

*Paper*

## **Repositioning Pitcairn's Tapa: Detecting the Voices of the Forgotten Women of Bounty**

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**Abstract:** Pitcairn Island tapa inventories, created by Ted Cookson and Pauline Reynolds, were merged, cross-referenced, and verified via online searches for a more comprehensive listing of tapa-holding institutions. Close examination of tapa artifacts created by Pitcairn's original women settlers and their female descendants (1790 to approximately 1856) allow enthusiasts and scholars the opportunity to hear the voices of their ancestors. The current number of tapa artifacts, which includes garments, cloth fragments, and wooden and whalebone tapa beaters, is low at sixty items. Geographically, these artifacts are housed at institutions located mostly in the United Kingdom. The British Museum has the largest collection Pitcairn tapa, with twenty (33%) of all Pitcairn artifacts in public institutions worldwide. The authors suggest that an electronic atlas of tapa artifacts be developed and updated as possible items from private collections become public. This will allow descendants of this Anglo-Polynesian settlement to learn more about their female ancestors. In 2023, less than fifty people reside on Pitcairn Island, not all descendants. Thousands of descendants, however, dwelling on Norfolk Island, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, trace their ancestry through this isolated oceanic outpost.

**Keywords:** Barkcloth, female agency, islanders-empire, *tapa*, Pitcairn Island

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### **Introduction**

Twelve Polynesian women arrived at Pitcairn Island on the fifteenth of January 1790 following the infamous mutiny on the HMAV *Bounty*. The circumstances surrounding this mutiny are well known, but less is known about the women of the *Bounty*. Here, a brief history will suffice for context before assessing the material record, that is, *tapa* (barkcloth) artifacts that have since dispersed to the United Kingdom and other colonial outposts. The *Bounty's* mission was to acquire breadfruit plants in Tahiti for delivery as an inexpensive food source for slaves working plantations

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in the British West Indies. In the early hours of the twenty-eighth of April 1789, a party of mutineers led by Acting Lieutenant Fletcher Christian roused William Bligh from the captain's cabin and forced him and eighteen sailors adrift in the *Bounty's* launch, the largest and most seaworthy of its service boats, thirty nautical miles southwest of Tofua, an erupting volcano in the Friendly Islands (Tonga). Bligh made an incredible forty-seven-day journey, 3,618 nautical miles to Coupang, Timor, and ultimately found passage to England (Wahlroos 2001). After a failed settlement attempt on Tubuai, the *Bounty* returned to Tahiti to deposit those planning to live amongst their native friends.

The *Bounty's* crew realized that a permanent settlement required women, so after inviting local women aboard, the anchor cable was cut, and the ship drifted out to sea. It is unclear how many of the Tahitians aboard were kidnapped, but there is some evidence that at least some of the women had formed friendships with the mutineers previously. Fletcher Christian and eight crew members, along with twelve women, six men, and an infant girl from Polynesia, circuitously reached Pitcairn Island in January 1790. Unbeknownst to Fletcher Christian, Pitcairn's geographic position had been mischarted 342 kilometers west of its actual location, a perfect hideaway for twenty-eight fugitives (fig. 1) (Albert 2018). The early years on Pitcairn Island were tumultuous. By 1800, infighting, drunkenness, and one death from asthma claimed the lives of all the men on the island except one, John Adams. On the other hand, the women of the island gave birth to a total of twenty-three children in that same period (Reynolds 2016, 195).

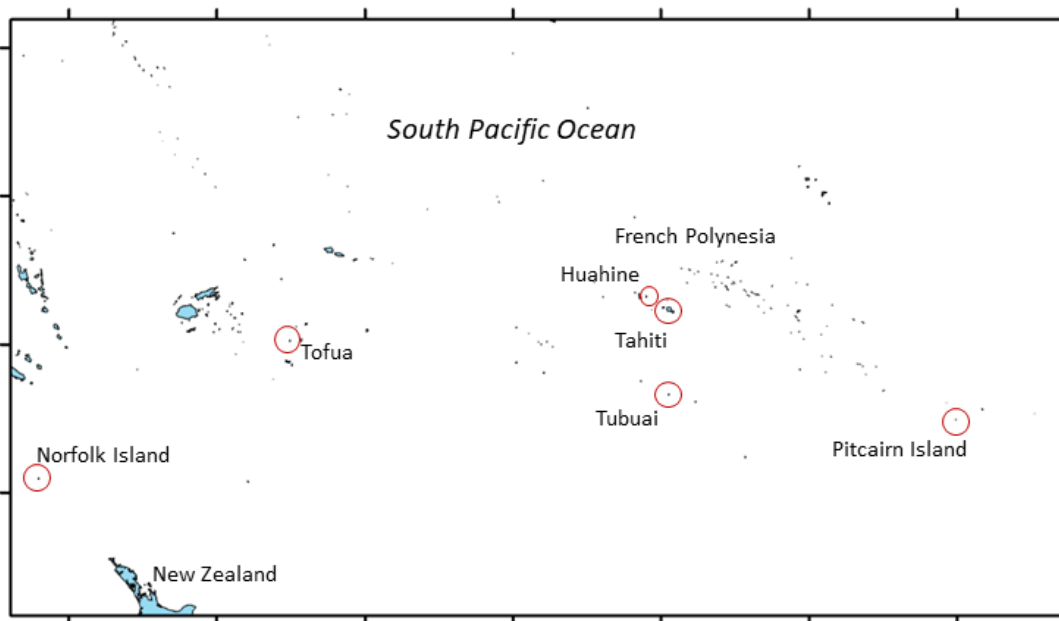


FIGURE 1. South Pacific Ocean, reference map of islands mentioned.

This study examines the spatial legacies of tapa produced by some of the Polynesian women brought to Pitcairn Island (1790). Two patterns are explored: 1) the origin-destination

trajectories of tapa artifacts gifted, traded, or otherwise exchanged from 1808 to 1856, and 2) the global distribution of tapa artifacts residing in public institutions such as museums and libraries. Anthropologists have examined the tools (wooden and whalebone beaters), dyes, and unique designs employed in tapa production on Pitcairn Island. Our focus is to merge two existing databases on tapa and ancillary artifacts and tally these so that researchers and others can more conveniently locate and examine these material objects. For such scholars, material objects represent primary sources (Reynolds and Clarkson 2020) for understanding, in this instance, the role of women in creating this remote settlement that arose out of the ashes of the *Bounty*.

Overarching this study is Thomas' (2010) call to explore islanders and empire (European) interactions with the "movement across seas, societies, and cultures" (7). He encourages historians to listen to individual voices from the past, famous or otherwise, to glean more nuanced explanations of islanders and empire encounters. Thomas' strategy is "to tell a larger story through individuals' experiences and lives, through events and happenings, some of which were small in the scheme of things but remain resonant of the kinds of dealing that shaped the colonial relationships and cultures" (Thomas 2010, 25). The extant tapa artifacts from Pitcairn Island offer an opportunity to hear these women's voices, even though ignored or attenuated by the male-dominated worldview of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Today, fifty individuals remain on Pitcairn Island (not all of *Bounty* lineage); however, thousands of descendants reside in Australia, New Zealand, Norfolk Island, and elsewhere.

Two individuals have created inventories, apparently without direct knowledge of the other, of where to locate, view, and study tapa artifacts. Ted Cookson is a travel agent who has journeyed the world during a decades-long career. He coupled a career that involved traveling to the far reaches of the world with a long-standing passion for the *Bounty* saga (Cookson 2012). Contemporaneously with Cookson, Pauline Reynolds, a Pitcairn Island descendant, published a series of articles and a booklet documenting her travels to study tapa artifacts (Reynolds 2008; 2010; 2011a; 2011b; 2014/2015; 2016). She was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in 2010 to travel to New Zealand, Hawaii, England, Scotland, and Norway to study tapa cloth, garments, and beaters in museums, libraries, and private collections. She recorded accession descriptions, photographs, and provenance from catalogue and archival documents. Reynolds is the leading expert on Pitcairn's heritage on tapa cloth, garments, beaters, and other artifacts, traditions, and socio-cultural meanings linked with Pitcairn's Tapa.

The surviving cultural artifacts (tapa linens, tapa garments, and beaters) from Pitcairn Island offer an opportunity to hear these women's voices, even though missing in early accounts (Reynolds 2011a; 2016). The record documents a transferring of the material culture and Polynesian identity from women of the *Bounty* to the first- and second-generation girls of the island community.

### **Women of the Bounty**

The women of the *Bounty* were instrumental in ensuring the survival of their nascent community in the remote south-central Pacific. The twelve women and an infant girl were from

Tahiti, Huahine, or Tubuai and were considered Polynesian (fig. 1). In 2020, the Pitcairn Islands and French Polynesia jointly issued a three-stamp cover titled “Women of the *Bounty*” to commemorate their significant role in ensuring the survival of early Pitcairners (fig. 2). Table 1 lists the name, origin, years of birth-death, and whether children were produced while on Pitcairn Island. Note that the women had alternative names and nicknames; therefore, more common forms are used here.

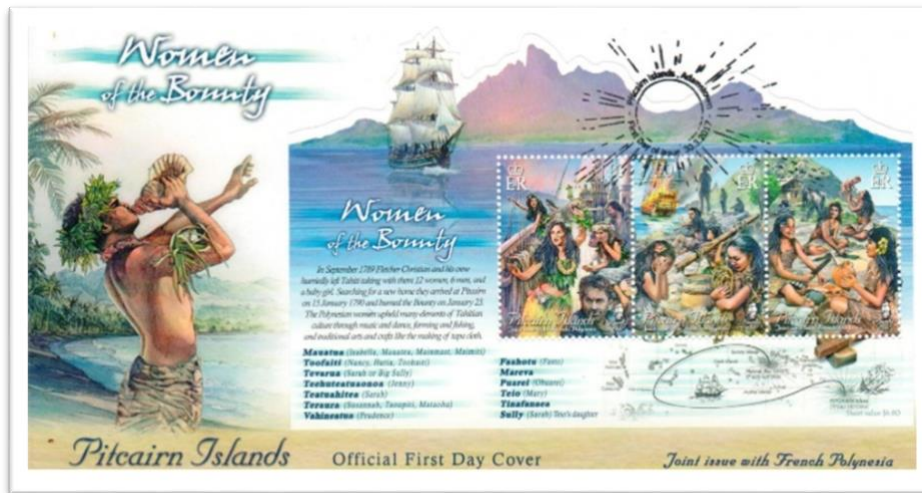


FIGURE 2. Women of the *Bounty* commemorated on an official first-day cover issued jointly by Pitcairn Islands and French Polynesia (Bounty Post, 2017).

TABLE 1. Women of the *Bounty*, origin, birth-death years, and children (data from Lareau 1999; Reynolds 2016; Wahlroos 2001).

Name	Origin	Birth-Death	Children
Mauatua	Tahiti	b.? – d. 1841	Yes
Toofati	Huahine	b. – d. 1831	Yes
Tevarua	Tahiti	b. 1774 – d. 1799	Yes
Teehuteatuaonoa	Tahiti	b. – d. ?	No
Teatuahitea	Tahiti	b. – d. ~1808-1814	No
Teraura	Tahiti	b. ~ 1775 – d. 1850	Yes
Vahineatua	Tahiti	b. d. 1831	Yes
Faahotu	Tahiti	d. 1790?	No
Mareva	Tahiti	b. – d. ~1808-1814	No
Puarei	Tahiti	b.? – d. – 1790?	No
Teio	Tahiti	b. ? – d. 1829	No
Tinafanaea	Tubuai	b. – d. ~1808-1814	No
Sully (infant)	Tahiti	b. 1789 - d. 1826	Yes

Mauatua, wife of Fletcher Christian, and the other eleven women were influential in helping this remote community survive. These women were involved in growing crops, fishing, and the cultivation and production of tapa (barkcloth) from paper mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), breadfruit (*Artocarpus*), and banyan trees (*Ficus*). Their use of different plant types for fiber sources demonstrated their botanical and cultivation knowledge. Reynolds (2008; 2010) has distinguished all three bark fibers in her visits to Pitcairn tapa-holding institutions. See relatively recent literature from Butaud (2017) and Richards and Matthews (2021) on the problem of identifying fiber sources.

### **Eyewitness Accounts from Early Visitors**

*The Plough Boy Anthology* (Whalesite, 2023) provides eyewitness accounts of contacts with the Pitcairn Islanders from the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Early visitors to Pitcairn Island frequently mention backcloth in their letters and reports. The eyewitness accounts from 1808 to 1851 confirm the who, how, and what of barkcloth production during the early decades on Pitcairn Island. This traditional craft is a gendered role in which older and younger women, as teachers and students, respectively, participated.

That John Adams was wrapped in a tapa cloth when Mayhew Folger arrived on Pitcairn Island in 1808 speaks to the importance of barkcloth after nearly two decades of isolation (Christian 2021, 129). Six year later in 1814, Captain Pipon of the HMS *Tagus* reached Pitcairn Island. Pipon reported that “their clothing and linen are made of a certain tree, and this is the employment of the elderly women: the bark, after being soaked, is beaten with square pieces of wood of the breadth of one's hand, hollowed out into grooves, until fitted for use” (Pipon 1834, 194). There is much to be gleaned from Pipon’s observations as he recorded the entire process from cultivation of aute (*Broussonetia papyrifera*) to the manufacture of cloths and garments from barkcloth. Captains King (1820) and Beechey (1831) both recorded the presence of the “cloth-tree” during their respective visits. Plant-based dyes from the roots of the candlenut tree (*Aleurites triloba*) and Indian mulberry (*Morinda citrifolia*) allowed for brown and yellow stains, respectively, to create patterns, including images of animals, birds, and fish (Delano 1817; Brodie 1851). The islanders were able to extract and prepare red, blue, and black dyes as well. Delano (1817), via conversations with his friend Mayhew Folger, found that girls were involved in the laborious beating of bark with a wooden mallet to create cloth. During Folger’s encounter, “The girls brought some presents of cloth, which they had made with their own hands, and which with they had dyed with beautiful colours” (Delano 1817, 143). These reports show that the older women were teaching or passing their traditional knowledge and skills to the next generation. During a visit in 1821, Captain Raine of the *Surry* had the opportunity to eyewitness the entire backcloth-making process first-hand. Raine records, “The boat being despatched, we returned to the village, where, whilst dinner was being prepared, I was much amused with their conversation, and had an opportunity of seeing their manner of making cloth, and a variety of other things” (Raine 1824, 461). The participation of girls in cloth making was observed during an 1825 visit of Beechey of the HMS *Blossom*. He recounted that “In an adjoining house we found two young girls

seated upon the ground, employed in the laborious exercise of beating out the bark of the cloth-tree, which they intended to present to us, on our departure, as a keepsake.” Further, Beechey “could hear, by the distance, reiterated strokes of the beater” (Beechey 1831, 105-106). There are audible components and repeated movements associated with the making of barkcloth. The garments manufactured ranged from the loincloth, apron, and shawl to the mantle, which often reached to the ankles (poncho) (Delano 1817; Beechey 1831; Pison 1834). In Tahitian, these traditional garments were called *maro* (for men) and *paren* (for women) and *tibuta* (poncho) for males and females (King 1820). John Adams, the last surviving mutineer, and the firstborn Thursday October Christian were described as wearing loincloths by Pison (1834) and King (1820). Tapa making even contributed to the cultural landscape such that “every cottage has its out-house for making cloth” (Barrow 1831, 317).

In total, the historic evidence recorded in period newspapers and journals provides an overwhelming account of clothmaking on Pitcairn Island. The making of tapa involved the senses, that is, sound (beater strokes and singing) and touch. The value that the women placed on tapa is shown by their propensity to gift tapa garments or cloth to visitors. The far-flung tapa pieces and garments presented from that time continue to provide a voice to the original and early generations of women from Pitcairn Island. Creating barkcloth was a valuable contribution to the community. Tapa making was a nexus of socialization for the women of Pitcairn Island and reflected an interest in transferring traditional knowledge and skills to the next generation of girls and women. The Pitcairn women expressed their generosity toward visitors by gifting a material item (tapa) made not only using their hands and minds but also hearts and souls. Their voices, while not particularly sought after during the visits of Captains Folger, Staines and Pison, King, Raine, and Beechey during the first twenty-five years of the nineteenth century, reverberate today in museums, libraries, and other institutions world-wide.

The making of tapa has a rich tradition all across Oceania, and the women of the *Bounty* brought those traditions with them to Pitcairn. Those readers interested in further literature on tapa history and cultural significance should consult these sources (see Matthews 1996; Chang et al., 2015; Peñailillo et al. 2016; Charleux 2017; Olivares et al. 2019). The process usually begins with the paper mulberry tree, *Broussonetia papyrifera*, a deciduous tree with a natural range spanning in East and Southeast Asia and widely introduced across Oceania. The inner bark of the paper mulberry is harvested and processed to make it more pliable through repeated soaking and sun drying. Once the bark is ready, it is taken and beaten on wooden anvils with wooden mallets called *i'e* in Tahiti and *e'e* on Pitcairn (Reynolds 2016, 194). This process produces a fine, white cloth used for garments, bedding, and the making of gifts. Tapa gifting allowed this cultural heritage to not only survive but to spread far and wide. Gifts of tapa and pieces cut from existing samples eventually reach collections and museums as far away as Edinburgh, Scotland. According to Reynolds, Mauatua “specialized in finely made bales of sun-bleached barkcloth” (Reynolds 2008, 27). Teraura, the youngest arriving as well as the longest surviving of the original women, created “brightly decorated” barkcloth (Reynolds 2008, 27). Hannah and Dinah, daughters of Vahineatua (wife of John Adams), were experts at tapa making (Reynolds 2008). The presented materials

indicate that these women had a strong work ethic and artistic flair.

### Data and Methods

Data on tapa and related material were found in Cookson (2012) and Reynolds (2008; 2010; 2011a; 2011b; 2014/2015; 2016). The *Review of Pacific Collections in Scottish Museums* contributed three entries, including one not found in the works of Cookson and Reynolds (National Museums Scotland 2013-14). The list of tapa-holding institutions by country and number and type of tapa-related artifacts from the above sources provided the basis for Table 2. Pitcairn Island tapa holdings (tapa, barkcloth, beaters) were confirmed for about fifty percent of the institutions via online searches of their respective websites and archives when available. This updated the Cookson and Reynolds sources published during the 2010s to a more current time period (mid to late 2022). After the Cookson, Reynolds, and National Scottish Museums data were extracted, a general keyword search (tapa or barkcloth or beaters AND Pitcairn Island) of the World-Wide-Web added these tapa artifacts to Table 2. Both the keyword searches of institutional webpages and the Internet were conducted from June through August of 2022.

TABLE 2. Country, institution, and source, Pitcairn barkcloth 1790-1850~ and barkcloth counts.

No.	Country	Institution, City	Tapa Garments & Cloth	Tapa Pieces	Tapa Beaters	Total
1	<i>Australia</i>					
	Subtotal	Macleay Museum, Sydney <sup>1</sup>		1		1
2	<i>United Kingdom</i>					
	<i>England</i>	Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge <sup>1,2,3</sup>	1	1		2
		British Museum, London <sup>1,3,4</sup>	6	13	1	20
		World Museum, Liverpool <sup>1,3,4,7</sup>		7*		7
		Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford <sup>1,3,7</sup>	1			1
		Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew <sup>1,3,4</sup>	1	2		3
	<i>Scotland</i>	Kings Museum (Marischal Museum), Aberdeen <sup>1,2,3,5,7,8</sup>	4			4
		National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh <sup>1,3,5,7,9</sup>	2	2!		4

		Glasgow Museum, Glasgow <sup>8</sup>	1			1
	Subtotal		16	25	1	<b>42</b>
3	<i>Germany</i> Subtotal	Voelkerkundemuseum, Munich <sup>6,7</sup>	1			<b>1</b>
4	<i>New Zealand</i>	Museum of New Zealand (Te Papa Tongarewa), Wellington <sup>5</sup>			1#	1
		Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland <sup>1</sup>	1			1
		Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington <sup>1,3</sup>	1			1
		Otago Museum, North Dunedin <sup>7</sup>			1	1
	Subtotal		2		2	<b>4</b>
5	<i>Norway</i> Subtotal	Kon-Tiki Museum, Oslo <sup>1,2,3,4,7</sup>	1		2#	<b>3</b>
6	<i>Pitcairn Island</i> Subtotal	Meralda Warren Collection, Adamstown <sup>2,4,7</sup>			2#	<b>2</b>
7	<i>USA</i>	Bishop Museum, Honolulu <sup>1,2,3,4</sup>		3		3
		Falmouth Museum, Falmouth <sup>2</sup>	1			1
		Nantucket Museum, Nantucket <sup>1</sup>		1		1
		Field Museum, Chicago <sup>7</sup>	1			1
		Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Cambridge <sup>9</sup>	1			1
	Subtotal		3	4		<b>7</b>
	Total		<b>23</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>60</b>

Sources: Cookson, 2012<sup>1</sup>; Reynolds, 2008<sup>2</sup>, 2010<sup>3</sup>, 2011a<sup>4</sup>, 2011b<sup>5</sup>, 2014/15<sup>6</sup>, 2016<sup>7</sup>; NMS, 2013-2014<sup>8</sup>; Authors, 2022<sup>9</sup> (online search). Notes: \*1 definite, 4 probable, 2 likely Pitcairn origin; <sup>1</sup>samples from an existing *tiputa*; #whalebone, only 1 of 2 beaters at Kon-Tiki Museum is whalebone.

The authors included the original provenance of individual artifacts and highlight their journey to current institutions whether this be a museum, library, house (historic government building) or garden. Accession descriptions and photographs are not reproduced here. Readers are



encouraged to access the original sources for such information. Name(s) of original and first-generation women who created, gifted, or otherwise exchanged tapa with visitors appear in the accession descriptions of museum artifacts. This allowed us to explore the origin-destination journeys of select tapa artifacts.

Because of the “cutting up culture,” small pieces rather than full garments are scattered across collections (Reynolds 2008, 51). Tapa pieces, garments, and beaters found in private collections are not recorded here except for tapa beaters belonging to Meralda Warren, an advocate and compatriot of Pauline Reynolds. The database includes tapa artifacts gifted or otherwise exchanged beginning with Mayhew Folger’s “rediscovery” of Pitcairn island in 1808 to around 1856, when the entire island population relocated to Norfolk Island. While there could be pieces with later provenance, the islanders had long adopted Western wear by 1856.

## Results

Cookson identified thirteen institutions in five countries, while Reynolds accounted for sixteen institutions in six countries (Pitcairn Island is listed as a country for tabulation purposes). Two artifacts recorded in the *Review of Pacific Collections* (National Museums Scotland 2013-14) matched previously identified Cookson and Reynolds entries. The authors added three items to the merged database from their website searching, increasing the final number to sixty artifacts and one additional institution. Table 2 provides a full list of twenty-one known institutions and seven countries with tapa garments, pieces, and beaters materials.

The items uncovered by the authors, as previously mentioned, are expanded upon here. One item is a rectangular piece of tapa cloth (88 cm x 70 cm) made of paper mulberry from Pitcairn. It resides at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge, Massachusetts (object number 77-37-70/11692). Its provenance is from Captain I. S. Knowles, the original collector, and was donated in 1877 by Mrs. Lucien Carr. There is an inscription on the cloth that reads, "Tappa. Made from the Leaves of the Paper Mulberry. Pitcairn Island. South Pacific Island."

We also came across two tapa samples in a tapa “book” (A.UC.822.101 and A.UC.822.102) from the National Scottish Museum in Edinburgh. These were cut out of an existing *tiputa* artifact (A.UC.360) from the same museum and date from pre-1826 via Captain Beechey’s expedition to the Pacific. A.UC.822.101 is an item of white barkcloth with coarse beater marks visible. The other, A.UC.822.102, is from the top layer of a garment showing visible colors and patterns. The tapa cloth book includes 110 specimens from Polynesia and is part of the NSM’s Oceania Collection.

The list of tapa-holding institutions included twenty-one institutions scattered across Europe, primarily England and Scotland of the United Kingdom; Oceania, including New Zealand and Australia; and the United States, including Hawaii (fig. 3). The tapa artifacts housed within the four US institutions are a result of whalers and missionaries encountering Polynesians during the first half of the nineteenth century. Pitcairn’s position adjacent to the South Pacific whaling grounds made it accessible to the whaleling ships of the nineteenth century.

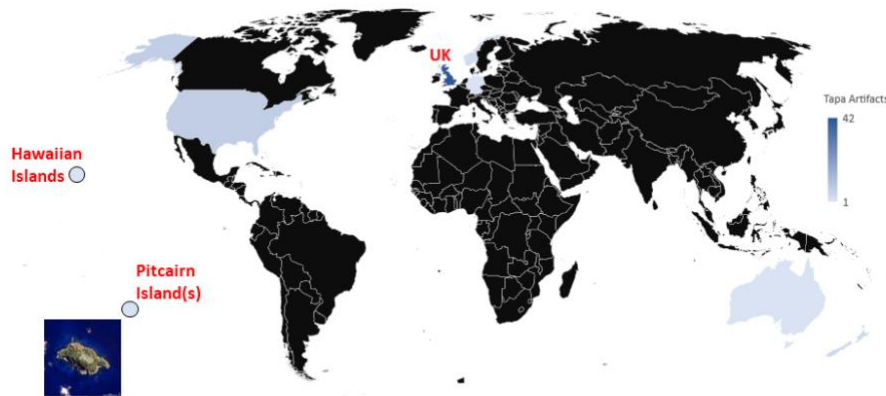


FIGURE 3. Tapa cloth and beaters, worldwide institutional holdings. Satellite image of Pitcairn Island, NASA 16 June 2006, Public Domain.

The entirety of the world-wide inventory of tapa cloth, fragments, and beaters is a low count of sixty items (Table 2). Of these, twenty-three are tapa garments (ponchos) or large cloths (linens), thirty are fragments—some undoubtedly cut from the linens mentioned, and just seven are tapa wooden and whalebone beaters. The United Kingdom has the greatest number of tapa-holding institutions and artifacts with eight and forty-two, respectively. The British Museum alone has almost half of these artifacts, with twenty, including six garments, thirteen fragments, and one beater (Reynolds 2010, 13).

Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, and Pitcairn Island) is a minor cluster, with five institutions and one private collection for seven artifacts, including four of the known seven Pitcairn Island tapa beaters in the world. The Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, preserves a 55 cm x 21 cm “finely made” breadfruit barkcloth by first generation Pitcairn Islander Polly Young (1796-1843) (Reynolds 2010, 9). Another minor cluster of tapa artifacts is in the United States, with seven barkcloth artifacts. These clusters exist owing to colonial, trading, whaling, and missionary activities connecting, for example, Boston (United States) and London (Britain) to the Pacific with destinations such as New Zealand, Australia, and Polynesia.

### Origin-Destination Journeys of Tapa from Pitcairn to the Outside World

Glynn Christian, a direct descendant of Fletcher Christian, has contemplated the role of women on early Pitcairn. Christian acknowledges that upper-class Tahitians wore long swaths of white barkcloth from the paper mulberry plant, and these transferred to Pitcairn Island. However, Christian surmised that the Islanders produced unique barkcloth patterns long before Folger’s visit in 1808 (Christian 2021, 36, 106, 128-129). Other than gifting, barkcloth was traded or sold, and some of these pieces rest in public or private collections.

The very first tapa gift leaving Pitcairn Island occurred in 1808, with the short visit of the American sealer Mayhew Folger. He received a 46 m by 2 m linen bolt of barkcloth. After

numerous cuttings, only a 24 cm by 20 cm piece remains with the Nantucket Museum, Massachusetts (Reynolds 2008, 51). It is unknown which one of the original women or their daughters contributed to the making of the cloth that was given to Folger. Ten of twelve of the original women were still alive during Folger's 1808 visit.

Kings Museum at the University of Aberdeen (old campus) maintains two decorative *tiputa* (poncho) and a third fragment collected by Christopher Nockells during a Pacific journey from 1816-1823. The provenance of one *tiputa* is credited to Dinah Adams, born 1796 on Pitcairn Island and died in 1831 (Reynolds 2011a; Lareau 1999). Dinah Adams was the daughter of John Adams and Vahineatua of Tahiti.

The British Museum possess barkcloth fragments originating from Mauatua alone and from Mauatua together with Tevaura (the longest surviving first-generation woman). One piece reads, "Made by the widow of Fletcher Christian, from Pitcairn Island, 1837" and another "Pitcairn Island in 1837 by Mrs. Christian and Mrs. Young the only survivors of the original settlers of the Bounty in 1837 on Pitcairn Island" (Cookson 2012). This latter piece left Pitcairn Island on the HM frigate *Imogene*, the same ship on which Joshua Hill was deported on December 6, 1837 (Ford 1996, 20; Reynolds 2010, 13).

Just one month before Mauatua's death in 1841, Captain Jenkin Jones arrived on the HM *Curacoa* (Ford 1996, 25). Mauatua learned of Peter Heywood's recent death, her long-ago acquaintance of *Bounty* fame. She entrusted Jones to deliver "several yards of beautifully decorated tapa cloth, made by her own hand, to present to Peter's widow Francis" (Lareau 1999, 11). The material transferred from Mauatua to Jones to Heywood ultimately found residence in the British Museum. Mauatua's garment was cut into pieces by Francis Heywood and distributed to friends and to the Kew Gardens in London (Reynolds 2016, 203).

Four of seven tapa beaters were made of whalebone, including one from Thor Heyerdahl's visit to Pitcairn Island during the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition of 1955-1956 (Cookson 2012). Two other whalebone beaters are in the private collection of Meralda Warren of Pitcairn Island (Reynolds 2016, 201-202), and a fourth resides at the Museum of New Zealand.

There is a large tapa cloth from Pitcairn Island in the Falmouth Museum in Massachusetts. According to Reynolds, Captain Lawrence from a New Bedford whaler, *Anaconda*, dropped his wife Mercy off on Pitcairn Island in 1854. There she gave birth to a daughter, Mary Stuart Lawrence. In remembrance, the islander(s) (presumably a woman or women) gifted her a "huge bundle of cloth made from aute" (Reynolds 2008, 41).

Two *tiputa* containing patchworked, dyed, and stamped decorative elements are housed in the National Museum Scotland. These trace their origin from the HMS *Blossom's* 1825-1826 visit to Pitcairn Island. Two tapa fragments from these *tiputa* were cut and form the basis for the transference of culture to the Bishop Museum in Hawaii (National Museums Scotland 2013-2014). The movement of fragments from museum to museum is a common trajectory; for example, three pieces of barkcloth were sent from the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew to Glasgow Museum (National Museums Scotland 2013-2014).

Reynolds confirmed fourteen Pitcairn barkcloth *tiputa*, or ponchos, during her site visits to

tapa-holding institutions (Reynolds 2016, 199). This extant of tiputa may reflect the women's adoption, acceptance, or tolerance of Western and Christian ideals of modesty. Thomas suggests that the tiputa originated in Tahiti and diffused westward and eastward across the Pacific with the adoption of Christianity (Thomas 1999, 5). This may explain why ponchos are prominent among the tapa artifacts originating from Pitcairn Island.

## Discussion

Meralda Warren and her 'Ahu Sistas (cloth or clothes sisters) are spearheading a “revival of tapa making among the descendants of the original Bounty women” through exhibitions and workshops (Reynolds and Clarkson 2020). In 2008, Warren, Reynolds, and Clarkson traveled to Tahiti from Pitcairn Island, New Zealand, and Huahine, respectively (fig. 1) for the first gathering of the 'Ahu Sistas. Warren exhibited an original tapa production titled “New View of Petroglyphs” to feature doodwi and nanu natural dye on 'uru (breadfruit tree) tapa. These hands-on endeavors are important cultural activities designed to facilitate a connection with the past (fig. 4).



FIGURE 4. Pitcairn Islands, The Art of Pitcairn: TAPA, Part IV. First Day Cover with Miniature Sheet. Source: Bounty Post, 2012.

Pauline Reynolds is in the process of forming agreements with tapa-holding institutions around the world to safeguard these artifacts as cultural heritage. While Reynolds documents tapa samples with photographs and robust descriptions, a comprehensive digital atlas of tapa artifacts from Pitcairn Island and elsewhere in Polynesia should begin in earnest so that details of technique, dye, patterns, and patches are fully captured for future researchers exploring Pitcairn's barkcloth. Adapting from microscale (close range) remote sensing applications using a tripod-mounted scanner with multispectral and hyperspectral sensors offers image, tabular, and spectra data useful in analyzing tapa cloth artifacts. The Smithsonian's Museum Conservation Institute's Imaging Studio, and its work on archaeological Peruvian textiles, provides an analog for our proposed project to develop a barkcloth inventory from Pitcairn Island, specifically, and Polynesia in general (Webb, Summerour, and Giaccai 2023). One possible dissemination strategy is to create a *Google*

*Earth Project* accessible via an online file-sharing cloud storage (see Albert 2021a). This could offer a public portal to high-resolution images and analysis for each Pitcairn Island tapa artifact.

## Conclusion

In essence, this study is an effort to highlight the work of the women of the *Bounty* and their legacy. Examined narratively, one could marvel at the stories behind how tapa garments, linens, and beaters made by women on a remote island in the Pacific found their way into the British Museum 14,708 kilometers (9,139 miles) away. But ultimately, the small number of tapa artifacts, made by so few women and housed in institutions far removed from Pitcairn Island, points at something more fundamental and important—that the women of Pitcairn Island were a driving force for keeping the people of the island alive and even thriving. Despite the Eurocentric and overtly male-focused history of Pitcairn Island found in dozens of books and a few films, no captains, ministers, governors (or even a dictator) of the island would have survived without the women of the *Bounty*.

Ultimately, this project is but one small thread in a much larger tapestry that is the cultural legacy of the women of Pitcairn Island. Tracking the geographic distribution of these artifacts can only go so far in highlighting the history and cultural significance of the work these women accomplished; that said, it is an important and telling thread. From our study, the only Pitcairn Island artifacts with a similar distribution to tapa would seem to be pieces of the HMS *Bounty* itself. That these much more humble, much more fragile, much simpler objects have travelled the globe in equal distance to that of a 90-foot sailing ship speaks, I think, to the lasting power and cultural significance of what is all too often considered small, simple, and inglorious work, the work of women. The women-empire encounters documented here (Albert 2021a, 2021b, 2022) complement the more copious male encounters (Mai or “Oma,” Tupaia, Tu, Finau, Keatonui, Kamehameha) recorded by Thomas and others. Future research should continue to analyze the socio-cultural and the dispersal routes of Pitcairn tapa (barkcloth) so that voices the women of the *Bounty* can be heard again.

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