



The Coleridge Santa Cruz Kapkap

The tema or kapkap is a chest ornament worn only by men in the Santa Cruz Group.

The Kapkap is the central and most important element of the ceremonial costume and its size and quality are indicative of the owner's wealth and social importance. The representation of the iconography is no longer recorded but the most probable hypothesis is that it represents the silhouette of a frigate bird against the full moon or the sun. The vertical, double row of triangles situated above the bird motif are probably representations of stylized fish. One other possibility is that the two long lateral points (of what appears to be the frigate bird) are each a profile (or cut-away) view of the head of a mythological dog, whose front paw is shown as one half of the inverted central "V" form – this could be a reference to the nguzunguzu canoe prow ornaments. It is probable that the larger tema are the oldest.

For this matter, tema measuring fifteen centimeters or more in diameter are exceedingly rare.

Graciosa Bay area (?), Ndende Island, Santa Cruz Islands, Para-Polynesia, Melanesia. Shell (*Tridacne gigas*), natural fiber string reinforcement and turtle-shell (*Hawksbill turtle* : *eretmochelys*), 15 cm x 0.4 ø cm. 19th century.