

# Art of the Pacific



Polynesian cultures value genealogical depth, tracing one's lineage back to the gods. Oral traditions recorded the importance of genealogical distinction, or recollections of the accomplishments of the ancestors. Cultures held firm to the belief in mana, a supernatural power associated with high-rank, divinity, maintenance of social order and social reproduction, as well as an abundance of water and fertility of the land. *Mana* was held to be so powerful that rules or taboos were necessary to regulate it in ritual and society. For example, an uninitiated person of low rank would never enter in a sacred enclosure without risking death. *Mana* was believed to be concentrated in certain parts of the body and could accumulate in objects, such as hair, bones, rocks, whale's teeth, and textiles.

## 1. Nan Madol, 13th-17th century C.E., Pohnpei, The Federated States of Micronesia

The basalt cliffs of the island of Pohnpei provided the building material for one of the largest and most remarkable stone architectural complexes in Oceania. Nan Madol, on its southeast coast, consists of 92 artificial islands set within a network of canals covering about 170 acres. Seawalls and breakwaters 15 feet high and 35 feet thick protect the area from the ocean. When it was populated, openings in the breakwaters gave canoes access to the ocean and allowed seawater to flow in and out with the tides, flushing clean the canals. While other similar complexes have been identified in Micronesia, Nan Madol is the largest and most impressive, reflecting the importance of the kings who ruled from the site.

The artificial islands and the buildings atop them were constructed between the early thirteenth century and the dynasty's political decline in the seventeenth. The site had already been abandoned by the time Europeans discovered it in the nineteenth century. Nan Madol was an administrative and ceremonial center for powerful kings, who commanded a labor force to construct this monumental city of as many as 1,000 people. Both the buildings and the underlying islands are built of massive masonry set in alternating layers of log-shaped stones and boulders

of prismatic basalt. The largest of the artificial islets is more than 100 yards long, and one basalt cornerstone alone is estimated to weigh about 50 tons. The stone logs were split from the cliffs by alternately heating the stone and dousing it with water. Most of the islands are oriented northeast-southwest, receiving the benefit of the cooling prevailing winds.

The walls of the Royal Mortuary Compound, which once dominated the northeast side of Nan Madol, rise in subtle upward and outward curves to a height of 25 feet. To achieve the sweeping, rising lines, the builders increased the number of stones in the header courses (those with the ends of the stones laid facing out along the wall) relative to the stretcher courses (those with the lengths of the stones laid parallel to the wall) as they came to the corners and entryways. The plan of the structure consists of progressively higher rectangles within rectangles – the outer walls leading by steps up to interior walls



that lead up to a central courtyard with a small, cubical tomb. A central canal divides the administrative side of the complex, with palaces and tombs, from the ritual side, with priests' quarters and tombs.

Around this time, a ruler called the saudeleur unified Pohnpei and Nan Madol is associated with his ascendancy. This political system came to an end in the early 1600s, when the island was divided into three autonomous political units. One of these units, founded in legend by the son of the thunder god, was centered at Nan Madol, which therefore continued to be actively used, though not expanded, at least until the early eighteenth century. By the 1820s, Nan Madol was no longer a residential center but was still used occasionally for religious observances.

Nan Madol's location offshore from the main island of Pohnpei may have both reflected and reinforced the unique character of the people who live there and their ritual activities. The complex consists of ninety-two artificial islets built in a shallow lagoon and surrounded by retaining walls to protect them from the ocean waves. Some of the islets have sides more than a hundred yards long and



many have orthogonal plans. They are covered with loose coral pavement. The buildings included residences, meeting houses, and tombs, divided roughly into two sectors by a central canal. One part is administrative, containing the rulers' residences and large public spaces, the other is ritual, encompassing the priests' residences and the mortuary centers. Many of the original structures were pole and thatch constructions, although ceremonial structures were built of stone. Enclosures provided privacy for the dwellings of high-ranking people or established sacred zones for the tombs or religious activities. The walls throughout the complex are built of alternate courses of basalt boulders and naturally formed prismatic basalts.

The royal mortuary compound on the islet of Nandauwas is perhaps the most magnificent part of the structure. The main entry landing on the central canal has a monumental quality, its steps leading to interior courtyards and tombs. It is situated near the edge of the lagoon, and faces east. The wall of the outer courtyard incorporates ledges that may have been used to display corpses before burial. The tomb contained adzes, beads, needles, necklaces, pearl shell fishhooks, and other valuable objects, including fragments of iron.

**2. Moai (ancestor figure), c. 11-1600 C.E., 156 cm high, basalt, Easter Island (Rapa Nui)**

Rapa Nui, the indigenous name of Easter Island, bears witness to a unique cultural phenomenon. A society of Polynesian origin that settled there c. A.D. 300 established a powerful, imaginative and original tradition of monumental sculpture and architecture, free from any external influence.



From the 10th to the 16th century this society built shrines and erected enormous stone figures known as moai, which created an unrivalled cultural landscape that continues to fascinate people throughout the world.

The island was colonized toward the end of the first millennium of the Christian era by a small group of settlers from Eastern Polynesia, whose culture manifested itself between the eleventh and seventeenth centuries in great works such as the ahu –ceremonial platforms- and carved moai - colossal statues- representing ancestors. Rapa Nui National Park most prominent attributes are the archaeological sites. It is estimated that there are about 900 statues, more than 300 ceremonial platforms and thousands of structures related to agriculture, funeral rites, housing and production, and other types of activities.

Prominent among the archaeological pieces are the moai that range in height from 2 m to 20 m and are for the most part carved from the yellow–brown lava tuff, using simple picks (toki) made from hard basalt and then lowered down the slopes into previously dug holes. Moai would have stood with giant stone companions, their backs to the sea, keeping



watch over the island. Their eyes sockets were originally inlaid with red stone and coral and the sculpture was painted with red and white designs. There are many kinds of them and of different sizes: those in the process of being carved, those in the process of being moved to their final destinations – the ahu-, those being torn down and erected.

The quarries (Rano Raraku and others) are invaluable evidence of the process of their carving. The ahu vary considerably in size and form; the most colossal is the Ahu Tongariki, with its 15 moai. There are certain constant features, notably a raised rectangular platform of large worked stones filled with rubble, a ramp often paved with rounded beach pebbles, and leveled area in front of the platform.

**3. 'Ahu 'ula (feather cape), probably before 1850 C.E., olona fibre, feather, 68.5 x 45 cm, Hawaii**

One of the most important elite symbols in pre-contact Hawai'i was the 'ahu 'ula, or feather cloak, made exclusively by men. These cloaks consist of a netting foundation finger woven of olonaa plant fiber, with feathers fastened on the outside. To make

these cloaks, thousands of red, yellow, black, or green feathers were plucked from wild birds that were trapped and then usually released. Although many cloaks were decorated with flat fields of a solid color, many others bore designs in bold checkerboard, bands, rhomboids, or most commonly, crescents. Often, the designs were rendered in yellow on a red field. The cloak was worn over the shoulders, and drawstrings allow it to be tied at the neck. Nobles wore the capes on ceremonial occasions or in battle.

The 'ahu 'ula communicated noble status in several ways. Because red was the royal color of Hawai'i, in the same sense that purple was the color of Byzantine emperors, the use of the term "red" in naming these cloaks implied a close association with the noble class. In addition, the red and especially the scarce yellow feathers used to make the cloaks were the most valuable commodity in ancient Hawai'i, analogous to the gold and precious stones accumulated by European royalty. In fact, in Hawaiian, a prosperous man was called he manu hulu, "a feathered bird." The feathers used to make the 'ahu 'ula were included in annual tribute payments collected by the high chief. As a way of rewarding loyalty, the chief could then bestow the feathers as gifts to subordinate lords. When a nobleman wore an 'ahu 'ula, then, it indicated his close political ties to the sacred person of the chief. A larger cloak made of more valuable feathers indicated a relatively high rank. In addition, 'ahu 'ula could be captured as trophies in war.

Hawaiian feather capes and cloaks were constructed by tying bundles of small feathers, usually 6-10 per bundle, to a foundation of netting. This netting was made from an endemic plant that produced one of the strongest fibers in the world, olonā (*Touchardia latifolia*). This olonā foundation could range from a very fine netting to a more coarsely woven foundation that would hold the feathers. Tens of thousands of feather bundles were connected, creating a visually striking garment.

These capes and cloaks were important signifiers of rank, and as noble regalia, they were to be worn only by the ali'i nui. Red, as a traditional color of royalty in Polynesia, was a dominant color. Yellow, made valuable by its scarcity, was also oft used. A great majority of feathers used in making these articles came from endemic birds, like the Hawaiian Honeycreepers. The 'i'iwi (*Vestiaria coccinea*) and the



‘apapane (*Himatione sanguinea*) supplied the vast amount of red feathers while the more rare ‘ō‘ō (*Moho nobilis*) and mamō (*Drepanis pacifica*) provided the cherished yellow. The ‘ahu‘ula of Kamehameha consists of approximately 450,000 of these yellow feathers of the mamō bird, found only on Hawai‘i Island. Feathers for these amazing works were procured by bird catchers, who often lived deep in the wao kele (upland forest) habitat of the birds that they sought.

One technique called kahekahe, involved pruning branches of the ‘ōhi‘a tree of most of its flowers and gumming the branch near the remaining flowers with the sticky sap of the ‘ulu (breadfruit). When the bird, attracted by the nectar of the ‘ōhi‘a blossom, alighted on the branch it became stuck and easy to catch. Care was often taken in removing the feathers from the bird, and salve applied to help the bird heal. Rare birds especially were seen as a sacred resource. David Malo wrote in the Hawaiian-language newspaper *Ka Hae Hawaii* that Kamehameha himself had forbidden bird-catchers from taking the life of the birds so as to allow his children in the future to experience the beauty of these wonderful birds.

These feathers were not just for decoration but also protected a chief with their spiritual power. When they were attached to the netted backing, the feathers were ‘tied’ with prayers that were considered as spiritually powerful as the olonā fiber was strong. These netted prayers were kept until they were needed by a divine being (akua).

The crescent (hoaka) in the central design of this cape was a very important shape to Hawaiians. The meaning of which varies, including: to cast a shadow, to drive away, to ward off or to frighten; spirit, apparition or ghost; or brightness, shining, glittering or splendid. The shape matches the meaning, giving strength and harmony to the design, particularly when worn on the shoulders and back.

The process of making feathered pieces was related to making an even more sacred object that embodied the divine, an ‘aha cord. The Hawaiian concept of ‘aha refers not only to cordage made of plant fibers (especially coconut fiber), human hair, or animal intestines, but also to a prayer or service whose efficacy depended on recitation under kapu (tapu) without interruption. In making an ‘aha cord, one or more priests chanted a prayer while braiding the cord. All of the chief’s priests concentrated their prayers on it as it was being made under kapu. The priests forbade all those outside to enter, nor could those on the inside go out while the ‘aha was being put in place, for the penalty was death. The braiding captured the prayer and objectified it and became a tool of the kahuna. It would be especially useful for chiefs to carry or wear such a prayer during sacred or dangerous situations.

Each cape was unique and made for a specific individual, a leader who, at least in the pre-Christian times, was a man. Since 1820, when many Hawaiians converted to Christianity, the capes have lost much of their sacred function; however, they still command respect and inspire awe. When they are brought out and worn for important occasions, their presence elevates an event to a major cultural affair.

#### 4. *Staff-god*, late 18th-early 19th century, wood, paper mulberry bark, feather, 396 cm, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

The Cook Islands are situated in the middle of the South Pacific. The wood carvers of the island of Rarotonga, one of the Cook Islands, have a distinctive style. The Cook Islands were settled around the period 800-1000 C.E.. Captain Cook made the first official European sighting of the islands in 1773, but spent little time in the area during his voyages. In 1821 the London Missionary Society set up a mission station on the island of Aitutaki, followed by one on Rarotonga in 1827. The Cook Islands became a British Protectorate in 1888, and were annexed in 1901. Since then they have been administered by New Zealand.

The most sacred Representations of the deities worshipped by Cook Islanders before their conversion to Christianity included wooden images in human form, slab carvings and staffs such as this, known as "god sticks." They varied in size from about 73 cm to nearly four meters, like this rare example. It is made of ironwood wrapped with lengths of barkcloth. The upper part of the staff consists of a carved head



above smaller carved figures. The lower end is a carved phallus. Some missionaries removed and destroyed phalluses from carvings, considering them obscene. Reverend John Williams observed of this image that the barkcloth contained red feathers and pieces of pearl shell, known as the manava or spirit of the god. He also recorded seeing the islanders carrying the image upright on a litter.

The only surviving wrapped example of a large staff god, this impressive image is composed of a central wood shaft wrapped in an enormous roll of decorated barkcloth. There are no other surviving large staff-gods from the Cook Islands that retain their barkcloth wrapping as this one does. This was probably one of the most sacred of Rarotonga's objects. This impressive image is composed of a central wood shaft wrapped in an enormous roll of decorated



barkcloth. The shaft is in the form of an elongated body, with a head and small figures at one end. The other end, composed of small figures and a naturalistic penis, is missing. A feathered pendant is bound in one ear.

Polynesians protected, managed and contained objects and people that held the power of the gods by wrapping and binding them. In the Society Islands in particular images of gods were made from a piece of wood wrapped in barkcloth, feathers and coconut fiber. The wrapping was a crucial part of the image and when it was removed the god would withdraw from it. Ritual re-wrapping reinvested the image with the god's presence. This presence, however, was potentially very dangerous and while wrapping protected the sacred object it also prevented that object's power from getting out.

This staff god is a potent combination of male and female elements. The wooden core, made by male carvers, has a large head at one end and originally terminated in a phallus. Smaller figures in profile appear to be prominently male. Jean Tekura Mason, curator of the Cook Islands Library and Museum Society suggests that the other figures facing outwards could depict women in childbirth. The barkcloth, made by women, not only protects the ancestral power ('mana) of the deity, but contains it within the different layers. Tattooing performed a similar role in wrapping the body. Tattoos reinforced it, added an extra protective layer and prevented power from being inappropriately transmitted in or out of a person.



As was the case with many early encounters between missionaries and Pacific Islanders, the tenacious actions and activities of the outside visitors destroyed art and disrupted traditional culture. At the same time, the narratives, drawings, and documents compiled by the visitors are our earliest records of lost traditions.

The Staff Gods that were not burned were sent to the London Missionary Society in England where a museum was established. The museum's contents were later lent to the British Museum which eventually acquired it in 1912. Recent scholarship has provided us with the detailed history and extent of the London Missionary Society's collections, activities, and in turn profound impact on the traditional arts and cultures of Central Polynesia.



## **5. Female Figure, Nukuoro, Caroline Islands, Micronesia, 18th-19th century, wood, 40.2 cm high**

Wooden images, *dinonga eidu*, were important in the pre-Christian religion of Nukuoro Atoll, a Polynesian outlier in the Eastern Caroline Islands. Probably fewer than 20 of these are still in existence in museums.

The goddess Ko Kawe, from Nukuoro Island, is represented by a monumental wood figure that projects both serenity and strength. Ko Kawe is the protective goddess of the Sekawe. Though located in Micronesia, Nukuoro is inhabited by peoples of Polynesian origin. The figure of Ko Kawe may represent a link to the Polynesian tradition of monumental sculpture – the Easter Island stone figures and the Hawaiian temple figures are perhaps the most famous examples – that is otherwise unknown in Micronesia. This massive figure of Ko Kawe, created on a coral atoll with few large trees, testifies to the persistence and adaptability of important artistic practices even under unfavorable conditions. She is considered the wife of the god Arika tu te Natoakin (the god of the underworld), whose ‘spirit’ resided in a black volcanic stone, which, like this statue, stood in the *amalau*.



The *amalau* was a long four-cornered building with three open sides. The middle of the room was empty though completely laid with mats. Those god figures that were kept in the *amalau* stood in front of the only wall along one of the short sides of the temple. At certain times of the year, a priest would present offerings of fruits and other foods to the gods so they might look favorably on the endeavors of their people.

The figures were regarded as representations of individual deities, and at certain times of the year were adorned with fresh garments and presented with offerings in the form of fresh coconuts and other fruits. Not all deities, however, were represented by a wooden image; some were believed to be represented by natural objects such as a piece of stone or coral, another by a wooden spear, and others again by certain animals.

**6. Mask (Buk), Torres Strait, Mabuiag Island, mid to late 19th century, turtle shell, wood, cassowary feathers, fiber, resin, shell, paint, 21 1/2 inches high**

The well-known turtle-shell and wood masks and headdresses of the Torres Strait Islanders were mainly used in ceremonies celebrating these culture heroes and their creative acts. The main myth in the central islands was that of the Four Brothers, named Sigai, Kulka, Malu, and Sau. They came from the west and carried out various creative acts for the islanders. But during a quarrel Malu speared Sau and the brothers divided up. Malu went to Mer (Murray Island), Sau to Massid (York Island), Kulka to Aurid, and Sigai to Yam (Turtle-backed Island)” (233). “The cult of Malu (who had a secret name, Bomai) was studied in some detail by Europeans on the island of Mer, so that we know a great deal more about it than the other hero cults. It was carried out in a series of complex secret rituals, culminating in the showing of large turtle-shell masks in a dance accompanied by the sacred drum, Wasikor (which still exists).

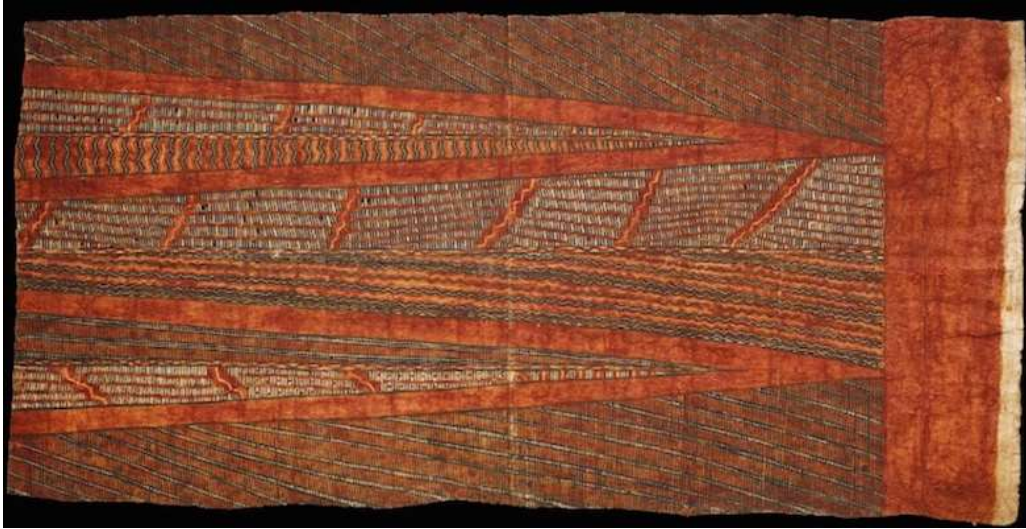
These basic myths have been outlined because the well-known turtle-shell masks and headdresses from Torres Strait were mostly used in secret ceremonies celebrating the creative acts of culture heroes, and in particular initiation and funeral rites. The masks are made from turtle-shell plates, carefully shaped and curved, then lashed together and usually decorated with incised patterns infilled with white ocher. Often they incorporate both animals and human figures. Sometimes they are adorned with cassowary feathers and nut rattles. Large masks in wood were made in some of the islands. They are powerful, semi-naturalistic elongated images, dressed with human hair. They paraded at night during celebrations of the harvest of certain fruit. Although these masks may seem grotesque to some people, it must be remembered that they were used in highly secret ceremonies, usually performed at night by the light of camp fires. The dances were accompanied by the steady beat of the drums and the chanting of events from the myths. They were designed to impress and even terrify the participants, and they doubtless performed this function very efficiently.



Turtle-shell masks in the western Torres Strait reportedly were also used during funerary ceremonies and increase rites (rituals designed to ensure bountiful harvests and an abundance of fish and game). The ceremonies often involved performances in which senior men, wearing the masks together with rustling costumes of grass, reenacted events from the lives of culture-heroes, drawn from local oral tradition. Worn over the head like a helmet, this work depicts a human face, possibly portraying one such culture-hero. It is surmounted by a frigate bird, perhaps representing his personal totemic species.

## 7. Hiapo (tapa), Niue, c. 1850–1900, Tapa or bark cloth, freehand painting

Gender roles were clearly defined in traditional Polynesian societies. Gender played a major role, dictating women's access to training, tools, and materials in the arts. For example, men's arts were often made of hard materials, such as wood, stone, or bone and men's arts were traditionally associated with the sacred realm of rites and ritual.



Hawaiian barkcloth, 1770s

Women's arts historically utilized soft materials, particularly fibers used to make mats and bark cloth. Women's arts included ephemeral materials such as flowers and leaves. Cloth made of bark is generically known as *tapa* across Polynesia, although terminology, decorations, dyes, and designs vary throughout the islands.

Generally, to make bark cloth, a woman would harvest the inner bark of the paper mulberry (a flowering tree). The inner bark is then pounded flat, with a wooden beater or *ike*, on an anvil, usually made of wood. In Eastern Polynesia (Hawai'i), bark cloth was created with a felting technique and designs were pounded into the cloth with a carved beater. In Samoa, designs were sometimes stained or rubbed on with wooden or fiber design tablets. In Hawai'i patterns could be applied with stamps made out of bamboo, whereas stencils of banana leaves or other suitable materials were used in Fiji. Bark cloth can also be undecorated, hand decorated, or smoked as is seen in Fiji. Design illustrations involved geometric motifs in an overall ordered and abstract patterns.

The most important traditional uses for *tapa* were for clothing, bedding and wall hangings. Textiles were often specially prepared and decorated for people of rank. *Tapa* was ceremonially displayed on special occasions, such as birthdays and weddings. In sacred contexts, *tapa* was used to wrap images of deities. Even today, at times of death, bark cloth may be integral part of funeral and burial rites.



Masi (tapa cloth), Fiji, date unknown

In Polynesia, textiles are considered women's wealth. In social settings, bark cloth and mats participate in reciprocity patterns of cultural exchange. Women may present textiles as offerings in exchange for work, food, or to mark special occasions. For example, in contemporary contexts in Tonga, huge lengths of bark cloth are publically displayed and ceremoniously exchanged to mark special occasions. Today, western fabric has also been assimilated into exchange practices. In rare instances, textiles may even accumulate their own histories of ownership and exchange.

On the island of Niue, hiapo is the term for bark cloth. When Samoan missionaries came to Niue in 1830, it is recorded that they brought hiapo with them, along with the Tahitian tiputa, which is a sort of poncho. It is reasonable to believe that this cultural sharing could be a historical bridge between Samoan and the Society Islands, arising not only from Missionary influence, but also as a result of a long history of inter-island voyaging typical of canoe expeditions in the region.

This hiapo has been decorated with freehand drawn motifs quite distinctive from other styles. In the 1880s, hiapo became notable for a new style of fine freehand decoration. Comprising intricate line work and detailed motifs based on various species of plants, a distinctly Niuean iconography developed. The unique style of hiapo decorations that emerged incorporated fine lines and new motifs. Hiapo from this period are illustrated with complicated and detailed geometric designs. The patterns were composed of spirals, concentric circles, squares, triangles, and diminishing motifs (the design motifs decrease in size from the border to the center of the textile). Niueans created naturalistic motifs and were the first Polynesians to introduce depictions of human figures into their bark cloth. Some hiapo examples include writing, usually names, along the edges of the overall design. Some scholars believe that many hiapo from this period were made by a single small community on Niue.



Hiapo (tapa), Niue, c. 1850–1900, Tapa or bark cloth, freehand painting

Although the bark cloth tradition is said to have come originally from Samoa, the quality in Niue is different from Samoan styles. The mystery about hiapo of Niue is that no one knows what it is made for, since the size seems to be small for clothing or blankets. Speculation has it that the very creative designs on Niuen hiapo were made for some sort of commercial purpose. Perhaps the artistry involved points to a creative purpose that served as a pastime activity? Since 1901, no hiapo has been produced in Niue.

### **8. Gottfried Lindauer, *Tamati Waka Nene*, 1890, oil on canvas**

Paintings like this one—and even photographs—do two important things. They record likenesses and bring ancestral presence into the world of the living. In other words, this portrait is not merely a representation of Tamati Waka Nene, it can be an embodiment of him. Portraits and other taonga tuku iho (treasures passed down from the ancestors) are treated with great care and reverence. After a person has died their portrait may be hung on the walls of family homes and in the whareniui (the central building of a community center), to be spoken to, wept over, and cherished by people with genealogical connections to them. Even when portraits like this one, kept in the collection of the Auckland Art Gallery, are absent from their families, the stories woven around them keep them alive and present. Auckland Art Gallery

acknowledges these living links through its relationships with descendants of those whose portraits it cares for. The Gallery seeks their advice when asked for permission to reproduce such portraits.

Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand. The subject of this portrait, Tamati Waka Nene, was a Rangatira or chief of the Ngāti Hao people in Hokianga, of the Ngāpuhi iwi or tribe, and an important war leader. He was probably born in the 1780s, and died in 1871. He lived through a time of rapid change in New Zealand, when the first British missionaries and settlers were arriving and changing the Māori world forever. An astute leader and businessman, Nene exemplified the types of changes that were occurring when he converted to Christianity and was baptised in 1839, choosing to be named Tamati Waka after Thomas Walker, who was an English merchant patron of the Church Missionary Society. He was revered throughout his life as a man with great mana or personal ability.



In this portrait, Nene wears a *kahu kiwi*, a fine cloak covered in kiwi feathers, and an earring of greenstone or pounamu. Both of these are prestigious *taonga* or treasures. He is holding a hand weapon known as a *tewhatewha*, which has feathers adorning its blade and a finely carved hand grip with an abalone or paua eye. All of these mark him as man of *mana* or personal efficacy and status. But perhaps the most striking feature for an international audience is his intricate facial tattoo, called *moko*.

Lindauer was a Czech artist who arrived in New Zealand in 1873 after a decade of painting professionally in Europe. He had studied at the Academy of Fine Art in Vienna from 1855 to 1861, and learned painting techniques rooted in Renaissance naturalism. When he left the Academy he began working as a portrait painter, and established his own portrait studio in 1864. Just ten years later he arrived in New Zealand and quickly became acquainted with a man called Henry Partridge who became his patron. Partridge commissioned Lindauer to paint portraits of well-known Māori, and three years later, in 1877, Lindauer held an exhibition in Wellington. The exhibition was important because it demonstrated Lindauer's abilities and he was soon being commissioned by Māori chiefs to paint their portraits. Lindauer took different approaches to his commissions depending on who was paying. He tended to paint well-known Māori in Māori clothing for European purchasers, but painted unknown Māori in everyday European clothing when commissioned by their families to do so. His paintings are realistic, convincingly

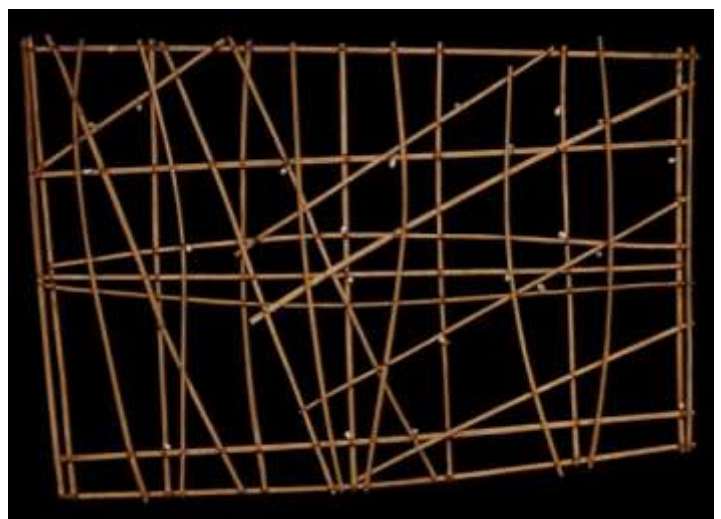
three-dimensional, and play beautifully with the contrast between light and shadow, causing his subjects to glow against their dark backgrounds.

If you've been paying attention to dates you will have noticed that Nene died in 1871 but Lindauer didn't arrive in New Zealand until 1873, and didn't paint his portrait until 1890. It is likely that Lindauer based this portrait on a photograph taken by John Crombie, who had been commissioned to produce 12 photographic portraits of Māori chiefs for *The London Illustrated News* (image above). There are several other photographs of Nene, and in 1934 Charles F Goldie—another famous portrayer of Māori—painted yet another portrait of him from a photograph. So Nene didn't sit for either of his famous painted portraits, but clearly sat for photographic portraits in the later years of his life. These were becoming more common by 1870, due to developments in photographic methods that made the whole process easier and cheaper. Many Māori had their portraits taken photographically and produced as a *carte de visite*, roughly the size of a playing card, and some had larger, postcard sized images made, called cabinet portraits. Lindauer is thought to have used a device called an epidiascope to enlarge and project small photographs such as these so he could paint them.

Lindauer didn't make many sketches. He worked straight onto stretched canvas, outlining his subjects in pencil over a white background before applying translucent paints and glazes. Through the thinly painted surface of some of his works you can still see traces of pencil lines that may be evidence of his practice of outlining projected images. But Lindauer wasn't simply copying photographs. In the 1870s, color photography had yet to be invented—Lindauer was working from black and white images and reimagining them in color. Moreover, sometimes he dressed his sitters—and those he painted from photos—in borrowed garments and adorned them with taonga that were not necessarily theirs. Thus some of his works contain artistic interventions rather than being entirely documentary.

**9. Navigation Chart. Marshall Islands, Micronesia. 19th to early 20th century C.E. Wood and fiber.**

Despite modern shipping and air travel, for the people of the Marshall Islands in Micronesia, navigation is a specialist task undertaken by a few dedicated individuals. Seafarers have long used a type of 'stick chart' to help them voyage safely and navigate accurately between islands and archipelagoes. Unlike Western navigational maps, stick charts don't indicate precise distances



between locations. They are tools that show swell patterns and their disruptions around islands they are used by navigators as memory aids, and as devices to pass on knowledge to students. Memory is an important attribute of navigators.

Navigational techniques still in use in Micronesia may provide insights into the ancient traditions of Lapita and Polynesian seafaring. In traditional navigational schools on Puluwat in the Caroline Islands, students learn how to sail outrigger canoes. As Puluwat sailors conceptualize a voyage between two islands, it is the islands that move rather than the canoe: the starting point recedes as the destination approaches. Puluwat map the skies by the constellations and the ocean by its distinguishing features: islands, reefs, swells, areas of rough water. Similarly, a Marshall Islands stick chart uses shells to indicate specific islands and patterns of sticks lashed together to illustrate currents and common wave formations in a form that is both supremely functional and aesthetically appealing.

By acute observation of the sea, the Marshallese accumulated a rich fund of accurate knowledge about the action of ocean swells, what happens to them as they approach and pass by land, and the characteristics of two or more swell patterns' interaction with each other in the presence of an island. Also studied were reflection, refraction, shadow phenomena, and other ancillary wave actions. From this information, the Marshallese developed a system of piloting and navigation, which was encoded in stick charts as science models and as piloting instructions. Knowledge that stick charts encode is indicated by the arrangement of the sticks relative to one another and by the forms given to them by bending and crossing.

Curved strips indicate the altered direction taken by ocean swells when deflected by the presence of an island; their intersections are nodes where these meet and tend to produce a confused sea, which is regarded as a most valuable indication of the voyager's whereabouts. Currents in the neighborhood of islands are sometimes shown by short straight strips, whereas long strips may indicate the direction in which certain islands are to be found.

**10. Malangan display and mask, before 1884 C.E., wood, pigment, vegetable fiber, operculum., New Ireland, Papua New Guinea**

The funeral practices of the peoples of northern New Ireland involve a series of ceremonies culminating in an elaborate memorial festival called a malagan. Helmet masks like this one, called a tatanua, are worn during dance performances in malagans. These performances reinstate order in the society after the chaos of death, enhance the prestige of the family of the bereaved, and assist the souls of the deceased as they move from the world of the living to the world of the dead.





The term tatanua is used to both refer to the mask and the dance during which it is worn. During the dance, a line of masked male dancers move in unison to the voices of a male chorus. When the ceremony is completed correctly, the community is assured that ancestral spirits have approved and that men of the community will continue to be vigorous and successful.

**Materials:** This mask is made from wood, paint, opercula (snail shells), shell, and cloth. The two sides of a tatanua mask are often decorated differently in order to enhance the drama and visual interest of the ritual performance.



**Tatanua Masks:** Tatanua masks like this one are worn during ritual performances. The masks are commissioned by individual families, but sculptors are given a great deal of creative freedom. For this reason, the visual details and motifs of tatanua masks vary greatly.

**Funeral Practices in New Ireland:** For the peoples of northern New Ireland, rituals for the dead include a funeral, a period of mourning, and an elaborate memorial festival known as a malagan. Before the malagan, special buildings are constructed, food is stockpiled to feed the guests, and a number of types of carvings are created. Because of its expense and extensive preparation, the malagan often occurs several months or years after the death, or deaths, of family members. The ceremony commemorates the deceased, helps their souls move from the world of the living to the world of the dead, and enhances the prestige of the family.



### **11. Processional welcoming Queen Elizabeth II to Tonga with Ngatu launima (tapa cloth).**

**Tonga, central Polynesia. 1953 Multimedia performance (costume; cosmetics, chant; movement; and pandanus fiber/hibiscus fiber mats), photographic documentation.**

Ngatu is the Tongan name given to tapa cloth or decorated bark cloth. It's rare to find one as large as this, which hasn't been cut up into smaller sections. Ngatu is made from the bark of hiapo (paper mulberry tree). Only men may tend hiapo while it is growing but, once it has been harvested, only women may turn the hiapo bark into ngatu. The process of making ngatu begins with stripping the bark from the tree and then separating the inner and outer bark. The stripped bark is then cut into strips and beaten - which transforms the strip into a wider piece resembling a fibrous fabric.

When a number of pieces have been produced, they are dried and placed under a mattress to flatten them. A design is imprinted on the cloth with a kupesi (pattern board) and pieces are joined together with a paste made from arrowroot. After the imprinted design has dried, extra decoration is painted on by hand.



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 happy couple. Ngatu also play an important part in funerals. Immediately after someone dies, the body is placed on a bed of ngatu in a room draped with ngatu and mats. The following day the body is wrapped in still more ngatu, carried to the cemetery and lowered into a grave that may be temporarily enclosed by a very long piece of ngatu. As a final touch, another piece of ngatu may be formed into a banner to decorate the grave.

Although ngatu of today do not have the range of color, grades, pattern types, and uses that existed a century ago, ngatu remain an important part of Tongan culture. The growth of tourism has meant that, today, ngatu are also used as decorative layers on such introduced items as purses, place mats and serving trays.

This ngatu was specially made for Queen Elizabeth's visit to Tonga in 1953. Made to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's visit, it was later placed under Queen Sālote's coffin when her body was flown back from New Zealand in 1965. The tapa was given to Flight Lieutenant McAllister, the pilot of the plane that took Queen Sālote's body back to Tonga, and he in turn presented it to the Dominion Museum in 1968.



**12. Emily Kame Kngwarreye, *Earth's Creation*, 1994, synthetic polymer paint on linen mounted on canvas, four panels**



Emily Kam Kngwarreye is regarded as a phenomenon in Australian art. For an elderly, traditional Aboriginal woman who, it was popularly believed, started painting in her seventies, she worked with immense speed and assurance. In a brief eight-year painting career, Kngwarreye produced an extraordinary number of canvases - reputed to be as many as 3000 works, an average of one canvas each day. To the art world both her output and her seemingly 'abstract' gestural style were unlike anything previously seen from an Aboriginal painter.

Kngwarreye started painting in acrylic on canvas in 1988, and in 1990 had her first solo exhibitions in the state capitals of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. These were followed by her inclusion in many group exhibitions, both in Australia and overseas, and by her posthumous representation of Australia in the XLVII Venice Biennale in 1997.



She has been acclaimed as one of the major 'abstract' painters of the twentieth century, and the market has been led by comparisons of her work with that of past masters such as Matisse, Monet, Renoir, Kandinsky and de Kooning. Her work, however, renders useless some of the terms of contemporary art discourse, and attempts by some to understand her painting by direct analogies between her work and that of Western Modernists are misleading. Kngwarreye's work is at once both abstract and referential - it requires a reading that goes beyond Eurocentric projections.

Kngwarreye was intensely traditional in her life and outlook, yet her work challenges pre-existing notions of the 'traditional' in Aboriginal art. This is precisely because she rarely used the familiar imagery of Western Desert paintings - motifs such as concentric circles, animal tracks and stylized implements - which allow the viewer some literal reading of a work. As her painting style evolved, such motifs became increasingly obscured. For many, the 'story' that links her art to cultural interpretations is not immediately apparent. In an art world hungry for explanation, the effect of her perceived reticence to explain has led to much speculation about the meaning of her work, and to the mystification of her persona.

Kngwarreye was born around 1916 and grew up in her traditional country before significant incursions of European settlers into the region, and the development of cattle stations. The 20 or so small Aboriginal communities, now referred to collectively as Utopia, flank the Sandover River, approximately 25kilometers north east of Alice Springs in Central Australia. These lands form a small part of the traditional country of the Eastern Anmatyerr and Alyawarr speaking peoples who, after about 50 years of pastoral occupation, reclaimed their land and converted the pastoral lease to freehold title.

Like many Aboriginal people of her generation, Kngwarreye spoke little English. Her Anmatyerr syntax and grammar was barely influenced by the spread of English, with which she had little or no contact until she was in her teenage years. In the following account she describes those early days:

*"I was born at the place called Alhalker, right there. When I was young we all came back to Utopia station. We used to eat bits and pieces of food, carefully digging out the grubs from Acacia bushes. We killed different sorts of lizards, such as geckos and blue-tongues, and ate them in our cubby houses [shelters] ... My mother used to dig up bush potatoes, and gather grubs from different sorts of Acacia bushes to eat. That's what we used to live on. My mother would keep on digging and digging the bush potatoes, while us young ones made each other cry over the food; just over a little bit of food. Then we'd all go back to camp to cook the food, the atnwelarr yams ... We didn't have any tents - we lived in shelters made of grass. When it was raining the grass was roughly thrown together for shelter. That was in the olden time, a long time ago."*

Women's traditional methods of mark-making include the use of pigments made from ochres which are applied to the body using brushes called tyepal, made from sticks bound with thread. This ceremonial body painting is central to the performance of awely - women's ceremonies - and the marks themselves symbolize the actions of ancestral beings or Dreamings. Women also tell tyepety stories while drawing in the sand with their hands - narratives of both ancestral and day-to-day significance.

Kngwarreye always worked on the ground, sitting cross-legged, in much the same way as she would sit to prepare food, dig grubs from the earth, or tell the tyepety stories. She rarely viewed her work as a vertical surface except on infrequent occasions when she travelled to see it hung on gallery walls. She usually worked from the periphery of the canvas to the center, although for extra-large canvases she sat in the middle. Her reach extended an arm's length, augmented by her brush.

According to Kngwarreye, the themes of country and Dreamings remained a constant in her work, throughout the transformations of her style. This symbolism is essentially derived from the Altyerr - the creative principle which saturates the world with meaning. Popularly called 'the Dreaming', the essence of the Altyerr remains in the world



today, manifesting itself in the topography of the land, in its life forms, and in the Law - codes of social behavior by which people endeavor to live. For Kngwarreye, the focus of this power lay in Alhalker country, her country of spiritual origin for which she maintained a connection inherited through her fathers and their fathers before them. What does 'Earth's Creation' represent? Simply stated - Everything, "Whole lot", as Emily used to say. If you stare into her paintings and in your mind's eye you see something - then that is what it is.

