Throughout Polynesia, tapa designs greatly impressed early European explorers. When Captain Cook visited Tonga, ngatu was used for many everyday objects including sheets, bedding, and even turbans, capes and kites! The tapa designs have almost disappeared from Polynesia; only in Tonga has the strong tradition remained. The main social function of ngatu is to be a constantly circulating gift, given at weddings, funerals and other special occasions. Larger pieces of ngatu are considered a symbol of wealth and nowadays at weddings in Tonga, a ngatu will be draped over the wedding car carrying the Tapa-making is a traditional art form whereby the inner bark of certain trees is softened and pounded into sheets of cloth, then bound together using natural starches such as root crop. The tapa making tradition is found all across Oceania, but due to the labor-intensive nature of its production, the craft has largely ceased in many countries. The root from the mangrove tree is also traditionally used for dye, but because mangroves are under conservation in Tonga (they serve as a critical barrier to erosion among other things), the harvesting of mangrove roots is, from what I understand, forbidden. I believe Kaloni said that the mud around the mangrove roots is often used for dye as well. Tags: artist's books, book arts, Collaborations, tonga. Last summer I mentioned that I was invited to go to Vava'u, Tonga as a guest instructor and to participate in an artist's™ book collaboration between the BYU Art Department and local Tongan craftspeople. I promised to report back. I didn’t forget! There you have it, the making of tapa cloth and koka dye. Next we learned a bit of design, a bit of bookbinding, and then set out to create our books. But I’ll save that for another blog post (hopefully soon), since this took a while to write! Book Arts in Tonga part 1 / 2 / 3 / 4. Share this: Twitter. Local artist selling traditional Tongan tapa designs, and customized art pieces! You can request any custom design, or work together with Tongia Tomasi to make your perfect design! #tapa #tonga #traditionaldesign #traditionalart. Tongia's Tapa. 9 May 2019. Some more cards being made! Tongia Tomasi. KoKo Design. 9 May 2019.