

FUSION FASHION:
EAST MET WEST IN HAWAIIAN TEXTILES

Linda Arthur Bradley
Washington State University

Abstract

Although the term ‘fusion fashion’ has been commonly used in recent years, there is nothing particularly new about the incorporation of design elements from other cultures into fashion that originates in the western world. Hawaiian textiles provide a case in point. In this chapter, a brief history of Hawaiian fabrics and their cultural design elements is presented, along with a brief history of Hawaiian apparel design and its’ Asian design inspiration. The role of a particularly important manufacturer, Alfred Shaheen, is presented as he intentionally brought ethnic design from Asia to the US Mainland, through Hawaiian textiles. In so doing, Shaheen brought the East to the West, through Hawai`i. This paper is based on historic research over an eight year period. Triangulated research methods were used, including analysis of primary and secondary sources, content analysis and interviews of designers and manufacturers in Hawai`i.

Key words: Hawai`i, Textiles, Aloha attire, Asian design, ethnic design, Shaheen

Originating as western-styled garments made from textiles inspired by Asian design motifs, aloha attire is a form of fusion fashion. The idea of incorporating design elements from Asia into European design can be traced back to the Greeks, likely as an impact of trade along the silk road. Orientalism is seen in Western dress, and is related to a Western perception of the exoticism of the East (Kwon & Kim, 2011). It was all the rage in the Rococo period of the seventeenth century to own Chinese and Japanese art, porcelain and textiles. The use of Chinese silks, in particular, in garments worn in Europe was quite fashionable (Weisberg, 2011; Batterbury and Batterbury, 1977). The fads of Chinoiserie and Japonisme eventually went out of style, but their spirit was revived during the twentieth

century and the use of Asian design elements in fashion continues to be important in the twenty-first century.

Asian design elements were used in Hawaii's aloha attire in the mid twentieth century and this practice spread throughout the United States. The term "aloha attire" refers to clothing designed and worn in the Hawaiian Islands. From the beginning, aloha attire has been a form of fusion fashion as it has merged design motifs and style lines from varied cultures. Aloha attire has consistently followed American style lines, but the fit has generally been loose and comfortable; that fit is symbolic of what has been termed the "aloha spirit" that is evidenced by a laid-back lifestyle. Where the fusion of design elements is seen is in the textile prints that celebrate the multi-ethnic diversity of Hawai'i. Hawaiian textiles have consistently celebrated the design traditions of the many and varied cultures that immigrated to Hawai'i.

This chapter briefly chronicles the history of aloha attire as fusion fashion in Hawai'i, and the concurrent development of Hawaiian textile designs.¹ In doing so it explains how a particular manufacturer, Alfred Shaheen, led the development of Hawaiian textile design in the 1950s and 1960s to express ethnicity as acculturation was occurring at a fast pace in the Islands. Hawaiian prints provide visible testimony to the impact of many ethnic groups in Hawai'i. As the Hawaiian garment industry developed, Shaheen's designers drew on ethnic design motifs as they created Hawaiian textiles for aloha attire. Whether Hawaiian prints are produced in Hawai'i, Kansas or Italy, today's aloha attire continues to be a form of fusion fashion as it blends western and non-western design elements into what is loosely called Hawaiian fashion.

Acculturation is a form of cultural modification that occurs when cultures merge and then have prolonged contact. Generally, acculturation brings about considerable diffusion of cultural traits in one or more directions. The process of acculturation is often visible in terms of dress; as adaptation occurs, debate often ensues in the form of inter-generational arguments, over what is considered appropriate dress (Eicher, Evenson and Lutz, 2000). In

a study of the effect of missionary activity on dress, Forney noted that acculturative changes in native dress seemed to be most dramatic in cultures where clothing prior to western contact was minimal and adornment and body markings more prevalent, such as those in Africa and Polynesia. She also notes that cultures where prestige and social status were important, were more willing to adopt new clothing patterns (1987). All of these elements were present in pre-contact Hawai'i and can be used to explain Hawaii's rapid acceptance of western dress in the nineteenth century while Hawai'i was a monarchy, and even afterwards as an American territory until it became a US state in 1959.

Until the end of the eighteenth century, the population of Hawai'i was composed entirely of Hawaiians. However, with the arrival of Westerners and their diseases, the Hawaiian population was decimated. As plantations developed, labor had to be imported. Chinese immigration began in the 1850s, followed by the Portuguese in the late 1870s, Japanese in the late 1880s, and Koreans and Filipinos arrived after 1900. Inter-marriage between the indigenous Hawaiians and the immigrants led to the extraordinary ethnic diversity seen in Hawai'i today. As a consequence of immigration and inter-marriage, no one ethnic group is in the majority (Arthur, 2002; Okamura, 1994). The largest ethnic groups are Asian (38%), Caucasian (23%), Hispanic/Latino (9%), Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (9%) African-American (2%) and Chinese (Welch, 2011).

A Brief History of Hawaiian Clothing and Textiles

Prior to the arrival of American Christian missionaries and their families in 1820, Hawaiians wore minimal coverings (loincloths, small skirts and mantles) made of barkcloth. Shirts made of woven fabric were eagerly adopted in the 1800s as sailors traded clothing to the indigenous people for varied items and services. Sailors landing in the Islands wore loose fitting, long sleeved upper garments called frocks. From the 1850s to the 1920s, Hawai'i was primarily a plantation based economy peopled by immigrants from Asia and other locales. Plantation laborers spent their days in heavy work clothes. The managers of these plantations were often white or Portuguese who wore western styled clothing imported

from America. Tailored shirts with collars and buttons had been brought into Hawai`i by American businessmen and served as design inspiration for the heavy cotton plaid shirts that were mass-produced for plantation laborers by the 1920s. Soon thereafter these shirts evolved into what would be called the aloha shirt.

The beginning of tourism as a major Hawaiian industry coupled with the increase of US military personnel stationed in Hawai`i led to a global awareness of Hawai`i. By the 1920s the promotional efforts of the Hawai`i Tourist Bureau, already in existence for twenty years, were focused on promoting the Territory of Hawai`i as a colorful, romantic tourist destination. The intense colors found in the Islands' fish and flowers were hyped in tourist literature. By the 1930s, bright colors were being used on fabrics for some aloha attire in the Islands, particularly for aloha shirts sold to tourists. Fabrics were still imported at this time. Plain cotton broadcloth was, by far, the dominant fabric for all Hawaiian garments, though silks from China, and *kabe* crepe from Japan were used as well. Also in the Islands at this time was the Filipino man's shirt called the *barong tagalog*- a sheer, cool long-sleeved shirt worn loose over trousers. Add to this the Chinese, Japanese and Euro-American custom tailors in the islands prior to the 1930s and the stage was set for all these multi-ethnic forces to blend together and create what would become Hawaii's three-dimensional postcard, the aloha shirt (Brown and Arthur, 2002).

Reports exist that boys from an upper-class private school began having colorful shirts custom made for special activities. Custom tailors in Honolulu started making shirts using



Photo Courtesy of University of Hawaii's CTAHR Historic Costume Collection

fabrics that primarily came from Japan and had been designed with bright prints intended for use in children's kimono. (please see the 1930s *kabe* crepe shirt to the right).

The fad of brightly printed shirts moved through Hawaii's upper classes in the 1930s. Hawai'i was still a plantation economy, with the bulk of its population primarily in the lower classes. Only the upper classes could afford clothing for leisure activities: "It was the Depression, then, and still Plantation days. I didn't know anyone who could afford aloha shirts when they first came out, and my family wasn't poor like most," said a Chinese-American gentleman (Sparky Do, personal communication, 1998).

A transition period in the development of Hawaiian textile design occurred from the 1930s through the end of World War II. The transition resulted from both the availability of imported goods (primarily from Asia) to a changing sense of identity of the population. The ethnic mix, which had begun with the importation of laborers in the previous century, had begun to stabilize through both necessity and intermarriage. The different ethnicities began to come together to re-define what it meant to be Hawaiian, based on culture and a sense of place, rather than genealogy. This cultural practice was made visible in design motifs of the aloha shirt.

The brightly printed shirt that started as a fad was formally given the name "aloha shirt" in 1936. The first to use the term in ads was Musa-Shiya the Shirtmaker who advertised in 1935 "Aloha shirts -- well tailored, beautiful designs and radiant colors." However, it was Elery Chun who trademarked the term "aloha shirt" in 1936. He too began by selling shirts made of traditional kimono fabrics although he wanted to produce an expressly Hawaiian shirt. He commissioned Ethyl Lum to create Hawaiian designs of local flowers and fish, and had these designs printed on *kabe* crepe. Because they sold well, Chun noted that: "In 1936 I figured it was a good idea to own the trademark" (Moor, 1978). That was a pivotal year as Chun trademarked the term "aloha shirt" and two major garment manufacturers, Kamehameha and Branfleet, set up factories in order to produce sportswear, including the aloha shirt. While sales to the local population were sluggish during this time

period, the major outlets for aloha shirts were tourists in Hawai`i and consumers on the US mainland. The clothing needs of Hawaiian residents were focused on work clothing, due to economics. At that time, most retailers sold shirts made either in cottons or kabe crepe, and most had Asian design motifs. One of the most notable characteristics of today's aloha shirts are Hawaiian print motifs; ethnic design motifs have been prevalent as well.

As the Territory of Hawai`i was westernizing, its people suppressed their ethnic identities in favor of acculturating into American culture (Hawai`i would not become a state until 1959). Other than on the plantations, people gave up ethnic dress in favor of imported American clothing. The focus was not yet on a local identity. As a consequence, there was not yet a local market for aloha shirts, so the fledgling apparel industry began exporting aloha attire; only five percent of their garments were sold locally. In 1939



Photo by Linda Arthur Bradley. Courtesy of the CTAHR Historic Costume Collection,

Kamehameha produced “23 exclusive print designs ... all of the cottons being printed on the US mainland” (Arlen, 1939). Branfleet, (later renamed Kahala Sportswear) was also founded in 1936 by George Brangier and Nat Norfleet. Today, like Kamehameha, Kahala is one of the oldest and largest firms in the islands. Along with Kamehameha, the company began by selling aloha shirts made of *kabe* crepes, in Asian designs. They were also the first to supply sportswear to the US mainland on a large scale. By 1939, the most popular prints were still quite subtle with small motifs and little color contrast. These basic designs with slight modifications were

used through the end of World War II (Laughlin, 1997). Branfleet's company trademark was the pineapple tweed. The fabric looked like rough linen; it was a durable fabric constructed into plain, solid colored shirts with long sleeves and open collars. These shirts were also referred to as jackets. The only decoration was the Royal Hawaiian crest with the motto: "The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness" (Brown & Arthur, 2002). Tourism continued to grow, and that unique demand led to the development of the Royal Hawaiian Manufacturing Company, founded in 1937 by Max Lewis. Motifs on the early Royal Hawaiian aloha shirts tended to be very bold, Hawaiian designs. Lewis focused on the production of clothing for sale to tourists and some of the earliest proto-Hawaiian shirts (with labels, such as the one pictured below), come from Royal Hawaiian Manufacturing (Arthur, 2006).



Wong's drapery shirt, 1948. Courtesy of CTAHR Historic Costume Collection, University of Hawaii. Photo by Linda Arthur Bradley.

Shipping between Hawai'i and the US was curtailed during World War II and this set the stage for an industry which could no longer import nor export garments. Fabrics had to be printed locally. Due to the scarcity of imported western-styled clothing, aloha attire became more popular on the Islands for the local population.

For some time, tourists and military personnel had readily adopted aloha shirts, but due to a lack of other options, the local Islanders began to accept them as well (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, 1999, 2001;

Dale Hope, 2000; Brown & Arthur, 2002).

After textile imports ceased during World War II, the creation of uniquely Hawaiian textiles began out of necessity in Hawai`i. Artists began designing textiles with large scale tropical motifs for interior design applications such as for slipcovers and draperies. Remnants from the production of slipcovers and draperies were used to make aloha shirts; these were among the earliest tropical print aloha shirts. The drapery shirts produced by Wong's Draperies were a local phenomenon; they were only worn by local residents, never by tourists. Although these drapery shirts were not advertised, they remained popular from the 1940s through the 1960s and even became popular in America as Hawaiian students went to college on the US mainland, then sent requests home for Wong's shirts. They were made of heavy cotton, and were comfortable for football games on the US Mainland (Mun Kin Wong, personal communication, 1998). Nonetheless, drapery shirts were a bit warm for Hawai`i. The tropical designs were in great demand so they were re-designed for apparel applications. The design motifs were scaled down, and the designs were printed on softer, more comfortable material -- rayon. Historical motifs were added to the designs as well. The bright, bold, tropical print shirts, known to collectors around the world as Hawaiian shirts, became well established in the 1940s. The brightly patterned rayon aloha shirt became famous throughout the nation as servicemen returned home from Hawai`i, and as tourism increased through the mid-twentieth century. The 1940s and 1950s were the heyday of Hawaiian tourism; fabrics with Hawaiian motifs were used extensively in aloha shirts both for sale to tourists.

The Hawaiian-born population did not eagerly embrace the bold aloha shirts; the local aesthetic was more subtle. In 1946 the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce appropriated \$1,000 to study aloha shirts and prepare suitable designs for clothing businessmen could wear during the hot summer months. A resolution was passed that allowed The City and County of Honolulu employees to wear sport shirts from June through October each year, but the aloha shirt was excluded. The resolution allowed for "open-collar sport shirts in plain shades, but not the ones with the loud colorful designs and patterns." In 1947 the first Aloha Week was

established. City employees were then allowed to don aloha shirts for business, but only during the single week each year. This decision was of great benefit to the Hawaiian fashion industry, which produced *mu`umu`u* and aloha shirts to be worn during Aloha Week. This festival now lasts from September through early November, with events scheduled on all islands. The institution of Aloha Week in 1947 led to the demise of drab business wear through a permanent adoption of aloha shirts as business dress. By 1965, the aloha attire was celebrated through its use every Friday. 2

As is true with any fashion, the aloha shirt continued to change as it represented the constantly shifting cultural landscape of Hawai`i. While the aloha shirt was known across the US because of tourists and military personnel, it was seen as a souvenir rather than an art form. It was through the development of textile design as a fine art in Hawai`i that aloha shirts in the late twentieth century became highly collectible as works of art (Morgado, 2003). While several textile artists contributed to the improved quality of Hawaiian textiles, one man in particular would become known for fine textile prints. Alfred Shaheen put Hawai`i and its' famous aloha shirt, on the map.



East Met West in Hawai`I: Alfred Shaheen and Fusion Fashion

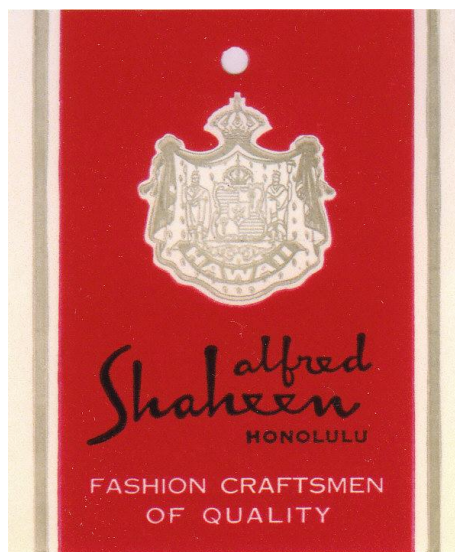
Hawaiian textile art has drawn the attention of artists and connoisseurs from all around the world. The quality of the textile art produced in Hawai`i from the late 1940s through the 1960s has been unsurpassed. Most of the designs showcased the multi-ethnic nature of Hawai`i, a

All hangtags, images, photographs and advertisements in the remainder of this article were provided by Camille Shaheen Tunberg, from her collection of Shaheen textiles, garments, photograph, business records and other ephemera.

state with no ethnic majority. One man with a broad vision and a sincere appreciation for cultural diversity brought Polynesian, Asian, Indian and Middle Eastern designs to Hawai`i, then incorporated them into Hawaiian textile designs; in doing so, Alfred Shaheen brought the East to the West with his fabrics and fashions. Shaheen used these culturally rich textiles as the foundation upon which his fashion lines were based. While his apparel production was in Hawai`i, a great deal of Shaheen apparel was sold in the finer department stores throughout the mainland United States (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication (1998-2008). From there Hawaiian design was introduced to the entire world. Today, Hawaiian textile designs can be found across the globe.

Alfred Shaheen was the cornerstone on which the Hawaiian fashion industry was built, and he was pivotal in its transition from small mom and pop businesses to a modern garment industry. In the late 1940s, a period of time when Hawai`i was still an American territory but quite isolated from the U.S. mainland, the garment business produced less than one million dollars in sales (in 1947). With Shaheen's lead, the industry was revolutionized and grew to \$15 million in sales in the mid-twentieth century (Noland, 2009). He revolutionized the industry by pioneering large-scale screen-printing, manufacturing, distribution, and vertical integration of a fashion business. Shaheen combined all facets of textile and garment creation under one roof, establishing a model for the evolution of the Hawaiian garment industry. In so doing, he brought the fledgling industry into what was then considered cutting edge fashion industry practices.

An aeronautical engineer, Alfred Shaheen never intended to follow the family tradition of garment manufacturing (started by his grandfather in New York in 1902). He was born in 1922, to George and Mary Shaheen who moved to Hawai`i in 1938 and built a custom clothing business focused on women's special occasion attire. After earning his engineering degree, Shaheen enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1942, then became a fighter pilot during World War II. After the War, he returned to his family in Hawai`i where there was no aircraft industry to employ him, so Shaheen began working in the family business. Soon thereafter, he married and started his own apparel business, Shaheens' of Honolulu, in



1948. Like his parents, Shaheen focused on quality material, but rather than custom apparel, Shaheen saw that the market in Hawai`i was ready for mass production. He had engineering skills, a creative mind, a willingness to solve problems, and an entrepreneurial spirit. These traits would prove to be essential to Shaheen's success.

When Shaheen started making aloha shirts in 1948, the shirts being produced by his competitors were similar in style, but varied in the types, qualities and weights of fabrics. Most of the Hawaiian apparel manufacturers ordered roller prints, from 6000 miles away in the eastern US. The print designs were small scale, with a 15 inch repeat. When a unique design was desired, free lance artists would sell the art to the manufacturer, who would send the art to textile converters in New York and it would take three months or more to convert the art to a textile print, then produce the fabric and send it through the Panama Canal to Hawai`i in order to start production.

In general, these prints from the 1940s were "hash" prints composed of many disparate design motifs that did not necessarily tie together. Shaheen described these designs as "doodling on fabric, throwing in a surfboard and palm tree and so forth" (personal communication, 1998). He felt that the hash prints were not artistic. Nonetheless, the varied styles of colorful aloha shirts were greeted with enthusiasm by tourists who were a ready market for more adventurous aloha attire in the post-World War II era. Shaheen's designs were more artistic, and color combinations became riotous, with three to five different colors used in the silk screening process. While the roller prints that could be ordered were produced with 15 inch repeats, In 1950, Shaheen decided to create his own 24" silk screens so that he could have larger repeats which led to larger designs. His designs were artistic, and had intense colors as a result of pushing a great amount of dye through the silkscreens. A good example of a Shaheen print featuring Hawaii's ti leaves is below.



As Shaheen built his company on a remote island, numerous problems appeared. Creativity, ingenuity and Shaheen's engineering skills would prove to be necessary components toward the development of his apparel firm. Shaheen began with four sewing machines and six employees. He did the fabric cutting. At the time, there was not a viable labor pool, so he trained his employees on every detail of the operation. He'd been using roller prints for his aloha shirts, and in 1950 the Korean war led to a huge upset in the textile market. He had tied up a great deal of money in ordering printed fabric, when the political situation led to textile prices dropping by more than half. Shaheen said,

I barely survived financially. I said to myself, 'If I am going to survive in this business I have got to control the fabric.' So I rented a Quonset hut ...and I started the print plant there, I built the tables, my screens, I built the equipment to process the fabric after it was printed -after printing it had to be washed and dried. I did it with baling wire, bicycle parts and 2 X 4 's because I didn't have money to buy the equipment (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, 2000).

Shaheen wanted his textile designs to be unique. He developed the metallic prints that were used on textiles for clothing. He wanted fabrics that were washable, light-fast, chlorine and saltwater resistant – Shaheen became well known for these fabrics, and produced them in about 100 colors, though gold, silver and copper were favorites. The next problem Shaheen encountered was hiring textile artists. He needed people who could render the artwork with great

detail and in at least three colors. A good example is below. This shirt, from 1948, features footprints in the sand, and captures the essence of life at the beach.



Textile design was a specialty that was learned through an apprenticeship system in the 1940s, and the available artists were on the East Coast of the US near the printing plants. There were no art schools to train textile designers at that time; it was not until the 1970s that textile design was taught in Europe and then America. Textile designs were produced as individual pieces of art and sold as piecework by the artists to apparel companies on the US Mainland. Hawai`i was too remote to attract artists so Shaheen solved his problem in a unique way. He remembered that:

It was in 1950-- what I did then-- and I was the first to do this in the whole US --- I got together four artists in Hawai`i, and I put them in a studio. They'd been living hand to mouth, barely surviving. And I put them in a studio and put them

on salary and taught them to do textile design. It's an art all in itself because the design had to be done in repeats and color separations had to be done for each one (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, 2001).

Shaheen recognized that providing a stable work environment for the employees was important to the production of quality textiles and apparel. By setting up the artists in a studio with a stable salary they were able to concentrate on their textile designs. Similarly, Shaheen workers were all paid above average wages and generally worked from their youth to retirement at Shaheen's. Bob Sato was a good example. When he met this young Japanese American boy, Shaheen immediately recognized his talent and hired Sato, and personally taught him to do textile design.



Bob Sato, seen in the foreground of the photo to the left, with Tony Walker on the right, had been doing glass etching when he was hired by Shaheen. He brought a keen eye for detail, a good hand and passion for ethnic design. These were essential skills that readily transferred to textile design. At Shaheen's, Sato became the head textile designer. Shaheen referred to Sato as "my hands- I'd tell him what I envisioned and he'd draw it." Sato stayed at Shaheens' until his death. Bob Sato led a team of four other textile designers, mostly Asian women, and Tony Walker, an African-American.

Ethnicity in general, and ethnic design in particular, were highly valued by Shaheen. His commitment to cultural diversity was manifested in both his employment practices and the textiles produced by the company. All but one of his designers (Richard Goodwin, trained in Paris) were from the Hawaiian Islands. Most of the Shaheen employees were ethnically Japanese, but others were Hawaiian, Chinese and African American. Toward that end, Shaheen championed textile art that reflected the ethnic backgrounds of all of Hawaii's people. Shaheen

wanted his textile designs to be works of art that also had cultural meaning. To maintain the authenticity of the designs, Shaheen kept library of rare books for the designers to use in their research. These books contained the history of the original native prints that were adapted for Shaheen textile designs. In this way, the textile designs were unique. There were over 6,000 textile designs created between 1948 and 1988. In talking about the early years of his textile designs, Shaheen said:

What I did was to make my designs more demonstrative. The first thing I did was to have my artists go into the Bishop Museum and study the *tapas*, and look for artifacts that could be illustrated. Basically what I wanted them to do was to create a textile design that had some meaning to it, to write a story about each textile design. We tried to put in more substance into the design, and on the hangtag we'd write the story behind the design. (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, 1998).

East Met West in Shaheen's Textiles



One of Shaheen's goals with regard to textile design was to capture the exotic sense of Hawai'i and to have his designs remain authentic to Hawai'i and its multi-ethnic people, most of whom came from Asia and Polynesia. Visually representing that idea, in the photo to the right, Alfred Shaheen is wearing one his line of shirts featuring *tapa* designs.

In the early days of the company, Shaheen sent Sato, Walker and the other designers to the Bishop Museum to study barkcloth produced on several Polynesian islands. (throughout Polynesia, the term for barkcloth is *tapa* but in Hawai'i the term is *kapa*.) Imagery from this research into Hawaiian *kapa* and Polynesian *tapa* designs then appeared in textile design for the Shaheen's aloha shirts. Visually representing that idea, in the photo below, Alfred Shaheen is wearing one his line of shirts featuring a *tapa* design.

Following the success of these *kapa* textile designs, Shaheen chartered boats and planes to send his textile designers on trips all over Asia and the Pacific. His goal was to have them visit many cultures, islands and museums, and his requirement was that they would draw whatever they saw in order to infuse ethnic designs into textile design for the company. Through this fusion of design elements, Asian design came to America through Hawaii.



The Hawaiian aesthetic of bold, multicolored patterns did not work well with American textile companies who preferred simpler prints and required runs of at least 10,000 yards per order. Japanese mills had long produced multicolored prints and required minimum runs of just 3,000 yards, so Hawaiian manufacturers often obtained yardage from Japan. The cessation of imports and exports during World War II created drastic changes in the Hawaiian fashion industry. Alfred Shaheen noted:

During the War there were one or two million servicemen in Hawai'i who were introduced to the Islands. Some stayed and married, others went home and then came back with wives. They introduced the aloha shirt to the US mainland. ... This was about 1950 when tourism started to be important. We weren't a tourist market yet because there were only three or four hotels then. There was a craze for Hawai'i on the US mainland then, related to the push for statehood in the US Congress (Personal communication, 2002).

Most of Shaheens' Hawaiian textile designs from the 1940s and 1950s were influenced by Hawaiian history, flowers, and people. The red and grey shirt to the right is from a series of designs that focus on Hawaiian rituals. This shirt design celebrates Hawaiian royalty who were wearing the feather capes and headdresses that were common prior to the adoption of aloha attire.



A key attribute that set Shaheen's aloha attire apart from his competitors was the use of high quality textile art and intense colors in the designs. These were particularly vivid in rayon shirts, like the one on the left, that featured an array of Hawaiian flowers.

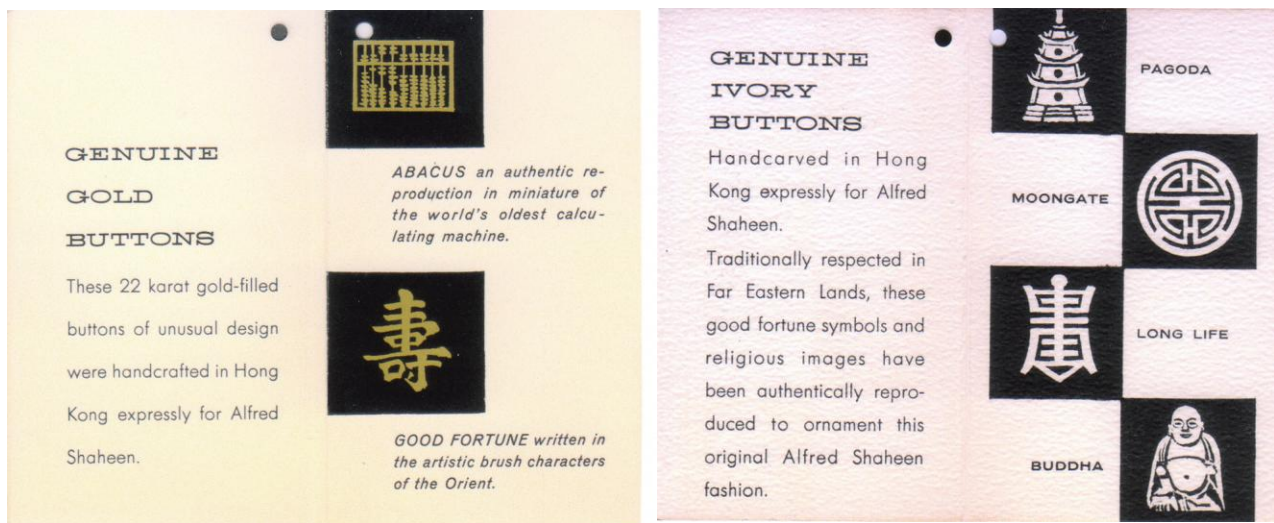
Shaheen's East Meets West Boutiques

A few of the Hawaiian manufacturers began shipping aloha attire to US department stores in the 1960s, but they focused on aloha shirts, and were not



very successful. From the beginning, Shaheen used western design lines for apparel, but the fabric featured ethnic design. Women's wear produced under the Shaheen labels followed the American fashion lines and silhouettes that were then current, but the textile designs were uniquely ethnic. By staying current with contemporary fashion silhouettes, Shaheen designs could be worn anywhere. With the blending of western style lines and Asian design motifs, Shaheens' garments were fusion fashion, and they were a hit in the major metropolitan areas across the US. These fashions were introduced to America through an innovative technique championed by Shaheen who created his "East Meets West" boutiques within many high-end American retail stores such as Bloomingdales in New York and Bullocks in Los Angeles.

The East Meets West boutiques were a total concept similar to what we see today in brand marketing. The boutiques were three-dimensional sets within the stores. They presented Shaheen's concept of ethnic diversity in all features from the garments displayed to the design of the boutique and its fixtures. Early on, garments were shipped via ocean freight, but what cemented the trend of Hawaiian prints in the US was the introduction of air traffic between Hawai'i and the US mainland, and the frequent air transport of garments from on Pan American World Airways and American Airlines (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, 1999). Alfred Shaheen stated that he and his textile artists wanted to "create a textile design that had some meaning to it. . . . So we tried to put in more substance into the design, and on the hangtag we would write the story behind the design" (2000). He felt a need to inform his consumers about the cultural meanings behind the imagery and did so on hangtags, as seen below.



Conclusions

Through Asian design motifs used by Shaheen's textile designers, the East was brought to Hawai'i. Tourists, and later manufacturers, took these Asian designs into the West as demand for Hawaii's ethnic prints increased. Most importantly, however, Shaheen introduced Hawaiian clothing to the people of the world and changed the global landscape of textiles, fashion, and design forever. His impact on Hawai'i was recognized in 2001 when he was awarded Hawaii's *Ka`ahu No`eau* Lifetime Achievement Award, then later on, in 2006, Shaheen was listed as one of the 150 most important influences in Hawai'i.

Shaheen's legacy continues to have an impact on Hawaiian fashion and its designers now, in the twenty first century. Though he retired in the 1980s, the Hawaiian fusion fashion that Alfred Shaheen brought to the US captured a sense of Hawaii's ethnic uniqueness that is at the heart of the aloha spirit. In an article written about contemporary Hawaiian style, Professor Kathryn Waddell Takara was quoted as saying "Fashion in the Western sense is an ever-changing form of marketed materialism, What happens in Hawai'i is that fashion draws on different aspects of ethnic styles and markets them from time to time³ (Simon, 2000a). A Hawaiian fashion consultant, Amos Kotomori agreed, and said "what we really draw on are our very distinctive ethnic roots". Anne Namba designs contemporary women's wear in Hawai'i, and prominently features Asian (particularly Japanese) design elements. In describing her clients in Hawai'i, Namba noted that "A lot of people are Western in the way they dress are yet are very Eastern in that they appreciate Asian arts and culture. What I do is to turn the fabrics of the kimono into something that is a little bit more wearable for the contemporary woman- so the customer is able to wear the fabric without having to feel that she's wearing some kind of costume." (Simon, 2000a; 38).

References

- Arthur, L. 1997. Cultural authentication refined: The case of the Hawaiian holoku. *Clothing and Textile Research Journal* 15 (3): 129–39.
- Arthur, L. (2000). *Aloha attire: Hawaiian dress in the twentieth century*. Atglen, PA: Schiffer.
- Arthur, L. 2006. The aloha shirt and ethnicity in Hawaii. *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture* (4): 8–34.
- Brown, D, and Arthur, L. 2002. *The art of the Aloha shirt*. Honolulu, HI: Island Heritage Publishers.
- Fujii, J. (2006). *Tori Richard: The First Fifty Years*. TR Press. Honolulu.
- Hope, D. and Tozian, G. (2000) *The Aloha Shirt: Spirit of the Islands*. Beyond Words Publishing. Portland OR.
- Kelly, M. (2002). Seeking Authenticity in the Marketplace. *The Journal of Popular Culture* 37(2):220-43.
- Kelly, M (2003). Projecting an Image and Expressing Identity: T-Shirts in Hawai‘i. *Fashion Theory* 7(2):191-211.
- Manchester, Curtis. 1999. Aloha attire: A geographic perspective. In D.W. Woodcock, (Ed): *Hawaii: New Geographies*. Honolulu, HI: Department of Geography, University of Hawaii.
- Morgado, M. (2003). From Kitch to Chic: The Transformation of Hawaiian Shirt Aesthetics. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 21 (2): 175-88.
- Norwich, William. 2003. A shore thing. *Men’s Fashions of the Times Magazine*, March 9; 48-50.
- Smith, R. (2001). *Inventing Paradise: Haeaiian Image and Popular Culture*. Fullerton Museum Center. Fullerton CA.

About the author: Linda Arthur Bradley is Professor and Curator, in the Apparel, Merchandising, Design and Textiles Department at Washington State University. Dr. Arthur's research methods are ethnographic and/or qualitative, and her work focuses on an investigation

of the relationship between material culture and the expression of identity and ethnicity. Most of her research projects address the complex meanings underlying traditional textiles and clothing in Asia and the Pacific. Dr. Arthur's numerous books and articles focus on the connections between culture, ethnicity, gender, religion and dress.