

The Impact of Alfred Shaheen's Use of Asian Design Motifs on the Development of the Hawaiian Textiles and Garment Industry

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Abstract *Hawaiian textile art has inspired artists and fashion designers worldwide and accounts for the high value of vintage Hawaiian apparel as collectibles. Other than tropical designs, a large portion of the textile art showcased the ethnic diversity of Hawai'i. In the 1800s, Hawai'i attracted immigrants from all over Asia, and the majority of Hawaii's residents today claim Asian ethnicity. This ethnic mix was made visible in textiles, a trend championed by Alfred Shaheen, an apparel manufacturer who loved Asian designs. He was committed to the celebration of cultural diversity at a time when Hawai'i was rapidly westernizing. The team of Asian textile artists he led created textile designs based on motifs and imagery from Asia. Shaheen's passionate vision led to the unique textiles produced in the 'golden age' of Hawaiian textiles, from 1940 through the 1960s. Alfred Shaheen has been called "Hawaii's Master Printer" and has been credited for turning Hawaiian textiles into art. The author's interviews with Mr. Shaheen were conducted over a decade, and form the basis for this paper in which Shaheen's own words are used to discuss his use of textile art in the transformation of the Hawaiian textiles and garment industry.*

Key words *Textiles, Asian design, motifs, prints, Alfred Shaheen*

Textiles have an almost limitless potential for communication. Throughout history, cloth has facilitated social organization. Cloth helps social groups to express values, to reproduce themselves and to achieve autonomy or advantage in interactions with others, as noted by Schneider and Weiner (1989). Clothing and textiles provide a window through which we can see, experience and understand the social world. Simply put, clothing and textiles are visual and non-verbal forms of communication. As Grant McCracken noted, "the principles of a world are found woven into the fabric of its clothing" (1986, p.60), because if one understands a culture's clothing and textiles, one can understand the values operant in that culture. Such ideas are particularly salient with regard to Hawaiian textile prints.

Because the Hawaiian Islands are located between Asia and the continental United States, it is not surprising that Asian influences appeared in the Hawaiian textiles that provide the basis of Hawaii's traditional clothing, referred to as aloha attire (aloha shirts for men, and *holoku*, *mu'umu'u* and *holomu'u*

for women). The very earliest aloha shirts were made with imported Japanese prints but that rapidly changed when textile printing began in the Hawaiian Islands and the colorful Hawaiian prints developed using Asian imagery (Arthur, 2008; Brown & Arthur, 2002, 2005). The aloha shirt has become an icon of Hawai'i. It has been referred to as a 'picture postcard' representing the Hawaiian spirit. Due to the textiles produced in the mid-twentieth century, these shirts are highly collectible and they have been the subject of books and research papers (Arthur, 2000; Brown & Arthur 2002, 2005; Hope & Tozian, 2000; Kelly 2003, 2012; Morgado, 2003, 2007; Morgado & Reilly, 2012). While research on garment design and evolution has been common, recently analyses of textile design, symbolism and ethnic imagery in Hawaiian textiles has been conducted. Some of this research has focused on the diverse ethnic imagery found in Hawaiian prints (Arthur, 2006, 2008; Brown & Arthur, 2002, 2005).



Figure 1.
Alfred Shaheen, wearing Samoan Tapa print, 1950s.
Courtesy of Camille Shaheen Tunberg and William Tunberg

While Hawaiian prints are iconic, what is less well known is how Hawaii's focus on ethnic diversity in the textiles actually came into being. This paper presents that history, and highlights the contributions of a particular manufacturer, Alfred Shaheen, who was passionate about unique designs in general, and Asian design imagery in particular. He led his designers and the Hawaiian garment industry

away from traditional and static designs and toward a more creative use of imagery where ethnic motifs, particularly from Asian cultures, were rendered in unique textile designs. In opposition to more familiar designs that might have been considered 'authentic', Shaheen met with his designers to discuss the concepts he had for his lines, then encouraged the designers to think freely as they created Hawaiian prints. This practice was one of hybridity, defined as occurring when different cultures interact and produce creative borrowing through the merging of varied forms and processes (Rosaldo, 1995). Hybridity is a common form of design adaptation in Pacific cultures. It thrives in settings of creative openness, where designers are free to experiment with a range of artistic opportunities. Hybridity then led to a process that Leslie and Addo (2007) refer to as pragmatic creativity, an excellent descriptor for the climate in which Shaheen led his designers to create ethnic imagery on textiles intended for Hawaiian dress.



Figure 2.
Geisha, courtesy of Camille Shaheen Tunberg and William Tunberg

At a time when the fledgling Hawaiian garment industry was composed of small family businesses that did very small runs of garments, Alfred Shaheen brought modern garment industry methods to Hawai'i. He was credited with guiding the Hawaiian fashion industry to success (Noland, 2009; Tunberg, 2012). In a short time period (1947-1959), Shaheen led the industry into a period of 15-fold growth (from one million dollars to 15 million dollars in sales). However it was not just the introduction of modern production and distribution techniques that led to this growth, but Shaheens' development of tex-

tile design and printing in the Islands that invigorated the industry in the era following World War II. At this time, Hawai'i was a territory of the U.S. but not yet a state; westernization was occurring at a fast pace in the Islands. Alfred Shaheen resisted that push toward Americanization; he took an opposing stand when he intentionally focused on ethnic designs in textile art. He took his design team to locations in Asia and they incorporated Asian design elements into the textile art for Shaheen designs that were sold in Hawai'i, the U.S., and then the world. Hawaiian prints provide visible testimony to the impact of Asian ethnic groups in Hawai'i. As a basis of contemporary aloha attire, these prints continue to represent a form of hybrid design that blends western and non-western design elements into what is loosely called Hawaiian fashion.

Materials and Methods

The study of material culture in general, and artifacts in particular, can facilitate new forms and methods of interpretation. Objects such as dress, can be examined as a form of visual literacy. When such objects are examined in conjunction with primary historical data our interpretations of history become richer. Such a combination of methods was found useful in the Hawaiian case study presented here. Because Hawaiiana (items of Hawaiian material culture) in general, and the aloha shirt in particular are pop-cultural phenomena that are highly sought by collectors, finding accurate data on aloha attire was a difficult task in the late twentieth century because materials in print were based on anecdotal writings by collectors. Serious academic research was needed and began at the University of Hawai'i in the mid-1990s (Arthur, 2000; Arthur, 2006; Arthur, 2008; Brown & Arthur, 2002; Kelly, 2003; Morgado, 2003).

A multi-method approach was used for this study, and included primary and secondary sources. While other work on Hawaiian textiles focus on secondary data, in this paper most of the data was derived from interviews with Hawai'i's acknowledged 'Master Printer', Alfred Shaheen. The author conducted interviews annually between 1998 and his death in 2008.

Primary source materials related to the production of Hawaiian textiles included clothing, textiles, ads, publicity stills, photography, and newspaper articles from the archives of the University of Hawai'i's Historic Costume Collection; examination of a collection of art, artifacts and fabrics produced by Ethyl Chun Lum for the first aloha shirts in 1936. These were loaned by her son for my analysis prior to their being sent to the Smithsonian Museum, where they currently reside. Most importantly, access to the largest collection of Shaheen garments and textiles in the United States provided rich data. This private collection of several thousand textiles and garments is owned by Camille Shaheen and her husband William Tunberg. Interviews with Alfred Shaheen and his family (who worked in the business) were conducted between 1998 and 2007 and form the basis for most of the data in this paper. When Mr. Shaheen died in 2008, requests for exhibitions of his fashions in several American museums led to a thorough analysis of Shaheen's textiles and apparel. A series of traveling exhibitions of Alfred Shaheen's work was mounted in museums in Hawai'i, California, Washington and Michigan between 2010 and 2013. The artifacts examined for this research paper were also significant parts of these exhibits each of

which included 100 to 250 textiles and garments. The textile designs were photographed, and content analysis was done to determine ethnic design motifs. Validation of the ethnic origin of the designs was provided by having colleagues from China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia and Polynesia examine and categorize the origin of the various motifs seen in Shaheen designs in order to ensure inter-rater reliability.

A Brief History of Hawaiian Textiles

Westernization began in Hawai'i soon after it was 'discovered' by European sailors at the end of the eighteenth century. Western diseases reduced the Hawaiian population by 75 percent so laborers from China, Korea, Japan, the Philippines and other countries were imported by the 1850s to work on Hawaiian plantations. They intermarried, leading to a society that is quite multi-ethnic. According to Arthur (2006), 65 percent of Hawaiian residents are ethnically Asian. In the same way that the cultures mixed, so did their fabrics and eventually their textile design.

In the early twentieth century, textiles in Hawai'i were imported from Asia, the US and Europe. The Shaheen family had been in the garment industry in New Jersey for two generations at that time. They moved from the U.S. to the Territory of Hawai'i in the 1930s and set up a custom dressmaking operation. Alfred Shaheen remembered:

The first fabrics in Hawai'i were the Japanese hand-printed *kabe* crepes and *yukata* which was heavier, it was *kimono* cloth. They also had silks for making *kimono*. It was pretty cheap to get it from Japan at that time. We got a lot of *habutae* silk; they didn't use pongee yet. In the 1930s the little tailor shops-like Musa-Shiya or King-Smith, they brought in *habutae* silk and *kabe* crepes for making *kimono* for clients. Sometimes people would go in just to buy the Japanese fabrics then the ladies would take it home and make *kimono*. The *kabe* crepes were the only printed fabrics in Hawai'i at the time—except for the indigo dyed *yukata* cottons used for casual *kimono* (personal communication, February 2, 1998).

By the middle of the 1930s, people in Hawai'i began to create bright, multicolored textile designs that reflected the vibrant environment of Hawai'i. The first Hawaiian prints for aloha shirts were done by Ethyl Chun Lum for her brother's business. Elery Chun trademarked the term 'aloha shirt' in 1936. The prints he used were made by Ethyl with very small linoleum blocks for each motif, then arranged together to form a pattern and block-printed onto plain cotton broadcloth. The earliest designs favored sea life and tropical flora and fauna.

When I first landed in Hawai'i in the 1930s most folks wore mainland clothes in town; there was no printing being done in the Islands yet. Herb Briner came in with Kamehameha (between 1936) to make low end garments. Then Nat Norfleet started at about the same time and did more expensive things in his company Branfleet (which became Kahala). Things

were slow, but were building and then World War II nearly killed it all. After the War about a dozen manufacturers started up to produce aloha shirts, though some made women's wear too. But they all looked alike, with hash prints that had all kinds of miscellaneous designs thrown on the fabric (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, March 2, 2002).

Tropical designs were roller printed onto heavy cotton fabric (for drapes and slipcovers) in the US and imported into Hawai'i. After these were constructed, remnants were used for what were referred to as 'drapery shirts' which were worn in the cooler areas of Hawai'i by the 1940s. The boldly printed designs were so popular that they were scaled down and screen printed onto lighter weight cottons for aloha shirts and later on, for dresses such as the *mu'umu'u* and *holoku*. While tourists and later servicemen rapidly adopted the Hawaiian prints, the local residents of Hawai'i were not as accepting; they were more conservative and favored the use of clothing imported from the US into Hawai'i as they were rapidly westernizing with an eye to becoming an American state (Arthur, 2006).

In college Shaheen studied aeronautics then became a fighter pilot during World War II, during which time his family continued with their small custom clothing business in Hawaii. This was a difficult time, as imports of fabric and apparel into Hawai'i ceased during the war. . Shaheen returned to Hawaii in 1945. Finding no aeronautical work when he returned to Hawai'i, Shaheen joined the family business and went out on his own in 1948. He started mass producing aloha shirts in 1948, and by 1950 a problem occurred that nearly ruined his business. Shaheen had been ordering roller prints from Asia but in 1950 the Korean war led to a huge upset in the textile markets. Shaheen had an enormous amount of money tied up in fabric that he had ordered but it could not be delivered due to the political situation. It nearly ruined his business. Shaheen realized that the key to success in the fashion industry, especially in Hawai'i, was to control the fabric. He knew he needed to have his own textile printing plant. However, he had no funds to do that so gathered bicycle parts and built his printing plant in an old Quonset hut near the Honolulu airport (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, February 2, 1998).

From the beginning, Shaheen focused on producing textile designs that had cultural relevance to Hawaiian residents. The designs drew from Hawaiian, Asian and Polynesian culture for design motifs and imagery. The designs were silk screened in large panels (often 24 inches) with large, brightly colored designs. Saturated dyes were used in order to produce the iconic Hawaiian designs. At the end of World War II heavy rayon was produced that could hold the dye through repeated washings (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, February 2, 1998). The fabric felt like silk, and the aloha shirts produced with rayon were called 'silkies' that were produced between 1945-1955. This was the heyday of Hawaiian textile design, which was driven by Alfred Shaheen's focus on fine textile art, then widely copied by small companies, and emulated by his larger competitors, including Kamehameha and Branfleet (Dale Hope, personal communication, August 14, 2004).

After trade restrictions eased, textile production continued in Hawai'i because manufacturers wanted smaller runs of fabric that had multiple colors, and found that there were many advantages to producing it locally. Hawaiian textiles became the backbone of the Hawaiian apparel industry that grew from mom

and pop shops to major manufacturing facilities by the time that Hawai'i became a U.S. state in 1959. By the 1960s and the influx of people from the mainland US, the trend in Hawaiian textiles had shifted from large, realistic brightly colored tropical prints on rayon to abstract prints on fine cottons throughout the 1960s (Arthur, 2002; Brown & Arthur, 2002; Hope & Tozian, 2000).

Ethnic Hybridity in Hawaiian Textiles

As a visible marker of acculturation, ethnic hybridity in a culture's designs can be seen as tangible evidence of cultural interaction. 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 Polynesian groups, acculturation has been constant and Islanders, like those in the Hawai'i, have easily accepted new cultural forms and worked to fit them into existing patterns so that 'new' artistic practices are simply the natural outgrowth of a long-standing willingness to embrace new design ideas. While this is a form of ethnic hybridity (Rosaldo, 1995), the development of textile art in Hawai'i can also be explained as a form of 'pragmatic creativity' as described by Leslie and Addo (2007) since it involves a perpetual openness to inspiration, adaptation and modification of the arts, textiles and clothing.

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 was found in Polynesia. She also notes that cultures where prestige and social status were important, were more willing to adopt new clothing patterns (Forney, 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 when Hawaii imported Asian immigrants by the thousands. Intermarriage led to a multicultural society that celebrates cultural diversity. The rapid integration of Asian design elements into Hawaiian textiles is a twentieth century manifestation of ethnic hybridity and pragmatic creativity at work.

A need for unique designs coupled with a sincere appreciation for cultural diversity led Alfred Shaheen and his design team to incorporate ethnic design elements into Hawaiian textile. 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 he produced apparel in Hawai'i, a great deal of the Shaheen textiles and clothing designs were sold in the finer department stores throughout the mainland United States, Polynesia, Asia and Europe (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, March 3, 2003; January 3, 2004; February 12, 2006). When Shaheen started making aloha shirts in 1948, his competitors' shirts were similar in style, but varied in the types, qualities and weights of fabrics. In general, most of the prints from the 1940s were "hash" prints composed of many disparate

design motifs that did not necessarily tie together.

It was so important to provide unique looks and I did that with the screen-printed Asian prints and the intense colors we used. I sometimes used five colors, but mostly did three because of my need for production. I figured with three colors, you could damn near do anything. With three you can get a great look. Many of my prints were tone on tone; I didn't use garish colors. I wanted my garments to be color coordinated with the customer's other clothing. I did hombre dying by tilting the jig. We did a lot of innovation focused on maintaining high quality with a craft look. Everything was geared toward quality. There was a period when I was doing a lot of silks, some plain but others variegated. I would use spray guns to get a striped effect then silk-screen a design on top of it. There was a full page editorial that ran on this process of mine in *Women's Wear Daily* (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, March 2, 2002).

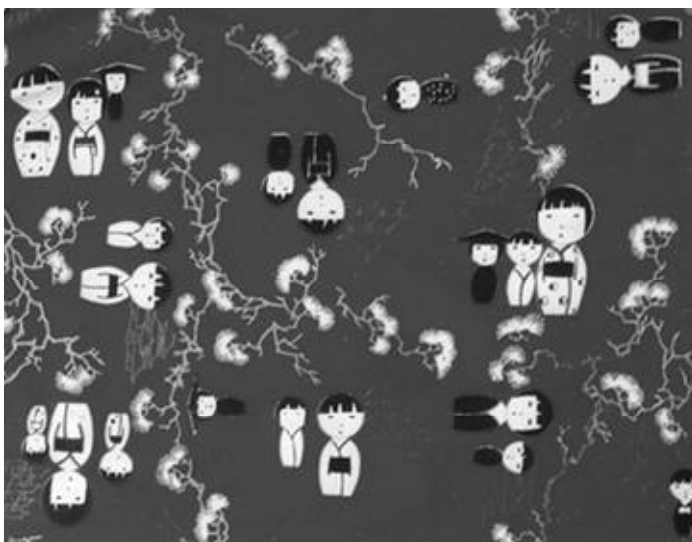


Figure 3.
Kokeshi dolls, courtesy of Camille Shaheen Tunberg and William Tunberg

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. It took 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. Shaheen was

the first apparel manufacturer in Hawai'i to produce large-scale, ethnic focused designs in the textile art. Additionally, garment design and the notions, particularly buttons, were also taken from ethnic design. Because Shaheen's was vertically integrated, the business stayed ahead of the competitors and became very successful (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, 1999, 2004, 2005; Camille Shaheen Tunberg, personal communication, May 12, 2012).

The textile art- that's where I made my niche...When I started my business, I fell in love with Oriental prints. They were bright, colorful and very smart. I could only get bright prints from Japan, and they were hand-printed kabe crepes that came through Japanese vendors who came to Hawaii. It took at least six months to get the fabric after it was purchased. And they were small prints, only fifteen inch repeats. I wanted bigger designs so when I started textile printing, I did silkscreens for 24" repeats. At Shaheens, our designers used these Asian prints for inspiration and we'd adapt the designs for our own garments. We loved the *mon* [Japanese family crests]. We had books of the old crests and study them. We'd reduce them and blow them up too. I did some panel prints with three huge *mon* down the center front of a long women's mu'umu'u. The print design was Japanese, the red/black coloration was Chinese, the design lines were Hawaiian and construction techniques American. It's that kind of mix that makes aloha attire special (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, March 2, 2002).

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. He said:

I had one principle; pay better salaries and get better people. I figured that we'd be better off economically. You get quality people that way. At the time, no other employers in Hawai'i did this. Many of my employees had grown up working on the plantations and had low expectations. I appreciated the skills and attitudes of my workers, most of whom were Asian. I gave them full insurance, vacations and holidays, all paid for by the company. Most people got hired by Shaheens, and worked 20 or more years and then retired. They were like family (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, August 20, 2000). In the women's wear division, my training section was run by my mother [who had a custom business]. She taught our first cutters and pattern makers- they were Japanese ladies. We were known for quality. I set up six operators, single needle. I broke my women's wear down to six operations and I made very intricate stuff in my women's wear. (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, June 20, 1999).

Women loved Shaheen dresses, not just for the unique prints, but because the intricate fit (as Mr.



Figure 4.
Mon panel print, courtesy of Camille Shaheen Tunberg and
William Tunberg

Shaheen alluded to, above) and the designs were the most sophisticated garments that women could buy in Honolulu. The bodices had an under-structure, such as a built in bustier that shaped women's bodies. In spite of the relatively high price point, women so loved Shaheen designs that they saved for the dresses. Often they cost an entire month's salary (Susan Shaheen Mulkern, personal communication, November 26, 2013). Fine needlework and construction skills were needed for this level of garment manufacture. It was fortunate that there were Japanese sewing schools in Honolulu at that time. Japanese seamstresses were hired by Shaheen and additional training was provided through in-house training (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, March 3, 2003).

Most of my workers were Asian, Japanese, Chinese and a few Koreans. Charlie Goto was in charge of the printing plant where the silkscreeners were often Japanese. In the retail stores we had people from all backgrounds, including Koreans. The designers were Japanese, Chinese, one African American and one *haole* (white). Tony Walker, Louise Chun and Richard Goodwin, and of course Bob Sato were the most important members of the team, and no one was more essential to our success than Bob and his designs (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, January 22, 2007). I met Bob met through a mutual friend-- this

was when we lived in Nuuanu [central Oahu]. I remember this had to be about 1951. Tony Walker was already working for me. Bob had been doing glass etching. I saw he had a good hand, so I hired him. Tony and I helped him learn textile design, and he just bloomed. He could follow instructions. The way I worked is that I explained my ideas to the designers. I always directed them about the look I wanted. They were very disciplined designers. I had to make sure their prints fit into our collection- it had to have a look, a unique theme. Bob loved these ideas. He was absolutely the best textile designer in the U.S. He was fabulous. I could talk with him, and lay out my ideas. He was like my hand. I could tell him what I wanted, and he'd draw it. He was fast. We'd sit down together and design it, working side by side, adjust it and get it into production. He was inspired by all kinds of design, Chinese, Japanese and Korean. He'd mix the different elements up to make unique looks. (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, June 20, 2001).



Figure 5.
Bob Sato designing the *mon* panel print, courtesy of Camille
Shaheen Tunberg and William Tunberg

To maintain the authenticity of the designs, Shaheen kept library of rare books for designers to use in their research. These books contained the history of the original native prints that were adapted to Shaheen textile designs. In this way, the textile designs were unique. As Alfred Shaheen stated, “ Some of my favorite pieces had Asian design elements, like three huge *mon* [Japanese crests] on the panel that went down the full length of the front of a dress. The problem with engineered panel prints is the

waste that results. The same thing happened with border prints for shirts. Lots of waste when you cut cross-grain. But the main thing was that I provided a unique look. Eventually I started doing even more intricate prints where the textile designer and garment designers would work together and we'd make the silkscreens that would fit into the markers for the garment pieces" (personal communication, August 20, 2000).

The textile designers produced over 6,000 textile designs for Shaheen between 1948 and 1988, and did them with several colorways and under a number of different labels. (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, June 30, 1999; March 2, 2002; April 10, 2005; Camille Shaheen Tunberg, personal communication April 5, 2011; March 6, 2012). When discussing his designs from the early years of his business in 1999, Shaheen reflected that:

In Honolulu, the artists were going hungry doing piecework, and so I hired them outright; I gave them salaries. That hadn't been done there before. I hired five artists and turned them into textile designers. And to design the prints, I taught them how to do repeats, color separation and so forth for different prints. And so I masterminded the look – I wanted a certain look that was different from everyone else's. I sent my artists to museums- the Bishop Museum in Honolulu is where we came up with the Antique Tapa print. It's an actual copy of a tapa in the museum. I love cultural images. I took the designers to Tahiti before they even had an airfield; after the War when I was on Bora Bora, I chartered an old fighter plane, and later on we took a yacht to other Polynesian islands. That is where we came up



Figure 6.
Designers examining silkscreen, courtesy of Camille Shaheen
Tunberg and William Tunberg

with the pareau designs. What we'd seen were pareau prints on cheap cottons with lousy colors. My colors were very vibrant because they were screen printed by hand, which pumps the color into the goods; you get color depth, you get more bloom. We did several pushes on the squeegee to really flush the dye into the goods (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, June 20, 1999).

East Met West in Shaheen Textiles; Impact on Industry

Dale Hope's family began one of the earliest aloha shirt businesses, Branfleet (later re-named Kahala). He referred to Shaheen as '*akamai*' (smart) and a renaissance man who understood the fashion industry like no others in Hawai'i (personal communication, January 3, 2004). After Shaheen's death, Hope was quoted in the Los Angeles Times as saying "He was a genius; he knew more about the inner workings of all the elements of printing, the garment business, wholesaling, retailing and distribution" (Noland, 2009). Alfred Shaheen was regarded as the cornerstone on which the Hawaiian fashion industry was built, and he was pivotal in its transition from small family-run 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 transformed and grew to \$15 million in sales by the time Hawai'i became the last U.S. state in 1959 (Noland, 2009). Alfred Shaheen revolutionized the industry by pioneering large-scale screen-printing, manufacturing, distribution, and promotion of the fashion business. Shaheen combined all facets of textile and garment creation under one roof, establishing a vertical-integration model for the Hawaiian garment industry. In so doing, he brought the fledgling industry into what was then cutting edge fashion industry practices (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, August 20, 2000; Camille Shaheen Tunberg, personal communication, March 6, 2012).

Shaheen's goal was to have a successful business based on a sophisticated line of fashions and unique textiles that captured the exotic sense of Hawai'i and its multi-ethnic people, most of whom came from Asia. In the early days of the company, 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 motifs into all of Shaheen's textile designs (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication June 20, 1999, March 2, 2002, April 10, 2005; Camille Shaheen Tunberg, personal communication April 5, 2011; March 6, 2012).

By the 1950s, Shaheen and his design team began forecasting trends. They worked well together, and spent hours discussing current trends in the U.S. and Europe. They had worked together so closely and for so long that they were a tight team that 'fed off each other' and developed wonderful Asian imagery for the textiles that were the foundation of the company's garments (Susan Shaheen Mulkern, personal communication, November 26, 2013). Many of the Hawaiian apparel manufacturers were still producing hash prints of Hawaiian motifs and copying Shaheen's Asian-inspired prints as well. To stay

ahead of the competition, Shaheen consistently focused on unique designs and developed a clever retailing concept based on developing boutiques within major department stores on the U.S. mainland. These were called the “East Meets West “ shops in which the garments were designed around a particular Asian theme, as were the fixtures and furnishings of the boutique :

I took my textile designers and Richard Goodwin, who was my garment designer, Leatrice who was his assistant, and took them to Tokyo. I took them into Hong Kong. I took them in to do the Oriental designs, because I went very heavily into these designs. I called this “East Meets West” to combine the eastern elements. No one was doing it then. I brought in the Cheong Sam, the mandarin collar, like the *pake* [Chinese] blouse. We would pick up ideas all over. We’d pick up ideas off of artifacts. We never duplicated ourselves. What I did do, if I had for example, a three color print, sometimes I would drop two screens and put one color, but change the color combination. Well, I might just drop one screen with two colors. It would look completely different, like color-on-color (personal communication, February 2, 1998).



Figure 7.
The Shaheen design team courtesy of Camille Shaheen Tunberg and William Tunberg

Through Asian design motifs used by Shaheen’s textile designers, the East was brought to Hawai’i. At least thirty five percent of the textile art featured Asian design motifs, as evidenced by a content

analysis of the Shaheen collection by the author and Camille Shaheen-Tunberg. Other manufacturers copied Shaheen's work and began using Asian imagery in their prints. In a study of over a thousand aloha shirt designs in the University of Hawai'i costume collection dated from the 1940s to the 1960s, 25 percent of the designs were Asian in origin. For this sub-set of the content analysis, the prints were examined and categorized by the author and Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Indian design colleagues. There were 198 textiles featuring Asian designs (produced between the 1930s and the 1990s). The prints were categorized based on the motifs in the textile art. Among the common Chinese motifs that accounted for 34 percent of the sample were joss sticks, Chinese coins, and elements such as wave patterns and dragons from Ching dynasty robes. Japanese motifs (47 percent of the sample) included geishas, Mt. Fuji, kanji, and children in kimono. Most of the Southeast Asian prints were wax batiks, and these accounted for 16 percent of the prints during the selected time period. Lastly, Indian designs featured numerous variations on paisley designs, as well as the Taj Mahal. Less than one percent of the sample between the 1940s and 1960s featured Indian designs (Arthur, 2006). Interestingly, Mr. Shaheen was fascinated by Indian design and during the 1960s most of his textile designs had Indian themes. After he introduced Indian motifs to Hawaii, the use of these motifs by other aloha shirt manufacturers increased more than two-fold in the 1970s (Arthur, 2006). Even though Shaheen's prints were often copied, he kept them unique with his focus on metallic dyes for his Asian prints:

There were a lot of Asian design elements in our designs, especially the After Five lines. These lines had a lot of metallic textile dyes- I had lots of colors- and the evening wear relied on great Asian design, not just in the motifs but in construction details like the use of mandarin collars, kimono shaping, frogs, ivory buttons, Chinese coin buttons and even jade buttons. I had all of these notions made for me in Asia, generally in Hong Kong (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, June 20, 2001).

Following Shaheen's success in the post-war years, a dozen or more manufacturers began business in Hawai'i. Many copied Shaheen's designs and color combinations. Tourists from the mainland U.S. bought aloha attire and brought it home. Demand for Hawaii's ethnic prints increased. It was not just the interest in ethnic design motifs that led to unique Hawaiian textiles. 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. That was not economically feasible for the small Hawaiian apparel companies. The American textile mills tried to produce Hawaiian-style prints but they didn't satisfy the Hawaiian manufacturers in terms of design, and they also needed much smaller orders and faster delivery. One of Shaheen's designers, Louise Chun noted: " You have to do it [design] from Hawai'i. Aloha shirts and prints are a spirit. There's a feeling of warmth here. If it's done elsewhere, it's just a copy" (quoted in Hope and Tozian, 2000, p. 60). She also stated: "When I'd see somebody wearing the shirts I designed, that was the reward. A good Hawaiian print never loses its charm. And the people who have the shirts love them. It's a love affair" (Louise Chun, quoted in Hope and Tozian,



Figure 8.
Shaheen Ad, 1960s, courtesy of Camille Shaheen
Tunberg and William Tunberg

2000, p. 71).

A few of the Hawaiian garment manufacturers began shipping aloha attire to U.S. 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 women's apparel, but the fabric featured unique ethnic design. The women's wear followed the contemporary fashion lines so they could be worn anywhere, and this led to his success.

So we developed a look- you could spot mine from anywhere. After about 1951 I had the artists write up the idea of the print . . . I wanted cultural meaning. They defined the theme of the print. And then I'd make the hangtag with the theme on it, which individualized the print. I printed the name of the print on the selvage and then my name, my trademark. The Japanese would come and buy my fabric in the 50s when I was selling to the trade and to fabric stores. Japan hadn't really gotten back into printing much- what they did wasn't very

good, but got better over time although it took at least six months for them to deliver the goods. Then [1960s] they started copying my prints and knocked me out of the fabric business. I had to figure out how to deal with it, and that led to engineered prints. I decided the way to deal with that was to go big- I started making large panel prints. I was the first one to do panel prints which I ended up calling my signature prints because I would sign them- 'Shaheen' was on every panel (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, August 20, 2000).

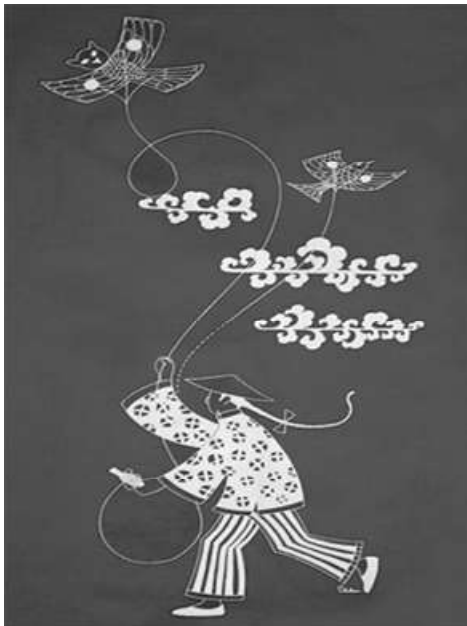


Figure 9.
Kites. Panel print. Courtesy of Camille Shaheen
Tunberg and William Tunberg

With the blending of western style lines and Asian design motifs, Shaheens' garments were fusion fashion that featured ethnic hybridity in the prints. These fashions were introduced by Shaheen to America through an innovative technique of building boutiques within major department stores. Shaheen's "East Meets West" boutiques were in high-end 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, furniture, fixtures, and even hangtags. 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." (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication March 2, 2002). 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 U.S. mainland, and the frequent air transport of garments on Pan American World Airways and American Airlines. At his peak, Shaheen's distinctive garments were sold on several of the Hawaiian Islands, the Mainland U.S., London, France, Hong Kong, Tahiti, Samoa, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (Alfred Shaheen, personal communication, June 2, 2001).

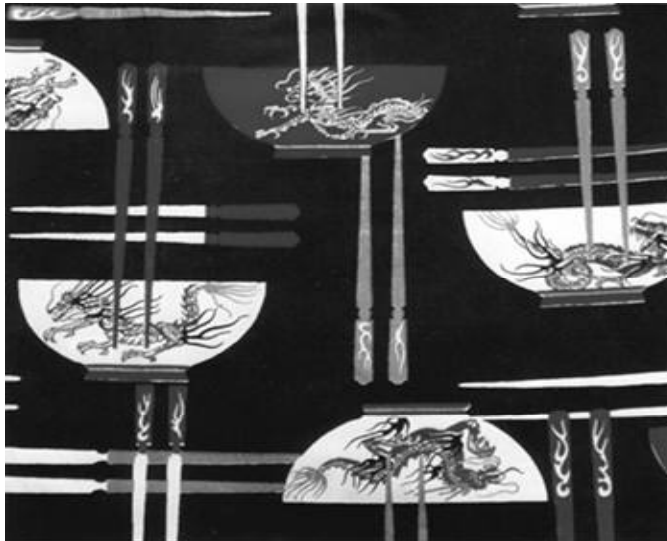


Figure 10.
Rice Bowls, courtesy of Camille Shaheen Tunberg and William Tunberg

Conclusions

Pragmatic creativity (Leslie & Addo, 2007) is a concept embodied by Hawaii's aloha spirit, as Polynesians historically embraced new design elements and ideas as they arrived in Hawai'i. This spirit of openness led to ethnic hybridity as seen in the merging of design elements from Asia with those from Polynesia, and all rendered on textiles produced in Hawai'i.

A truly unique set of Polynesian Islands, Hawai'i is truly multicultural with 65 percent of the population claiming Asian roots as a result of massive immigration and intermarriage in the nineteenth century. Ethnic hybridity was the result and was made visible in the Hawaiian textiles that are the basis

of aloha attire. These textiles feature ethnic design motifs from the varied ethnic groups that live in Hawai'i. Many of those designs are Asian in origin. The aloha shirt has been called an icon of Hawai'i and is worn by the vast majority of men in Hawaii on a daily basis to express their multiethnic identities (Arthur, 2006).

The use of Hawaiian prints to celebrate ethnic diversity originated with Alfred Shaheen, an apparel manufacturer who produced textiles and apparel from 1948-1988. He developed the textile designs with his Asian textile artists to showcase Hawaii's multicultural people, their ethnic uniqueness and Hawaii's value system, referred to as the 'aloha spirit' which is at the heart of pragmatic creativity. The aloha spirit is a philosophy that embraces cultural diversity in all arenas, and celebrates that cultural uniqueness in Hawaiian arts, textiles and fashion today.

In an article on Hawaiian fashion, Simon interviewed prominent designers in Hawai'i. The subject of ethnic design was covered. Takara noted, "in Hawai'i... fashion draws on different aspects of ethnic styles and markets them from time to time." Kotomori agreed, and said "what we really draw on are our very distinctive ethnic roots". Anne Namba designs high end designs focused on Asian prints, and in describing her clients 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." (Simon, 2000a; p.38).

Consequently, Hawaiian textiles provide an excellent case for examining the impact of cultural interaction on material culture as they are a form of hybrid ethnic textile design. As a case study, Hawaii's Master Printer, Alfred Shaheen, changed the face of Hawaiian textile art as a result of his passion for Asian design and the development of a successful fashion company that had far-reaching impact. Although there have been other articles written about Mr. Shaheen's work, this is the first to focus on extensive interviews with him as he discussed his life's work. Because Shaheen's business was vertically integrated and he controlled all aspects of it, he had a huge impact. Shaheen developed line themes and concepts, textile design and printing, garment construction, promotion and distribution. He insisted on fine textile art, and through Asian design motifs used by Shaheen's textile designers, the East was brought to Hawai'i. Originally tourists took these designs from Hawai'i to the mainland U.S., but Shaheen and other manufacturers shipped ethnic-inspired garments to the U.S. as well. Of this group of Hawaiian apparel manufacturers, Shaheen was the most competitively successful at producing in Hawai'i for both the local Hawaiian market, but also for America's resort market. Shaheen introduced ethnic styled clothing to the people of the world and changed the global landscape of textiles, fashion, and design forever.

Alfred Shaheen's 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. The United States Post Office also recognized his contribution in 2012 by publishing a series of stamps featuring aloha shirts, eighty percent of which were Shaheen prints.

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Having had access to Shaheen garments and textiles at the University of Hawaii's CTAHR Historic Costume Collection was the original impetus for my research. However this work would not have come to fruition without the generosity of Camille Shaheen and her husband William Tunberg who gave me an inordinate amount of access to their huge collection of Shaheen textiles, garments, ephemera from their enormous collection. While it goes without saying that the thousands of textiles and garments were an extraordinary resource, the photo archives from the years that Shaheen was an apparel producer was also critical to the research project. All of the photos in this paper were shot by William Tunberg and Camille Shaheen, and are used with their permission.

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