

## 4. Melanesia

During the late nineteenth century, Europe began to take an increasing interest in Melanesia. Colonisation and missionary work introduced a rapid process of cultural transformation. In the context of globalisation, local residents are now increasingly posing questions about their cultural belonging and their chances for economic and social development.

Six regional examples provide impressions of the variety of Melanesian tapa and its complex meanings to the present day. Whether preserving local history for coming generations, expressing relationships or a sense of belonging, recalling cultural roots, or as individual art or tourist goods – in many parts of Melanesia tapa has a vital presence today more than ever.

### 4.1 Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands

On Santa Cruz, barkcloth was widespread until the early twentieth century. On account of European influence, the residents increasingly replaced tapa with cotton textiles. Since the mid-1990s, a return to local culture and history has led to a revival of traditions and almost forgotten techniques. For example, today some men and women are again creating painted tapa as costumes for traditional dances and of late also as artefacts for sale. In so doing, they increasingly develop formats and patterns which disregard traditional conventions. However, this innovation is not welcomed by all.

#### 4.1.1-4

##### Tapa beater

Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, before 1900

Wood, 34 x 5 x 5; 41 x 3 x 3; 40 x 4 x 4; 40 x 4 x 4 cm

Donated 1899 by Adele and Eugen Rautenstrauch, collected 1897 by Wilhelm Joest (1852-97)

Köln: RJM (4011, 4012, 4013, 4015)



#### 4.1.5

Duddley Dopwe

##### **Tapa beater**

Pala Village, Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, 2010

Wood, 39 x 5 x 4 cm

Permanent loan from Museumsgesellschaft RJM e.V., collected 2011

by Oliver Lueb

Köln: RJM (64859)

#### 4.1.6

I'sao

##### **Tapa beater**

Mateone Village, Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, late 20th cent.

*No nie* tree wood, 38 x 4 x 4 cm

Permanent loan from Museumsgesellschaft RJM e.V., collected 2011

by Oliver Lueb

Köln: RJM (64860)

#### 4.1.7

Paul Fisheryoung Kabune

##### **Tapa beater**

Mbanua Village, Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, 2005

*No neke* tree wood, 32 x 5 x 4 cm

Permanent loan from Museumsgesellschaft RJM e.V., collected 2011

by Oliver Lueb

Köln: RJM (64861)



Top: RJM (64861), middle: RJM (64860), bottom: RJM (64859)

#### 4.1.8

##### **Dance club *napa ba***

Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands

Wood, colour pigments, 102 x 14 x 6 cm

Acquired by Klaus Clausmeyer 1966

Köln: RJM (48137)



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#### 4.1.9

##### **Dance club *napa ba***

Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands

Wood, colour pigments, natural fibres, 102 x 33 x 14 cm

Acquired by Klaus Clausmeyer 1966

Köln: RJM (48138)



© Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, Foto: Wolfgang F. Meier

#### 4.1.10

Carved by Christian Mewir, decorated by Shadrack Sade

##### **Dance club *napa ba***

Malo Village, Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, 2007

*No mini* tree wood, colour pigments, natural fibres, 143 x 5 x 5 cm

Permanent loan from Museumsgesellschaft RJM e.V., collected 2011

by Oliver Lueb

Köln: RJM (64835)



Foto: Oliver Lueb

One occasion for the wearing of tapa on Santa Cruz are traditional dances like the *napa ba*, named after the batons of the same name. According to today's *napa ba* dancers, the dance has its origins in a war dance. In this dance, the warriors trained their abilities and sought to give themselves courage. They were also dedicated to a divinity that they beseeched for

support. Even if today *napa ba* is exclusively performed for tourist groups or at cultural festivals, the dancers remain aware of its historical and mythological origins (fig. 1).

As a model for painting these batons, the dancer Shadrack Sade used photographs from a 1999 national cultural festival where a *napa ba* dance group performed in the capital Honiara. According to the maker, the eyes at the end of the dance baton symbolise the sea god Mebok, while other elements symbolise forest divinities. He no longer remembered the significance of the geometric patterns (fig. 2).



**Fig. 1: *napa* dancers, Malo Village, 2009**  
Photo: Oliver Lueb



**Fig. 2: Shadrack Sade, Malo Village, 2009**  
Photo: Oliver Lueb

#### 4.1.11

Matthias

#### **Dance hat *abe***

Nea Village, Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, 2011

Barkcloth, rattan, natural pigments, 45 x 28 cm

Permanent loan from Museumsgesellschaft RJM e.V., collected 2011  
by Oliver Lueb

Köln: RJM (64823)



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*Abe* hats indicate the status of the leading dancer in a traditional *nelo* dance, named after the nose adornment worn by the dancers (figs. 3 and 4). The



pattern of these *abe* symbolise affluence and reputation. The term *abe* was also once used for a men's hairstyle, where they plaited their hair at the back of their heads in a long roll of tapa.



**Fig. 3: Leader of dancing party with *abe***

Original: 56. Dancing Party at Santa Cruz. 83. Beattie-Hobart  
Photo: John Watt Beattie, Hobart Tasmanien, 1906  
Köln: Historisches Photoarchiv RJM (3951)



**Fig. 4: Leaders of a *nelo* dance, Ne'ele Village, August 2011**

On the left is Police Commissioner Walter Kola, on the right Duddley Dopwe. Both are wearing the insignia of the lead dancers: dance hat (*abe*), pectoral (*tema*), banana bast loincloth (*lepanesa*), bow and arrows.  
Photo: Oliver Lueb

#### **4.1.12**

Decorated by Shadrack Sade

#### **Dance loincloth for men**

Malo Village, Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, 1998

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 160 x 30 cm

Permanent loan from Museumsgesellschaft RJM e.V., collected 2011

by Oliver Lueb

Köln: RJM (64824)

See figure 2

#### 4.1.13

##### Dance loincloth for men

Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, c. 1910

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 131 x 42 cm

Permanent loan from Museumsgesellschaft RJM e.V., collected by Felix Speiser (1880 – 1949)

Köln: RJM (30583)



Men formerly wore painted skirts for special occasions and unpainted ones in everyday life (fig. 5). Today, they only wear decorated tapa for traditional dances to express pride in their culture. The men pull the tapa between their lags. The skirt is held up by a strip of bark fabric.



**Fig. 5: Men with tapa loincloths**

Photo: John Watt Beattie, Hobart Tasmanien, 1906

Original: Men of Vanicolo-Santa Cruz Group. 398-Beattie-Hobart

Köln: Historisches Fotoarchiv RJM (3955)

#### 4.1.14

##### Barkcloth

Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, before 1900

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 40 x 146 cm

Donated 1899 by Adele and Eugen Rautenstrauch, collected 1897 by Wilhelm Joest (1852-97)  
Köln: RJM (3984)



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#### 4.1.15

##### **Barkcloth**

Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, before 1900

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 40 x 205 cm

Donated 1899 by Adele and Eugen Rautenstrauch, collected 1897 by Wilhelm Joest (1852-97)

Köln: RJM (3985)



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#### 4.1.16

##### **Barkcloth**

Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, before 1900

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 52 x 219 cm

Donated 1899 by Adele and Eugen Rautenstrauch, collected 1897 by Wilhelm Joest (1852-97)

Köln: RJM (3986)



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#### 4.1.17

##### **Barkcloth**

Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, before 1900

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 80 x 340 cm

Donated 1899 by Adele and Eugen Rautenstrauch, collected 1897 by Wilhelm Joest (1852-97)

Köln: RJM (3987)



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In the past, only affluent men and their wives could afford elaborately painted loincloths. They were probably worn as costumes for festive occasions. Certain motifs were reserved exclusively for women or men, and every clan probably had its own repertoire of motifs. The significance of the patterns is no longer known. Everyday tapa were left undecorated.

#### 4.1.18

Ena Yamöli and Steven Mdwöt

##### **Tapa for women**

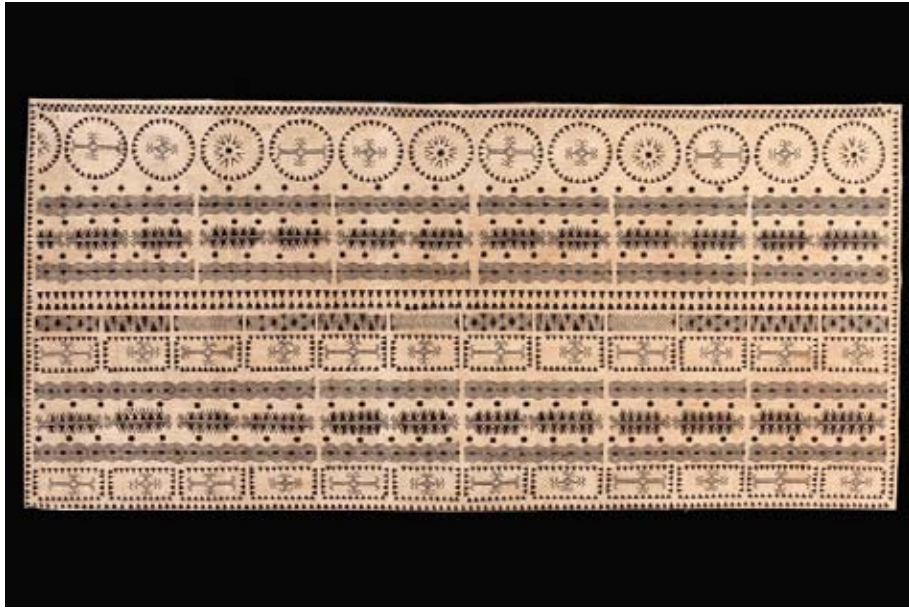
Nea Village, Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, 2010

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 86 x 183 cm

Permanent loan from Museumsgesellschaft RJM e.V., collected 2011 by Oliver Lueb

Köln: RJM (64825)





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As a symbol of their regional affiliation and their ties to their history, the women of Santa Cruz today appear at official receptions, cultural festivals, and performances for tourists in traditional dance costumes, wearing tapa as a one- or two-fold wrapped skirt over their hips and breasts (fig. 6).



**Fig. 6: Women at a *nelo* dance, Venga Village, 2010**

Today, women wear tapa for dance performances, as is here the case for the visit of a government delegation from the capital Honiara. The painted fabrics are based on historical models or clan tradition.

Photo: Oliver Lueb

#### 4.1.19

Ena Yamöli and Steven Mdewöt

##### **Barkcloth**

Nea Village, Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, 2011

Colour pigments, 42 x 70 cm

Private loan, collected 2011 by Oliver Lueb



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Today's tapa often combine old knowledge with new ideas. While the making of tapa is still left to women and little has changed, the making of patterns offers men a new realm of creative work. This fabric produced by Ena Yamöli was used by her husband Steven Mdewöt (fig. 7) as the basis for an entirely new composition, combining traditional patterns from dance clubs, chest adornment, and banana fabric skirts in a unique way.



**Fig. 7: Ena Yamöli and Steven Mdewöt, Nea Village, 2011**

Photo: Oliver Lueb

#### 4.1.20

Wilson Kabi

##### **Pectoral *tema***

Luepe Village, Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, 2010

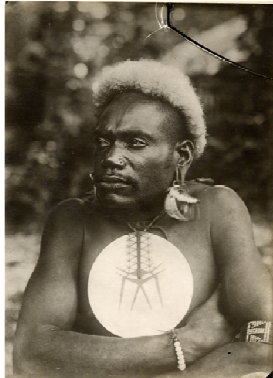
Tridacna clam, tortoise shell, synthetic fibre, H: 0,6 cm, ø 45 cm

Private loan, collected 2011 by Oliver Lueb

The *tema* adornment created using tortoise shell plating and sheaves of mussel shells once designated clan membership, affluence, and status of their wearers. In wartime, they also served as chest protection against arrows (fig. 8).

With the renewed interest in traditional culture, it has regained in popularity. The use of electric polishers and metal files allows manufacturers like John Namiade to create *tema* in larger numbers and

better quality. His father Wilson Kabi already advanced the production of smaller *tema*. Today, women use the *tema* as a fashionable accessory to show their regional origin and affiliation (fig. 9).



**Fig. 8: Man with pectoral *tema***

Original: Type of native. Earrings of tortoiseshell. Breastplates of Giant Tridacna

Photo: Walter H. Lucas, about 1900

Estate Georg Küppers-Loosen

Köln: Historisches Fotoarchiv RJM (9783)



**Fig. 9: Young female dancers wearing *tema* as fashionable accessories, Malo Village, 2009**

Photo: Oliver Lueb

#### **4.1.21**

John Namiade

#### **Pectoral *tema***

Luepe Village, Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands, 2011

Tridacna clam, tortoise shell, synthetic fibre, H: 0,7 cm, ø 16 cm

Private loan, collected 2011 by Oliver Lueb



## 4.2 Manus, Papua New Guinea

In what was formerly known as the 'Admiralty Islands', women created tapa using the bark of the breadfruit tree. Unique in the Pacific region, here the relatively coarse material was lavishly decorated with natural materials, including 'shell money', that women created in a few places in the northwest of the islands using conus shells and which they exported to the other regions. With the decoration they increased the value of the items of clothing. After the arrival of European and Asian traders, they increasingly replaced the shell money with glass beads.

### Dance Skirts

Until the 1950s, women made these richly decorated skirts using tapa or woven fibres and wore them for dancing. The dance skirts worn by the men were less elaborately decorated. The women probably wore two to four skirts: the decorated side was usually worn towards the front and fixed using a tapa belt.

The tassel-like decoration indicated the wealth and the family status of the wearer. Sometimes, a skirt was part of the bride price paid by the groom's family to his future bride, who later wore it at the marriage. Little is known about the other meanings of these items of clothing. Today, the dance skirts are made using printed fabrics and decorated with bast fibres and glass or plastic beads.

### 4.2.1

#### Loincloth

Admiralty Islands, Papua New Guinea, 1904

Barkcloth, cone shell, Palaquium, Job's tear, natural fibres, cotton, 86,5 x 47 x 4,5 cm

Acquired and donated by Georg Küppers-Loosen, patron of the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Co-founder and vice chairman of the museum's friends association, member of the 'Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft', Cologne division.

Köln: RJM (13967)



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#### 4.2.2

##### Loincloth

Admiralty Islands, Papua New Guinea, beginning of 20 cent.  
Barkcloth, cone shell, Palaquium, Job's tear, natural fibres, 91 x 45 x  
2,5 cm  
Köln: RJM (62935)



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#### 4.2.3

##### Loincloth

Admiralty Islands, Papua New Guinea, 1902  
Barkcloth, cone shell, Palaquium, Job's tear, natural fibres, cotton, 91  
x 59 x 2,5 cm  
Collected by Dr. Curt Danneil (before 1865), end of 19th/beginning of  
20th cent., sometime physician in the Bismarck Archipelago  
Köln: RJM (8281)



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#### 4.2.4

##### **Loincloth**

Admiralty Islands, Papua New Guinea, 1902

Barkcloth, cone shell, Palaquium, Job's tear, natural fibres, cotton, 72 x 47 x 3.5 cm

Collected by Dr. Curt Danneil (b. 1865), end of 19th / beginning of 20th cent., sometime physician in the Bismarck Archipelago

Köln: RJM (8282)



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#### 4.2.5

##### **Loincloth**

Admiralty Islands, Papua New Guinea, 1904

Barkcloth, cone shell, Palaquium, Job's tear, natural fibres, cotton, 61 x 83 x 5,3 cm

Acquired and donated by Georg Küppers-Loosen, patron of the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Co-founder and vice chairman of the museum's friends association, member of the 'Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft', Cologne division.

Köln: RJM (13970)



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#### 4.2.6

##### Loincloth

Admiralty Islands, Papua New Guinea, before 1897

Barkcloth, cone shell, Palaquium, natural fibres, cotton, 82 x 86 x 3 cm

Köln: RJM (13969)



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### 4.3 Finisterre and Saruwaged Ranges, Papua New Guinea

Still in the 1950s, depending on the region, barkcloth was made either by women or men. They decorated everyday and ritual clothing with ornamentation that usually represented important themes or beings from the supernatural world. The same motifs painted onto capes and dance decorations can also be found carved into lime containers and combs.

In the mid-1950s, ethnologist Carl A. Schmitz began collecting everyday and ritual objects for the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum and analysed the meaning of the patterns, especially on the barkcloths.

#### 4.3.1 – 23 Lime Containers

Finisterre or Saruwaged Range, Papua New Guinea, 1956

- 4.3.1 Bamboo, pigments; 28 x 6 cm; Köln: RJM (46396)
- 4.3.2 Bamboo, pigments; 23 x 5 cm; Köln: RJM (46398)
- 4.3.3 Bamboo, pigments; 19 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46416)
- 4.3.4 Bamboo, pigments; 24 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46418)
- 4.3.5 Bamboo, pigments; 25 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46419)
- 4.3.6 Bamboo, pigments; 14 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46420)
- 4.3.7 Bamboo, pigments; 20 x 5 cm; Köln: RJM (46421)
- 4.3.8 Bamboo, pigments; 26 x 6 cm; Köln: RJM (46622)
- 4.3.9 Bamboo, pigments; 25 x 5 cm; Köln: RJM (46626)
- 4.3.10 Bamboo, pigments; 23 x 5 cm; Köln: RJM (46627)
- 4.3.11 Bamboo, pigments; 24 x 5 cm; Köln: RJM (46629)
- 4.3.12 Bamboo, pigments; 24 x 6 cm; Köln: RJM (46630)
- 4.3.13 Bamboo, pigments; 29 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46949)
- 4.3.14 Bamboo, pigments; 25 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46950)
- 4.3.15 Bamboo, pigments; 34 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46953)
- 4.3.17 Bamboo, pigments; 19 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46954)
- 4.3.19 Bamboo, pigments; 29 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46957)
- 4.3.20 Bamboo, pigments; 21 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46958)
- 4.3.21 Bamboo, pigments; 24 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46959)
- 4.3.22 Bamboo, pigments; 22 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46966)
- 4.3.23 Bamboo, pigments; 26 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46967)

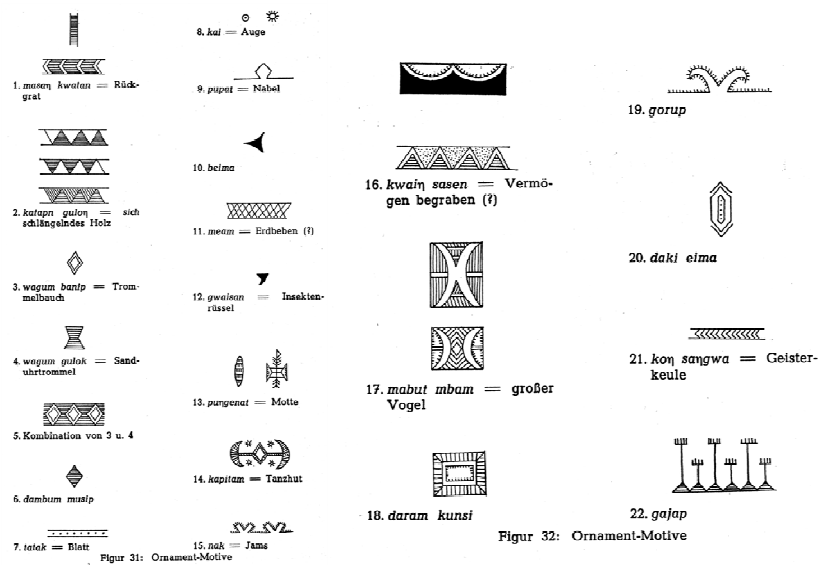
Some examples:





Bamboo containers were used for slaked lime, a necessary additive for the consumption of betel nut (*Areca catechu*), a natural stimulant widespread from Asia to Melanesia.

Schmitz wrote on the decoration of the lime containers, combs, and barkcloths: “[They are] not painted in a ‘naturalistic’ fashion, but the ‘paintings’ are composed of stereotyped forms, with clearly recognizable and repeating symbols. I have decoded 22 of the symbols known to me [...] Sometimes I had the impression that it was a kind of ‘ornamental shorthand’ that was intended to address a certain realm of thought or imagination by combining various symbols.”



**Tab. 1: Ornamentations and their Meanings**

Schmitz (1960): Fig. 31 and 32

#### 4.3.24 – 39 Combs

Komba or Selepet, Finisterre Range, Papua New Guinea, 1956

4.3.24 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 24 x 4 x 2 cm; Köln: RJM (44760)

4.3.25 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 32, x 8 x 2 cm; Köln: RJM (44762)

4.3.26 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 21 x 5 x 1 cm; Köln: RJM (44763)



- 4.3.27 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 29 x 6 x 5 cm; Köln: RJM (44764)
- 4.3.28 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 29 x 6 x 1 cm; Köln: RJM (44765)
- 4.3.29 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 19 x 7 x 2 cm; Köln: RJM (44766)
- 4.3.30 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 25 x 8 x 2 cm; Köln: RJM (44802)
- 4.3.31 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 21 x 8 x 2 cm; Köln: RJM (44804)
- 4.3.32 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 29 x 7 x 2 cm; Köln: RJM (44805)
- 4.3.33 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 28 x 7 x 2 cm; Köln: RJM (44806)
- 4.3.34 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; H 25 x 7 x 2 cm; Köln: RJM (46251)
- 4.3.35 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 30 x 10 x 4 cm; Köln: RJM (46255)
- 4.3.36 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 22 x 8 x 2 cm; Köln: RJM (46256)
- 4.3.37 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 28 x 8 x 2 cm; Köln: RJM (46258)
- 4.3.37 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 29 x 8 x 2 cm; Köln: RJM (46259)
- 4.3.38 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 30 x 7 x 1 cm; Köln: RJM (46261)
- 4.3.39 Bamboo, colour pigments, slaked lime; 29 x 7 x 2 cm; Köln: RJM (46262)

Some examples:



The male inhabitants of Wantoat Valley probably used these combs only after they abandoned the custom to cover their hair with net sacks under the influence of the first missionaries. Prior to that, men had their calf-long hair plaited in several braids on their heads, tying it with a net. This hairstyle embodied their ideal of beauty and indicated a man's diligence and good upbringing.





**Fig. 1: Komba**

Photo: C. A. Schmitz, 1956

Köln: Historisches Fotoarchiv RJM

It is uncertain whether this is the way the comb was actually worn or whether this was only staged for the photographer.

#### **4.3.40 – 43 Barkcloth**

Yupna (Jupna), Finisterre Range, Papua New Guinea, 1956

Barkcloth, 182 x 69 x 5; 102 x 50 x 2; 180 x 61 x 2; 148 x 53 x 1 cm

Köln: RJM (46386, 46389, 46392, 46394)

According to the collector's information, these objects served as capes (*amal*).



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#### **4.3.44 – 46 Barkcloth**

Yupna (Jupna), Finisterre Range, Papua New Guinea, 1956

Barkcloth, 58 x 147 x 1; 52 x 150 x 2; 45 x 101 x 1 cm

Köln: RJM (46382, 46385, 46391)



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According to the collector, these objects also served as capes (*amal*). The form and designs of the fabrics indicate that they probably once served as part of a dance costume. The barkcloth was pulled over a bamboo or rattan frame and the ensemble was worn as a three-part frame around the hips (figs. 2 and 3).



**Fig. 2 and 3: Dancers with tapa dance ensemble**

Photo: V. Keck

#### 4.3.47 – 50 Barkcloth

Uruwa, Finisterre Range, Papua New Guinea, 1956

Barkcloth, 186 x 78 x 1; 143 x 87 x 1; 173 x 75 x 1; 96 x 76 x 1 cm

Köln: RJM (46357, 46358, 46360, 46361)



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According to the collector, these objects are bast cloaks (*ti'arip*), which also were worn during performances (fig. 4).



**Fig. 4: Initiation dance**

Photo: C. A. Schmitz, 1956

Köln: Historisches Fotoarchiv RJM

#### **Dance decoration for *kap ngaman* festivities**

To ensure the fertility of both gardens and women, each year the inhabitants of the Wantoat valley – and in modified forms their neighbours too – celebrated the festival *kap ngaman*, or red dance, held to commemorate the origins of the first Wantoat. According to myth, the ancestors emerged from canes of bamboo after a great flood. For the dance, men decorated bamboo poles up to 18 metres in height with various frames that slid up and down the poles during the dance. During the day, the dancers appeared with unornamented dance hats and adornment, simply dyed red, while at night only objects featuring ornamentation were used, symbolising various spiritual beings. The men made their hats and frames outside the village in a special hut created just for this purpose (fig. 5).



**Fig. 5: Hut for making the *kap ngaman* dance decoration**

Photo: C. A. Schmitz, 1956

Köln: Historisches Fotoarchiv RJM (18946)

#### 4.3.51

##### **Dance decoration *ojang***

Wantoat, Finisterre Range, Papua New Guinea, 1956

Barkcloth, rattan, liana, banana bast, colour pigments, 156 x 86 x 30 cm

Köln: RJM (46567)



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This dance ensemble was an especially impressive form of decoration. Painted entirely red or with mythical patterns, it was movably mounted on a bamboo pole up to 18 metres in length and worn on the back. Due to its elasticity, it could sway up and down along the pole to the rhythm of the dance. It can be assumed that the ensemble depicted a female figure, since an oversized woman's skirt can be found beneath the cylinder.

#### 4.3.52 – 53 Dance decoration *kap japi*

Wantoat, Finisterre-Gebirge, Papua-Neuguinea, 1956

Barkcloth, bamboo, liana, colour pigments, cockatoo feathers, 123 x 56 x 11; 77 x 82 x 22 cm

Köln: RJM (46569, 46570)



(two-sided), © Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, Foto: Wolfgang F. Meier



(two-sided), © Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, Foto: Wolfgang F. Meier

In contrast to the *ojang* dance cylinder, this decoration did not move freely but was firmly fixed to the bamboo poles over the head of the dancer (figs. 6 and 7). There were also day and night versions of this decoration, the former larger than the latter.



**Fig. 6:** *Kap ngaman* dance at night

Photo: C. A. Schmitz, 1956  
Köln: Historisches Photoarchiv RJM (18934)



**Abb. 7:** Fixation of the bamboo pole on the dancer

RJM (18942)



#### 4.3.54 – 57 Barkcloth for the *kap japi* dance decoration

Wantoat, Finisterre Range, Papua New Guinea, 1956

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 149 x 53 x 5; 101 x 59 x 5; 141 x 53 x 5; 169 x 62 x 5 cm

Köln: RJM (46583, 46579, 46580, 46582)



© Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, Foto: Wolfgang F. Meier

Barkcloths as *kap japi* were mounted like pillows and put on bamboo poles. Both sides had different ornamentation. According to Schmitz, the ornamentation of the largest exhibited *kap japi* (RJM 46583) can be read as follows:

The upper two rows show drums and a backbone. A 'face' follows, which is clearly recognizable with its eyes and suggested nose. According to some informants, it represented a spiritual being without a mouth, and could stand for an opossum or for the sun. The combination below depicts a navel in the midst of the upper part, embraced on the left and right by representations of insect proboscises and in the lower area by symbols for yams, one of the most important staple foods of the region. The four illustrations placed very much in the foreground do not represent hands, but yams.

The combination of symbols leads Schmitz to the conclusion that the whole image depicts the divine creator's retreat after the act of creation, being imagined somewhere 'above', most likely in the sun. The insects are considered his messengers to the earthly world. The sun cycle plays an important role in yam cultivation. Thus, this *kap japi* shows in abbreviated symbolic form important elements of the Wantoat's religious beliefs.

#### 4.3.58

##### Men's dance hat (*ngap*)

Wantoat, Finisterre Range, Papua New Guinea, 1956

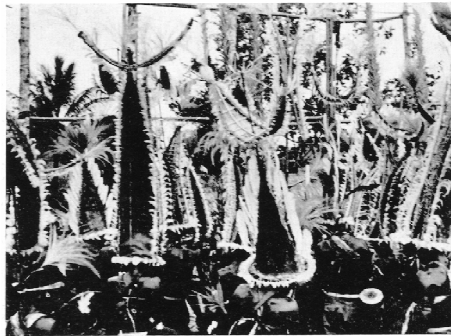
Barkcloth, bamboo, liana, colour pigments, cockatoo feathers, 96 x 71 x 4 cm

Köln: RJM (46576)



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Dance hats also had different designs for the day and night. With this type of hat, the bent shield moves up and down along the reed to the rhythm of the dancer's movements, thus symbolising the presence of a spirit. Schmitz emphasises the mobility principle of the decorations as an especially important feature of all *kap ngaman* ensembles.



**Fig. 8: Men's dance hats**

Photo: C. A. Schmitz, 1956

#### 4.3.59

##### **Women's dance hat (*tekwan*)**

Wantoat, Finisterre Range, Papua New Guinea, 1956

Barkcloth, bamboo, plant fibres, 95 x 39 x 3 cm

Köln: RJM (46571)





© Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, Foto: Wolfgang F. Meier

Wantoat women donned this kind of headdress not for the *kap ngaman* dance but at the end of a ceremony, which allowed adult men for the first time to wear the 'traditional' hairstyle. In addition, the women were equipped with bow and arrow.

#### 4.3.60 – 61 Capes (*amba*)

Komba, Finisterre Range, Papua New Guinea, 1956

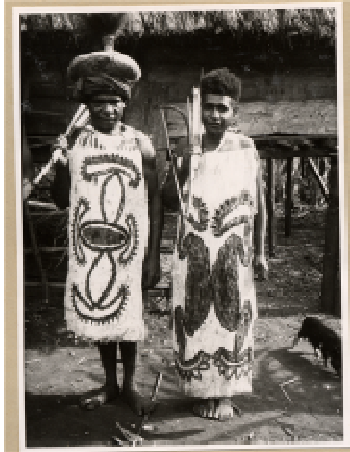
Barkcloth, colour pigments, plant fibres, 134 x 46 x 5; 186 x 44 x 5 cm

Köln: RJM (46302, 46301)



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Beside loincloths and small barkcloths fixed to hip cords, the men also wore capes made out of barkcloth. They were held in place with a cord around the neck. Women wore capes of coarse net bags, whose straps were bound together over the head.



**Fig. 9: Two men wearing capes ( left RJM 46302, right 46301)**

Photo: C. A. Schmitz, 1956

Köln: Historisches Fotoarchiv RJM (19031)

The unusual style of wearing the capes in front of the body was probably arranged by the photographer for demonstration purposes only.



**Fig. 10: Design on the cape**

Photo: C. A. Schmitz, 1956

Köln: Historisches Fotoarchiv RJM (19029)

#### **4.3.62 - 63**

##### **Tapa mallets**

Komba, Finisterre Range, Papua New Guinea, 1956

Stone, 34 x 5 x 6; 9 x 6 x 6 cm

Köln: RJM (46320, 46321)

Besides wooden beaters, men also used stones to beat the tree bark to separate it from the wood core. At the time of the missionaries' arrival in 1928, the village Kubung had developed a veritable industry for making barkcloths. The residents had begun to cultivate trees for barkcloth production and to sell the finished 'fabric' far beyond the Finisterre Range. Following the introduction of cotton by the Europeans, the surplus production collapsed within a very short period of time. However, for their own use barkcloth was still made.

Today, the local school board conducts a “cultural day” once a week whereby the children have to come to school wearing traditional clothes (fig. 13).



**Fig. 11: Tapa production**  
Photo: C. A. Schmitz, 1956



**Fig. 12: Beating tapa**  
Photo: C. A. Schmitz, 1956  
Köln: Historisches Fotoarchiv RJM  
(19027)



**Fig. 13: School girls with traditional grass skirts and – a contemporary adjustment – blouses made from barkcloth on the occasion of the weekly »Cultural Day«.** In the background are boys with traditional barkcloth belts; Gua Village, Yupno, 2007. Photo: V. Keck

#### 4.4.A Lake Sentani, Papua, Indonesia

In the past, women at Lake Sentani produced tapa (*maro* or *malo*). Only married women were allowed to wear them, and after their death a *maro* designated their graves. The motifs (*homo*), which men also used on their carvings, provided information about the owner, whilst every clan owned specific designs and handed them down.

Today, women and increasingly men produce *maro* as a local form of art. The traditional spiral motif *fouw* and stylised animals are very popular, but landscapes or biblical stories are also drawn on tapa. One of the few female artists has recently started to produce tapa hats, bags and purses.

##### 4.4.A.1

##### Barkcloth *maro*

Saboiboi, Lake Sentani, Papua, Indonesia, 19th–20th cent.

Barkcloth. colour pigments, 129 x 187 cm

Basel: Museum der Kulturen (VB6658), Photo: Peter Horner



This *maro* once marked the grave of a woman, as can be seen on the insitu photo. Its pattern shows a double spiral (*hakhalu*), one of two spiral patterns which were common in earlier times. From the 1930s stylised animal patterns were added to the repertoire – above all fish, birds and lizards, as these motifs were popular with European collectors.

In the course of the Second World War the production of *maro* came to a complete halt. It was only in the 1980s that it was taken up again, but now increasingly by men.

#### 4.4.A.2



Paul Wirz

**Woman's grave with painted loincloth (*maro*) on display**

Saboiboi, Lake Sentani, Papua, Indonesia, 1926

(F)Vb 35487. Photo: Paul Wirz. 1926. © Museum der Kulturen Basel & Dadi Wirz



© A. Hermkens



© A. Hermkens

**Figs. 1 and 2: Agus Ongge drawing a spiral pattern on a large piece of barkcloth. Asei Village, 1996.**

Contemporary Sentani artist Agus Ongge often copies old tapa patterns from catalogues or photos he receives from visitors who would like to buy a specially designed tapa.

#### 4.4.A.3

Agus Ongge

**Barkcloth *homo malo***



Asei Island, Lake Sentani, Papua, Indonesia, 1996  
Barkcloth, colour pigments, 108 x 103 cm  
Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(5875-5)



In this region tapa are made of the bark of a wild Banyan tree species. Tapa trees are not cultivated here and since they are scarce nowadays people have to walk considerable distances to find suitable trees. Due to its shortage, barkcloth is also imported from other areas in Papua. The drawings consist of stylized animals, for example lizards, which also feature on barkcloths collected around the turn of the twentieth century, but which also figure traditionally on sago plates.

#### 4.4.A.4

Agus Ongge

#### **Barkcloth *homo malo***

Asei Island, Lake Sentani, Papua, Indonesia, 1996  
Barkcloth, colour pigments, 77 x 56 cm  
Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(5875-2)



On this tapa Agus has drawn the typical Lake Sentani spiral design *fouw*, which is also prominent on woodcarvings (figs. 1 and 2). Today, tapa is no longer used as a garment for initiated and married women, but made and used as a commodity.

#### 4.4.A.5

Agus Ongge

#### **Barkcloth *homo malo***

Asei Island, Lake Sentani, Papua, Indonesia, 1997

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 28 x 38 cm  
Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(5876-1)



Agus decorated this tapa with two fish and a basket, representing the New Testament parable of Christ multiplying bread and fish. This drawing was made in cooperation with Papua Reverend Phil Erari from the Christian Evangelical Church of Papua, who encourages and supports local artists by buying their work.

#### 4.4.A.6

Agus Ongge

##### **Barkcloth *homo malo***

Asei Island, Lake Sentani, Papua, Indonesia, before 1997

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 42 x 70 cm

Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(5876-10)



“With this tapa I am featuring a stylized representation of Christ’s Last Supper. It shows 12 coloured squares and one circle with a cross. The 12 squares symbolise the 12 apostles, the circle with the cross Jesus Christ. The white square in the left corner with a little snake represents Judas. The wine chalice and the bread plate in the centre of the cloth symbolise the Last Supper”, explains Agus, who created this drawing in cooperation with Papua Reverend Phil Erari.

#### 4.4.A.7

##### **Barkcloth *homo malo***

Asei Island, Lake Sentani, Papua, Indonesia, 2009

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 58 x 41 cm



Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(5876-9)



Decorated with a 'Mandalau' pattern. Mandalau is a string game played by girls, who, by looping strings between their fingers and hands, create intricate patterns. This pattern symbolises the harvesting of a type of root crop called *ubi*, during which the string-game is often played. Unlike the larger spiral and stylized animal designs that are drawn by hand, these smaller patterns are predominantly made by using a mould made of a piece of linoleum. This technique enables a faster production and can be done by anyone.

#### 4.4.A.8

##### **Barkcloth *homo malo***

Asei Island, Lake Sentani, Papua, Indonesia, 2009

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 41 x 53 cm

Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(5876-16)



This barkcloth is decorated with a particular spiral (*fouw*) design, called *hakhalu*, made by using a mould. One of the main instigators of tapa art on Asei has been a centre for women's training and development (P3W), which buys and re-sells the works.



© A. Hermkens

**Fig. 3: Women and children display pieces of decorated tapa for tourists on the gravel of Asei Island. Asei Island, 1996.**



© M. Widjojo

**Fig. 4: Martha Ohee wearing one of her creations. Lake Sentani, 2009.**  
Martha Ohee is one of the few women who nowadays produce tapa again. Recently she has started to developed tapa hats, bags and purses for sale to tourists.

#### **4.4B Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea**

For Maisin people in Collingwood Bay, tapa is still very important. Women have been and are still the producers of male and female tapa loincloths, decorated with either clan designs or curvilinear designs. The latter are exchanged in life-cycle rituals such as wedding ceremonies and funeral rites, used for barter or are sold. In contrast, clan designs are inalienable. They visualise a clan's origin story and land claims. All 36 Maisin clans have their own designs and techniques. Recently, women have started to develop new formats as local art with the purpose of selling them as commodities.

##### **4.4B.1**

##### **Loincloth**

Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, c. 1900

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 127 x 49 x 1 cm

Köln: RJM (22359)



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##### **4.4B.2**

##### **Loincloth**

Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, c. 1900

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 176 x 16 x 1 cm

Köln: RJM (22365)



© Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, Foto: Wolfgang F. Meier

#### 4.4B.3

##### Loincloth

Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, c. 1900

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 130 x 33 x 1 cm

Köln: RJM (22374)



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#### 4.4B.4

##### Loincloth

Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, c. 1900

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 48 x 131 x 1 cm

Köln: RJM (22383)



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#### 4.4B.5

##### Loincloth

Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, c. 1900

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 75 x 112 x 1 cm

Köln: RJM (23474)



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#### 4.4B.6

##### Loincloth

Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, c. 1900

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 249 x 39 x 1 cm

Köln: RJM (23475)





**4.4B.7**

**Loincloth**

Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, c. 1900

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 220 x 48 x 2 cm

Köln: RJM (23480)



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**4.4B.8**

**Loincloth**

Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, c. 1900

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 111 x 91 x 1 cm

Köln: RJM (23483)



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**Fig. 1: Accumulation of gifts in Uiaku. Collingwood Bay, 2001.**

The exchange of tapa, clay pots, mats, and food is part of a series of exchanges between the bride-giver and bride-taker groups.



© A. Hermkens

**Fig. 2: Abraham receiving his end-of-mourning (*ro-babassi*) ritual after his wife had died one year earlier.**

After not having cut his hair for a year, his in-laws trim his beard and hair. Abraham is seated on several mats, textiles and a piece of tapa he received from his in-laws. He keeps the hair clippings that are a memento of his mourning for his deceased wife in a small piece of tapa. Airara, Collingwood Bay, 2001.

#### 4.4B.9

Monica Taniova (Waigo clan)

#### **Female loincloth *embobi***

Airara, Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, 2001

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 158 x 107 cm

Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(6009-3)



Monica Taniova (figs. 3-5) is one of the acknowledged tapa artists among the Maisin people. As with most other women, she learned the techniques of

making, designing and painting tapa from her mother. Monica designed this tapa by folding it in four parts: designing one panel, folding it underneath the other parts and working on the next part without looking at the previous one. This technique produces the 'Panel' Design.



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**Figs. 3 and 4: Monica Taniova drawing a pattern on one of the panels. Airara, 2001.**



**Fig. 5: Monica patching holes in the back of a tapa with the sticky juice of berries. Airara, 2001.**

© A. Hermkens

She presumes that buyers will not like the little holes that come with beating the inner bark of the mulberry tree. Tapa meant for personal use is not patched-up.

#### **4.4B.10**

Muriel Ruri (Rerebin clan)

**Male loincloth *koefi***

Airara, Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, 2001

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 230 x 28 cm

Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(6009-7)



While *embobi* are wrapped around women's hips and fastened with a plaited belt, *koefi* are folded between the legs and around the hips, leaving one end of the tapa to hang in front, while the other end covers the behind (fig. 6). Muriel made this *koefi* for her husband to wear at a church festival, which today provides one of the main occasions for traditional dancing and singing (fig. 7).



© A. Hermkens



© A. Hermkens

**Fig. 6: Maisin woman and men performing a dance at a church festival in Collingwood Bay, 2001.**

**Fig. 7: Church celebrations in Wanigela, 2001.**

#### 4.4B.11

Jill Javisea (Waigo clan)

#### Shirt

Airara, Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, 2001

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 84 x 30 cm

Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(6009-19)



Maisin women have been experimenting with sewing tapa into shirts, hats and bags in order to try other revenue ventures. These tapa products have become popular souvenirs outside of Collingwood Bay.

#### **4.4B.12**

Brenda Davè (Waigo-Clan)

##### **Barkcloth**

Airara, Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, 2001

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 85 x 32 cm

Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(6009-26)



Brenda was one of the older women in her husbands' clan and village. Although Maisin say all women can make tapa, many thought she was particularly good in designing tapa. Brenda's style is a bit freer than many of the other tapa designers, although she equally adheres to the curvilinear design style that is so typical of contemporary Maisin.

#### **4.4B.13**

Brenda Davè (Waigo-Clan)

##### **Barkcloth**

Airara, Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, 2001

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 88 x 33 cm

Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(6009-27)





Brenda decorated this small piece of tapa with a typical curvilinear Maisin pattern. This type of design is called *gangi-gangi*, which means a free flowing, meandering curvilinear pattern that covers the whole of the tapa. This way of decorating tapa is easier to learn and apply than the panel design, and it was this technique that Brenda taught her non-Maisin daughter-in-law Helen (fig. 8).



© A. Hermkens

**Fig. 8: Helen colouring-in a piece of tapa. In the background sits her mother-in-law, Brenda.**

In contrast to the drawing of the patterns, the painting of the designs is frequently done together, with several women sharing one pot of paint. The red paint used to be prohibited for men and children and out of respect was referred to as 'red blood'. Airara, 2001.

#### **4.4B.14**

Brenda Davè (Waigo-Clan)

#### **Female loincloth *embobi***

Airara, Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, 2001

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 97 x 70 cm

Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(6009-30)



This tapa is designed with a so-called 'panel' design. The tapa is folded in four parts, and each part is decorated with the same pattern. This technique is predominantly used for applying clan designs (figs. 9-11).



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**Figure 9: Maisin dancers wearing their clan designs at a church festival. Collingwood Bay 2001.**



© A. Hermkens

**Fig. 10: Barbara colouring-in an *embobi* with her husband's clan design.**

An older woman in the village showed her how to make the design, as nobody within her husbands' clan knew how to draw it. Airara, 2001.



© A. Hermkens

**Fig. 11: Georgina being dressed up by her relatives in her father's clan design on her wedding day.**

As soon as she enters her husband's house, she will remove all her father's regalia and, on future occasions, will wear her husband's clan tapa.

#### **4.4B.15**

Brenda Davè (Waigo clan)

##### **Barkcloth**

Airara, Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, 2001

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 95 x 52 cm

Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(6009-34)



This tapa shows a combination of patterns and motifs Brenda often used in her work. The spiral pattern is combined with a more conventional curvilinear pattern. Brenda's less strict approach of conventional Maisin designing is apparent in the way she divided the tapa into two panels. However, instead of creating two similar patterns, she created a design with two different patterns.

#### **4.4B.16**

Louisa Jokè (Waigo clan)

##### **Male loincloth *koefi***

Airara, Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, 2001

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 248 x 37 cm

Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(6009-37)



This tapa illustrates the continuity of designs, as it is almost identical to a barkcloth collected along the Lower Musa River in 1894 (M 5017, National Museum and Art Gallery, Papua New Guinea). The current Maisin clans living along the coast migrated from the Lower Musa River to Collingwood Bay some six generations ago.



© A. Hermkens

**Figure 12: Louisa sitting on her veranda making black paint called *mi* with which to draw tapa designs.**

She is scraping off pieces from a lump of black clay she obtained from a riverbed far inland near the foot of the mountains. Her second youngest son is watching her. Airara, 2001.

#### **4.4B.17**

Cephas Davè and his wife Sylvia (Waigo clan)

#### **Bag**

Airara, Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, 2001

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 26 x 22 x 2 cm

Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(6009-58)



While Louisa's tapa exemplifies how present tapa designs are grounded in the past, the handbag made by this couple shows that tapa is also made into something entirely new. New tapa products like this bag should attract more buyers. Selling tapa is one of the few ways for Maisin to generate cash income.

#### 4.4B.18 - 19

Julie Bendo (Sia clan)

#### Hats

Airara, Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, 2001

Barkcloth, natural colours, ø 38 cm; ø 40 cm

Leiden: National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde)  
(6009-59, 6009-60)



Hats are a further example of how Maisin experiment with new ways of making and marketing tapa. Due to their geographical isolation, Maisin living in Collingwood Bay find it hard to access, develop and maintain markets for their tapa. Apart from relatives living in towns, the Anglican Church is often one of the main buyers of tapa in the area.





© A. Hermkens

**Fig. 13: Tapa dress designed by Elsie Bilah Wei from Milne Bay, Papua New Guinea.**

Young Papua New Guineans, proud of their country's cultural traditions and styles, turn Maisin tapa into fashionable dresses and high-heeled women's shoes.

## 4.5 Erromango, Vanuatu

Decorated barkcloth (*nemas*) from Erromango Island was once an essential public marker of social status and clan associations. Made by women, the designs were associated with the living environment, spirituality, land rights and ceremonial life, although the most sacred designs were controlled only by men. Since the arrival of James Cook in 1774, the island suffered major depopulation and cultural fragmentation.

In 2002 the Australian Museum in Sydney, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and people of southern Erromango began an ongoing project to reactivate barkcloth production and reinforce its cultural reintegration into social life.

*Following the wishes of south Erromangan cultural representatives regarding their protocols, traditional modalities of respect, knowledge, and ownership over their cultural heritage the RJM does not publish pictures of the displayed objects.*

### 4.5.1

#### ***Uyomok nomurep (A mosquito's life cycle)***

Erromango, Vanuatu, late 19th cent.

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 130 x 63 cm

Acquired by Sutherland Sinclair, 1894

Sydney: Australian Museum (E004848)

The barkcloth designs represent six major stages of the malarial mosquito life cycle. White traders in the mid 1800's purposefully introduced a particular type of mosquito (*uyomok*) which bore a strong form of malaria previously unknown on Erromango. These activities were strategically targeted to reduce the population and take control of the island's sandalwood resources. Wearing a barkcloth with this design was believed to protect the wearer from malaria mosquitos.



**Fig. 1: Women of high status, late 19th c.**

Courtesy of Australian Museum (AMS 164/vv2906)

Acquired by A.R. McCulloch c. 1926

This woman is thought to be Tainar, a woman of high status (*nahim nalam*) from the Nompunoruwo region in southeast Erromango. She is wearing a decorated barkcloth whose central design represents mosquito larvae about to turn into mosquitos. Her adornments signify her as *nahim nalam*.

#### 4.5.2

##### **Nat'mah Harong**

Erromango, Vanuatu, mid-20th cent.

Barkcloth, colour pigments, 170 x 100 cm

Acquired by Captain Francis Bayldon, 1949

Sydney: Australian Museum (E052695-1)

Nat'mah Harong, The Great Spirit, illustrated on this barkcloth was the most important guardian spirit for many Erromango clans. The rayed sun above his head represents his governing system, combining the decision-making of male chiefs with the peace-making role of women. The design between his legs and to the right of his face is the male symbol for war.

#### 4.5.3

##### **Bav'ki**

Erromango, Vanuatu, late 19th cent.

Barkcloth, colour pigments; 187 x 78 cm

Acquired by Mrs J. Jeffreys, 1887

Sydney: Australian Museum (E013284)

Bav'ki is the female consort and helper of the Great Spirit Nat'mah Harong. She is on the same spiritual level as her consort, but as a female figure, she is secondary to him. The small speckled lines represent the decision-making of men and the reddish-brown lines represent the role of women in this process. Other designs indicate harvest, pigs and agricultural ceremonial activities in which women play an important role.

#### 4.5.4

##### **Nior (distribution of chiefly decisions)**

Erromango, Vanuatu, late 19th cent.

Barkcloth, pigments, 156 x 67 cm

Acquired by Rev. Samuel Ella, 1898

Sydney: Australian Museum (E008144)

This barkcloth has a multiplicity of *nior* designs associated with high-status women, menstrual cycles, public meetings, war and the importance of passing on chiefly messages following the right protocols. It is likely that this barkcloth was produced at a time of high social tensions. The barkcloth was probably worn in public as a warning notice.

#### 4.5.5

##### **Barkcloth**

Erromango, Vanuatu, early 20th cent.

Barkcloth, pigments, 196 x 78 cm

Acquired by Captain Thomas Farrell, 1910

Sydney: Australian Museum (E018888)

A whale motif is depicted in the top left and a shark motif is illustrated in middle left and upper middle right. A line of yams (at the bottom) indicate

ritual preparation. Banded with the symbol for war (lower middle), the five-‘fingered’ circular design above this band indicates that only men are involved in the ceremonial event announced on the barkcloth.

#### 4.5.6

##### **Nema’h Nempong Telal (Nempong Telal flower)**

Ipota community, southern Erromango, Vanuatu, 2008

Barkcloth, pigments, 137 x 115 cm

Acquired by Yvonne Carrillo-Huffman, 2008

Sydney: Australian Museum (E093610)

This is an example of one of the newly-made barkcloths collected in 2008. The main design represents the flower and seeds of the ancient and wise Nempong Telal tree. In southern Erromango, this unique tree is important because people believe it can see everything and it communicates through the way it moves its branches and thus gives important messages to those who ask for its guidance. The design on the left represents the male chiefly system; the motif at the bottom represents high-status women and peace.

#### 4.5.7

Brian Nouvoi

##### **Tangani (female design)**

Erromango, Vanuatu, 2008

Barkcloth, pigments, 166 x 62 cm

Acquired by Yvonne Carrillo-Huffman, 2008

Sydney: Australian Museum (E093595)

The patterns of this barkcloth are multidimensional. On one level, they are linked to strict land/sea boundary separations. On another, border patterns around the edges indicate the female wearer of this barkcloth has a husband or a male ancestor of warrior status. Furthermore the central designs are also linked to Bav’ki’s, the female consort of the Great Spirit Nat’mah Harong. The hand stencil motifs are from coastal caves.

#### 4.5.8 - 9

Chief Jerry Taki Uminduru

##### **Chiefly spokesman chest barkcloth straps**

Unpang, Erromango, Vanuatu, 2008

Barkcloth, pigments; 148 x 11; 141 x 14 cm

Acquired by Yvonne Carrillo-Huffman, 2008

Sydney: Australian Museum (E093606, E093607)

*Left:* Worn across the chest or hanging over one shoulder by a chief or his spokesman when giving an important speech to his people on his own village sacred area.

*Right:* These designs illustrate a ‘travelling’ version of the previous strap. Worn by the same people or an appointed representative while giving public speeches away from their own community and sacred ground.

#### 4.5.10

Janet Taki

##### **Winged lizard and Guardian spirit**

Umponyelongi Village, Erromango, Vanuatu, 2008

Barkcloth, pigments, 109 x 33 cm

Acquired by Yvonne Carrillo-Huffman, 2008

Sydney: Australian Museum (E093605)

*Upper half:* Winged lizard holding a butterfly. The fish in its chest indicates that its spiritual power lies under the sea, although the lizard spirit can also fly.

*Lower half:* A powerful Spirit Guardian figure holds a stone axe and has fish as feet. Its headdress combines designs to promote the harmonious relationships of male and female domains.

#### 4.5.11

Nong'ru Nobong

***Nevri nemas utovi* (barkcloth basket with *Nevri* design)**

Erromango, Vanuatu, 2008

Barkcloth, pigments, 92 cm (incl. handle), ø 15 cm

Acquired by Yvonne Carrillo-Huffman, 2008

Sydney: Australian Museum (E093611)

This innovative basket (*utovi*) is made of finely-split barkcloth stripes. The weaving pattern is called *Nevri* and it is linked to the chiefly governing system. The diamond shapes inside the pattern represent a star, the abode of winged women.



In 2003 Sophie Nemban, female fieldworker of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, researched at the Australian Museum in Sydney the barkcloth of her home island Erromango. After her return she shared the photographs and trained some women from southern Erromano in tapa making.



© James King Australian Museum, 2008



© Yvonne Carrillo-Huffman, 2003



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**Fig. 7:** At the Australian Museum, 2003.

**Fig. 8:** Sophie Nemban at Umponyelongi Village. Her clothes signify her as a female of high status (*nahim nalam*). She wears a decorated barkcloth strap (*semblawon*) draped across her chest from the left shoulder and wears a decorated pandanus outer skirt (*nomblat tun'a'mit*).

**Figs. 9 and 10:** Sophie Nemban demonstrates the production of tapa.

**Figs. 11 and 12:** She shares the information gained about the historic tapa from the collection of the Australian Museum.

**Children discover the meaning of Tapa, Umponyelongi Village, southern Erromango**



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**Fig. 13:** Chief Jerry Taki Uminduru is speaking to a group of young children about the importance of barkcloth revival.

**Fig. 14:** Rachel Taheman of Pontutu Village, is painting a barkcloth strap using a pinfeather and charcoal ink. The pattern *Unkil* illustrates a sea bird linked to the ancestry of specific clans in southeast Erromango. In the background Et'na Yavora'h paints a whale (*tavora*).

#### 4.6 Papuan Gulf, Papua New Guinea

Until the early 1950s, village communities along the central Gulf of Papua carried out regional male-dominated ritual cycles. They were intended to secure fertility, revive social relationships, and establish contact to the ancestors. For these occasions, initiated men used barkcloth to create elaborate masks in secret that represented ancestors or spirits.

Inspired by festivals supported by Papua New Guinea's Cultural Commission, several village communities held a mask festival for the first time in many years in 2005. Since then, the Toare Karama Festival has become a regular regional event.



**Fig. 1: Toare Karama Festival 2006**

Photo: R. Welsch 2006

##### 4.6.1

##### *Kovave* mask

Elema, Papuan Gulf, Papua New Guinea, before 1922

Barkcloth, bamboo, rattan, plant fibres, colour pigments, 117 x 34 x 69 cm

Köln: RJM (35755)



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During the first phase of their initiation, young men wore *kovave* masks outfitted with emblems expressing their clan membership. The mask depicted here is missing a component on top that probably showed the emblem. Dense hangings of plant fibers were affixed to the lower ring, covering the mask wearer down to the knees (figs. 2 and 3).



**Fig. 2: Seven *kovave* masks in front of a backdrop; Motu motu, Papua New Guinea. 1881-1889**

Motu Motu, Papua-Neuguinea, 1881-1889

Photo: Reverend William George Lawes

Courtesy of The British Museum (Oc, B103.15)



**Fig. 3: Paul B. de Rautenfeld with *kovave* dancers at Biai village, Orokolo Bay, western Elema, July 1925**

Wirz Collection, Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1992.417.125)

Working for 30 years as Commissioner of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service Swiss Dr. Paul Baron de Rautenfeld (1865 - 1957) intensively travelled through Melanesia and Indonesia. He spent a brief stay in the Gulf of Papua, returning in 1925 for several months. In 1942, he published his findings in the book *Wanderings in Primitive New Guinea*.

#### 4.6.2

##### *imunu aiaoro* mask

Purari, Papuan Gulf, Papua New Guinea, c. 1900

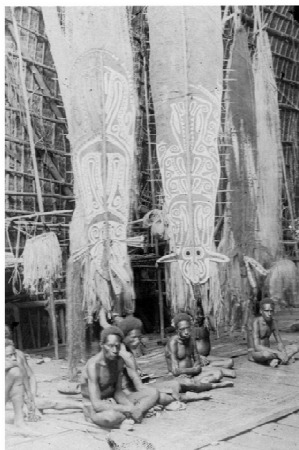
Barkcloth, rattan, plant fibres, colour pigments, 36 x 20 x 8 cm

Köln: RJM (14867)



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Ancestral spirits (*imunu*) were attributed the ability to take on various shapes. The abstract curved patterns represented clan-based mythological themes that young people were familiarized with during initiation. Masks of this kind were probably the 'mother' of larger 'son' masks, up to seven meters in height (fig. 4).



**Fig. 4: Ravi interior with unfinished *aiaimunu* masks, probably Kaimari area, Purari Delta, November 1930.**

Wirz Collection, courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1992.417.174)



#### 4.6.3

##### Mask

Elema, Papuan Gulf, Papua New Guinea, before 1922

Barkcloth, bamboo, rattan, plant fibres, colour pigments, 78 x 128 cm,  
ø 40 cm

Köln: RJM (35758)



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#### 4.6.4

##### *hokore or eharo mask*

Elema, Papuan Gulf, Papua New Guinea, before 1922

Barkcloth, rattan, plant fibres, colour pigments, human hair, 90 x 26 x  
30 cm

Köln: RJM (35761)



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This mask type represents a now unknown clan totem. Totems could be animals, like birds, insects, reptiles, fish, shellfish, jellyfish, or dogs, but also plants, like trees or mushrooms. The Elema, like many other communities, considered them mythological ancestors and maintained very close relationships to them. Often a clan claimed special abilities of the totem as their own, considering themselves particularly powerful, fast, or enduring. The respective animals and plants were often banned from being hunted,

harvested, or eaten. The Elema used these masks to express their clan membership and the cohesiveness of their individual clan.

#### 4.6.5

##### *Kovave* mask

Elema, Papuan Gulf, Papua New Guinea, before 1922

Barkcloth, bamboo, rattan, natural fibres, colour pigments, 99 x 41 x 26 cm

Köln: RJM (35760)



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#### 4.6.6

##### *Eharo* mask

Elema, Papuan Gulf, Papua New Guinea, before 1922

Barkcloth, rattan, colour pigments, 53 x 34 x 22 cm

Köln: RJM (48481)



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*Eharo* masks probably all represent the same spiritual being, of equal importance to all clans. The design of the eyes or the presence of totemic symbols refer clearly to a certain clan. Each clan maintained a clear repertoire of forms and motifs, in so doing emphasizing their independence and particularity.

In contrast to other masks, that were purportedly made in secret, the women and non-initiated were aware that the men made the *eharo* masks. Like *kovave* masks, the lower ring of these masks was used to affix dense hangings of plant fibers (figs. 1 and 2).