

Moka

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



LECTURER UNIT Ongka's Big Moka, 1980 In relation to the Kawelka society, moka is a gift that is given to the neighboring tribe and it is the most important gift in the Kawelka society. One of the significances in giving moka to the other tribe is that Ongka will be able to earn fame and status for his tribe and for himself. The only way to get this prestigious status is by Ongka outdoing fellow men and giving the biggest moka to the other tribe. An example is when Ongka had been preparing to give a big moka combination of pigs, rare birds and other valuables to the other tribe. Secondly moka in form of pigs is very significant as compared to money. This is because pigs are everything to the tribe and the bigger the moka is, the more respect and status is earned. According to Ongka, pigs are everything as it keeps the tribe alive; moka can also be used to pay for troubles, debts and get a wife. The lack of pigs according to Ongka is sad as the individual who lacks pigs is referred to as being nobody and rubbish altogether in the tribe. The last significance of moka is that it is the only possible way to get a life, marry and get children, without moka then a man has nothing. Finally, moka is also used to impress other people and also as a way to do business. For example, Ongka wanted to give a hundred pigs as a system of investment and the investment would pay itself in several years time.

Body decoration or adornment is prominent in the Kawelka tribe as it is their way of living and respecting their origins. Secondly they use body decoration during great achievements so as to celebrate special occasions. In the film, they celebrate moka by going to the tribe dressed in their traditional attire and decoration and call out Ongka so that they can hand to him the moka in form of a pig as a returned favor for his previous gifts. In addition to that,

body decoration was worn to pay the last tribute to a fallen leader. In the film, when one of the elders passed on, they wore big green leaves and sang a sad song as part of their traditions.

Works cited

Ongkas Big Moka: The Kawelka of Papua New Guinea. Dir. Charlie Nairn.
1976. Film