Part IV

Context of the Lake Sentani Material
The Entanglement of Objects and Society

In this part the objects, the decorations of which were analysed in Part III, are presented in their 19th century and early 20th century context. My aim is to demonstrate the entanglement of these objects with other objects and their social surroundings. It will be argued that a holistic view of both social and material culture is necessary when studying material culture. The formal analysis, put forward in Part III, disregards the social value of both the object and its decoration. The outcome reveals nothing more (or less) than the co-occurrence of design elements or structures. The structural principles of the designs give some indication about the conceptual world which governs both the material and immaterial surroundings of people. This aspect will be further discussed and analysed in Part V.

14.1 Introduction

The people of Lake Sentani used to pay a lot of attention to the objects which surrounded them. They decorated them with curvilinear motifs and stylized animals. The specific way in which these basic ornamentations are depicted gives information about the village, family and person which owned or owns the object. Utensils like canoes\(^{42}\) (*koji*), paddles, wooden dishes (*'o'ho'i*), suspension hooks (*inyou*), spatula's (*ankom*), lime- (*anu*), and tobacco containers etc. were often decorated with the ornaments which were also depicted on religious objects. These ornamentations consist of curvilinear motifs and stylized animals. The curvilinear motifs are spirals which are depicted in rows or solo. According to Hoogerbrugge, the four animal motifs which were predominant are the turtle, the Papuan hornbill, the varan and the frog. "In each case the body of the animal was represented by a diamond-shaped or ellipsoidal figure filled with spiral ornament" (Kooijman & Hoogerbrugge 1992: 114). The position of the legs or wings determined the individual species depicted. Since both the spiral and these stylized animals can be found on religious objects and objects of daily life, it can be assumed that the decorations have a mythological or religious origin (Van der Sande 1907: 283; Hoogerbrugge 1967). This is confirmed by the fact that in myths, decorations are mentioned in relation to spirits and ancestors (see for a further elaboration of Sentani myths, Part V). It is also clear that animals played a major role in the religious life of the Sentani and Humboldt Bay people. Both totemistic and animistic principles intertwine the lives of these people with those of the animals and their natural surroundings. This entanglement of human, natural and conceptual life, is most clearly visible in the material culture.

\(^{42}\) The word for canoe in the eastern part of Lake Sentani is *koji*. In the middle part of the lake it is called *kei*keji and in the west it is named *ipo*. 
Context and life-cycle of lime- and tobacco-containers, painted barkcloth, wooden dishes and drums

15.1 Lime-containers
Betel chewing is a central part of life in New Guinea. In many places children start chewing when only a few years old. Adults chew after dinner, when they meet friends, work in the gardens, attend feasts and during canoe voyages (Beran 1988: 5). In Lake Sentani betel chewing seems to have a religious origin (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 38). In daily life, the collective chewing of betel implies a friendly relationship and serves as a principle of reciprocity (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 38). According to Van der Goes (1862: 170), who visited the Humboldt Bay in 1858, only the older people chewed betel and sirih because the younger ones still had white teeth. In 1996, however, I observed that young children were allowed to chew betel as well. On Asei the influence of the church has diminished the practice of betel chewing, like liquor and drugs it is considered as a bad and evil habit. This was quite different at the turn of the century, when lime-container and individual seem to have been inseparable. They were carried along under the arm, in a stringbag or tied to a string (Van der Sande 1907: 22).

Betel is chewed by about a tenth of the world's population in an area stretching from East-Africa across India, Sri Lanka, southern China, mainland Southeast-Asia, Indonesia and the Philippines to New Guinea and nearby islands (Beran: 1988: 5). It is a mild stimulant which reduces hunger pangs and produces feelings of good humour, well-being and increased capacity for work. Chewing also improves the odour of the breath, increases the flow of saliva and colours it and the teeth red. It is also said to strengthen the teeth and to reduce dental caries. The increase in salivation and the odour freshens the breath and strengthens the teeth.

The ingredients and implements used in betel chewing vary in the region. In Sentani three essential ingredients are consumed. These are the 'areca-nut' which is the seed of the areca palm (pu or pe), the fruit of the betel plant (sidi or affe), and mineral lime (au) which is made from burnt shells (Van der Sande 1907: 20; Hermkens 1996a). The combination gives a pleasant sensation and effects the central nervous system, which causes fatigue and hunger to disappear. Due to the interaction of the nut with the lime, a reddish saliva and increase in saliva is obtained.

The utensils used in betel chewing in Sentani consists of lime-containers, lime-spatulas to convey the lime from the container to the mouth, and stringbags in which the containers are carried. In order to consume the lime, the spatula is moistened and dipped in the lime. The lime that sticks on the spatula is licked off and consumed with the areca-nut and sidi.
15.1.1 Lime, lime-containers, lime-spatulas, 'holoboL' and beads

The lime, which is consumed with the pu and affe, is made from burnt shells, locally named gofja (Van der Sande 1907: 33). In Lake Sentani two kinds of lime are consumed; lime made from sea- and lime made from lake-shells. The former is white coloured and has a sharp taste and composition which can cause slight wounds to the mouth. The latter is greyish and has a softer composition.

The production of lime is a women's task. They collect both empty and full shells, the contents of the latter are consumed first. The collected shells are put between two layers of sago slats and the whole is burnt with dry grasses for about 10-15 minutes. When the fire is gone out, the white burnt shells are picked out of the ashes. These pieces are crushed with the hand, moistened with water and wrapped in banana leaves. The leaves don't add any taste to the lime but are used for practical reasons. The banana leaf package is burnt in hairy coconut shells and regularly turned. After approximately 10 minutes the lime is ready to be sieved and after cooling down it can be consumed.

Lime-containers are made from gourds or coconuts. The lime-containers made from gourds belong to the Lagenaria Vulgaris species and are called au in Sentani (Van der Sande 1907: 33; Hoogerbrugge 1967: 53; Hermiens 1969a) and naq-fauge in the Humboldt Bay (Galis 1955: 115). On the spot of the stalk a little hole is made through which the contents of the gourd are emptied with a little stick. Subsequently the gourd is cleaned with water or sand, placed on a little stick and dried in the sun for several weeks (Van der Sande 1907: 21; Hoogerbrugge 1967: 53). Van der Sande (1907: 21) reported that gourds were dried upside down on the roof of a man's house. Due to the drying, the peel of the gourd became hard and obtained a yellow or goldbrown colour. Decorations were burnt into the dry gourd with a piece of sharpened and singed nerve (kinkai) from a sago-palm (Van der Sande 1907: 21; Hoogerbrugge 1967: 53). This activity took place in the twilight (Van der Sande 1907: 21). Written sources indicate that the manufacture and decoration of lime-containers was a specifically male concern (Van der Sande 1907: 21). If people wanted to have a very nice decoration, experienced persons were asked to engrave their gourd. Such a specialist was called tukang au (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 53). People highly valued symmetry and regularity. Hoogerbrugge (1967: 53) noticed that people followed the complex intertwining spiral decorations with a twig, in order to check if the engravings were correctly applied. The often complicated spiral decorations are difficult to apply in a regular and symmetrical fashion, since the surface of gourds is smooth and convex. This is especially the case with coconuts of which the surface is even harder to engrave.

There are some indications that different shapes of gourds and specific decorations were related to certain persons or groups. The elongated and oval-shaped gourds were attributed to men, the women possessed pear-shaped (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 53) and probably round gourds as well. However, the ondoelfi

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22 Tukang is the Indonesian word for someone who is specialized in something, au is the Sentani word for lime and lime-gourds.
and his wife, possessed special lime-containers. The ondoafi owned a gourd with a specific decoration named homo kelew. These gourds were also used by the medicine man, who used them during the execution of black magic (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 81). Both women and children were not allowed to touch the medicine man gourds or consume anything out of it (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 55). Besides the individual lime-containers, each clan possessed a big melon-shaped lime-gourd, which was meant for communal use. The spiral decorations on these pieces were cut out and filled with lime (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 58). The gourds were used during special occasions and festivities at which the wife of the clan-leader offered it around so all guests could take some lime out of it. These big gourds were kept by the wife of the clan or lineage leader (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 58).

Lime-containers made from coconuts were less frequently used as compared with the gourds. Their use was restricted to the wife/wives of the ondoafi (Van der Sande 1907: 21,34; Galis 1955: 116; Hoogerbrugge 1967: 59). These containers, koau (ko=knut) in Lake Sentani (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 59) and moingiwi (moi=woman) in the Humboldt Bay (Galis 1955: 116), were already a peculiarity in 1903 (Van der Sande 1907: 21). In the fifties they were completely out of production already for several generations (Galis 1955: 116; Hoogerbrugge 1967: 59). There are some indications that the containers were passed from mother to daughter. This would explain a photograph on which a woman with the lime-coconut of her mother is displayed (In: Hoogerbrugge 1967: 27). In 1996 only some older women, originating from Lake Sentani islands, could remember the use of this kind of lime-container. This contrary to the gourds which were commonly known, and according to some women, still in use. During my fieldtrip in 1996 I did not, however, see any lime-gourds in use. People used little metal boxes or little jars to keep the lime. When going on a trip, the small boxes along with the betel and sirih were carried in a stringbag, locally named holoboi.

Besides lime containers and the ingredients used for chewing betel, tobacco-containers were carried in stringbags as well (Van der Sande 1907: 17). Holoboi were owned by both men and women. Holoboi's which are used by men are called pesangè, stringbags for women are called hora. The names are different; the shapes, however, are the same. The holoboi of the ondoafi were decorated with coloured beads and shells. These nets contained precious beads and bracelets. Today most people use modern, knitted, variations or bags made from cotton. The holoboi of ondoafi's are rare.

The production of the yarns and the stringbags takes place in the village and is executed by women. There are 3 kinds of trees which can be used: yongoli ha (white bark), ghusa (reddish bark) and haboloha (reddish bark). The bark has to be soaked for one week, after which a woman stripes the bark in long thin fibre-threads. Three fibres are picked out and rolled and twisted on the woman's leg. The fibres are always right-twisted because the movement is downwards. The threads are sometimes coloured with natural pigments.

The lime was consumed with a spatula which acted at the same time as a lime-container cap. Spatulas were called ankom in Lake Sentani (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 61; Hermkens 1996a) and njanjau in
the Humboldt Bay. Their shape and material differs. Some contain a simple sculptured handle, others have a handle carved with ornaments or human figures. Most of the spatulas are made from wood, only a few are made from bone. These were quite unique in the fifties and were called *auvumti* or *au-nu*. Almost all spatulas have a -more or less- decorated handle. The spatula itself, which is not visible when put in a lime-container, is not decorated but only sharpened. An exception is formed by spatulas, which also serve as a rattle-stick. These pieces contain horizontal ridged spatulas and were called *uchelika* (*chelika* = sound) (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 62). The human figures which were carved on top of the spatulas were called *torelo uno* (=human statue). Sometimes people described these figures as "a dead person" (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 61). The resemblance between the human figures and some geometrically carved handles is such that a relation between the two types can not be excluded. Hoogerbrugge (1967: 61) argues that the areca-nut has served as an example for the evolution of respectively the geometrical pieces and, subsequently, the pieces with human figures. The latter have evolved from the first. The areca-nut has evolved into the head, the beads and shell-rings into the body (Figure 8.2). Sentani people have a special relation with beads which are considered equal to a human life. Beads are also compared with the tree of life, a symbol which is frequently depicted on barkcloth as well (see Part IV).

The beads were obtained via trading and were -and still are- used as dowry and adat payments. The Sentani name for dowry is miè róbôni, which means 'woman bead' (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 51). They have their origin in the mainland of Asia, which causes them to be rare and therefore highly valued. Chiefs and people with status tried to increase their power by collecting more of these old beads (Kooijman 1959: 15). The missionary Bink noticed that the people of Ayafò (Lake Sentani) would do anything in exchange for blue and yellow beads (Bink 1896: 66).

There are three kinds of beads (*haboni*) which are valued differently. The blue ones are called *norm*. In 1996 the price of one such a blue bead was 100,000 rp. (approximately fl. 75,-). Green beads are called *hawa* (10,000 rp.) and yellow beads *hajè* (1,000 rp). In November 1962 the value of beads was still expressed in packages of sago (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 51).

The sizes of the human figures vary considerably. The Institute of the Tropics in Amsterdam possesses some relatively large pieces of between 15 and 20 cm high. This in contrast to the more frequent pieces of about 7 to 8 cm high. A striking feature of the human figures -in both the Dutch museum and several private collections- is the predominance of male figures. Only two of the studied pieces are feminine. Some of the human figures are decorated with little beads or strings around the neck, upper-arms and hips, or have engraved bracelets on the arms. Ethnographic sources mention both men and women decorating their hair and limbs with flowers and ornaments (Van der Sande 1907;Wirz 1929; Galis 1955: 92). Tattoo patterns are also visible on some pieces. These spatulas have painted faces and limbs. In contrast to the ethnographical record which states that only women had tattoos, the 'tattooed' human figures on the spatulas are all masculine. Since men painted their faces and bodies during special activities
such as war or combat, the designs may depict painted body-decorations as well. The feminine spatula in Groningen has engraved tattoo patterns on her upper-arms.

Figure IV.15.1a Lime-gourd and lime-coconut with spatulas.

Figure IV.15.1b Different types of geometrical spatulas.

Figure IV.15.1c The meaning of the different parts of geometrical spatulas: 1= areca-nut, 2= bead, 3= ring made from shell, shaped like a star and frequently used as an earring, 4= ring made from shell, flat, worn in necklaces between beads (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 60).
15.2 Tobacco-containers

There is some doubt about the origin of tobacco in New Guinea. Some claim it is an endemic product (Nouhuys 1932: 75-79; Galis 1955: 116). Others believe it has its origin in America and was transported to New Guinea by Europeans (May 1984: 97). It is certain that tobacco was already a popular stimulant in 1616, when early seafarers visited the north coast (Nouhuys 1932: 75). In the Humboldt Bay, tobacco was spotted by members of the Etna-expedition who visited the area in 1858. Coast dwellers are known to have acquired their tobacco from inland people (De Clercq 1893: 71; Nouhuys 1932: 77) who probably traded it for food or other utensils. In the area of Sentani, tobacco was grown in gardens. Bink (1896) mentioned that when walking from Tobadi to Lake Sentani he passed through gardens with sugarcane, bananas, tubers and tobacco (Bink 1896: 41). These gardens belonged to Lake Sentani people who maintained them well (Bink 1896: 68). The Humboldt Bay people seem to have grown tobacco as well, which they called *sahegai* (Bink 1896: 7). The tobacco was stored in containers made from bamboo. The container protected the tobacco and prevented it from crumbling. To prevent loss of tobacco, the topside of the cylinder was closed with a piece of barkcloth or some rolled leaves.

15.2.1 Tobacco-containers, trade and social intercourse

Tobacco-containers (*pósé*) were made from bamboo and were used to store dried tobacco (*sahuchai*) (Van der Goes 1862: 180; De Clercq 1893: 71; Van der Sande 1907: 17). The tobacco-containers were about 20-30 cm long. The bottom of the containers was a natural articulation of the bamboo. In 1858 decorations were incised with stone tools (Van der Goes 1862: 180), around 1900 metal knives were probably more in use. By partly removing the outer bark of the bamboo the darker inner bark got visible which created a light-dark effect. In the Geelvink Bay and Humboldt Bay this optical effect was intensified by adding dark-red pigment into the grooves (Loebèr 1919-20: 10). According to Van der Sande (1907: 17) this emphasizing of the inner-bark was rarely practised in Lake Sentani. The specimens he collected in 1903 do, however, have traces of dark pigments in the grooves. It is not clear which persons were involved in the production of tobacco-containers. The regularity of the incised patterns indicates the expertise of the craftsmen involved. Especially in Lake Sentani people were renowned for these skills and there are indications of some kind of industry in this area. Tobacco-containers were much appreciated by the Humboldt Bay people, who acquired these objects through trading (Van der Sande 1907: 17). Van der Sande collected most of the tobacco containers in Ayapo (15 of the 17 pieces).

The decoration style on the tobacco- and also the lime-containers probably evolved in the Lake Sentani area. This in contrast to 'fashion' styles in hairdress and clothing, which the people of Lake Sentani took over from the Humboldt Bay and Tanah Merah Bay (Wirz 1929: 27). Besides the 'export' of tobacco- and lime-containers to nearby societies, tobacco was probably traded as well. This local product was highly valued by societies who were not able to grow it. Stone axes were also objects of trade. These were made by Sentani men, who sold the surplus to the Humboldt Bay (Bink 1896: 65-66). Besides 'export' the
Sentani people were engaged in 'import' as well. Coloured beads -being highly valued- were acquired in exchange for other goods.

Young boys at Lake Sentani were allowed to smoke earlier than the neighbouring Humboldt Bay youngsters, who were not allowed to smoke while remaining in the temple (Van der Sande 1907: 18). Women smoked too (Bink 1896). There is, however, no information about the smoking habits of young girls. Both smoking and betel-chewing can be considered as common stimulants. Distinct from the religious character of betel-chewing, there is no relation between ritual and tobacco (Nomhuys 1932: 76). Bink mentioned it was a habit to offer cigarettes to guests. Like the collective eating of fi from one helai (vessel in which fi is prepared and served), it was considered good manners to pass cigarettes around (Bink 1896; Van der Sande 1907: 18). This social custom was considered a bit distasteful by the missionary, who visited the Sentani village Ayafo in 1893. After a sago-meal the host and hostess offered him a self-prepared cigarette. Bink accepted the cigarette but removed the part which had been in contact with the host's and hostess' mouth. Due to the growing European influences in the area, local tobacco was rapidly replaced by Van Nelle tobacco and European cigarettes. Tobacco-containers were therefore no longer needed and consequently no longer produced after about the early 1920's.

Figure IV.15.2 Designs on tobacco-containers
15.3 Painted barkcloth

In Indonesia weaving was a highly developed art. In Irian Jaya, however, weaving was restricted to one place, the village Sarmi (Kooijman 1992: 11). The people of Lake Sentani used barkcloth to make 'clothes' or ornaments. As garment the women of Lake Sentani and the Humboldt Bay wore a rectangular piece of barkcloth which was wound around the hips with a rope. The barkcloth reached from the hips till the thighs (Van der Goes 1862: 172). This loincloth as well as barkcloth are called 'maro'. Sometimes, a decorated piece of barkcloth was worn over undecorated pieces (De Clercq 1893: 47; Galis 1955: 92-93). The decorations consisted of shells (Galis 1955: 93) or "regularly painted black figures" (Van der Goes 1862: 172). During festivities, knotted loincloths were worn (Van der Goes 1862: 172).

Until the beginning of this century maro were worn by initiated girls and married women only (Van der Goes 1862: 172; Bink 1896: 50; Van der Sande 1907: 38; Galis 1955: 25). The rest of the people were naked (Van der Goes 1862: 169; Bink 1896: 50; Galis 1955: 92). Penis-gourds were, however, not totally unknown in the area. In the Humboldt Bay, some men wore little penis-gourds, which Van der Goes described as resembling a corkscrew (Van der Goes 1862: 169). According to De Clercq and Schmeltz (1893 : 47), boys and men wore penis-gourds during festivities in the temples. As soon as the men married, they stopped wearing the gourds (De Clercq 1893: 47). According to Galis (1955: 92), this was not a traditional custom of the Humboldt Bay men but of the men from Sko. This is confirmed by Bink (1896: 69) who mentioned that the men of Sko wore gourds and the women pieces of barkcloth.

In 1901 all Humboldt Bay women wore loincloths and cotton pieces were worn during festivities. Cotton petticoats were a specially wanted item in this area in 1903. In Lake Sentani the traditional clothing habit did not change until 1909, when cotton loincloths found their way among the Lake Sentani societies (Hoogerbrugge 1992: 128). During the following years, the influence and control of government and missionaries grew stronger. Cotton loincloths replaced the barkcloth and soon all women and men were dressed.

Until the nineteen-twenties there are hardly any descriptions or photographs of painted maro. The earliest descriptions and documentations of painted pieces come from members of the Etna-expedition, conducted in 1858. One of its members, Van der Goes (1862: 172), described them as having "regularly drawn, black figures". The artist C.B.H. von Rosenberg made a drawing of a Humboldt Bay couple, the woman wearing a decorated piece of maro with patterns similar to those depicted on the barkcloth that his colleague, F.G. Beckman collected (Hermkens 1995b: 25-26). In 1921 more reports of painted maro became known. They seem to have been worn during festivities and added as decoration to the graves of young women (Wirz 1928: 296; Hoogerbrugge 1992: 128). Wirz, who visited Lake Sentani in 1921 and 1926, collected and photographed a few of these painted barkcloths, which are similar in decoration (Hoogerbrugge 1992: 128-129). The spiral-decorations are the same as those depicted on the barkcloth which was collected in 1858.
THE WAY OF THE OBJECTS

In May 1929 'The Arts and Crafts Exhibition' was held on the occasion of the fourth Pacific Science Congress, and held at the museum of the 'Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen', now the National Museum, Jakarta (Hoogerbrugge 1995: 175). It is reported that a group of 35 men and women from the northeast of Irian Jaya went to the exhibition. The women of the Irian Jaya team all wore plain barkcloth. However, painted pieces were sold at their stand and were described as "naive drawings in bright colours" (Hoogerbrugge 1995: 178). Viot arrived several months after the exhibition and was able to collect no less than 50 maro's. The Fleischmann collection, which consists of 41 pieces of maro, was partly collected by W. Stüber, a German immigrant who settled in Yotefa Bay in 1917, and by Fleischmann himself in December 1933, when he sailed into the Humboldt bay (Meyn 1994: 89-90). Among his collection are many maro that are painted in an innovative style (Hoogerbrugge 1995: 178), containing many figurative elements which are placed at random on the barkcloth.

When comparing these early thirties maro with the old maro from 1858 and the ones Wirz collected and photographed between 1921 and 1926, it can be stated that in general, the shape and layout of the maro and paintings had changed. Instead of an elongated shape, which was necessary in order to wind barkcloth around the hips, most of the barkcloths collected in the late twenties and thirties have a rather square shape. The overall orientation of the decorations is central, instead of at one of the short sides of the elongated shaped barkcloths. These changes are probably due to the changing function of the maro (Hermkens 1995b: 44). Started as a loincloth, the maro soon became a piece of decoration and "primitive art". The art-dealers of the late twenties and thirties were very interested in the painted maro. They sent collectors like J. Viot to Lake Sentani in order to collect local sculptures and painted barkcloth. Probably due to the Exhibition in Jakarta and the subsequent European interest in painted barkcloth, an art in the painting of maro developed.

In the fifties, Galis (1955: 116) recorded that items made from barkcloth were rare in the Humboldt Bay. Ten years later, Hoogerbrugge came to the same conclusion when visiting the Lake Sentani area. In 1971 he met two older maro painters in Nafri village, the Humboldt Bay, who were very skilful in the painting of barkcloth (Hoogerbrugge 1995: 167). At the end of the seventies the two men had died and Hoogerbrugge feared the art of maro painting had definitely disappeared (Hoogerbrugge 1992: 139; 1995: 169). Twenty years later he returned and noticed that the tradition was more vivid then ever (Hoogerbrugge 1995: 170-174). Approximately the same story was told by Augus Ongge (oral communication 1996), who revealed that before the early seventies, people scarcely made paintings or sculptures. When he started painting in the seventies, he had to ask his parents and other people about the meanings and depictions of motifs. According to him, he is the only one (in Asei) who still knows which designs belong to which family. Since the early nineties there has been a revival in barkcloth painting, probably due to the efforts and encouragements of Christian organisations, the two Museums in Abeura and Waena and the increased flow of tourists visiting the Lake Sentani villages, mainly Asei.
15.3.1 Production and painting of barkcloth

Barkcloth is made from trees which belong to the Moraceae family and specifically to the genera *Ficus*. On Asei Besar barkcloth is made from 4 species. The most frequently used species are: 1. *Aye*, reddish bark: this tree grows fast in, amongst others, the gardens, and 2. *Kombow*, white bark: this tree grows very slow and is rare. Most of these trees used to grow in the gardens, but today people have to search for them and walk large distances in order to retrieve the bark.

When a suitable tree is found, it is chopped down and the bark is peeled off by making an incision in the outer-bark. Then it must be carefully loosened from the inner-bark, with help of a little stick or knife. The rectangular pieces of bark are rolled up and transported to the village where the hard pieces of the outer bark are removed. By continuously beating and wetting the bark, the fibres are flattened and the bark becomes larger and thinner. Finally the barkcloth is dried by stretching it out on a wooden floor or house-wall. As soon as the barkcloth has been dried, it can be decorated with paintings.

The colours most commonly used, both in the past and the present, are white (*kélëman*) made from lime, red (*ninë-ninë* or *mélë*) from reddish soil or stones and black (*nokaman*), which is made from soot scraped from boiling pots or charcoal. These colours are mixed with water and tree-resin that is applied as a thickener. Today most people use pencils and a paintbrush. Traditionally, however, a little stick from a coconut was used to draw and fill-in the motifs. In general all the motifs and figures are drawn with black paint. In drawing the spiral ornamentations, a particular order is kept up (Figure 15.3). The application of white and red forms the final stage of the painting.

![Figure IV.15.3 The different stages of drawing scroll or spiral-ornaments.](image)

In the old days, *maro* were made and painted by women. Jacques Viot, for example, collected a painted barkcloth from an old women, who had decorated the cloth with the traditional spiral-design. She explained the drawing as "the angry sea and the beach" (In: Peltier 1992: 170). In 1960-70 the few *maro* painters who were still active in Nafrí, Humboldt Bay, were men. Today both men and women make painted *maro*, though mainly men are renowned for their artistic talents and produce the larger and artistic *maro*. 
15.3.2 Loincloths, tattoos and identity

As mentioned, not everybody wore loin-cloths. Only initiated girls and married women wore maro. In the Humboldt Bay, girls (and boys) were initiated at the age of 12. The initiation period commenced when the Ondofolo of a village decided to start the initiations. The girls would stay in the house of the Ondofolo and attended a kind of learning school under guidance of a number of women. The boys were accommodated in the initiation house or temple, man, where they learned to play the sacred flutes and practised how to make decorations (Galis 1955: 24). At Lake Sentani during the initiation period the youngsters decorated their hair with feathers and flowers (Wirz 1929). After their initiation the youngsters had to wear loincloths, and they were allowed to let their hair grow. They were no longer boys and girls, but unmarried men and women. In this period most of the girls received their tattoos and had to wear a loincloth, maro (Galis 1955: 24).

Thus besides maro’s, Sentani women wore tattoos ”so they would not be naked when they went out” (fig.16.6; oral communication 1996). In 1858 many women had tattoos that were located on their breasts, back, arms and legs (Van der Goes 1862: 172). Besides tattoos, some women had figures that were burnt in the skin (Van der Goes 1862: 172). Among men, tattooing was rare (Van der Goes 1862: 171). However, it seems that certain men wore loincloths or loinsels. Medicine-men wore a special loincloth when exercising their rituals. Also in myths, the hero wears a loincloth so he will not be harmed by arrows and axes (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 73). Hence it seems that these loincloths have a symbolic meaning. It is therefore most intriguing that sacred drums are supposed to wear loincloths or loinsels as well (see section 15.6).

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44 When drawing the tattoos of Salina Ohee (1932 Asie besar), she told me that in the early days women wore tattoos so they would not be naked when they went out. This statement is, however, not confirmed by other informants because women of Salina’s age were very scarce on Asie. Younger male and female informants, however, told that their mothers had the same tattoos as Salina.
It is certain that around and after 1930, the tattoos were made by both men and women. They used soot, mixed with a little water in a shell, and a spine from a plant to incise the tattoos. Tattoos were placed on the face, legs, arms, breast and back (Oral communication Salina Ohee 1996). In 1996 only older women of about 60 years had tattoos that covered a large part of their bodies, mostly on the face, breast, back, arms and legs. Younger women (30-50 years) only had some small tattoos, mostly initials or small figures, on their arms. So it seems that the tradition of whole body tattoos had diminished and disappeared at least after the late fourties or early fifties.

The tattoo ornaments show similarities with the motifs on the barkcloth. When considering the initiations and Salina's explanation stated above, the tattoos can be considered as having the same purpose as the loincloths as well, namely the identification of initiated and married women by means of body decoration.

15.3.3 Totem-, wild and domesticated animals

Especially on barkcloth animals are frequently depicted. Besides fish; turtles, lizards and crocodiles are painted on barkcloth. Contrary to these wild animals, domesticated animals, like pigs, chickens and dogs, are rarely painted on barkcloth. In fact, according to my knowledge there are no maro's with pigs or dogs painted on them. These animals were, however, carved as three-dimensional figures and placed on the roof of temples.

In former times animals like wild pigs (obo) and cassowaries (apangke of mangkum) were hunted by the men in organized hunting drives. The bush and dry grass was put on fire in order to get the animals on the run (Kooijman 1959: 13; Galis 1968: 74). Kangaroos, bandicoots, and field rats formed small game, which supplied additional proteins (Kooijman 1959: 13). In 1920 resident Lulofs imported deer. These flourished excellently and had their habitat near Kojabu, on the North side, and in the South of the Lake (Galis 1968: 74). These animals were not depicted on barkcloth are any other material.

Domestic animals, like pigs and chickens were raised in and around the villages. Today, pigs -as well as chickens- are quite rare and rarely slaughtered. Only during special festivities like weddings, pigs are slaughtered and consumed. In former times much pork was traded from the Lake to the Humboldt Bay (Kooijman 1959: 13). This trade was probably largely in the hands of the ondoofi (Kooijman 1959: 13).

Especially the maro that were produced along the Humboldt Bay (mainly Tobati), and the post-twenties maro from Lake Sentani, are decorated with, amongst others, animals. At Lake Sentani, before the twenties maro seem only to contain spiral-ornaments and fish motifs. More recently the trend towards the depiction of different kind of animals, has gained momentum. Since the early nineties, animals like turtles, crocodiles and lizards, figure prominently in the two-dimensional barkcloth art.

Most of the wild animals that are depicted on the barkcloths are totem-animals. Crocodiles, turtles and snakes are well-known clan-symbols in the Lake Sentani area. These animals were considered as
relatives and therefore forbidden to eat. Also in the Humboldt Bay, a special relationship existed between deceased clan-ancestors, the living clan-oldest and a certain kind of animal or plant (Galis 1955: 130). Some inhabitants of the village Asei (Lake Sentani) claim to have a special relationship with the crocodile. They consider themselves as descendants of this animal and are therefore not allowed to eat it. These clans, however, used to have a monopoly on its image. Thus, only members of certain clans were allowed to paint or carve crocodiles. In the village Asei, the family Ongge had the right to make decorations on the Ondofolo's house and depict the crocodile. Some people still attribute certain kinds of power to the crocodile. For example, Yahim Ongge (about 60 years) had tied on one of his house-poles a carved figure with a crocodile on its back. He stated that this figure would protect the house during storms.

In the villages Ayafo, Asei and Kabiterau, people were not allowed to eat the cassowaries (Wirz 1928: 273). Snakes were forbidden food in the village of Doyo (Wirz 1928: 273). According to Wirz (1928: 273), these prohibitions had nothing to do with totemism, but with the different mythological origins of people or rituals. In the three eastern villages, the taboo on the cassowaries is related to the prominent position of this bird in the Karawari rituals. The cassowaries is considered the mother of this ritual, so initiated men were not allowed to eat it (Kooijman and Hoogerbrugge 1992: 76). The definition of totemism, however, also applies for mythological relations between humans and animals.45 Besides these mythological relations between humans and animals (see also part V), there also existed a special relationship between certain animals and specific objects like drums and flutes (see section 16.5).

15.3.4 The other world: Fish, fishing-nets, peddles and canoes

The most frequently depicted animals on barkcloth are fish. This preference for fish can be ecologically explained by the dominant position of fish in the Lake Sentani area. Besides sago, fish is a major source of food. Furthermore, the world of the fish is considered to be synonymous to the world of the Sentani people. The lake with its inhabitants is similar to human life. Fish live in the lake, they eat water plants and smaller fish, procreate, live and die. People live on the lake, they eat plants, fish, procreate, live and die (Gershon Kaigere: oral communication 1996).

Catching fish is womens work. "The women of the Lake Sentani region are renowned for this skill, and consequently much sought after in marriage even beyond their own district (Kooijman 1959: 13)". In the old days fish was caught by using different kind of nets like waunv and a bigger net called pēi (Galis 1968: 73). Besides these nets, women used very big nets (kahu̍la) which were about 10 metres long. These nets were produced by women of the village and owned by the wife of the ondoofi. In return for their voluntary labour, the women were offered food, which was prepared by the wife of the ondoofi. It took about half a year to finish one net. Wooden floats (rulu̍h), mostly carved in the shape of fish or geometrical figures, were attached to the net. The nets were stored in a stringbag (holahoi)

45 Totemism can be defined as: "a special relation between animals (sometimes plants) and a group of people (often a kinship-group), which expresses itself in amongst others rituals (Kloos 1981: 247)".
and hung on a hook (injon) inside or outside the house. Besides these nets, which were hard to get and have become extremely expensive, women use(d) landing-nets (féléfélé) and fishing sticks to catch fish. Both women and men dive in order to catch fish and collect shells.

A recent development is the construction of a fence below the houses, in which gold-fish are reared. These fishes are fed with leftovers and special fish feeding which has to be bought. As soon as these fish are big (about 30 cm), they are sold or consumed during special occasions. In general the catch is meant for private consumption or sold on the market, which is located at Sentani-village. In the old days the Sentani people used to trade fish with the Humboldt Bay villages who preserved the sea-fish by smoking (Kooijman 1959: 13). According to Kooijman (1959: 13), this trade could be an indication of a minor supply of fish in the Lake Sentani area. Gershon Kaigere (oral communication 1997), however, told that the Sentani people used to trade sago and locally caught fish -which was dried and stringed to a little stick-, for sea-fish from Tobati, Humboldt Bay. Trade between the Humboldt Bay and Lake Sentani people did therefore not take place because of a shortage in fish-supplies. Interests in 'exotic' food and objects are more plausible explanations for trade.

Besides the different kinds of fish which are depicted on barkcloth, fishing-nets and the movements of peddles and canoes in the water are depicted as well. According to Kaigere (oral communication 1997), some ornaments represent fishing-nets with caught fish. Other combinations represent the -spiral- movement of water when peddling. These interpretations are, however, not confirmed by Augus Ongge, a local craftsman on Asei. According to him, these depictions symbolise the ancestors, the contemporary people and their future descendants (Ongge 1993).46

Fish are not only depicted on barkcloth both also on utensils which are associated with fishing, like floaters, canoes and peddles.

Canoes are made from the trunk of a tree which has soft, yellow wood called phuli. The trunk is dug-out, and sometimes, like its prow and stern, decorated with stylized animals and curvilinear motifs. A distinction can be made between two kinds of canoes, the ifa or men's boat, and the kaji, the women's boat (Figure 15.5; Kooijman 1959: 13). The ifa is an extremely frail and unstable one-man craft, unwieldy for those who are not accustomed to it (Kooijman 1959: 13). It is so narrow that the user does not sit between the sides of the boat but on top of it. Sometimes one leg is dangled in the water to help preserve balance (Kooijman 1959: 13). In the old days, every man had his own private ifa and for young boys appropriate canoes would be made until he was able to make one himself (Kooijman 1959: 13).

The women's boat was a much heavier and larger craft and could carry some ten to fifteen girls and women. The kaji was used for communal fishing parties and for going to the gardens. It was also the task of the women to fetch game which was hunted and killed by the men (Kooijman 1959: 13). Today both children and adults use canoes which belong to them, their family or nearby relatives. Small manlike canoes are also used by women. Larger canoes which can carry about 6 persons, are owned by women, but men or other women often borrow them. Each village has one very large, kaji-like canoe, which is communal property and used when people have to transport lots

46 In my MA thesis for Anthropology these different interpretations are further discussed.
of persons or goods. Since most transports of goods and people take place across the water, canoes are of vital importance to the Lake Sentani people.

A recent phenomenon is the use of an outboard-motor which is attached to the stern of a large canoe. However, only wealthy families can afford this expensive equipment. Paddles are still commonly used.

Fig. IV.15.5 Female (a) and male (b) canoes and their pertaining designs (Drawing made bij Augus Ongge 1996).

Like the canoes the paddles differ also in shape and decoration. A distinction can be made between men's paddles (Figure 15.6.b), which have a fine and oblong blade, and women's paddles (Figure 15.6.a), which are bigger and more oval shaped. The designs on the canoes and paddles consist of spiral-motifs and fish, the same motifs which are depicted on barkcloth.

Figure IV.15.6 Female (a) and male (b) paddles and their pertaining designs (Drawing made bij Augus Ongge 1996).
15.5 Pottery and wooden plates

Pottery was rare in New Guinea. The production centres in both the Humboldt Bay and lake Sentani are therefore quite unique. It could be suggested that the earthenware technique was introduced by seafaring Austronesian immigrants who settled on the northwest coast of New Guinea around 3,500 Bp (Kirch & Hunt 1988: 10-11). This would imply that the earthenware tradition in this region is more than 3,500 years old. Because of the poor archaeological record, this hypothesis can not be proved. A more recent or even local development in the Humboldt Bay or Sentani area cannot be excluded either.

The manufacture of earthenware was women’s work. In the Humboldt Bay and Lake Sentani, the manufacture of pottery was located in one specific village and executed by women of a special clan only (Van der Sande 1907: 253; Galis 1955: 116). This monopoly was held by specific women from the village Kayu Batu in the Humboldt Bay, and specific women from the village Abar at Lake Sentani. In both areas the women not only had a monopoly on the manufacture of pottery but also on the resources. This is quite remarkable since land was owned and inherited by men.

Raw materials, yellow or red clay and fine sands as fillers, were obtained near the village. It is not known in what way these raw materials were prepared (crushed or sieved) in order to remove particles of coarse matter. The clay and the sand were mixed and kneaded till a coherent clay body was formed. The potter’s wheel was unknown so the Kayu Batu women used another technique to form vessels, namely drawing combined with beating. Drawing is a forming technique, whereby a lump of clay is opened by forcing the fist into it. The walls were refined by “squeezing the clay between the hands while simultaneously pulling or stretching it upward” (Rye 1981: 72). As a secondary forming technique the Kayu Batu women used a paddle or beater and anvil. After putting a stone in the centre, the surrounding walls were carefully beaten with a piece of stone or wood. The firing took place in the open air (Van der Sande 1902: 235; Galis 1955: 117). In Abar the raw materials consisted of grey clay and sand, which were obtained near the village. They used the same forming techniques as the women from Kayu Batu.

The common vessels which were used to prepare fì and big storage vessels to store sago, were not decorated (Van der Sande 1907: 10). The painting of the ceremonial vessels was done by the men. This activity took place in the temples and was not visible for the women. The women had to be convinced that the content of the vessels -which was sago- had been eaten by spirits, who had then decorated the vessels with beautiful ornamentations.

The production of sago took place in the gardens and was executed by both women and men. The installation needed for the sieving and winning of sago was built from the outer bark and the leaves of the sago palm. The inner bark was beaten with a conical stone which was attached to a wooden adze-like tool. The refined fibres were mixed with water and sieved. The washed out sago residue was gathered and left to deposit. The hardened pieces of sago were transported to the village and stored in a big storage vessel called helè.
In the early 20th century the temples disappeared and with them the ceremonial, painted pottery. Today only in Abar pottery is manufactured. These vessels (helai), which are still used for the preparation of fi have the same round shape as the old ones, and therefore have to be supported by a manka. The big storage vessels (helê) are rare. Because of the introduction of metal pots and pans, the pottery production in Kayu Batu diminished. The pots that were produced in the fifties were meant for the market and differed considerably from the former production in both style and decoration technique. They were decorated with incised and coloured figures (Galis 1955: 117). The production technique remained the same.

Besides vessels, wooden (‘q’) dishes (hotê) were used to dish up meat and fish. These dishes were owned by the women, except for the oblong-shaped and much bigger dishes who were owned by the Ondofolo. These were called hotê kabam (kabam = big) and were used to serve pork, the festive food during ceremonial occasions (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 69; Kooijman & Hoogerbrugge 1992: 118).

The utilitarian plates are made from hard wood, usually oval-shaped and vary from 30 to 70 cm. The backs are decorated with incised curvilinear motifs or stylized animals like frogs and turtles. The background is sometimes filled with lime or red earth. One end of the plate, and sometimes both ends, has a knoblike extension, often with a hole to pass a loop through to hang up the dish (Kooijman & Hoogerbrugge 1992: 102), or shaped as the head of an animal, often a turtle. Especially the animal designs on the wooden plates, show considerable similarities with the animals which are used as tattoos. The most frequently depicted animals are the turtle, bird, frog and lizard. Since the dishes were used to serve fish, it is quite striking that these are rarely depicted on the wooden plates. According to Hoogerbrugge (1967: 68), the people sometimes viewed the plates with geometrical ornamentations as turtles. This is emphasized by the knoblike extension, which is often carved as the head of a turtle. The geometrical ornamentations consist of curvilinear motifs. In general, only one design element is used.

In contrast to the utilitarian plates, the ceremonial ones have more than one geometrical design-element engraved. In fact it seems that on this plate all known design-elements are depicted. This is confirmed by the meaning of the name of the ornamentation, which is called joniki or joninshi (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 69). Joniki means "de decoration that is entitled to the Ondofolo only" or "the decoration which belongs to the entire village" (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 69). Since in one village, every family or clan had its own decorations (Oral communication 1996), and the village was run by the Ondofolo, it is quite logic that objects that were used in communal activities and guarded by the Ondofolo, are decorated with designs from each family. In this way the communal use of these objects was enhanced, not only by the participation of all families, but also by the presence of each clan-design on the object.

15.6 Temples, sculptures and drums
In the 19th century the production of three-dimensional sculptures was probably done by specialists. Architectural sculptures pertained to the men's house and the Ondofolo's house. The Ondofolo's house had
an exceptional and dominant position in the village (Kooijman 1959: 18). This house was much larger than the houses of ordinary people and its interior was decorated with woodcarvings.

Sentani houses are built on piles, partly out in the water. The front piles were grounded on land, the side, middle and rear piles were grounded in the Lake. These pile structures were rectangular-shaped and about 10 to 20 metres long (Kooijman 1959: 18). The front and back consisted of triangular walls. Since the pitched roof came down on the floor there were no side walls. The ridge-pole was supported by a number of heavy posts that were made of hard wood which is locally called soang. The central posts of the ondoofi's house were decorated with carvings. These posts were made of tree-trunks with heavy, plank-like roots and stood in the water with the root end high. These root ends were carved in such a way that two wing-like projections were left on either side of the trunk (Kooijman 1959: 18). The trunk and two wings were carved with two-dimensional and three-dimensional sculptures. Curvilinear patterns and stylized animals like lizards and fish were often depicted. Some posts show a human figure carved in relief. Other, supporting, posts were decorated with three-dimensional human figures on the top end. It is assumed that these posts supported the floor, the ornamental tops came up through an opening in the floor (Kooijman 1959: 18). According to Jacques Viot, who visited the area in 1929, such figures were outside the houses. Others were part of the jetties or bridges between the houses (Kooijman 1959: 18).

Like the Ondoofi's house, pyramid-shaped temples were decorated with architectural and three-dimensional sculptures as well. Both the inside and outside of the temples were decorated by men and young boys who attended their initiation in the temple. Originally the Karawari temples or mau (Humboldt Bay), came from the coastal area of Papua New Guinea, probably Vanimo (Galis 1955: 164). The first village in the Humboldt Bay to acquire the temple and its secrets was the eastern village Nafri. Subsequently other villages in the Humboldt Bay, integrated the temples and their secret rituals in their religious life. Since the first Europeans visiting the Humboldt Bay already spotted the temples, the acquisition of the temples and their secrets must have occurred before 1858.

When Bink visited the village Ayafö in 1893, he noticed pyramid-shaped houses which resembled the mau. However, Bink did not see any of the so-called 'sacred flutes' that formed the nucleus of the mau's ritual activities (Kooijman and Hoogerbrugge 1992: 84). In 1903, when Van der Sande visited the area, this situation was much the same. Commander D.A.P. Koning of the ship 'Ceram', noticed that Ifar had a Karewari which resembled the one in Tobati (Koning 1903: 275). When Wirz visited the area in the 1920's, he described four pyramid-shaped, mau-like buildings in Ayafö, Asci and two in and near Kabiterau (Wirz 1928: 266). The rituals of the sacred-flutes were practised as well. Wirz was told that the Ondofolo of Ayafö, Asareu, acquired the information about the temple-flute-secrets in exchange for ancient beads from his friends of the village Nafri. He tried, however, to cheat his friends by imitating the sacred flutes himself. This had severe consequences, since the villagers of Nafri considered this to be a theft. Only after Asareu had purchased the flutes from Nafri and had 'paid' ten ancient beads, a glass ring and several old drums, friendly relations were restored (Wirz 1928: 266-267; Galis 1955: 164; Kooijman
and Hoogerbrugge 1992: 84). Subsequently the Ondofolo of Asei purchased, by negotiating with the chief of Tobati, the secret rituals, followed by the village Kabiterau (Wirz 1928: 267).

The playing of the sacred flutes constituted an important part of male-dominated rituals that were centred around the initiation of boys (Kooijman and Hoogerbrugge 1992: 84). This was only allowed for men, women were strictly forbidden to enter the temples or play the instruments. According to Koning (1903: 275), women had their own houses as well. The women's house in Ayapo was about 50 metres long. The exact function of these houses is, however, not clear.

Thus in the temples the sacred flutes and drums (wachoe or wachu) were played. These objects were guarded by the Ondofolo of the village (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 72). Drums were made of one piece of wood that was carved and hollowed out in an almost straight form. The handles are situated at the top of the drum or just above the slightly narrowing waist. The batter-head of the drum was made of cassowary or biowak (varan) skin. The designs that are carved on the drums are similar to those depicted on the wooden plates. Sometimes the whole drum is decorated, it also occurs that only the middle section is decorated and the upper and lower part of the drum remain undecorated. Some pieces have a decorated lower- and middle part, while the upper part has been left plain. The amount of decorations seems to have had no impact on the value of the drums. According to Hoogerbrugge (1967: 73), the sacred character of the drum was not determined by the amount of decorations. The Sentani people told him, however, that the middle part had to be decorated (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 73). This belt was compared with the loinbelt that was worn by the Ondofolo (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 73).

Thus, the ceremonial drum, which is identified with the ancestors, wears a loincloth, just like the ancestors. Hoogerbrugge (1967: 73) describes a drum from Ayafo that had a human figure as handle, with a batter-head made of cassowaries skin. The owner of this drum claimed that the batter-head was made of the skin from the belly of the ancestor, who was carved on the handle. Depictions of human figures on drums are, however, rare. This seems to have been also normative for the past (Hoogerbrugge 1967: 73). Some of these human figures are carved upside down on the drum, e.g. with the head down. The drum described in the previous section, had a carved figure with its head towards the batter-head. According to Hoogerbrugge (1967: 73), drums are not only related to ancestors but also to the tree of life. The middle part of the drum has to be decorated since it is this part that divides and simultaneously connects the under- with the upper-world.

This intermediary function, between the spirit and the human world, of drums but also of flutes is even more clear when one considers that people believed that by playing the flutes and drums the spirits would speak (Wirz 1929: 61). The sounds were considered to be uttered by a naropa, a spirit or ghost. In fact the player became a spirit himself (Wirz 1929: 61). Drums and flutes were considered sacred because people believed ancestors housed in them or were transformed into these instruments.
*Uaropo* (Lake Sentani) or *urèb* (Humboldt Bay) also lived in certain trees, stones, the sea, the lake, mountains and the sky. The demons or spirits had names that were mostly opposite pairs, like male-female (Galis 1955: 123). Since spirits were also supposed to live in stones, this Animism expressed itself in the worshipping of stones as well. In the Humboldt Bay and Lake Sentani area, chopped and natural stones were connected with spirits who could alter the life of people (Wirz 1929: 58; Galis 1955: 123-126). At Lake Sentani, during special occasions some stones were rubbed with coconut bark and smoked. The shape of the stone determined the nature of the spirit and the meaning of the ritual. Some stones were, for example, related to pig-spirits. The accompanying ritual was executed in order to favour a good hunt (Wirz 1929: 58). Offerings in order to provoke a good fishing, were made by a stone resembling a turtle (Galis 1955: 123).

Like the demons, each drum and flute had its own name, mostly bird or other animal-names, and were divided into male and female-ones (Galis 1955: 180). This dualistic nature was amongst others expressed in the sounds, the sizes of the instruments and the decorations on the objects (Galis 1955: 181).