

Embargoed until 18 August 2026, 10am

Interwoven and Entangled

The textile collection of the Museum der Kulturen Basel is as extensive as it is world-renowned. In a pop-up exhibition, the provenance research team not only shows how the collection is entangled in old colonial structures, but also what opportunities this offers for forging new relationships.

Whether we're dealing with colourful christening caps from the Ticino, embroidered prayer cloths from Afghanistan, a warrior's tunic from Sudan, a cap from Armenia, crochet lace from Romania or an ikat weaving frame from Indonesia: they all hold fascinating stories and tell a rich history, and are presently on display at the Museum der Kulturen Basel (MKB) alongside 20 additional textiles, archival material, historical photographs, and tools.

In the pop-up exhibition "Interwoven and Entangled – Provenance Research on the Textile Collection", the curatorial team provides insight into the extensive and world-renowned MKB textile collection and the history behind it. Since the 1940s, the collection has been a significant focus of research at the museum. The aim was not only to collect textiles but also to provide the foundation for a systematic study of the various techniques involved.

Visitors encounter the men and women who drove this branch of research in the first section titled "Interwoven – Building Up the Textile Collection". With the help of letters, a travel diary and textile samples, they will learn more about their studies, knowledge, and networks. But also, how the sarongs and cloths on display came to the museum in the first place.

Back to the Future

In the second section "Entangled – The Coloniality of the Textile Collection", the provenance team discloses how the appropriation of textiles was shaped by colonial power structures. A garment from Cameroon and a cloth from the Congo reveal how Swiss men and women were embedded in the colonial system – through the missions and the military, for example.

As borne out by the third section "Linking Up – The Future of the Textile Collection", the exhibition does not dwell merely on the past. For many years, research focused on how these materials could be incorporated into a systematic "Classification of Textile Techniques", as published by the museum in several editions. Now the researchers want to learn more about the significance of the textiles and the tools used to make them, such as the spindle from Colombia, from a different viewpoint. For this purpose, the museum is contacting various stakeholder groups to find out more about their stories and perspectives. For example, an exchange with members of the local Afghan diaspora revealed how brightly embroidered prayer cloths have the potential of bringing back deep personal memories.

The pop-up exhibition runs from 18 August until 29 September 2026. It serves as a prelude to the upcoming exhibition "Tie-Dye: Folded, Stitched, Coloured" that opens on 4 September 2026 and deals with various patterning techniques such as Japanese shibori. Images of both exhibitions are to be found from 18 August at our [media website](#).

In addition, MKB is hosting the [International Shibori Symposium](#) from 25 to 29 September to which roughly 200 experts, artists, and textile aficionados from across the globe are expected.