

Origins of Plant Uses: Mythology as Truth

Where do we come from?

Why are plants the way they are?

How is all of this related?

The questions of childhood, science, and truth

KEY CONCEPTS

–Ethnobotanical myths commonly contain elements of conservation, plant origin/histories, considerations of the relative importance of plants to the culture, cultural uses, and comments on correct usage and respect for plants.

DEFINITIONS

- Mythology
- Science
- Both

KEY CONCEPTS

–“Myths” or cultural stories often contain truths and historical information.

–Myths are valid from the perspective of members of the culture regardless of the “validation” status given by scientists.

PLANTS & COSMOLOGIES

- Cultural perspectives of plants
- Purposes of plants and people
- Holistic thinking – Linear speaking

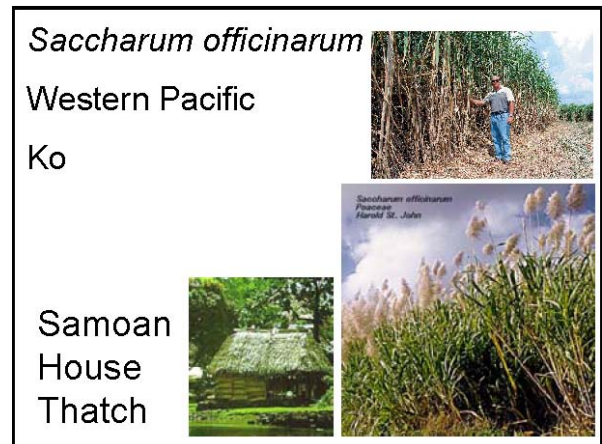
ROLES OF MYTHOLOGY

- Explanations of origins
- Organization of daily life
- Aid in cosmological communication
- Remembering the power of Gods
- Remembering history / Important lessons

ROLES OF MYTHOLOGY

- **Explanations of Origins**

- Example: sugar cane



ROLES OF MYTHOLOGY

- **Explanations of Origins**

- Example: coconuts

ROLES OF MYTHOLOGY

- **Organization of Daily Life**

- Daily schedules
 - Calendars
 - Others

ROLES OF MYTHOLOGY

- **Aid in Cosmological Communication**

- Communication with other people

- Communication with spiritual realm

ROLES OF MYTHOLOGY

- **Remembering the Power of Gods**

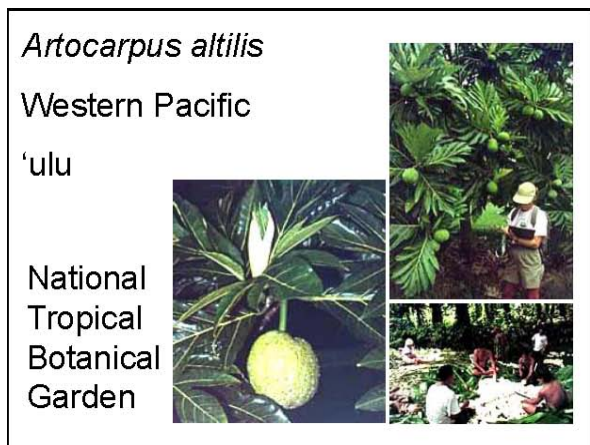
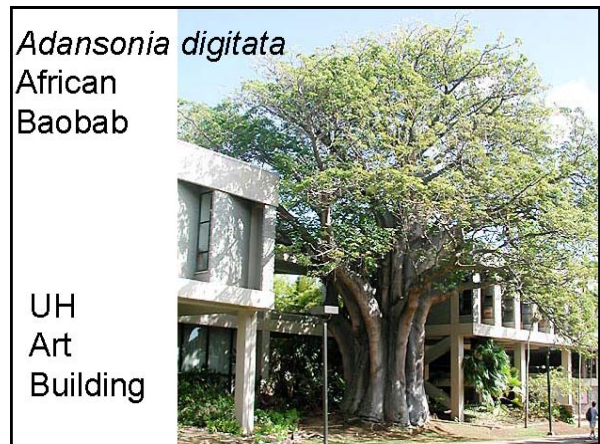
- Metaphorical plants

- Ritual regulatory plants

ROLES OF MYTHOLOGY

• Remembering History and Important Lessons

- Example: Long lived plants
- Example: Representative plants



HAWAIIAN PLANT MYTHOLOGY

- Kumulipo
- Wakea and Papa
- Hāloa
- Kinolau
- Kapu
- Makahiki

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. What are five roles of plant myths in cultures?
2. How are science and mythology related?
3. Describe the value of each of the following to a traditional farmer: inbreeding, asexual reproduction, polyploidy, and genetic variation.
4. What is a plant?
 - 5. How are the terms kinolau, Wakea and Papa, Hāloa, kapu, kumulipo, and makahiki related to plant myths and ethnobotany?