered appropriate gifts. Pacific Islander women learned quilt making from missionary wives. Many of them took the technique and put their own stamp on it using designs that they saw in nature. Hawaiian applique quilting has developed into a high art form and such quilts sell for thousands of dollars. Hawaiians have also developed an art form called feather lei making. Usually worn as hatbands or as head leis, these are considered very valuable.

Pacific Islander woodcarving is a highly developed art form that continues to be practiced. Traditional carving by native carvers in the islands often command high prices. Bone carving pendants, revived in Aotearoa-New Zealand, are becoming very popular and are often available for purchase at gatherings.

Tongan tapa making, called ngatu, is beginning to be recognized by the western artists as high art due to the efforts of Tonga's tapa guilds. While tapa making is generally not practiced here, some fine examples of tapa are seen at social events and in homes.

Dancing was done for entertainment, as part of religious worship, to prepare for war, to tell stories and recite histories, to celebrate, for fitness and health, to demonstrate ability, to demonstrate daily activities, and for courtship. Today dancing continues to be part of Pacific Islander American gatherings.

Hawaiian Hula

_Hula kahiko_, the style of dancing practiced before the 1870's, was accompanied by chant and drum. Many of these dances had strong religious overtones and were done in honor of Hawaiian deity. Some hula kahiko were historic and told stories of people who had lived and others spoke of the beauty of the land. Hula kahiko steps are probably the most intricate in the Pacific and were often based on military steps associated with the most lethal form of martial arts in the Pacific, _Lua_. _Hula auwana_ represents dances composed after the 1870's. This dancing style is more lyrical, and is most often accompanied by modern instruments such as ukuleles, guitars, steel guitars and double basses and dancers wore modern style attire. The word hula is often mistakenly applied to the Tahitian Tamure, a women's fast drum dance.

**Other Dances**

Throughout the Pacific, most dances were accompanied by drums and dancers also sang. This is certainly true in Tonga. No performance of Tongan dance is complete without the
tau’olunga. This dance was performed by a highborn virgin. It was often an opportunity for the young woman to display her grace and dignity and to attract an ideal suitor. Today, when the tau’olunga dances, people will go up on stage and slap dollar bills on her body. This is a sign of support, respect, and admiration.

Fijian dances are distinguished by their haunting sounds and rhythms. Fijian men's spear dances are performed with very colorful regalia and the women's hand and fan dances are among the most graceful and elegant in the Pacific.

The Maori of Aotearoa-New Zealand are famous for their full and rich harmonies. Their most distinctive dances are the poi, a dance done with implements called pois, and their haka or war dances in which men contorted their faces, rolled their eyes, and protruded their tongues.

Samoan dances are certainly full of vigor. Perhaps the most popular are the sasa which tells about daily activities, the fa’atau pati or slap dance, and the nifo oti or fire knife dance.

Always exciting are the Tahitian otea and tamure. The fast hip movements in time to intricate drum beats are accentuated by grass like skirts made from stripped wild hibiscus.

As we teach each other our dances, we are beginning to rely less on group singing and more on musicians singing at microphones. As our dances are shared with others, they undergo change and become more alike. While this threatens separate group identities, it may help our identities as Pacific Islanders to survive.

Pacific Islander artists are making gains for themselves in non-Pacific Islander arenas, in classical music, modern music and western art forms.

A Final Note

It is hoped that the many cultures and people of the Pacific that find their way to Mainland USA will, in time, cease to be seen as exotic, unusual, or strange but instead as an accepted part of the fabric of this land and society which we enjoy.
Suggested Activities
1. Write a description of your culture.
2. Bring items that you think represents your culture and tell your classmates why you think these articles represent your culture.
3. What arts and crafts are practiced in your home?

Reflective Activities
1. Why is your culture important to you?
2. What will you pass on to your children?

Poster Activities
1. Create a poster that represents your culture/cultural identity.
2. Create a poster showing where the people living in Utah come from.
Glossary

**Acculturation** - changes, gains, and adaptations of a new culture without giving up the established one.

**Archipelago** - an expanse of water with many scattered islands.

**Assimilation** - The process through which one cultural group adapts to the attitudes, belief systems, and ways of life of another culture.

**Atoll** - a coral island consisting of reef surrounding a lagoon.

**Condescension** - a patronizing attitude.

**Coup(s)- d'état** - a violent overthrow or alteration of an existing government by a small group.

**Cricket** - a game played, usually by two sides of 11 players each, with a ball and bat in a large field centering upon two wickets defended by a batsman.

**Culture** - description of a group of people who share a common experience or history that may also include language, religion, tradition, values, etc.

**Denizen** - one admitted to residence in a foreign country.

**Homogeneous** - of the same or a similar kind or nature.

**Imperialism** - extending the power or dominion of a nation by direct territorial acquisition.

**Indigenous** - having originated, and being produced, growing or living naturally in a particular region or environment.

**Multiculturalism** - imparting a strong knowledge base about the diverse people that populate the United States, and providing an education that is equitable for all students.

**Ochre** - an earthy red or yellow color.

**Peer group** - belonging to the same group in society that is determined by age, grade, or status.

**Poi** - a Hawaiian and Samoan food of taro root cooked, pounded and kneaded to a paste and often allowed to ferment.

**Race** - a class or kind of people unified by a community of interests, habits or characteristics.

**Sovereignty** - an autonomous state free from external control.

**Stratification** - to divide or arrange into classes, castes or social strata.