

International Symposium: Made in Oceania

– Presentations –

SESSION 1: CULTURAL MEANING OF TAPA

Verena Keck (Germany)

FROM DEPICTION OF PRIMEVAL EVENTS TO TODAY'S *KASTOM* OBJECT: TAPA AMONG THE YUPNO IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Traditionally, the Yupno of the Finisterre Range in Papua New Guinea used barkcloth not only as everyday clothing (as for plain belts or cloaks) but also as carrier of indigenous cosmology and mythology. These tapa were decorated with earth colours and used to depict important primeval beings. They were worn together with large feather wheels at *nsaguo konggap* dance festival, held at night.

Today, with the increasing loss of indigenous knowledge, those tapa have nearly lost their function of passing on cultural knowledge and prehistoric events. However, they are transferred to new contexts. Using an altered iconography, they are an important part of *kastom*, the proud, cherished, but also nostalgic return to local traditions and ways of living of the ancestors, and an expression of cultural identity.

Anna-Karina Hermkens (Australia)

MEDIATIONS OF CLOTH: ENGENDERING PERSONHOOD AMONG THE MAISIN OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

This presentation explores the engendering of personhood through barkcloth (tapa). In particular, I follow barkcloth made by Maisin women living along the shores of Collingwood Bay in Oro Province, Papua New Guinea. By following the production, movement, appropriation and reworking of cloth among and outside Maisin, it will be shown how sociality is formed and mediated through cloth. Among Maisin, barkcloth is crucial in mediating relationships between groups of people, and between the living and the dead. In fact, the production and use of tapa engenders Maisin people and their identities. At the same time, Maisin tapa is used by other Papua New Guineans as a traditional garment and is reworked into fashionable dresses and high-heeled women's shoes, becoming a statement of modern PNG identity. These and other examples show how Maisin barkcloth influences patterns and practices of personhood across different contexts. It also shows the gender struggles involved with dynamics of 'worlding'.

Joshua Bell (USA)

A FOREST OF RELATIONS: BARKCLOTH AND THE RITUAL ARTS OF THE CENTRAL PAPUAN GULF OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Until their cessation following World War II, communities of the Papuan Gulf of Papua New Guinea made elaborate ritual art of which barkcloth masks are the most iconic. Within the Purari Delta, these masks were made within the secluded confines of the longhouse by initiated men. Bursting forth from the longhouse during regional ritual cycles, these masks materialized a forest of relationships between clan groups and with otherwise unseen totemic spirit-beings that inhabit the land and water-ways. Weaving together historical accounts and contemporary

oral histories, I discuss the materials and the making of the region's barkcloth masks, as well as the masks' ritual use, symbolism and sensorial affects. In doing so, I examine some otherwise overlooked barkcloth objects made regionally, and offer up a new interpretation of the role and place of barkcloth in the ritual arts of the Purari Delta.

Kolokesa Mahina-Tuai (New Zealand)

NIMAMEA'A KOKA'ANGA – THE FINE ART OF TONGAN NGATU OR BARKCLOTH MAKING

Is there such a thing as an authentic Tongan ngatu or barkcloth? Where does authenticity lie? Does it lie in the artists who produce the ngatu or does it lie in the ngatu produced by the artists? Is a Tongan ngatu that is made entirely of natural materials more authentic than one that is made using a mixture of natural and synthetic materials? Is it more authentic because it was made by artists of Tongan heritage as opposed to artists who are not of Tongan heritage? These questions of authenticity will be discussed and critiqued using the *tā-vā* (time-space) theory of reality and Tongan ethnography, and examples of Tongan ngatu from two exhibitions: *Threads: Contemporary Textiles and the Social Fabric* (1 October 2011 – 5 February 2012) Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Australia and *Ko e Hala Hangatonu: The Straight Path 2013* (8 March – 13 April 2013), Two Rooms, Auckland, New Zealand.

MODULE 2: MATERIAL QUALITY OF TAPA

Fanny Wonu Veys (Netherlands)

DUTY AND MULTI-SENSORIAL QUALITIES OF BARKCLOTH DURING ROYAL CEREMONIES IN TONGA

Barkcloth as it is used today in Tonga is an object with multi-sensorial qualities: it is visual, olfactory, tactile and auditory. Decorated with different motifs, the visual aspect of barkcloth is clear. It has volume, contrasting colours and it shines. The olfactory quality of barkcloth is intimately connected to the use of coconut oil. During its manufacture, its tactile quality is omnipresent and the auditory aspect undeniable. Barkcloth is ubiquitous during rites of passage in Tonga, even more so when the ceremonies concern the Royal Family. This paper will explore how the multi-sensorial qualities are asserted during barkcloth's involvement in royal ceremonies.

Anne-Claire de Poulpiquet (France)

TREATMENT OF OILED HAWAIIAN BARKCLOTH – LOOKING FOR THE SUITABLE ADHESIVE. IDENTIFICATION OF OIL ON HAWAIIAN BARKCLOTHS

In this presentation, we describe restoration treatments on early 19th century Hawaiian oiled tapas. The tapas that were selected for specific treatments were part of a study, analysis and restoration project on barkcloths from the Wilkes collection, led by the Natural History Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. Part of the project focused on Hawaiian oiled tapas. We observed the interaction between oil and cellulose that generated specific degradations. Tapas were oiled in two different ways: some were coated in oil and others showed oil used as binder for pigments. We reproduced two different sets of samples using modern tapa that were dipped in oil and artificially aged. Two oils that were said to be manufactured in ancient Hawaii, kukui and kamani oils, were selected. We believe that those oils were the main ones in use for tapa manufacture in ancient Hawaii and they could have been employed for different purposes. The poor condition of the oiled tapas raised the question of suitable adhesives for their reinforcement by local backing. Different adhesives were tested on the artificially

aged contemporary barkcloth samples. The Wilkes' tapas were then restored using starch paste, and in some cases, when the tapas were coated with oil, starch mixed with Lascaux®. This work demonstrates that the combination of oxidative oil and inappropriate storage strongly weakens the cellulose with time. It also shows that some oils still have a very greasy "touch" when aged and that it raises the issue of finding a suitable adhesive.

Julia Gresson (United Kingdom)

INVESTIGATION OF TWO COLOURANTS USED TO DECORATE SOLOMON ISLANDS BARKCLOTH: TURMERIC AND WILD INDIGO

Many of the colourants used to decorate Pacific barkcloth were recognised by their makers as fugitive, and could be replenished when the need arose. Once in a museum collection, however, the choices for renewal become increasingly restricted, with conservation ethics preventing the replacement of missing dyes and pigments as part of any remedial treatment. The colourants themselves may also limit the options for conservation treatment, as their chemical properties render many commonly used solvents and adhesives impracticable. This paper focuses on the preparation, use and conservation treatment of two traditional colourants – firstly, the rhizome turmeric, used to impart a yellow/orange hue to barkcloth from the islands of Tikopia and Santa Cruz; and secondly, wild indigo, used to produce the mottled blue surface and distinctive motifs of types of Santa Isabel barkcloth. Identification methods and conservation treatment limitations are discussed, and recommendations made on suitable display techniques for use with barkcloth coloured in these ways.

Robin Bastian, Petra Czerwinske, Regina Klee, Stephanie Lürßen (Germany)

BEFORE THE OPENING – ASPECTS OF CONSERVATION AND INSTALLATION

A special exhibition such as „Made in Oceania“ requires a long period of preparation. Alongside the contextual concept and texts the objects themselves may also, if required, undergo a conservation treatment and/or be fitted with a specifically-constructed method of exhibition mount. In consultation with the curators the presentation of the object is ultimately determined by the museum's conservation department. But what exactly does this "preparation for an exhibition" really mean for the conservator?

The preparations for the current special exhibition should give an example of what goes on behind the scenes, in that the various different aspects of exhibition preparation and installation will be further examined. For an example, the individual stages of the development of a suitable display for a "Masi" (room-divider) will be presented – and the conservational aspects of dealing with numerous, sometimes quite large, exhibits made of tapa. Furthermore, the problems that can develop during the planning and implementation phase, as well as the related logistical aspects, will be presented. To round off the presentation, background information such as input and personnel expenditures will be discussed.

Keynote: Nicholas Thomas (United Kingdom)

BARKCLOTH: MUSEOLOGY, HISTORY, ART HISTORY

The Cologne exhibition, following 'Paperskin' in Brisbane and Wellington, and 'Tapa' in Birmingham, empowers a new understanding of the power and diversity of barkcloth in the Pacific. This lecture considers how a new museology – that sees the collection as a relational assemblage rather than just a set of objects – and new engagements with artists and makers enable us to understand barkcloth textiles, paintings and assemblages as art forms with complex cross-cultural histories; as eloquent expressions of customary practice, and as media of tradition and experimentation today.

DAY TWO

Keynote: Adrienne Kaeppler (USA)

CULTURE, CONSERVATION AND CREATIVITY: TWO CENTURIES OF POLYNESIAN BARKCLOTH

Since the late 18th century, visitors to Polynesia have been fascinated by the fabrication of barkcloth from the inner bark of certain trees. Many pieces of the cloth were collected, starting with the three voyages of Captain Cook. Some of the pieces were made into dresses for Europeans to wear and marvel at. Others were cut into small pieces and pasted into books, such as those put together by Alexander Shaw (1787). But most pieces became part of museum collections and many museums have hundreds of pieces. Unfortunately, many of the pieces have deteriorated in a variety of ways, making it almost impossible for researchers to view them. This paper will explore the Polynesian cultures that created these beautiful pieces and recent efforts for preserving them for research and exhibition.

SESSION 3: TAPA IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Mark Nesbitt (United Kingdom)

TAPA AT KEW GARDENS: THE VIEW FROM A BOTANICAL MUSEUM

The first tapa pieces arrived at Kew shortly after the opening of its Museum of Economic Botany in 1847. By 1900 the Museum had acquired over 70 pieces from throughout the Pacific, as well as barkcloth from Africa and South America. I will explore the routes by which tapa cloth came to Kew, through a wide variety of personal and official contacts, and examine its reception in London. How was tapa displayed, what kind and quality of information was linked to specimens, and how did collectors and botanists view this material? I will conclude by looking at the relevance of this type of historic collection to source communities and scholars today.

Monique Pullan (United Kingdom)

BARKCLOTH CONSERVATION AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Using examples from the Oceanic collections of The British Museum, this presentation will discuss some of the techniques used at the Organic Artefacts Conservation studio in the conservation of barkcloth (tapa).

This will include consideration of the typical types of damage and deterioration found in the collections. Conservation techniques described will include various methods of cleaning (conservation sponges, moistened swabs and blotter washing), humidification and reshaping, the localised repair of splits and tears, and the application of support linings to pieces with extensive damage. Some discussion will be made on the choice of repair materials, the colouring of repair materials and extent of visual infill, as well as the choice of adhesive. These interventive treatments will be set in the context of their ethical and cultural appropriateness.

Roswitha Zobl (Austria)

BARKCLOTH IN THE WELTMUSEUM WIEN

The former *Museum für Völkerkunde Wien* owns numerous barkcloths from various regions. The way they are stored varies. Depending on their place of origin, they are either stored in the building's basement in compact or fixed shelves, or in cardboard boxes in the textile storage on the mezzanine floor. The long lasting situation with the museum only having a minimal permanent exhibition space and continuously changing special exhibitions is now about to be improved by a temporary closing of the museum at the end of 2014, its restructuring, and a proposed re-opening in 2016.

These conditions draw greatly upon the conservators' expertise so that there is little time and energy left for the permanent care of the objects and the continuation of already initialised projects. Still, there have been steps forward. At times, supported by trainees and a diploma student, objects were meticulously catalogued by having the objects photographed in full size, creating data sheets, entering them into the museums data base TMS and repacking them for storage. In the course of past exhibitions, some objects were cleaned, flattened, tears were fixed and holes supported. Various mounts were tested for their advantages and disadvantages. When stored horizontally, magnets with various in-between layers are used.

Jeremy Uden (United Kingdom)

BARKCLOTH IN THE COOK-VOYAGE COLLECTIONS AT THE PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

The Cook-voyage collections at the Pitt Rivers museum date from the first and second voyages (1768-1771, 1772-1775). Sir Joseph Banks, the scientist on the first voyage, gave a collection to Oxford before January 1773, while the second voyage collection was part of the large quantity of objects collected by the Forsters, who were the naturalists on that expedition. The Forster collection is one of the best-documented Cook-voyage collections in the world, and therefore arguably one of the most important. The collections have been in Oxford since the 1770s.

There are 20 pieces of flat barkcloth in the Cook-voyage collections at the Pitt Rivers, some associated with the Tahitian Mourner's costume. This paper will give an overview of the collection, and will discuss the research into some of the individual barkcloths in more detail.

SESSION 4: TAPA – TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Eva Raabe (Germany)

FROM PATTERNS TO GRAPHIC ARTS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA. LOOKING FOR TRACES

In many regions of Papua New Guinea barkcloth, bamboo containers, bracelets or shields were decorated with traditional patterns. Those ornaments inspired the graphic art work which characterized the image of modern Papua New Guinean art during the 1960s and 1970s. Although it cannot always be clearly seen at first, artistic pioneers like Timothy Akis or Matthias Kauage transferred traditional patterns into their drawings and paintings. By juxtaposing examples of traditional and modern art, while looking for traces in the Frankfurt Oceania collection, the line of development from rural grass root arts to urban outsider art will be visualized. It seems that the graphic style of the so-called outsider art informed PNG's urban art scene like no other art style and is even of influence today. There is still a vivid interest in traditional decorative art because it is so easily transferred into graphics and prints.

Sean Mallon (New Zealand)

FOLLOWING TAPA: NEW CONTEXTS, NEW MEANINGS, AND GLOBAL CULTURE

In this survey paper, I highlight the significance of tapa cloth outside formal indigenous contexts of ceremonies and exchange. Following tapa from Papua New Guinea, to Hawaii, the Pitcairn Islands, the Cook Islands and New Zealand, I analyse how tapa cloth and its images are put to work and mediate processes of identity formation, the transfer of knowledge and cultural revival. These are not new processes associated with tapa cloth production, but the contemporary and social and cultural dimensions which are less widely known. In this presentation, I examine new contexts where tapa is made and used, the meanings people give to tapa, and how global flows of people and information shape its production, use and circulation.

Closing panel