



WAR

EMBLEMS OF POWER

Introduction

What we now call Tribal or Primitive Art - *Les Arts Premiers* - evolved from the concept of purpose. Every object had a function: trade, medicine, crops, initiation, marriage, fertility, judgment, punishment, power and warfare. In this catalogue we are examining objects created by master craftsmen over the centuries to be used in combat or to demonstrate power to fellow tribesmen and the enemy.

Each civilization used its own myths and taboos to intimidate or frighten the enemy, often depicting them in elaborate ways on shields, war canoes and weapons.

In the 21st century we look at these objects from a different perspective, holding them in high esteem not just for their beauty but equally for the inventiveness and talent of their creators.

We hope you enjoy the catalogue. Please contact us for more information on the objects featured.

War charm *Andakara*

SOUTHERN ABELAM PEOPLES, WOSERA
EAST SEPIK PROVINCE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Man's pectoral, mouth and back ornament. Worn on the back during ceremonies, but held tightly in the mouth during war to appear like a ferocious pig. The clenched teeth stop evil enemy spirits entering the warrior through his mouth.

20th century

Provenance: collected in the Wosera, 1975

Height: 32 cms



Superb rootstock club

FIJI, POLYNESIA

War clubs inlaid with Sperm Whale ivory were solely the dominion of important Chiefs in Fiji. A club of this dimension could be used in battle but was more likely to have been employed as a sceptre of prestige and intimidation.

Circa 18th/19th century

Provenance: R. Nasser, New York

Height: 109 cms





African Iron throwing knives

Central African throwing knives show a wide range of inventive shapes and abstract forms which highlight the craftsmanship of the master blacksmiths that forged them by hand. The best examples, such as these, were not only lethal weapons but also symbols of great prestige, carried by warriors of high status.

Knife 1 Mabo, Congo Kinshasa. Central African Republic. 19th century. 46.5 cms

Knife 2 Zande. Congo Kinshasa. 19th century. 35 cms

Knife 3 Kota. Gabon. Late 19th/early 20th century. 35cms

Knife 4 Kota. Gabon. Late 19th/early 20th century. 33cms



Superb Old Fighting Shield *Warrumbi*

UPPER NEMBI VALLEY, SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

This is a fine pre-contact, stone-carved shield that has been used over several generations in Highland wars. The engraved figure is superb, with spindly arms and legs and prominently displaying exaggerated genitalia - intended as an insult to the enemy.

mid-20th century

Provenance: collected in remote Nembi Valley, 1999

Height: 125 cms



Magnificent war club

Mere Pounamu

MAORI PEOPLES, NEW ZEALAND

This exceptional *Mere Pounamu* is made from translucent green nephrite (jade). These highly prized weapons were symbols of authority. They were often given a personal name and handed down through generations, carrying with them the *mana* – power – of their owners. A nephrite mere was, and still is, a symbol of chieftainship.

18th/19th century

Provenance: collection Barbier Müller, Geneva; A. de Monbrison, Paris;
private collection, UK

Height: 46 cms



Early Silver-Inlaid Pipe Tomahawk

CHEROKEE PEOPLES, EASTERN USA

The first pipe tomahawks seem to have been introduced for trade or presentation among the Eastern tribes around the beginning of the 18th century.

This fine example is forged from one robust piece of iron, inset with a steel cutting edge and decorated on both sides with a raised deeply fluted vertical panel and inlaid silver. The diagonal silver band on one face is engraved with the Anglicised Cherokee name *SEQUETCHY* in large capitals slanting over its length.

Circa 1795-1800

Provenance: the Budde collection, USA

Length: 23 cms



Two Etrusco-Roman bronze helmets

ITALY

The thick bronze of the helmets has been crushed, perhaps in battle and its aftermath. The bottom edges flare at the neck where the guard has a punched hole, and two riveted bronze bands would have allowed a neck strap to be attached. A flattened rounded knob crowns the pointed tops.

1st century BC – 1st century AD. Montefortino-Bugenum type

Provenance: private collection, Germany; private collection, Brussels

Dimensions: 20.5 cms x 29 cms

Published: M. Junkelmann *Römische Helme – Sammlung Axel Guttman*, vol. 8 (2000) 118, 121 illus 45,48,51



Kanak “Birdhead” club

NEW CALEDONIA, MELANESIA

The elegant form of the classic Kanak “birdhead” club, or Chief’s sceptre, has long been admired amongst collectors of Oceanic Art.

This example, with its rich natural colour and patina is at the apex of Kanak craftsmanship.

18th/19th century

Provenance: from an old English country collection

Height: 73 cms



Fighting Shield *Hanko*

KAMANO PEOPLES, EASTERN HIGHLANDS
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

This hardwood shield, thin for its large size, is carved from the buttress root of a local tree called *ufozei*. The design is bold and fluid, representing a creation snake ancestor. The snake is surrounded by a white glow of sunlight reflected from its skin; this is said to disorient enemy warriors.

Mid-20th century

Provenance: collected in Kompri Valley, Eastern Highlands, 1992

Height: 171 cms



Superb wood hand club *Wahaika*

MAORI, NGAPUHI PEOPLES, NEW ZEALAND

This club is of the finest quality and was fashioned by a master carver. The various elliptical forms and scrollwork are symbolic of clan and rank emblems. The highly expressive figure on the edge bears finely executed body tattooing.

19th century

Provenance: private collection, Brussels

Height: 45 cms



Corinthian Helmet

GREECE

Classic Corinthian helmet in excellent condition. Formed from a single piece of bronze and finely engraved around its entire perimeter. This helmet exhibits the very fine skills developed by Greek metalworkers of the period.

Late 6th century BC

Provenance: private collection, Brussels

Height: 24 cms



Exceptional woven war shield

ZANDE PEOPLES, NORTH EAST DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

This is a very fine example of a Zande woven war shield. It is exceptional for the fine workmanship, size and the graphic use of yellow in its design.

Circa 1900

Provenance: private collection, Ghent; Pethica collection UK

Height: 128 cms



Metal War Mask *Mempo*

JAPAN

This superb and ferocious *Mempo* features a moustache made of badger hair, copper teeth and a lacquered throat guard *yodare-kake*.

Edo period

Provenance: private collection, France; private collection, Brussels

Height: 21 cms

Width: 18 cms



Superb Gold and Ivory mounted Arab sword *Nimcha*

EAST AFRICA

This superb sword is fitted with an ivory grip carved in relief with a series of recessed panels, set with *repoussé* gold plaques. The silver knuckle-guard and *quillon* has a stylised dragon-head finial.

This was made by Omani craftsmen but was produced and worn on the Islands of Zanzibar, Pemba, Comoros and East African coastal towns such as Lamu.

19th century

Provenance: private Danish collection

Length: 101 cms





Superb war club *Tewhatewha*

MAORI PEOPLES, NEW ZEALAND

Tewhatewha were used both as double-handed weapons and by Maori chiefs to direct operations during battle. They were the domain of great warriors. This example has been made with primitive tools, including ray skin and stone implements.

18th/19th century

Provenance: George Birnie, founding member of the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society in 1822; private collection, Brussels

Height: 133cms





Aboriginal Shield *Wunda*

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

An elegant ovoid shield carved in softwood, with deeply fluted zig-zag motif divided in three sections. The indentations are painted alternately in red and white ochres. The reverse has fine fluted adzed markings running vertically, deep red ochre pigment, loop handle and an old patina overall.

Late 19th/ early 20th century

Provenance: ex collection of an Australian diplomat, Los Angeles

Height: 79 cms



Superb star-headed war club

KANAK PEOPLES, NEW CALEDONIA, MELANESIA

The Kanak had a highly developed sense of form. This large hardwood club features a deep, glossy patina and was almost certainly an important emblem of rank, as well as a tool used in battle.

Early 19th century

Provenance: private collection, Brussels

Height: 79 cms





Ko-Boshi Bachi Helmet

JAPAN

Helmet bowls of this type are referred to as *ko-boshi bachi*, or 'small rivet bowls.' This black lacquered helmet consists of 62 plates each riveted to its neighbour with 33 rivets, making a total of 2079 rivets.

Ko-boshi helmets were first produced during the 16th century, continuing to be made until the 19th century. This example is unsigned but has some features which suggest it may be the work of a smith called Nagamichi, or possibly one of his pupils.

Early Edo period - 17th century

Provenance: the Budde collection, USA

Height: 17 cms





Group of Aboriginal Boomerangs

AUSTRALIA

A group of 5 boomerangs from the border area of southern Queensland and northwestern New South Wales. Boomerangs were used by the native peoples of Australia primarily for hunting and warfare, but also ceremonially and as a digging tool. Boomerangs were the universal weapon/utensil for a nomadic people. They are sometimes highly decorated with designs relating to the landscape and "Dreamtime".

Early - mid 19th century

Provenance: private collection, Brussels

Heights left to right: 59cms, 63cms, 66cms, 68cms, 89cms



Bronze Helmet

PSEUDO-CORINTHIAN TYPE

This helmet shows a stylistic progression from the earlier Corinthian form and was worn on the back of the head. Hammered from a single sheet of bronze with flattened neck guard and three attachment points for plumes, held in place by rivets. The front of the helmet is worked in *repoussé* with a row of tight curls above the two eyeholes, recessed for inlays and a nose guard.

5th century BC

Provenance: Ex Axel Guttman Collection, Berlin;
private collection, Brussels

Height: 18 cms

Literature: for similar, compare A. Bottini et al., *Antike Helme* (Mainz 1988) p. 114, pl. 8



Fighting Shield

JOSEPHSTAL, GOAM RIVER, MIDDLE RAMU RIVER
MADANG PROVINCE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

These shields are very rare, with few extant examples in circulation. This shield features a bold face depicting a protective ancestor and displays fine chipping on its lower half. The shield would have had a woven sleeve covering the bottom half which included a sling to allow the warrior to wear the shield, thus keeping both arms free.

c. mid-20th century

Provenance: M. Hamson

Height: 131 cms



War Club

VANUATU, NEW HEBRIDES

This style of club, long and slender with ball-like forms at both ends, is found in the central Vanuatu islands of Malekula, Epi and Ambrym. This is a fine example, with elegant mushroom-shaped head surmounting four carved spheres, which make the club very effective in combat. Deep glossy patina.

19th century

Provenance: private collection, Brussels

Height: 71 cms



Fighting Shield *Warrumbi*

NIPA VALLEY, SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

This wonderful old oval shield is decorated with the simplest of motifs – a central red circle. The circle represents a navel, and hides the underlying anthropomorphic meaning inherent in Southern Highland shields. It is carved from the timber of the *fel* tree. Generally shields made from this rarer hardwood are used by the fight leaders.

Mid-20th century

Provenance: collected in the Nipa Valley, 1986

Height: 112 cms



BACK COVER

War Canoe Stern *Tomako*

ROVIANA LAGOON, NEW GEORGIA ISLAND, SOLOMON ISLANDS
WESTERN PROVINCE, MELANESIA

Tomako had highly decorated prows and sterns to display the importance of clan leaders and could comfortably carry twenty warriors or more. They were often used during headhunting raids between the islands of the archipelago and the Marovo and Roviana lagoons. Warriors wore elaborate decoration and embellishments to intimidate the enemy.

19th/20th century

Provenance: K. Conru

Height: 200 cms

This catalogue is dedicated to the memory of John Giltsoff. His passion and expert knowledge of tribal art, during a career spanning 40 years, enriched many lives. He was an inspiration to *amateurs*, collectors and colleagues alike. He will be so very missed by us all.

Rita Fryer Giltsoff

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AFRICA, OCEANIA
& THE AMERICAS