

KUNST KAMMER



MARTIN DOUSTAR

K U N S T K A M M E R

O N E . H U N D R E D
T R E A S U R E S . F R O M
T H E . A N C I E N T . W O R L D

A F R I C A . A S I A . O C E A N I A . A M E R I C A S

By

MARTIN DOUSTAR





As illustrated on the previous page by a famous woodblock depicting the *kunstkammer* constituted by Bolognese Marquis Ferdinando Cospi (1606- 1686), the art and curiosity cabinets became increasingly popular in Renaissance Europe, when the royal courts were suddenly taken with the collecting passion. Among this aristocratic elite, the first and foremost name associated with those patrons who dedicated their wealth to build extraordinary collections is probably the Medici. The term Kunst/Wunderkammer was apparently first employed by Count Froben Christoph of Zimmern and Johannes Müller in their historical account *Zimmerische Chronik* of 1564–66 (family chronicle describing the lineage and history of the noble family of Zimmern, based in Meßkirch, Germany). But one of the first scholars who established the theoretical basics of collecting, was the Belgian Samuel Quiccheberg (Antwerp 1529 – 1567 Munich). He published his “*Treatise Inscrptiones vel Tituli Theatri Amplissimi*” in 1565. This first theory with practical guidance on the design and presentation of the objects in a museum, influenced the Munich Art Chamber, which was built at the same time. He designed a five-part classification system for his ideal museum (“Theatrum”). The text gives a deep insight into the world of collecting in the 16th Century. As Renaissance specialist Francesca Fiorani writes “The *Kunstkammer* was regarded as a microcosm or theater of the world, and a memory theater. The *Kunstkammer* conveyed symbolically the patron’s control of the world through its indoor, microscopic reproduction.” Besides the most famous and best documented cabinets of rulers and aristocrats, members of the merchant class and early practitioners of science in Europe also formed collections that were precursors to museums. Since then, the interest for the *kunstkammer* never faltered, and even, somewhat democratized to a broader, more diversified audience. Despite the emergence of the numerical era, a new generation of young collectors has appeared -perhaps too wary of the profligacy of the contemporary world-, educated, passionate, and inquisitive about the arts and cultures of the past.

The aim with this exhibition was to share my interest for the creations of man in its broadest sense. The works of art that are published in this catalogue come from different continents and ages; they are the outcome of a decade of collecting, through wanderings, encounters, with cultures and people, inspiring dealers and legendary collectors, like George Ortiz, or the late Jean Paul Barbier-Mueller. And so, this catalogue is also an homage to these connoisseurs who dedicated their lifetime to the pursuit of beauty and knowledge; and paved the way in the course of the twentieth century in assembling extraordinary collections of artworks from many different civilizations. I do hope that the ensemble of little treasures you will discover hereby, will instill the desire to expand your horizons to other cultures, forms, materials and objects. From the marvelous animal bronzes of Ancient Iran to the infinite variations of precolumbian art, through the remote islands of the South Pacific where the beauty of the material often combines with an unexpected yet great aesthetic sensibility... The grounds of wonderment are inexhaustible !



“Look closely. The beautiful may be small.”

Bactria-Margiana, Central Asia, 2300-1700 BC
Calcite
Height : 19 cm

Provenance Private collection, Japan (circa 1970)
Private collection, Belgium (1996)
Michael Woerner, Cologne

The cylindrical body tapering to the feet, a humped protrusion at the posterior, the truncated arms extending horizontally, each with a shallow drilled recession, the triangular head with beaked nose, straight lips, dotted circular eyes and bovine ears, the recessed headdress rounded at the top, a serrated necklace around the neck...

These highly stylized idols are among the earliest representation of the human figure. They originate from the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (also known as the Oxus civilization), a modern archaeological designation for a Bronze Age civilisation of Central Asia, dated to circa 2300–1700 BC, located between modern-day northern Afghanistan and western Tajikistan, and centred on the upper Amu Darya (Oxus River).

The Oxus civilization has attracted a lot of interest from scholars and archeologists in regards of its relationship with the Indo-Iranian migration theory, and as a candidate for those looking for the material counterparts of these Indo-Iranians, a major linguistic branch from the Indo-Europeans.

A comparable idol was sold at Christie's New York, 11 December 2003, lot 108.



2

BOVIDAE

Bactria-Margiana, Central Asia, 2300-1700 BC
Alabaster
Length : 22 (a) and 18 cm (b)

Provenance Private collection, Japan (circa 1970)
Private collection, Belgium (1996)
Michael Woerner, Cologne

These stylized bovids carved in alabaster -a humped bull or zebu and a ram- originate from the Bactria-Margiana cultural complex (see previous object) that developed in Central Asia, primarily around the Oxus river. Similar objects were found in Iran, in connection with the Elam civilization, but also in the Indus Valley.



BULL PROTOME

Qataban Kingdom, Yemen, circa 700-100 BC
Bronze
Height : 18 cm

Provenance Private collection, New York
Galerie David Ghezlbash, Paris (acquired in 1999)
Private collection, Paris (acquired from above)

In the shape of the powerful forequarters of a bull, his massive head with round muzzle, grooved nostrils, and ribbed bulging brows, symbolic motifs and a crescent moon engraved on the forehead, a lozenge-decorated diadem between the horns. This rare Sabean inscription is dedicated to the moon god and refers to the people of Qataban, the most prominent Yemeni kingdom in the second half of the 1st millenium before Christ.

A written report by Prof. Walter W. Muller, from the Center for Near and Middle-Eastern studies of Philipps Univeristy of Marburg, describes in detail the context and the meaning of these different motifs.

“The South Arabians before Islam were polytheists and revered a large number of deities. Most of these were astral in concept but the significance of only a few is known. It was essentially a planetary system in which the moon as a masculine deity prevailed. This, combined with the use of a star calendar by the agriculturists of certain parts, particularly in the Hadramaut, indicates that there was an early reverence for the night sky. Amongst the South Arabians the worship of the moon continued, and it is almost certain that their religious calendar was also lunar and that their years were calculated by the position of the moon. The national god of each of the kingdoms or states was the Moon-god known by various names: ‘Ilumquh by the Sabaeans, ‘Amm and ‘Anbay by the Qatabanians, Wadd (love) by the Minaeans, and Sin by the Hadramis”. The term ‘God is Love’ is characteristic of Wadd (Briffault 3/85). ‘the Merciful’ ascribed to Allah is also South Arabian (Pritchard).

Biblio. : Briffault, Robert, 1927, The Mothers, George Allen Unwin, London.
Pritchard, James ed. 1974, Solomon and Sheba, Phaidon, New York.



4

AMULETS

Jemdet Nasr, Southern Mesopotamia, 3200-2900 BC
Marble
Length : 8,8 cm

Provenance Private collection, London

Amulets in the shape of bulls and other animals -often used as seals- dating from the late third millenium and second millenium BC where found in different regions and cultures from the Euphrates to the Indus Valley. One of the most famous archeological sites is named after a hill called Jemdet Nasr in modern-day Iraq, which provided cultural evidence and numerous artefacts.

5

Bactria or Indus Valley, 3000-2000 BC
Red steatite
Length : 8,3 cm

Private collection, London



6

BACTRIAN GOAT

Bactria-Margiana, Central Asia, 2nd millenium BC
Steatite
Length : 10,6 cm

Provenance Ex. South London collection, acquired circa 1990

I am quite sure a collector like George Ortiz would have felt in love with this little goat just like how he felt in love with another sculpture of a recumbent goat from the Corinthian School (Ortiz, n°108). In the present example the animal is carved out of stone -which is quite rare-like the so-called “Bactrian princesses” found in the same region; and we can observe the same curvilinear motif running on their dresses, and imitating the woolly skin of the goat. But what is truly remarkable with this sculpture is the dynamic posture of the animal suggested by subtle details of the musculature, while its expression remains serene, and almost human.



PYXIDES

Bactrian, Central Asia, 3rd millenium BC
Chlorite, calcite
Height : 6,7 (a) and 5 cm (b)

Provenance Private collection, London (acquired ca. 1960-1980)

Finely carved cosmetic vessels; the shorter comprised of a tubular body and a flat lid, both with tear-shaped inlay to the outer face; four lines incised around the body. The tallest with a flared rim and short neck, lozenge and leaf-shaped inlay to the body. Rare and beautiful examples of pyxides.



COSMETIC PALETTE

Gandhara, Northern Pakistan, 200 BC - 100 AD
Alabaster
Diameter : 7,2 cm

Provenance Collection Kotlar, Paris (before 1975)
Private collection, Paris

Stone palettes -also called cosmetic palettes- commonly found in the areas of Bactria and Gandhara are round trays which usually represent Greek mythological scenes. Some of them are attributed to the Indo-Greek period in the 2nd and 1st century BC. Many are considered to be of later production, around the 1st century CE during the time of the Indo-Parthians. They practically disappeared after the 1st century AD. Many have been found at the archaeological site of Sirkap, in today's Pakistan.

This stone palette is quite exceptional in the corpus. The first reason is the material chosen by the sculptor. Whereas most palettes are made in schist, the present example was carved in a beautiful, almost translucent, piece of alabaster. Then, there is the quality of the carving, the extreme attention for details, unrivalled in a corpus yet abundant.



Phoenician, Near East, 800-600 BC
Bone
Height : 5 cm

Provenance Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri (228.54)
Jean-Philippe Marraud de Serres, Paris

Bes and its feminine counterpart Beset are an Ancient Egyptian deity worshipped as a protector of households, and in particular, of mothers, children and childbirth. Bes later came to be regarded as the defender of everything good and the enemy of all that is bad. While past studies identified Bes as a Middle Kingdom import from Nubia, more recent research indicates that he was present in Egypt since the start of Old Kingdom. Mentions of Bes can be traced to pre-dynastic Nile Valley cultures; however his cult did not become widespread until the beginning of the New Kingdom. Like many Egyptian gods, the worship of Bes or Beset was exported overseas, and he, in particular, proved popular with the Phoenicians and the ancient Cypriots meanwhile she got popular in Minoan Crete. The Balearic island of Ibiza derives its actual name from this god, brought along with the first Phoenician settlers 654 BC. These settlers, amazed at the lack of any sort of venomous creatures on the island thought it to be the island of Bes...

Modern scholars like James Romano claim that in its earliest inception Bes was a representation of a lion rearing up on its hind legs. After the Third Intermediate Period, Bes is often seen as just the head or the face, often worn as amulets. The present example, of particularly fine manufacture was probably a pendant or a decorative element, part of a precious object intended to be worn.

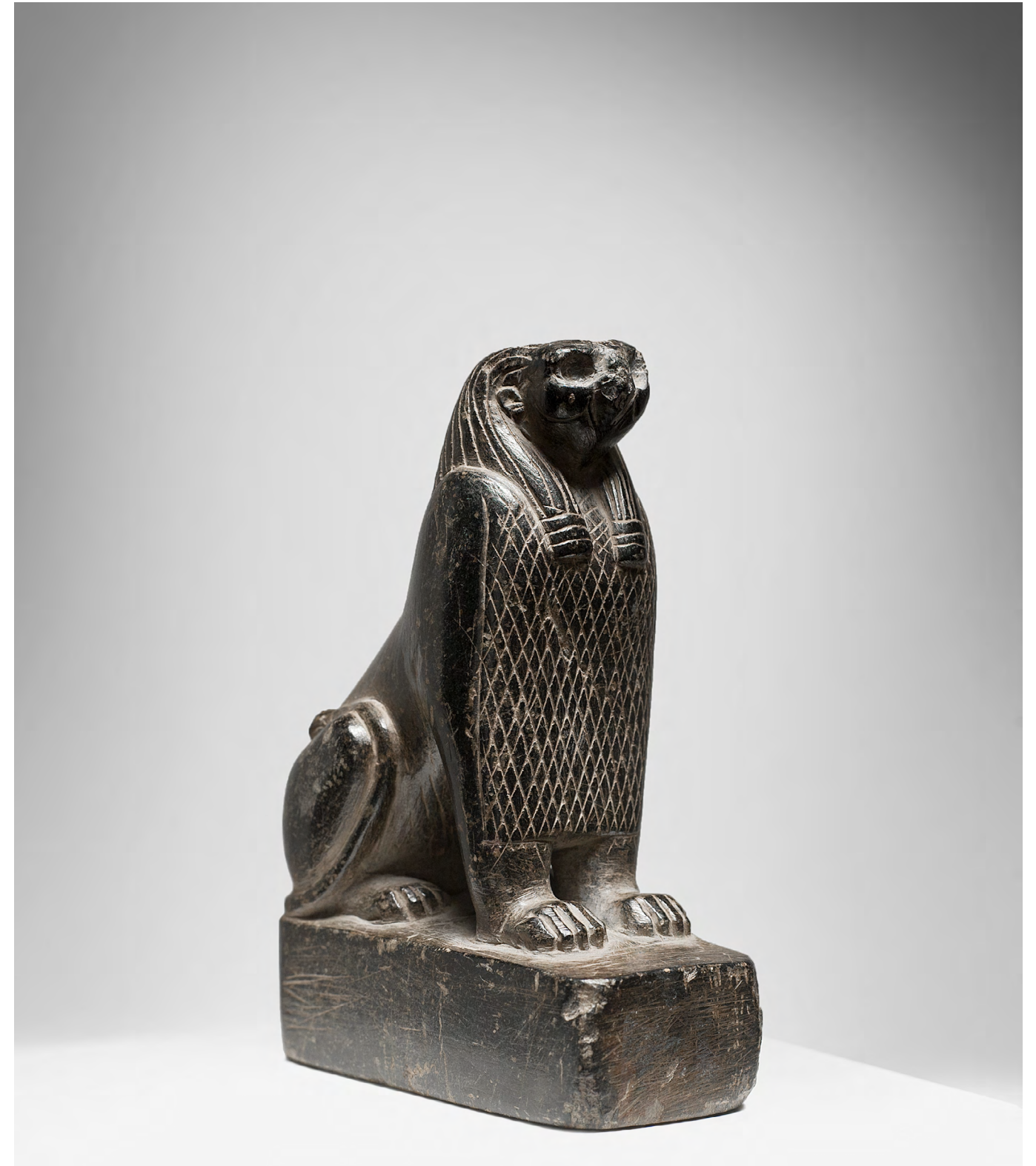


Late Period to Ptolemaic, circa 664-30 BC
Black steatite
Height : 18 cm

Provenance Josef Nestor, acquired circa 1910-1940

The falcon-headed sphinx is seated on a rectangular integral base, the tail of the lion body wrapped around the contour of the right leg, the mane with a stylized cross-hatched bib pattern, the striated tripartite wig framing the head.

Plaisant Josef Nestor (1886-1950) of Brussels attended a Jesuit school, where he concentrated on Greek and Latin studies. This undoubtedly contributed to his intense interest in traveling to ancient sites, which in turn inspired him some time before World War I to begin collecting Egyptian art. The collection he amassed with his wife Mary remained in the basement of their family home till 1974, when his oldest grandson eventually inherited. And that is how the next generation of the family would become fascinated with ancient Egypt, and even, over the next 25 years, come to add some wonderful objects to this collection.



Ore Mountains, Central Europe, circa 1100 BC
Bronze
Height : 13 cm

Provenance Private collection, Germany

The Ore Mountains (*Erzgebirge* in German and *Krušné hory* in Czech) in Central Europe form a natural border between Saxony and Bohemia. Europe's earliest mining district appears to be located in the Ore Mountains, dated to 2500 BC. The area played an important role in contributing to the development of the Bronze age, and as the setting of the earliest stages of the transformation of modern mining and metallurgy from a craft to a large-scale industry.

This rare massive anklet with wider turned-in decorative ends and magnificent deep turquoise patina, intended to be worn around the ankle by an aristocratic elite, dates from the Late Bronze Age of Central Europe, a period called the Urnfield culture, circa 1300-750 BC. The name comes from the custom of cremating the dead and placing their ashes in urns which were then buried in fields. The Urnfield culture followed the Tumulus culture and was succeeded by the Hallstatt culture. Linguistic evidence and continuity with the following Hallstatt culture suggests that the people of this area spoke an early form of Celtic, perhaps originally proto-Celtic.



12 STONE RHYTON

Achaemenid Empire, Northeastern Iran, 1st millenium BC
Steatite
Height : 16 cm

Provenance Private collection, Bruxelles (circa 1970)

A rhyton is a roughly conical container from which fluids were intended to be drunk or to be poured in some ceremony such as libation, or merely at table. They are typically formed in the shape of an animal's head, and were produced over large areas of ancient Eurasia, especially from Persia to the Balkans. Many have an opening at the bottom through which the liquid fell; others did not, and were merely used as drinking cups, with the characteristic that they could not usually be set down on a surface without spilling their contents.

The English word rhyton originates in the ancient Greek. The conical rhyton form has been known in the Aegean region since the Bronze Age, or the 2nd millennium BC. However, it was by no means confined to that region. Similar in form to, and perhaps originating from, the drinking horn, it has been widespread over Eurasia since prehistoric times.

The rhytons carved in stone are extremely rare. The magnificent example above is sculpted with a realistic crouching ibex protome. The eyes sockets and the horns, now missing, were probably inlaid with another contrasting stone such as calcite.



13 IBEX PROTOME

Achaemenid Empire, Iran, circa 500 BC
Bronze
Height : 15 cm

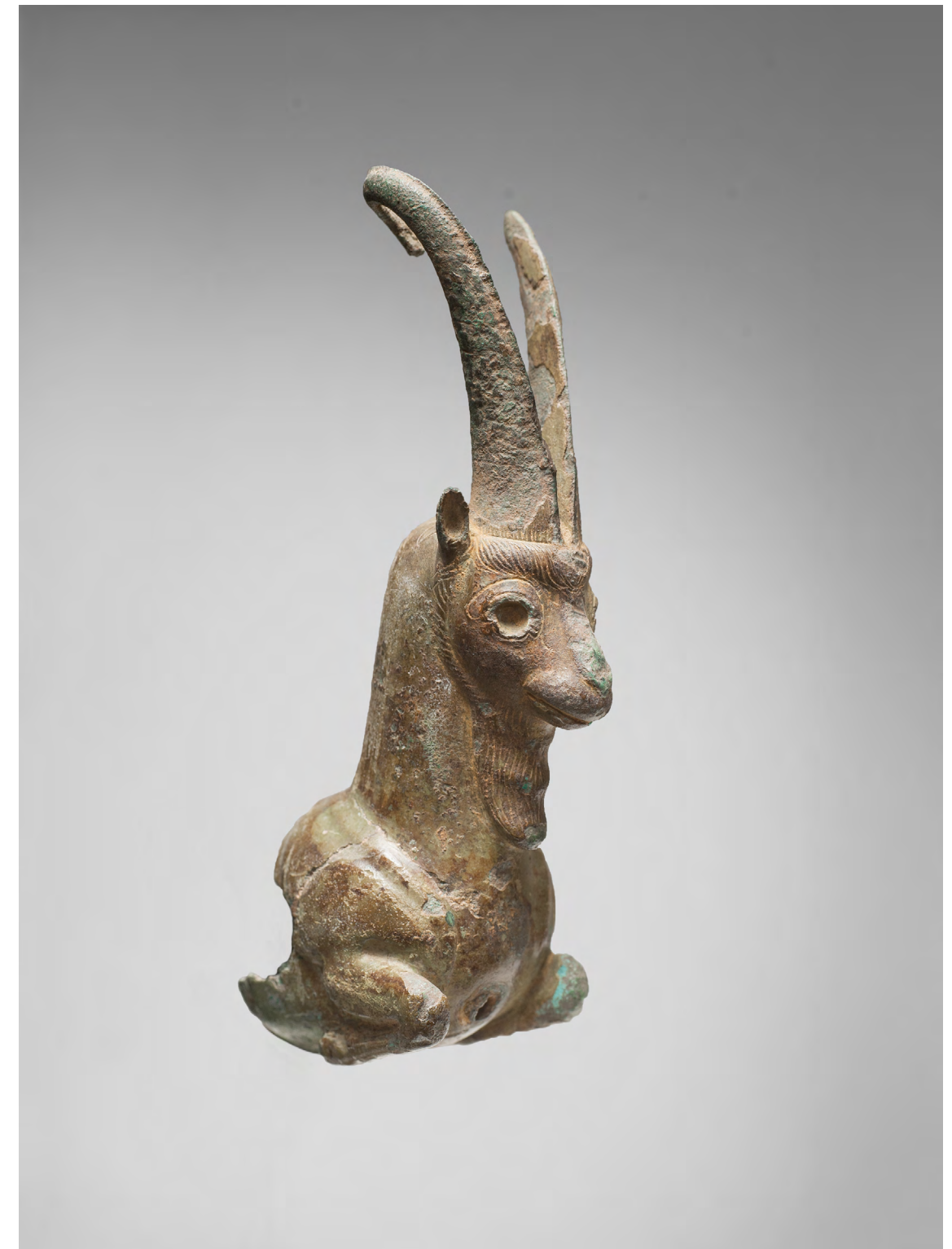
Provenance Private collection, United Kingdom
Rupert Wace, London

Herodotus mentions in his *Histories* volume 8, that the Persians drank wine in large quantities and used it even for counsel, deliberating on important affairs when drunk, and deciding the next day, when sober, whether to act on the decision or set it aside... The rhytons typically formed of a drinking horn with an animal's head were prestige objects used to drink or pour the wine.

In the shape of an ibex, with tall horns curved at their tips proudly crowning the head and the legs tucked up under its body, this superb bronze cast was originally terminating a ritual rhyton. The details of the beard and forelock are all incised, as well as around the eyes -recessed for inlay- which gives an almost human-like expression to the animal, a common characteristic in the art of the Achaemenid period, well illustrated in the architecture of Persepolis.

By the 7th century BC, the Persians had settled in the southwestern portion of the Iranian Plateau in the region of Persis, which came to be the heartland of the Achaemenid Empire (550–330 BC) founded by Cyrus the Great. Ranging at its greatest extent from the Balkans and Eastern Europe proper in the west to the Indus Valley in the east, it was one of the largest empires in history, spanning 5.5 million square kilometers, and was larger than any previous empire in history. It is equally notable for its successful model of a centralised, bureaucratic administration (through satraps under the King of Kings), for building infrastructure such as road systems and a postal system, the use of an official language across its territories, and the development of civil services and a large professional army. The empire's successes inspired similar systems in later empires.

We know several comparable vessels. A silver rhyton, originally found in Turkey and now in the British Museum, with the foreparts of a horned and beaked mythical animal with the feet of a lion and a ribbed horn is shown on the back cover of Dominique Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art* (London, 1995). A similar ibex protome in bronze is illustrated in Edward L. B. Terrace, *The Art of the Ancient near East in Boston Museum of Fine Arts* (1962, n° 59).



Balochistan, Southeastern Iran, 2nd millenium BC
Bronze
Length : 23 cm

Provenance Private collection, London
Persepolis Gallery, Mayfair (ca. 1980)

A magnificent bronze rhyton of a rare and early type that consists of a long conical body in the shape of a horn entirely decorated of geometric pattern in panels, two friezes of rearing snakes with human arms and a top panel with a frieze of mouflons. The long funnel-shape vessel terminates elegantly with an ibex head displaying impressive curved antlers and a short beard.

Similar in form to, and perhaps originating from the libation horn, rhytons have been widespread over Eurasia since prehistoric times, and particularly in Persia where they produced it in various metals and stones often richly ornated. In an article titled “Persian influence on Greece”, Dr Janine Bakker (2012) notes that after a Greek victory over Persia, much silver, gold, and other luxuries, including numerous rhytons, were brought to Athens. Persian rhytons were immediately imitated by Greek artists.

A similar bronze rhyton can be found in the collections of the Louvre in Paris.





15 **IBEX**

Lorestan, Southwestern Iran, circa 1000 BC
Bronze
Height : 15 cm

Provenance Collection Bruno Gay, Paris

BRONZE AXE HEAD 16

Lorestan, Southwestern Iran, 1st millenium BC
Length : 22 cm

Ex. Gilles Danon, Paris (between 1940-1990)

A large flaring blade extending from the mouth of a lion, the shaft tube decorated with four clusters of three cords terminating in four feline's heads. A Superb example in pristine condition.

17

HARNESS RINGS

Lorestan, Southwestern Iran, 800-700 BC
Bronze
Height : 7,4 (a) and 8,5 cm (b)

Provenance Private collection, Paris (before 1975)
Collection Françoise and Claude Bourelrier, Paris

Similar bronze rings used for horse harnessing and topped by an ibex head with curved striated horns surrounded by a pair of crouching felines dating from the Early Iron Age were found in Lorestan province in the 1920's. The British Museum (1934,1108.2) and The Met (30.97.12) have very comparable examples in their collections.



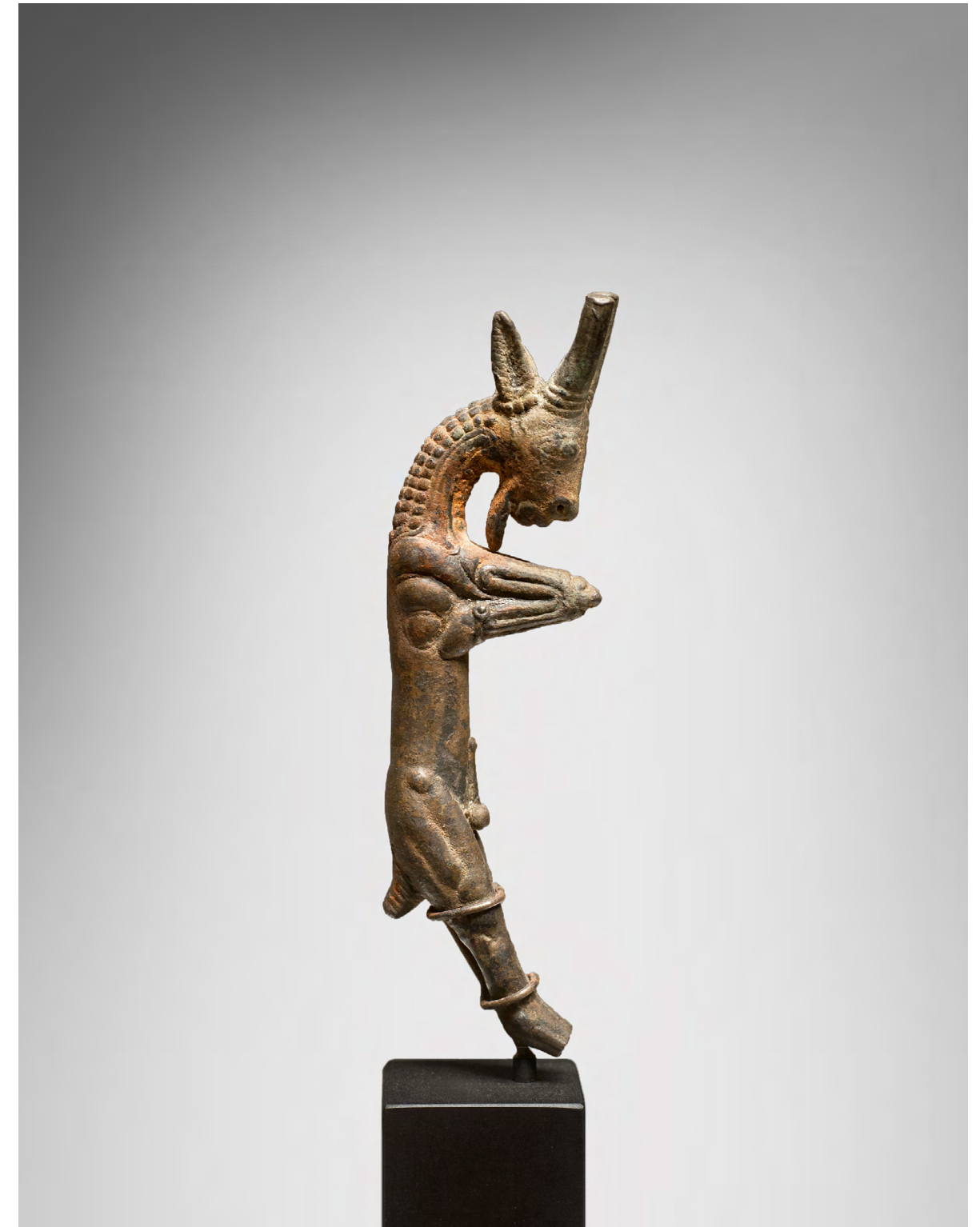
18 IBEX HANDLE

Achaemenid Empire, Iran or Balkans, circa 600-400 BC
Silver
Height : 9,6 cm

Provenance Private collection, Paris (circa 1960)

This magnificent miniature ibex was part of a larger silver vessel, an amphora or a similar recipient. In matching pairs, they were mounted as handles on each side of the vessel, as illustrated by several examples housed in the National Museum of Tehran, The Louvre, or in the George Ortiz collection (Ortiz: 1996, n°205).

The musculature of the animal is detailed and accentuated with an incredible knowledge of the anatomy. The intense facial features and standing posture of the animal are almost those of a human -a typical characteristic of Achaemenid animal representation-, which confer a monumentality and presence that have been rarely achieved.

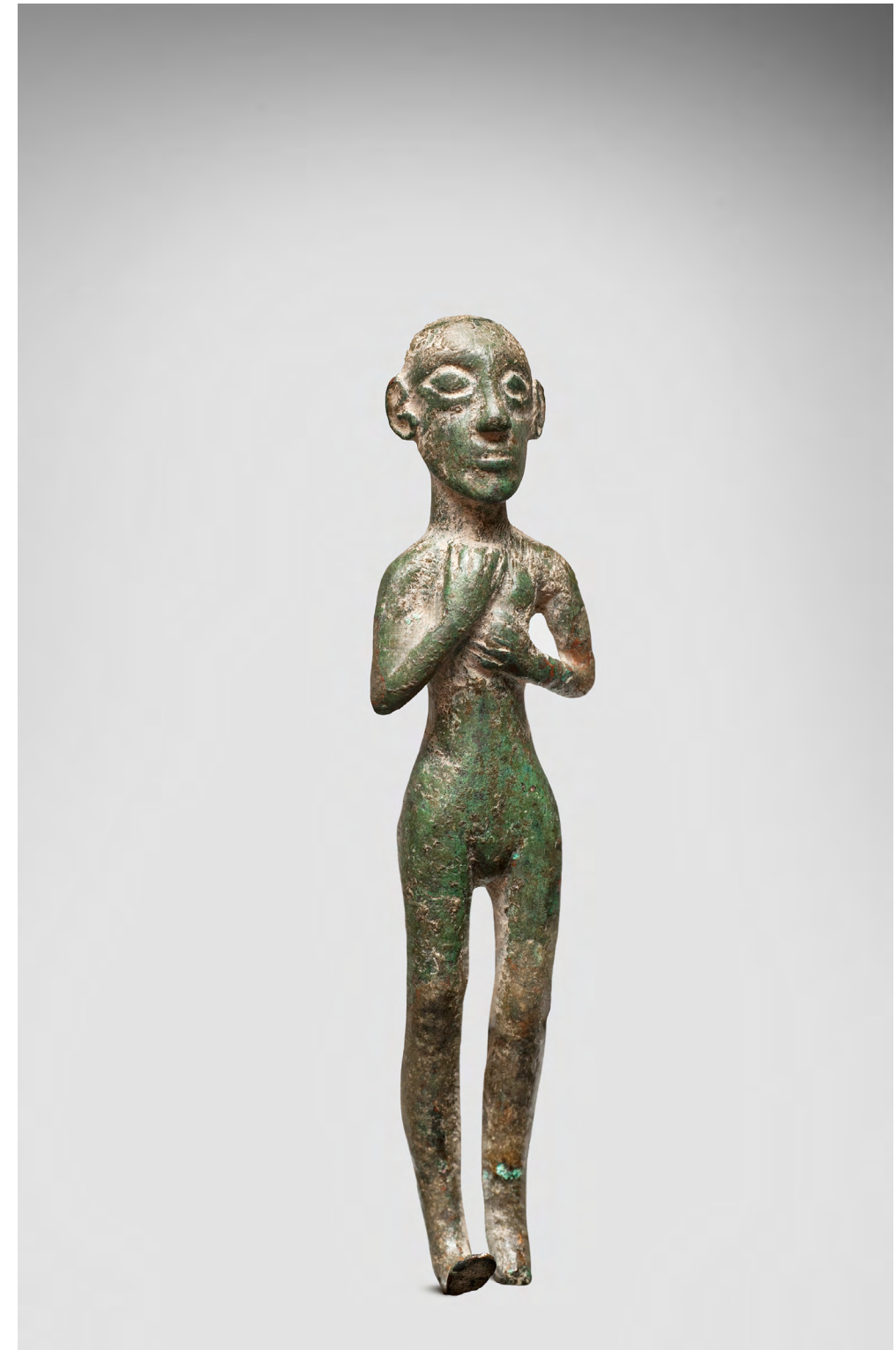


19 STATUETTE

Iberian, Southern Spain, 1st Millenium BC
Bronze
Height : 12 cm

Provenance Private collection, Germany

Similar votive statuettes are notably found in the Museo Arqueologico Nacional in Madrid. The naked body and the attitude, with both hands on the breast, are not uncommon in the corpus of Iberian bronze figures, but here, the detailed treatment of the head, the slender shape of lower body and the overall elegance achieved is quite remarkable.



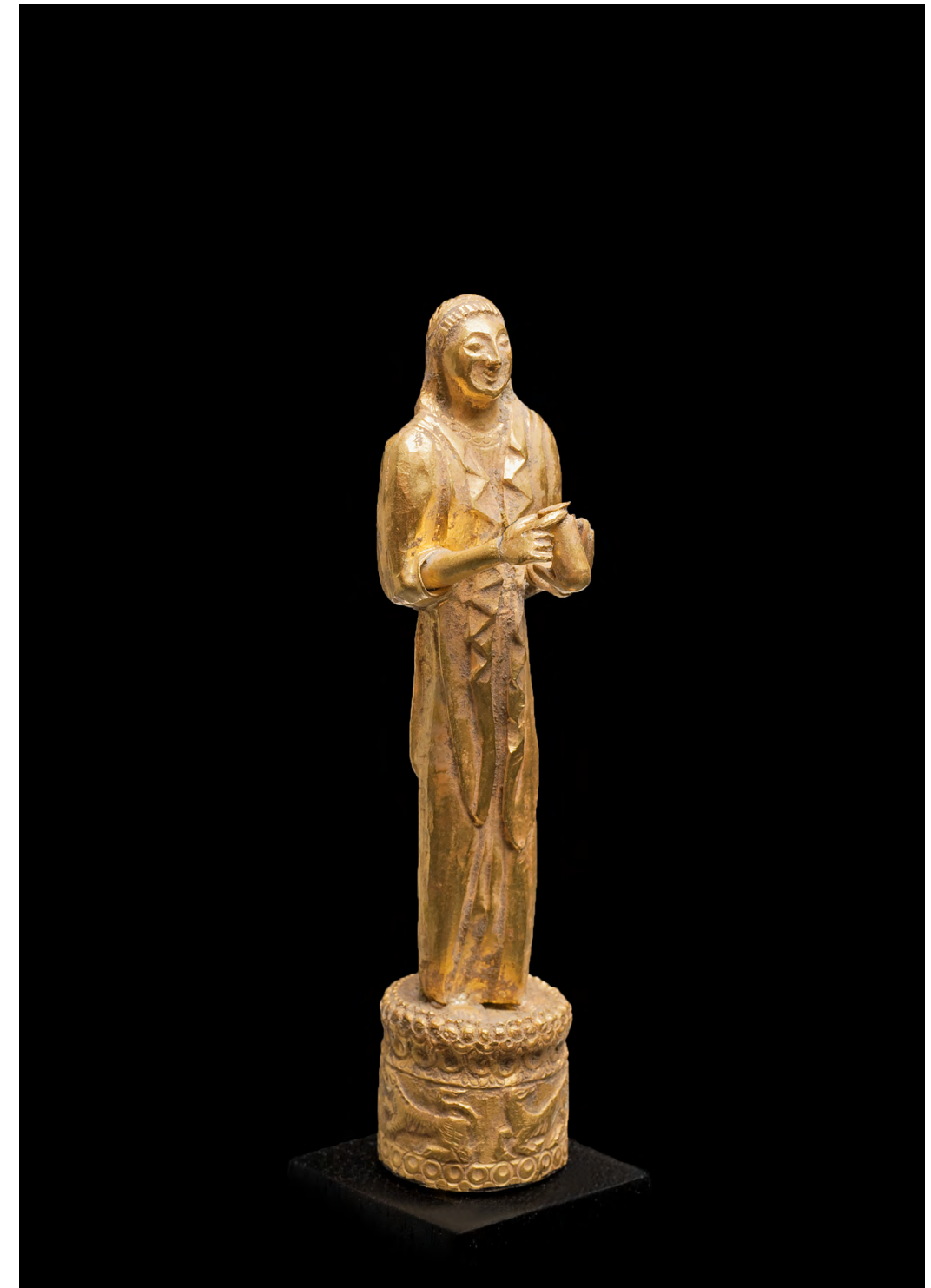
20 **STATUETTE OF APOLLO**

Etruscan, Northern Italy, circa 600-400 BC
Gold
Height : 9,4 cm
Weight : 27,4 gr

Provenance Private collection, Japan (circa 1960)

This extremely rare figurine sculpted in a single piece of hammered, repoussé and engraved gold, represents the Greek god Apollo. He is standing on a pedestal decorated with a hunting scene depicting a lion chasing a deer. He is wearing a long robe and holds a beaker in his hands. The face is smiling and the appearance serene, in the ideal of the kouros, a beardless, athletic youth.

Apollo has been variously recognized as the god of music, truth and prophecy, healing, the sun and light, plague, poetry, and more. He is known in Greek-influenced Etruscan mythology as *Apulu*. The most famous temple dedicated to Apollo was built in the rich city of Veii in the late 6th century before Christ, and indicates the spread of Apollo's cult in Etruria.



ASIA

21 ORNEMENTAL PLAQUE

Ordos, Southern Mongolia, circa 600-200 BC
Bronze, tin
Length : 9 cm

Provenance Galerie Uraeus, Paris

The Ordos culture refers to groups of nomadic peoples that inhabited the southern Mongolian Plateau during the Bronze and early Iron Age from the 6th to 2nd centuries before Christ. They are mainly known from their skeletal remains and artifacts, blade weapons, finials for tent-poles, horse gear, and small plaques and fittings for clothes and horse harness, using animal style decoration with relationships both with the Scythian art of regions much further west, and also Chinese art.

This rare tinned bronze plaque depicting a crouching tiger has the clarity and style that characterize early Scythian art. The smooth blueish-green patina resulting of the corrosion of tin and bronze is particularly attractive on this piece.



22 - 23 ORNAMENTAL PLAQUES

Northern Heibei Province, Northeast China, 600-500 BC (22)
Ordos, Southern Inner Mongolia, circa 500 BC
Bronze
Length : 8,8 (22) and 10,8 cm

Provenance Sheldon and Barbara Breitbart, New York (22)
Collection Gérard Lévy, Paris (23)

Exhibition Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona (22)

The Ordos culture refers to groups of nomadic peoples that inhabited the southern Mongolian Plateau during the Bronze and early Iron Age from the 6th to 2nd centuries before Christ. They are mainly known from their skeletal remains and artifacts, blade weapons, finials for tent-poles, horse gear, and small plaques and fittings for clothes and horse harness, using animal style decoration with relationships both with the Scythian art of regions much further west, and also Chinese art.

An identical pectoral as the one from the Breitbart collection (22), depicting a crouching leopard, is in the collection of Leon Levy and Shelby White, illustrated in *Traiders and Raiders on China's Northern Frontier*, E. Bunker & J. So (1995), page 112 n° 27. A belt plaque similar to number 23 is published in the same book, page 165 n° 89.



24 - 25

ORNEMENTAL PLAQUES

Ordos culture, Southern Siberia/Mongolia, 600-200 BC
Bronze
Length : 10,9 (24) and 9,7 cm

Provenance Collection Gérard Lévy, Paris

The Ordos culture refers to groups of nomadic peoples that inhabited the southern Mongolian Plateau during the Bronze and early Iron Age from the 6th to 2nd centuries before Christ. They are mainly known from their skeletal remains and artifacts, blade weapons, finials for tent-poles, horse gear, and small plaques and fittings for clothes and horse harness, using animal style decoration with relationships both with the Scythian art of regions much further west, and also Chinese art.

An almost identical bronze plaque as number 25, with the typical scythian iconography of a carnivore devouring the carcass of an animal, is illustrated in *A passage through Asia*, M. Doustar (2015), n°20. Another example is notably in the collection of the Musée Barbier-Mueller, in Geneva.



Hebei Province, Northern China, circa 600 BC
Gilded Bronze
Length : 11,5 cm

Provenance Private collection, Beijing
Collection Acher Eskenasy, Paris

This large gilded plaque of a bouncing onager inlaid with turquoise is a rare and beautiful example of pectoral. A comparable gold plaque of a leopard previously in the collection of Joseph Gerena is illustrated in *Nomadic Art of the Eastern Eurasian Steppes*, Emma Bunker, 2002, page 171 n° 157.



Ordos, Northwestern China, 300-200 BC
Gilded bronze
Diam. : 11 cm

Provenance Rupert Wace, London

The phalera is a circular adornment used on the harnessing of horses. This large and remarkable example is of a rare type, decorated with a ram's head in its center and an attachment hook on the back. In 1923, the legendary dealer C.T. Loo offered a comparable phalera decorated with a reclining bear to the Musée Cernuschi in Paris.



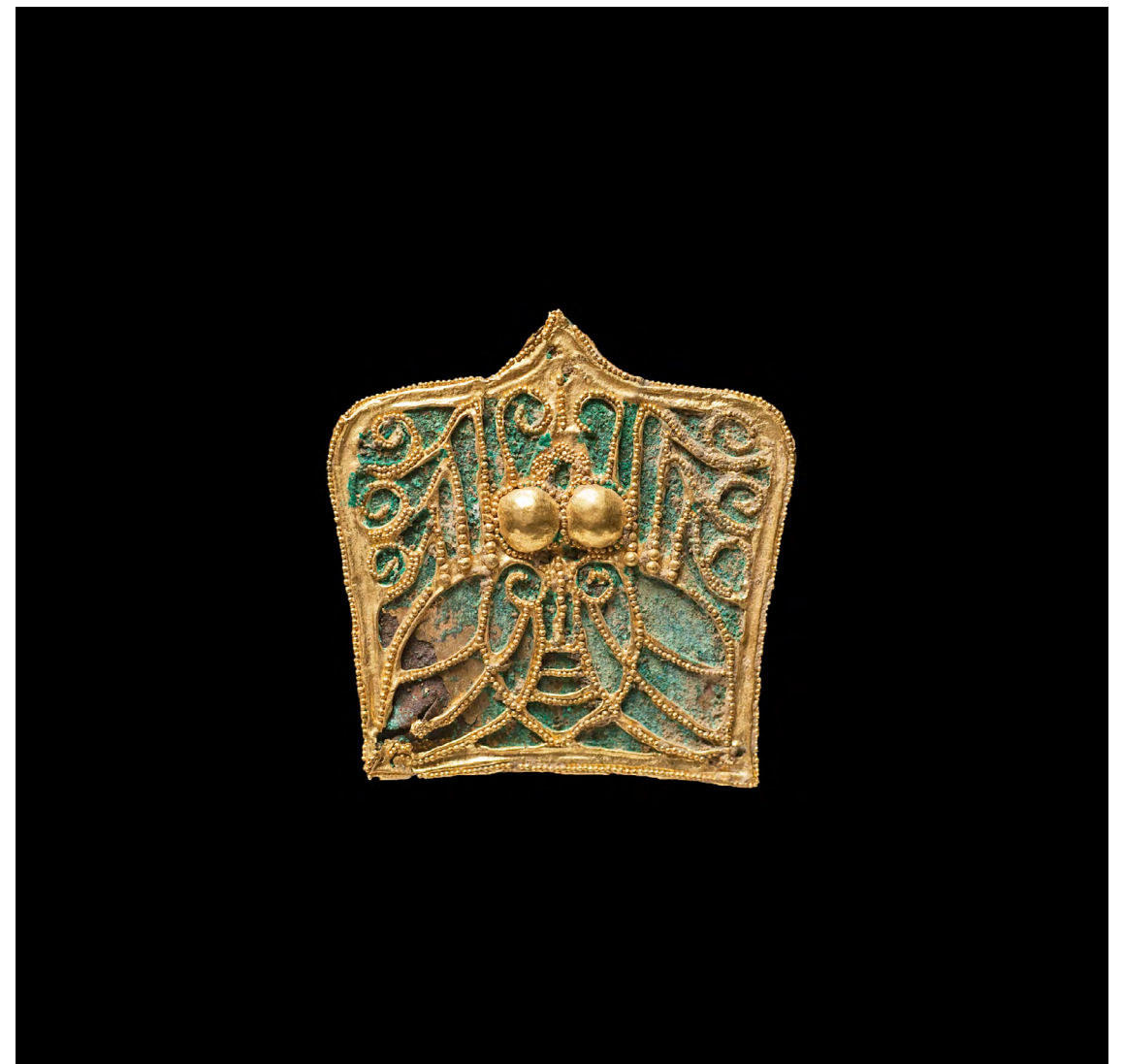


28 CHARIOT POLE FITTING

Western Han Period, China, circa 200 BC
Bronze, gilt
Length : 4,4 cm

Provenance Collection Acher Eskenasy, Paris

Similar gilded bronze chariot pole fittings have been unearthed from Tomb I on the site of Xuyi in Dayun Mountain, Jiangsu. There are now in the collection of the Nanjing Museum.



29 HEADDRESS ORNAMENT

Six Dynasties, China, 200-600 AD
Gold , bronze
Height : 3,7 cm

Provenance Collection Acher Eskenasy, Paris

These rare miniature plaques were ornaments on government official or elite's headdress. The intricate gold motif in relief depicts a grasshopper in its center -symbol of renaissance and immortality- and a human face surrounded by stylized dragons at the same time. The contrast between verdigris bronze and gold is superb.

IMPORTANT RITUAL EWER

Zhou Dynasty, China, 800-700 BC
Bronze
Length : 37 cm

Provenance Collection Alphonse Kann, Paris (n° 365)
Seized by the Nazis in October 1940
In deposit at the Jeu de Paume museum (ref. Ka 121)
Transferred at Altaussee salt mine art center, Austria
Restituted to owner in July 1947
Collection Hélène Kann-Bokanowski, Paris

This very rare and important bronze vessel -called *yi*- probably dating from the beginning of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) was a water vessel that was often used in conjunction with a pan for the ritual washing of hands, which is confirmed by the two having been found together in tombs, usually with the *yi* in the pan. Raised on four intricate legs with sides horizontally grooved under a band interlaced dragons motif, the handle cast as an elongated dragon with the head at top end portion supplied with two long-tailed feline beasts adorned with a spectacular pair of angular openwork horns. An almost identical *yi* vessel called the “*Ch’u Huan Yi Yi*”, from the esteemed collection of Mr Walter Sedgwick is published in *Ancient Chinese Bronzes*, W. Watson (1962), p. 76.

Alphonse Kann (1870-1948) was a prominent French art collector of Jewish heritage. He was a childhood playmate and adult friend of the writer Marcel Proust, who incorporated several of Kann’s features into the character Charles Swann (in *Swann in Love*). The name Kann, written with double “nn”, was said in Paris to be “le plus chic du chic”. Known for his discerning taste and shrewd collecting instincts, Kann shocked the art world in 1927 by auctioning off (at the American Art Association, New York City) most of his Old Master collection (including works by Bruegel, Cimabue, Fragonard, Pollaiuolo, Rubens and Tintoretto) in order to concentrate on the acquisition of 19th-century and modern art, which he collected vigorously over the following decade. Kann left France for England in 1938 without making an inventory of his eclectic art collection, which was kept in a St.-Germain-en-Laye mansion and subsequently looted in October 1940 by Nazi occupiers.

For a comparable bronze vessel, see Christie’s, New York, “*The Sze Yuan Tang Archaic Bronzes from Anthony Hardy Collection*”, 16 September 2010, lot 908.



31 EAR-SHAPE AXE

Western Zhou, Northwestern China, 1046-771 BC
Bronze
Height : 19,5 cm

Provenance Private collection, Brussels

This rare type of axe has been documented after the discovery in 1972 of a tomb in top of a hill in the city of Gansu, in northwestern China. The results of the excavations, including a very similar ear-shaped axe depicting a roaring feline, are now in the Gansu Provincial Museum. This type of elaborated axes and halberds were typically mounted on a wooden staff and used as prestige weapons by the military elite. The style and the origin of the object indicates a clear influence of the nomadic tribes from northern China and southern Mongolia.



32 DAGGER-AXE

Eastern Zhou, Northern China, circa 500-300 BC
Bronze
Height : 20 cm

Provenance Private collection, Brussels

The dagger-axe or *ge* is a type of pole weapon that was in use from the Shang dynasty until the Han dynasty in China. It consists of a dagger-shaped blade, mounted by its tang to a perpendicular wooden shaft. The earliest dagger-axe blades were made of stone. Later versions used bronze. Jade versions were also made for ceremonial use. There is a variant type with a divided two-part head, consisting of the usual straight blade and a scythe-like blade. The dagger-axe was the first weapon in Chinese history that was also a dual-use tool for hunting (such as the bow and arrow) or agriculture. Lacking a point for thrusting, the dagger-axe was used in the open where there was enough room to swing its long shaft. Its appearance on the Chinese battlefield predated the use of chariots and the later dominance of tightly packed infantry formations. The above example has a rare decor of felines on its blade, an influence from the north.



FIGURE OF A SHAMAN

Han Dynasty, China, circa 200 BC

Bronze

Height : 7,3 cm

Provenance Robert Ellsworth, New York (n°B2070)



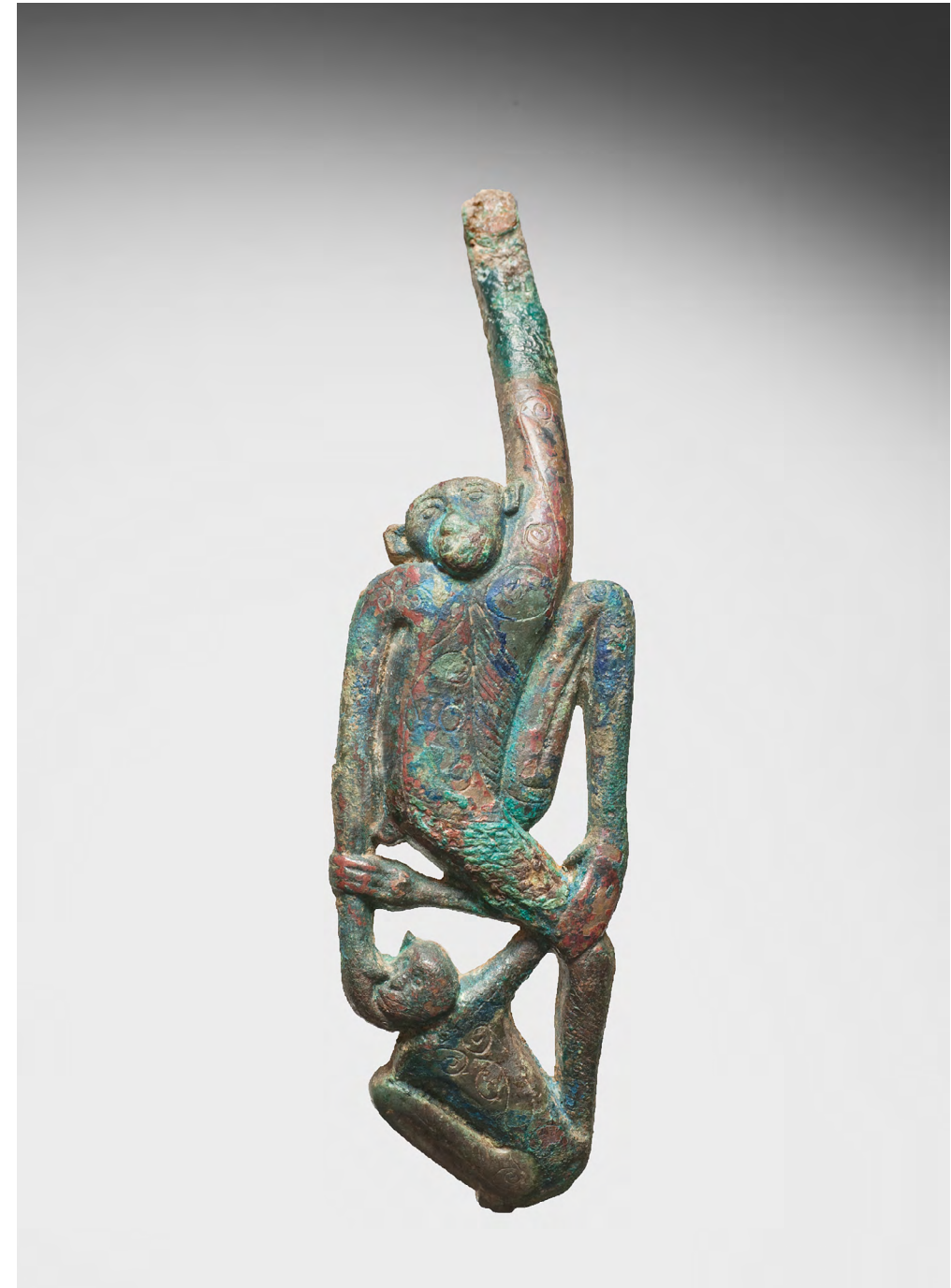
Finely cast in kneeling position with the hands symmetrically resting on his knees, the shaman is wearing a feather cape and tunic with rich incised geometrical designs. The mask-like pointed face seems to be scarified with thick undulating eyebrows and a long triangular beard extending from the hair. Despite its small size a haunting and powerful presence emanates from the figure.

Such objects were often used as supports or stands for lamps. A comparable bronze excavated in Xi'an is published in "The path of beauty" (Li Zehou, Beijing, 1988, p.60)

Western Han, Southwestern China, circa 200 BC
Bronze
Height : 10,5 cm

Provenance George Ortiz, Geneva
Private collection, Paris

The rather startling iconography of this bronze buckle, showing two intricately detailed monkeys, a female and its child, dangling in the air as if suspended from a branch, is quite unique. It is truly a gem, with delicate ornamental and anatomical details. The patina is also superb, covering all the shades of bronze corrosion, from copper red to azurite blue.



Peri-Dongsonian culture, Thailand, circa 200-100 BC
Bronze
Length : 16,8 cm

Provenance Collection Dr. Kurt Sandmair, Munich

The long grooved armband with flaring ends is surmounted by an elephant with partly missing tusks. We know a few of these large bracelets decorated with animals, found mainly in Thailand and Vietnam they belong to the Bronze Age period of Southeast Asia, conventionally called the Peri-Dongsonian culture in reference to the original site of first excavations, in the village of Dong Son, in northern Vietnam.



36 BRACELETS

Peri-Dongsonian culture, Thailand, 400-200 BC
Bronze
Diameter : 10,2 (a) and 8 cm (b)

Provenance Private collections, Brussels

The thick bronze bangle and the more aerial designed bracelet above are characteristic of the Bronze Age culture that developed in Southeast Asia in the second half of the first millenium BC. The spiral motif associated to the rope-like decor are typical of objects that originated from Thailand. Here, the elegance of form combined to the refinement of ornementation truly reach its apogee.



RITUAL DAGGER

Dong Son, Northern Vietnam, circa 300-200 BC
Bronze
Height : 18,6 cm

Provenance Private collection, Paris

Publication *Art of the Bronze Age in Southeast Asia*, Doustar, 2014, n° 21

These bronze objects became emblematic of the Dong Son culture, and comparable examples are in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum, New York and the Musée Barbier-Mueller in Geneva. Weapons of prestige, they have been found in the tombs of the distinguished elite at various locations along the Red River up to the Chinese province of Yunnan, and in the Ca Valley. The figures depicted on the handle are aristocrats or warriors, more rarely women.

This beautiful and perfectly intact example has a smooth blueish patina and an iconographic particularity, as the figure wears two different types of earrings.



Koh Ker, Cambodia, 10th century
Bronze
Height : 14 cm

Provenance Private collection, Brussels

Koh Ker is a remote archeological site in northern Cambodia about 120 km from the ancient site of Angkor Vat, and the modern name for an important city of the Khmer empire. Under the reign of the kings Jayavarman IV and Harshavarman II it was the capital of the whole empire (928–944 AD). Numerous sanctuaries with Shiva-lingas existed already on the site but during that period the cult of Shiva was particularly prevalent.



39 **KNIFE HANDLE**

Lombok, Indonesia, 19th century
Wood, iron
Length : 18 cm

Provenance Aalderink, Amsterdam

This very fine handle is carved with a tall protective figure in a typical gesture hands clasped on the torso. The glossy reddish-brown patina shows great age and wear, probably as a betelnut crusher.



40

KNIFE

Lombok, Indonesia, circa 1900
Wood, brass
Length : 22 cm

Provenance Collection Yves Bonan, Paris

The striking handle of this Lombok knife is carved with two stacked figures, the largest one perched on the shoulders of the other, holding his head in his two hands like a trophy... This imagery refers to the head-hunting iconography, very common in tribal Indonesia, and also to the notion of lineage and ancestry.



41

TOBACCO CONTAINER

Batak, North Sumatra, Indonesia, 19th century or before
Wood, horn
Height : 23,5 cm

Provenance Private collection, Paris

These magic containers were called *partimbahoan* by the Batak people of the Island of Sumatra in western Indonesia. The ones with a long tapered body carved in a single horn of water buffalo, like the present example, are much rarer. The bottom and the lid are wooden. The extremely eroded surface suggests undoubtedly a great age.

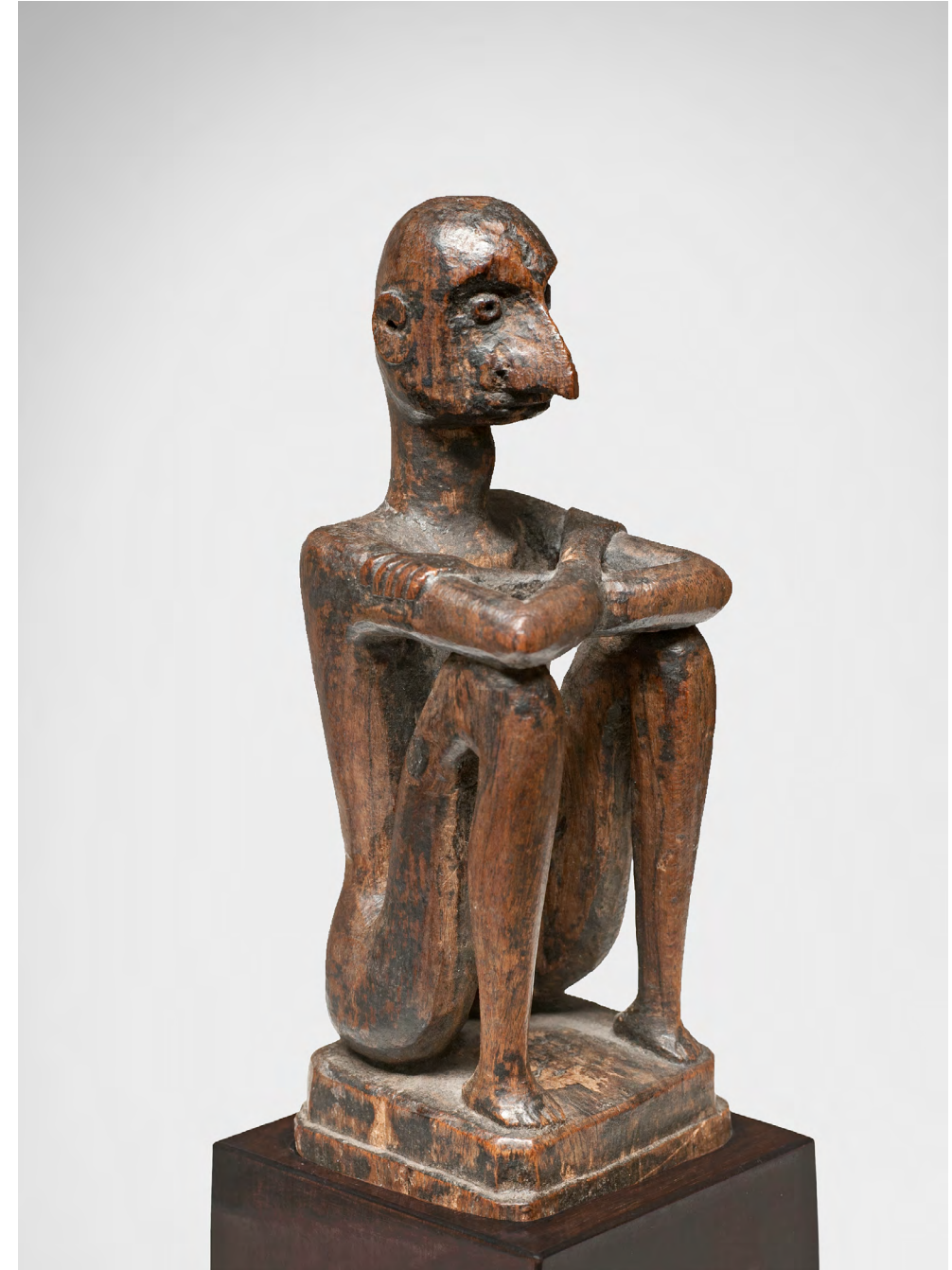


Leti Island, Moluccas, Indonesia, 19th century
Wood
Height : 14,5 cm

Provenance Bruce Frank, New York
Private collection, Paris

Throughout the Moluccas archipelago in eastern Indonesia, ancestor images indicated important links between the living and the dead. Small seated ancestor figures -called *yene*- depicted recently deceased family members and served as a vessel in which his or her spirit resided temporarily before departing for the land of the dead and to which it periodically returned to receive offerings or be consulted about important matters. On Leti Island, the pose of *yene* indicated the gender and status of the deceased. Male ancestors were shown seated with the legs drawn in to the body, and female ancestors were depicted with the legs crossed.

This exquisite little figure shows all the typical characteristics of Leti figurative statuary, a round head with a long beaked nose, the body seated on a pedestal and arms crossed over bent knees. The eyes have the shape of small glass beads and the ears resemble seashells. The dark brown patina presents remnants of black paint.



RARE ANCESTOR FIGURE

Moluccas, Indonesia, 19th century or before
Rosewood
Height : 25 cm

Provenance Private collection, Paris

The present figure depicts a female ancestor and it belongs to a group of extremely rare and early carvings with very few examples outside Dutch museums (most of these sculptures were collected by missions and traders from the Dutch East Indies in the course of the 19th century). The sculpture shows great attention and refinement in the stylization of details, such as the typical heart-shape face with arched brows, the ears in the form of seashells, the legs crossed with feet bented backwards and rolled under the thighs, or the pedestal, decorated with a double frieze of spiral motifs similar to Dongsonian drums found in Southeast Asia.

There are very few references of this particular style of carvings. One closely related sculpture is illustrated in the low-right corner of the old Dutch woodblock reproduced on the previous page. We believe they could originate from one of the small islands between Leti and Tanimbar, possibly Babar Island.



Geelvink Bay, Irian Jaya, Indonesia, 19th century
Wood, cassowary feathers
Height : 28 cm including the headdress

Provenance Lady Andrée Millar, Port Moresby
 Crispin Howarth, Melbourne
 Anthony Meyer, Paris
 Private collection, Paris

Lady Andrée Millar was the curator of the Lae Botanical Gardens, and the author -along two other famous collectors of Oceanic Art, Ron and Margaret Mackay- of the reference book "Orchids of Papua New Guinea", 1999. She was also the founder of the National Capital Botanical Gardens in Port Moresby, having spent from 1954 onwards in Papua New Guinea. She acquired this rare ancestor figure, called typically *korwar* in the Geelvink Bay area, around 1960. It is part of a tiny corpus of figurative carvings which were covered with a cassowary feather headdress. This particular example is probably the finest we know from this type. The treatment of the body in openwork swirls is quite unique and the overall condition remarkable despite its age.



45

CANOE PROW HEAD

Geelvink Bay, Irian Jaya, Indonesia, 19th century
Wood, natural fiber
Height : 21,2 cm

Provenance Collection Alexandre Bernand, Paris



Geelvink Bay, Irian Jaya, Indonesia, 19th century
Wood
Height : 23 cm

Provenance Private collection, Prague

Exhibition *De Kunst van het Zuidzeegebied*, Museum von Volkenkunde,
Rotterdam, 4 june-12 Sept. 1949, illustrated in the catalogue

The peoples of the coasts and islands of Cenderawasih Bay (ex. Geelvink Bay) in northwest New Guinea formerly created *korwar*, carved wooden figures that portrayed recently deceased ancestors. *Korwar* images served as supernatural intermediaries, allowing the living to communicate with the dead, who remained actively involved in family and community affairs. When a family member died, his or her relatives summoned a carver, typically a religious specialist, who created a korwar and enticed the spirit of the deceased to enter it. *Korwar* imagery was highly conventionalized, depicting the ancestor in a seated or standing position with the robust head and arrow-shaped nose that are the hallmarks of Cenderawasih carving. Kept by the family, *korwar* were consulted during crises and prior to important undertakings, such as trading voyages, warfare, or fishing. When a *korwar*'s advice proved sound, it was shown great deference. However, if the advice a korwar provided proved wrong, the living at times vented their anger on the figure, hurling it against the walls or house posts or even destroying it.



OCEANIA

47

ANCESTOR FIGURE

Sepik River, Papua New Guinea, 19th century
Wood, black pigment
Height : 21,5 cm

Provenance Private collection, Germany
Voyageur & Curieux, Paris

The figure presents a large fierce-looking head and a powerful torso well seated on strong legs, slightly squatting. The black crusty patina, thick and cracked on the back of the figure, suggests a considerable age.



ANCESTOR FIGURE

North Coast, Papua New Guinea, 19th century
Wood, natural pigments
Height : 34 cm

Provenance Private collection, United Kingdom

Rare and early type of wooden figure originating from the northwest coast of Papua New Guinea, possibly the village of Singarin or in the very same region. The whole sculpture is painted, with ochre, red, black, and white pigments obtained from vegetal sources. A small hook is carved at the back of the head to hang the figure on the back of the dancer or to a basket. The piece was carved before the end of the German protectorate in 1914, and most probably collected in the early years of the twentieth century.

Similar statues were notably collected by the Steyler Mission, now held in the Steyl Museum (see below) ; and a few examples are illustrated in Heinz Kelm' *Kunst vom Sepik*, vol. III.



Papuan Gulf, Papua New Guinea, 19th century
Dwarf coconut, cord
Length : 10 (a) and 11,4 (b) cm

Provenance Galerie Anthony Meyer, Paris (a)
Private collection, Amsterdam (b)

Marupai are magical and protective charms made from dwarf coconut shell and incised with clan motifs filled with lime. The overall shape and design of the marupai resemble the head of an animal, while another grinning face appears within the incised decor when turning the object upside down. They were personal property of adult men and fulfil a variety of magical functions such as help in hunting and fishing or protection against illness and attack of enemies.

This pair of marupai are superb examples in terms of design, age and condition; they are complete with their original hanging cord.



LIME SPATULA

Massim region, Papua New Guinea, 19th century
 Turtle shell, lime
 Height : 27 cm

Provenance A New England museum, USA

This spatula carved in turtle shell originates from the southern Massim region. It has a dual function : as a lime spatula to scoop powdered lime from a container during the chewing of betel nut (a mild stimulant), and as a *gabaela*, a ceremonial wand that served to display precious shell disks used as currency, which were tied to it using the holes in the upper margin. Viewed with the blade downward, the *gabaela* portrays a stylized human face or figure; the curved portion represents the forehead or chest, and the extremities the arms and hands. The eyes of two stylized birds form the eyes or testes, and the blade depicts the nose, leg, or phallus. Viewed with the blade upward, the *gabaela* portrays a sailing canoe, its blade representing the mast and the curved portion the gunnels.

The present example appears to be particularly ancient; the carving is less clear-cut and mechanical than later examples, attesting the use of stone tools.





HOOK PENDANT 52

Torres Strait, Melanesia, 19th century
Tortoise shell
Height : 7,6 cm

51 NOSE ORNAMENT

Papua New Guinea, 19th century
Shell
Length : 13 cm

New Ireland, Melanesia, 19th century
Shell, tortoise shell, beads, fiber
Diameter : 10,4 (a) and 7,4 cm (b)

Provenance Collection H. M. Lissauer, Australia
René & Odette Delenne, Brussels (between 1967- 1972)

These two shell-disc ornaments with attached turtle-shell panel pierced with rows of geometrical motifs were called *kap kap* in Melanesia. They were typically found in the Solomon Islands archipelago, New Ireland and the Admiralty islands; worn around the neck, the forehead or the temple. Highly prized as personal status symbols of authority, they were worn mainly by men, leader and warriors.

Men of New Hanover wearing *kapkaps* around their necks.
Photo : Lajos Biro, Ethnographical Institute Budapest





54 CURRENCY BRACELET

New Caledonia or Papua New Guinea, Melanesia, 19th century
 Conus shell
 Diameter : 10,5 cm
 Provenance Galerie Lemaire, Amsterdam

These bracelets were found all around Melanesia, and particularly on the coastal region of Papua New Guinea.



55 KNIFE

New Caledonia, Melanesia, 19th century
 Mother-of-pearl, flying fox hair
 Height : 16,4 cm
 Provenance Collection Berend Hoekstra, Brussels

A similar knife, attached with a twine of flying fox hair and used to peel the yam, was presented in the Kanak exhibiton "*L'art est une parole*" at the Musée du Quai Branly in 2013-2014 (cat. n°100, page 168).

56 KANAK ADZE

New Caledonia, Melanesia, 1700-1800 AD
Wood, cord, nephrite
Height : 23 cm

Provenance Collection Berend Hoekstra, Brussels

These kanak adzes were observed and collected for the first time during the second voyage of Captain Cook in the South Seas, circa 1772-1775. Sometimes referred to as “knee-adze” due to the unique spherical shape of the wooden handle, they are said to originate from the Loyalty Islands, an archipelago within New Caledonia. Most examples were collected very early and it appears that they were probably initially made for an utilitarian use. With the transition from an indigenous lithic culture to the technology of iron in the course of the 19th century they became obsolete but retained a certain prestige as blade holder.



Choiseul Island, Solomon Islands, Melanesia, 19th century
Clam shell
Width : 17 cm

Provenance Ulrich Kortmann, Dortmund

Objects fashioned from the hard marble-like shell of the giant clam are prized by many Melanesian peoples, but the art of working giant-clam shell (*tridacna Gigas*) reached its apogee in the Solomon Islands. The most complex clam shell objects are the *barava*, ornate openwork plaques created in the western Solomon Islands. The designs on some *barava* are geometric, but many -like the present one- include stylized human figures interspersed with forms that resemble faces, shown with spiral eyes and grinning mouths filled with minute teeth. *Barava* appear to have been associated with burial places and were reportedly used to adorn structures housing the skulls of prominent men or slain enemies or placed on graves. In the past, some *barava* formed part of *vovoso*, powerful charms carried in war canoes during headhunting expeditions to protect the crew and ensure success.

An extremely similar barava fragment is in the collections of The Met, New York (1978.412.749).



CANOE PROW FIGURE

New Georgia, Solomon Islands, Melanesia, 19th century
Wood, mother-of-pearl, pigment
Height : 17 cm

Provenance The Gurney family, England
Michael-Graham Stewart, Auckland

Small figures such as this one -called *musumus*- were tied above the waterline to the towering prows of large, plank canoes, used for warfare and fishing, which could accommodate over thirty men. The figures seem to have been associated with *Kesoko*, a beneficent spirit who warded off dangerous water spirits and approaching enemies. This archaic-looking example is less ornamented and probably more ancient than most canoe prow figures we see on the market. Another figure of the same type, but inlaid with sea shells and certainly of later manufacture, is in the collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (1996.393).

The Gurney family worked on British ships that traveled to the South Seas in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they probably acquired the figure during that period.

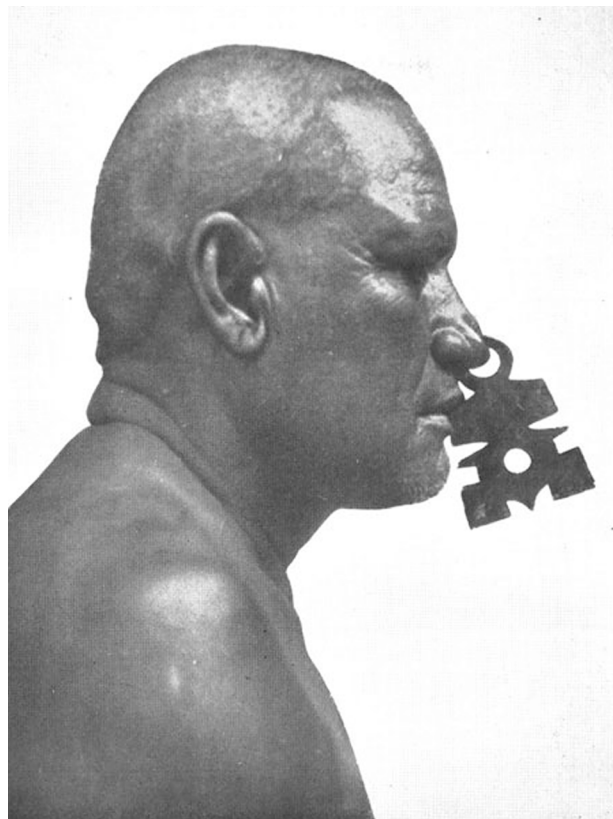


NOSE ORNAMENTS

Ontong Java, Solomon Islands, Melanesia, 19th century
Tortoise shell
Height : 11,7 (a) and 11,5 cm (b)

Provenance Paula and Abraham Rosman, New York

These two carvings are typical nose ornaments from Ontong Java, a geographically-melanesian but culturally-polynesian atoll in the Malaita province of the Solomon Islands archipelago. Stone carved turtle shell polished with sand, these sculptures were also wearable symbol of wealth.



PRESTIGE TRAY (*tolúk*)

Palau, Caroline Islands, 19th century
Turtle shell
Length : 17,5 cm

Provenance Presented to Nordern H. Cheatham by M'aas (elder women)
as a gift while he was the Forest Conservation Officer
for the Palau Trust Territory between 1964-67.

“The accumulation and exchange of wealth in the form of prestige valuables is an important aspect of Palau culture. Although frequently referred to as “money,” Palauan valuables are not currency in the ordinary sense but treasured objects, often with extensive individual histories, which are exchanged between families only on important occasions such as births, marriages, or deaths.

Men and women each have their own forms of wealth, which cannot be owned or exchanged by members of the opposite sex. Women’s wealth consists of *tolúk* (shallow trays), such as the present work, and *itrir* (spoons) made from subtly mottled plates of turtle shell.

The trays and spoons are created through a complex process, in which flat plates of turtle shell are transformed into three-dimensional objects. To form the trays, individual plates of turtle shell are immersed in hot water to soften them. Now malleable, the plates are placed in two-part molds of wood, which are tied tightly together and further heated to press the plates into the desired bowl-like form. Still within the mold, the turtle shell is placed in cold water to harden. Once cooled, the newly formed *tolúk* is ready for use. Exchanged between rather than within families, *tolúk* are owned and used exclusively by women, and are presented as ritual payment to female in-laws for food or services, such as assistance in the preparations for a feast. When received, the trays are carefully preserved and form part of a family’s store of wealth. Through years of exchange and handling, *tolúk* acquire individual histories and a rich, glossy patina and old and storied trays are valued far more highly than more recent examples.” (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, nd, 2013)

A similar example can be seen at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (1978.412.756).





61 RARE NECKLET

Micronesia, 19th century
Mother-of-pearl, fiber, glass beads
Height : 15,6 cm

Ex. Collection Berend Hoekstra, Brussels



IMPORTANT NECKLET 62

Marshall Island, Micronesia, 19th century
Mother-of-pearl, fiber, glass beads
Height : 16,4 cm

Herbert Tischner, Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg
Ex. Collection Lemaire, Amsterdam

Austral Islands, Polynesia, 19th century
Coral
Height : 14,5 cm

Provenance Collection Berend Hoekstra, Brussels

This large and beautifully shaped pounder is carved in a *Dipsastraea pallida* (also known as Knob Coral and *Favia pallida*), a coral formed by a characteristic network of circular corallites closely compacted. Called *penu* in the Austral Islands archipelago -the most southern latitude of any islands in French Polynesia-, this traditional pestle was used to crush tubers, medicinal plants and fruit pulp. The *penu* makers were in the past highly estimated for the quality and beauty of their production; a tradition that unexpectedly stopped at the end of the 19th century. The *penu* is also the emblem of the Austral Islands flag.

The handle of saddle form above tapering sides, with a narrow neck flaring out at the bottom in a domed shape. The present example shows extremely well balanced proportions and natural coarse white surface with wear indicative of much age and use. A superb example.

Cf. *Polynesian Artifacts, The Oldman Collection*, Illustrated and Described, Memoirs of the Polynesian Society, Wellington, 1953, pl. 37, fig. 457G



Fiji Islands, Polynesia, 19th century
Whale tooth
Length : 14,5 cm

Provenance Private collection, United Kingdom

The term *tabua* refers to a presentation whale tooth, the greatest of all Fijian valuables. Originally taken from the lower jaw of sperm whales found stranded on Fijian beaches, *tabua* are pierced and braided whale teeth. They are considered by Fijians as a *kavakaturanga* or 'chiefly thing'. Whale ivory in Fiji is closely associated with divine power and with chiefs as embodiments of divine ancestors. *Tabua* are not worn but are presented at important ceremonies, including weddings, births and funerals. *Tabua* used to be the most effective way to give weight to an apology or pledge allegiance. The occasion where *tabua* are presented also determines their spiritual value.

Ceremonial *tabua* - like the above example - have holes drilled through the tip and the butt, and a braided sennit cord is attached. To make *tabua*, the whale teeth are polished and sometimes rubbed with coconut oil and turmeric to darken them. In some cases the teeth are smoked in a small tent-like structure covered in bark cloth to turn them a rich tobacco colour. The present example shows a superb smooth surface and rich honey-coloured patina.



Fiji Islands, Polynesia, circa 1800
Whale teeth, natural fiber
Height : 20 cm

Provenance Collection Berend Hoekstra, Brussels

This necklace is made of thirty one whale teeth each carved into a sharply pointed tusk-like form. The teeth were traditionally strung on a coconut husk fiber rope and the necklace would be worn so that the points face upwards. In the the Pacific Islands of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa such necklaces were called “*Wasekaseka*” or “*Waseisei*” when they were made of perm whale teeth, or “*sisi*” - much rarer - when they were mounted with whale teeth, like the above example. Whale teeth were highly valued symbols of honor, wealth and power worn by high-status individuals who in many cases received them as gratitude for an alliance or for their political support or, as a token of solidarity. In the 18th century necklaces and other ornaments made from whale teeth were extremely rare as the materials were obtained on the occasion a whale would become beached on shore. In the 19th century when Europeans began the whaling industry in the area teeth became far less rare to obtain and more common but, never losing their stately significance.



RARE NECKLACE

Fiji Islands, Polynesia, 1700-1800
Whale ivory, vegetal fiber
Length : 30 cm with cord, reel size

Provenance Kevin Conru, Brussels
Collection Berend Hoekstra, Brussels

In the recent publication *Fiji : Art and Life in the Pacific*, Steven Hooper describes a later necklace of the same type : “The place of manufacture of this rare but distinctive type of necklace remains unclear. An example in private hands has an old French label attributing it to “Uvea”, also known as Wallis Island. The fibre cord resembles that used on Tongan fishing lures, and the similarity of the form to reel-shaped runners on the sides of canoe hulls suggests they were made by canoe-builders, but where in Western Polynesia is uncertain. An example in Dresden (30864, acquired in 1882) has “Viti” on an old label. Some old kava bowls have lugs in reel form, and a Fijian fish-shaped dish in Sydney has four reel-shaped feet, so it is likely that eastern Fiji-based canoe builders made these ivory necklets. An example in the British Museum predates 1855.”

Steven Hooper (2016), *Fiji : Art and Life in the Pacific*, Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, Page 140 n°40.





67 RARE CHIEF PENDANT

Marquesas Islands, Polynesia, 19th century
Whale tooth
Length : 15 cm

Provenance Private collection, France

As in the Fiji Islands and other parts of the South Pacific, whale teeth were used in the Marquesas Islands to carve various type of ornaments and valuables. Similar in shape to the *tabua*, presentation whale tooth very common in the Fiji Islands, the above pendant is a much rarer version found in the Marquesas. Unlike the *tabua*, it is pierced only at one end, intended to be worn around the neck with the pointed end facing down.

68 EAR ORNAMENT

Marquesas Islands, Polynesia, 19th century
Whale ivory
Length : 10 cm

Provenance	Collection Bernard and Bertand Bottet, Nice (n°24) Christie’s Paris, 11 December 2012, lot 41 Private collection, Brussels
Publication	Collection Bernard et Bertrand Bottet, 2013, p.266 n° 98

Ivory ear ornaments, or *hakakai*, made from whale teeth or, in smaller examples, pig tusks were worn by both sexes. Obtained, in precontact times, solely from chance strandings, whale teeth were among the rarest and most precious objects in the Marquesas. Carved in one piece from the massive teeth of sperm whales, larger *hakakai* such as the present one, were worn by men. Consisting of a large disk worn in front of the ear and a curved spur inserted through the earlobe, which projected behind the ear.

The above example is carved with an exquisite little tiki figure which has a unique particularity, as the head of the figure was carved separately and inserted into the body. As Bernard and Bertand Bottet noted in their books (page 5): “the head of the tiki has been broken and restored by the natives.” The wear and patina of the head, consistent with the figure, confirms it was made in early times.

Some comparable examples are published in *Adorning the World, Art of the Marquesas Islands*, E. Kjellgrenn, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2005, p. 75.



Marquesas Islands, Polynesia, 19th century
Bone
Height : 4 cm

Provenance René Choussat (1903-1987), commissaire principal
de la Marine Marchande, collected before 1930.

To adorn themselves and the objects they used, Marquesans fashioned beadlike cylinders of bone called *ivi po'o*, literally “bone pieces”, from the arm and leg bones of their enemies. Those carved in human form, such as the present piece, were referred to as *tiki ivi po'o*. These objects were employed widely as personal ornaments, worn around the neck or in the hair, or as decorative accents to larger works such as shell tumpets, drums, slings and other household furniture. A particularly large and fine example.



A F R I C A

DJENNE BRACELET

Djenné, southwestern Mali, 1200-1600 AD
Bronze
Height : 15,5 cm

Provenance Private collection, Brussels

This massive bracelet cast in two sections originates from the Djenné culture that flourished in the Inland Niger Delta, in present-day southwestern Mali. The town of Djenné was founded between 800 and 1250 AD and grew to become a significant trans-Saharan trading center. By the fourteenth century, gold, kola, and slaves from the southern savanna, salt and manuscripts from the Sahara, and the staple foods of the Inland Niger Delta were bartered here in an extensive web of trade reaching as far as northern Africa and Europe. By the sixteenth century, Djenné had become one of the foremost market centers on the African continent. Most of the works discovered on the site of ancient Djenné date between the 12th and 16th centuries; they were found during the annual inundation of the Niger Delta when the water uncovers objects from the overlaying soil.





71

OGBONI EDAN STAFF

Yoruba, Nigeria/Benin, 19th century
Brass, iron
Height : 27,5 cm

Provenance Collection Bruno Gay, Paris

The Yoruba people are an ethnic group of southwestern and North-central Nigeria as well as southern and central Benin, together known as Yorubaland. The Yoruba are one of the most important and best studied African peoples South of the Sahara. However, we know very little about one of their most important social and religious institutions, the Ogboni society. This is principally due to the oath of secrecy that protects their meetings and rituals. German ethnographer Frobenius reports in 1912 that certain Ogboni rituals demand human sacrifice, that would possibly explain the need of secrecy. The contents of their deliberation could be another reason. In his publication of reference, “Earth and Ancestors : Ogboni iconography”, Hans Witte writes that : “what seemed to be one of the few established facts on the Ogboni, founded on solid fieldwork and unanimously accepted, was that the religious foundation of the society rested in the veneration of the earth (*ile*) in the form of the earth-mother named Ile or Onile (Owner of the earth). The society performs a range of political and religious functions, including exercising a profound influence on regents and serving as high courts of jurisprudence in capital offenses. Its members are generally considered to be part of the nobility of the various Yoruba kingdoms of West Africa. When a new member joins the Ogboni society, they receive a pair of “Edan staffs”, which consists of an iron rod projecting from the lower part of the figures. Core figures of clay are attached to the iron staffs and later covered with finely executed versions made of yellow cast-alloy (brass) executed with ‘waste mould’ casting. Each pair consists of a man and a woman linked at the top of the head by means of a chain. The staffs are worn around the neck and serve as a form of identification during the meetings of the society. The brass staff protects its owner with the power of the earth, Yoruba “ile”, against evil forces. They also intervene in the administration of justice, during initiation of a new candidate, or in medical practice to cure illness. The iron spike underneath the staff is used to stick the edan ogboni in the ground to serve as an oracle. The present example, a very old female figure with legs apart, hands flat, and bulging eyes, appears to be one of the finest edan ogboni staff. The expressiveness of the face is unrivalled in the corpus.

SHANGO STAFF

Yoruba, Nigeria, 19th century
Wood, pigment
Height : 35,5 cm

Provenance Private collection, Paris

The ancestral Shango was the fourth king of the town of Oyo. Oral tradition describes him as powerful, with a voice like thunder and a mouth that spewed fire when he spoke. When a subordinate chief challenged his rule, many townspeople were impressed by the subordinate's feats of magic and deserted Shango. Defeated in the eyes of the majority of his subjects, Shango left Oyo and committed suicide by hanging himself. His followers were angry and they hired a great magician to bring fire on his enemy's houses. Several fires occurred and Shango's followers declared that Shango had ascended into the sky from which he sent fire, symbolized by the red and yellow in the double ax. This one has the figure holding a form, which relates to the rainbow. Because of their protective associations, Shango staffs are sometimes displayed over doorways to ward off theft and misfortune. Those staffs used in ceremonies to evoke his spirit are usually surmounted by a female figure representing his wife Oya. The double thunderbolt ax headdress symbolizes his power and bring thunder and lightning while the female figure of Oya symbolizes fertility from the rain shown by the blue around the double ax.

This beautifully carved staff depicts Oya in a typical iconography carrying a new born. The shaft is covered with a thick crusty patina and appears to be a very old example.



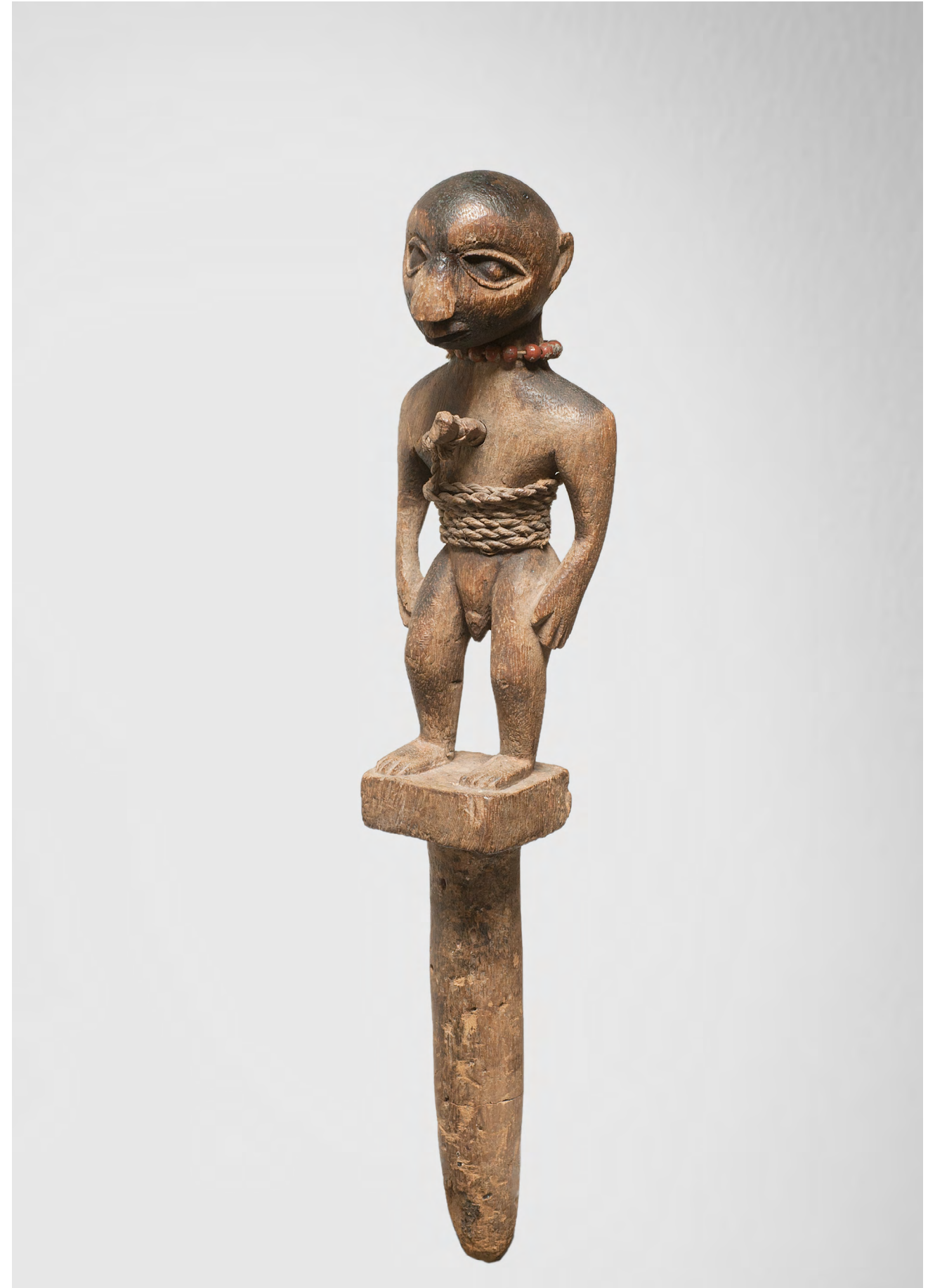
73 ***BOTCHIO***

Fon people, Benin, 1900-1950
Wood, cord, beads
Height : 32,5 cm

Provenance Collected in situ by Ann de Pauw & Luc Huysveld

The Fon people are a major African ethnic and linguistic group, notably the largest group in Benin found particularly in its south region; they are also found in southwest Nigeria and Togo. The history of the Fon people is closely linked to the Dahomey kingdom. The traditional Fon religion is regionally called Vodoun, which is etymologically linked to Vodun – a term that refers to their theological concept of “numerous immortal spirits and deities”. It centers around the ancestors, whose protection and benevolence is sought through yearly offerings.

During the height of the Dahomey Empire, the royal lineage paid annual tribute to its ancestors at a spectacular gathering known as the Annual Custom, which culminated with the sacrifice of about a hundred slaves and war captives. This was only exceeded by the Grand Custom, which was held after the death of a ruler. Among the citizens of Dahomey offerings were often made to botchio (wooden statues). These statues, which are still carved today, are used by individual families for protection and embody the well-being of the village. The botchio are rubbed with palm oil as a prayer to the ancestors, which results sometimes in the polished look we have come to expect in similar objects found in museum collections. The present figure, an unusually well carved and early example, has traces of palm oil on the top of its head and shoulders, and a very expressive face that reminds somewhat the Yoruba. A wooden stick is planted in its chest and attached with a cord around his waist.





74

DIVINATION CHARM

Chamba, Nigeria, 1900-1950
Clay, natural pigment
Length : 12,4 cm

Provenance Renaud Vanuxem, Paris



PENDANT

75

Baule, Ivory Coast, circa 1900
Bronze
Height : 5,8 cm

Ex. Nicole and John Dintenfass, New York

76 **LEGA FIGURE**

Lega people, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 19th century
Ivory
Height : 16 cm

Provenance Pierre Darteville, Bruxelles
 Luciano Lanfranchi, Milano

Publication *Scultura, l'Arte dell'Africa*, Milano, 2009, pp 74-75-76.
 A Hidden Heritage, Sculture Africane in Collezioni Private Italiane,
 Galleria Dalton Somaré, Vittorio Carini, Milano, 2004 n° 245 p. 280
 White Gold, Black Hands. Ivory Sculpture in Congo Vol. 5, p. 294

The Lega are an ethnic group of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They originated in what is today Uganda, and started to migrate from there to their present location in the 16th century. They were fierce warriors, conquering the people whose territory they entered and imposing many of their customs. The social and spiritual lives of the Lega are governed by a central initiation society known as *Bwami*. The teachings of *Bwami* permeate all aspects of life, guiding the moral development of the individual and governing relations with others. *Bwami* doctrine is represented by wood and ivory masks, heads, and small figures, all of which play a vital role during initiation into the society's highest grades. The anthropomorphic sculptures carved in ivory and called *iginga* are the exclusive and individual property of the initiates (*lutumbo iwa kindi*) of the highest *Bwami* rank, obtained at the time of accession to this very high level. According to Biebuyck (in MRAC 1995: 381), these statues most often were inherited by the initiate from a deceased parent after having been displayed at the grave of the deceased.

The above *iginga* is clearly an extremely ancient and symbolically important example, attested by the rich dark brown patina and the presence of ritual cuttings at the nose and the breast. The carving is also remarkable with the arms subtly suggested alongside the torso.

We know another statuette carved by the same hand that was sold at Sotheby's Paris, 17 June 2009, lot 109, and later exhibited by Bernard de Grunne. The sculpture is larger in size but in comparison with the present figure the carving lacks of depth and sharpness, and doesn't achieve the same strength and presence. One can also observe that the patina is dramatically different and the carving rather "fresh", even though the provenance indicated the object was collected in the early years of the twentieth century.

cf. Sotheby's Paris, 17 June 2009, lot 109, for a statuette by the same hand.





HAIR PIN 78

Kwere/Zaramo, Tanzania, 20th century
Ivory
Height : 18,6 cm

Provenance Private collection, France

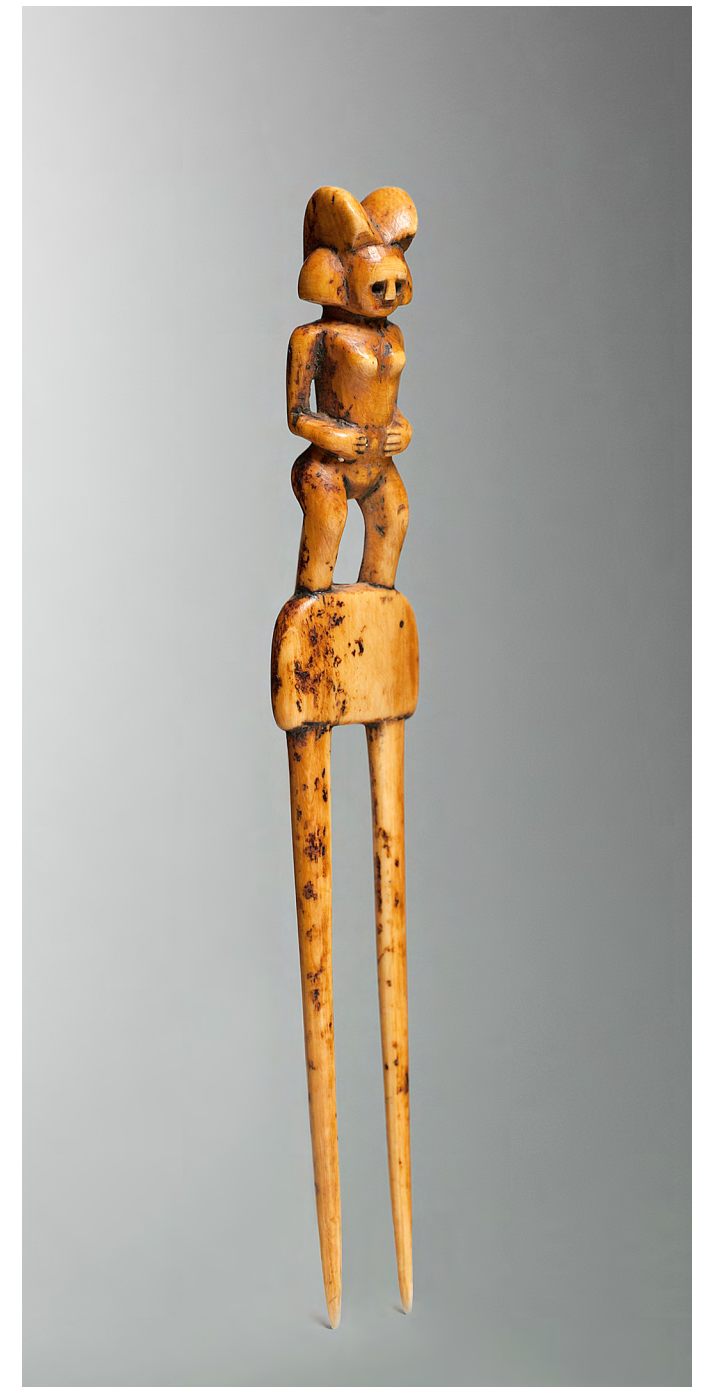
This rare and delicate hair pin is carved in ivory and surmounted by a *Mwana Hiti* female figure typical of the kwere and Zaramo.

77 INITIATION STOOL

Kwere/Zaramo, Tanzania, 20th century
Wood, beads, string
Height : 25 cm

Provenance Private collection, France

An extremely rare initiation stool used to sit the young girls during the ceremony of the circumcision. The stool has the unusual shape of a very large *Mwana Hiti* fertility doll, wearing typical glass bead necklace and tiny beads in the eyes. A straight line is cut on the face of the figure, probably a symbol in reference to excision.



A M E R I C A S

OLMEC FIGURE

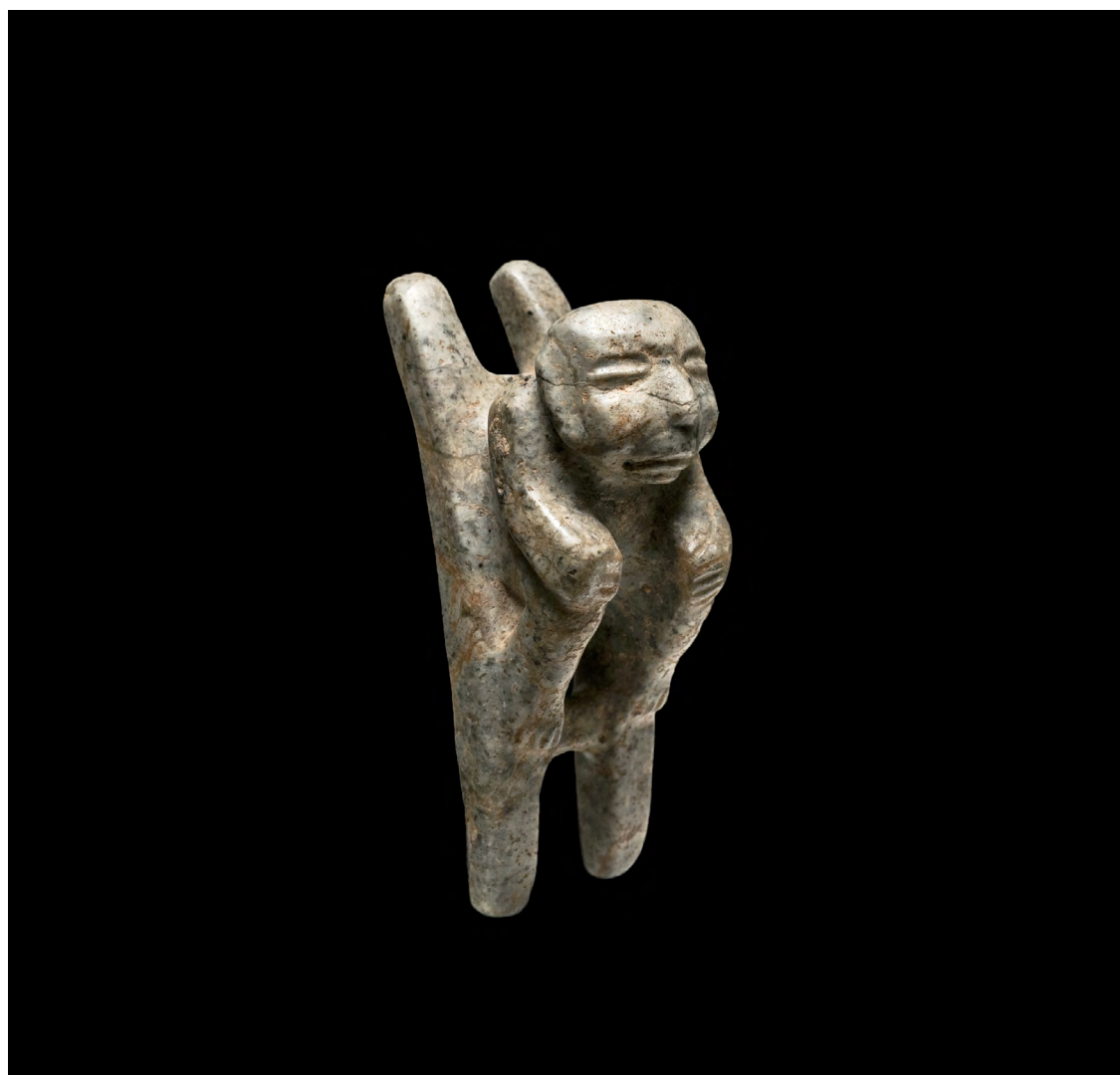
Olmec civilization, Mexico, 900-400 BC
Steatite
Height : 10,2 cm

Provenance Galerie Mermoz, Paris
Private collection, Paris

The Olmec civilization is considered to be the mother culture of Mesoamerica. The Olmec ruled a vast empire covering much of southern Mexico and Guatemala from around 1500-400 BC. Olmec religious activities were performed by a combination of rulers, priests, and shamans. The rulers seem to have been the most important religious figures, with their links to the Olmec deities or supernaturals providing legitimacy for their rule. The cross-legged position, as depicted by the above figure, is a characteristic format of seated rulers. Another recurring element of Olmec culture and mythology is the composite creature known as the “were-jaguar”, which is the most common subject of the art. This name is used to describe a characteristic countenance of Olmec art generally exhibiting the puffy, fat cheeks and jowls of a human baby with the slanted eyes and curved mouth of a jaguar thought by scholars to depict a shaman in the midst of transmogrification.

A comparable seated figure found in Teotitlan, Oaxaca, in southern Mexico, is in the collection of the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin. Another large example sold at Sotheby’s New York, 16 May 2013, lot 9.





80 PALANQUIN FIGURE

Chontal culture, State of Guerrero, Mexico, circa 500-100 BC
Silicate
Height : 8,2 cm

Provenance The Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina

We know only a handful of these mysterious lying figures on palanquin. Carved in mottled green and white silicate, we think they date from the Late Chontal period, which corresponds to the Classic period of the Teotihuacan tradition of making portable stone sculpture, in that both cultures share many stylistic traits. A similar figure is illustrated in *Chontal*, Carlo & Robin Gay (2001), Balsas Publications, page 24, n° 9.



STATUETTE 81

Olmec, Central Mexico, 900-400 BC
Serpentine
Height : 9 cm

Collection Jacqueline Loudmer, Paris

Mezcala culture, Guerrero state, Mexico, 300-100 BC
Andesite
Height : 19 cm

Provenance Collection Alexandre Bernand, Paris

It was Miguel Covarrubias, the famous painter, ethnologist, and collector of precolumbian antiquities who first defined and named the Mezcala culture (1948), based on the study of small stone sculptures found in the Guerrero state of Southwestern Mexico. The culture is still poorly understood but is believed to have developed during the Middle and Late Preclassic periods of Mesoamerican chronology, between 700 and 200 BC, in the upper Balsas River region.

Mezcala-style sculpture is characterised by abstract facial features and body suggested by lines and differences in texture. The sculptural style of the Mezcala culture may have been influenced by the Olmecs. In turn, it may have influenced the development of sculpture at the Classic-period metropolis of Teotihuacan in the Valley of Mexico.

The present figure falls into the category described as M-10 style in the classification established by Carlo Gay. Carved in a grey-green andesite with a superb polish, it closely resembles another larger figure published in *Mezcala*, C. Gay & F. Pratt, 1992, plate 37.

A statuette of similar size from the estate of Ernest Beyeler was sold at Christie's New York, 10 May 2012, lot 30.





83 AMULETS

Maya civilization, Preclassic Period, Mexico, 2000 BC-250 AD
Serpentine and Jade
Height : 3,7 (a) and 2 cm (b)

Provenance Private collection, New York

A striking serpentine carving of a monkey head with a hollowed shape on the back for attachment; and a unique olmecoid head carved in a translucent jade nugget in the shape of a foot. A rather esoteric miniature that reminds the art of the Lega.



84 ARMADILLO

Mezcala culture, El Organal, Balsas river, Guerrero, Mexico, 200 BC-1000 AD
Green andesite
Length : 7,7 cm

Provenance collection Alexandre Bernand, Paris

To our knowledge, this is quite a unique and charming representation of an armadillo, carved in a beautiful light-green andesite with a smooth polish, the four paws folded under the shell and two holes for suspension.

85 SEATED FIGURE

Xochipala, Guerrero state, Mexico, circa 1000 BC
Clay, pigment
Height : 20,5 cm

Provenance Galerie Mermoz, Paris (circa 1970)
Private collection, Brussels

Exhibition *Mexique, Antiquités Précoltésiennes*
Paris, Hotel George V, 24 June 1974

Xochipala is an archaeological site in the Mexican state of Guerrero, whose name has become attached to a style of Preclassic Period figurines and pottery from 1500 to 200 BC. The first rediscovered Xochipala-style figurine was purchased in Guerrero in 1897 by William Niven and sold to the Peabody Museum in 1903. These figurines are some of the earliest and most naturalistic Mesoamerican figurines, and many scholars consider them as the greatest ceramic figurines in all of the vast body of Mesoamerican art (cf. Griffin ; Miller). In his seminal 1972 book, Carlo Gay attributed the sophisticated artistry of the Xochipala figurines to a precocious culture that was the predecessor of the Gulf coast Olmecs.

Gay, Carlo T. E. (1972) Xochipala: The Beginnings of Olmec Art, Princeton University Press
Griffin, Gillett (1972) "Xochipala: The earliest great art style in Mexico", , vol. 116, no. 4, pp. 301-309.
Miller, Mary Ellen (2001). "The Art of Mesoamerica: From Olmec to Aztec", London, ed. Thames & Hudson



PRETTY LADY

Tlatilco, Central Mexico, 1250-800 BC
Clay, pigment
Height : 15,7 cm

Provenance Private collection, New Orleans

Tlatilco is a small farming community on the fringes of Mexico city that gave its name in the late 1930's to an important precolumbian culture that already settled in the Early Preclassic Period (ca. 2000-1200 BC) and flourished in the Valley of Mexico between 1250 and 800 BC, during the Meso-American Middle Formative period. Most scholars believe the great number of clay figurines that were found in graves in the region date from that period.

Depicting females with large heads, small waists, and prominent hips, these hand modeled sculptures present a fairly standardized body type and are typically fired to red, buff, or brown tones and painted. As the popular embodiments of an ideal feminine form, the Tlatilco figurines are often referred to as "pretty ladies". Their intimate, lively poses and elaborate hairstyles are indicative of the already sophisticated artistic tradition. This is remarkable given the early dates. Ceramic figures of any sort were widespread for only a few centuries before the appearance of Tlatilco figurines.

Similar figurines are published in "*The Natalie Wood Collection of Pre-Columbian Ceramics*", Frierman (1969), p. 55, fig. 335



Colima, West Coast, Mexico, circa 300 BC - 200 AD
Clay, pigment
Height : 17 cm

Provenance Drs. Mimi and Milton Levin, New Jersey
Ex. Sothebys, 31 May 1985

Exhibition Bruce Museum, Greenwich, June 1962

A solid pottery, standing figure having arms held away from sides, wearing barrel armor, lunate-shaped headdress with applied human features and feathered edges, a whistle incorporated in the back of the head and face peering below headdress. Natural buff-brown color.



Narino culture, Colombia, 700-1000 AD
Ceramic, pigment
Height : 21 cm

Provenance Private collection, Paris

The Nariño culture was located in southwestern Colombia on the highlands of the Andes. They are known mainly for their elaborate shaft burials, which could reach a depth of 15 m. At the bottom of the shafts were radiating burial chambers, which often contained gold, seashells, or potteries like this lovely ocarina. A comparable flute, also decorated with two monkeys, is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York (2007.74).



89 VOMITIVE SPATULA

Taino culture, Greater Antilles, 800-1500 AD
Stone
Length : 30 cm

Provenance Collection Dr. Médard A., Berlare
Karl Stimm, Antwerp

The Taino centered their religion on the worship of *zemis*, or deities. Shamans (*behiques*) served as intermediaries between supernatural and natural worlds. They communicated with deities by inhaling cohoba powder, a hallucinogen that was mixed with tobacco to maximize its effect. Snuff, made from the crushed seeds of the piptadenia tree, would then be taken in front of the Zemi through a forked tube. This caused hallucinations during which the Zemi would make known his will. Carved spoons were used to ladle the powder, which was then inhaled through the nose with a tube. Before ingestion, the shaman purified himself by purging with a vomiting stick. These spatulas were made of wood, bone, shell or -exceptionnally- stone as in the present case, and were essential to the ritual of purification. These ritual objects were exquisitely carved with images of *zemis*, who helped the shaman achieve ecstatic states. *Zemis* were the spirits of ancestors from whom the Taino sought assistance in their everyday life, and whom they worshipped through the carvings that were made to represent them. Once a year every Taino village would pay homage to the *Zemis* of their chief. The ceremony began with a procession of villagers wearing their ornaments carrying baskets of cassava bread and singing songs about the *Zemis*. The chief sat at the entrance to the temple beating a drum while the priests entered and dressed the *Zemis*. The villagers presented themselves before the temple and purified themselves by pressing a vomit spatula down their throat to induce vomiting. The women then brought cassava bread to the priests who offered it to the *Zemis*. Dancing and singing followed praising the chief, the ancestors and the *Zemis*. Prayers were then offered for the prosperity of the village. Finally, the priests broke up the cassava bread and distributed pieces to the heads of families and these fragments would be preserved throughout the year as protection against accidents and illness.

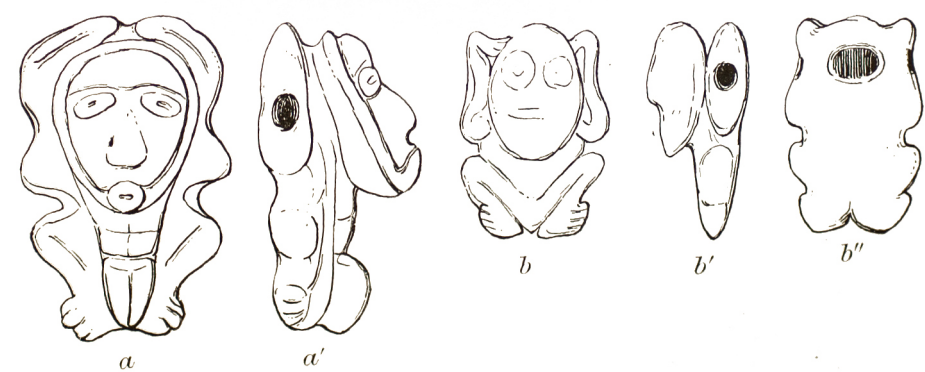


90 AMULETS

Taino culture, Hispaniola, Greater Antilles, 800-1500 AD
Calcerous stone
Height : 6,8 (a) and 10 cm (b)

Provenance Collected in the early 20th century
 Smithsonian Institution, Washington
 Merton Simpson, New York
 Private collection, France

The Taíno believed that *zemis*, gods of both sexes, represented by both human and animal forms, provided protection. That explains the great number of small zoomorphic and anthropomorphic amulets and pendants worn around the neck that were found throughout the Carribean. And these two exquisite examples are clearly among the very best we've seen. Carved in a calcerous stone with remnants of lime concretions, they depict two squatting figures with legs joined and hands holding firmly the knees. A common theory says they are the representation of slaves... The Metropolitan Museum of New York has a vitrine with several comparable amulets.



Similar stone pendants from Santo Domingo, illustrated in the Twenty-fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1907, plate LIX





91 IMPORTANT AMULET

Taino culture, Dominican Republic, Greater Antilles, 800-1500 AD
Hardstone
Height : 8,6 cm

Provenance Spencer Throckmorton, New York (circa 1980's)



CEREMONIAL MACE HEAD 92

Guanacaste-Nicoya, Costa Rica, 100-500 AD
Limestone
Length : 11 cm

Private collection, New Orleans

BIRD-CELT PENDANT

Guanacaste-Nicoya, Costa Rica, 100-500 AD
Serpentine
Height : 17,5 cm

Provenance Private collection, Brussels

One of the most typical forms of Precolumbian lapidary work from Costa Rica is the so-called “axe-god” in which an animal, human, or composite effigy surmounts a celt-like polished blade, drilled for suspension. Functional polished celts were forest-cleaning tools, usually associated with agricultural, sedentary societies. Their representation in an obviously symbolic, high-status object suggests that their owners may have been influential in decisions involving land use or redistribution of foodstuffs. Such effigies were probably important in rituals, and they may have been clan symbols as well. (Cf. *Precolumbian Art of Costa Rica*, The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1981, p. 182) Among the avimorph axe-god pendants is a style defined by crisp, angular carving that looks almost machine-tooled. This stylized geometricity is seen only in pieces from Guanacaste-Nicoya. The bird portrayed is usually the quetzal, topped with a tiered headdress. The above pendant, carved in a beautiful piece of serpentine, is clearly a superlative example of this particular corpus.

A similar bird-celt is published in *Jade in Ancient Costa Rica* (1998) The Metropolitan Museum, New York, p. 66 n° 36





94 **IMPORTANT SHAMANIC PENDANT**

Chukotka Province, Far East Russia, 250 BC-1000 AD
Walrus ivory, stone
Height : 14 cm

Provenance Private collection, Brussels

This exceptional ivory figure shows a rare and complex iconography, illustrated by another important idol from the Okvik culture (250 BC-100 AD) in the collection of anthropologist Edmund Carpenter who assembled one the world’s finest and most extensive collections of Old Bering Sea Paleo-Eskimo material culture. Described as the “Okvik Madonna”, the standing figure is carved with a second face - or mask - on the torso. It was exhibited in “*Microcosmos : Details from the Carpenter collection of Arctic Art*” at The Menil Collection in Houston in August 29, 2015 – Feb. 21, 2016. Nevertheless, we can observe that the above figure goes further, in the stylization, but also with the integration of multiple iconographical themes. While the first frontal impression is that of a madonna holding a child, the sculpture becomes a canoe boat when turned horizontally, and an otter when it is turned upside down. This triple interpretation, zoomorphic-utilitarian-anthropomorph, is unprecedented to our knowledge. It covers all the primary, material and mystical, concerns of these indigenous people, as fishing, hunting, traveling, fertility and death - the canoe may be interpreted as the boat of souls as well.

The Chukotka -or Chukchi- Peninsula is the eastmost peninsula of Asia. It is bordered by the Chukchi Sea to the north, the Bering Sea to the south, and the Bering Strait to the east. The peninsula is part of Chukotka Autonomous Okrug of Russia, and traditionnally the home of indigenous peoples of Siberia. The Chukchi are nomadic hunter-gatherers originating from the people living around the Okhotsk Sea. In Chukchi religion, every object, whether animate or inanimate, is assigned a spirit. This spirit can be either harmful or beneficial. Some of Chukchi myths reveal a dualistic cosmology.

95 **IMPORTANT IDOL**

Okhotsk Culture, Khabarovsk Krai, Far East Russia, 600-1500 AD
Walrus ivory
Height : 15 cm

Provenance Private collection, Brussels

The legs are slightly bent, as if to protect the pregnant belly. The arms clasped along the torso and hands joined on the chest in a characteristic gesture, common in the ancient art of Far East Russia. The idols depicting pregnant women are notably known in the region of Chukotka in Eastern Siberia, where the cult of the mother-goddess seems to have been particularly manifest. Another comparable idol* to the present figure - but found in an Ekven burial site dating from the Old Bering Sea culture (400 BC-1300 AD) - presents the same posture and archaic aspect that reminds the so-called “Venus” from the Paleolithic.

The Okhotsk culture is an archaeological coastal fishing and hunter-gatherer culture of the lands surrounding the Sea of Okhotsk (600–1000 CE in Hokkaido, until 1500 or 1600 CE in the Kurils) : the Amur River basin, Sakhalin, northern Hokkaido, the Kuril Islands, and Kamchatka. It appears to have spread outwards from the Amur River region, only to be partially absorbed or pushed back by the Satsumon culture spreading north from Japan, but nevertheless surviving, for example, in the Nivkh of Sakhalin and the Amur and in Itelmen of Kamchatka. The historical Ainu people appear to have retained a strong element of the Okhotsk, but the Satsumon culture, and perhaps language, appears to have dominated the mix of people who contemporaneously became known as the Ainu. Fundamental Okhotsk elements remained, however, such as the bear cult.

The archeological material from the Okhotsk is extremely scarce, and this important idol - of large size and pristine condition - found on the Russian coast of the Sea of Okhotsk is an essential testimony of this vanished and very specific culture, that bonds Northern Japan with Far East Russia.

*For a comparable ivory idol exhibited at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, see “Upside Down: Les Arctiques”, 2008, p. 137





96 MINIATURE FIGURES

St Lawrence Island, Old Bering Sea culture, Alaska, 100-300 AD (a)
 Thule culture, Alaska, 1000-1600 AD (b)
 Walrus ivory
 Height : 3,2 and 4,6 cm (b)

Provenance Alaska on Madison, New York

These two little sculptures - one with the characteristic features of a man if not a male deity, with broad shoulders and thin waist, and the other a rare depiction of a pregnant woman or Venus - both embody the miraculous qualities that convey monumentality to miniatures : the sense of proportions and the clarity of form scaled down to the essential. The little venus figure appears to be completely calcified and dessicated due to exposure to extreme cold conditions.





97

FISH HOOK

Inuit culture, Alaska, 19th century
Ivory, beads, iron
Height : 12,5 cm

Provenance Jacques Lebrat, Paris

This Inuit fish hook cleverly resembles an octopus. It is inlaid with blue and white glass beads and weighted with four metal hooks that allowed it to function both as a sinker and a fish hook.



BEAR PENDANT

98

Ipiutak, Point Hope, Alaska, 200-600 AD
Walrus ivory
Length : 11 cm

Ex. Collection Douglas Dehi, Boston

99 **EFFIGY PIPE**

Archaic period, Northern America, 1st millenium AD
Limestone
Length : 15 cm

Provenance Private collection, New York

Carved limestone in the shape of a polar bear standing on four short pointy legs. Drilled through the center of the back and through the mouth, connecting to the central drill hole in the back, the way a smoking pipe would be drilled. Additional drill hole on the under side of his stomach. Animal effigy pipes are common in the archaic cultures of Northern America, but this bear example is rather unusual, and appears to be extremely ancient.



Haida, British Colombia, Borth America, 1820-1840
Argillite
Height : 18 cm

Provenance Private collection, United Kingdom

Haida argillite carvings are a sculptural tradition among the Haida indigenous people of the Northwest Coast of North America. The black slate that the Haida use to carve is located on the island of Haida Gwaii, formerly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Knut Fladmark, a professor in the Archaeology Department at Simon Fraser University, believes argillite was known to the Haida pre-European contact, and that it had been used for more utilitarian purposes such as the creation of labrets. Fladmark excavated at the Richardson Ranch site on Graham Island, located near the mouth of the Tlell River. During the summers of 1969 and 1970 he found the first major archaeological assemblage of argillite. Fladmark's analysis of the assemblage led him to believe that the creation of argillite pieces for the purpose of trade followed its use within the Haida community as a pipestone.

Robin Kathleen Wright believes it was the introduction of the tobacco pipe into the Haida culture that spawned the first argillite carvings. Smoking tobacco was introduced to the Haida by European and American sailors. Argillite pipes that show evidence of smoking tobacco date from about 1810–1840 and are generally small in size but have proportionally large bowls. These very early argillite pieces depict traditional Haida images normally seen on totem poles, masks, rattles and spoon handles, and are carved in a thin plate of argillite, like the above example. The intricate iconography and graphical qualities of this piece are particularly remarkable.





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Martin Doustar

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GALERIE MARTIN DOUSTAR

15, Rue des Minimes
Bruxelles - 1000

Tuesday - Saturday	10.30 am - 6.30 pm
By appointment	(+32) 497.45.78.21
Doustar79@aol.com	martindoustar.com