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MUSEUMS ARCHIVES. Exhibition Records, 1905-2008, Box 105 Folder 1960. Oceanic and  
African Art, May 1934 [1934-1935, 2003]

# OCEANIC AND AFRICAN ART

FOGG MUSEUM CAMBRIDGE  
MAY, 1934

## FOREWORD

NEGRO was known in antiquity, but it was forgotten by Europe at large until it was rediscovered by the Genoese seeking new trade routes in the fourteenth century. Later in the fifteenth century the Portuguese sent out many expeditions along the West Coast discovering Ashanti, Benin, and Dahomey. In the sixteenth century the Spanish and Portuguese explored the Pacific Islands, which are grouped together under the name of Oceania; in the eighteenth century Captain Cook made his famous voyages writing the observations, which are of inestimable value to modern science in determining the true character of native life before the coming of white traditions.

The difficulty of transporting in small vessels the curious fragile objects made by the native peoples was so great that specimens from Africa and Oceania did not appear in Europe in any quantity before the eighteenth century, and then they were regarded with suspicion by the god-fearing as the badges of heathenism.

WE WISH TO EXPRESS OUR APPRECIATION  
TO THE OFFICERS OF THE PEABODY MUSEUM  
AND OF THE FOGG MUSEUM FOR THEIR  
GENEROUS COOPERATION WHICH HAS  
MADE THIS EXHIBITION POSSIBLE.

HARRIET HAMMOND

JEAN REED

FREDERICK GRACE

FREDERICK R. PLEASANTS

## FOREWORD

NEGRO was known in antiquity, but it was forgotten by Europe at large until it was rediscovered by the Genoese seeking new trade routes in the fourteenth century. Later in the fifteenth century the Portuguese sent out many expeditions along the West Coast discovering Ashanti, Benin, and Dahomey. In the sixteenth century the Spanish and Portuguese explored the Pacific Islands, which are grouped together under the name of Oceania; in the eighteenth century Captain Cook made his famous voyages writing the observations, which are of inestimable value to modern science in determining the true character of native life before the coming of white traditions.

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The scientific point of view which developed in the nineteenth century finally freed the study of man from the bonds of religious dogma, and with the general acceptance of the principle of evolution, man, his nature and cultural manifestations became of great interest. Then the specimens from far away Africa and Oceania were of immense value to science as indices to the cultures they represented. In the latter part of the century ethnological museums composed of collections from Mexico, Africa, Oceania and elsewhere were formed to aid in the study of primitive tribes. The specimens were presented as cultural phenomena. From this point of view all objects had equal value, the most crudely executed spoon and the finest sculptured figurine being alike worthy of exhibition and consideration. The arts of primitive peoples were freed from the curse of heathenism but turned to the service of science which recognized in them only the key to ethnological problems.

It was an extreme group in Paris which first aroused the interest in the artistic potentialities of primitive art. Ignorant of ethnological significance they found in the African handling of form a curious relationship with their own aspirations toward simplicity and consciousness of material. African sculpture became a cult valuable in the

esoteric experiments of a self-conscious group who saw in them not a new interpretation of life but novelty of presentation. Primitive African art in particular has been the victim of diverse circumstances. It has never had critical consideration of its artistic excellence combined with a solid background of ethnological knowledge, which is the true basis for the deepest artistic understanding.

In preparing this exhibition the objects have been selected primarily on the basis of aesthetic merit. At the same time we have included in what is primarily an art exhibition the maps, photographs and brief ethnological sketches of the cultures represented by the objects, for it is only in observing the objects in a proper sequence and surrounded by the other expressions of the spirit which produced them that we can reach a real comprehension of the aims and aspirations of these workmen. We have for long been prepared to admit the value of the great Far Eastern artistic stream and we have attempted at times to forget the beliefs and prejudices inherent in our Occidental tradition in an effort to comprehend the message which the Oriental craftsman had for his compatriots. Similarly in dealing with arts of the primitive African and Oceanic tribes we must admit that we are facing great cultural streams possessed of their own canons and aesthetic stand-



ards which we can not honestly introduce into our alien life as a cult, but fairly judge as the separate manifestation of a separate way of life which we will be the richer for having understood.

The sculpture, like the ethnology of Africa and Oceania, has a certain unity; nevertheless diverse influences have produced characteristic works of art which may be grouped in units equivalent to the schools of other periods of art history. Thus in Africa we may distinguish sculpture from the Sudan, from Benin and Yoruba, from Sierra Leone, from Cameroon and the Belgian Congo. Yet they all bear the stamp of being African even as the schools of Praxiteles and Scopas are unmistakably Greek. Also in Oceania objects from Micronesia, Polynesia and Melanesia bear a separate stamp but a definite relation to each other.

As with all so-called primitive races the materials at hand have had a vital effect on the formation of the artistic style because they determine the original nature of the objects. The material, whether stone, wood, clay or metal is always of dominating importance artistically, in any primitive group, whose structure depends on unity and slow growth with few innovations to break the harmony of time-honored conceptions. We find, then, in wooden sculpture from Oceania and Afri-

ca the qualities of wood itself, plasticity, symmetry of outline, balance of parts, which though separate, united become a whole of character and beauty, all of which can be sharply differentiated from the static stone tradition of countries like Egypt or Mexico.

Even as the guiding principles of their life are not intellectual and objective, but emotional and self-conscious surrounded with black magic and taboo, so the essence of their sculpture is to be found not in exterior reality but in interior quality.

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## AFRICAN AND OCEANIC COLLECTIONS

### AMERICAN MUSEUMS

- American Museum of Natural History, New York, N.Y.
- Bankfield Museum, Halifax, N.S.
- Brooklyn Museum of Arts and Sciences, Brooklyn, N.Y.
- Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago.
- Peabody Museum, Harvard University.
- Peabody Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.
- Pennsylvania University Museum, Philadelphia.

### FOREIGN MUSEUMS

- Afrikanisches Ethnographisches Museum der St. Petrus Claver Sodalitat fur die Afrikanischen Missionen, Vienna.
- Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Honolulu.
- British Museum, London.
- Dominion Museum, Wellington, N.Z.
- Musee du Congo Belge, Tervueren, Belgium.

Musee du Trocadero, Paris.  
Museum fur Volkerkunde, Berlin.  
Museum fur Volkerkunde, Hamburg.  
Museum fur Volkerkunde, Munich.  
Pitt-Rivers Museum, Farnham, Dorset.  
Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford.  
Rijks Ethnographische Museum, Leyden.  
Städtisches Museum fur Volkerkunde, Leipzig.

## CATALOGUE

### EAST AFRICA

1. Water buffalo, wood  
Zulu-Kaffir

### CONGO

2. Ivory handled knife  
Mangbetu Tribe
3. Fetish figure, ivory  
Welle Basin
4. Fetish figure, wood  
Kavango Tribe
5. Fetish figure, wood  
Wadia Tribe
6. Cup, wood  
Bakongo Tribe
7. Cup, wood  
Bakongo Tribe
8. Cup, wood  
Bashilele Tribe
9. Cup, wood  
Bashilele Tribe

10. Fetish figure, wood  
Batempe Tribe
11. Ceremonial axe, wood and iron  
Uru Numba Kudja Tribe
12. Fetish, ivory  
Baluba Tribe
13. Fetish figure, wood  
Baluba Tribe
14. Headrest, wood  
Baluba Tribe
15. Fetish figure, wood  
Baluba Tribe
16. Mask, wood  
Kasai Region
17. Mask, wood, with beads and shell  
Babende Tribe
18. Chief's stool, wood  
Bena Kanioka Tribe
19. Stool, wood  
Congo
20. Stool, wood  
Congo

#### WEST AFRICA

21. Monkey, wood and horn  
Loanda
22. Female divinity, wood  
Spanish Guinea

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23. Female idol, ebony  
Bene Tribe, Cameroon
24. Pipe, pottery  
Bamum Tribe, Cameroon
25. Pipe, pottery  
Bamum Tribe, Cameroon
26. Cult mask, wood  
Bamum Tribe, Cameroon
27. Mask, bronze  
Benin City
28. Pedestal, bronze  
Benin City
29. Idol, ivory  
Benin City
30. Plaque of warrior, bronze  
Benin City
31. Ceremonial ladle, wood  
Liberia
32. Cult mask, wood  
Liberia
33. Cult mask, wood  
Liberia
34. Idol, wood  
Gio Tribe, Liberia  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Johnson
35. Idol, wood  
Liberia

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36. Cult mask, wood  
Mende Tribe, Sierra Leone

37. Stool, wood  
Liberia

#### MELANESIA

38. Bowl, wood  
Admiralty Islands

39. Dish, wood  
Maty Island

40. Ladle, wood  
Maty Island

41. Ceremonial mask, wood  
New Ireland

#### INDONESIA

42. Spoon, wood  
Ifugao Tribe, Philippine Islands

43. Spoon, wood  
Ifugao Tribe, Philippine Islands

44. Animal bowl, wood  
Ifugao Tribe, Philippine Islands

45. Seated male figure, wood  
Ifugao Tribe, Philippine Islands

46. Jar with figure, wood  
Ifugao Tribe, Philippine Islands

47. Female figure  
Philippine Islands

48. Male figure  
Philippine Islands

#### POLYNESIA

49. Ancestral figure, wood  
Maori, New Zealand

50. Fisherman's god, wood  
Hervey Islands

51. Figure, wood  
Easter Island

52. Figure, wood  
Easter Island

53. Turtle, wood  
Easter Island

54. Bowl, wood  
Hawaii

55. Headrest, wood  
Tonga

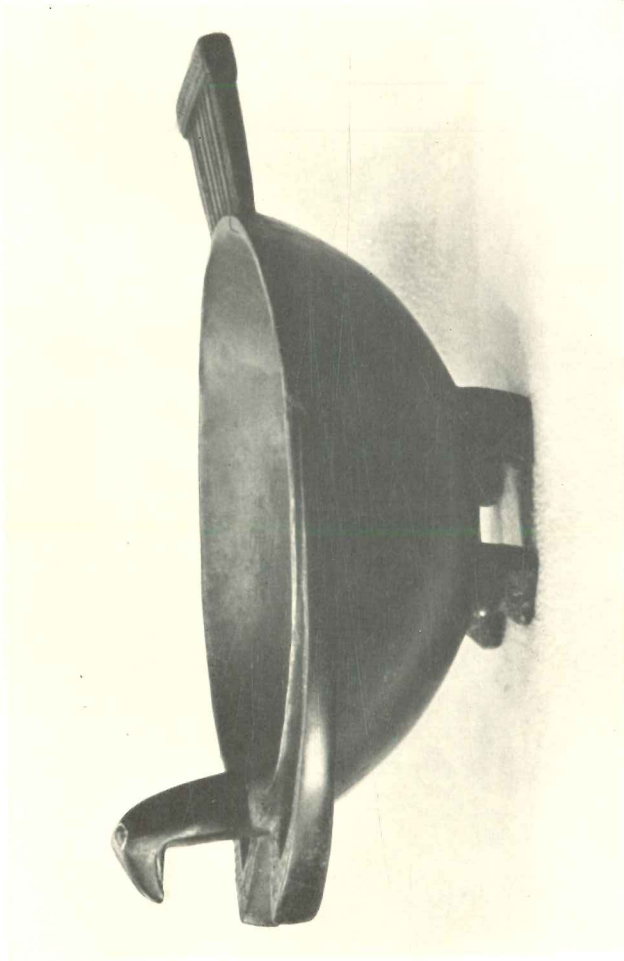
56. Headrest, wood  
Tonga

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ILLUSTRATIONS



WOODEN MALE FIGURE, EASTER ISLAND, POLYNESIA



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WOODEN BOWL, ADMIRALTY ISLANDS, MELANESIA



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WOODEN BOWL, HAWAII





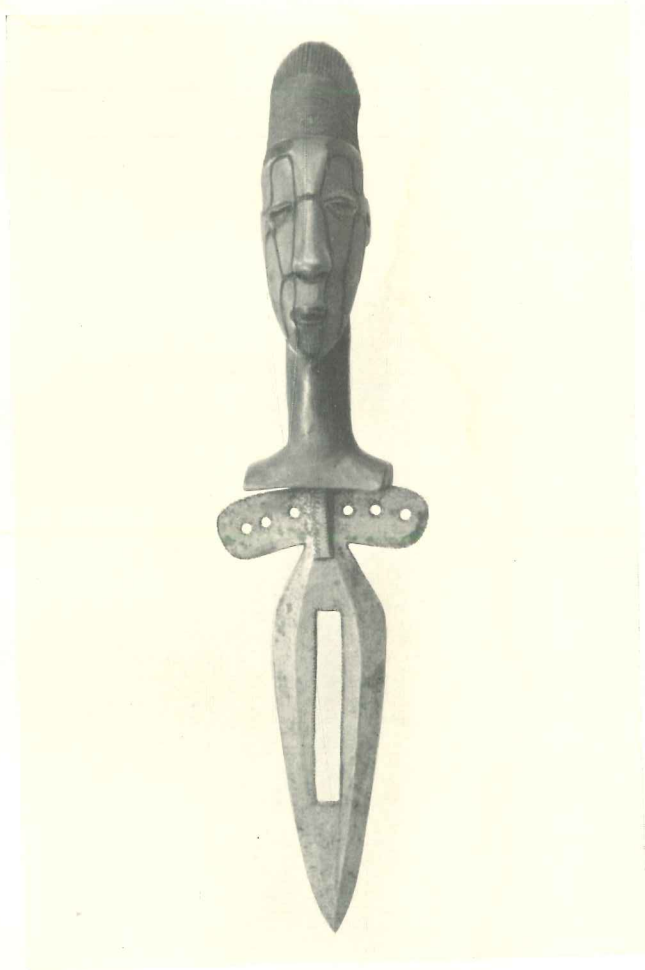
HEADRESTS, TONGA ISLANDS, POLYNESIA

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CHIEF'S STOOL; BEND KANIOKA TRIBE, CONGO

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CEREMONIAL KNIFE, BALUBA TRIBE, CONGO

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IVORY IDOL, BENIN CITY, WEST AFRICA

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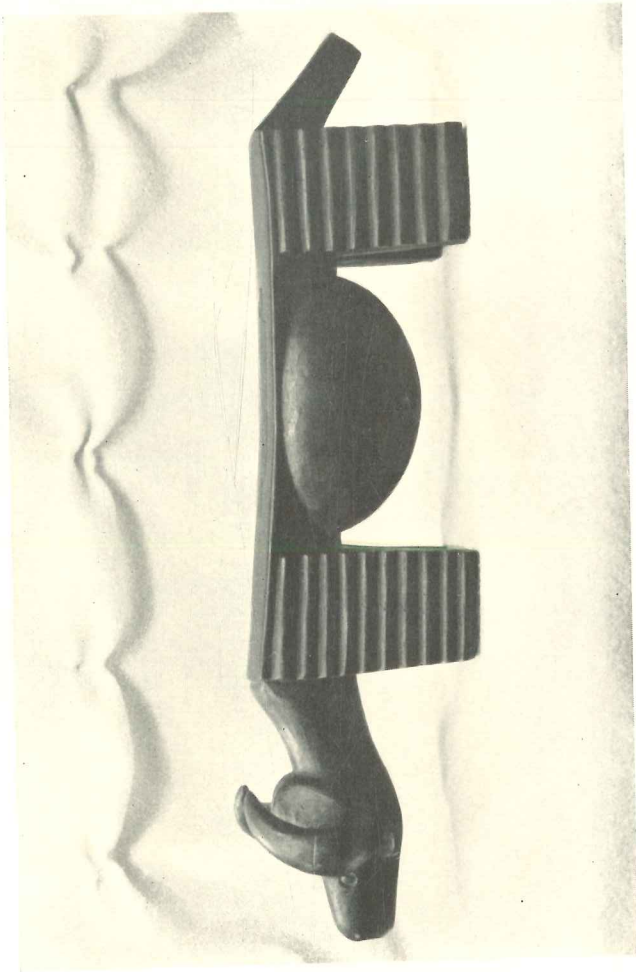
BRONZE PEDESTAL, BENIN CITY, WEST AFRICA

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BRONZE MASK, BENIN CITY, WEST AFRICA

[ 27 ]



WATER BUFFALO DIVINING INSTRUMENT, ZULU-KAFFIR

[ 28 ]



FEMALE FIGURE, BALUBA TRIBE, CONGO

[ 29 ]

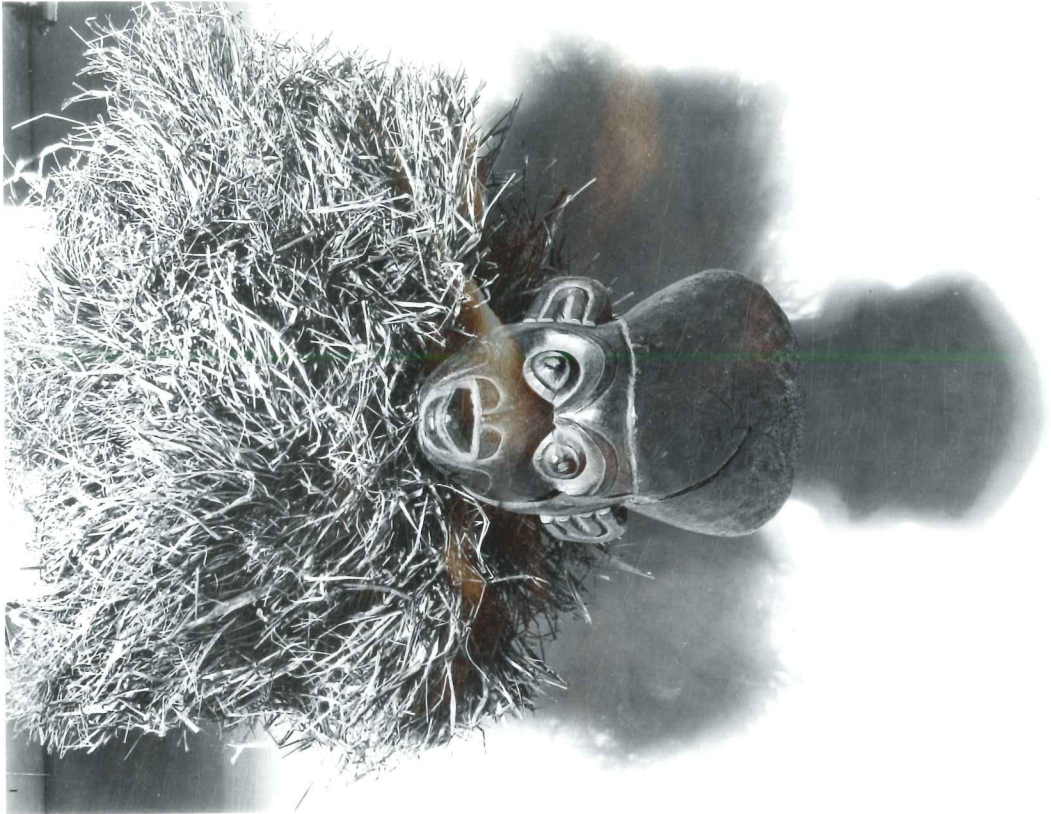




FEMALE FIGURE, LIBERIA

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GEORGE BANTA PUBLISHING COMPANY, MENASHA, WISCONSIN



AFRICAN<sup>AND</sup> OCEANIC  
SCULPTURE

FOGG ART MUSEUM  
MAY 7 - MAY 28