

Preparing the barkcloth and making the dyes

Preparing the barkcloth and making the dyes for Ömie nioge.

Preparing the barkcloth 1. Dapeni Jonevari in a forest to cut *nioge*. **2.** Blancley Niduve and Dapeni Jonevari loosening and levering the long strip of inner bark from the wooden core of the paper mulberry tree. **3. 4. and 5.** Blancley Niduve and Dapeni Jonevari separating the inner bast from the outer bark. **6.** Dapeni Jonevari scraping the bast with the blunt side of a large knife. **7.** Dapeni Jonevari and Lila Gama beating the *nioge* with the blunt side of a large knife. **8.** Meguen Gugomami, Milicent Naumo, Julias Agiro and Josephim Mekio beating *nioge* on black palm logs with heavy mallets. The cloth has been folded and refolded to broaden it and make it smooth and even.

Making are (yellow dye) 9. The yellow paint comes from a hard green guava-like fruit that turns yellow as it ripens. **10.** The fruit is cut in half exposing the bright cadmium yellow pulp. **11.** The pulp is scraped into a half coconut shell. **12.** Water is added to the pulp and the fibrous remains of the fruit are discarded.

Making birire (red dye) 13. Ferns are gathered to make red dye. **14.** Ferns are placed in a long bark container and the skin of *biredihane* trees is scraped onto the ferns. **15.** Ash is added to the mixture with hot stones from the fire and the ferns are wrapped around them. **16.** Water is added and the liquid, which turns from brown to red, is squeezed from the ferns as they are 'cooked' by the hot stones. The colour can be varied between red and brown by manipulating the application of heat.

Making barige (black dye) 17. The leaves of *omu hane* (a small bamboo) are burned on a fire. **18.** The burnt leaves are wrapped in *tulif* leaves. The ash and leaves are chewed thoroughly with a generous working of saliva. **19. and 20.** When the mixture is ready it is spat out in long black streams into half coconut shells. A greener tone can be produced by modifying the amount of ash used.





Photos: Drusilla Modjeska