

TITLE: The Ambum Stone **LOCATION:** Papua New Guinea **DATE:** 1500 BCE

ARTIST: _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Prehistoric Oceanic Art **PATRON:** _____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Greywacke

FORM:

A composite human/animal figure, perhaps an anteater head and a human body. It has a pleasing shape and smooth surface, and the slightly shiny patina on some of its raised details suggest it has been well handled. It was made from greywacke stone, and its finished shape may suggest the original shape the stone it was carved from. Carved in the form of some kind of animal, its features are rounded and include a freestanding neck, elegantly curved head and long nose, and upper limbs that hug its torso and appear to enclose a cupped space above its belly.

FUNCTION:

The Ambum Stone is a decorative pestle. Sculpted stones uncovered in Papua New Guinea fall into three different categories: figurines, mortars, and pestles. These objects take the form of both land- and air-dwelling animals, anthropomorphic creatures, and human figures. The Ambum Stone is one of the earliest stone objects, hailing from way back in 3500 B.C.E., and would have been created as a pestle. It's likely that the Ambum Stone was used for fertility or burial rituals. The discovery of the Ambum Stone sheds light on the supernatural and religious beliefs of the ancient New Guinea peoples. The early stone sculptures have supernatural significance. These special mortars and pestles were used in religious rituals. New Guinea peoples believed the supernatural powers of these sculptures and the animals they depicted helped with fertility, hunting, and burial rites.

CONTENT:

Even today, in some areas of New Guinea, animal figurines similar to the Ambum Stone are believed to possess supernatural powers. Stylized eyes, ears and nostrils are depicted in relief, and shoulder blades and what could be an umbilicus suggest the maker's understanding of anatomy. While it is possibly a fetal-form of a spiny anteater known as an echidna, which is thought to have been valued for its fat prior to the introduction of pigs, it might also be a bird or a fruit bat, and some have speculated that it represents a now extinct mega-sized marsupial.

CONTEXT:

When the Ambum Stone first became known to Westerners in the 1960s, it was being used by a group of people called the Enga who live in the western highlands of Papua New Guinea. For the Enga, the Ambum Stone and other objects like it are called *sinting bilong tumbuna* which literally translates as the "bones of the ancestors" (Egloff 2008:1). This is the Enga term for a class of cult objects which were used as powerful ritual mechanisms where ancestors reside. While the ritual object is not actually an ancestor per se, paradoxically, such sacred objects are believed to have a life of their own, and they can even move around, mate, and reproduce. Before the Enga decided to convert to Christianity in the wake of the arrival of missionaries and colonization in the 1930s, the Ambum Stone and other objects like it were imbued with supernatural powers through ritual processes. They were buried in a group's ancestral land and regular sacrifices of pigs were needed to appease the stones and the ancestors that resided in them. With the appropriate care they could ward off danger and promote the fertility and vigor of the tribe and the land.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The Ambum Stone represents one of the earliest dated Pacific works of art. Although the Ambum Stone is far from the only pestle in Papua New Guinea fashioned in animal form, it's the most famous and arguably the most beautifully carved. The Ambum Stone is prized above all others not only for its age—it is one of the oldest of all sculptures made in Oceania—but also for its highly detailed sculptural qualities.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

The artist stylized the animal form. What we can appreciate is the effort and skill required in working with the tough lava based stone involving many weeks or months of laborious chipping and hammering at the surface with stone tools. The artist(s) used subtractive carving technique.

INTERPRETATION:

Other theories are that this image represents a masked human, or an anteater embryo in a fetal position. At the heart of the recent chapters of the story of the Ambum Stone is a narrative about colonialism and its legacy. The Ambum Stone was made and imbued with particular meanings and values by a group of what we now know as Papua New Guineans, and then relocated to a Western museum where it has been reinterpreted within a framework of aesthetics and exchange, where we continue to marvel at it—and exoticize it—because of its origins, and the mysteries we perceive in the pages of its story, remain closed to us.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

More recently it suffered a mishap that left it broken, and the publicity around this thrust the Ambum Stone into ongoing political debates about who owns historical artifacts. Many objects of New Guinea's historical material culture were shipped to foreign museums and galleries for "safe keeping." Other desirable or even potentially valuable objects were smuggled out illegally.

TITLE: Nan Madol **LOCATION:** Pohnpei, Micronesia **DATE:** C. 700- 1600 C.E.

ARTIST: Saudeleur Dynasty **PERIOD/STYLE:** Micronesian Art **PATRON:**

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Basalt boulders and prismatic columns

FORM:

Nan Madol is an abandoned city located on Pohnpei a remote Micronesian island northeast of New Guinea. The ancient ruins reveal an engineering marvel. They comprised almost 100 stone and coral fill platforms, built atop artificial eyelets connected by narrow canals and protected by high sea walls. At its peak between 1200 and 1600 CE, Nan madol served as the ceremony and political center for the ruling Saudeleur Dynasty. The surviving ruins pose still unanswered questions about how architects built these remarkable stone structures.

FUNCTION:

The Capitol of the Saudeleur Dynasty of Micronesia. Seawalls act as breakwaters; 15 feet high and 35 feet thick. The city was built to separate the upper classes from the lower classes.

CONTENT:

Nan Madol contained more than palaces for the rich and powerful; it also included a variety of specialized islets. For example, some islets contained facilities for holding sacred eels, constructing canoes, and preparing coconut oil for ceremonial anointing at important rituals. The Saudeleurs reserved the largest and most prominent islet for a massive royal mortuary compound. A group of specially-trained priests conducted elaborate ceremonies within this walled enclosure.

CONTEXT:

According to a well-known Pohnpeian legend the Saudeleur dynasty began with the arrival of Olisihpa and Olosophpa, twin brothers who are sorcerers from another Island. Aided by flying dragons, the brothers levitated huge boulders to construct an altar dedicated to an important god of architecture. After Olisihpa died of old age, Olospha married a local woman and founded the Saudeleur dynasty. Olospha's successors quickly asserted their authority over the entire Island. They rewarded an aristocratic class with land and then demanded tribute of fresh fish and fruit from the large class of landless commoners. This stratified social structure supported the earliest known example of a centralized political system in the western Pacific. The Saudeleur Dynasty ruled Pohnpei for at least five centuries. According to local oral history, increasingly oppressive rulers placed unbearable burden upon the people. Even worse, the Saudeleur's offended the Thunder God. Aided by this powerful deity, the people rebelled. Although the last Saudeleur ruler desperately tried to cling to his power, the insurrection finally toppled the Dynasty in 1628.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Work crews carved the salt stones from volcanic plugs. They somehow transported boulders, ranging between 5 and 50 tons, from the mountain quarries to the coral reef lagoon at Nan Madol. Engineers and their workers accomplished this remarkable feat without the benefit of large animals, pulleys, or metal levers. Archaeologists believe Pohnpei crews used palm trunks to lever the massive stones into position. Like the architects at Great Zimbabwe and Machu Picchu the Nan Madol builders did not use concrete. Instead they utilized a distinctive criss-crossing pattern of horizontal basalt logs called stretchers laid on top of perpendicular basalt logs called headers. They used coral to fill in the floor and middle layers. A series of six seawalls protected Nan Madol from Pacific storm surges. This enormous building project required centuries to complete.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Pohnpei's remote island location meant that it's Saudeleur rulers did not have to devote scarce resources to maintaining a strong military. Instead they concentrated upon building a unique capital city complex for themselves. Recent uranium series dating indicates that major building project began between 1180 and 1200 ce

INTERPRETATION:

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

The name Nan Madol means "spaces between". It refers to the canals that link the islets. However, the city's 1,000 inhabitants describe their home as Soun Nan-leng, "Reef of Heaven". For the city's elite group of rulers, Nan Madol must have indeed seemed like a heavenly reef. They enjoyed living in luxurious palaces surrounded by obedient servants. In order to control potential rivals, the Saudeleurs forced local chiefs to move to Nan Madol where their activities could be closely monitored. Five centuries later, Louis XIV used the same strategy at his newly-opened Versailles Palace.

TITLE: Moai on platform (*ahu*). **LOCATION:** Rapa Nui (Easter Island) **DATE:** C. 1100-1600

ARTIST: **PERIOD/STYLE:** Polynesian Art **PATRON:**

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Volcanic tuff figures on basalt base

FORM:

The process of creating a moai began at a quarry located on the side of one of the islands three extinct volcanoes. Skilled carver's used stone tools to awaken the statues from the compressed volcanic ash. The average moai is 12 ft tall and weighed 13 tons. These imposing stone figures are all standing males. Large rectangular heads comprise one third of each moai. The stylized heads include prominent foreheads, large staring eyes, long straight noses, any longer earlobes. The moai have slender arms pressed close to each side. These huge blocky figures lack legs.

FUNCTION:

Rapa Nui's early settlers called the completed statues are *aringa ora* or "living faces". Endowed with a spiritual force called MANA, the moai represented honored ancestors. The vast majority of the moai did not face the ocean. Instead they faced Inland intently watching over their descendants.

CONTENT:

The journey from the quarry to an *Ahu* platform did not complete the project. After erecting a moai, islanders inserted eyes of white coral with inlaid pupils of red or black rock. They sometimes capped the statue's head with top knots (*pukao*) made of redstone (*sco-ria*) weighing as much as 10 tons. The faces have heavy brow lines, long noses, and pouty, protruding lips. The arms of the figures are cut in bas relief and rest against the bodies of the figures. The moai generally don't have any visible legs. Their chests and navels are delineated. White coral is placed in the eyes to awaken them.

CONTEXT:

Rapa Nui is one of the most remote inhabited spots on the globe. This tiny island is located in the South Pacific, more than 1,200 miles east of Pitcairn Island and 2300 miles west of Chile. The prehistoric people who lived on the isolated island carved and moved almost 900 enormous stone statues. According to Rapa Nui oral histories, Polynesian explorers led by Hotu Matu'a discovered and settled Rapa Nui. The colonizers may have reached the island as early as 800 CE. However, recent radiocarbon dating places their arrival closer to 1200 CE. Regardless of when they arrived, the settlers brought a well-established tradition of carving wooden and stone figures. But sculptures on no other Pacific island can match with extraordinary size or number of the moai found on Rapa Nui. Like the contemporary European builders of Gothic cathedrals, they invested significant resources into a project deemed vital to the spiritual welfare of their community. The island plunged into a civil war. For reasons that remain unclear, the Rapa Nuians overturned all their statues.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The Rapa Nuians now faced a daunting challenge; how would they move the multi ton moai from the quarry to specially prepared platforms, called *ahu*, located up to a dozen miles away? Modern investigators have proposed two competing possibilities. One group speculates that the Rapa Nuians used wooden sleds to push the horizontal statues along prepared paths. A second group offered a novel idea inspired by ancient oral tradition--the stone giants walked to their platforms!

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

After quarrying, the Easter Islanders dragged the Moai to the *ahu* sites and then positioned them vertically. It would have taken 30 men one year to carve a moai, 90 men two months to transport it from the quarry to the *ahu* site, and 90 men three months to position it vertically on the platform.

INTERPRETATION:

The arts of the Pacific are created to harness the power of deities, ancestors, founders, past leaders, and primal principles. In the case of the moai, wrapping or covering wasn't a salient feature (meaning it really didn't exist). Instead, the head was emphasized at the expense of other body parts (such as legs) to focus on the importance of the "living faces" of the ancestors who were watching over the people of the island. The large heads reflect a Polynesian belief in the primacy of the chief, or the head of the community.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Archaeologists believe the Rapa Nuians carved most of the moai between 1200 and 1600 CE. European explorers discovered Rapa Nui on Easter Sunday, 1722. As in North and South America, their arrival brought culture shock, exploitation, and worst of all deadly diseases. During the 1860s, Peruvian slave raiders kidnapped 1500 Rapa Nuians, or about one-third of the island's population. Almost all of the Rapa Nuian captives died working in guano mines. A tiny group of survivors returned to their homes, only to infect the population with smallpox. Known as the great death, the epidemic reduced Rapa Nui population to just 111 people. The island's moai now outnumbered the human population.

TITLE: 'Ahu 'ula (feather cape). **LOCATION:** Hawaii **DATE:** Late 18th century C.E.

ARTIST: **PERIOD/STYLE:** Hawaiian Art **PATRON:** Kalani'ōpu'u

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Feathers and fiber

FORM:

The crescent (hoaka) in the central design of this cape was a very important shape to Hawaiians. The meaning of which varies, including: to cast a shadow, to drive away, to ward off or to frighten; spirit, apparition or ghost; or brightness, shining, glittering or splendid. The shape matches the meaning, giving strength and harmony to the design, particularly when worn on the shoulders and back.

FUNCTION:

A prized 'ahu 'ula created a vital link between the living and their ancestors. The 'ahu 'ula manifest a great spiritual force called mana. As treasured royal possession, a feathered cape acquired more and more Mana as it passed from one generation to the next. Worn by an imminent chief, an 'ahu 'ula conveyed a majestic image of all inspiring power that intimidated rivals and impressed followers. A completed 'ahu 'ula served a variety of functions. It signaled the wearer's high-status at religious festivals and other important ceremonial locations. Hawaiian chiefs also wore their dazzling feathered capes and similarly feathered helmets into battle. And finally, chiefs used their 'ahu 'ulas as ceremonial gifts. The cloaks were viewed as powerful protection of the mana, or life force of the warriors who wore them. The cloak took a lot of effort to make and it had a distinct job to provide tapu, protection, for the person who wore it.

CONTENT:

The cloak consists of a woven netting that serves as the base into which brightly colored bird feathers were attached. When these cloaks and helmets were made in the 18th century, the black and yellow feathers came from four species of bird called 'o'os. All these species eventually became extinct, but not because their feathers had been used for the making of cloaks. Disease was probably the cause. Black feathers came from two species of mamo birds, which are also now extinct. The red feathers come from birds called 'I'iwi and 'apapane. Both of these species are still found in Hawaii today, but only in reduced numbers.

CONTEXT:

A hereditary ruling elite known as the ali'i dominated Hawaii's social, political, and artistic life. Executed in brilliant sacred colors, the elaborate feather cape signaled it's owners royal status. The cape served as more than an expensive status symbol it also embodied how Hawaiian ideals about the continuing presence of ancestors and the protective power of their gods. When British explorer Captain Cook voyaged in the Pacific in the 18th century, he visited Hawaii. On January 26, 1778, he was greeted by the high chief, Kalani'ōpu'u. At the end of the meeting, the chief removed his own feather cloak and helmet and placed them on Captain Cook. The chief also laid at Cook's feet several more feather cloaks, four pigs, and various food offerings. Cook took all the feather cloaks back to England with him, and over time, they were dispersed to various collections and put on display. Today there are about 160 examples of feather cloaks in museum collections all over the world.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Throughout history, rulers have used coveted raw materials to display their power. For example, the Oba of Benin commissioned brass plaques, and the kings of Silla commissioned Golden Jade crowns. Similarly, Hawaiian chiefs turn to their most precious raw material, the feathers of rare birds. Creating a feathered cloak required a long and painstaking process. Skilled trappers caught tiny birds by snaring them midair with nets or by using decoy birds to lure them on two branches coated with a sticky substance. They then harvested a few price feathers from each bird before releasing it. The relatively small cloak featured here required thousands of feathers. Specially-trained male weaver's attached tiny overlapping clusters of feathers to a plant fiber foundation. Each cloak had a distinctive geometric pattern, associated with a particular lineage. As weaver's knotted cords, they recited prayers and chanted ancestral names. This ritual helped imbue the cloak with additional protected mana.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Hawaiians viewed birds as spiritual messengers capable of flying between the earthly and heavenly realms. This link between birds and gods made feathers sacred objects that could be worn by members of ali'i. Hawaiians assigned special symbolic value to specific colors. For example, red feathers represented royalty while yellow feathers indicated a prosperous future. Bird handlers would harvest a few feathers from each bird and then release the birds back into the wild. Hundreds of thousands of feathers were required for each cloak. That's a lot of bird handling, not to mention feather plucking. The feathers were bundled together and tied into the netting in close proximity to create a uniform covering that would become the "fabric" of the cloak.

INTERPRETATION:

The makers of feather cloaks employed richly colored plumage that came from birds native to the islands where the cloaks were made. This is a great example of using local materials that are near-at-hand to make beautiful, useful objects. The use of feathers was an inventive solution to the problem of creating something special and eye-catching that could be worn by men of high rank. Thanks to native birds, and whoever got the great idea to use their feathers, these cloaks exhibit a rich opulence, something totally befitting of a chief or a revered warrior.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

A full length cloak would require 500,000 feathers.

TITLE:Female deity **LOCATION:**Nukuoro, Micronesia **DATE:** C. 18th to 19th century

ARTIST: **PERIOD/STYLE:** Micronesian Art **PATRON:**

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Wood

FORM:

The female deity portrayed here stands under 16 in tall. The sculptor skillfully draws the viewer's eye upward to the statue's head, the seat of its Mana, or spiritual energy. Her ovoid or egg-shaped head lacks distinctive facial features. The Nukuoro artist followed a canon that did not use representational proportions. For example, the figures truncated legs support an elongated torso. Simple incised lines suggest the statues chest and pubic area.

FUNCTION:

Today we appreciate works of Pacific art for their aesthetic beauty. However like other Pacific Islanders the people of Nukuoro created their statues to be used and not just viewed. For example this image may have occupied a special spot along one of the walls of the rectangular amalau. Priests adorned the statue with flowers and special headdresses. They expressed gratitude to their gods and ancestors by organizing festive parades to celebrate a bountiful harvest.

CONTENT:

Even though the carver who made this deity simplified the form, he or she included everything needed to tell us this is a figure. In some ways, by keeping the form simple, the maker helps to reinforce the strength of the deity. It has a head, shoulders, arms, a torso, and legs intact. Its simplicity gives it a kind of basic strength and power of its own. The figure has no actual feet, no hands, and no facial features, but hey, it's a deity! It doesn't need all those specific details to do its job. Sometimes these dieties would be decorated with garments or flowers.

CONTEXT:

The Nukuoro Atoll is a ring of 46 tiny islets that surrounds a lagoon in Micronesia. First inhabited between 800 and 1000 CE, the atoll's abundant crops and rich sealife have nourished a population of about 400 people. Despite it's remote location and small population, the atoll has supported generations of exceptionally creative carvers, who sculpted widely admired wooden figures of their gods and deified ancestors. This image provides an example of Nukuoro's unique artistic tradition. Five clans dominated religious life on Nukuoro. Each clan maintained its own religious building and cult objects. The entire population worshiped in a large community Spirit house called an amalau.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The Nukuoro statue convey a sense of strength, designed to awe viewers. Only 37 of the statues still exist. Their simplified abstract form deeply impressed early modern sculptors such as Constantin Brancusi and Alberto Giacometti. The female form in Pacific arts is related to a Mother Creator; there are many examples of streamlined deity figures like this one in Micronesian art. She is where it all began, but she's not alone. Before the arrival of Europeans in the 17th century, Micronesian religion was polytheistic, meaning that people looked up to more than one deity. From island to island, the religions resembled one another, but each island had its own gods and myths. The island religions also recognized ancestor spirits and spirits connected to certain locations, kind of like ghosts. Only select people—priests, healers, and magicians—could communicate with spirits, and they usually did this in a trance or dream state.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

An unknown Nukuoroan master sculptor carved this image sometime before 1830. He used the light but sturdy wood from a bread-fruit tree. Although Nukuoro statues range in height from 1 to 7 feet, they all follow an established artistic canon. The simplified form employed here by the carver is most likely an outgrowth of the fact that a powerful deity is best expressed through the most simple, universal forms possible. Keeping things simple and universal allows everyone who would have looked at or used the figure to participate in its sacredness.

INTERPRETATION:

The image of a deity was something meant to be kept and treasured over time by the culture that made it. A figure like this reflects the beliefs of a group of people at a certain time and place, living on a small island in the middle of a huge ocean. The carvers of Nukuoro made a simple, lasting expression of a deity figure, efficiently using local wood as a means to express the form of one of their Mother Creator gods.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

TITLE: Staff god **LOCATION:** Rarotonga, Cook Islands **DATE:** Late 18th to early 19th century C.E.
ARTIST: **PERIOD/STYLE:** Polynesian Art **PATRON:**

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Wood, tapa, fiber, and feathers.

FORM:

The Rarotonga staff god consists of an elongated body topped by an elaborately carved head that may represent Tangaroa. The creator gods outsized head comprises about one-third of the wood carving. The god's smooth head features stylized large eyes along with a pointed chin and tightly closed mouth. The staffs can be as small as 28 inches or as long as 18 feet. They were carried and displayed horizontally. At one end of the staff, there is always a blade-shaped head with little carved appendages made of small figures that rise from the god's body and a phallus at the bottom of the carved section.

FUNCTION:

Staff gods from the island of Rarotonga are carved wooden cult figures that are meant to represent the melding between a god and its human descendants.

CONTENT:

Thick layers of barkcloth conceal the remainder of the staff God. The wrapping served a variety of functions. First and foremost, it protects and contains the deities spiritual force, or Mana. If for any reason the islanders removed the wrapping, the deity would leave, rendering the staff God useless. In addition, the barkcloth provides the god with clothing, since it would be inappropriate for a deity to be seen naked. The process of creating a staff god required a unique combination of distinctive male and female contributions. Male carvers created the staff god's head, miniature figures, and wooden core. They also carved a large phallus, originally placed at the end of the figure. The phallus may have represented Tangaroa's role as a divinity responsible for creation and thus sexual reproduction. However, the phallus symbols offended the missionaries and they forced the islanders to remove them.

CONTEXT:

Rarotonga is located in the Cook Islands, Northeast of New Zealand. Wood carvers working on the tiny volcanic island created a distinctive style of art. This is the only surviving example of a large wrapped staff god. The image offers a tantalizing but elusive glimpse into Rarotongan religious beliefs and the artistic roles of men and women. The Rarotongan people believe that Tangaroa was the first god. He lived in a round shell shaped like an egg. Nothing existed but the shell and the outside world. Finally, Tangaroa broke his shell and called out, "who's there?" But he neither saw nor heard any life. Tangaroa then began to create a family of gods.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The Rarotonga crafted many objects to honor Tangaroa. The 12 ft long staff God associated with this piece may represent Tangaroa's head spine and body. The people of Rarotonga prominently displayed and worshipped their staff gods in outdoor courtyards. Highly-skilled women weavers also played a vital role for creating the bark cloth that covered the staff god's central core. Producing barkcloth required a demanding series of steps. Only one example of a fully wrapped, intact staff god still exists. It's in the collection of the British Museum, and it is quite large.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Arts of the Pacific are created to harness the power of deities, ancestors, founders, past leaders, and primal principles. All these forces are protected by wrapping, sheathing, and otherwise covering things to keep them safe from human contact. The vital force embodied by the staff god (its mana) is kept safe under the wrap of the bark cloth (tapu). In this way, the object maintains its power over time. This is similar to the way that feather cloaks protect the mana of those who wear them or the way the structure of Nan Madol protects mana by the way it is laid out and designed.

INTERPRETATION:

Rarotongan carvers positioned a line of smaller figures just below Tangaroa's head. This combination of small figures placed alongside a large figure is a characteristic motif of Polynesian art. Scholars believe the placement of the small figures suggest that they are positioned along vertebrae, symbolizing genealogical continuity. The line of alternate male and female images could represent tangaroa as children. The frontal females may represent women in childbirth, while the males shown in profile may represent important ancestors. Taken together, this image reinforces Tangaroa's important role as a god of fertility. Mana is a key Oceanic concept indicating a special power or spiritual force that can be invested in objects or people. For example, the staff god's Mana was so great that it required a protective cover of barkcloth. Mana can also be associated with important leaders. For example, the Maori Chief Tamati Waka Nene also possessed great Mana.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Members of the London missionary Society arrived in Rarotonga in 1827. Within a short time, they convinced the people to embrace Christianity and abandon their traditional religion. Encouraged by the missionaries, the people destroyed many of their staff gods. This profound change in the islands religious beliefs disrupted artistic production. As a result, much traditional knowledge has been irrevocably lost.

TITLE: Buk (mask). **LOCATION:** Torres Strait **DATE:** Mid- to late 19th century

ARTIST: **PERIOD/STYLE:** Arts of the Pacific **PATRON:**

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Turtle shell, wood, fiber, feathers, and shell.

FORM:

This mask features a distinctly human face, but it is combined with an equally distinct animal figure, a frigatebird. It's thought that the face represents a culture hero of some kind, who would have been an icon that everyone would recognize.

FUNCTION:

The frigate bird may serve as Kwoian's personal totem or emblem. The black sea bird's striking features include a distinctive forked tail, and elongated hooked beak, and a long wingspan. Like eagles in American art and culture, The soaring frigate suggests great strength and nobility. Scholars believe masks like the buk played an integral role in the ceremonial life of the Torres Strait Islanders. Important uses included male initiation and funerary rites as well as rituals associated with hunting and warfare. The mask also enhanced increase rites performed to assure bountiful harvests and an abundant supply of fish and game. Masks like this were used in funeral ceremonies and in rituals that were intended to ask for bountiful harvests and lots of fish and game. In these ceremonial dances, senior men of the community would wear these masks along with costumes made of dried grass that would rustle with the dancer's movements.

CONTENT:

The masks are some of the most striking looking works of art in all of the arts of the Pacific. Here, the face of the mask covers literally the entirety of the turtle's shell. There are a variety of markings carved into cheeks and around the eyes of the face, and fibers and carved wood elements hang from the edges, adding visual interest to the main circular form.

CONTEXT:

The shallow Waters of the Torres Strait separate Australia and the Melanesia island of New Guinea. The strait includes a maze of reefs, extensive beds of seagrass, and 274 small islands. Scholars believe that skilled artisans living on the island of Wabuiag created the complex mask depicted in this image. The mask's distinctive appearance makes it one of the most admired works of Oceanic art. Male dancers performed during elaborate ceremonies illuminated by campfire lights. The performers wore masks, fitted over their heads like a helmet. The steady beat of sacred drums provided a rhythm for dancers wearing grass costumes. This combination of awe inspiring masks and pounding drums must have impressed, instructed, and even terrified onlookers.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The creation of turtle shell masks on the Torres Strait Islands goes pretty far back, at least to the 17th century. Turtle shell masks like this one were first recorded as being made and used on the islands in 1606 by the Spanish explorer Don Diego de Prado y Tovar.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Torres Strait mask makers created works like this image for centuries. They began the painstaking construction process by heating individual plates from the shells of hawksbill sea turtles and then bending them into a desired shape. After completing this critical step, artists pierced holes along the outer edge of each plate. This enabled them to use fiber to stretch the plates together and assemble them to a three-dimensional sculptural image. The mask makers completed the construction by adding decorative shelves, feathers, and hair to accentuate the eyes, mouth, and wig.

INTERPRETATION:

This image presents a ceremonial mask called buk. This unique work is a distinctive combination of a human face crowned by a soaring frigatebird. The human face may represent a revered ancestor or a legendary cultural hero. For example, many Torres Strait masks celebrate the exploits of Kwoian, a great warrior renowned for his many conquests. In Pacific Island art, there are a wide variety of exchanges that can occur between the maker, the user, and the viewer of the object. Art objects aren't static things in island cultures. Instead, they are used in dances, rituals, and ceremonies as part of a dynamic expression of ideas. In all these cycles of exchange, which occur between individuals, groups, and entire communities, there are strict rules that govern how these interactions can occur. The masks of Torres Strait Islands must be worn by the elders who dance together to ask the gods for abundance in food sources for the community.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

TITLE: Hiapo (tapa). **LOCATION:** Niue **DATE:** 1850-1900 C.E.

ARTIST: **PERIOD/STYLE:** Polynesian Art **PATRON:**

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Tapa or bark cloth, freehand painting

FORM:

This image illustrates a Niuean hiapo design. The cloth is 8 feet long and 6.5 ft wide. Talented female artists use a black dye to decorate this hiapo by hand. Their intricate pattern includes a complex combination of geometric and botanical motifs, placed within a circular form. The triangles, squares, and diamonds diminish in size as they approach the center.

FUNCTION:

Like other Polynesian barkcloths, Niuean hiapo performed a wide range of functions. As a highly prized form of clothing, Hiapo often served as signs of status and prosperity. High-ranking individuals wore their decorated cloths at every important stage of their lives. For example parents would wrap their newborn children in a hiapo, suggesting the close relationship between an individual and his or her clothing. In addition Niueans wore hiapo at ritual ceremonies, exchanged them at rites of passage such as marriages, and used them to wrap sacred objects. Also as blankets, room dividers, or decorative textiles that hang on the wall in people's homes.

CONTENT:

Once the cloth is made, it's decorated by rubbing, stamping, stenciling, burning, painting, or dyeing the surface. The designs can get very elaborate and include grid squares, repeated fish and plant motifs, stylized leaf forms, or concentric, abstract patterns as in the example seen here. Sometimes the fabric is even smoked to achieve a particular type of tint.

CONTEXT:

Niue is a small Polynesian island country, located 1500 miles Northeast of New Zealand. Its position near Tonga, Samoa, and the Cook Islands exposed it to increasingly frequent encounters with traders and Christian missionaries. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Niuean women created a distinctive style of bark cloth or tapa, illustrated by the fine lines and intricate geometric designs in this image.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The art of making barkcloth fabric is a distinctive part of Pacific culture. The process is performed almost entirely by women. Unlike the silk and wool ardabil carpet and the camelid fiber and cotton All-T'oqapu tunic. Barkcloth is not a woven material. Instead it is manufactured from the soft inner bark of the paper mulberry tree.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

The arduous process of creating fine barkcloth requires many steps. Once harvested, the mulberry trees outer bark is separated from its inner fiber. A process of soaking and repeated beating with a heavy wooden mallet transforms the inner fiber into thin, flat strips of bark cloth. In a procedure called felting, these pieces are fitting together and combined into long, plain sheets. Once the felting is completed, the widened barkcloth is ready for dying. Skilled women stamp, stencil, or paint designs into the cloth. Dyes come from earth pigments and a variety of berries and plants. The final result is a beautiful and sophisticated work of art.

INTERPRETATION:

The meaning and symbolism of these motifs is elusive. In a careful study of Niuean hiapo, John Pule and Nicholas Thomas conclude that, "the written and illustrated source material relating to the culture and history of Niue is unusually sparse and fragmented." This "poverty of facts" continued into the 20th century. Niuean women discontinued production of their distinctive hiapo by the early 1900s. No hiapo has been made in Niue since the 1930's. Using stencils, the artists dye the exposed parts of the tapa with paint.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Hiapo is the word for barkcloth, or tapa, in Niuean language. Christian missionaries introduced barkcloth to Niue in the 1830s. Within 50 years Niueans developed a distinctive decorative Style. Different names for it include ngatu, masi, ahu, and siapo. On the island of Niue, where this example was made, bark cloth is referred to as hiapo.

TITLE: Tamati Waka Nene **LOCATION:** New Zealand **DATE:** 1890 C.E.

ARTIST: Gottfried Lindauer **PERIOD/STYLE:** Czech painting of a Maori Warrior **PATRON:** The Family of Tamati Waka Nene

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Oil on canvas

FORM:

Lindauer painted a compelling series of finely detailed images of indigenous Maori leaders. This image captures both the likeness and mana of Tamati Waka Nene, a renowned Maori warrior and peacemaker, whose life story illustrates the tumultuous changes that took place in 19th century New Zealand.

FUNCTION:

A larger, color portrait would have been important to the descendants of Tamati Waka Nene who, like all Māori, believed that likenesses of ancestors brought that ancestor's presence back into the world of the living. While Lindauer certainly wasn't painting portraits like this as gifts for Māori families, its mere existence, along with the stories of this great leader that have been passed down through the generations, help to keep his spirit alive and well.

CONTENT:

This incredible-looking man with the tattooed face is Tamati Waka Nene. He was born about 1785 into a royal Māori family and grew up to be a powerful warrior and leader on the island of Hokianga, near New Zealand. In this portrait, he appears to be physically strong, as well as intellectually sharp and forward thinking. Lindauer chose to portray Nene in traditional Maori garb. The great chief wears a fine cloak covered in kiwi feathers. A valuable green stone earring dangles from his right ear lobe. Lindauer reaffirms Nene's status as a warrior by prominently positioning a tewhatewha weapon in his right hand. The artist devoted particular care to painting Nene's intricate facial tattoo, or moko. The swirling tattoo conveys information about Nene's lofty status, impressive clan connections, and powerful mana.

CONTEXT:

Sometime between 1200 and 1300, a people later known as Maori discovered and settled New Zealand. They soon divided into tribes linked to a common ancestor. Although they lived in separate tribes, the Maori developed a distinctive culture that included a belief in the importance of Mana as a force that invested a person with power and prestige. In addition, Maori culture placed special importance on using complex tattoos to adorn their faces. Maori chiefs coveted guns known as muskets. The new weapons soon ignited in an intertribal arms race among chiefs determined to gain territory and avenge past grievances. A series of three thousand battles known as the Musket Wars claimed between 20,000 and 40,000 Maori lives. British officials attempted to restore order by inviting Maori Chiefs to sign a treaty with the crown. Known as the Treaty of Waitangi the agreement made New Zealand a British colony. However the treaty did not end tensions over disputed land purchases. Thousands of British troops finally overpowered the Maori and firmly established the Crown's authority over New Zealand. In 1839, he was baptized and took the name Thomas Walker, or Tamati Waka. He used his position as chief to advocate for and protect traders and Methodist missionaries. He also fought as an ally to British forces in some battles on his home turf and was instrumental in encouraging tribal leaders to sign treaties with the British.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Gottfried Lindauer arrived in New Zealand in 1874 three years after Nene's death. Supported by a wealthy patron, he immersed himself in Maori culture. Lindauer's many life-size and life-like portraits for a unique pictorial record of Maori culture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lindauer began work on a portrait of Tamati Waka Nene in 1890. Although he had never met Nene, Lindauer located a newspaper photograph of the famous chief. He then used the photograph to help guide his portrait. This integration of photography and art characterized many of Lindauer's portraits.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Lindauer is known to have used the technique of projecting the image of a photograph onto a canvas and tracing it before going back and painting over it. Some of his pieces even still have visible pencil lines underneath layers of paint. To be fair, this wasn't cheating. Photographs at the time were very small and only available in black and white, this one was by John Crombie. By enlarging them and adding color, Lindauer was using a fledgling technology to inform and improve his artistry.

INTERPRETATION:

In the arts of the Pacific, the dual nature of opposites is often expressed. This painting is not a work of Pacific Art; it is actually a European artist's interpretation of a Māori leader. It embodies, however, a whole discourse on the opposing forces of indigenous rights and colonization. Tamati Waka Nene tried to reconcile the encroachment of Europeans and the good things they brought, like new technologies and new ideas, with the destruction of the traditional ways of his people. In some ways it was a losing battle, yet he managed to appear heroic—not only to the Europeans he assisted, but to the Māori as well.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

The upheavals that shook Maori society during the 19th century had a profound effect on Tamati Waka Nene. During the Musket Wars, Nene distinguished himself as a ruthless and successful Warrior. As a result he became one of New Zealand's most powerful chiefs. Nene understood the turbulent changes taking place in New Zealand. For example, he protected the Wesleyan missionaries and was baptized into their faith in 1839. He took the name Tamati Waka after Thomas Walker, a prominent British Merchant and Patron of the church missionary Society.

TITLE:Navigation chart **LOCATION:**Marshall Islands, Micronesia **DATE:**19th to early 20th century

ARTIST:_____ **PERIOD/STYLE:**Micronesian Art **PATRON:**_____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:Wood and fiber

FORM:

Stick charts were usually made using the middle “ribs” of coconut tree fronds. These ribs, or sticks, were tied together to form a framework that represented the movement of the ocean swells in a given area of water. Then, cowrie shells were hung from the framework to represent the islands. The idea was to have a clear picture about how the wave crests met and interacted as they broke around the land. The charts varied so much in form and interpretation that only the navigator who made a particular stick chart could accurately read and interpret its information.

FUNCTION:

Master Marshallese navigators created a variety of stick charts to symbolically display their understanding of how islands disrupt swells and create wave patterns. Some of the charts represented large geographic areas while others focused on the waters around specific Islands. Still other stick charts functioned as tools to help young apprentices understand the principle of how waves interact with Islands. The whole point of the navigation charts was to indicate how the islands interrupt the way the ocean swells move through the water. In this way, the navigators could feel for and detect the swells predicted by the charts and thus understand where the canoe was in relation to nearby islands.

CONTENT:

The charts come in three varieties: mattang charts, abstract examples used for instruction that didn’t represent actual conditions; meddo charts, detailed charts showing only a portion of the main island chains; and rebbelib charts, charts that showed the same type of information as meddo charts but which always included all or most of the islands. Within each of these types of charts, four different kinds of swells could be documented, each with their own relative strength and typical behaviors. The names and characteristics of these different types of waves aren’t important. What is important is the fact that these charts conveyed some pretty sophisticated information. Small shells indicate the position of the islands on the chart.

CONTEXT:

The Marshall Islands are located about 2,300 miles Southwest of Honolulu, Hawaii. The island group includes 29 atolls with roughly 1200 islets, spread across 750,000 square miles of ocean. While outsiders might view the ocean as a barrier, the Marshallese have always viewed it as a unifying part of their daily lives. However, reaching the low-lying islands poses a special problem, since they cannot be seen from a distance. This forced expert Marshallese navigators known as ri-metos to develop a unique understanding of the ocean. A highly experienced ri-meto could observe or even feel the pattern of swells bouncing back from an island. This ability to read the ocean enabled a ri-meto to fix his nautical position. The master navigator could then steer his vessel into a reflective swell and thus reach the island that caused it.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The stick chart was a significant contribution to the history of map-making because no one had ever attempted to map ocean swells before the Marshallese people did this. These simply made but very complex organizers of “data” point to the concept that maps in the ancient world were probably very different from maps we use today. For one thing, the stick chart would have been studied and memorized prior to the voyage; it didn’t come along on the journey. The ability of Marshallese ri-metos to navigate across hundreds of miles of open waters stems from their skill and understanding the movement of ocean swells. Weather systems from as far away as Alaska, California, and Antarctica generate waves or moving waves that can travel thousands of miles. Marshallese Navigators understood that when a swell strikes a low-lying island, some of the waves energy reflects back in arcs of water.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Ri-metos jealously guarded the knowledge contained in their sea charts. They even threatened to kill anyone who reveal their secrets! Navigators memorize their charts before departing on a voyage. Safely stored with her family, the stick chart remained a precious possession that father’s only shared with their sons.

INTERPRETATION:

A Marshall Island navigation chart and a Mbudy Society lukasa, both store vital information. The objects provide abstract designs that function as mnemonic devices for highly-skilled Ri metos and Luba “men of memory”. The ability to read these conceptual guides provide each elite group of specialists with great status and influence. Exploration, migration, and exchange of objects occurred across the Pacific thanks to ships and navigation devices created by island people. The ability to navigate meant that voyagers could also return to their points of origin. The navigation charts were a physical manifestation of the experience and wisdom of the navigators who knew the sea swells so well. The charts were an important tool that allowed the Marshallese people to journey from island to island safely, conducting business and furthering their relationships with inhabitants of other islands.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

TITLE: Malagan display and mask **LOCATION:** New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea **DATE:** c. 20th century C.E.
(Aka: Tatanua)

ARTIST: _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Arts of the Pacific **PATRON:** The family of the honored deceased

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Wood, pigment, fiber, and shell

FORM:

Specially costumed tatanua dancers provide an emotional concluding performance. Derived from the word for Spirit or Soul, tatanua refers to both a dance and to distinctive helmet like masks. Although no two tatanua masks are alike they all contain prominent open mouths and a prominent asymmetrical hair design. The bald sides represent how a New Ireland man shaves his head to show his grief. The ceremonial dance provides a tangible display of unity and a restored feeling of vitality.

FUNCTION:

The masks were created to be part of funeral ceremonies and feasts that honored the dead. The malagan display is created for a spectacular but fleeting moment. Once seen, the exhibit frees the living from their obligation to the dead. The no longer needed sculptures can then be discarded or sold to foreign collectors. The importance of the mask to the community comes from the collective memory that the mask embodies regarding its creation, how it was used in the dance, and how elements related to it were destroyed. It is the memory of this process that gives the mask its greatest meaning.

CONTENT:

When the sculptures are on display, it's thought that the souls actually inhabit them, so they are attended to with the utmost care. Once it is deemed that the souls have departed and moved on from the land of the living to the land of the dead, the sculptures are usually burned or allowed to rot. Only the masks and the musical instruments are kept to be used at future occasions. This's why there are still existing masks today in museum collections, like the ones seen here. For the eyes, mask makers insert sea-snail shells.

CONTEXT:

Malagan activities require months and even years of meticulous planning. Farmers must prepare for a large feast by planting extra crops and raising additional pigs. At the same time, organizers choreographed dances, hire carvers, and build a special ceremonial house. The process of creating malagan sculptures begins in secret. Workers cut down trees noted for a soft, lightweight wood that lends itself to detail carving. They then cover the logs with leaves to protect them from the Forbidden eyes of women. Next they carry the concealed wood to a special enclosure, where an expert carver and his assistants spend months crafting a variety of statues. The completed sculptures remain hidden while guests enjoy days of dancing, feasting, and singing. At a climactic moment, the organizers dramatically unveil a line of statues arranged in front of a newly-built ceremonial house. The statues do not represent specific individuals. Instead, they honor spirits associated with supernatural beings and ancestors.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

New Ireland is a large island province in Papua New Guinea. Islanders are renowned for staging elaborate ceremonies to honor recently deceased clan members. The term Malagan refers to both the festivities and to sculptures carved for the event. The striking malagan carvings and mask illustrated here are among the most memorable sculptures in Oceanic art.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Over time, these masks have grown more complex and elaborate because of a highly developed system of ownership. Once a mask is created and purchased by a family to honor an ancestor, the same mask cannot be made again. The makers of these masks must constantly change their methods to make sure that no two masks look alike. Because the preparation was a long process that required much work and many resources, often families would join together to create all the necessary elements to honor several people all at once who had passed away. In this way, all who had died in a certain time frame were honored together. The black, yellow, and red paints are symbolic of violence, war and magic. Artists specialize in using negative space.

INTERPRETATION:

The Malagan ceremony includes a complex set of rituals designed to facilitate the transition of a soul from the world of the living to the realm of the dead. The ceremony does more than just evoke grief for the dead, however. It also includes rights to initiate young men into adulthood. The malagan thus reinforces a community's spiritual and social ties. A great deal of the art of the Pacific is about process, meaning creating, performing with, and even destroying the aesthetic object. It's this process that carries the meaning of the work of art, not so much the object itself. Meaning comes through knowing and understanding how the object was used. The Malagan masks were always spared when they were displayed as part of the funerary ritual. Since the other parts of these elaborate ceremonies were burned or left to decay, the masks are the main connection to the ceremonies that once took place.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

In northern New Ireland Province—an island in Papua New Guinea not the British Isles—these elaborate ceremonies were called malagan, and that is the name given to the masks and other sculptures that are part of the proceedings.

TITLE: Presentation of Fijian mats and tapa cloths to Queen Elizabeth II. **LOCATION:** Fiji, Polynesia **DATE:** 1953 C.E.

ARTIST: _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Polynesian Art **PATRON:** _____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Multimedia performance (costume; cosmetics, including scent; chant; movement; and pandanus fiber/hibiscus fiber mats), photographic documentation

FORM:

In this photograph taken by an unknown photographer in December of 1953—which is summertime in the Southern hemisphere—we see a line of Fijian women in traditional clothing carrying mats and tapa cloths in a stately and organized manner. The women are lined up in a procession to bestow these gifts upon Queen Elizabeth II of England. We don't see the Queen in this photograph, only the Fijian women bearing gifts and the backs of heads of some of the onlookers.

FUNCTION:

Tapa serves a variety of functions. Artisans use it to make cloth, sheets, capes, and even kites. They also use tapa as a gift for weddings, feasts and important ceremonial events.

CONTENT:

The image captures a procession of women wearing beautifully decorated masi skirts. The women are carrying rolls of woven mats that they will present to Queen Elizabeth II. The mats in the photograph look a bit plain, especially to give to a newly crowned queen. This isn't just because they are rolled up or because the photograph is in black and white. Fijians consider simpler designs to be more meaningful. By presenting the queen with relatively plain mats, they were honoring her. A news reporter later described the festivities in Albert Park as a great day indeed. Scholars do not know when the photographer took the photograph featured in this image.

CONTEXT:

Queen Elizabeth II visited Fiji and Tonga in December 1953. Both of these small Polynesian Islands staged elaborate ceremonies to welcome the queen. This image shows a procession of Fiji women presenting Elizabeth II with specially-prepared mats. Two days later, Queen Salote of Tonga presented the British monarch with an extraordinary tapa. The use of Tapa for important ceremonial gifts underscores the role of female artists in the cultural traditions of both Islands. Queen Elizabeth II arrived at Suva, the capital of Pacific island nation of Fiji on December 17th, 1953. The Islanders initially welcomed the queen with silence, a traditional sign of great respect. The silent welcome continued as Elizabeth's motorcade reached Albert Park in the center of Suva. As required by custom, an official presented Elizabeth II with a polished coconut cup filled with kava, a bitter drink made by mixing the pounded roots of a pepper plant with fresh water. The completion of the ceremonial drinking broke the silence and signaled the beginning of an afternoon filled with songs and dances.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Polynesian and ancient Athenian societies prize their highly skilled female weavers. Female artists created the fine top of fabric created for Queen Elizabeth's historic visits. Athenian women performed a similar role by creating the peplos that have adorned the gold and ivory statue of Athena parthenos in the Parthenon. The presentation to the Queen is a form of performance art.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Tapa is created from the bark of the paper mulberry tree. Custom dictates that men tend to the trees. However, once men have harvested the trees, only women may turn the soft inner bark into a finished fabric. Skilled female artisans begin the arduous production process by cutting the soft part into strips. They then use a heavy wooden mallet to transform the fabric into thin, flat strips. And a procedure called felting, women beat the pieces together to form long plain sheets once the felting is completed, female artists imprint a design onto the cloth. They often enhance the fabric by adding extra decorations. The notion of reciprocity that is so important in Pacific island cultures extends beyond the Pacific region to include visitors from far-off places. When Queen Elizabeth visited Fiji in the early 1950s, the whole island came out to honor her, greet her, and perform for her. The people were determined to share their cultural identity with their Queen through gifts of flowers, cloth, dances, and special drinks. It was surely a feast for the senses of the Queen.

INTERPRETATION:

Tongan artists prepared an extraordinary ngatu launima for the royal visit. Ngatu is Tongan barkcloth, and the term launima indicates the pieces length. The specially made ngatu reached an impressive length of 74.6 Ft with a width of 14.2 feet. The design featured Elizabeth Royal initials, ERIL. The ngatu Launima later played a much more somber role in Tongan history. After suffering a long illness, Salote passed away in a New Zealand hospital in 1965. The Royal party placed the famed ngatu launima under her coffin as a plane returned her body to Tonga. Visitors can now see the historic ngatu launima at the Te Papa Museum in Wellington, New Zealand.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

The art of making tapa or barkcloth is a distinctive part of Polynesian culture. Although the process of manufacturing the fabric is the same, local names for tapa vary from Island to Island. In Fiji, for example, tapa is called masi where as in Tonga it is called ngati.