

Pitcairn Island: Heritage of *Bounty* Descendants

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ABSTRACT: This article adopts the method ‘tensed ethnography’ to describe aspects of Pitcairn Island folklife and the symbolic meaning of community. Such meanings emerge in the empirical field whereby ‘community’ is viewed as a cluster of embodied dispositions and practices. Described as one of the most isolated islands in the world and accessible only by sea, Pitcairn is the last remaining British Overseas Territory in the Pacific, notable as the home of *Bounty* mutineers and Tahitians who settled the island in 1790. It is from this unique heritage and present-day fieldwork that the collective manifestations of social life and folk expression are herewith discussed.

KEYWORDS: Pitcairn Island, folklife

Heritage of Mutineer’s Sons and Daughters

Evening shadows lengthen on fair Adam’s Town.
Day is all but gone; the slow declining sun
Leaves tintured coloured evening shades all around
Pitcairn’s village—King Sol’s daily race is run

Semi darkness now covers both land and sea—
Pitcairn’s inhabitants pause from daily toil.
Cool winds from windward—sheltered homes in island’s lee
Bring peace and rest after toiling on sea and soil.

Thus nestles Adam’s Town—an Elysium dream.
A jewel setting in Pacific waters
Where contentment, serenity, reign supreme
Heritage of mutineer’s sons and daughters.

A poem by Roy Clark (*Pitcairn Miscellany* 1966).

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Introduction

Roy Clark's poem illuminates a cultural embedding and connectedness to (is)land and an aesthetic appreciation of Pitcairn's place and identity within the Pacific. This paper articulates this connection by describing aspects of folk-life, past and present, of the Pitcairn Island community. I draw on the definition of folk-life/folklore as 'tradition-based and/or contemporary expressive culture shared within a community and deemed a reflection of its cultural and social identity' (see *Folklife*, 1987, p. 65). This definition embraces a wide range of creative and symbolic forms such as custom, belief, mythology, ritual, language, literature, music, song, behaviours, actions, narrative, architecture and art and craft (Ryan, 1998). In this, I am influenced by Clark's references to 'Adam's Town', 'land and sea', 'daily toil', 'sheltered homes' as constitutive of group-oriented and tradition-based action; while reference to 'Elysium dream' and 'heritage of mutineer's sons and daughters' allude to the mythic image of Pitcairn as refuge to mutineers of the ship H.M.S. *Bounty*.

Pitcairn, along with its uninhabited dependencies Oeno, Henderson and Ducie, is the last remaining British Overseas Territory in the Pacific. Pitcairn's nano economy is heavily dependent on a small number of activities and almost wholly on UK budgetary aid. Much of the islander's day-to-day life is committed to maintaining roads, building homes, upkeep of basic infrastructure, gardening, and government jobs, fishing, trading on ships, and taking care of family and household duties. With a current resident population of just over forty, Pitcairn is often described as one of the smallest and most isolated places in the world, accessible only by sea and visited annually by a handful of ships and passing yachts. As such, the extent of knowledge *about* Pitcairners' expressive culture is limited; oft provided by authors who have never visited the island. Based on longitudinal fieldwork this article describes some of the traditions of Pitcairn culture through a lens of 'tensed ethnography'. An ethnographic tense enables the ethnographer to review relevant data that contains descriptions of past events and measure these against present fieldwork experience.

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Pitcairn and the Bounty Story

It would be fair to say that Pitcairners have not paid much attention to documenting their history; the only widely circulated book by a 'native' of the island, *Mutiny of the Bounty and Story of Pitcairn from 1790 to 1894* was written by Rosalind Amelia Young (1894). Those acquainted with knowledge of Pitcairn Island are most likely to connect Pitcairn with the

story of the mutiny on the *Bounty*.¹ Settled in 1790 by nine English mutineers and their Tahitian companions the *Bounty* story has served to mythologize Pitcairn and its people. Following settlement and burning of the ship to hide any trace of their location, murder and conflict over land and women underpinned the early development of this bi-cultural community. By 1800, only one mutineer, John Adams was left with a number of Tahitian women and mixed race children. Adams transformed these murderous beginnings by turning to the *Bible* in order to inculcate the principles and moral values of a Christian life to the growing community (Shapiro, 1929); a disposition that was subsequently fostered by like-minded patriarchal leaders after his death. In the late nineteenth century, persuaded by literature sent by the Seventh-Day-Adventist (SDA) mission in the USA, and subsequent visits from SDA elders, the community converted to the faith in 1886 (Clune, 1966). From such transformation, Pitcairn came to represent an icon of Pacific ‘paradise’ and Christian morality. Thus, religion, isolation, protectionism (restricting who can settle on-island) and a sense of exclusivity attached to their *Bounty* heritage has in turn shaped the cultural identity of Pitcairners. As such, there are distinct insider/outsider characteristics that delineate boundaries of identification evident in today’s Pitcairn community.

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Methodology: Tensed Ethnography

My fieldwork experience draws on three extended periods living on Pitcairn between 2008 and 2013 (in total two and a half years) while accompanying my husband, a doctor, contracted by the UK Government. A wide range of sources (informal, formal and official) informs my tensed ethnographic study of Pitcairn. Of these, the most insightful is Ford’s *Pitcairn Port of Call* (1996) detailing the maritime history of the world’s ships calling at Pitcairn from 1790 to 1990.

This dot of volcanic outcropping about midway between Panama and New Zealand has drawn thousands of ships to her cliff-ridden flanks. The ships come because Pitcairn is the remnant of one of the world’s great sea stories. For many a captain the Island’s colourful past has caused him to divert his ship scores, even hundreds of miles from its planned course. ‘We’ll give the crew a look-see’, he’ll mutter, while it is his own look-see he’s thinking about most (Ford, 1996, p. 1).

¹ It is estimated some 1200 books, 3200 magazine and uncounted newspaper articles, documentary films, and three major Hollywood movies relating to the mutiny on the *Bounty* have accounted for Pitcairn’s iconic status (Hayward, 2006).

My own visits to Pitcairn bear out Ford's comment. Indeed, many a captain did divert his ship for a 'look-see' at this 'fabled' island and its inhabitants. More contemporarily, one of the most influential sources is the *Pitcairn Miscellany (PM)* (Figure 1) produced monthly since 1959.² *PM* serves as a social network of family, friends, and interested *Bounty* 'buffs' worldwide. Its most significant feature is in recording the routine of Pitcairn life; the minutiae of day-to-day social behaviour is documented in the emotive, (via islander narratives, poems and stories, obituaries), the political (via Council meeting reports), communal (public work, school events, church activities), food gathering activities (gardening, fishing) and economic (carving and weaving, trade with visiting ships) as well as observations of opinion, gossip, rumour, innuendo, disagreements, humour, alliances between kin groups, friendships and interactions. These are the socially shared means whereby Pitcairners construct their social worlds and from which the ethnographer interprets Pitcairn society.



Figure 1. Masthead of *Pitcairn Miscellany* newsletter depicts image of 'land and sea' and *Bounty* heritage.

Pitcairn's small size, isolation, close-knit community, developmental trajectory and unique *Bounty* heritage motivated me to examine the 'symbolic meanings' (Cohen, 1985) of community; how such meanings are constructed, maintained, and alter over time. Such trajectory operates through temporal stages of past, present and future, thus acts of ethnographic discovery are grounded in the empirical field. Of note, my

² I have read over 500 copies of the *Pitcairn Miscellany* housed at the Hocken Library in Dunedin NZ (one of two institutions in the world that house an almost complete record of the publication).

field experience encompassed observation of the effects of ‘Operation Unique’—the UK’s investigation of historical sexual abuse of women on Pitcairn culminating in the well documented ‘trials’ held on Pitcairn in 2004. This event divided the community and instigated much socio-political change by the UK. It is not this article’s intention to expand on this topic (see Marks, 2008; Oliver, 2009) but to acknowledge its influence on cultural lifeways on Pitcairn today.

Pitcairn Culture: The Place and People

The mutineers and their Tahitian wives brought with them to Pitcairn no idealistic theory for the foundation of a new society. An account of their life and customs is the story of the development and growth of an unconscious social experiment (Shapiro, 1929, p. 9).

Islands are typically shaped by their remoteness or insularity, which produces ecologies and cultures that are unique to their location (Hall, 2012). An important feature of ethnographic inquiry is a concern with action, with what people do and why. Pitcairn’s isolated and subsistence-style life has largely necessitated formation of an integrated and cooperative society. ‘Society’, Barth (1992, 20) contends cannot be abstracted from the material context: all social acts are ecologically embedded. Hence, emphasis on social action demands analysis of the socially shared means whereby people construct their social worlds. This is evident in how Pitcairners spatialize place through the intersubjective naming and mapping of landscape. Historical and anthroponymous landmarks inscribe the identity of early settlers, while later generations named places after events or accidents (it is estimated that up to 430 place names exist on Pitcairn). Both English and Pitkern place names constitute an integral part of the idiolectical or specific vernaculars of Pitkern culture.

The spatial organisation of Adamstown village projects an ethos of related people and familiar activities carried on by the collective. Each member is aware of the significance of the various spatial elements of the village and responds to them accordingly. The ‘Square’ (Figure 2) is a communal point of social and administrative association; housing the public hall, Island Secretary’s Office, the Treasury, Post Office and Seventh Day Adventist Church. The nearby co-operative store—open only three times a week for one hour—is a site of gossip, banter and debate. Notwithstanding the need (or not) to purchase supplies most islanders will visit the ‘co-op’ on these mornings. For the individual islander lived centres are denoted in familial dwellings—places of birth, death, celebration, friendship and hardship; oft named for the homeowner’s

heritage (*Pommy Ridge*), dwelling practices (*Big Fence*) or related to the *Bounty* settlement (e.g. *Flatchers* is a variant of 'Fletcher' named for lead mutineer Fletcher Christian) whereas dwellings housing expatriates are named for their 'outsider' attachment (e.g. *The Lodge*, *Doctor's House*, *Schoolhouse*).

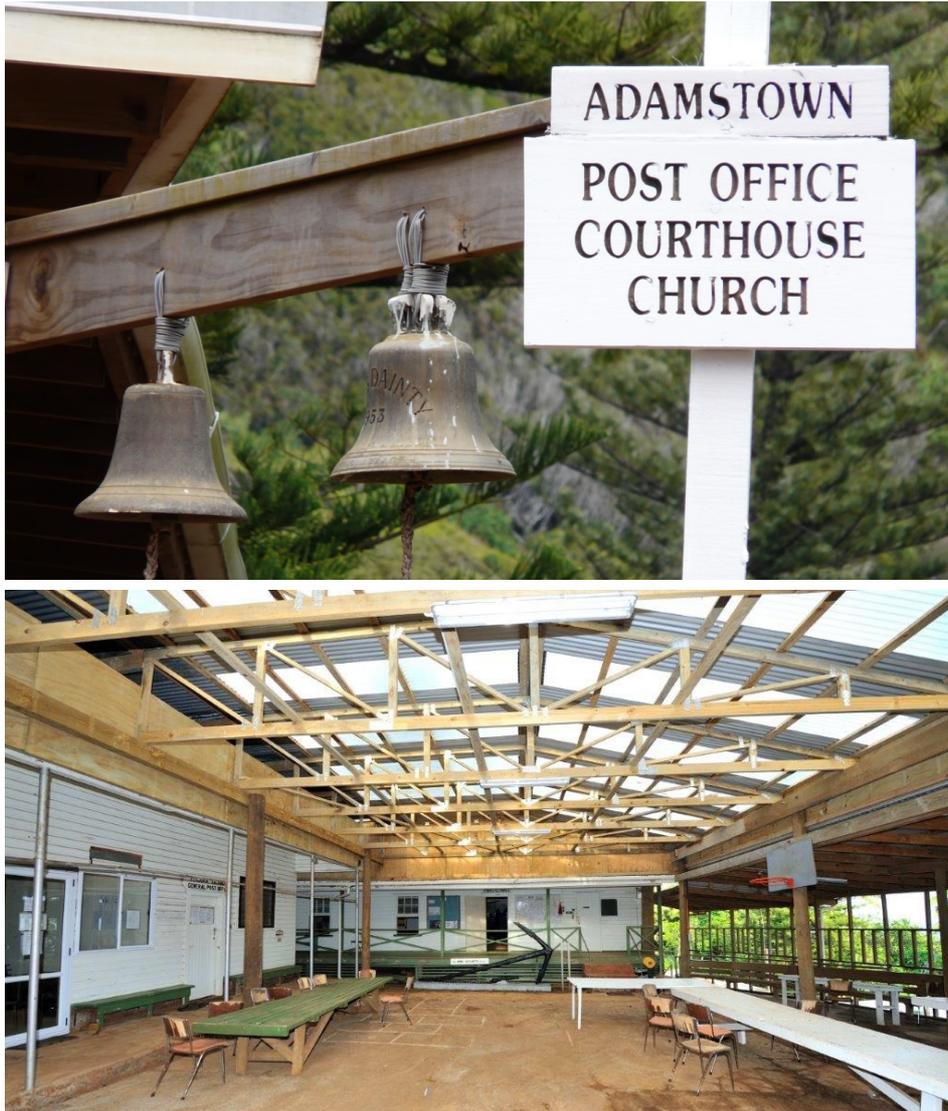


Figure 2. Adamstown Square and bells (author photo 20 October 2008).

Reliance on the sea for trade and sustenance, long periods of isolation and the necessity to be self-sufficient has led to the development of livelihood systems based on local knowledge, adaptation and the ability to cope under difficult circumstances. The capabilities of Pitcairners have been shown, through historical literature, to resonate in particular *dispositions* like religion, ‘share out’, public work, food gathering activities and the Pitkern language to name a few. According to Bourdieu (1992) embodied dispositions are culturally learned and shared; these ‘fields’ of practice are passed on through the generations. For example, within Pitcairn’s society several hierarchical positions have existed. These include those of chief magistrate (now mayor), island secretary, and chairman of the internal committee, longboat coxswain, chief engineer, Seventh Day Adventist pastor, island policeman, radio operator and post-master. Each role holds a form of capital; a concentration of force. Authority and status is attached to the mayor, reputation the chairman, esteem the coxswain, standing the radio operator, influence the pastor, and ability the chief engineer. But the field is also a place in which people fight to change the structure, contest or seek to disrupt; influenced by both internal and external forces. Following the trials some roles (e.g. chairman of the internal committee) were disbanded, while others ‘de-formalized’ (e.g. chief magistrate) by way of appointing a UK Island Administrator. Others like the radio operator have given way to new technology (i.e. satellite communication and internet). For much of the twentieth century the role of radio officer was pivotal to the island’s contact with the outside world; the remnants of which are still evident on *Taro Ground* which housed the Pitcairn Radio Station. Many PM stories tell of emergency evacuations and the need to ‘flag down’ a passing ship to transport an islander to medical facilities (usually some 3,300 miles to New Zealand). The role of coxswain and engineer are still highly regarded but recent political changes, which aim to devolve more autonomy to the Pitcairn Island Council have worked against collective action. In theory, this development symbolises collective political life-cycle changes together, but in practice one observes intrinsic divisions between individuals and groupings within the community as a result of such change.

Based on my first year on Pitcairn, I generated a set of etic (e.g. social capital, economy, boundaries, disposition, politics, resilience) and emic (e.g. kinship, religion, ritual, language, gender, craft, food/cuisine, hierarchy) categories to guide fieldwork data analysis. For the purposes of this discussion, I turn to the emic categories in order to describe elements of Pitcairn tradition. The term *tradition*, like *folklore*, refers to several related concepts. It indicates the *lore* of folk groups as well as the *process* of communicating that lore (Sims & Stephens, 2005, p. 65). Tradition also implies a sense of continuity and of shared materials, customs, beliefs, ritual, and verbal expressions that continue to be practiced within and among certain groups. Thus, the concept of continuity, time, and repetition

is integral to any definition of tradition. Based on these elements I have listed below a number of ‘symbols’ that construct the ‘meaning’ of Pitcairn folklife. Albeit not an exhaustive list, these symbols represent the idea of culture as a web (Geertz, 1973) and tradition as part of a web of behaviours. The following section describes some of these symbolic actions as experienced in fieldwork.

Table 1. ‘Symbols’ of Pitcairn Culture

Religion/Sabbath	<i>Bounty</i> memorabilia (bible, anchor, canon)
Pitkern language	Rituals (e.g. ‘Burning the <i>Bounty</i> ’)
Food implements (e.g. ‘una’ and ‘yolla’)	Fishing
Public Work	Share Out
Public dinner	Annual harvests (arrowroot, sugar-cane)
Bell ringing	Hymn singing
Longboats	‘shooting’ breadfruit
Kite flying	Pitcairn wheelbarrow
Island place names	Handicrafts (weaving/carving)

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Symbols of Pitcairn Culture

The symbolic construction of Pitcairn community is manifest in annual rituals such as ‘burning the *Bounty*’;³ arrowroot and sugar cane harvests, and the practices of ‘share out’ as well as activities of carving and weaving. The island women weave intricate pandanus baskets and fans, sourced and prepared from island flora, as well as painted dried ‘hattie’ leaves—named for Hattie Andre, a Seventh Day Adventist who arrived on Pitcairn in 1893. Andre organized a school in Adamstown and is credited with teaching the islanders woodwork and weaving skills. The Pitcairn men produce wooden carvings including figures such as sharks, dolphins, whales and turtles as well as walking sticks, replica *Bounty* ships and longboats. Many hours are spent producing these items and nearly every household on Pitcairn has a workshop, with entire families involved in the production process. It is rare to see ‘idle hands’ and even at public gatherings the islanders take a basket of tools and unfinished curios along to work on while they chatter. The sale of souvenirs to visiting tourists is important to each Pitcairn household to supplement low-paying government jobs. One long-standing device of

³ Pitcairnians celebrate *Bounty Day* on 23rd January. The islanders build a replica ‘ship’ to burn at Bounty Bay preceded by a day of social festivities and ending with a community dinner.

on-island communication has been the use of a ship's bell (Figure 2) in the village. The bell code represented specific community practices:

5 bells	'Sail Ho' (sighting of a ship)
4 bells	Public share out of goods
3 bells	Public Work
2 bells	Village meeting
1 bell	Religious services

Today, the ritual of five bells for sighting of a ship is the only one still practiced. However, most islanders rely on hearing the message via marine radio communication (each household has one). Relph (1976) notes ritual and custom reaffirm and strengthen enduring relationships that arise between people and place. Symbols can act as devices for expressing the continuity of past and present, and for reasserting the cultural integrity of the community in the face of apparent subversion by the forces of change (Cohen 1985).

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1. Share Out

'Share out' may have dated to the mutineers' first years of settlement. Denning (1992, p. 318) states: each would put into the common store what circumstance of skill or productive land allowed and take out what each needed... land they owned individually, but its produce were owned in common. The custom of exchanging 'public fruit' for goods of approximate equal value which later could be distributed evenly at the 'share-out' in Adamstown Square has now largely disappeared (Ford, 1996). Today, a 'procurement' officer is elected to communicate (via email) with visiting ships. He barter for and orders provisions for islanders that would otherwise incur costly freight charges on the three-monthly supply ship from New Zealand. However, there are still instances when gifts and produce are gifted to the island community by visiting ships and these are distributed evenly amongst members. As an outsider, one particular fieldwork share out is memorable for its ritualistic rules and sense of shared norm that facilitates group co-operation and community level action. A supply of miro wood had been gifted by Pitcairners in Mangareva to the islanders. Miro is valued for its fine quality and used for carving souvenirs to sell to visitors. For many decades Pitcairners have sailed by open longboat 169km to Henderson Island to collect miro—a now depleted resource on Pitcairn. *PM* records the risky crossing and often treacherous seas, the difficulty in manoeuvring timber from shore to

longboat, a process that took several days. So, when this wood was gifted to the community, the traditional ‘share out’ practice was maintained. The wood was cut to even sizes and each man, women and child were allocated their portion (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Miro wood share out (author photo taken 14 April, 2011).

Additionally, this ‘share out’ is worth noting for its performative action. In this example, the setting was Bounty Bay landing. All members of the community participated in organizing, stripping and preparing the wood piles for share out. A nominated male elder sits with his back to the ‘audience’ while another community member points to a pile and calls ‘whose pile is this?’ Unseen by the elder (who holds a list of community member names) he replies with a name whereby another islander chalks the concrete with the corresponding name next to each pile. In this example, with its historical antecedent and importance of communal asset, ‘share out’ reveals a fundamental referent of group membership and sense of identity.

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2. Annual Harvests

Seasons dictate the cycles of island life: planting, harvesting, fishing and trade with passing ships. Cumulatively, the ‘meaning’ of your island takes shape by how you dwell on your island, the practical orientations to actions, tasks, movement, rest and encounter (Seamon, 1979). But Buttimer (1976, p. 277) argues, ‘to dwell implies more than to inhabit, to cultivate, or to organize space’. It also means being attuned to the rhythms of place in which one’s life is anchored in history and directed toward a future.

PM records islanders’ waiting up to six months before seeing a ship and when ships did arrive luxury items such as flour, sugar, butter, and meat were sought after trading items. Consequently, annual sugar-cane and arrowroot harvests were important community practices.

First of all the cane is cut and trimmed at the gardens and is then transported to the sugar mill, where it is to be pressed. This mill is a very old one and works on a simple principle of two heavy rollers squeezing the juice out of the cane. The cane is fed by hand; and the rollers are turned by manpower, using long poles pushed by members of the community. The sugar-cane juice is collected in large tubs and then carried up to the fire house, where a blazing fire is set under a shallow tray into which the juice is poured. When the time is judged right, the rich molasses is poured into containers ready to be taken home. (*PM*, 1975)

Upon my first arrival in September 2008, a sugar-cane harvest was held. Following the trials and imprisonment of island men, disruption to such harvests was imminent. Between 2008 and 2013 the arrowroot harvest occurred only once whilst the sugar cane harvest not again until 2014; then only undertaken by a few islanders and expatriates. This dwindling practice is a combination of increased pressure on work time (especially government jobs), the ease of importation of such products and a general decline in willingness to undertake such laborious tasks. Yet many Pitkern elders still talk fondly of these annual harvests; their stories recall the enjoyment of such communal activities and celebrating the end of harvest with a shared meal. Admittedly, such rituals have been affected by a measure of apathy and detached attitude toward maintaining such collective action.

3. Religion and Hymn-Singing

In 1956, Ferdon⁴ (1958, 81) noted: 'If there is a focal point that brings and holds the islanders together, it is their religion'. Religion and hymn singing have been hallmarks of Pitcairn culture since its early establishment and *Miscellany* records many examples of this symbiotic relationship. Education Officer Roy Sanders' (1953, 263) analysis of religious practice concluded *because* of the 'absence of other institutions and entertainments, religious services supply meaning to each week, and assign meaning to continuous endeavour'. The many phases of services included Sabbath School (adult/child divisions), the Missionary Volunteer Programme, and weekday evening prayer meetings. Friday was 'preparation day' whereby folk were occupied with cooking and cleaning as no food is cooked nor work undertaken on the Sabbath Day (Saturday). On the rare occasion a ship called on Sabbath, no trade was permitted. Today, such restrictions have lapsed and one observes a marked decline in religious persuasion; affected by generational change, frequent travel abroad and external societal influences. Moreover, severe religious divisions occurred during the trials and certain kin-groups shunned the Church and those who represented it. After a century of SDA representation on-island, the post of permanent pastor was discontinued during my field visits, and has remained *ad hoc*. However, Sabbath Day is still an important 'day off' for Pitcairn families who choose to share time and leisure activities together.

Linked to this religious persuasion Pitcairners are legendary for their hymn-singing. But the symbolic construction of this performance today is somewhat commercialized yet strives to maintain a self-image of the past. Pitcairners are renowned for their signature song 'In the Sweet Bye and Bye' often sung collectively aboard a cruise ship or alternatively performed from a longboat as it departs a visiting ship. This performance is highly emotive as the islanders' harmonious tones drift across the water and appear, to all intents and purposes heartfelt. Many a cruise ship passenger is enthralled with such a scene. But in essence, once a ship departs and the longboat heads for Bounty Bay, hardly one islander looks back at the departing ship; each intent on the next stage of the trade activity, be it collective share out, or counting their individual sales for the day. In its cultural significance religious meaning may vary between and with its members' unique orientations to it. That said the consciousness of community is kept alive through 'manipulation of its symbols' (Cohen 1985, p. 15).

⁴ Ferdon visited the island for four days with Thor Heyerdahl's expedition of the Pacific in 1956. During their stay they recorded a brief but useful report on both physical and social aspects of Pitcairn Island.

4. Food and Cooking

The Pitcairn term for food is *wekle* and can mean food in general, or a particular food. The relationship, like other Pacific cultures, is strongly pragmatic and functional. Many words are concerned with food and shelter, for example *rama* (to collect seafood or to go fishing by torch light at night) and *hulu* (to garner root vegetables) which recalls early horticultural practices. Despite their isolation, Pitcairners have always managed to have food, enjoy their own foods cooked in their own way and are eager to share food with visitors. Eating is a large part of life on Pitcairn and many meals are taken together as family units and expressing the pleasure of food consumed is revealed in the less commonly used Pitkern term '*se buss*' (meaning someone is so full they have burst).

Traditionally, the principal foods of the Pitcairners were yams, taro, sweet potatoes and banana; all of which are commonly consumed today. In the early day of settlement, fish was eaten once or twice a week; meat was not a large element in the diet. Today however, fish constitutes a main part of Pitcairn cuisine with varieties such as nanwee, moi and opapa, snapper, tuna and wahoo being the most popular. The island's rich volcanic soil yields a variety of tropical fruit including breadfruit, pawpaw, coconut, banana, mango, guava, oranges, watermelon and pineapple; however over 200 years of intensive cultivation has necessitated the use of fertilizers to guarantee high yields. The islanders also grow a range of vegetables such as cabbage, beans, sweetcorn, carrots, pumpkin, cucumber, onions, and lettuces on scattered garden plots on the slopes south and west of Adamstown. Citrus fruit is plentiful and in the early decades of the twentieth century Pitcairners exported crates of oranges to New Zealand. Today, the regular three-monthly supply ship from New Zealand enables access to most everyday grocery items (including once banned alcohol and tobacco) available to the outside world.

The most traditional dish on Pitcairn is *pilhi*: a basic staple food which can be made from green or ripe *plun* (bananas) and sweet *taty* (potato) which was originally grated on a special type of stone called *yolo*. The stone was left to soak for some time then cut diagonally in a crisscross pattern with a saw to form 'teeth' like a grater. The *yolo* was often placed at one end of the *ana*—a long stool affair where the cook could sit at one end and work a split coconut back and forth over a metal grid collecting the flakes in a bowl placed underneath. The grated food was mixed with coconut milk then wrapped in a banana leaf for baking. Cooked mashed pumpkin mixed with arrowroot flour is more commonly made today. *Pilhi* is an acquired taste, and for most visitors deemed bland and tasteless. Nonetheless no public dinner or special celebration feast is devoid of *pilhi* and will likely remain the dish that strongly represents Pitcairn culture past and present.



Figure 4. Pitcairn longboat (author photo 31 August 2008).

5. Pitcairn Longboats

The island's tiny size (4.6 square km), rugged coastline and sheer cliffs offer no safe anchorage for ships that must lie a mile or two offshore. Transport to the island is governed by the skill of local men and their longboats. The storied longboats of Pitcairn are the island's lifeblood. They are the islanders' only physical link with the outside world and are the means of reaching offshore ships delivering mail and supplies. Most visitors first contact with the island is by longboat; first seen lunging out of the narrow mouth of Bounty Bay (Figure 4). The risky access to and from Bounty Bay requires skill and timing by the coxswain. Early Pitcairn longboats were built of native wood but indiscriminate use of island timber for house building and firewood soon depleted this valuable commodity. In past years it took many hands to heave a heavy longboat up the slipway, but now a powered winch does the work. Originally powered by 14 oars aluminium vessels were introduced in the early 1980s. Following a tradition of naming all boats, the current ones are referred to as *Tin*, *O'Leary* and *Moss*, names that follow colorful names like *HoHo* and *Dumpy*. Several island men carve replica *Bounty* ships and carved longboats for sale to tourists; iconic symbols of Pitcairn and sought after souvenirs. I am humbled by one special longboat carved by the oldest Pitcairn male and 'master carver' presented in appreciation of my husband's medical treatment of a family member. The carving was a replica of *Surprise*—a 1960s longboat skippered by the aforementioned

carver (Figure 5). Boats of such intricate detail had not been made for many years and it stands in pride of place in our Dunedin home.



Figure 5. Replica Surprise longboat and Pitcairn crafts (author photo 4 May 2017).

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Concluding Comments

My fieldwork experiences and observations provide an outsider/insider view derived from association with and friendships formed within the Pitcairn community. This brief ‘tensed ethnography’ attempts to convey the centrality of the symbolic dimension of community as a defining characteristic. My experiences help me understand how particular structures originate and remain embedded within a small island community. Admittedly, ‘progress’ has lessened the hard toil of self-subsistence lifestyle on Pitcairn. That said, each ‘daily race is still run’ on ‘land and sea’ whereby ‘heritage of mutineer’s sons and daughters’ itself generates its own social forces. In general, when Pitcairners talk of ‘their community’, they refer to an entity, a reality, invested with all the sentiment attached to kinship, rivalry, familiarity, jealousy and conflict, as they inform the social process of everyday life (Cohen, 1978). Pitcairn, to some extent reveals ‘community’ in its many folkloric guises, as a

powerful everyday notion in which people organize their lives and understand the places in which they live. Furthermore, it is through rituals, social events and daily practices that a shared symbolic universe emerges. Symbols (e.g. such as ‘share out’, ‘burning the *Bounty*’ and bell-ringing) are devices for expressing symbolically the continuity of past and present. Shapiro’s aforementioned quote provides the basis from which Pitcairn life can be observed and described today; a culture that has developed its own unique ways of life founded on the ‘Heritage of mutineer’s sons and daughters’.

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The Women of the *Bounty*

Everett L. Parker

In September 1789, after the mutiny and while staying briefly on Tahiti, Fletcher Christian became concerned that some of his men were ready to rebel against him. Spurred also by fear of discovery and arrest from Britain, he made a hurried departure. He and eight members of the HMAV *Bounty* crew sailed from Tahiti with six Polynesian men, 12 Polynesian women and a baby girl. Searching for a new home took four months until uncharted Pitcairn was sighted on January 15, 1790.

A decision was made on January 23 to burn the *Bounty* and the fate of all to remain on the island was sealed. The women consorts soon adopted a survival mode by growing crops, fishing, making tapa for warmth and clothing and ensuring Tahitian culture remained an integral part of Pitcairn's identity through music and dance. Pauline Reynolds, in her *Textile History* article, writes how the production of tapa and gifting 'reveals information regarding their social, ritual and innovative activities, and their contribution to the *Bounty*/Pitcairn story.' This activity was exclusively a female role but one that gave them a degree of power, status and prestige (depending on the fineness of the cloth). It also provided an outlet for their creative talents and helped bind social relationships. In addition to clothing the community, the tapa made by the *Bounty* women also made fine tapa for traditional gifting to seafaring visitors. This gave the women an important role in Pitcairn daily life. Reynolds added: