RC-Oceania-Display Descriptions

**Melanesia, Vanuatu,**

**Ancestral Head, Black Tree Fern**

This head was carved from the trunk of a tree fern (*Cyathea medullaris*) by the indigenous peoples of the island of Malekula in the Republic of Vanuatu. Carvings of this type are sometimes made to represent ancestral figures or to act as an "abode" for the spirit of an ancestor to inhabit. They are an integral part of the Nimangki ceremony or grade taking, in which a participant acquires a named rank, and the right to display certain insignia or perform certain rituals. Lower grades are typically taken in one's youth and involve the killing of low-value pigs, but higher grades involve killing hundreds of pigs including valuable 'tusker boars'. These events are designed to reflect the economic level of the participant involved and are directly related to one’s status and power (Huffman 2007:349).

Kirk Huffman, Arts of Africa and Oceania. Highlights from the Musée Barbier-Mueller, musée Barbier-Mueller & Hazan (eds.), 2007.

**Polynesia, Tonga,**

**Head with Facial Tattoos, c 1400**

Tongan shamans (*taula-aitu*), in order to heal the afflicted, tattooed the faces of the afflicted with images of the spirally unfolding fronds of the black tree fern (*Cyathea medullaris*) that was considered symbolic of life and protection from disease. H. Ling Roth, “Tongan Islanders’ Skin Marking,” *Man* 1906:6-9.

**Micronesia, Gilbert Is.-**

**Fishhook-c 1890.**

**From Mark Blackburn’s collection**

**Melanesia, Solomon Is., Honiara-Fishhook-Nautilus Shell-1875**

**Melanesia, Fiji Islands,**

**Spurred Club, *Kiakavo Vividrasa*, c 1950.**

Spurred clubs of this form. called *Kiakavo Vividrasa* referring to the sennit handle wrapping, were used for ceremonial dancing and not for warfare, hence they lack a sharp edge. *Bulletin of the Fiji Museum*, Issues 1-2, 1973, p. 51.

**Melanesia, Fiji Islands,**

**Throwing Club, *Ula Tavatava*, c 1950.**

Fijian Ula (or Ulu) - a traditional throwing club with its distinctive ribbed head and pommel. Made by a specialized craftsman from the root wood of native bushes. It was a personal weapon of Fijian warrior carried in the girdle and would be thrown with great precision, speed and mastery. *Bulletin of the Fiji Museum*, Issues 1-2, 1973, p. 42.

**Melanesia, Fiji Islands-**

**Sperm Whale Tooth, *Tabua,***

On the Fiji Islands a sperm whale’s tooth or *tabua* was so highly valued and culturally important because it was regarded as the repository of great '*mana*' whose importance is enhanced by the gravity and status of the presenter. “The fates of men, clans and tribes have often depended upon the way in which the whale's tooth has been presented or received..... the sphere of [every other emblem] was much more limited than that of the *tabua*'” (W. H. Dean, *The history of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society,* 1921).

**Polynesia, Rapanui (Easter Island)-Ribbed Statue-*Moai Kavakava***

Each year in the spring when the sooty tern arrives on the offshore islet of Moto Nui south of Rapanui and lays its eggs, the swimmer who first retrieves an egg is proclaimed *Hopu* or “Birdman” of the year. Years later his statue, *Moai Kavakava*, is carved of toromiro wood from one of the few trees that were left after all the coconut trees were cut down, c 1400 ce. Many coconut logs were used to roll the huge basalt *moai* to the shore, where they were erected to look inward to the people, who were asking Lono, the chief Rapanui god, to assist them in their ecological adjustment.

This *Moai Kavakava* with white-shark-vertebrae eyes and black obsidian pupils, assumes the same staring visage as those huge basalt, inward-looking statues at the shore. Whether the cause of Rapanui’s downsizing was ecological disaster (Bahn and Flenley 1992) or success at adjusting to a diet of rat meat and vegetables (Hunt and Lipo 2012) we will never know, but this statue is a reminder that Rapanui did experience an ecological trauma that required severe adjustment of the people to the new scenario which is the point of this Moai Kavakava’s exposed rib cage, the sooty tern tattooed on his head and his off-balanced stance.

# This *Moai Kavakava* was purchased during a two-week stay in 1967 on Rapanui from an old Riroroko couple, who had had it in their family for three generations, c 1895. Their octogenarian son Valentino Riroroko Tuki was installed as the monarch of the island in July 2011 (Nelson 2012).

# HEYERDAHL, T. 1975. *The art of Easter Island*. New York: Doubleday, 1975. FISCHER, S.R. (ed.). 1993. *Easter Island studies. Contributions to the history of Rapanui in memory of William T. Mulloy*. Oxford: Oxbow. Oxbow Monograph 32. FOMENT, FRANCINA. 1993. "'You are Crab, Crayfish, and Octopus': Personal and Group Symbols in Rapanui Wood Sculpture," in Fischer (1993): 206-213. ORLIAC, C. 1993. "Types of wood used in Rapanui carving," in Fischer (1993): 201-5. ORLIAC, C. & M. ORLIAC. 1995. *Bois sculptes de l'Ile de Paques*. Marseille: Editions Parentheses. HUNT, T. and C. Lipo, The statues that walked, 2012. P. Bahn and J. Flenley, Easter Island, Earth Island, 1992. Aaron Nelsen, “A Quest for Independence: Who Will Rule Easter Island's Stone Heads?” *TIME*, Mar. 11, 2012.

A2620 **Rapanui-Easter Is.-**

**Writing Board-Rongorongo, c 1200**

This Easter Is. Rongorongo Board of Toromiro Wood is written in a script that has been proposed to be Mnemonic. This particular board is similar to Aruku Karenga RR4) dated to c 1200. Two dozen wooden rongorongo inscriptions on wood were collected in the mid nineteenth century and are now scattered in museums and private collections. None are extant on Easter Island. Petroglyphs on Rapanui may include short inscriptions. Adding to the paucity of inscriptions, there were only a few high-ranking *ali‘i* who were literate in the written glyph script which was probably mnemonic.

This authentic rongorongo text is written in alternating directions, a system called reverse boustrophedon. The glyphs are standardized geometric forms that have human, animal, and plant correspondences. Many of the human and animal figures, such as glyphs **200** [Glyph 200](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Roro_200.svg) and **280** [Glyph 280](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Roro_280.svg), have characteristic protuberances on each side of the head, possibly representing eyes which may have phonetic values.

S. R. Fischer, *Rongorongo: The Easter Island Script*, 1997.

**New Zealand-Māori–Hei Tiki-made from Flower Jade or Pounamu Arahura**

Tiki was the first man created by either Tūmatauenga or Tāne. “Hei Tiki” means personal image of Tiki, worn as a neck pendant and carved from New Zealand jade or “*Pounamu*”. The origin of Hei Tiki has an interesting story. Ngahue, was an explorer of the Te Arawa tribe from the island of Hawaiki, the ancient name for Raiatea, which, together with Tahiti, were the original home islands of the Maori (Salmond 2010: 227-228). There he carved a beautiful jade (*pounamu*) fish, named Poutini, which Hine-tua-hoanga, goddess of grinding *pounamu*, coveted. In order to escape her wrath, Ngahue fled in his canoe to Ngahue voyaged in his outrigger canoe to Tūhua (Mayor Island in the Bay of Plenty) on New Zealand’s n Is. Still averting Hine-tua-hoanga’s wrath he fled to the mouth of the Arahura River on New Zealand’s South Island's West Coast. There he carved a slab of jade from Poutini before he hid it, and from this slab he carved the first Hei Tiki and an adze for making canoes. He returned to Hawaiki and with this adze carved the canoes that brought the rest of his Te Arawa tribe to the area of the Arahua River. H. D. Skinner, *The Maori Hei Tiki*, 1946. Anne Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island*, 2010. Charles Royal,”First peoples in Māori tradition,” *Encyclopedia of New Zealand,* http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/photograph/2410/hine-tua-hoanga (accessed 9 November 2018)

**HI, Lana‘i, Canoe Anchor.**

# This red scoria canoe anchor has a beautifully smooth elliptical shape that enables both easy deployment to a sandy bottom an easy retrieval by an attached sennit rope. These anchors were used with light outriggers for inshore fishing. Abraham Fornander, Thomas George Thrum, *Fornander collection of Hawaiian antiquities and folk-lor*e, 1919-1920.

**HI, Hawai‘i,**

**Basalt chisels**

This unusual selection of a range of basalt chisel sizes provides a glimpse of the tools used by master artisans for carving small statuary, many of them having been burned by missionaries as idols. The distribution of these chisels on the Big Island established ancient trade and exchange pathways. B. Lass, *[Hawaiian Adze Production and Distribution,](https://books.google.com/books?id=qELqPx_GdQgC&q=Hawaiian+adzes&dq=Hawaiian+adzes&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjjidbU_sLeAhWtdN8KHRM8A4MQ6AEIRzAF)* [1994](https://books.google.com/books?id=qELqPx_GdQgC&q=Hawaiian+adzes&dq=Hawaiian+adzes&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjjidbU_sLeAhWtdN8KHRM8A4MQ6AEIRzAF)*[.](https://books.google.com/books?id=qELqPx_GdQgC&q=Hawaiian+adzes&dq=Hawaiian+adzes&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjjidbU_sLeAhWtdN8KHRM8A4MQ6AEIRzAF)*

**HI, Hawai‘i,**

**Quadrilateral Basalt adzes.**

These grey-black adzes are geochemically basalt from the main summit quarries of Mauna Kea at 3,800 m. Their occurrence at the extreme limits of the *ahupua‘a* surrounding Mauna Kea provided the carvers with raw material for large adzes as well as chisels. B. Lass, *[Hawaiian Adze Production and Distribution,](https://books.google.com/books?id=qELqPx_GdQgC&q=Hawaiian+adzes&dq=Hawaiian+adzes&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjjidbU_sLeAhWtdN8KHRM8A4MQ6AEIRzAF)* [1994](https://books.google.com/books?id=qELqPx_GdQgC&q=Hawaiian+adzes&dq=Hawaiian+adzes&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjjidbU_sLeAhWtdN8KHRM8A4MQ6AEIRzAF)*[.](https://books.google.com/books?id=qELqPx_GdQgC&q=Hawaiian+adzes&dq=Hawaiian+adzes&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjjidbU_sLeAhWtdN8KHRM8A4MQ6AEIRzAF)*

**HI, Hawai‘i, Kohala.**

**Trilateral Adze.**

This adze was found in Kohala district and represents the trilateral (triangular) design of an adze that is only found in the Marquesas Islands. For this reason it is suggested that this adze is associated with the first waves of immigration to the Big Island, 1000-1200 CE from the Marquesas. See P.V. Kirch, “When Did the Polynesians Settle Hawai‘i? A Review of 150 Years of Scholarly Inquiry and a Tentative Answer,” *hawaiian archaeolog*y 12(2011:3-26); A. Anderson, H. Leach, I. Smith and R. Walter, “Reconsideration of the Marquesan Sequence in East Polynesian Prehistory,” *Archaeology in Oceania*, 1994, 29(1):29-52.

**HI, Hawai‘i,**

**Helmet Conch Blowing Shell, “Pu”**

The word *pu* or *puu* is generally accepted to be an onomatopoeic imitation of the sound made by a trumpet shell. In ancient times the blowing of the Pū was used to communicate between people in canoes and those on land to request permission to come ashore. Permission or denial would then be returned from those on shore by them blowing the conch shell with a certain number of blows. Often, coming ashore without permission meant death, so this method of communication was critical. Mervyn McLean, *Music, dance, and the Polynesian origins*, Occasional Papers in Pacific Ethnomusicology No. 8, 2010.

**Australia-Bathurst Is.-Ancestor Carving-*Pukamuni***

Bathurst Is. is part of the Tiwi Is., N. Terr, Australia, 80 km n of Darwin. The public *Pukamuni* Ceremony is a forum for artistic appreciation of the deceased through song, dance, sculpture and body painting 6 months after burial. This culminates in the erection of carved *Pukumani* poles painted with red hematite, yellow limonite, and white kaolin, pigments that are also painted on dancers’ bodies that transform them into mythic rôles that protect them against being recognized by the spirit of the deceased. Mountford, Charles Pearcy. 1958. *The Tiwi; their art, myth, and ceremony.* London, Phoenix House. Pye, John. 1977. *The Tiwi islands*. Kensington, N.S.W.: [John Pye].

**Australia-Bathurst Is.-**

**Sea Turtle on Quahog Shell**

Bathurst Is. is part of the Tiwi Is., N. Terr, Australia, 80 km n of Darwin. Sea turtles are an intimate part of the economic like of the island and their continued abundance amidst a plethora of kelp, here painted with red hematite, yellow limonite, and white kaolin, pigments that are also painted on dancers’ bodies that transform them into mythic rôles of thee hunters and the hunted.

Charles Pearcy. 1958. *The Tiwi; their art, myth, and ceremony.* London, Phoenix House. Pye, John. 1977. *The Tiwi islands*. Kensington, N.S.W.: [John Pye].

**West Australia, Mowanjum-(Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Wunambal tribes)-Wandjina-Betel Nut**

This engraving of Wandjina on a betel nut comes from the three tribes who live at Mowanjum in w Kimberley, w Australia: Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Wunambal. On one side is Wandjina and on the other side is the petitioner with an attentive demeanor and a crest of feathers in his hair signifying his high social rank.

Wandjina are ancestral marine beings who emerged from the sea in the w Kimberley region, created the landscape and then melded into the surfaces of the rocks. Peering out from these rocks they saw corrupt human behavior, so they created a great flood by opening their mouths, obliterating humanity. Then they began again. They created new humans who were less corrupt. As time passed, their mouths disappeared completely like the engraving on this betel nut.

* Wandjina that merged into the rocks have round or oval human faces, and they have eyes and noses but no mouths or ears, like the engraving on this betel nut. Their heads are surrounded by a band of rays representing falling rain like the engraving on this betel nut. Each year during a cycle of religious ceremonies, the Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Wunambal repaint the Wandjina figures to reinvigorate the energy of their spirits, to bring fertility to the land with adequate water and to ensure that the seasons cycle properly. Repainting these Wandjina spirits of yesteryear makes them part of the present and preserves them for re-energizing in the future. D. Welch, *From Bradshaw to Wandjina*, 2016.

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**Headpot Pipe, Crittenden Co., AR, Siltstone, 1150-1450 CE**

The facial expression with three angular incisions under each closed eye and a down-turned grimacing mouth is comparable to Headpot #27 for which the provenance is excellent (Cherry 2009:52). Headpot Pipes presumably were smoked with regard to the individual whose face was depicted whether an ancestor or a defeated enemy. J.F. Cherry, *The Headpots of ne AR and s Pemiscot Co., MO,* 2009.

**Arkansas,**

**Fetus Pipe, Siltstone, c 1250 CE**

This figurine pipe is apparently that of a fetus with a determined facial expression with both arms clasping its chest and its legs are positioned like that of a frog suggestive of emerging down the birth canal, from a watery existence into an atmosphere of air. One could suppose it was used by a midwife who would reflect on her deliveries. S. Murcott, Pers. Corr.,8 Nov. 2018