

Samoa

Samoa is located in the Pacific Ocean. It is made up of two main islands (Savai'i and Upolu) and 6 smaller islands. The capital city of Samoa is Apia. Around 200,000 people live in Samoa.

The Art Forms in Samoa

Tatau

Tatau is a traditional tattoo of Samoa. Men get tatau from their torso (around the tummy button) right down to the knees. It is called Pe'a or Malofie. All Malofie have a triangle at the back which represents a canoe (va'a). Women on the other hand get tatau from their upper thigh (above the leg) to the knees. The women's tatau is called Malu.

Traditionally, ink used for tatau used to be made from the seeds of a tree called a candlenut tree or lama. The seeds were burned and the soot which rose off the burning seeds would be collected then mixed with water. This was a dangerous process as the seeds were toxic.

Tatau has been around for around 2000 years! Traditionally, the skill is passed down a family line.

The tools for tatau are made out of materials such as boars teeth, turtle shell and wood.

Siapo (tapa)

Siapo is a material made out of mulberry tree bark. The material that is made out of this bark is called u'a.

The bark is first harvested/collected from the tree and then the bark is stripped. After this, the bark layers are separated and then scraped and beaten. Finally, the bark is dried.

The dye used to create designs on the siapo is made from berries, seeds, bark and nuts. Different colours are created using different products from different trees:

- **O'a (brown dye)** - from the blood tree
- **Lama (black dye)** - from the Candlenut tree + O'a
- **Loa (red dye)** - Lipstick tree + O'a
- **Ago (yellow dye)** - Turmeric

- **Soa'a (purple dye)** - Banana tree - this doesn't tend to be used anymore.

Siapo was a form of currency/money and used for trading. It has many uses such as for clothing, wrapping a person who has passed away and on beds.

Siapo is similar to tapa found in Fiji and Tonga. In Fiji it is called Masi and in Tonga it is called Ngatu.

Ie Toga

Ie Toga are very finely woven mats which are seen as treasures. It is a sign of wealth in Samoan culture. They can be given as gifts for ceremonies such as weddings and funerals.

Ie Toga are made out of the smaller version of the Pandanus plant, called lau'ie. The fibres are made by soaking, drying and bleaching the plant before they are cut into fine strips. The thinner the strips, the finer and softer the mat will be.

A completed ie Toga has unwoven edges and a line of red feathers.

Bibliography::

[*The Truth about the Samoan Tattoo Tatau 2*](#)

[*The Truth about the Samoan Tattoo Tatau III*](#)

[*Skin stories*](#)

[*Samoan art lesson for kids*](#)

[*Samoan art in the Tatau*](#)

[*About Siapo*](#)

[*ABC net*](#)

[*ABC net 2*](#)

[*Te Papa*](#)