

AP Art History Review: Unit 6

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Africa (1100-1980) C.E

~6% of exam score (14 works)

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Africa: The Birthplace of Humanity

- Humanity is understood to have begun in Africa and then radiated outwards
- The earliest examples of African art date to around 77,000 years ago
 - Such examples of art primarily include rock art, the earliest of which was found in the Sahara Desert
- The Sahara was once a suitable grassland for agriculture. However, people migrated along trade routes near the Congo River Basin, causing traditions and influences to spread along with them

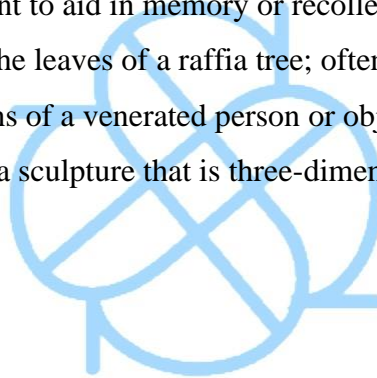
Characteristics of African Art

- Despite being a continent that is comprised of many different nations and regional cultures, there are some shared elements of beliefs and religions that can be found:
 - Worship of nature deities
 - Rulers believed to be divine and sacred
 - Diviners and fortune tellers
 - Elders governing small groups
- Some common forms of African art include the following. These art forms reflect different aspects of the human experience, especially social life.
 - Rock engravings and paintings, body decoration, figural sculpture

Key Vocabulary

- **Coiffure:** an elaborate hairstyle

- **Diviner:** a fortune teller or prophet
- **Dentelle:** an ornamental, lace-like design
- **Egalitarian:** a society that deemphasizes class distinction in pursuit of individual equality
- **Hierarchy of scale:** visual technique in which the largest and most important figures of a work are depicted according to size, with the most important figure as the largest
- **Lost wax casting technique:** process through which a metal is poured into a mold, created by a wax model
- **Plaque:** an ornamental tablet typically hung on a wall
- **Matrilineal:** (of a society) honoring the lineage of the mother
- **Masquerade:** an event (usually a play or ceremony) in which dances are performed by masked dancers in multimedia costumes
- **Mnemonic:** a device meant to aid in memory or recollection
- **Raffia:** fiber made from the leaves of a raffia tree; often used to weave baskets or mats
- **Relic:** the physical remains of a venerated person or object
- **Sculpture in the round:** a sculpture that is three-dimensional and meant to be viewed from all sides



167. Conical tower and circular wall of Great Zimbabwe. Southeastern Zimbabwe. Shona peoples. c. 1000–1400 C.E. Coursed granite blocks.



Content

- “Zimbabwe” - houses of stone, capital of the empire
- Three areas: the Hill Ruin, the Great Enclosure, and the Valley Ruin
- Conical tower (granary): symbolic of royal authority and generosity, as grain was given to the rulers

Context

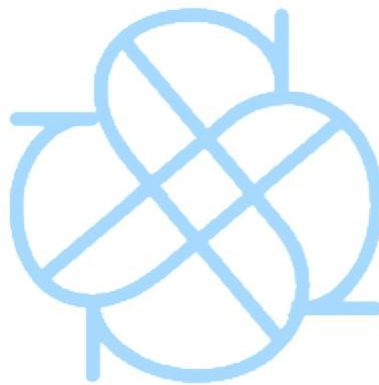
- Great Zimbabwe had an empire and extensive trading routes that stretched from the Near East to China
- Largest stone complex in Africa before modern era
- Inhabited by the Shona people

Form

- Residential structures reveal hearths and other interior furnishings
- The Hill Run enclosed a structure surrounded by cylindrical towers and monoliths with geometric designs
- The top of the wall features lace-like designs called dentelle and is composed of stone blocks that separate the royal residency area

Function

- Great Zimbabwe functioned as a political center during the 12th century



168. Great Mosque of Djenné. Mali. Founded c. 1200 C.E.; rebuilt 1906–1907.

Adobe.



Content

- Mosque: follows some conventions of traditional mosques--three minarets, courtyard, mihrab, courtyard, hypostyle hall
- Ostrich eggs on top of pillars--represent fertility and purity

Context

- Djenné was founded in c. 800-1250 B.C.E and functioned as a commercial and educational center
- Mosque built around 13th century and was constructed during the succession of King Konboro
 - Rebuilt from 1834-1836 for second time
 - Rebuilt again in 1907 w/ help from adjacent regions
- Architectural style has roots among the Songhai and Mande peoples of western Sudan
- The mosque is replastered annually during the Crepissage de la Grand Mosquée--a community festival

Form

- Rectilinear structure, enclosed by wall on exterior
- Constructed using adobe and coated with mud on exterior
- Wooden scaffolding on exterior prevents shrinking of walls under sunlight, aids in repairs

Function

- Expression of power
- Also serves as social center for community

169. Wall plaque from Oba's palace. Edo peoples, Benin (Nigeria). 16th century C.E. Cast brass.



Content

- Central figure is an Oba (king), who is being flanked by his attendants
 - Attendants holding shields
 - Oba wears distinctive coral-shaped regalia on his head

Context

- Benin was a major power in West Africa during the 19th century, partially due to trading slaves with Europeans
- Social stratification evident in Benin
 - The Oba was of the highest rank, who was believed to be a divine intermediary between the physical and supernatural realm, as well as the head of government
- Brass acquired through trade with Portugal. Metal workers in Benin melted them down

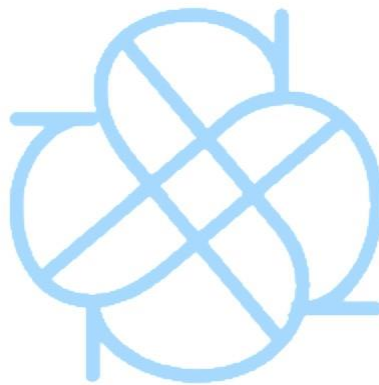
and used them to make plaques commissioned by the Oba

Form

- Hierarchy of scale--Oba is depicted as the largest and main subject of the work
- Lost wax casting technique used to mold and produce plaques

Function

- Hung on the walls of the Oba's palace--expression of power and authority



170. Sika dwa ko (Golden Stool). Ashanti peoples (south central Ghana). c.

1700 C.E. Gold over wood and cast-gold attachments.



Content

- Golden stool with bells attached to its sides
 - According to the legend, the stool fell from the sky onto the lap of the first ruler of the Ashanti Confederacy (Osei Tutu)

Context

- Ghana was a valuable source of gold in West Africa during the Trans-Saharan trade. Interactions with other nations helped the nation accumulate even more wealth
- Oral tradition was central to the nation

Form

- Gilt and inlaid with gold over wood
- Crescent-shaped stool

Function

- Functioned as the “seat of the soul”
- Present during rituals and is of symbolic significance

171. Ndop (portrait gure) of King Mishe miShyaang maMbul. Kuba peoples

(Democratic Republic of the Congo). c. 1760–1780 C.E. Wood.



Content

- Ndop (idealized portrait figure) of King Mishe miShyaang maMbul
 - The king is holding a drum with a hand on it, which is an ibol, or object that serves as a symbol of his reign
 - Holding a ceremonial knife
- Large head symbolizes wisdom and intelligence

Context

- The Kuba people lived in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and solidified into a kingdom in the 17th century
 - Historically known as wood carvers and sculptors who worked for a leader (nyim)
 - Apprentices learned and worked under masters

Form

- 1:3 proportion; the head was $\frac{1}{3}$ of the statue's total size
- Some naturalistic features--rounded shoulders
- Ibols carved in relief

Function

- Portrait commissioned by the King to celebrate his reign and accomplishments
- Historical marker

172. Power Figure (Nkisi n'kondi). Kongo peoples (Democratic Republic of the Congo). c. late 19th century C.E. Wood and metal.



Content

- Human nkisi figure (container of supernatural and sacred forces that can manifest in the physical world)
- Sharp objects pierced into the central area of the figure, which is frequently covered by a reflective surface
- Cavities in other areas are often filled with medicine or herbs

Context

- Sacred medicines and divine protection are essential to the beliefs of the Kongo people
- These figures were confiscated by Europeans during conquest and exploration, and then later destroyed for being heathen/pagan objects

Form

- Carved from wood
- Glass/reflective components

Function

- Oath-taking image
- Used to guard an individual or inflict negative energy upon an individual if an oath is broken

173. Female (Pwo) mask. Chokwe peoples (Democratic Republic of the Congo). Late 19th to early 20th century C.E. Wood, ber, pigment, and metal.



Content

- Ideal representation of a female ancestor
 - Symbolic of fertility and prosperity in community
- Embodiment of female virtues and ideals
 - Closed eyes--wisdom; white powder--spiritual connectedness
 - Closed mouth--modesty
 - Calm expression
 - Adorned with jewelry

Context

- Chokwe culture is matrilineal and actively honors young, fertile women
- Mukanda: the initiation activity associated with the Pwo mask
 - Boys are initiated into adults by performing a dance with the mask on

Form

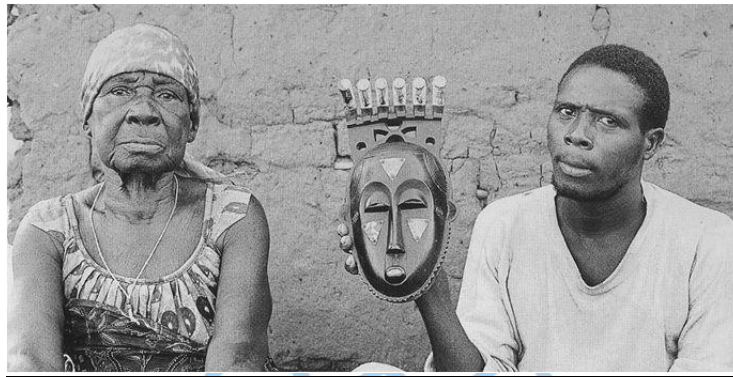
- Carved from wood
- Naturalistic face; stylized eyes
- Colored with dark pigment
- Rounded dots and tattoo patterns on cheek

Function

- Part of a performance; worn by boys along with a costume with wooden breasts during an initiation ceremony

174. Portrait mask (Mblo). Baule peoples (Côte d'Ivoire). Early 20th century

C.E. Wood and pigment.



Content

- Represents a respected individual of Baule society, specifically Mrs. Moya Yanso
- Smooth face and coiffure symbolize beauty and intelligence

Context

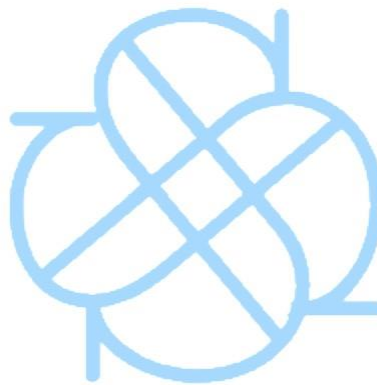
- The Baule have a rich carving history; they sculpted masks and figurines as part of tradition
- Individualist, egalitarian society
- Ancestors respected and held in high esteem
- Mblo: performance that's meant to celebrate the most respected members of the community

Form

- Oval shaped
- Scarification patterns
- Incised hair
- Elongated nose

Function

- Entertainment mask worn during Mblo masquerade
- Honors and represents Moya Yanso, the wife of the commissioner who also wore it along with her sons
- Carved by Owie Kimou



175. Bundu mask. Sande Society, Mende peoples (West African forests of Sierra Leone and Liberia). 19th to 20th century C.E. Wood, cloth, and fiber.



Content

- Bottom of mask contains raffia, which would have concealed the wearer's identity
- Symbolic of the ideal beauty of a woman
 - High forehead represents wisdom and intellect
 - Downcast eyes, small ears--modesty
 - Neck rings--proper health
 - Elaborate coiffure

Context

- The Sande Society of the Mende peoples is a female-only secret society in which girls would be educated on how to be good wives and mothers
 - Located in West African forest region--Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast
- Initiated girls subject to genital mutilation, which is believed to instill purity and fertility

Form

- Smooth, shiny surface of painted wood

- Geometric designs span the forehead and the sides of the head

Function

- Mask made for the initiation of young girls into the Sande society

176. Ikenga (shrine gure). Igbo peoples (Nigeria). c. 19th to 20th century C.E.

Wood.



Content

- Ikenga: a carved wooden figure with a human face and animal attributes
 - Male warrior figure--seated on a stool, wielding a sword in one hand and holding a human head in the other. Solidifies the accomplishments of the individual
 - Ram horns curl at the top of the head, which symbolizes power and aggression

Context

- Igbo society of Nigeria organized around the 19th century
- Men in Igbo society could be rewarded with certain titles for individual accomplishments

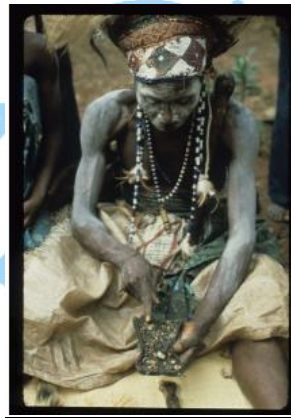
Form

- Figure itself is carved, with additional relief carvings to represent weapons and tools
- Incised dots and lines
- Horns tower above the figure

Function

- Used in men's society as a personal shrine; connects one's chi (life force) with an ancestor

177. Lukasa (memory board). Mbudye Society, Luba peoples (Democratic Republic of the Congo). c. 19th to 20th century C.E. Wood, beads, and metal.



Content

- Lukasa: memory board; consists of beads, shells, and pegs
 - Each board is unique to its owner
- Design based on the spatial layout of the Luba royal court, which in turn mirrors the structure and order of Luba cosmology

Context

- In this society, history was traditionally performed, not read, as a result of no established writing system
- Luba Kingdom had a powerful presence from the 16th century to the 20th century in the south of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Lukasa belong to and are used by the members of the Mbudye society, who are in charge

of reading and interpreting the messages from the boards

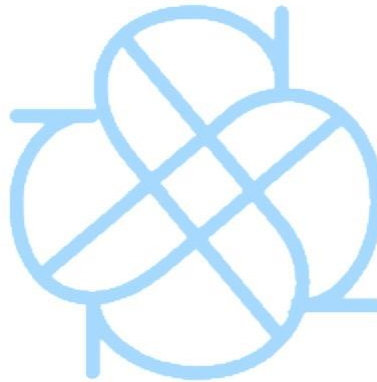
- The boards may also be used by diviners, or fortune tellers

Form

- Zoomorphic elements--animal-like projections at top
- Compact and hand-held
- Geometric designs carved into sides

Function

- Conceptual map/mnemonic device that allows the user to recount history and recite messages to others



178. Aka elephant mask. Bamileke (Cameroon, western grass elds region). c. 19th to 20th century C.E. Wood, woven raffia, cloth, and beads.



Content

- Abstract representation of an elephant--rounded ears, eyes represented by circles
 - Masks symbolize kinship, wealth, and political power
 - Color patterns express societies' cosmic and political functions
 - Colored beads & cowrie shells display the wealth of members of Kuosi society.
- Worn with other regalia, including leopard-skin pelt, red-feather headdress, and full-body costume

Context

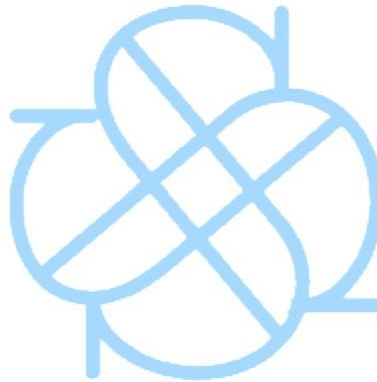
- Worn by members of the Kuosi society of Cameroon, a group of elite men who are advisors to the kin.
- Dominant animals relate to specific clans in the society

Form

- Colorful beadwork gives the mask a dynamic, energetic quality
- Colors contrast against dark backgrounds
- Abstracted facial features

Function

- Expresses power and wealth of the former military society, the Kuosi
- Worn during traditional masquerade (mbap mteng)



179. Reliquary Figure (byeri). Fang peoples (southern Cameroon). c. 19th to 20th century C.E. Wood.



Content

- Human figure with a combination of child-like and adult features
 - Large infant head; adult body; expressionless face
 - Small hands and naval represent qualities of a baby
- In a squat-like pose

Context

- The Fang were nomadic peoples who organized their society in kinship communities
- The Bantu believed in the sacredness of ancestral relics, which connected them to their ancestors--ancestral veneration
 - These beliefs were tied to an ancestral cult called byeri
- Babies believed to be connected with ancestors
- Some central themes in the beliefs of the Fang include tranquility and balance of opposites

Form

- Tall, upright, and symmetrical body
- Carved from wood
- Features depicted in relief

Function

- Offered relics ancestral protection and safety, especially in a nomadic society

180. Veranda post of enthroned king and senior wife (Opo Ogoga). Olowe of Ise (Yoruba peoples). c. 1910–1914 C.E. Wood and pigment.



Content

- Nude senior wife (Ogogo) towers over the king and endows him with a crown during a coronation. The king sits upon a throne
- Smaller figures include the junior wife and the trickster god Esu

Context

- The Yoruba people located in Southwest Nigeria
- Olowe of Ise produced numerous objects commissioned by royal patrons in Ikere for the palace; he worked as a master royal carver

Form

- Larger proportions of the senior wife illustrate her central role during the coronation
- Sculpture in the round
- Details carved in relief

Function

- Structural post of a palace porch, supports a lintel
- Expression of king's power