

P R I M I T I V E
& A R C H A I C



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ARTS D'AFRIQUE, D'ASIE, D'OCÉANIE ET DES AMÉRIQUES



Archaism in anthropology is defined as the absence of writing and the economy of subsistence. Although the word has a negative connotation in modern language, often associated with backward and obsolete concepts, it reveals a whole different meaning when it comes to aesthetic and arts.

That is precisely what all this is about here...

1 RARE SABEAN BRONZE PROTOME

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

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

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 ‘An-bay 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.



2 BULL HEAD

Egypt or Near East, Antiquity
Terracotta, natural pigment
Height : 9,6 cm

Provenance : Private collection, Paris

This bull seems to have stepped straight out of Pablo Picasso's studio ... But despite its strikingly modern features it was actually acquired in an Egyptian art collection from an old estate in France. The ochre terracotta with red engobe in the shape of a bull head was once the pouring spout and the handle of a large vase.



Picasso avec un masque de taureau,
Cannes 1959 © Edward Quinn, 2005



3 GANGETIC IDOL

Indo-Gangetic plains, Uttar Pradesh, Northern India, 1500 BC
Oxidized copper with soil deposits
Width : 36,5 cm ; Height : 24 cm

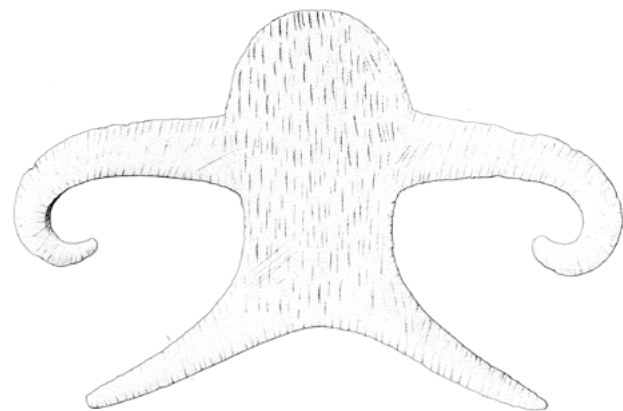
Provenance : Acher Eskenasy collection, Paris

This anthropomorphic figure is of type I. Fashioned from thick metal sheeting, these artifacts have stocky proportions and are patterned on both sides with elongated gouges or dents which usually are lengthwise oriented. Sometimes, however, the patterning is chevroned or cross-hatched. Significantly, the upper edge of the “head” shows no thickening, as is the case of type II anthropomorphs (Yule : 52). See below for an example found in Bisauli, Badaun district, and illustrated in Paul Yule’s extensive study “Metalwork in the Bronze Age in India”, plate II n°239.

The present example distinguishes by broad and harmonious proportions,, and an excellent state of conservation with no visible restorations.

Another gangetic idol of type I, from the Doris Wiener collection, was sold at Christie’s New York in 2002, March 20th, lot 69.

Biblio. : Paul Yule, Metalwork in the Bronze Age in India (1985), Abteilung XX, 8 Band.



4 IMPORTANT BRONZE FIGURE

Peri-Dongsonian culture, Cambodia, 500-200 BC

Height : 15 cm

Provenance : Karim Grusenmeyer, Bruxelles

Publication : Art of the Bronze Age in Southeast Asia, M. Doustar, 2014, n°8

An exceptionnally large seated figure, characteristic of the so-called Bronze Age culture “Dong Son” which developped in Northern Vietnam in the course of the first millenium before Christ, and in neighboring regions in Thailand and Cambodia.

The spiral motif, such as the chest ornaments, and the ring armlets, are typically dongsonian, they represent prestige goods such as shells, metalware, and illustrates the rank of the character. Figures such as the present one are quite rare, we know they were used as weights for small scales made for the measure of precious material in a ritualized context. Similar objects with various features depending on origin have been found elsewhere in Southeast Asia, notably in Indonesia (see a recent acquisition made by the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris).

This object has been treated against bronze-illness by Mr. Louis-Pierre Baert, head restorer of the Cinquantenaire Museum in Bruxelles.



5 RARE SULAWESI FIGURE

Bulukumba, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, 1st millenium AD
Clay
Height : 18,5 cm

Provenance : Dominique Rabier, Bruxelles

This funerary clay figure is defined by broad shoulders, oval shaped head and abstracted features that are strangely reminiscent of wooden and ivory idols carved in the South Pacific, and notably in Tonga and Fiji Islands.

See Heppell, Michael & Maxwell, Robyn, *Borneo and Beyond, Tribal Arts of Indonesia, East Malaysia, and Madagascar* (1990), for comparable Bulukumba clay figures.



Three Tongan figures from the Oldman collection, circa 1830, in K. Conru and R. Hayes, *Oldman the Remarkable Collector*, 2016, fig 29.



BOLI

6 A MASSIVE BOLI

Bamana people, Mali, 19th century
Wood, clay, blood, fibers, cloth, organic material
Length : 66 cm ; Height : 42 cm ; width : 26

Provenance : Ole Jensen, Copenhagen
Private Danish collection, circa 1970

The *Komo* is one, and the most important, of the six male institutions in the Bamana culture. The term refers to the concept formed in each village by its members, living and deceased, the shrine and the altars (boli), the leader of the cult, and the mask. Its essential purpose is to keep up the worship of God, the One Creator, and to ensure the preservation and spread of traditional knowledge in the fields of nature and culture. The entry is obligatory for all young boys who have undergone circumcision : the practice and the teaching received assure gradually their religious, cultural, social and political education.

In his catalogue of reference about the *Boli* (pl. *boliw*) Johann Levy gives the following definition: “object that possesses magical powers ; portable altars that receives sacrifices. Brought into existence by secret incantations and complex recipes of ritual specialists, *boliw* are living beings that experience hunger and must be fed with sacrifices. The force that emanates from them, called *nyama*, is often aggressive. *Boliw* can both protect and harm human beings. They are feared because they are neither wholly good nor evil and because they are believed to be supremely powerful.”

Although this boli looks vaguely like a hippopotamus it does not correspond to any animal species in particular. Despite its massive appearance and tremendous weight an impression of lightness and serene strength emanates from the sculpture, giving the illusion of a movement in slow motion. The worn surface reveals multiple layers of sacrificial materials resulting in a thick, dried and cracked, coagulated blood coat. The overall shape of the boli perfectly fits with the concept of modern aesthetic while its primitive and archaic aspect is strangely reminiscent of prehistoric and rupestral art.

Ref. : DIETERLEN Germaine, *Religions de l'Afrique noire*, Ecole pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses, Annuaire 1969-1970, Tome 77, page 132-138.

LEVY, Johann, Boli, 2009, Gourcuff Paris, page 13;

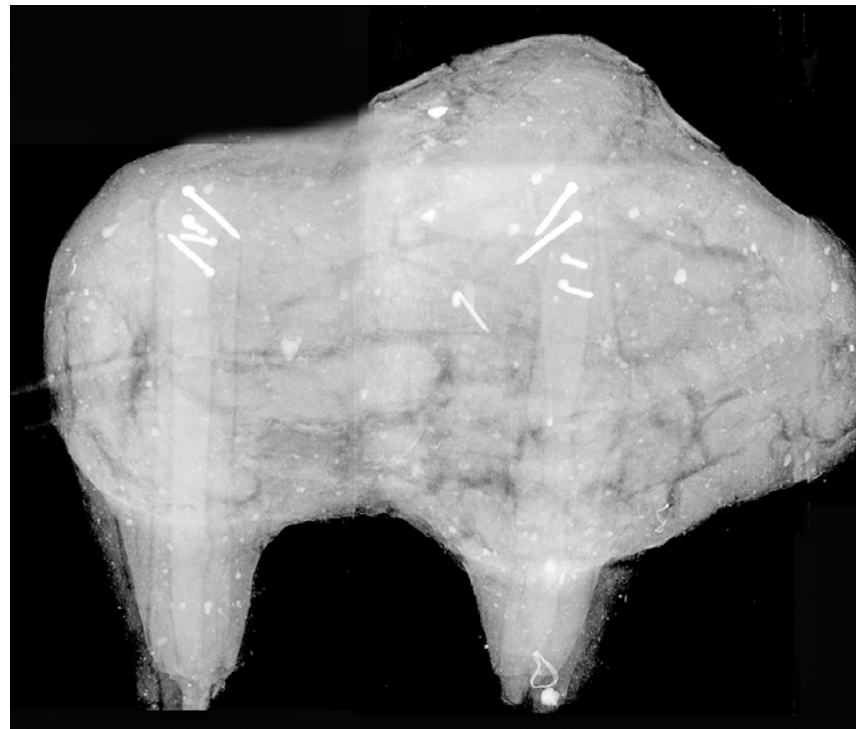


7 A POWERFUL BOLI

Bamana people, Mali, 1900-1950
Wood, clay, blood, cloth, nails, rods, organic material
Length: 54 cm ; Height: 42 cm ; Width: 21 cm

Provenance : Private collection, Copenhagen

This “zoomorphic” fetish, a feature of Watiriwa and the principal *Kono* cult boli, once played a central role in the ritual life of a Bamana village. Its primary function was to accumulate and control the naturally occurring life force called *nyama* for the spiritual benefit of the community. Used as altars or carried during dance performances, boliw are complex creations created from esoteric recipes, or *daliluw*. Animal bones, vegetable matter, honey, and metal are packed around an interior armature of bamboo wrapped in white cotton cloth. They are covered with layers of mud and clay, and their surfaces accumulate sacrificial materials over time, including chicken and goat blood, chewed kola nuts, alcohol, and millet porridge. Each added layer of material lends the structure greater spiritual power.



A scanography of the present boli performed at the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen clearly shows the bamboo-like wooden backbone and a number of interesting rods and nails.



8 RARE DIVINATION CHARM

Chamba, Nigéria, 1900-1950
Terre-cuite, pigments naturels
Length : 12,4 cm

Provenance : Johann Levy, Paris
 Renaud Vanuxem, Paris

Of undefined nature but beautiful shape, this zoomorphic charm has an ochre-red surface with a craqueled crust resulting from multiple libations. It stands on four short legs, and an eye-spot at one end of the body indicates the supposed head of the animal. This minimal yet mysterious form that seems to contain a magical potency questions our curiosity and shakes our esthetic perception.



9 SMALL ZOOMORPHIC FETISH

Zigua, Pare people, Tanzania, 1900-1950
Clay, fabric, resin
Length : 15 cm

Provenance : Private collection, Germany

Tribe diviners were believed to have the power to make medicine bundles (like the red cloth wrapping bound inside the belly of this animal), that gave their ‘possessors’ the ability to diagnose a patient’s illness. In serious cases, the diviner, patient, and the healing statue would travel together deep into the bush to offer libations to the statue, and to expel ghosts from the patient. Fetishes like the present one were historically placed in shrines and treated with great respect by the Zigua. The use of fetishes by the Zigua is in fact a vital part of daily village life. Typically, a “remote” object such as this fetish will be “activated” by a diviner with the insertion or application of fetish material or in the hole on the figure, and then used as a channel for the spirits, and thus an intermediary for change. This piece has evidence of age, handling, and encrustation from the passage of time and applied materials.

A physical analysis of the piece shows extensive signs of handling and age. The patina on this piece is characteristic of antique Zigua fetishes, with chipping surface pigment and shrine materials.

A very similar object is illustrated in *Tanzania*, by Felix, Marc & Maria Kecskesi (1994), Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin und die Stadtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munchern, p. 210 n°123.

The Gogo (singular: *mgogo*, plural: *Wagogo*) are a Bantu ethnic and linguistic group based in the Dodoma Region of central Tanzania. Their name was invented sometime in the 19th century by the Nyamwezi caravans passing through the area while it was still frontier territory.



10 ZOOMORPHIC FETISH

Zigua or Gogo people, Tanzania, 1900-1950
Clay, resin, red cloth, pigments
Length : 14,7 cm ; Height : 13,5 cm

Provenance : Private collection, Germany





11 RARE *TROH* HEADCREST

Bangwa people, Cameroon, ca. 1900
Wood, pigments
Width : 45 cm

Provenance : Wilma and Carl Zabel collection, acquired circa 1980

Exhibition : The African Art Museum of the SMA Fathers, New Jersey, 2005

Publication : *The Discerning Eye: African Art from the Collection of Carl and Wilma Zabel*
2005, C. Bordogna. Page 23.

Sculptural crest of great expressiveness, carved with two conjoined squat heads, an animated zoomorphic head with large concave goggle eyes and open elliptical mouth with notched teeth. Other head is anthropomorphic with smaller ovoid eyes filled with red pigments, wide nose, and open lips. Both have grooved hairdos with two parallel nodes on back, white kaolin detail, and both extend from a concave cap with perforated holes at sides. Black crusty patina with thick deposits.

Little is known about the precise meaning and use of these multiple-headed crests. In his masterwork, *Arts Anciens du Cameroun*, Pierre Harter illustrated one comparable sculpture he considered the most beautiful of this particular corpus, with not two but four heads on top of the crest (cat. 339-340). He notes that these *Troh* night society masks are exceptional because there is only one such mask by chiefdom. When he questioned the informants about the signification of these masks “the response was always based on a dualist concept, of past and future, intra or extraterrestrial, life and death, confirming the knowledge and power of the society members” (p. 309).

The rediscovery of this ancient headcrest is a significant contribution to an extremely tight and mysterious corpus of *Troh* masks, of which we only know a handful of examples.

Biblio.: Pierre Harter, *Arts Anciens du Cameroun*, Paris, 1986.



12 EARLY YORUBA FIGURE

Yoruba people, Nigeria, 1600-1700
Wood, natural pigments
Height : 49,5 cm

Provenance : Private collection, Bruxelles

This early Yoruba figure was probably part of a larger sculpture, a mask or a shrine figure. Despite the erosion, the superb quality of the carving suggests it is from the hand of a great artist.

The sculpture has been tested by radiocarbon dating technique by CIRAM laboratory and the results indicates an age comprised between 1645 and 1800.



Figure of king, Ita Yemoo, Ife (late 13th-early 15th century)



K O N G O



13 RARE FEMALE POWER FIGURE

Kongo people, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 19th century
Wood, resin, ceramic, pigments
Height : 27 cm

Provenance : Marcel Fleishmann, Zurich
Private collection, New Jersey

Marcel Fleischmann was a Swiss grain merchant who became a dealer of Modern art in the 1920s. Fleischmann “reveled in his patronage of emerging artists and writers, furnishing his home with an impressive library and contemporary works of art” (Pugliese 2009: 131), as well as a small collection of African sculpture, including this refined little Kongo figure. Fleischmann lent works by Picasso to a number of important exhibitions in the 1930s, including the major 1932 retrospective at the Galerie Georges Petit in Paris, directed at the time by Georges Keller, who, like so many figures in avant-garde circles, was a collector of African and Oceanic art. Fleischmann was one of a small number of European lenders to the first American Picasso retrospective, Picasso: Forty Years of His Art, held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1939 - 1940. After the exhibition the museum bought from Fleischmann Picasso’s *Ma Jolie*, an analytical cubist work of 1911-1912 (inv. no. “176.1945”). Fleischmann had acquired the painting from Paul Guillaume by 1929, and with his avant-garde connections it seems probable that he bought his African objects at around the same time.



14 LEGA IVORY MASK

Lega people, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 19th century
Ivory, kaolin
Height : 17,1 cm

Provenance : Private collection, Bruxelles

Large-scale Lega ivory (*Loxodonta Africana*) masks are extremely rare and played an essential role within the institution of the Bwami. Called *idumu*, they were the exclusive property of the highest ranking initiates and were placed under the authority of the community's elder. They weren't supposed to be worn but attached on a fence together with small wooden masks.

The present example has remarkably expressive features, with large almond-shaped eyes set slightly at a slant under high eye brow arch heightened with heavy eyelids. The face has a smooth honey patina but still retains marks of the stool used by the carver. The back of the mask has a rough and more primitive aspect, the ivory appears to be almost fossilized in some areas, with remnants of kaolin here and there on both sides.

Below : Ivory and wood masks displayed on a specially constructed fence, circa 1952-1954. Photograph Daniel P. Biebuyck.



15 IMPORTANT HUNGANA FIGURE

Hungana people, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 19th century or before
Wood, pigments
Height : 32 cm

Provenance : Patrick Dierickx, Bruxelles
Christie's, Londres, 29 juin 1994, n° 129
Private collection, New York

Wooden sculptures are extremely rare in the - already- scarce corpus of Hungana art. Marc Felix (in 100 peoples of Zaïre and their sculpture, 1987, p. 42) et Arthur Bourgeois (in Phillips, Africa, the Art of a Continent, 1995, p. 261) notes that some of these sculptures were used by the diviners and placed in houses for protection, whereas the tallest ones - ancestral figures of the clan- were displayed on altars with skulls of the deceased. They are characterised, like the present example, by a tripartite headdress, a predominantly red thick and crusty patina, hands joined at the chin (or cheeks or temples) in a remarkably bold articulation of volumes and voids.

See Valluet (in Felix, *White gold, black hands*, 2012, vol. 3, p. 146, n° 34) for a figure with similar gesture, and Kerchache, Paudrat et Stephan (*L'art africain*, 2008, p. 450, n° 832) for another, in the collection of Musée Dapper, Paris.

Apart from its aesthetic qualities, the present figure shows an erosion and a patina that places it among the most ancient testimonies of Hungana art.





DOGON



16 DOGON FIGURE

Dogon people, Mali, 1700-1800
Wood, nails
Length : 52 cm

Provenance : Calmels-Cohen, Hotel Drouot, Paris
Collection Maxime du Chayla, Paris

This Dogon figure of commanding hieratism presents a rigorous construction and an elegant shape. The stretched and thin lines of the torso contrasting with the short and condensed face, marked by two nails in the eye sockets. The patina, dry and nuanced, from dark brown to honey, is superb and attests of the age of this figure.



17 EARLY DOGON HEAD

Dogon people, Mali, 1500-1700
Wood
Height : 16,5 cm

Provenance : Renaud Vanuxem, Paris



18 A KONSO FUNERARY STATUE

Konso people, Southern Ethiopia, 19th century
Wood
Height : 154 cm

Provenance : Stéphane Mangin, Paris
Collection Bruno Gay, Paris





PAPUA

19 RARE PREHISTORIC BIRD PESTLE

Western Highlands, Papua New Guinea, circa 1500 BC
Metamorphic stone sith hornblende(amphibolite)
Height : 19 cm

Provenance : Private collection, New York

Similar winged bird pestles were found between Lai and Baiyer rivers in the Western Highlands, in an area defined by Douglas Newton (1979) and Pamela Swadling as the “Sepik-Wahgi zone”. A great balance characterizes this particular example, the subtle details of the head of the bird are outlined with great sensitivity and the animal emanates a noble elegance and an ageless poetry.

A study of the surface of the stone was performed by Ciram laboratories and the results of the analysis are consistent with the prehistoric datation.



20 IMPORTANT PREHISTORIC PESTLE

Pora Pora region, Papua New Guinea, circa 1500 BC
Hard stone
Height : 28,5 cm

Provenance : Cletus Maiban, Pora Pora
 Ulrich Kortmann, Dortmund
 Acher Eskenasy, Paris
 Martin Doustar, Paris
 John A. Friede, Rye

This magnificent pestle is certainly among the most powerful testimony of the prehistoric period in Papua New Guinea. As described by Douglas Newton and Pamela Swadling, it corresponds to the marsupial-type corpus, of which several examples were found in the Highlands, and especially in the Enga region. Despite the damages of the time, the object emanates a haunting presence.



21 RARE PREHISTORIC FIGURE

Enga province, Western Highlands, Papua New Guinea, circa 1500 BC
Stone
Height : 12,4 cm

Provenance : Private collection, Australia

This small marsupial-type figure is quite unique in the corpus of prehistoric stones. The petite scale and the presence of facial details such as the eyes and the ears are quite uncommon. The purpose of this sculpture remains unclear, possibly an amuletic magic figure or simply a pestle.



22 ERODED FIGURE

Northwest coast, Papua New Guinea, 19th century

Wood

Height : 28 cm

Provenance : Allan Stone, New York (acquired circa 1950-1960)

This elegant figure comes from the Northwest coast of Papua New Guinea, possibly the region of Aitape. Considering the heavily eroded face and front of the piece and the greyish-brown patina with remnants of soil we suppose it was left in the mud and abandoned at some point. Nevertheless, the figure has preserved a haunting presence and shows great sculptural qualities, typical of early carvings from this region.



23 RARE AITAPE FIGURE

Aitape, Papua New Guinea, 19th century
Wood, rattan, hair, natural fiber, rope, pigments
Height : 50 cm with hair

Provenance : Collected by German mission before 1914
 Private collection, Germany
 Klaus-Jochen Krüger, Hamburg

The art of Aitape on the northwest coast of Papua New Guinea is rather scarce outside German museums. Named Berlinhafen in 1905 and established as a train station by the German colonial institution, the town was occupied by the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II. The first documented objects from this region were probably collected by Christian missionaries of the Societatis Verbi Divini (the Society of the Divine Word or SVD) from Germany and Holland, in 1896. In the early twentieth century, both historical and natural disasters soon put an end to the collecting campaigns of ancient pre-contact carvings. In 1908, the region was struck by a major tsunami, and a second one in 1935, resulting in the collapse of entire settlements along the coast. In 1942, Aitape was then again at the center of battles, during the recapture of the region by American forces.

For a comparable figure with human hair attached on top of the head, strong cubistic features, and a vegetal fiber cloth attached to the waist, see *Sepik*, *Arts de Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée*, Musée du Quai Branly, 2015-2016, cat. 55.



24 RARE ANCESTOR FIGURE

Coastal region, Northern Papua New Guinea, circa 1900
Wood, pigments
Height : 34 cm

Provenance : Private collection, London

I was more than happy to find this fine ancestor figure in an English shoe box... It's a rare and early sculpture from the northwest coast of Papua New Guinea. Fully painted, with ochre, red, black and white pigments. The piece was certainly carved before the end of the German protectorate, and probably collected early in 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's *Kunst vom Sepik*, volume III.



25 RARE RAMU FIGURE

Ramu River, Papua New Guinea, 19th century
Wood, traces of pigment
Height : 49,7 cm

Provenance : Alex Philips, Melbourne
Kevin Conru, Bruxelles

Ancient wooden figures from the Ramu River are not common, an the present example appears to be one of the finest in quality and age. The sculpture reveals great formal subtlety, with the thin bented arms joining on the chest in a soothing gesture, while the slight twist of the legs gives rythm and dynamic to the figure. The uncanny face with its large flat nose evokes an archaic style that is accentuated by the weathered patina.



26 IMPORTANT KERAM FIGURE

Keram River, Papua New Guinea, 19th century or before
Wood
Height : 77 cm

Provenance : Joe Eszterhas, Los Angeles
 Bruce Frank, New York

A tall and extremely old male ancestor figure from the Keram River. The surface is beautifully weathered but the sculpture remains perfectly readable and alive. The body slightly twisted with one foot up in a dynamic posture. The arms are long and thin, barely bented but undulating along the torso. The gangly silhouette perfectly illustrating the innate sense of rythm of ancient Papuan carvers.





IATMUL

27 IMPORTANT ANCESTOR FIGURE

Iatmul region, Middle Sepik, Papua New Guinea, 19th century
Ironwood
Height : 133 cm

Provenance : Private collection, Australia (acquired circa 1960)
Private collection, Paris

The art of the Sawos, Iatmul, and neighboring peoples in the Middle Sepik region of northeastern New Guinea is primarily associated with their impressive men's ceremonial houses, which are seen as the embodiments of primordial female ancestors. Standing at the center of the village, the famous *ngeko* ceremonial houses act as the keeping place of ritual objects essential to the wellbeing of the community. Each of its posts is elaborately carved from exceptionally heavy ironwood. According to oral history, when the central pillars of a new ceremonial house were to be erected, recently acquired human heads were placed in the post-hole as a way to ensure the building's spiritual power.

This menacing female figure of impressive scale and weight was carved in a solid trunk of dense ironwood, slowly eroded by the elements over time. Once part of the architectural structure of a ceremonial house, it was probably adorning a house post - from which it was detached thereafter, as suggested by the slick cut on the back of the figure.

The face shows characteristic features associated with the crocodile ancestor, and reminds certain masks encountered among the Iatmul, and in the lakes region. The surface is extremely weathered yet reveals a beautiful range of colors, from dry grey to smooth red. Despite a missing arm - actually it probably even enhances this impression - an archaic strength and commanding presence emanate from this rare ancestral figure.



28 IATMUL SPEAR-THROWER

Iatmul, Middle Sepik, Papua New Guinea, circa 1900
Wood, bamboo, rattan, natural pigment
Height : 82 cm

Provenance : Collected during the voyage of the Korrigane in 1935
John A. Friede, Rye

Collected during the notorious voyage of the Korrigane in the South Seas, this superb spear-thrower is adorned with a rare, almost unique, type of anthropomorphic figure.



29 RARE DANCE STAFF

Washkuk Hills, Papua New Guinea, 19th century
Wood , remnants of pigments
Height : 67 cm

Provenance : Douglas Newton collection, New York
John A. Friede, Rye

Collected by Douglas Newton in the late 1950's, this rare dance staff is one the few stone-carved sculptures from this region. John Friede, who was very fond of the object, recalled that it was also one of Newton' all-time favorite.
For sure, there is a great deal of humor and poetry in this bird-shaped stick...



30 LAKE SENTANI PADDLE

Lake Sentani, Papua New Guinea, 19th century
Wood
Height : 157 cm

Provenance : Private collection, London

This almost fossilized Sentani paddle is the best example i've encountered so far. It has extremely refined and elegant intricate motifs on both sides of the paddle but also on the handle. A superb quality of carving typical of early pre-contact sculptures. The surface of the paddle is dark, crusty and dry, resulting from the weathering in water and mud.



31 RARE BARAVA FRAGMENT

Solomon Islands, 19th century or before
Shell (*Tridacna Gigas*)
Height : 32 cm

Provenance : Collection Alexandre Bernand, Paris

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 reached its apogee in the Solomon Islands. The most complex clam shell objects were *barava*, ornate openwork plaques created in the western Solomon Islands. The designs on some barava are geometric, but some of them include stylized human figures interspersed with forms that resemble faces, shown with spiral eyes and grinning mouths filled with minute teeth.

The above example is of this rare type. The stylized squatting figure reminiscent of ancient Bronze Age motifs representing similar squatting characters, found notably on Dong Son drums and situlas. This iconography has probably the same meaning in both cultures and represents the seated ancestors on the boat of souls, or the sailors on their war canoes, defying death...

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.





MOLLUCAS

32 RARE ALTAR FIGURE

Mollucas, Indonesia, 1700-1800
Wood
Height : 25 cm

Provenance : Collection Yves Bonan, Paris

The discovery of this small yet exquisite figure, remarkable in multiple aspects, was of great enjoyment to me ...

The corpus of wooden figures from the Moluccas archipelago and Sunda Islands is rather tight and the high demand for fine quality sculptures from both collectors and institutions has increased their scarcity. The present figure belongs to a group of extremely rare and early carvings with very few examples outside Dutch museums, as most of these 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 different details, such as the heart-shape face with arched brows, the ears carved like seashells, the beaker held between its fingers and knees, the legs crossed with feet bented backwards and rolled under the thighs, or the pedestal, decorated with a double frieze of spiral motifs reminiscent of ancient archaic cultures of the Austro-nesians.

This rare type of figure is illustrated on the low right corner of this old plate showing the variety of carvings found in the Mollucas.



33 RARE SUMBA HEAD

West Sumba, Sumba Island, Indonesia, 1500-1800
Limestone
Height : 28 cm

Provenance : Liliane and Michel Durant-Dessert, Paris

This extra-ordinary sculpture should be seen in the light of two other Sumba Island sculptures acquired by the Musée du Quai Branly (one was previously part of Musée Barbier-Mueller in Geneva, see below).



34 RARE KORWAR

Geelvink Bay, West Papua, Indonesia, 19th century
Wood, feathers
Height : 28 cm with the feathers

Provenance : Galerie Anthony Meyer, Paris

The head fully covered with feathers and carved in full openwork this little korwar is of a rare type, and truly a gem.



RAPA NUI



35 RARE EASTER ISLAND FIGURE

Easter Island, Polynesia, 1800-1880
Wood, obsidian, shell, black pigment
Height : 44 cm

Provenance : Paul Cassirer, Edinburgh
Ernst Ascher, Paris (acquired from the above circa 1920)
George F. Keller collection (inv. G.F.K. 334)
Paolo Morigi, Milano
Sotheby's, Paris, Collection Paolo Morigi, 6 Dec 2005, lot 7

Exihition : *Terra dei Moai*, Palazzo Reale, Milano, March 7- 28 May 1995

Publication : Orefici, *Terra dei Moai*, Palazzo Reale, Milano, 1995, 243 n° 128

Paul Cassirer (1871-1926) was a German art dealer and editor who played a significant role in the promotion of the work of artists of the Berlin Secession and of French Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, in particular that of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Cézanne. He was also one of the early sponsor of primitive art in the Avant-Garde cercles in Europe, as attested by the presence of this Easter Island figure in his collection at the turn of the twentieth century.

Little is known about the meaning and use of wooden figures such as the present example. The shaved head and the thick eyebrows refer to masculine features but more generally to persons of high rank, of which the elongated ears are another characteristic. The plump stomach is more typical of the *moai tangata* - representation of a youngster - but it could also describe a pregnant woman. Here, the absence of genitals suggests clearly an hermaphroditic figure. The incorporation of male elements into the figure may indicate that the female deities or ancestors they likely represented were perceived as the equals of their male counterparts. The Rapanui cosmogony is composed by a wide pantheon of mythological figures, resulting in a great diversity of carvings. Kept preciously inside the Pascuan households, these ancestors sculptures were venerated in small domestic cults and various magical practices.

A comparable figure is held in the Museu de Cultures del Món in Barcelona.

Right : Kahnweiler's appartment in Paris with a *moai tangata* next to Picasso.





TAINO

36 RARE VOMITIVE SPATULA

Taino culture, Hispaniola or Jamaica, 1520-1668 AD
Wood with traces of resinous black pigment
Length : 27 cm

Provenance : Old private collection, Scotland
Rick Gallagher, New York
Kevin Conru, London
Alex Arthur, Bruxelles
John Giltsoff, Spain
Finch & Co., London
Collection Alexandre Bernand, Paris

In June 1792, near the settlement of Vere in Jamaica, a surveyor who was measuring the land in Carpenters Mountain region found accidentally a small group of wooden sculptures hidden in a natural cave near the summit of a mountain. These three figures were exhibited for the first time at the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1799 by Isaac Alves Rebello. The figures’ subsequent provenance after this remains obscure before their acquisition by the British Museum. All three figures are carved from a tropical hardwood called guayacan (*Guaiacum officinale* L.). The surface of the sculptures were probably polished with pebbles to bring the resin to the surface and attain the black lustre. The present object, an exceptionnally rare vomitive spatula, was carved by the Taino people of the Greater Antilles around the time of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Carribbean, at the turn of the fifteenth century. This spatula, like the three figures mentioned above, are quite different than other Taino sculptures of the same corpus. The Taino produced a large number of sculptures spread over several centuries and across a vast region, with a great diversity of local styles. The very few spatulas and zemi figures held in museums are quite different from each others, in the typology but also in the style of carving, the wood and the patina. The comparison between the above spatula and the three sculptures from the British Museum becomes relevant when one examines the surface of the objects closer. The four objects show the same lustrous patina, a dark brown colour with traces of black resinous pigment, and the knotty aspect confirms that it is most probably the same wood. More interesting is the similarity between the slightly engraved network of motifs along the surface of the spatula and the crown on top of the bird-headed figure from the British Museum, consisting of a row of undulating lines ending by small dots. Furthermore, the radiocarbon dating of this particular figure is comparable with the results obtained for the Spatula.

The carbon-14 analysis performed by Ciram laboratory has indicated a datation comprised between whether 1520-1576 or 1622-1668.





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 or shell, and were essential to the ritual of purification. Ritual objects of bone and wood such as the ones seen here were exquisitely carved with images of zemis, who helped the shaman achieve ecstatic states. Zemís 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 Zemís of their chief.

The ceremony began with a procession of villagers wearing their ornaments carrying baskets of cassava bread and singing songs about the Zemís. The chief sat at the entrance to the temple beating a drum while the priests entered and dressed the Zemís. 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 Zemís. Dancing and singing followed praising the chief, the ancestors and the Zemís. 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.



A bone spatula in the shape of a lizard, Metropolitan Museum of New York. Purchase, Mary R. Morgan, Mary O'Boyle II and Mr. and Mrs. Frederick E. Landmann Gifts; The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller and Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, by exchange, and Gift of Nathan Cummings, by exchange, 1982

37 IMPORTANT ZEMI HEAD

Taino culture, Greater Antilles, 800-1500 AD
Hard stone
Height : 22 cm

Provenance : Stefanus Grusenmeyer, Ghent
 Philippe Dodier, Avranches

A couple of three-pointed stones of the third type - called *zemi* - characterized by a similar lizard head were published in the Twenty-fifth annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1907. These two sculptures and the above one all differ stylistically from each other, suggesting a different period or origin. Unlike the first two zemi heads the present example has no decoration, and the animal is rendered in a more realistic manner. A closer inspection shows some binding marks on the forehead of the lizard, probably resulting from attachment to a stone collar (see below for an example illustrated in the cited publication above).

The exact function of these ellipsoid stone sculptures remains open to interpretation. In a book of reference about the subject - *Taino, Pre-Columbian Art and Culture from the Caribbean* (1997) - the scholar Jeffery P. Walker discusses whether the yokes should be considered zemis, the spiritual artifacts and beings central to the Taíno religion, or whether they functioned as vehicles for displaying attached “three-pointer” stone zemis, belonging to individual caciques (chiefs), during communal rituals. Walker writes that “The stone collar represents the mythical base, the foundation on which all Taíno religion rests - a communal and common past uniting all Taíno equally.

The three-pointer, on the other hand, was owned and manipulated by the cacique as a personal power-object... a private, personally focused spirit-object.”

Walker concludes that as the yokes were likely communal or clan property, “This may also explain why there was a reluctance to incorporate any three-pointer permanently into the design of a stone collar... before too long one cacique would pass on and there would be another. Zemis presumably were eternal beings.

Because of the intensely personal nature of three-pointer zemis, it was not prudent or even logical to attach such an object permanently to the fundamental base of the group’s religious history - the stone collar. When a new cacique became the leader, or an existing one acquired a more potent zemi, the new object could be attached to the stone collar for rituals at any time during his rule.” (page 91)



Biblio.: Bercht, Brodsky, Farmer, and Taylor, *Taino, Pre-Columbian Art and Culture from the Caribbean*, 1997, p.29, 91.

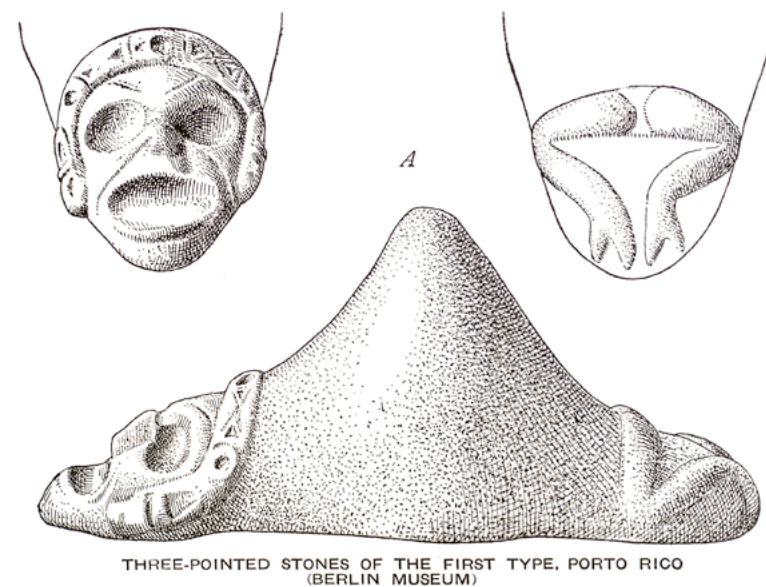


38 AN EXCEPTIONAL TRIGONOLITHE

Utuado, Puerto Rico, Greater Antilles, 800-1500 AD
Limestone
Length : 28 cm

Provenance : Alice de Santiago, Barcelonata, Puerto Rico
George Heye, New York, acquired in 1928
Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York
Stanley R. Grant, acquired from the above in 1965
Estate of Joan and Stanley R. Grant, New York

Carved and pecked limestone three-point zemi, depicting a reclining, snail-like stylized human figure, with relief carved facial features, a large pointed mound type back at the midsection, and feet with delineated toes at the opposing end. Wearing a headband with drilled and incised decoration. Scattered surface deposits of fossilized alluvium. Underside is inscribed with old collection number "16/1119" from the Heye Foundation and Stanley R. Grant collection reference "SAG 248".



*a**a'**b**b'**c**c'**d**d'*

THREE-POINTED STONES OF THE FIRST TYPE

- a, a'* Lateral and face views of specimen with low conical projection; length 5½ inches
b, b' Lateral and face views of specimen with rounded conical projection; length 10¼ inches
c, c' Lateral and face views of specimen; length 14 inches
d, d' Lateral and face views of specimen, showing prominent ears and chin; length 9½ inches



39 AN IMPORTANT TRIGONOLITHE

Arecibo, Puerto Rico, Greater Antilles, 800-1500 AD
Hard stone (basalt)
Length : 20 cm

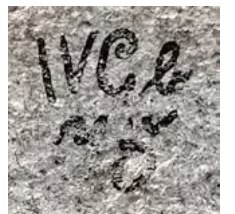
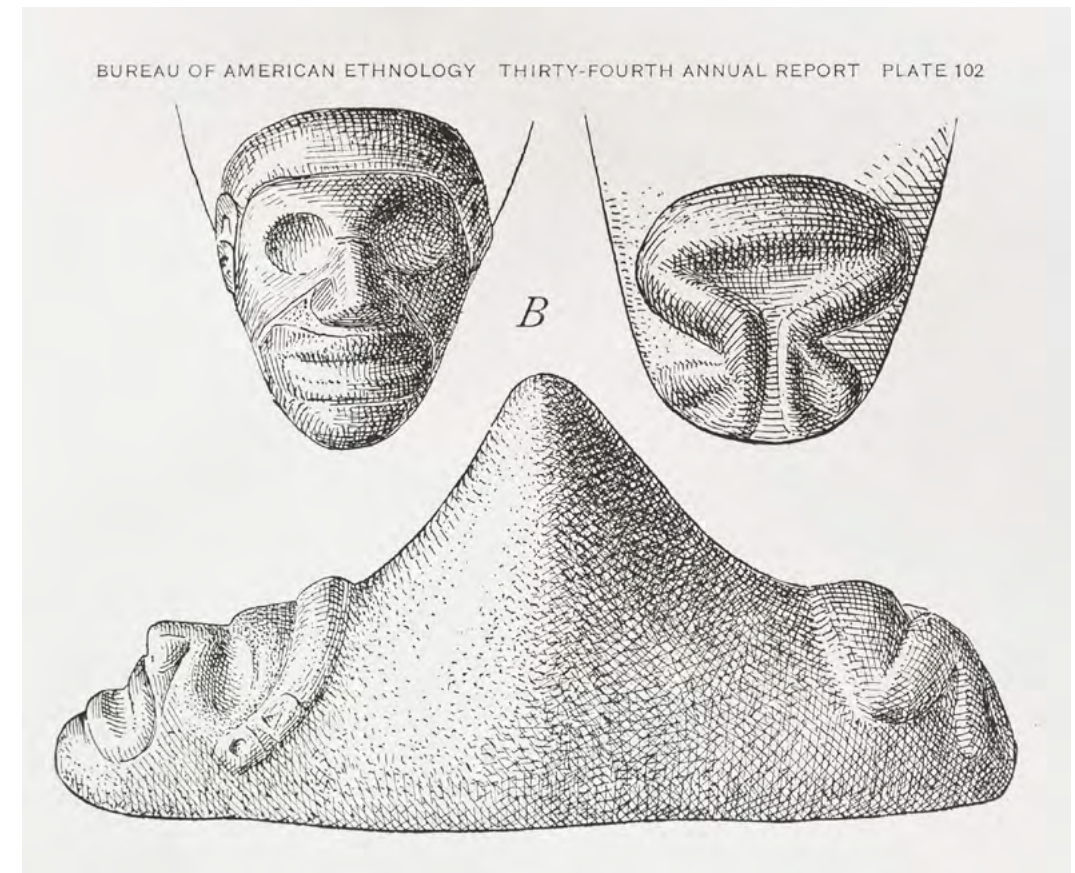
Provenance : Collected by Carl Leopold Krug in Arecibo between 1857-1876
Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Everett Rassiga, New York (acquired from the above by exchange)
Emily and Paul Wingert, Montclair (acquired in 1965, October 15)
Estate of Emily A. Wingert, New Jersey

Publication : *Thirty-fourth annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*,
1912-1913, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, plate 102 B.

Carl Wilhelm Leopold Krug (1833-1898) was a German businessman, naturalist, ethnographer, diplomat, and a keen supporter of scientific collections. After a short apprenticeship in Bremen, Krug arrived in Puerto Rico in 1857 and started work in the international trading company of Lahmayer & Co. in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. He became partner, and later sole owner of the company. He became as well vice-consul in Mayaguez of both Germany and Great Britain. Under the influence of his legal advisor Don Domingo Bello y Espinoza, Krug became an avid collector of plants and insects. He underwrote several collecting expeditions by the zoologist Juan Gundlach. These collecting activities resulted in a large amount of scientific material, which became part of the Zoological and Ethnographic Museum in Berlin when Krug retired, in 1876.

This very fine three-point zemi carved in a dense basalt, was first described in 1912 by famous scholar Jesse Walter Fewkes in his anthological study “A prehistoric Island Culture Area of America” published in the *thirty-fourth annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* by the Smithsonian Institution. Page 212, the author notes : “The body si very long as compared with its height, and the apex of the conical projection does not bend forward. The head suggests a human being, its fillet being without engraved decoration. The ears are indicated by incised circles and triangles.” Finally, one has to mention the beautifully polished original surface and the exceptional state of conservation of this stone, remarkably rare for an object with an historical provenance that goes back to the mid-nineteenth century.





40 TAINO AMULET FIGURE

Taino culture, Hispaniola, Greater Antilles, 800-1500 AD
Limestone
Height : 10,7 cm

Provenance : Private collection, München

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 found throughout the Carribean. The nodule figure below was published in the Thirty-fourth annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1912-1913, and comes from Les Cayes in Haiti. Like the above example, it has ridges representing the arms on each side of the stone extend backward, forming shoulder blades, and lengthwise for upper arms to the elbows. The legs are made in low relief extending to the knees.



Plate 94 from the *Thirty-fourth annual report* of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, 1912-1913



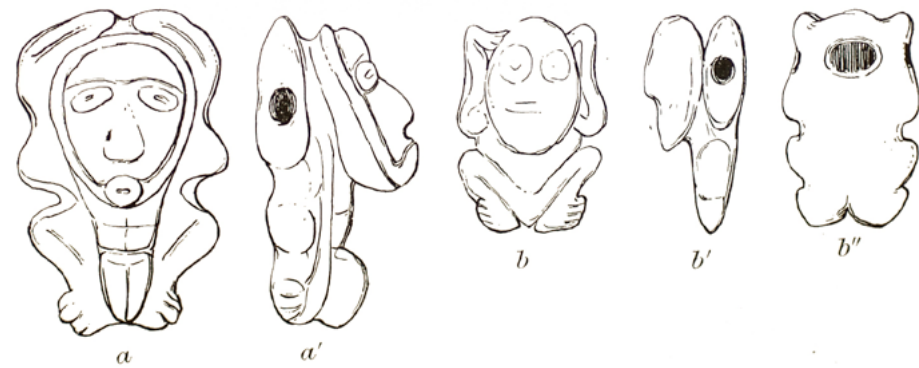
41 TAINO PENDANT

Taino culture, Hispaniola, Greater Antilles, 800-1500 AD
Hardstone with lime concretions
Height : 7 cm

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

The Taíno believed that *zemís*, 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 found throughout the Carribean. Sometimes the zemi is both human and animal, like the present example.

Carved in a calcereous stone, the head is strong with a prognathic lower jaw. When one turns the figure, it becomes a smiling frog. Two attachment holes on the back were used to wear the figure on a necklace. A beautiful example in excellent shape.



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

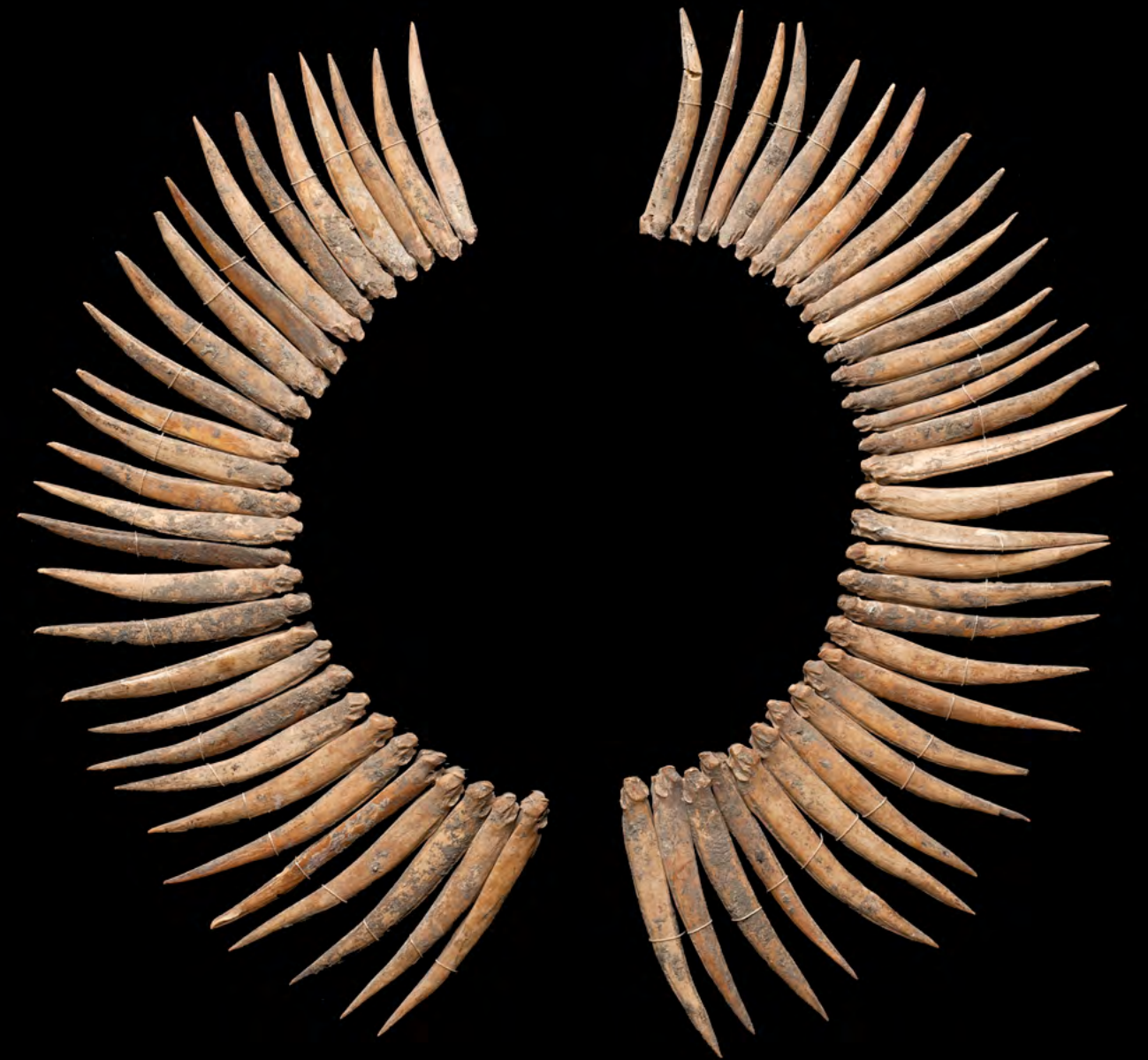
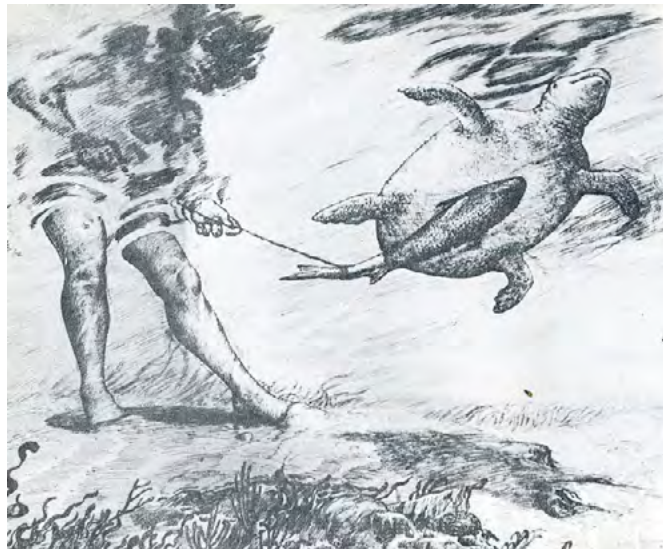


42 RARE TAINO NECKLACE

Taino culture, La Loma, Dominican Republic, 800-1500 AD
Fish-bone
Diameter : 20 cm approx. ; Longest bone : 6 cm

Provenance : Dominique Rabier, Bruxelles

The term *guaikano* (guaicano) is a Taino word for the remora fish (scientific name *Echeneidae*). Among the Taino, the *guaikano* was once used by fisherman, specifically, because of its abilities to attach on to larger animals such as turtles and sharks. A cord or *kabuia* (cabuya) would be tied to the *guaikano*'s tail, and once the fish attached, a Taino fisherman could simply haul in both the *guaikano* and its host. The vertebrae of this very same fish was then removed carefully and mounted into necklace, sometimes with anthropomorph or zoomorphic amulets.



43 RARE STONE LIZARD

Late Archaic period, Florida, Northern America, 1st millenium AD
Green hardstone
Length : 22,5 cm

Provenance : Found in the early 20th century in Florida
Geroge Green & Terry Allen collection, Jefferson City, Missouri
Private collection, New York

This mysterious sea-going lizard is possibly a ritual pestle incarnating an ancestral spirit. It is strangely reminiscent of zemi sculptures carved by the Arawaks of the Carribean, a few miles away from the coasts of Florida, where this object was initially found. The striated tarsals are typical of objects such as anthropomorphs or zoomorphic idols carved by native Americans during the Archaid period.



44 DIQUIS STONE FIGURE

Diquis region, Costa Rica, 1000-1550 AD
Basalt
Length : 36,5 cm

Provenance : Private collection, Bruxelles

A rare free-standing male figure carved as a naked slave condemned to be sacrificed, the hands outspread on the side of the legs, broad squared shoulders with demarcated back musculature, the face distinguished by quite naturalistic features. A beautiful example in excellent shape.



M A Y A



45 **IMPORTANT CEREMONIAL YOKE**

Early Classic Period, Veracruz, Mexico, 100-400 AD
Hard Stone (Tecali)
Length : 40,5 cm ; Width : 35 cm

Provenance : Private collection, Kentucky

Carved in a rare banded green Tecali, this striking and very early yoke represents the image of a crouching frog in the guise of the earth god. The detailed facial features of the animal, with ears, legs and body sculpted along the sides, is more naturalistic and less stylized than on later models, and somehow reminds the Olmec iconography. Mesoamericans believed giant frogs were supernatural because of toxins on the frogs skin which held hallucenogenic properties involded during rituals.

This ceremonial yoke would have been used as regalia in the Maya ball game, before or right after the play. Various Mesoamerican cultures including the Olmecs, Mayans, and Aztecs played the Mesoamerican ball game which consisted of using only the hips to hit a heavy rubber ball through a stone hoop. The stone yoke is thought to be two heavy for use in the actual game and instead used for ceremonial purposes such as the sacrifice of players after a match. The yoke was worn at waist to symbolize the present world above the waist and the underworld beneath the waist. This symbolized the spiritual nature of the game in which players were often sacrificed after the game's completion. Experts believe that the stone yoke was used as a mold for leather yokes used during the game. The leather would be molded after the stone yoke and filled with cotton to protect players bodies from the hard rubber ball. The rubber ball would bounce off the yokes which would cushion the ball as it bounced of players' bodies.



46 MAYAN MUSHROOM GOD

Maya civilization, Preclassic period, Guatemala, 1st millenium BC
Volcanic Stone
Height : 30 cm

Provenance : Private collection, Antwerp
Collection Marc Delorme, Paris

The ritual use of hallucinogenic mushrooms in Mesoamerica is attested in multiple cultures such as the Olmec, Zapotec, Maya, Teotihuacano, Toltec, Mixtec, and Aztec, and its origin probably traces back much earlier, to the Archaic period.

The late Maya archaeologist, Dr Stephan F. de Borhegyi, published in 1957 the first of several articles in which he proposed the existence of a Mesoamerican mushroom cult in the Guatemalan highlands as early as 1000 B.C. This cult, which was associated from its beginnings with ritual human decapitation, a trophy head cult, warfare and the Mesoamerican ballgame, appears to have had its origins along the Pacific coastal piedmont. Borhegyi developed this proposition after finding a significant number of small, mushroom-shaped sculptures in the collections of the Guatemala National Museum and in numerous private collections in and around Guatemala City. While the majority of these small stone sculptures were of indeterminate provenance, a sufficient number had been found during the course of archaeological investigations as to permit him to determine approximate dates and to catalog them stylistically (Borhegyi de, S.F., 1957b, "Mushroom Stones of Middle America," in *Mushrooms, Russia and History* by Valentina P. Wasson and Robert G. Wasson, eds. N.T.)



Mayan deities with mushrooms from the *Codex Vindobonensis*, illustration representing Lords of Xibalba (the underworld) with fungi.



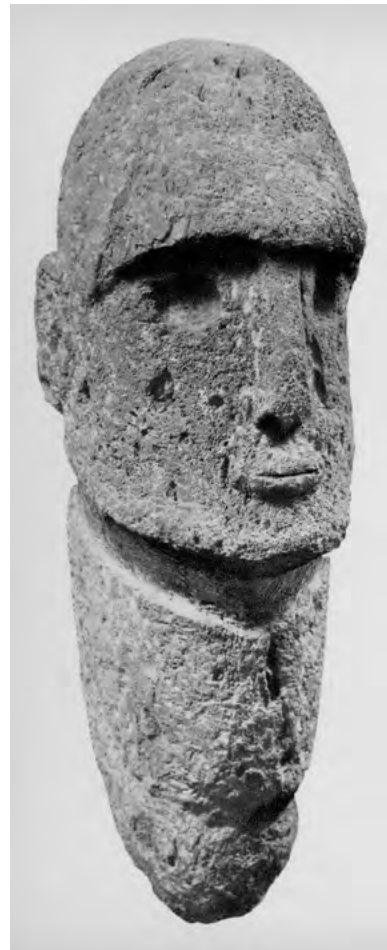
47 RARE COLIMA FIGURE

Colima culture, Mexico, 300 BC - 300 AD
Volcanic stone
Height : 26 cm

Provenance : Dr. David Harner collection, Arkansas, 1950s-60s.

This powerful and archaic sculpture depicts a stylized human figure holding both hands to his stomach. His large conical head with eyes wide open seems to scrutinize the sky in expectation of a divine manifestation... Echoing the gigantic Moai statues of Easter Island, not so far away in the South Pacific.

Right : A bust in red andesite from Easter Island
Carved in ancient times, this sculpture was obtained by Commander Jouin of the La Flore and given to the Lafaille Museum in La Rochelle.



48 OLMEC MASK

Olmec culture, Mexico, 1200-400 BC
Jadete
Height : 7,8 cm

Provenance : Collection Gérard Wahl-Boyer, Paris (circa 1970)

An exquisite were-jaguar face panel maskette carved in jadeite and partially altered.



49 OLMEC MASK

Olmec culture, Mexico, 1200-400 BC
Jadite
Height : 8,4 cm

Provenance : Spencer Throckmorton, New York



50 OLMEC MASK

Late Olmec culture, Guerrero state, Mexico, 1200-400 BC
Jadite
Height : 8,4 cm

Provenance : Emile Deletaille, Bruxelles



51 A MEZCALA MASQUETTE

Mezcala, Guerrero, Mexico, circa 400 BC
Grey Stone
Height : 8,3 cm

Provenance : Fine Arts of Ancient Lands Inc., NYC, Oct. 5th, 1984
Estate of Marion Lynton-Sonnenberg, Larchmont, New York

Exhibition : Cologne, Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, *Out of the Depths,*
Tomb Figures From West Mexico, July 4th, 1986 - Jan. 11, 1987

Carved in a grey stone, this very fine head pendant has abstracted facial features characteristic of the M22 type from the classification made by Carlo Gay. A biconical suspension hole is drilled at the top rim and there's a light calcareous encrustation on the overall surface.



52 AN ARCHAIC BANNERSTONE

Ross County, Ohio, Northern America, circa 2000 BC
Slate
Height : 6 cm

Provenance : Discovered in Ross County, Ohio
 Terry Allen collection, Jefferson City, Missouri

Bannerstones are artifacts usually found in the Eastern United States that are characterized by a centered hole in a symmetrically shaped carved or ground stone. The holes are typically ¼” to ¾” inches in diameter and extend through a raised portion centered in the stone. They usually are bored all the way through but some have been found with holes that extend only part of the way through. Many are made from banded slate or other colored hard stone. They often have a geometric “wing nut” or “butterfly” shape but are not limited to these. More than just functional artifacts, bannerstones are a form of art that appear in varying shapes, designs, and colors, symbolizing their ceremonial and spiritual importance.

An important archaic site containing numerous graves containing bannerstones is at Indian Knoll, Kentucky. At this site, “few of the bannerstones show signs of use. They are carved of exotic imported stones with an exceptional artistry that exploits the natural colours, patterns, and striations of the stones to afford maximum visual satisfaction” (Berlo : 75). This shows both the importance of long distance trade in connecting various archaic societies as well as the importance they placed on the visual appeal of the pieces. This visual appeal would be created in part to please the spirits that the individuals were attempting to persuade for assistance and protection in the hunt, society, and the world as a whole.

The above example has been examined at Breckinridge laboratory in Leonard, Oklahoma, and the results of the laser spectographic and microscopic analysis are consistent with the datation.

Biblio.: Berlo, Janet C. and Ruth B. Phillips. Native North American Art. Oxford University Press: Oxford, England, 1998.



53 A WINGED BANNERSTONE

Jackson County, Michigan, Northern America, 3000- 2000 BC
Banded slate
Width : 12,7 cm

Provenance : Found in Jackson County, Michigan
Donald O. Boodeman collection, Kalamaroo
Daniel Gould, Burlington, Vermont

Bannerstones are weights for spear-throwers, the long shafts that propelled the actual darts, thus extending the thrower's reach. In use in North America for some 3,000 years beginning in the fourth millennium B.C., bannerstones took many and varied forms. The form of the present example is known as a double-notched butterfly. It is made of banded slate, a material frequently used in bannerstone manufacture. While bannerstones are functionally utilitarian, the consistent selection of materials and their careful, balanced workmanship distinguish them and indicate their worth as esteemed objects as well as tools. Many have been discovered in burials and funerary mounds in the Ohio and Illinois valleys, for instance, further evidence of their value in ancient times. Bannerstones were out of favor by about 1000 B.C., but spear-throwers persisted in use in a few areas of North America until the sixteenth century. However, by that time spear-throwers had largely been supplanted by bows and arrows.

A comparable example is held at the Metropolitan Museum, New York (1979.206.403).



54 POP-EYED BIRDSTONE

Late Archaic period, Michigan, Northern America, 1500 BC - 500 AD
Pink granite
Length : 9,6 cm

Provenance : collection of Dr. Sisman, Sens (France)
Private collection, Paris

Bird stones are zoomorphic and abstracted stone carvings made by Native Americans in pre-historic times. The artifacts were a common inclusion in graves and thought to have ceremonial importance. They are noted for their distinctive simplicity and beauty.

The exact purpose of these artifacts is not known, but most have a small hole drilled at the base of the neck and another at the aft end, presumably for mounting. Some theories suggest they were part of an atlatl (a short rod to hurl spears), in addition to their ceremonial uses. It has also been suggested that these artifacts were worn as decorative items denoting marriage status or pregnancy, and as totems representing tribes.

Bird stones were mostly made east of the Mississippi, in the Woodlands, and the thousands in existence have been found primarily in the states of New York, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin. The stones range in length from 3 to 6 inches, and have unique variations in style. Most are ground from grayish green, banded slate, and occasionally porphyry.

The above example is of the type described as “pop-eyed”, and it was carved in a rare pink granite.



55 RARE BEAR EFFIGY PIPE

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

Provenance : Private collection, New York

Carved limestone 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 not uncommon but this early bear example is rather unusual and undoubtedly extremely ancient.



56 RARE SIBERIAN MASKETTE

Chukotka province, Eastern Siberia, Russia, 200 BC-500 AD
Ivory, stone inlays
Height : 7,8 cm

Provenance : Private collection, Moscow

A haunting miniature mask of a tattooed and scarified head carved in walrus ivory, and used by Siberian shamans as a divination amulet. In contrast to Eskimo ivories from the other side of the Bering sea, the Siberian ones are much rarer and archaic. The present example is exceptional by the quality of the carving and the meticulous attention given to details and iconography.



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