

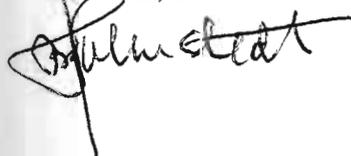
# Ethnopharmacologic Search for PSYCHOACTIVE DRUGS

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# The Function of Kava in Modern Samoan Culture

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In the Manu'a island group of American Samoa no formal or informal meeting of chiefs would be complete without the distribution of the traditional Polynesian beverage kava. This drink known locally as 'ava, is prepared by steeping the pulverized roots of the *Piper methysticum* plant in a prescribed amount of water until a cloudy, khaki-colored liquid is produced.

Kava is in no way alcoholic, but much has been made of its narcotic properties. Early missionaries maintained that the concoction partially paralyzed the lower extremities, making it difficult to walk. More recent partakers of kava, including the author, have experienced no debilitating effect which could be attributed to consumption of the drink. Instead they have found it a refreshing, astringent drink which produces nothing more than a tingling sensation in the mucous membrane of the mouth and a short-lived numbness of the tongue. The partial paralysis of the lower limbs is not caused by the kava but by sitting cross-legged for hours while the kava ceremony is in process. Samoans who find the sitting posture a more natural one do not complain of any impairment to walking. Missionary V. A. Barradale, writing in 1907 stated, "I have heard it said that if people drink too much [kava], it makes them drunk in their legs; it paralyzes their lower limbs, and they have to sit where they are till the effect wears off. But it would certainly need a very large quantity to affect a man in that way, and I never saw or heard of any one in that condition" (2).

Although Beaglehole (3) reports rare cases of kava addiction in Pangai, Tonga, such a phenomenon was not personally observed in Samoa. The author's informants did on one occasion refer to one recently deceased chief whom they believed drank kava in excess because he had it prepared every morning so that he could partake throughout the day. They also felt this excessive use of kava was the cause of his death. Actually he had died at the age of seventy-five from cancer of the stomach. Another claim made by native informants is that over-indulgence of the drink can result in skin diseases and eye ailments. The literature produced by early missionaries contains numerous references to a scaly skin condition being attributable to kava drinking. These claims were not corroborated by the author. One European observer believed that the consumption of kava had the effect of preventing the Samoans from developing a taste for alcoholic liquors. The author has not observed this phenomenon either.

Krämer reports that he observed the addition of *Capsicum* pepper pods to the kava concoction and believes this strengthened its stimulating effect thereby rendering kava the equivalent in its use to *Piper betle* in Indonesia.

He tells of having broken open a *Capsicum* pod and accidentally having touched his face with his soiled hands. He complains of having "endured severe pain for a long time; thus the pepper affects even the epidermis." (6).

The addition of this pepper to the kava mixture was not observed in contemporary Samoa, and the extent of its use in earlier days is not known. Kramer is the only 19th century observer to record its use.

Kava is often drunk by Europeans, who upon acquiring the taste, find it very refreshing. Many urban centers in the South Seas boast kava saloons where local businessmen—native and European—take a kava break during the mid-morning hours. Some government offices have kava prepared in the morning for the comfort and enjoyment of their employees.

The relative importance of kava varies from island group to island group. Kava drinking in Polynesia is primarily a phenomenon of the cultures in the west, such as Tonga, Fiji and Samoa. The plant does not grow on the atolls of the Tokelaus. Beaglehole (3) reports universal use of the beverage in Tonga, but maintains that accompanying ritual is almost totally absent in villages inhabited by commoners. Hawaii and Tahiti had the drink at one time but it has practically disappeared in recent years. The Cook Island cultures formerly used the plant for drinking purposes also, but many of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum monographs on the cultures of this region do not even mention kava. The Maori did not drink kava although a variety of the plant which could have been used for such purposes was indigenous to New Zealand. Aitken (1) reports that in the Australs the occasional and somewhat unimportant practice of kava drinking was abolished by missionaries in 1822. New Caledonian Polynesian populations are described by Leenhardt (7) as ignoring the plant altogether.

Other centers of kava drinking in Oceania are Ponape in the Carolines, the Marind District of West New Guinea, the New Hebrides and the Wallis and Futuna islands. In Melanesia the drink is described as being made from fresh roots, and the concoction is said to have the effect of rapidly inducing deep sleep. Chronic drinkers in this area are said to suffer from a state of depression accompanied by a permanent decrease in appetite. Malnutrition is also said to be observed among some addicts. The difference in effect between this area and western Polynesia is possibly attributable to the state of the kava root at the time of production of the beverage. The dried roots used in Polynesia apparently do not produce as strong a drink as that concocted from fresh ones.

In Samoa it appears that kava drinking and its attendant ceremonies has a long history, the practice being intimately related to indigenous religious practices and village social and political organization. Mythology relates how kava drinking was given to mortals by the first high chief, Tagaloa Ui, and prescribes the form for modern kava ceremonies. The myth which provides these sanctions was recorded in *Manu'a* as follows:

Not far from the village of Fitiuta there is a place where the rising sun is first seen in Samoa. This place is called *Saua*. Long ago there was a custom that one day a year one of the families of Fitiuta must sacrifice the daughter to the sun. On the day of the "celebration of the sun" a daughter from the family of Matainaumati went to Samoa

to be sacrificed. The girl's name was Ui. When the sun came for the girl he saw that she was very beautiful and instead of eating her he decided to take her as his wife. He took the girl to live with him in the sky. After a time she became pregnant and wanted to go home so that her first child could be born in her family's village, and she wanted to show her parents that she had not been killed.

While journeying home, Ui had a miscarriage, and the fetus floated away upon the waters where it was found by the hermit crab, the plover and the shrike. By manipulating the fetus and breathing life into it the animals created the first Samoan chief, Tagaloa Ui.

After his creation Tagaloa Ui made a kilt for himself out of *ti* leaves and started to walk toward the village of Fitiuta. On his way he walked through a grove of kava plants and discovered the house of the mortal, Pava. Pava invited the chief to enter his house and there the first kava ceremony involving mortal men was held.

When Tagaloa Ui entered the house he took a place at the end of the house (today the seat of honor), and Pava sat in the front of the house (the traditional place for talking chiefs) and began to prepare the kava. Pava chewed and spit the kava into a taro leaf (*laupula'a*) which served as the kava bowl. Cups consisted of *tautava* leaves, and Pava used his fingers to wring the kava as no strainer was then known.

While Pava was wringing the kava, his son, Fa'alafi, laughed and played near the bowl. Tagaloa Ui instructed Pava to make the boy sit down and be quiet, but nothing was done about the irreverent boy. After several unheeded warnings, Tagaloa Ui picked up a coconut frond, formed it into a knife, and cut Pava's son into two pieces. Then Tagaloa Ui said to Pava, "This is the food for the kava. This is your part and this is mine." Pava mourned and could not drink the kava.

Then Tagaloa Ui said, "Let us have a new kava ceremony." The kava and the leaf bowl and cups were thrown away and Tagaloa Ui told two of Pava's sons to go to the highest mountain, the house of Tagaloa Lagi, and bring down a wooden kava bowl, coconut cups, a hibiscus strainer and a new kind of kava, *latasi*, a single branch kava tree. These things were brought, and a second kava ceremony was started. Again Pava served as the kava wringer, and when the kava was ready, Tagaloa Ui said, "Bring me my cup first." Tagaloa Ui did not drink the kava but poured it onto his piece of the dead son of Pava and then onto Pava's piece. Then he said, "*Soifua*" (life). The two parts came together and the boy lived. Pava was so happy he clapped his hands. Pava drank his cup of kava and Tagaloa Ui gave the following orders: "Pava, do not let children stand and talk while kava is being prepared for high chiefs, for the things belonging to the high chiefs are sacred."

A number of ritual details of the modern Samoan kava ceremony seem to relate directly to this myth. They are:

1. The seating arrangement of the chiefs and the talking chiefs.
2. Prohibitions against children, or indeed any unauthorized untitled persons, attending the ceremony.
3. The solemn atmosphere which must prevail.
4. The proper equipment for the production and distribution of kava—a carved wooden kava bowl, a hibiscus strainer, a coconut cup, and a certain type of kava.
5. The order of drinking—high chiefs first, talking chiefs second.
6. The pouring of a bit of kava from the cup onto the mat.
7. The concept of food for the kava.
8. The use of the term "*Soifua*."
9. The clapping of hands when the kava is ready.
10. The duty of talking chiefs to direct the kava ceremony.

The importance of the above is indicated by the fact that although short-cuts are often taken in the modern kava ceremony the features listed are seldom if ever altered.

Kava in contemporary Samoan society has been likened by Keesing (5) to the European cocktail or highball, in that it produces a relaxed and friendly atmosphere conducive to social cooperation.

Every chief is expected to keep a stock of dried kava on hand for his own use and for the many demands made upon him by the protocol of hospitality. Whenever any elite visitor enters the village, the welcoming ceremony requires that each of the host chiefs present him with a dried kava root.

The kava ceremony is invariably the initial act of any meeting of the village council (*fono*), and is therefore a definite part of formal discussion and decision making. It is also an essential part of all ceremonies associated with births, marriages, deaths and title installations. No bonito canoe or house is ever constructed without the labor being prefaced by the kava ceremony wherein the carpenter is served first kava in the name of Sao (a name which people claim was given to the first carpenter by the god Tagaloa). The ceremony is said to insure successful work.

Kava drinking is without doubt the most important element of the *aiavā*, the ceremony of greeting for visiting parties (*malaga*), and therefore carries much of the burden of Samoan hospitality.

In earlier, less peaceful days kava was consumed by warriors prior to battle. On such occasions, the ceremony was referred to as *'ava mua au*. Fe'epulea'i Ripley (7) reported observing such a ceremony wherein the chiefs lined up along each side of the road and set up the kava bowl in the middle of it.

Aside from its ceremonial use, kava is reported to have certain medicinal uses. It is often consumed in an attempt to counteract the chills which accompany filariasis. Some Samoans believe that kava chewed in large quantities will cause abortion. It is also claimed to be a cure for gonorrhoea, and it is a matter of record that German drug houses at one time imported small quantities of the plant for this purpose.

Although the kava ceremony is considered the exclusive property of titled men there are certain ceremonial occasions, such as the entertainment of a visiting party, when the society of untitled men (*avmaga*) or the wives of the village chiefs (Woman's Committee) conduct their own social kava ritual. On such occasions the order of drinking is determined by one's relationship to the title holders of the village. Having a father or husband who is the village paramount chief entitles one to be honored with first kava.

Some regional variations in kava ritual may be observed from village to village, and even in a given village the ceremony is not always performed in the same way. Certain parts may be abbreviated or eliminated altogether, and perhaps the ceremony to be described in this paper is closer to the ideal than to the real. However, all the steps described herein have been observed frequently on occasions of high ceremony. Regional variations include differences in who may wring kava, the number of attendants involved in serving the kava, and in some cases, the status and sex of those served. In some villages only men are permitted to wring kava, but in others the ceremonial village maiden (*taupou*) may do the honors. On the island of Tutuila it is not uncommon for women to hold *matai* titles and serve on the village council. They are, therefore, as titled individuals, qualified to participate in the kava cere-

mony. In Manu'a women neither hold *matai* titles nor partake in the drinking of kava at formal ceremonies where chiefs are present. The one exception to this was the female sovereign Tuimanu'a Makelita.

## The Modern Kava Ceremony

In preparing for the modern Manu'an kava ceremony the talking chief who will later direct the kava distribution selects a piece of kava root. This part of the kava plant is called the Brother Roots (*'ava uso*). The name drives from a myth which recounts how two brothers, the sons of Tagaloa, found a piece of floating wood while swimming west from the Manu'a Group. They divided the wood and used the two pieces as floats. One of the brothers returned to Fitiuta where many similar plants were observed to be growing already, while the other brother swam on to Western Samoa where kava was unknown. Here he planted his piece of wood and thereby introduced kava drinking in this area.

After the initial selection of a piece of kava root, the society of untitled men (*aumaga*) takes over and the root is cut into still smaller pieces by one of their members. In this form kava is known as *una o le i' a sa*, scales of the sacred or forbidden fish. This term alludes the fact that like many other sacred or taboo foods kava is reserved for the exclusive use of the chiefs.

While the pieces of kava were formerly chewed, final processing today involves pulverizing in a crude stone mortar (*ma'a tu'i'ava*). Other preparations for the ceremony include washing the kava bowl and bringing water in coconut shell containers (sometimes a galvanized bucket is substituted today).

A full inventory of the ceremonial paraphernalia includes a carved bowl, eighteen inches in diameter, which traditionally had four legs but now may have as many as twenty-four, a strainer made of shredded hibiscus bast, and a polished coconut cup.

Village kava ceremonies are usually held in the house which serves as the meeting place of the village council. As the chiefs enter the council house an attitude of reverence prevails. Nothing may be worn above the waist, and body ornaments of all types must be laid aside. The men speak in whispers and refrain from smoking as the kava ceremony begins.

At a place near the back of the house three untitled men, members of the village *aumaga*, station themselves at the kava bowl while a fourth remains outside to clean the hibiscus strainer of kava fibers when it is periodically thrown to him by the wringer. The man who is to wring the kava sits immediately behind the bowl with a water pourer to his right, and to his left, the man who will carry the cups of liquid to the assembled chiefs. Several taboos must be observed by the wringer. These include never wearing a flower necklace, a ring, a shirt or any other clothing except a wrap-around (*lavalava*). *Lavalavas* of all untitled men involved in the ceremony must be worn so they do not extend below the knees. The wringing of the kava must be done correctly and with precision. Untitled men take pride in their ability

in this art. There are a number of specific steps in the preparation of the liquid, and each has a traditional name. They are:

1. *Fa'apulou*—Covering the kava in the bottom of the bowl with the strainer.
2. *Vau*—Pressing down on the strainer with the heels of the hands and with the fingers.
3. *Aōga*—Collecting pieces of kava fiber in the strainer by drawing it toward the back of the bowl.
4. *Tatau*—Wringing the kava. The strainer is lifted from the bowl and wrung three times only. It is grasped in both hands like one would grip a baseball bat. At the end of each wringing stroke the clenched hands are bent forward so the liquid will not run down the arms.
5. *Mapā*—Cleaning the strainer. After the above steps have been carried out three times the strainer is passed under the right knee of the wringer and thrown back, with a side arm motion, to the untitled person outside the house who catches it in his right hand and removes the kava particles in it by snapping it three or four times. The hibiscus strainer is then thrown back underhand and caught by the wringer in his right hand.

The above process is continued until the bowl is free of pieces of kava root. When this has been accomplished and the kava is ready for drinking, the wringer wipes the rim of the bowl, cleans the strainer himself by snapping, forms it into a ball, and plunges it into the kava, and lifts it above the bowl with both hands, allowing the stream of liquid to fall into the bowl. This final gesture, known as *sila alofi*, permits the chiefs to see whether the kava requires more water. It is said that the correct mixture is judged by the sound of the kava splashing into the bowl as well as by its color.

If the talking chief serving as kava announcer does not call for more water the hibiscus strainer is wrung out and placed on the rim of the bowl. The kava wringer then places his hands on the sides of the bowl, his right covering the strainer. He remains in that position until the kava has been distributed.

It is the responsibility of the talking chief directing the ceremony to watch the progress of the wringing from his position behind and to the right of the bowl. When the kava is nearly clear of fiber particles, he must commence the verbal part of the ceremony with a poetic recitation (*solo*) which recounts the mythical origin of the kava or particular kava ceremonies of importance held by the ancient Samoan gods. A typical *solo* is as follows:

Si'i le faiva e to'alu  
Papa ma Lotulotua  
Aumai se i'a setasi  
Le Manini mai le Sami  
Telemu ma Telea'i  
O mai lua te taufetuli ile lagi  
Fati mai se la tasi  
Se la o le la 'ava o tu felata'i

Gaugau ma sasa  
Gaugau ma falava

Translation

Two people went fishing  
Papa and Lotulotua (members of the Tagaloa family)  
They brought one fish  
The Manini, from the sea.  
Telemu and Telea'i (two brothers of the Tagaloa family)  
Were sent to run to the heaven  
To bring a branch of kava  
They broke and hit the kava  
They broke and hit the fierce kava

Many *solos* are traditional, but clever talking chiefs may and do compose their own. It will be noted that the example given above is composed of rhyming couplets. There is, however, little concern for rhythm. The *solo* is timed to be finished the moment the kava is completely clear of fibers, whereupon the kava announcer states, "*Ua usi le alofi*" (The kava is already cleaned). The color and consistency of the mixture is then analyzed and if pronounced acceptable, the assembled chiefs respond by clapping their hands several times. Informants state that this act of clapping corresponds to the clapping of Pava when his sons was returned to life through the action of Tagaloa Ui at the first kava ceremony.

The distribution of kava begins by calling the cup title of the high chief who, because of his rank, is permitted to drink first. It must be understood that the cup title is not the family title of the chief. For example, in Si'ufaga village High Chief Lefti (Lefti is the family title) has the cup title *Lupe lele talitali lau ipu* (The pigeon who flies, receive your cup). Only high chiefs have cup titles. Talking chiefs receive their cup after the announcement of their family title and the words "*Lau 'ava*" (your kava). Chiefs of secondary rank receive the cup after their family title and the word "*Taumafa*" (drink) is pronounced.

The order of drinking is of the utmost importance as it signifies the relative rank of the drinker. The chief of highest rank in the village receives first kava; the highest talking chief, second; second highest chief, third; second highest talking chief, fourth; and so on down the ranks of chiefs and talking chiefs. In some villages this procedure is altered, and certain divisions of chiefs, or certain sections of the village, drink before others. To drink last kava is as prestigious as to drink first.

Drinking etiquette, which varies according to rank, is as follows: When the high chief receives the cup he does so with both hands. Before drinking he pours a few drops onto the floor mat and says, "*Ia fa'atasi le Atua ma i tatou i lenei aso*" (May God be with us today) or "*Ia ta'ita'i le Atua i lenei aso*" (May God be our leader for today). Smith (8) records a typical prayer as, "Let the god drink kava that this gathering may be pleasant."

Following this prayer the high chief raises his cup, says "*Soifua*" or "*Manuia*," and drinks what is contained in the cup. If the high chief says "*Soifua*" the other chiefs respond with "*Manuia*." If the latter word is pronounced by the drinker the chiefs reply with "*Soifua*." Informants point out the connection between this aspect of the modern kava ceremony and the action of Tagaloa Ui in the first kava ceremony. The pouring of kava onto the mat represents the pouring of the liquid onto the two parts of the dead son of Pava, and the word "*Soifua*," which may be translated "Life" or "May you live," alludes to the command given by Tagaloa Ui when he performed the miracle of returning the boy to life. The word "*Manuia*" may be translated "Blessings" or "May the gods bless you," and perhaps relates to an expression of gratitude by Pava. It is also contended by informants that the right of the high chief to drink first kava and to sit in the end of the house is sanctioned by the Tagaloa Ui myth.

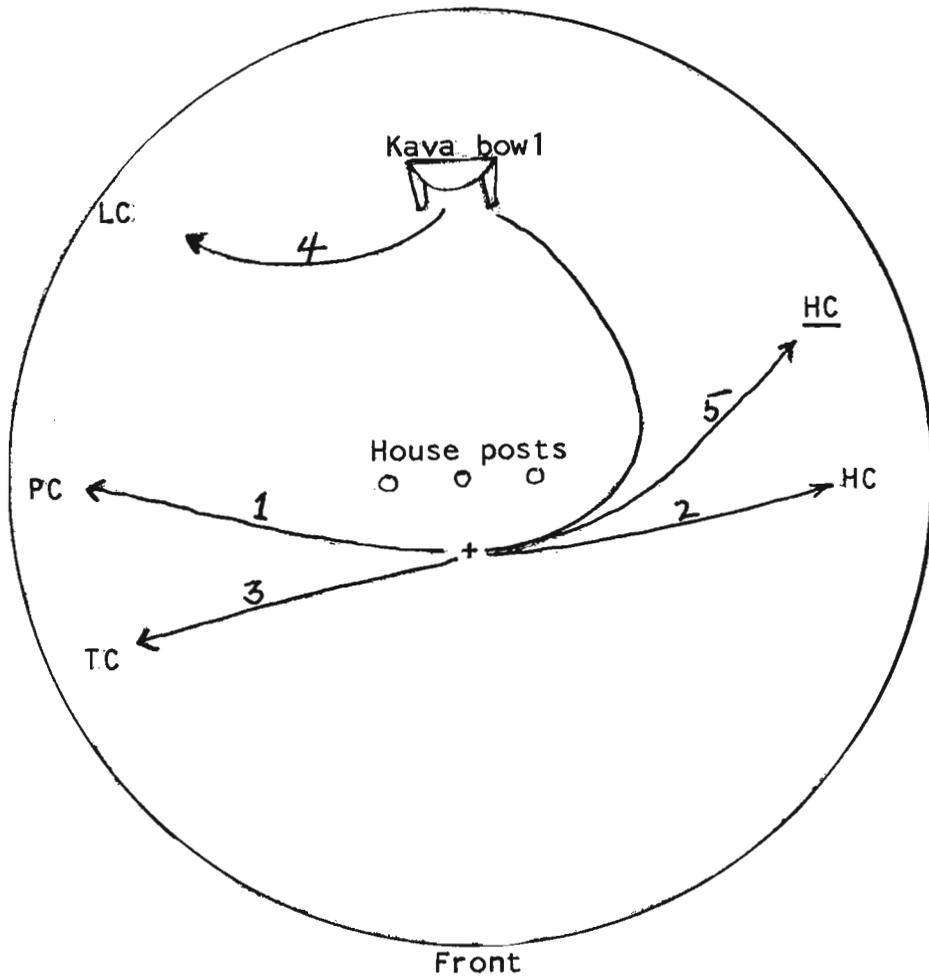
The drinking etiquette to be observed by a high talking chief varies somewhat in that he receives the kava cup with two hands if high chiefs are occupying both ends of the house, but if only one high chief is seated to the high talking chief's right, the cup must be received with the left hand to avoid showing the high chief the back of the hand. Of course the cup will be taken with the right hand if the high chief is seated to the talking chief's left. A high talking chief usually does not pour any kava onto the floor mat although he may say "*Soifua*" or "*Manuia*" before drinking.

Chiefs and talking chiefs of secondary rank do not pour kava onto the mat, nor do they say anything before drinking. Furthermore, they are not expected to respect the position of the high chief by receiving the cup with any particular hand.

Some Samoans do not care for kava and they "drink" symbolically by merely touching the bottom of the cup as it is passed to them. The cup may also be raised in a form of salutation and then returned to the cup bearer, with the kava untouched. On rare occasions a chief may take the liquid into his mouth, swish it about and then turn and spit it out onto the apron of the house outside. All these actions represent acceptable etiquette for the non-drinker.

When many chiefs are assembled there is often not enough kava to serve everyone. In such cases it is important for the kava announcer to judge when but a single cup of kava remains and then to announce rapidly the names of those who are entitled to drink. Following the recitation of this list of titles the announcer calls the cup title of the high chief who is then honored by drinking last kava, and the final cup is served to him. When talking chiefs of secondary rank are aware that there is not sufficient kava to go around they will often interrupt the announcer and call, "I will drink with my chief." When this occurs the lesser talking chief's title is not announced but the cup is taken to him immediately after the high chief of his family has been served.

Partially consumed kava must be cast away and the cup returned empty. It may be handed or thrown back to the server. If the cup is thrown to the server it is done to test his alertness.



1= Serving route to paramount high chief (PC); 2= Serving route to high chief (HC)  
 3= Serving route to talking chiefs (TC); 4= Serving route to lesser chiefs and talking chiefs (LC); 5= Serving route to high chief who will receive last kava (HC); += Point at which the kava server stops before approaching chiefs of high rank.

All *aumaga* members who expect to take part in the kava ceremonies must master the etiquette of serving kava. Each rank of chief or talking chief must be served in a special and distinct manner. Respect is paid to the half of the house in which the paramount chief is seated, and the kava server must walk in this area as little as possible in making his rounds to the drinkers.

When serving a high chief the kava distributor dips the coconut cup into the kava and carries it with the thumbs and index fingers at the level of his waist to the center of the house where he stops, raises it to his forehead and walks in the direction of the high chief. About four feet from the chief, the server lowers his right hand and with his left, places the cup on his upturned right palm. The left hand is placed behind the back, and the cup is handed to the high chief chest high. The young man then walks to the

center of the house where he stands at attention until the chief has finished drinking.

Lower ranking chiefs are served kava with the right hand, but in the case of these lesser personages the cup is held by the edge with the thumb inside, thus showing the palm of the hand to the chiefs as it is presented to them.

In serving a high talking chief, the cup is held by the edge with the thumb, index and middle finger of the right hand. As it is carried from the bowl it is held just above the left shoulder. When in front of the high talking chief, the kava server swings the cup forward and down, presenting it with the back of his hand toward the talking chief. The kava cup for lower ranking talking chiefs is carried in the right hand, waist high, but is presented with the left. As in the case of high talking chiefs, the cup is held by the edge and the back of the hand is shown to the drinker.

After delivering the kava the server returns to the center post of the house and stands facing front while the kava is consumed. In rare cases he may return to a position in front of the kava bowl and face the front of the house.

When all of the assembled chiefs and talking chiefs have drunk or have been acknowledged as having the right to drink, the kava announcer concludes the ceremony with "*Ua moto le alofi*" (The kava is finished). "*Ale le fau ma le ipu e tautau*" (The bowl will hang with the *fau* (strainer) and the cup). Perhaps a more traditional closing is that recorded by Smith (9) as "*Le 'ava 'au motu*" (The kava is broken off). "*Ua matefa le fau*" (The strainer is poor). "*Ua pa'u le alofi*" (The company of chiefs has fallen down).

The assembled chiefs respond to these final words of the kava announcer with an expression of thanks, "*malo fa'asoasoa*." At the conclusion of the kava drinking ceremony there is always the *fono o le 'ava* (food for the kava ceremony). According to the Tagaloa Ui myth the food for the first ceremony was the son of Pava and the food for the second was the sacred fish Manini and *talofa'afana* (recooked taro). Today the *Manini* and *talofa'afana* remain the traditional foods for the kava ceremony but there are frequent substitutions of rice, tinned beef, or other prestige foods.

The present day kava ceremony contains a number of elements which can be traced to older religious concepts of Samoan culture. The pouring of a bit of kava onto the mat not only relates to ancient mythology, but a number of scholars feel that it is a ritual reenactment of an ancient religious custom of pouring an evening offering to family or village gods. Steubel records in *Samoanische texte* (1895) that the typical prayer accompanying this act was "O the kava to drink of thy highness Sepo. Be lovingly disposed. Bless this village." (Sepo was primarily a war god, but in many villages served as a household god.)

Mead (8) suggested that the casting away of unconsumed kava may be related to ancient ceremonies wherein kava was entreated to depart and take all misfortune with it. On the other hand it may be related to precau-

tions about unconsumed food or drink which might be used for purposes of sorcery. Certainly the sanctity of the mixing bowl and gear, the air of solemnity and respect which accompany the entire ceremony, and the inclusion of poetic recitations which always allude to ancient Samoan gods, testify to the religious nature of the ancient ceremony.

Although the kava ceremony contains these unmistakable references to pre-Christian religion there seems to have been no great problem in fitting it into the Christian context. Bits of Christian prayer frequently accompany the pouring of kava onto the mat prior to drinking, and it is not uncommon to see local pastors included in the kava circle. On such occasions the village pastor (*faiife'au*) drinks first kava, thus being accorded honors even greater than those shown to the village paramount chief. Since village pastors do not hold titles, their privileged position of drinking indicates their exalted status within the social structure of the village. Samoan medical practitioners and village school teachers are accorded similar honor by being served kava second only to the highest village chiefs.

Neither the church nor the American government has attempted to do away with the kava ceremony, and it is not unusual to see chiefs partake in a communion service in church, and then go home and conduct a kava ceremony while waiting for the midday meal. All visiting dignitaries in American Samoa, including President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1966, are honored with a kava ceremony by the paramount chiefs of the territory.

It has been said that while other Polynesian people worshipped gods, Samoans worshipped their village and social organization. The kava ceremony would seem to be a part of this veneration. The detailed etiquette of serving, the prescribed order of drinking, the use of special honorific cup names, and the insistence that the beverage be prepared and served only by specially qualified persons, have been tremendously important in dramatizing the whole system of Samoan rank and prestige. When the kava ceremony is completed there is little doubt of the status of those present and of the rights and privileges of their respective offices. Through continual ceremonial exercise, social relationships are reiterated and Samoan values are intensified. The result of this seems to be an unusual stability and resistance to change which is found among few other Polynesian peoples. In an attempt to explain this remarkable resistance to change, John Copp has commented, "Samoan custom now serves as a 'refuge' from the conflict of choice and judgment resulting from Western contacts." (11). Perhaps it has been the stabilizing influence of the kava ceremony and other rituals that has allowed the Samoans to make satisfactory adjustments to European influences. Traditional aspects of Samoan culture such as the kava ceremony are, in a manner of speaking, bits of solid ground on which to anchor in a changing world.

It is believed that the influence of the kava ceremony is one of the explanations for the amazing stability of a people who, as Douglas Oliver puts it, have survived "the strong impact of western civilization without losing their numbers, their strength, their dignity, or their zest for a good fight." (9).

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