

PACIFIC ISLANDS ART CART

JUNE 2006

**Department of Museum Guide Programs
Minneapolis Institute of Arts
2400 Third Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404**

Art Cart Inventory

Art Cart Interpreters:

The docents/guides for each Art Cart shift should inventory the contents of the cart before **and** after the shift. If this is not done and objects are missing or damaged, the lead guide may be held responsible. (The lead guide is the first guide listed on the tour confirmation form.)

If an object is missing or damaged, make a notation on the inventory and report it to the Tour Office.

If an object is suddenly missing during your shift, notify security immediately by alerting the guard in the gallery or by calling x3225.

MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS
Department of Museum Guide Programs
Pacific Islands Art Cart

Please share! Record visitor questions that “stumped” you and comments or observations you would like to share with fellow guides and staff. If you know the answer to someone's question, please record the answer! Staff will also periodically review questions and try to assist with finding answers.

PACIFIC ISLANDS ART CART

WHAT IS THE THEME OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS ART CART?

The Pacific Islands Art Cart features objects that illustrate the intense relationship between the people of the Pacific Islands and their natural environments. The region is comprised of three major island groupings (Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia) and the continent of Australia, a vast territory that includes very diverse peoples and landscapes. These diverse environments have contributed to an underlying belief in the unpredictability and all-pervading power of nature and a philosophy that regards it as an animated force that must be accommodated rather than modified. Everything is imbued with a spirit—humans, animals, and plants. These spirits in the natural world are localized through art. Art is not about individual expression. Nearly all of the art produced in the Pacific Islands and included on the Art Cart is created from organic materials and illustrates how artists apply their creativity and skill to things from nature to give expression to their beliefs and traditions.

WHAT DEFINES THE PACIFIC ISLANDS GEOGRAPHICALLY?

The three regional island groupings—Melanesia (New Guinea, Admiralty Islands, New Britain, New Ireland, and others) Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaii, Easter Island, Samoa, Fiji, Tahiti, Tonga and others) and Micronesia (Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Belau, Caroline Islands and others)—are so designated as geographical entities, rather than as references to history or the way in which they were populated. They encompass a total land mass of about 470,000 square miles and include some 10,000 islands. The landscape ranges from the legendary paradise of the South Sea to swampy, flood-prone river lowlands and thick rain forests requiring labor-intensive agriculture that are hardly ideal for human existence. The coastal areas can be intensely volcanic and prone to powerful typhoons. Even today much of the Pacific Islands remains isolated with travel difficult between regions.

The native peoples of the Pacific Islands migrated to the region from mainland Asia. The island of New Guinea is occupied by speakers of Papuan languages and has been inhabited for more than 40,000 years. Most of the other Pacific Islands were settled much later by speakers of Austronesian languages between 4,000 and 3,000 years ago. Originally cultural groups were clearly distinguished by linguistic differences; today, however, most cultural distinctions are a result of boundaries in the landscape. Many threads of continuity can still be found. One is the undeniable presence of the sea itself, felt by all cultural groups with the exception of the few that live in the high interior of some of the larger islands. Livelihood is based mainly on agriculture, with a supplementary protein diet supplied from fishing. With the exception of the indigenous sweet potato and sago (a palm-like plant found in Melanesia), all of the cultivated plants are of Asian origin.

**AGE OF ART CART
OBJECTS**

It can be assumed all of the objects on the Pacific Islands Art Cart were made in the late 20th or early 21st century.

**WHAT IS THE
IMAGE ON THE
FRONT OF THE
PACIFIC ISLANDS
ART CART?**

As the gallery label notes, this frieze (*Malagan Frieze*, 19th Century, 85.94) is a classic interpretation of the New Ireland theme of birds and snakes in struggle. It depicts two chickens and a smaller frigate bird (or drongo), compressed at the top edge, holding the tail of a snake that undulates through stylized foliage. The struggle between birds and snakes is a common feature of sculpture and dance performances as it portrays the ongoing battle between two cosmic realms in relative balance—the sky and the earth.



**WHERE IS THE
PACIFIC ISLANDS
ART CART
STORED?**

The Pacific Islands Art Cart is stored in the Art Cart closet on the second floor of the Target Wing. The closet is not far from the Pacific Islands gallery (276), between G275 (Craft) and G262 (Photographs). The Tour Office staff or a security guard can open the door for you.

**WHERE SHOULD
THE PACIFIC
ISLANDS ART CART
BE SET UP IN THE
GALLERY?**

The cart should be set up in Gallery 276, in the niche where the Pacific Islands map hangs.

ASMAT BOWL

- WHAT IS IT?** This oblong, wooden bowl was made by the Asmat of Papua (Irian Jaya).
- WHO ARE THE ASMAT PEOPLE?** The Asmat number around 65,000 and live in a swampy area in the south of Papua (Irian Jaya), the western half of the island of New Guinea. Although the Dutch colonial government, the Catholic and Protestant missions and the Indonesian government have brought many changes to the Asmat, most still live in a traditional manner, gathering sago, the region's staple, and hunting and fishing. The Asmat live in villages that average 350-500 people along waterways, with canoes being the primary mode of transportation.
- WHAT ARE CHARACTERISTICS OF ASMAT ART?** The Asmat have developed remarkable ritual objects that are used to honor ancestral spirits. Their woodcarving skills are recognized as some of the most prolific and most striking throughout the Pacific Islands. To the Asmat, carvings are embodiments of the ancestral spirits that, along with other natural forces, control their world. Their dramatically tall ancestor poles, or *bis* (pronounced bee-sh) poles, are well-known examples of Oceanic art throughout the world, but the Asmat also create intricate shields, canoes, drums, sculptures, bowls, pipes and many smaller objects. The Asmat name every one of these carvings for the deceased. Today much of this artwork is produced for ritual feasts and family ceremonies; in the past, however, much of the intricate carving celebrated warfare practices including the taking of heads and cannibalism. As seen with the other objects on the Art Cart, Asmat carvings make the spiritual world visible and tangible, thus maintaining the specific balance of nature.
- HOW ARE THE BOWLS USED?** Carved wooden bowls are exclusive to the coastal, central, and northwest Asmat regions. They are used for sago and other food, and once they are older and more worn, for mixing paint. This is the case in the example on the Art Cart. Paint stains are still visible on the inside of the bowl. In other areas, food containers are made of sago, sewn into the shape of a long bowl. These bowls are also used on ritual occasions, for sago worms, and in former times, for the human brains extracted from decapitated heads that were given to the elders. Formerly all wooden bowls were probably made in the shape of miniature canoes, a form still seen in the northwest region. Bowls along the coast began to change when the tourism industry arrived. It was suggested that carvers flatten them out and reverse the direction of the figures at the ends so they could be seen when the bowls were hung for display.
- WHAT ARE THE FIGURES AND WHY DO THEY FACE THE WAY THEY DO?** In traditional examples, like this bowl, the figures face up, towards the eater, while it is being held in the lap, so that the owner can always look at the ancestor or ancestors for whom the bowl was named. While the Asmat sometimes carve specific representations of their ancestors, they typically are only symbolic, idealized forms. The undersides are often covered with intricate designs, although this one is not. These designs can also reference specific ancestors or deceased relatives. As mentioned above, it has only been in recent years that woodcarvers have reversed the faces to match the carving on the bottom of the bowl to attract more foreign buyers who were disturbed that the faces were "backwards."

**WHO MAKES
THESE BOWLS?**

Asmat men do all the woodcarving, and typically every man has enough carving knowledge to create useful objects and tools like this bowl, canoe paddles and utensils. When a special object is needed, such as a shield, the Asmat approach the *wowipitsj* (using the phonetic pronunciation), the master woodcarvers. (*Wowipitsj* literally means “woodcarver.”) These individuals have gained a reputation for woodcarving skill, but they also gather sago, hunt and do what the other men in the village do. Given the importance of woodcarving, the *wowipitsj* often enjoy considerable prestige in the community, but they are not designated as “artists” in the Western sense of the word.

**QUESTIONS AND
ACTIVITIES**

1. Look at the bowl. Notice the texture, marks from the paint, and the carvings. How would you describe it? Why?
2. Ancestral figures play a large role in the Asmat culture. The figures on this bowl are supposed to represent these ancestors who influence their world. What kind of emotion do they express? If you could put an ancestor (or any) figure on a bowl you eat out of, who (or what) would it be? Why?
3. Try sitting carefully with the bowl on your lap. Imagine eating out of the bowl. How does this differ from the way you usually eat from bowls?
4. The Asmat bowls usually have intricate designs on the bottom, though this one does not. What design would you carve on the bottom? Draw your design.

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

Other Asmat Objects

1. *Spirit Mask*, Asmat, 1999, L2006.20.9
2. *Shield*, Asmat, 20th c., L2006.20.4
3. *Drums*, Asmat, various accession numbers
5. *Shield*, Asmat, 20th c., L2006.20.2
6. *Canoe Prow*, Asmat, 20th c., L2006.20.1
7. *Figure*, Asmat, 20th c., L2006.20.5

Wooden Bowls

1. Admiralty Islands, *Prestige Bowl*, c. 1900, 2001.130.3
2. Admiralty Islands, *Bowl*, 2002.162
3. Papua, *Dish*, 20th c., 2004.120
4. Marquesas Islands, *Lidded Bowl*, early 19th c., 91.59a,b
5. Hawaii, *Wooden Bowls*, 19th c., L2006.36.1,2
6. Fiji Islands, *Ceremonial Bowl*, 19th c., 2002.128.1
7. Solomon Islands, *Bowl*, c. 1890, 2004.107.5
8. Various Artists, American, *Bowls*, Contemporary Craft Gallery (adjacent to Pacific Islands)

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GRASS SKIRT

- WHAT IS IT?** This skirt from the Asmat people of Papua (Irian Jaya) is an example of the most common dress that women wear throughout Melanesia and the Pacific Islands. It consists of an approximately knee-length grass fringe attached to a woven, patterned band. While the grass can be very dense, the medium thickness of the Art Cart skirt is common.
- HOW IS IT WORN?** A number of separate skirts may be worn together or one longer skirt could be wrapped around the waist several times. As one goes inland from the coast, the length of the skirt tends to shorten. Another variation consists of making the fringe discontinuous, so that the legs are exposed on the sides.
- WHAT ELSE DO WOMEN WEAR?** The Asmat live in rural and remote areas and are largely dependent upon local natural materials for their clothing. Typically women wear skirts and a variety of ornaments. Some work in simple skirts of leaves tucked into a band around the waist. Barkcloth skirts and wraps are also common, especially in colder mountain regions. Shells, animal teeth, feathers, tusks, string, seeds, wood, and bamboo are some of the materials used to create ornamental pieces for armbands, nose and ear rings as well as headpieces. There is little metal of any kind available.
- As is the case throughout much of the Pacific Islands, Western dress has reached the coastal regions of the Asmat. Men and women alike wear shorts, skirts, and t-shirts. They are often worn in combination with traditional clothing articles. For example, it would not be uncommon to see women wearing a grass skirt with a pair of shorts underneath. The more rural the area, the less likely this would be.
- WHAT DO MEN WEAR?** The most common article of traditional clothing worn by men throughout the Pacific Islands is the loincloth or *mal*. The loincloth consists of a long and narrow strip of barkcloth. It is wrapped several times around the waist and then through the legs and tucked through the front of the belt to form an apron-like end. It is usually undecorated. The length of this portion can indicate the rank of men in places like Fiji. Complete nudity is not common, though found in a few regions including the Solomon Islands. If a loincloth is not worn, some sort of waistband and a covering like gourds or woven wrappers are worn.

**QUESTIONS AND
ACTIVITIES**

5. Feel the skirt and its material. How would you describe its texture, feel, weight? Try wrapping the skirt around yourself. (It isn't long enough to go all the way around most waists since multiple sections like this one were often strung together.) How would it feel to wear this?
6. Look at the design on the skirt's band. Find and describe any patterns or repetition.
7. Find women's clothing from other cultures in the galleries. Notice the materials they are made out of, the patterns on them, and what they are worn for. What similarities or differences can you find between the Asmat grass skirt and other items you find?
8. What clothes do you wear in everyday life? What kinds of conditions (economic, climate, fashion, occasion) dictate what you wear? Think of reasons why the Asmat may dress differently than we do (climate, culture, availability of material).
9. The Asmat use natural material for apparel and adornment. What are your clothes made from? Your jewelry or watches? Have you ever made anything to wear? Was it ever from natural material?

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

Women's Traditional Attire

1. Japan, *Summer Robe*, L2006.37.14
2. Torii Kiyonaga and Isume Ko_zuya, Japan, *Ferryboat on the Rokugo River*, 1784, 74.1.127
3. Democratic Republic of Congo, *Woman's Ceremonial Skirt*, 20th c., 2003.227.48
4. Nigeria, *Wrapper*, 1995, 97.189.50
5. Bolivia, *Woman's Ceremonial Full Overskirt*, 20th c., 89.116.4
6. Laos, *Skirt*, 20th c., 2004.236.68
7. Apsaalooka (Crow), North America, *Outfit (Female)*, various accession numbers
8. China, Ch'ing dynasty, *Manchu Woman's Semiformal Court Robe*, 41.74.2

MEN'S TRADITIONAL ATTIRE

1. Solomon Islands, *Kapkap*, 20th c., 99.4
2. Jokei Ryu_ko_sai, Japan, *Seven Great Actors in Favorite Roles*, late 1780s, 74.1.193
3. Ewe, West Africa, *Wrapper*, 20th c., 2005.71.11
4. Mexico, *Saltillo Serape*, 19th c., 93.85.14
5. Japan, *Campaign Coats*, various accession numbers
6. A'ani Nakoda (Gros Ventre/Assinboine), North America, *Shirt*, c. 1890, 2001.197
7. Apsaalooka (Crow), North America, *Outfit (Male)*, various accession numbers
8. Diné (Navajo), North America, *Ketoh*, c. 1920, 90.58.354

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS
(CONTINUED)**

Ornamentation Through Other Apparel and Adornment

1. Egypt, *Horus Collar*, 2160-1788 BCE, 27.42.4
2. Chimu (Peru), *Earspools*, 1150-1450, 43.4.1
3. China (Western Chou and Early Eastern Chou Dynasty), *Jades*, various accession numbers
4. Kuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, *Yet Belt*, 20th c., 89.1
5. Seneca, North America, *Cape*, early 19th c., 93.59
6. Bode' wadmi (Potawatomi), North America, *Sash*, date unknown, 2000.138.3
7. Russia, *Apron*, c. 1884, 41.35.13
8. Isthmus, Panama and Costa Rica, *Gold Ornaments*, various accession numbers

Other Asmat Objects

1. Asmat, *Spirit Mask*, 1999, L2006.20.9
2. Asmat, *Shield*, 20th c., L2006.20.4
3. Asmat, *Drums*, various accession numbers
4. Asmat, *Shield*, 20th c., L2006.20.2
5. Asmat, *Canoe Prow*, 20th c., L2006.20.1
6. Asmat, *Figure*, 20th c., L2006.20.5
10. Asmat, *Bis Pole*, 20th c., 74.79.1



Asmat Bags

- WHAT ARE THEY?** These two woven bags were made and used by Asmat men of Papua (Irian Jaya). They are woven from sago palm fiber and decorated with natural pigments, shells, and beads.
- HOW COMMON ARE THESE?** Bags and baskets are found everywhere throughout the Pacific Islands and the most common are similar to these examples of sago bags from the Asmat. Each region or community has its own specific variations, however, in the construction of the handle and decoration of their bags.
- HOW ARE THEY MADE?** They are made from the shredded inner bark of the sago palm tree. The bark is soaked and scraped to cleanse the fiber from other materials. The cord is twisted tightly by rolling it with the hand on the bare thigh or on some smooth surface like the bottom of a bowl. The bags are made with a handle to go over the head or shoulder, a thickened edge or border around the top, and usually an open mesh. The most common stitch used is often called a figure-of-eight stitch, as each stitch or loop is caught around itself as well as in the loops on all sides. The string is lengthened as necessary by adding more fiber and twisting it or by rolling it on the thigh. In making the bags the end of the cord is passed by hand through these loops, so that even if the cord breaks, it does not unravel easily.
- ARE THESE FOR MEN OR WOMEN?** We can tell these are men's bags because of their relatively small size. One is worn on the back (backpack style), while the other (with a single strap) crosses the breast. Men's bags are seldom more than eighteen inches wide and are always smaller than women's bags because they function more like pouches. They serve as a pocket of sorts in which to keep the various small personal possessions including tobacco, nipah leaf (often used to roll cigarettes), bone and shell scrapers, tooth or bone awls, small skulls, bits of sago and other food. Asmat men make their own bags and the stitch used varies greatly. More important men, such as village elders, can be identified by the positioning of their bag. They may wear theirs around the neck and hanging down their breast, more like a necklace.
- Women use much larger bags to assist them with their work during the day, from carrying babies to firewood. In these great big bags, the figure-of-eight stitch of open mesh is used almost without exception. A strip of pandanus leaf, around which the stitches of each row are passed, may be used to keep them a uniform size. Pandanus trees grow in coastal regions with thick prop roots and long, thin palm-like leaves.

**WHY IS ONE
DECORATED AND
THE OTHER NOT?**

Ornament is very common on men's bags, making the plain example on the Art Cart unusual. The plain example is likely unfinished. The Asmat typically adorn even the most utilitarian of items with objects from nature, especially small shells, seeds and feathers. These are threaded on the string during the weaving process. Color can be applied two ways, either by painting the bag itself or dyeing the string beforehand and twisting it on when weaving.

**A NOTE ABOUT
DISPLAYING THE
BAGS**

There is a plastic hook on the front of the Art Cart, on which you may wish to hang the two bags while the Art Cart is in use.

**QUESTIONS AND
ACTIVITIES**

11. Compare the decorated bag and the undecorated bag. How are they similar? Different? Notice the decorative pattern and the various colors. What would you put on the undecorated bag? Draw your design.
12. Look for other Asmat objects in the gallery. Look at material, patterns, and decoration, as well as function. What similarities can you find among the objects and the bags? Differences?
13. Asmat men used these bags as a kind of pocket for smaller objects. What do you keep in your pockets? When might you use a larger bag?
14. Try on one of the bags. What would you carry in this bag?
15. The Asmat people make these bags from the sago palm tree and decorate them with natural materials. What other natural materials do you see on the bags?

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

Bags, Pouches, and Other Personal Carrying Devices

1. China, *Chaire* (Tea-Caddy), Sung Dynasty, 10th-12th c., 2003.28.1
2. Japan, *Cha-ire* (Tea-Caddy), Momoyama Period, 16th-17th c., 2000.29.1a,b
3. Japan, *Inro*, 19th c., various accession numbers
4. China (Jade Corridor), *Snuff Bottles*, mostly 17th-19th c., various accession numbers
5. Anishinabe (Ojibwe), North America, *Pipe Bag*, 1890-1910, 2005.27.3
6. Apsaalooka (Crow), North America, *Pipe Bag*, 1870-1880s, 2004.70.11
7. Anishinabe (Ojibwe), North America, *Bandolier Bags*, 19th-20th c., various accession numbers
8. Maria Likarz, Austria, *Evening Bag*, 1925, 98.276.166
9. Yoruba, Nigeria, *Diviner's Bag*, 20th c., 98.47

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS
(CONTINUED)**

Natural Fibers

1. Anishinabe (Ojibwe), North America, *Basket*, 20th c., 90.52.2a,b
2. Inde (Apache), North America, *Baskets*, 20th c., various accession numbers
3. Akimel O'odham (Pima), North America, *Baskets*, 20th c., various accession numbers
4. Paul Gauguin, French, *I Raro te Oviri (Under the Pandanus)*, 1891, 41.4 (shows the Pandanus tree, from which the Asmat use material to make the bags)

Decorated Utilitarian Objects

1. Japan, *Tobacco Tray*, Edo Period, 17th-19th c., 2002.141.4
2. Japan, *Incense Boxes*, Muromachi Period, 14th-16th c., 2001.266.1a,b
3. China, *Cosmetic Case (Lien)*, 100 BC-100 AD, 2001.69.2.1a,b
4. Korea, *Hat Box*, Choson Dynasty, 14th-20th c., 2002.219.1
5. Mamaceqtaw, North America, *Quilled Box*, mid-19th c., 2004.114.2a,b
6. Wendat (Huron), North America, *Quilled Box*, 19th c., 90.53a,b
7. Marquesas Islands, *Lidded Bowl*, early 19th c., 91.59a,b
8. German, *Box for Toilet Articles*, 1745, 85.81.1
9. England, *Embroidered Box*, 1662, 95.14a-bb
10. Roman, *Cinerary Box with Cover*, 1 c. AD, 62.20a,b



SAWOS BOWL

WHERE IS THE BOWL FROM?

The ceramic bowl is made by the Sawos people, specifically the Kiowt and Kanangawai villages, who reside in the Middle Sepik area of Papua New Guinea. The Sepik River District is respected for producing some of the highest quality and most prolific art in all of the Pacific Islands. These two villages are known especially for their ceramic bowls like the example on the Art Cart. The Sepik meanders back and forth throughout the country, geographically straddling some of the most important physical features of the island. Two major mountain ranges run almost parallel to the river while it journeys through the coastal regions and then into higher grasslands. Altogether the area comprises about 28,000 square miles inhabited by about 260,000 people.

The Sawos people live in the higher grasslands and are mainly agricultural. They rely on trade for their livelihood, cultivating yams and producing sago, a flour-like substance from the pith of sago palms. In general, the cultural groups that live directly on the banks of the Sepik River are larger, more permanent and produce more elaborate art because of their ease in transporting and trading goods (e.g. the Iatmul). The Sawos do not live along the river and are smaller in number than many of their neighbors. They are one of very few ceramic-producing cultures in the Pacific Islands.

HOW IS THE BOWL USED?

This highly decorated bowl is made for eating. It appears to have been used very little judging by the vibrancy of the pigment, and lack of staining on the inside, although artists will repaint ceramics, wooden carvings and various sculpture if the color wears off. This is likely, given the hot, humid climate.

HOW WAS IT MADE?

Men and women both contribute to the production of Sawos eating bowls in this region. The clay is gathered by the women from the flood areas of the Sepik River and brought back to the village. Potters, usually women, prepare enough clay at one time to make several bowls using the coil method. Once the bowls are dried to a leather-hard state, the men will use a small circular section of coconut shell to carve the designs. Pit-firing is also usually done by the women and takes place about two weeks after the designs are complete. Notice the interesting designs created by the flashing (fire marks) on the unpainted interior of the bowl during firing. The last step is painting the pot after firing, which is done by the men.

IS THIS A TYPICAL OBJECT?

While this is a typical object from this region, ceramics are relatively unusual throughout the Pacific Islands. Because of the availability of wood and the advanced carving skills of many different cultural groups, carved wooden bowls are more common than ceramic ones. Clay can only be found in certain areas, including northern Papua New Guinea, where the Sawos reside. As a result, the most elaborately molded and painted pottery comes from this region. The colors are typical of those found in Oceanic art: black, white, yellow and red. Clays of rust, yellow, white and ochre colors are ground into powders and mixed with water. Black is formed by mixing charcoal with vegetable oil.

**WHAT DOES THE
DESIGN MEAN?**

It is impossible to know what the design means exactly. Anthropologists have found in interviewing artists of the Pacific Islands about the meaning of certain symbols, designs and patterns, that answers are often vague. Commonly, the importance of ancestral traditions motivates the ornamentation, stated as simply as “that’s the way it’s always been done” or “that’s the way the ancestors painted it.” If this is the case, the object and its ornament derives meaning from this broader understanding of ancestral tradition rather than reading color, shape, and other formal qualities as is the custom when interpreting Western art.

There is some evidence that suggests the design could be related to a popular animal symbol, the cassowary. The cassowary is a large, flightless bird, similar to an ostrich. They are the largest animal on the island, along with pigs; therefore, are a valuable source of meat and sustenance. The feathers are used frequently in masks and sculptures while their bones are often formed into daggers and other weaponry. The cassowary also plays significant roles in different mythologies of the people throughout the Sepik district, including one of providing food and also a human creation story. As a result, abstracted forms of the cassowary have evolved in Sepik art, although they are more commonly found on canoe prows, painted skulls and slit gongs. The design on this bowl proves similar to a published example of a canoe prow inspired by the cassowary (Douglas Newton, *Crocodiles and Cassowary*, New York, Museum of Primitive Art, 1971, pg 46, ill. 75).

**QUESTIONS AND
ACTIVITIES**

16. Feel the bowl. How does it feel? What does it make you think of? What do you feel that makes you say that?
17. What parts of the bowl are decorated? Undecorated? Why might the artist have left the undecorated areas that way?
18. Most Pacific Islands groups use wooden bowls instead of ceramic ones. Which type would you prefer? Why?
19. This bowl is used for eating. Compare it to the bowls you use in everyday life. How is it similar or different? What would you put in this Sawos bowl and why?
20. Look closely at the bowl and describe the design. It is very likely the design represents a cassowary, a popular animal symbol. What kind of animal would you like to represent you and why?

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

Ceramics – Decorated and Utilitarian

1. Japan, Tea Wares, G224
2. Chimu, South America, *Vessels*, 10th-15th c., various accession numbers
3. Wombun, Papua New Guinea, *Bowl*, 20th c., 74.79.4

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS
(CONTINUED)**

4. Ancient Puebloan (Anasazi), North America, Vessels, 10th-14th c., various accession numbers
5. Islamic ceramics, G243
6. Chinese ceramics, G204 and G210
7. Tio, Yombe, Ngbandi and Havu, Democratic Republic of Congo, Vessels, 20th c., various accession numbers

Other Decorated Sawos Objects

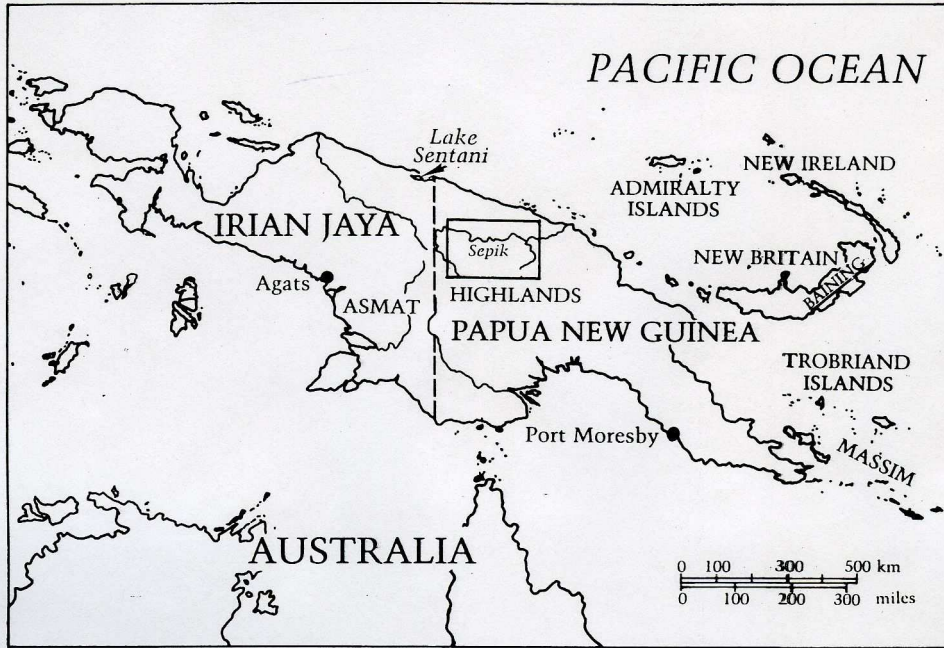
1. Sawos, *Mortuary Panel*, 20th c., 98.37.1
2. Sawos, *Bowls*, 1980-1988, 98.107, 1-3

Animals and their Symbolism in Art

1. Benin, Nigeria, *Leopard*, 17th c., 58.9
2. Akan, Ghana, *Goldweight (Leopard)*, 19th-20thc., 98.1.279
3. Belgium, *Allegorical "Millefleurs" Tapestry with Animals*, 1530-45, 34.4
4. China, *Celestial Horse*, Eastern Han Dynasty, 2nd c. BE-1st c. AD, 2002.45
5. Olmec, Mexico, *Mask*, 900-300 BCE, 2002.127
6. Maya, Mexico, *Vase with Monkeys*, 450-700, 2000.195

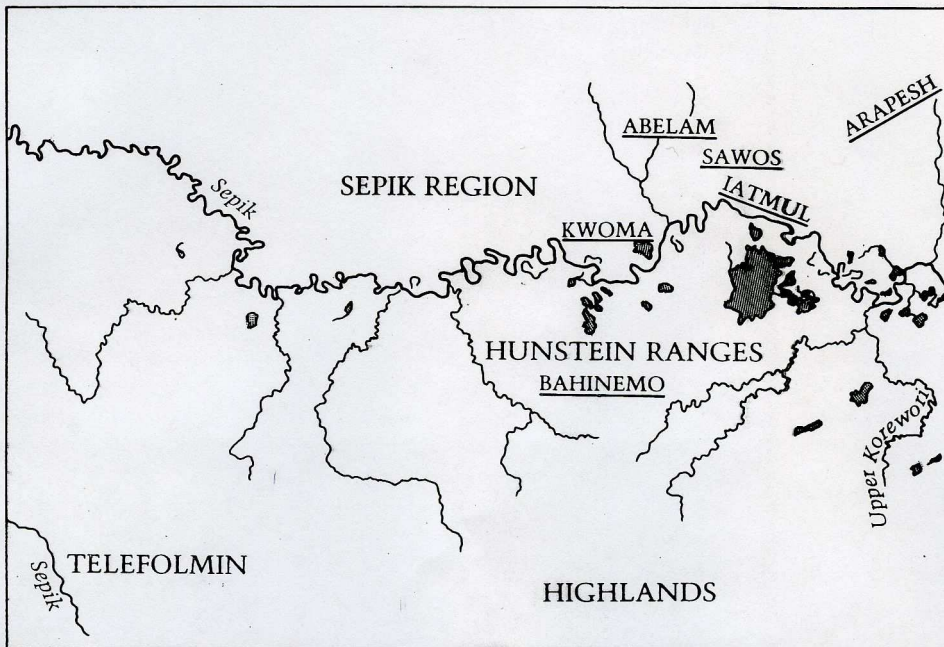
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31 Map of New Guinea.

32 The Sepik region and its peoples.



BANDICOOT CLAN TOTEM

- WHAT IS IT?** This clan totem, in the form of a bandicoot (see below), comes from the Iatmul people (Tambanum Village) of Papua New Guinea. It is made of bush twine and decorated with natural pigments, shells, and cassowary feathers.
- WHO ARE THE IATMUL?** The Iatmul (YAHT-mool) live on the banks of the Middle Sepik River and in lagoons connected to it. They are one of the larger cultural groups in Papua New Guinea and are dependent upon fish and sago for their livelihood. Because of their proximity to the river, they also trade for goods with ease. The Iatmul are known best for their architecture, specifically the men's house, one of the great social and artistic institutions in New Guinea. Men gather in the house to talk, eat, relax, and to undertake religious rituals that are the center of spiritual life. The Iatmul, like many of the other peoples of Melanesia, make careful selections from nature to be visual symbols of their culture. The men's house is one example, but the Iatmul objects on the Art Cart also illustrate this.
- WHAT IS A BANDICOOT?** Bandicoots are pointy-nosed marsupials native to Australia, and are also found in Papua New Guinea. They often are not much bigger than a rabbit. There are nineteen different species, including the long-nosed bandicoot, which may be what is depicted on the Art Cart. Bandicoots can survive in various environments including the grassy highlands of New Guinea. The bandicoot's pouch actually faces backward to prevent dirt from entering it. Bandicoots are nocturnal and excavate long, complex burrows.
- WHAT IS A CASSOWARY?** The feathers down the bandicoot's spine in this sculpture may represent the stripe often seen down the back of the long-nosed bandicoot. These feathers that form this stripe or crest come from a cassowary. A cassowary is a large flightless bird native to New Guinea and Australia. It is shy, but has deadly claws to protect itself; it also has a hard bony casque (helmet) on its head.
- WHAT ARE CLAN TOTEMS?** *Totemism* means belief in the existence of special relationships between humans and certain species of animals and plants. A totem can also simply be an animal emblem, not charged with religious beliefs. More often than not, a totem is claimed by a clan, or kinship group, as having certain supernatural power. The totem is often regarded as the founder of the group or as being associated with the groups' earliest ancestors. These views are very common throughout Melanesia and seen less often in Polynesia and Micronesia. The bandicoot clan totem is an excellent example of the artwork created to express these beliefs.

**HOW DOES THIS
RELATE TO
ANCESTOR
WORSHIP?**

When creating a clan totem, the artist in Papua New Guinea is called upon to ensure the presence of the ancestor in the object. This usually is linked to an oral tradition that the clan descended from that animal. The power of natural materials is often drawn upon, as in our example on the Art Cart, to communicate ancestral presence to the clan or kinship group. Here, bush twine, shell, organic pigments and cassowary feathers are used. The bandicoot is not exclusive to one clan. There may be a kinship group in every Papua New Guinea village that claims the bandicoot, the crocodile or the pig as their totems. There are many other forces including clan names and ceremonial practices that make each clan totem unique and powerful. The animal itself is only one part.

Totems are one aspect of the Melanesian belief system which, as mentioned above, seeks to affect invisible spiritual forces, rather than worshipping certain deities. Most of the art of the Pacific Islands is religious by nature because it is made in response to a series of related beliefs that the universe is governed by invisible forces that determine and influence the events of life. These forces are thought to be everywhere. While they do not cause the behavior of inanimate objects and living things, they are expressed by them. Through these forces and their expression in the art, a symbiotic relationship between the people and the elements of their environment is established. Throughout the Pacific Islands, each region and cultural group has its own mythologies and specific spiritual presence.

The reverence for ancestors is especially common in Melanesia and is best expressed through such objects as totems. Many Melanesian peoples believe that after death the soul becomes a permanent part of the complex spiritual world. The soul has influence on the lives of people, particularly those belonging to the family of the deceased. Through various ceremonies, clans try to influence their present and their future through ancestor worship. It is understood that none of these powerful spirits and forces can be controlled, but if they are properly respected and treated, they might at least benefit the individual, family, and community. Much art is made to honor them. The bandicoot totem is an example of this expression, making the invisible realm visible and tangible. The clan would also refrain from ever using the clan animal as an article of food.

**WHAT ARE OTHER
FORMS OF
ANCESTOR
WORSHIP?**

Another common artistic expression of ancestor worship throughout Melanesia is a carved human figure created to serve as a form for an ancestor to inhabit. During ceremonies, masked dancers become infused with the spirit's presence. The hair, bones, and skulls of important deceased ancestors are sometimes preserved and added to these figure sculptures and masks so that their individual presence might be assured. The ancestors' voices are also represented by the sounds of drums, flutes, pan pipes, conches, and other trumpet-like instruments.

**QUESTIONS AND
ACTIVITIES**

21. What do you see? How would you describe this animal? What do you see that makes you say that?
22. Describe the materials (look, feel, etc.). They're drawn from the natural world of the Iatmul people. What kinds of clues do the things you've noticed about the materials give you about the Iatmul environment/habitat?
23. This object is a symbol associated with a clan or extended family. If you were to select an animal to be a symbol for your extended family, what would you choose? Why?
24. Find other animal imagery in the Pacific Islands gallery. Make a list or draw what you discover.

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

Totems

1. Inuit, North America, *Figures*, before 1500, 2002.196.1
2. Haida, North America, *Totem Pole*, after 1850, 97.169.1
3. Roman, *Cinerary Box with Cover*, 1st c., 60.20.a,b
4. Tahiti, *Turtle*, 19th c., 2000.25.1
5. New Ireland, *Malagan Pole*, c. 1910, 68.9.3

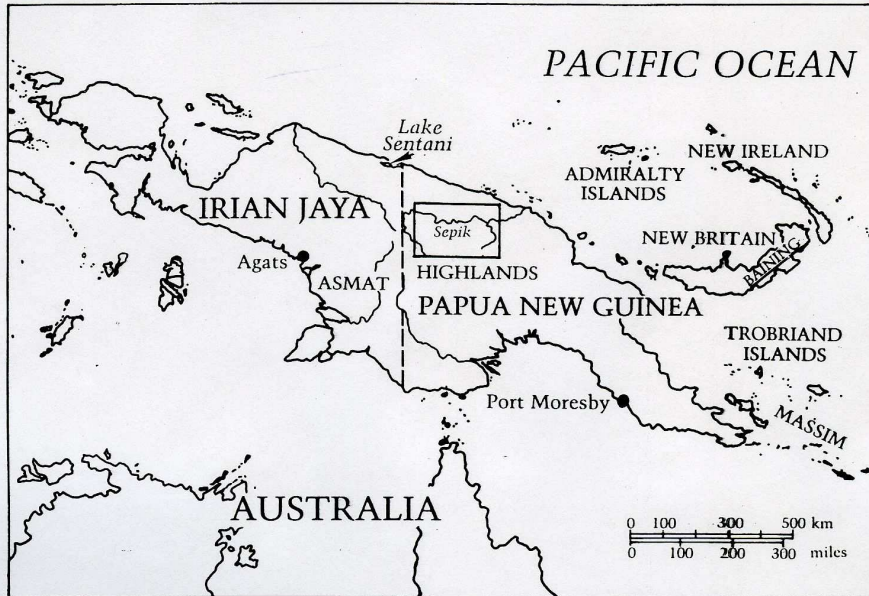
Ancestors

1. Yoruba, Nigeria, *Crown*, c. 1920, 76.29
2. Chokwe, Democratic Republic of Congo/Angola, *Figure*, 20th c., 2000.140
3. China, *Ancestral Portraits of Prince Shih Wen-ying and Princess Shih*, 18th c., 2002.12.2.1,2
4. Papua New Guinea, *Gope Board*, 18th c., 67.56

Emblems

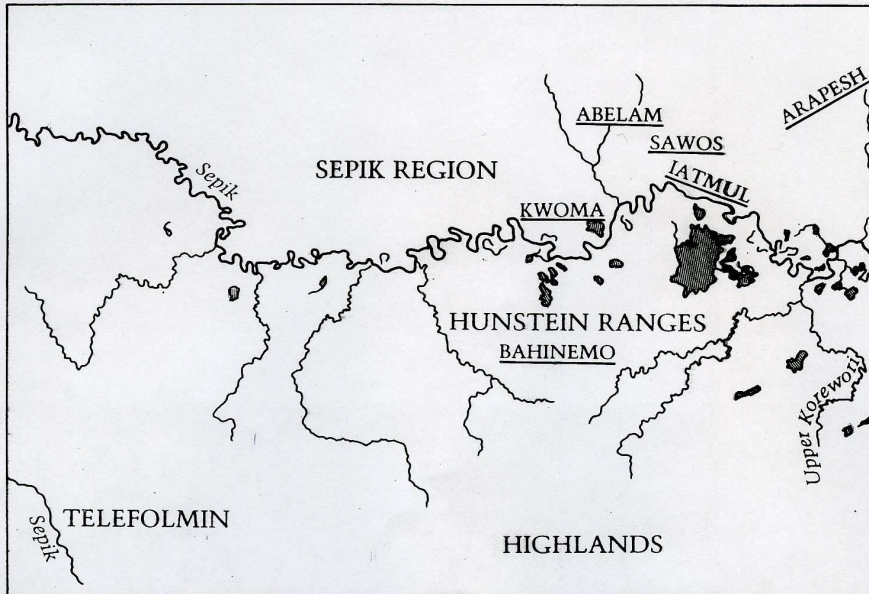
1. Japan, *Tiger and Dragon Screen*, c. 1560, 83.75.1
2. China, *Figure of a Rabbit*, T'ang Dynasty, 2004.132.4
3. Sir John Everett Millais, England, *Peace Concluded*, 1856, 69.48
4. Italy, *Coat of Arms of Cardinal Scipione Borghese*, c. 1610-20, 61.63.2





31 Map of New Guinea.

32 The Sepik region and its peoples.



KUNDU (HAND DRUM)

- WHAT IS IT?** This Kundu or hand drum was made and used by the Iatmul (YAHT-mool) people who live along the Middle Sepik River in Papua New Guinea.
- HOW IS IT USED?** Through the act of drumming and creating sound, the drum makes invisible spirits, real and tangible. The drum's sound becomes the voices of spirits and ancestors. Kundu drums are used most often to provide accompaniment to clan songs that are sung at important community events.
- HOW WAS IT MADE?** Like most hand drums from Melanesia, this Iatmul drum was carved from a single piece of wood. The drum has an hourglass shape with intricate patterns carved into the surface. Traditionally the carvings may be painted white (with lime) or black (charcoal). At one time, one end of the drum was covered with a lizard skin tympanum. As one might imagine, Melanesian lizard skin is not easily obtained in Minnesota. So that visitors to the Art Cart can try the drum and hear its sound, a more locally available calf or goat skin head has been stretched across the top of the drum. Do tell visitors this is not what the Iatmul would have typically used. On the cart, there is also a piece of dried lizard skin to show visitors the more common local material used for Melanesian drums. There are also examples of Asmat drums on view, on which the lizard skins are intact.
- WHAT DO THE DESIGNS MEAN?** The artistic designs on the surface of the drum express the fundamental Iatmul worldview. The intricate pattern of repetitious ovals creates a faint reference to leaves and other plant species, but also provides a dynamic and lyrical setting for the function of the drum. The carvings culminate on each end of the drum in an open, cracking or gaping shape, which is meant to represent the gaping jaws of two crocodiles, their open mouths directed toward either end of the drum. The crocodile is an extremely important ancestor to the Iatmul, who believe that a huge crocodile (*Wagen*) spawned them, and the land they occupy is the back of this animal.
- The two crocodiles carved on the drum also represent the two major components of the cosmos, the earth and the sky. The Iatmul believe that the earth and sky—like the dark and light, male and female, fire and water—are opposing yet complimentary forces (dualities) of the universe. The two sound chambers of the drum, open and closed, also symbolically represent this relationship. The handle establishes a link between the two worlds, visualized in various oral traditions as a vine stretching up from the earth to the sky. In this example, the handle is guarded by two almost bird-like spirit figures.
- In comparison to the drum in the MIA's permanent collection, the Art Cart example features a less direct reference to the importance of the crocodile in the lives of the Iatmul. The permanent collection drum features a handle that is the actual animal, with life-like details. The carvings on the core of the drum are more linear and less dense, with the same gaping design pattern on each end.

**QUESTIONS AND
ACTIVITIES**

25. Describe what you see upon examining this object closely. What do you see that makes you say that?
26. Try sounding the drum by gently patting it with your hand. How would you describe the sound it makes? Can you make the sound louder? Softer?
27. Cover the open bottom of the drum with one hand or set it gently on the cart to cover the opening. How is the sound similar or different from when you played it without covering the open bottom?
28. Find other drums in the Pacific Islands gallery. How do they compare in size, shape, and decoration to this example?

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

Musical Instruments

1. Haida, North America, *Rattle*, 19-20th c., 75.55
2. Cambodia, Dong Son, *Ceremonial Bell*, 2004.130
3. China, Eastern Chou, *Ritual Bell*, 97.81
4. Luba, Democratic Republic of Congo, *Thumb Piano*, 20th c., 2002.27.14
5. Korea, Choson dynasty, *Kayagum*, 97.124
6. China, *Ch'in (Zither)*, 475-221 BCE, 2002.8
7. New Ireland, *Malagan Figure (with pan pipes)* c. 1890, 85.93
8. Aborigine, *Bull Roarer*, c. 1900, 99.163.2
9. Iatmul, Papua New Guinea, *Kundu Drum*, 20th c., 98.37.3
10. Asmat, Papua (Irian Jaya), *Kundu Drum*, 19-20th c., 74.56.1

Duality

1. India, *Shiva Nataraja*, late 10th c., 29.2
2. Bwa, Burkina Faso, *Plank Mask*, c. 1960, 98.2
3. New Ireland, *Malagan Frieze*, c.1890, 85.93
4. Ligbi, Ivory Coast, *Triple Face Dance Mask (Do Society Mask)*, 71.60a,b
5. Yoruba, Nigeria, *House Post, (Olowe of Ise)*, L98.295
6. Japan, *Tiger and Dragon Screen*, c.1560, 83.75.1

Origin/Creation Stories

1. Lakota, North America, *Woman's Dress*, 1880-1900, 74.64.5
2. Albrecht Dürer, German, *Adam and Eve*, 1504, P12.613
3. Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl), North America, *Sun Mask*, c. 1860, 2003.189
4. Quapaw, North America, *Underwater Panther Vessel*, c. 1500, 2004.33
5. Yoruba, Nigeria, *King's Crown*, c. 1920, 76.29

Crocodiles

1. Senufo, Ivory Coast, *Granary Door*, 19th c., 58.13
2. Akan, Ghana, *Goldweight Crocodile* (#35), 15th-16th c.
3. Isthmus, Venado Beach, *Gold Pendant Crocodile* (#12), 800-1200, 53.2.3
4. Iatmul, Papua New Guinea, *Kundu Drum*, 20th c., 98.37.3
5. Isthmus, Costa Rica, *Metate*, 1-500, 97.92.5



COCONUT SHELL SPOON

- WHAT IS IT?** This scoop or spoon from Papua New Guinea is made from the outer shell of a coconut.
- HOW ARE COCONUTS USED IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS?** Coconuts can be found practically everywhere along the coast in the Pacific Islands, and they are used for an infinite number of everyday activities. They are used as balls for different games, their leaves are fastened together to make children's toys like windmills, and their husks are used to start fires. Milk is drained for food, and coconut oil is common for cooking. The leaves are also used to wrap the deceased as well as the more common practice of weaving of mats and rugs. The shells are used as bowls for mixing pigments, as ladles for food, as a tool for making pottery, and are also made into rattles to attract fish.
- WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT THE COCONUT SPOON?** Practically every type of object—sacred and secular—is decorated in some way to enhance its appearance and/or meaning. Coconuts are found everywhere, and spoons and vessels are made and used with great frequency. Ornamented coconut spoons and vessels are made in only a few places, and Papua New Guinea is one of those regions. This spoon is evidence of the desire to ornament and beautify even the most common of objects.
- WHAT IS THE DESIGN?** As with the Sawos ceramic bowl, also found on the Art Cart, it is impossible to know exactly what the design means. The figure carved into the handle on the underside of the spoon is human rather than an abstracted animal or plant shape. This could suggest a relationship between the object and a spiritual figure or ancestor. Incised designs on spears with carved faces or human figures often represent the spirit which guides the spear to its proper destination. An incised design on an object used for preparing food and eating may suggest a spirit connected with sustenance or guidance to food sources.
- While we do not know exactly from what part of Papua New Guinea this spoon originates, the design suggests it could be from the Huon Gulf. Here, incised designs occur on headrests, bullroarers and especially on coconut cups. Typical patterns include a conventionalized face with sharp zigzags and toothed lines, much like what can be seen on this spoon.
- QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES**
29. Look at the decoration on the spoon. The design on the spoon is to enhance its appearance or meaning. Notice the figure carved into the spoon. Describe what you see. What do you see that makes you say that?
 30. If you were to carve your own spoon, how would you decorate it? Why? Draw your design.
 31. Compare the design of the spoon (the material, patterns, and figure) to other Pacific Islands objects. What are the similarities and differences?
 32. What kinds of utensils do you use in everyday life? How are they decorated? Find spoons from different regions and cultures in the galleries and compare them to the coconut shell spoon and the spoons that you use. How are they similar? Different?
 33. The figure on this spoon may represent an important ancestor or other spirit.

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How do you honor or remember your relatives/ancestors after their passage? If you were to create/commission a special memorial object for a beloved relative, what would it be/look like? Why?

**COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS**

Spoons from Other Cultures

1. Joseph Taylor, British, *Jockey Cap Caddy Spoon*, 1798-99, 75.10.6
2. Handicraft Guild of Minneapolis, American, 1905-18, *Spoon*, 96.117
3. Hester Bateman, British, *Cream Ladle*, c. 1782, 61.55.3
4. Paul Revere II, American, *Tablespoon*, 1792-93, 2001.165.1
5. Tsimshian or Tlingit, North America, *Spoon*, 19th c., 28.104
6. Egypt, *Cosmetic Spoon*, 1991-1784 BCE, 16.277
7. Yombe, Democratic Republic of Congo, *Ceremonial Spoon*, 19th c., 2002.27.23
8. Bassa, Cote d'Ivoire, *Spoon*, 20th c., 2000.201

**DECORATED OR EMBELLISHED OBJECTS FOR
DINING**

1. Christoph-Ferdinand Caron, French, *Tea Service*, 81.101.1-28
2. Tournai Porcelain Manufactory, Workshop of Anton Lyncker, decorator, various accession numbers
3. William Whitmore, American, *Beaker*, c. 1740, 32.21.1
4. England, *Chocolate Muddler*, c. 1760, 2003.51
5. Samuel Kirk & Son, American, *Tureen*, 1846-61, 98.92.a,b
6. Solomon Islands, *Bowl*, c. 1890, 2004.107.5
7. Papua New Guinea, *Food Plate*, 19th c., 90.81

DINING UTENSILS DEPICTED IN USE

1. Manufacture Nationale de Sevres, French, *Plate*, c. 1810, 25.417.31
2. Henri Cartier-Bresson, French, *Last Days of Kuomintang, Peking*, 1949, 95.6.4
3. Pierre Bonnard, French, *Dining Room in the Country*, 1913, 54.15
4. Cornelis Jacobsz. Delff, Dutch, *Kitchen Still Life*, c. 1608-10, 2002.151
- John Singer Sargent, American, *The Birthday Party*, 1887, 62.84

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BARKCLOTH (TAPA)

- WHAT IS IT?** This small piece of barkcloth (tapa or masi) comes from Moce Island, Fiji.
- WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BARKCLOTH?** Barkcloth, or *tapa* (tāh-pāh), is a cloth-like material derived from the inner bark of the mulberry or breadfruit tree. Practiced exclusively by women, tapa making is one of the most important and diverse art forms in Polynesia. Because cloth does not last long and garments are always needed, cloth making is a continuous process. The sound of the tapa beating is very distinctive and is not merely noise in the village. Instead, it is an expressive, aural activity. The women will often keep a constant, percussive beat and sing along.
- Tapa is a general term used to refer to barkcloth throughout the Pacific Islands. In Fiji, which is where the Art Cart example is from, tapa is called *masi* (māh-sēē). In Tonga, it is *ngatu*, and in Samoa, *siapo*.
- HOW IS IT MADE?** This example is from Fiji, though tapa is made throughout Polynesia and parts of Melanesia by the same method. Trees are cultivated solely for this purpose; most commonly the bark of the paper mulberry or breadfruit tree is used. When the trees are mature, the men cut them down and bring them to the villages. Work is started on the same day it is cut. The bark is carefully separated from the tree, soaked in water and then scraped with a shell to remove any outer bark from the inner bark. This treatment creates a soft, pliable material. The bark is then beaten out on a heavy, wooden table with an anvil-like wooden tool, known as a tapa beater. Beating is a long, fatiguing process requiring continuous folding and unfolding of the bark. Often its initial width is no more than four or five inches and when each piece is complete, it will be around twenty inches. Several of these smaller pieces are then overlapped and beaten together so their fibers fuse, forming large sheets.
- Elaborately carved tapa beaters are often used (see MIA object 99.12.1), leaving behind impressions of the designs carved on them, somewhat like a watermark on paper.
- HOW IS IT DECORATED?** While tapa is made using the same method throughout the Pacific Islands, there is a great deal of variety in the decoration of the cloth. Different cultural groups will stencil, print, dye and freehand paint to stamp repetitive designs using vegetable ochre and soot pigments. “Printing plates” are sometimes made of hibiscus bark and coconut fiber stitched to a pandanus-leaf base. Large, traditional tapa cloths are nearly always divided into rectangular compartments, then frequently subdivided with geometric patterns. Motifs are repeated in series.
- In western Polynesia, specifically Samoa, Tonga and Fiji, some of the most complex decorative techniques are used. Fijian tapa is especially known for its intricate stenciling. The video in the Pacific Island gallery shows a short clip of women making tapa cloth as well as people wearing it in ceremonial context.

WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

Both now and in the past, the display and exchange of large pieces of tapa form important components of ceremonial life in many areas of Polynesia. As would be expected, finer cloths are made specifically for those of chiefly status, or for ceremonial use. Although the incorporation of barkcloth in sculpture is rare, there are examples of it being used to create human effigies and frame figures. While “native cloth” was long abandoned in virtually all of eastern Polynesia, its use continues in ceremonial presentation, especially in the context of marriage ceremonies in Fiji.

In recent years, the collection of highly decorative tapa has increased throughout museums. Much emphasis is placed on the intricacy of the designs, but it is important to remember that traditionally tapa was presented in the context of a variety of relationships—marriage, death and other community ceremonies. This is true especially in Fiji where the exchange of valuables is more important than in parts of eastern Polynesia, where the emphasis is on the presentation of food and feasting. The idea that tapa is only decorative cloth is inadequate. Meaning arises from the process of its creation and use within the community.

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

34. Look at the tapa. Describe the designs and patterns. Feel the barkcloth. What do you feel? What do you see/feel that makes you say that?
35. Compare the barkcloth to the clothing you are wearing (pattern, texture, material, color, etc.). How is it similar or different? Would you like to wear the barkcloth? Why or why not?
36. The process of making tapa involves a percussive beat and singing. Think of other everyday activities or processes that involve a beat or sounds that could become musical (building a house/hammering, bouncing a ball, stirring a pot, etc.).
37. Pacific Island groups use tapa for important ceremonies. Think of what you wear on special occasions. How is it different from what you normally wear?

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

Ceremonial/Special Occasion Clothing

1. Laos, *Ceremonial Skirt by Blue Hmong*, 1950-82, 82.138
2. Various Cultural Groups, North America, Moccasins
3. Lakota, *Dress*, 1880-1900, 74.64.5
4. Asmat, Papua, *Spirit Mask*, 1999, L2006.20.9
5. Apsaalooka (Crow), North America, Man’s and Woman’s Outfits, 19th-21st c., various accession numbers
6. Asante and Ewe, Ghana, *Kente Cloth*, various accession numbers

Other Fiji Islands Objects

1. *Gugu* (Dance Club), 19th c., 2004.29.1
2. *Ceremonial Bowl*, 19th c., 2002, 128.1
3. *Headrest*, 19th c., L2006.36.6

Barkcloth

1. Society Islands, Tahiti, *Tapa Cloth*, 19th c., 98.36.1



NAVIGATION MAP, MARSHALL ISLANDS, 20TH CENTURY

WHAT IS IT?

This is a map or chart used in the Marshall Islands to navigate ocean currents.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a Micronesian island nation with a population of approximately 70,000 located north of Nauru and Kirabati. The country consists of 29 atolls (coral formations surrounding a central depression) and five isolated islands. The most important atolls and islands form two groups: the Ratak Chain and the Ralik Chain (meaning sunrise and sunset, respectively). Two-thirds of the nation's population lives on Majuro, which is also the capital, and Ebeye. Naturally, the Marshallese perceive their universe in relation to the sea and have developed great skills to coexist with its forces. Specifically, the Marshallese are expert navigators and are respected throughout the Pacific Islands for these skills. Long before modern day navigational tools, the Marshallese traveled the ocean, maintained courses and determined island positions by studying wave patterns and capturing that information in navigations maps made from sticks. These stick charts are unique to their culture.

WHAT TYPE OF VESSELS DO THEY SAIL?

The people of the Marshall Islands traditionally built wooden canoes in several sizes to serve distinct purposes. The largest could reach a length of 100 feet and carry up to 40 people, with supplies for voyages that lasted well over a month since these large vessels, called *walap*, were not fast. The *tipnol* was a smaller and speedier canoe, mainly used for fishing inside the lagoons. It could still carry 10 or more and be serviceable for ocean voyaging. The *korkor* was a small paddling outrigger, sometimes fitted with a sail, used for lagoon work.

WHY IS WAVE NAVIGATION USED? IS THAT UNUSUAL?

Traditionally in the Pacific Islands, celestial navigation—navigation by the position of the stars, sun and moon—is much more common than by understanding wave patterns. Stretching from the northwest to the southeast, the Marshall Islands are set at right angles to the ocean swell built up by the predominant winds. This orientation lends itself to a unique type of navigation based on wave patterns because there must be a sufficient number of islands or atolls set close enough to each other at an angle which runs perpendicular to the swell. In the Pacific Ocean, there are only a few island groups that meet these requirements with the Marshall Islands being the best example.

Ocean currents are driven by the circulation of wind above surface waters. Frictional stress at the interface between the ocean and the wind causes the water to move in the direction of the wind. Large ocean currents are a response of the atmosphere and ocean to the flow of energy from the tropics to polar regions. In some cases, currents are transient features and affect only a small area. Other ocean currents are essentially permanent and extend over large horizontal distances. Waves, or moving swells, are created only on the ocean surface and are more temporary than currents. They are directly affected by wind conditions.

HOW ARE THE CHARTS USED?

The Marshallese navigational charts were constructed as instructional aids for teaching the recognition of wave patterns. The example on the Art Cart is known as a *mattang* or *wappepe* and represents the typical pattern of currents surrounding any

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island. It is used to introduce the basics to new students of the seas. Other charts are much more complex and represent specific voyages and islands. They are typically asymmetrical or irregular in their design, as they represent actual wave patterns and islands. None of the charts are actually taken on voyages; all knowledge is memorized. While modern charts are universal and can be used to navigate from any location on the chart to another location on or even off the chart, the Marshallese stick charts are predominantly unidirectional because the wave patterns for the return voyage are different. The one exception is the completely symmetrical teaching chart, of course.

Each stick in a chart represents a current. Shells are often affixed to represent islands. The charts are often made of strips of coconut midrib or pandanus root on a frame. Strips which are curved show the altered direction of swells deflected by an island, and their intersection is an area of confused sea, a valuable indicator of position. Island currents are shown by short straight pieces.

Wave pattern navigation is based on the principle of reflection, deflection and refraction of waves. If a wave hits a stable object, such as an island, some waves are reflected back in the direction they came. Others are deflected at a different angle at the margins of the island. In addition, each island creates a conical shaped zone of quiet water on the leeward side, where the swell cannot reach. Further out on the leeward side, there will be a zone where the refracted waves coming from both sides of the island will meet.

Thus a canoe approaching the island against the direction of the swell, when it is dead on course, will encounter the wave collision point. The canoe will then enter the quiet water area. A canoe approaching the island with the swell will encounter the zone of the reflected swell if it is dead on course. The navigator must keep the canoe aligned with the triangle created by the refracted waves. If the approach to the island is at a right angle, then the navigator must look out for the refracted waves. The pattern becomes more complicated if there is more than one island creating reflections, deflections and refractions.

As is evident by the explanation above, wave navigation is quite complex and a challenge to explain in concise terms. Do not feel you need to be able to do so in complete terms for visitors. A simple explanation will suffice.

**WHAT WOULD
ONE LEARN FROM
THE TEACHING
CHART?**

From studying the teaching chart, Marshallese sailors will learn the most basic currents and wave patterns surrounding an island. Because it is symmetrical, it has no correct alignment and is applicable to many situations. After studying these basic currents, the young sailors are then taught how to gauge the strength of currents and to make adjustments. The teaching charts are also never taken along on the voyage. The training is intense and taken very seriously by young people and elders alike. It is said that many Marshallese sailors can lie in the bottom of their canoe and sail by the feel of the waves and the current on the hull.

COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS

Sailing and Navigation

1. Eugene Delacroix, French, *View of Tangier from the Seashore*, 1856-58, 49.4
2. Charles Adam Platt, American, *Dieppe*, 19th c., P.5,298
3. Charles Adam Platt, American, *Afternoon on the Maas*, 19th c., P.5,276
4. Paul Signac, French, *Blessing of the Tuna Fleet at Groix*, 1923, 62.36
5. Gustave Le Gray, French, *Brig on the Water*, 1856, 93.21
6. Emil Nolde, German, *Evening Glow*, 1915, 62.83
7. Ludolph Backhuysen, Dutch, *Fishing Vessels Offshore in a Heavy Sea*, 1684, 82.84
8. Lai Sung, Chinese, *The Ship Fleetwing, Hong Kong Bay*, J.W. Guest, *Commander*, 19th c., 58.24.7

CODE, SYMBOLISM, AND/OR DIRECTIONS IN ARTWORK

1. United States, *Album Quilt*, 19th c., 75.9.2
2. Hon'ami Koetsu and Tawaraya Sototsu, Japan, *Poem Card (Shikishi) with Snowy Willow*, 2003.27
3. China, Ming dynasty, *The Lotus Sutra in Seven Volumes*, 2004.85a-i
4. India, *Cosmic Parsvanatha*, c. 1525, 97.77
5. Monks of the Gyuto Tantric University, Tibet, *Yamantaka Mandala*, 1991, 92.44
6. Assyria (Iraq), *Winged Genius*, 883-859 BCE, 41.9
7. Egypt, *False Door*, c. 2400 BCE, 52.22

WATER AND WEATHER

1. William Trost Richards, American, *Quiet Seascape*, 1883, 80.67
2. Frederick Childe Hassam, American, *Isles of Shoals*, 1889, 14.115
3. Johan Barthold Jongkind, Dutch, *Landscape from Lake Lemman to Nyon*, 1875, 64.22
4. Claude Monet, French, *The Seashore at Sainte-Adresse*, 1864, 53.13
5. George Wesley Bellows, American, *The Harbor, Monhegan Coast, Maine*, 1913, 33.16

COLLECTION
CONNECTIONS
(CONTINUED)

Boat-Related Carvings

1. Solomon Islands, *Canoe Prow*, mid-late 19th c., L2006.5.1
2. Asmat, Papua, *Canoe Prow*, 20th c., L2006.20.1
3. Maori, New Zealand, *Canoe Bailer*, 19th c., L2006.36.5
4. Maori, New Zealand, *Canoe Strake*, 19th c., 2002.193
5. Papua, *Canoe Paddle*, 19th-20th c., 74.56.2
6. Thomas Ona Odulate, Nigeria, *Boat Group*, c. 1940, 97.2a-p
7. Egypt, *Model Boat with Figures*, 2133-1786 BCE, 16.496

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