



MEZZANINE

1. Talipun ceremonial currency. Papua New Guinea, East Sepik province, northern region between the Prince Alexander Mountains and the coast. Boiken people (Population of the western Boiken around Yangoru, and the Boiken of the plain). Turbo marmoratus shell, vegetable fibers, pigments and cassowary feathers. H. 46 cm. Inv. 4080-3. Musée Barbier-Mueller

Hosts of the deep sea, the *Turbo marmoratus* shells rarely appeared on the coast; they were therefore considered as valuable objects, their value varying according to their condition. They were obtained by way of exchange or as matrimonial compensation. The basketry mask that accompanies them is said to evoke clan spirits. The latmul also used them as part of their wedding ceremonies.

From A. Vanderstraete, *Monnaies, objets d'échange, Afrique Asie Océanie*, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2016, p.106, p. 186.

2. Aiamunu mask. Papua New Guinea, Gulf of Papua, Purari River. Bark, sago palm and coconut fibers, rattan and pigments. H. 38.5 cm. Inv. 4203-B. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

At the *aiai'imunu* festival, talented Purari mimes and dancers would perform with their faces covered by an upuai in order to obtain food, tobacco, and areca nuts to share with the other performers who remained in the longhouse, the center of the village's ritual and cultural life; the masks were made there and all the ceremonial objects were stored, visible only to the men for whom the house was reserved.

From J. A. Bell dans *Ombres de Nouvelle-Guinée*, Somogy Editions d'art, Paris, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2006, p. 202, p. 421.

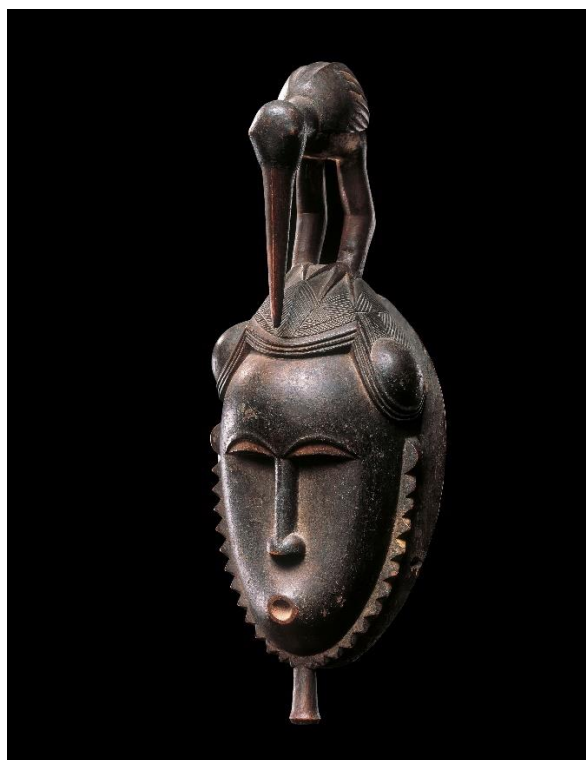
3. Double "twin" nda mask. Côte d'Ivoire. Baule people. 19th century. Painted wood. H. 29 cm. Fomer Roger Bédiat coll., collected in the mid-1930s. Inv. 1007-65. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

The Baule people of central Côte d'Ivoire have several sets of masks. This mask is rarely danced and shows up after other masks symbolizing animals during diurnal ceremonies open to all and held for entertainment and pleasure. It belongs to the category of portrait masks (*ndoma*) and embodies twins (*nda*). Like many African peoples, the Baule consider twins to have beneficial powers. The faces are not identical. They have different striations and hairstyles and above all the right face is black and the left face is red (the red is only visible in the cracks in a dark coating applied a posteriori). For the Baule, these two colours signify male and female. The double mask, an image of simultaneous birth, symbolizes the unity of a balanced duality and the power of beneficial duplication.

From A.-M. Boyer dans *Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Fleurons du musée Barbier-Mueller*, Editions Hazan, Paris, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2007, pp. 140-141.



4. Arik Levy drew his inspiration from the Yaure mask below to create his work *YohuréBronze*. A high-precision 3D scan was first performed. This allowed a print to be made which served as a mould for the artist to cast his bronze.



Facial mask of the *je lomane* or *loman* group. Côte d'Ivoire. Yaure-Namanle people. 20th century. Medium-hard wood with white and red highlights. H. 43 cm. Former Josef Mueller coll., acquired before 1939. Inv. 1007-60. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

The figure is surmounted by a carved bird, whose robust legs cling to the mask's headdress, and whose long beak points to the gently curved forehead. A few touches of colour enhance the volumes of the mask, the beak and the bird's feathers. According to Alain-Michel Boyer, the bird on a human head evokes the reconciliation of man and nature. This couple underlines the interest that Yaure art has in the image of man associated with animal forms.

Called *lomane* or "bird", this mask belongs to the *je* set which includes, in principle, seven masks, followed by those of the *lo* set at funerals. Indeed, the yaure masks are linked to the associations of men organizing funerals to honour the deceased's spiritual power. The masks come out for a single occasion, death, this disturbance of the order that must be restored.

The Lomane mask, accompanied by incantations, dances and touches lightly the deceased's body, ritually transforming him into an ancestor who is supposed to help and protect his descendants. Masks are considered among the Yaure as very powerful and dangerous objects. Women are not allowed to see them and it is impossible for men to approach them outside of the ritual context; they are also subject to numerous sexual, choreographic and aesthetic prohibitions.

From F. Morin dans *L'Homme et ses Masques*, Hazan Editions, Paris, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2005, p. 75, p. 325.



5. Arik Levy drew his inspiration from the Tussian mask below to create his work *Tusiabronze 001*. A high-precision 3D scan was first performed. This allowed a print to be made which served as a mould for the artist to cast his bronze.



***Kaptō-pintra* helmet mask. Burkina Faso. Southern Tussian people. Hard wood, dark grey crusty patina. H. 55 cm. Former Josef Mueller coll. Inv. 1005-35. Musée Barbier-Mueller**

The Tussian masks appear for the solemn celebration of the *dó*, an initiatory institution which is the source of the Tussian social and religious organization. During this great initiation ritual, which stages the creation myth every 40 years in the same place, each initiate learns from which animal his eternal vital principle comes. Each mask embodies an animal from the creation myth. The helmet mask exhibited here is emblematic of an animal identity that belongs to Pintra, the first buffalo, and Kolutou, Kassan, Kepri are only some of the names attributed to the initiates gathered under its sign. This monoxyle model with no attachments is specific to the Wĩ (Southern Tussian), while among the Pitõ (Northern Tussian) the same type of helmet mask is always provided with ears and other mobile elements.

From I. Hahner-Herzog, *L'Autre visage, Masques africains de la collection Barbier-Mueller*, Paris, Adam Biro, 1997, cat. 7b, p. 240.

6. *Tevau* or *teau* feather currency rolls. Solomon Islands, Santa Cruz Islands. *Myzomela cardinalis* feathers, wood, vegetable fibers and *Coix lacrima Jobi* seeds. Diam. of a roll: 71 cm. Former René Rasmussen coll., Paris. Inv. 4584. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

Most islanders in the Solomon Islands used this unique and beautiful means of payment, but only one particular language group in the southwestern part of Ndende Island was responsible for making it. Three categories of specialists, from only a few clans, passed on their art from generation to generation: the feather collector, who left the bird alive if possible, the maker of the wooden plates used to support the feathers, and the person who attached these elements to the band.



Spirits were supposed to give the craftsmen the skills needed to do this work, and they also knew secret formulas and the nature of the magical accessories made of variously shaped wood or the vertebrae of the dreaded *māpua* snake. The negotiable value of each of the rolls, composed of fifty to sixty thousand feathers, was established by comparison. The intensity of their color was an important criterion, so the *teau* were wrapped in a beaten bark and a fishing net and placed near the fire to avoid the appearance of mold and parasites. This money was used to acquire wives, boats, beautiful pigs and sea turtles, to finance important works and to pay fines. To obtain a wife, ten rolls were needed.

From A. Vanderstraete, *Monnaies, objets d'échange, Afrique Asie Océanie*, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2016, p. 130, p. 194.

7. Arik Levy drew his inspiration from the Ejagham mask below to create his work *EjaghamBronze*. A high-precision 3D scan was first performed. This allowed a print to be made which served as a mould for the artist to cast his bronze.



Crest with female figure. Nigeria, Cross River region. Ejagham people. 19th-20th century. Wood covered with antelope skin. H. 71.5 cm. Inv. 1012-38. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

A feature of the art of the Cross River region is the use of the technique – unique in Africa – of covering a sculpted wooden armature with animal skin, mainly for head crests and helmet masks. The tanned pelt, when stretched over the wood, imitates the grain, brilliance and volume of human flesh and renders these works surprisingly lifelike. The kaolin or light metal eye whites and dark wood pupils enhance this effect.

The monumental hairstyle is unusually large in African statuary. Ethnographic accounts report that this hairstyle was worn by young women during initiation and the period of reclusion prior to marriage. The plaits were supported by a rigid armature and modelled with clay, which maintained the hair and added locks in place.



From C. Boullier dans *Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Fleurons du musée Barbier-Mueller*, Editions Hazan, Paris, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2007, pp. 174-175.

8. Arik Levy drew his inspiration from the Bamana mask below to create his work *BamanaBronze*. A high-precision 3D scan was first performed. This allowed a print to be made which served as a mould for the artist to cast his bronze.



Mask with antelope horns. Mali. Bamana people. Very hard wood. H. 37 cm. Former Marie Ange Ciolkowska coll. Inv. 1004-169. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

This work evokes the hyena-masks (*sukuru*) of the Bamana linked to the sixth initiation society, the Korè society.

From I. Hahner-Herzog, *L'Autre Visage, Masques africains de la collection Barbier-Mueller*, Editions Adam Biro, Paris, 1997, p. 240.

9. *Mma mma ji, mma ubi, ikwum* mask. Nigeria, village of Okpoha. Igbo people. Wood, raffia, pigments. H. 38.3 cm. Inv. 1014-79. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

Small in face size, worn quite forward on the face *mma ji* is characterized by either three or four frontal projecting round pegs on the facial central line. There seems to be no meaning attached to the pegs, except aesthetic pleasure, unless they are an elaboration of a nose, often high-bridged and projecting in Igbo masks. The face and top blade portion are variously decorated, often with triangular cuts and coloured forms. The mask typically lacks a mouth and ears. The blade suggests a machete, a farm tool and formerly a warrior's weapon. The mask's names, *mma ji* and *mma ubi*, respectively "yam knife" and "farm knife", associate it with farming, in which the yam is the principle crop, and an important ceremonial food. Yet the mask is not associated with the yam cult.



In Okpoha village-group the mask is worn in *okonkwo*, where the masqueraders dance in a circle around a xylophone played by two men. Here the mask blade curls back at its top to meet either the top of the head of the mask or the base of the blade.

From S. Ottenberg dans *Arts du Nigeria revisités*, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2015, p. 96.

10. Mfondo face mask. Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kasai River region, border with Angola. Lwalwa people (Lwalu). Medium-hard wood, dark brown patina, remains of white pigments. H. 31.8 cm. Former Vrancken coll., Brussels. Inv. 1026-218. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

A great sobriety emerges from this angular face, with an elongated profile. Indeed, the arch of the eyebrows and the nose form an astonishing geometric composition of interlocking triangles whose prominent edges determine the very structure of the face. The eyes, two horizontal slits surrounded by white, are positioned in the shadow of the prominent eyebrows. The narrow mouth, sculpted in high relief, opens its fleshy lips, whose layers soften the geometric features of the face. A skullcap-like headdress, engraved with striped motifs, adorns the top of the double-sided forehead. Finally, a cord attached to a hole drilled under the nose of the mask allows the dancer to tighten the end. The masks of the Lwalwa people are carved from *mulela* wood and reddened with the *mukula* fruit of the *Bixa arcellana* tree.

The example in the Barbier-Mueller collection belongs to one of the three types of Lwalwa male masks, *mfondo* (or *mvondo*), *nkaki* and *shifola*, associated with the only female type, *mushika*. The *mfondo* and *nkaki* masks have the same lenticular profile and a long nose, evoking the powerful beak of the hornbill. These wooden figures were originally dedicated to the initiation rites of young boys in Ngongo societies; they were also used to appease the spirits after a fruitless hunt. Nowadays, the masks are performed at entertainment events, on commission.

From F. Morin dans *Picasso, L'Homme aux mille masques*, Somogy Editions d'art, Paris, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, Barcelone, 2006, pp. 198-199.

11. Shield with white kifwebe mask. Democratic Republic of the Congo, southeastern region. Songye and Luba peoples. Wood, pigments. H. 76.5 cm. Former Charles Vignier and Josef Mueller coll., acquired before 1939. Inv. 1026-111. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

This well-known shield was probably made alongside similar Songye or Luba *bifwebe* masks (singular, *kifwebe*) in the border region between Songye and Luba territories. Dunja Hersak refers to the black-and-white stripes on the Songye *bifwebe* masks as being symbolic of animals, including bushbucks and zebras. The shield's surface is carved in relief stripes of triangles and lozenges which are possibly symbolic, in the same way that radiating lines on other shields, which recall the sun and the moon, are associated with coded meanings in Songye and Luba *bifwebe* societies.

These shields have a symbolic rather than defensive function. Many of them are carved in a soft wood (*Ricinodendron*) and were used like flags to lead troops into battle. Similar shields were used as gifts to chiefs who chose to align themselves with the Luba rather than fight. One particularly fine shield was collected as far north as the Lomami and Lualaba rivers, reaching this region of the



Topoke and Lokele peoples possibly as a trade item or in payment of political alliance. Some of these shields may have come to Belgian collections as a result of such exchanges, functioning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as emblems of appeasement and as a means to gain political ground with the Congo's colonial rulers.

From P. Benitez Johannot dans *Boucliers d'Afrique, d'Asie du Sud-Est et d'Océanie du musée Barbier-Mueller*, Editions Adam Biro, Paris, 1998, pp. 88-89.

12. Seated female statue. Mali, Segou region. Bamana people. Wood, pearls, nails. H. 74 cm. Inv. 1004-136. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

Such female statues are figures of the *jo*, an initiatory society of the Bamana from the Segou region in southern Mali. They personify the soul at the origin of this society, whose social structure they preserve.

Whether they are represented sitting or standing, they display the same stylistic characteristics and symbolize the perfect female figure among the Bamana. Their geometric shapes carved in wood are accentuated, their bodies show scarification and adornments – here a necklace of red beads – are present. Always full and erect, their breasts evoke fertility and fecundity.

Keilen Euzet from :

R. Goldwater, *Bambara Sculpture of the Western Soudan*, the Museum of Primitive Art, distributed by University Publisher, Inc., 1960, p. 17.

J.-P. Colleyn, *Bamana, Un art et un savoir-vivre au Mali*, Snoeck, Gent, 2022, p. 154.

K. Ezra, *The figure sculpture of the Bamana of Mali*, PHD, Northwestern University, Evanston IL, 1983, pp. 11-12.



HALL

1. Dagger. Vietnam, Nghê An province (?). Đông Sơn culture. 3rd-1st century BCE. Bronze with light green patina. H. 36 cm. Inv. 2505-26. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

This very elaborate weapon belongs to a type of daggers whose handles are elaborately decorated, taking on the appearance of a female or male figure, or of animals stretching upwards as on this example where two tigers stand on their hind legs. Their body is striated to evoke their coat. Their front legs are crossed and support a small elephant (tail on the left, trunk and tusks on the right) on whose back rests a traditional type of house on stilts, with a roof with two raised points, such as the one adorning the miniature drum and the one topping the staff, both of which are also exhibited in this showcase. In Lang Vac (Nghê An province in Vietnam), archaeologists unearthed an almost identical piece in 1980, currently exhibited in the Nghe An Museum. One of the two finials of the house and the eye of one of the tigers have been slightly restored. These restorations allowed us to see that the inside of the object is almost nothing but metal powder, held together by the light crust of the patina.

From V. Viet Nguyen dans *Le profane et le divin, arts de l'Antiquité. Fleurons du musée Barbier-Mueller*, Editions Hazan, Paris, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2008, pp. 462-463, p. 522.

2. Male funerary statue attributed to the sculptor Horatsy. Madagascar. Sakalava people. Around 1900. Wood. H. 103 cm. Inv. 1030-1. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

Malagasy art generally expresses itself without exuberance. Its originality derives mainly from the variety of tombs and other monuments dedicated to the ancestors such as this ancestral effigy which topped a post. At the end of the nineteenth century, the French colonial presence in Menabe induced profound social and economic changes which, in a manner, were projected upon the tombs. Royal power collapsed, and along with it went the ancient hierarchy and the system of devolution of funerary privileges. Henceforth, each family would claim the right to honor its ancestors, to build tombs, and to compete with all others to erect the one most worthy of admiration! Sculptors began to be solicited by entire segments of the population that had never constructed tombs: poor plebeians and recently freed slaves. Over time, the sculptors began organizing themselves into workshops and introducing new techniques. Several important workshops were established in Menabe and their influence spread over successive generations and across a number of regions. This explains the variety of regional styles within Sakalava funerary production. Among these workshops was a particularly prolific one, established in the village of Kivalo; it made sculptures for tombs in cemeteries across the entire region north of the city of Morondava. The name of the sculptor who founded this workshop was Horatsy. He is also the creator of the statue that belongs to the collection in the Musée Barbier-Mueller.

From S. Goedefroit et J. Lombard, « À la gloire des ancêtres. Regard sur l'art funéraire sakalava », *Arts & Cultures*, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, Somogy Editions d'art, Paris, 2008, pp. 136-153.



SMALL ROOM

1. Zoomorphic bicephal *nkisi nkondi* - *kozo* "power-object". Democratic Republic of the Congo. Kongo people. 19th century. Wood, nails, iron, fibers. L. 67.5 cm. Inv. 1021-35. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

Of the many Kongo spiritual entities, the *minkisi* (sing. *nkisi*) are probably the most important class of spirits. *Minkisi* have continued to be produced in great number until the present day. These 'power objects' are meant to exert their power over the world, and especially human beings. They are made and manipulated by 'sorcerers' called *nganga*, who are recognised for their usefulness. They respond to all kinds of requests from individuals afflicted or threatened by evil spirits. For example, a *nganga* can use his *minkisi* to make a man's hunting successful again, to find and neutralise a sorcerer who is threatening the life of his client, or to protect a village from thefts and attacks.

This representation of a two-headed dog is no mere stylistic exercise. The dog is regarded as the mediator between the village (it is the domestic animal that is not eaten) and the kingdom of the ancestors, the forest, where the game hunted is the livestock of deceased ancestors. The janiform configuration of this *nkisi* accentuates its ambivalence and omnipotence. It is a spirit with neither front nor rear, which can attack from both ends and has peripheral vision.

From B. Wastiau dans *Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Fleurons du musée Barbier-Mueller*, Editions Hazan, Paris, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2007, pp. 222-223.



HALLWAY

1. Ceremonial axe. Solomon Islands, Choiseul or New Georgia? Wood, iron and mother-of-pearl. L. 117 cm. Former Josef Mueller coll., acquired before 1939. Inv. 4505-G. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, iron axes imported from England, especially from Birmingham, were important barter items in the Solomon Islands, especially in Simbo and New Georgia, where the islanders would only accept this merchandise in exchange for their shells. The Solomon Islanders were supplied with iron blades by various types of ships: merchant ships, those associated with slavery, and missionary ships. The islanders who worked in the British colonies also obtained a blade at the conclusion of their contract. They would take care of fitting them themselves and decorate the wood with mother-of-pearl inlays, thus producing a beautiful acculturation object. Visible at both ends and recurring metaphorical subjects, the bird-frigate as well as the crocodile, about to swallow a human head, refer to the hunt for heads.

When they were provided with an elaborate decoration, they became insignia of authority proper to men of high status whom they accompanied one last time at their funerals before being destroyed.

The contribution of the axes facilitated enormously the work of the inhabitants in several fields.

From A. Vanderstraete, *Monnaies objets d'échange, Afrique Asie Océanie*, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2016, p. 192.

2. Mask. Republic of the Congo, upper Likouala River. Mahongwe or Ngare people. 19th century. Polychrome semi-hard wood (black, white, red). H. 35.5 cm. Former Aristide Courtois, Charles Ratton and the Museum of Modern Art coll., New York. Inv. 1021-33. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

If this mask is so emblematic of African art this is primarily due to its resemblance to the elongated faces of Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1907), and consequently is thought to have been one of the Catalan painter's sources of inspiration. Yet in 1984, in *Primitivism in 20th-Century Art*, William Rubin showed that this was not so since the object was collected in the then French Congo ten years after the picture was painted.

These very rare masks with a stylized concave face and prominent forehead seem to come from several more or less related peoples of Kota origin on the borders of east Gabon and neighbouring Congo-Brazzaville. This one was found by the colonial administrator Aristide Courtois in the village of Etumbi, on the upper Likouala River, an area populated by the Mboko, Ngare, Bangi and a few communities of Mahongwe.

From L. Perrois dans *Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Fleurons du musée Barbier-Mueller*, Editions Hazan, Paris, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2007, pp. 214-215.



3. *Kpwan* mask of the *goli* group. Côte d'Ivoire. Baule people. 1st half of the 20th century. H. 46 cm. Hard wood, polychrome remains. Former Hubert Goldet coll. Inv. 1007-228. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

The *kpwan* mask belongs to a cult with figures gathered in a group called *goli*. The *goli* mask group includes a tendency towards abstraction (disc masks), mythified animality and the idealised naturalism of this face, 'the most beautiful of all the masks' according to the Baule, and the last to intervene during the ceremony. The *kpwan*'s noble, serious, concentrated face is a woman's, despite certain features (the plaited beard suggests a hermaphrodite). The face, crowned by a tall hairstyle with chignon and plaits and surrounded lower down by indentations showing the influence of the Yaure people, has a ruff-like collar for the wearer. The neither oval nor rectangular mouth has small pointed teeth coated with kaolin (like the example in the Indiana University Museum), whereas the masks seen in use in Côte d'Ivoire have a more oval mouth and no teeth.

From A.-M. Boyer dans *Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Fleurons du musée Barbier-Mueller*, Editions Hazan, Paris, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2007, pp. 138-139.

4. Male anthropomorphic figure. Papua New Guinea, Maprik district. Wosera people. 20th century. Wood, pigments. H. 135 cm. Inv. 4080-7. Musée Barbier-Mueller.

The body paintings and ornaments of this monoxylic male figure are depicted in polychrome and relief. The head, trunk and legs, three zones roughly the same size, are delimited by the marked relief of the shoulders and arms. The forms are rendered ambiguous to create visual metaphors: the arms, for instance, curve like snakes, and the hook at throat level is like a bird's beak. The pig at the back of the neck, whose form also evokes a slit-drum, is particularly important. Wild pigs were occasionally hunted and some were raised by women in semi-captivity. Both types played an important role in the Abelam context (as they did elsewhere in New Guinea) and were the food par excellence eaten during ritual ceremonies and/or rituals organised by men. Pigs were exchanged between ceremonial partners, but also to settle conflicts or seal magical alliances in secret. Thus, apart from their nutritious qualities, they acted as mediators since they materialised links between the sexes, individuals, clans and villages and were also symbols of the clan's procreative power. In the Maprik region, domestic and wild pigs were exterminated in the 1990s due to the damage they regularly did to crops. Only a few continued to be kept in enclosures, and due to the resulting scarcity of ceremonial meat, are now sometimes replaced by imported canned meat and fish.

From L. Coupaye dans *Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Fleurons du musée Barbier-Mueller*, Editions Hazan, Paris, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2007, pp. 280-281.

5. *Rapa* dance paddle. Chile, Easter Island. Late 19th-early 20th century. H. 78.8 cm. *Sophora toromiro* wood. Former Butler Museum coll., Harrow School. Inv. 5702. Musée Barbier-Mueller.



The first *rapa* were brought back to Europe by Captain James Cook in 1774. In 1872 Pierre Loti attended what he called a 'paddle dance'. The name of these objects *rapa* was noted in 1868 and their use in 1886 by J. Thomson. They were 'sweet potato fetishes', used to protect this vegetable from drought, insects and also to ward off evil spirits.

According to A. Métraux, *rapa* were manipulated by military chiefs during warrior dances performed before the king (*ariki mau*). They were spun near his face to scare him. The *rapa*'s small size also enabled them to be used during seated women's dances.

Its end was damaged by impacts on the ground during dancing, and the object's edges, thickly coated with dark brown pigment, were all worn during use in rituals for several generations.

From C. et M. Orliac dans *Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Fleurons du musée Barbier-Mueller*, Editions Hazan, Paris, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, 2007, pp. 378-379.