

Culture

It is estimated that more than a thousand different cultural groups exist in Papua New Guinea. Because of this diversity, many different styles of cultural expression have emerged; each group has created its own expressive forms in [art](#), [dance](#), [weaponry](#), [costumes](#), [singing](#), [music](#), [architecture](#) and much more. Most of these different cultural groups have their own language. People typically live in [villages](#) that rely on subsistence farming. In some areas people hunt and collect wild plants (such as [yam roots](#)) to supplement their diets. Those who become skilled at hunting, farming and fishing earn a great deal of respect.

On the Sepik river, there is a tradition of [wood carving](#), often in the form of plants or animals, representing [ancestor](#) spirits.

[Sea shells](#) are no longer the [currency](#) of Papua New Guinea, as they were in some regions – sea shells were abolished as currency in 1933. However, this [heritage](#) is still present in local customs; in some cultures, to get a bride, a groom must bring a certain number of golden-edged clam shells as a bride price. In other regions, the bride price is paid in lengths of shell money, [pigs](#), [cassowaries](#) or [cash](#). Elsewhere, it is brides who traditionally pay a [dowry](#).

People of the highlands engage in colourful local rituals that are called "sing sings". They paint themselves and dress up with [feathers](#), [pearls](#) and animal skins to represent birds, trees or mountain spirits. Sometimes an important event, such as a legendary [battle](#), is enacted at such a musical festival



This rattle is made of leaves, seeds and coconut shell. The rattle is tied around a dancer's ankle and makes a sound when the dancer moves.



This bilum bag is from Goroka, in the Eastern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea.



Resident of Bago-Bago, an island in the southeast of Papua New Guinea



20th century wooden Abelam ancestor figure (nggwalndu).