

Art of the Pacific Islands

Lending Boxes
American Samoa Box #2

Pacific Territories Grant

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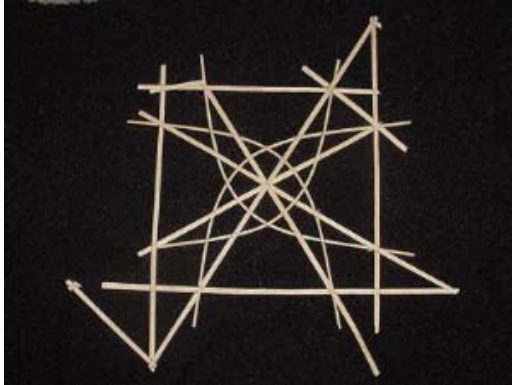
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MICRONESIA

13. Stick Chart, Republic of the Marshall Islands



Stick charts were made out of wooden sticks and cowrie shells lashed together to show currents, sea swells, wave patterns, and island locations. They are used to teach wayfinding. Wayfinding is the use of stars, sea signs, and mental maps, rather than modern navigational instruments, to find one's way in the ocean. In the past master navigators would teach these skills on shore. Wayfinding used to be secret knowledge, but it is now shared with anyone who wishes to learn.

The artistic sensitivity the navigators used in creating the charts is very appreciated by Westerners. They see the charts as elegant examples of abstract art.

MICRONESIA

14. Fan, Kosrae



These brightly colored fans are made from bamboo, coconut palm, pandanus leaf, and taro stalk. While they don't vary the construction, women are free to plait whatever patterns they please. Many of these geometric patterns represent images from the local environment. They are popular for use in church and at other public gatherings.

MICRONESIA

15. Storyboard, Republic of Palau

Storyboards are long panels that tell the tales of Palau and its people. They were originally painted or carved on the rafters and beams inside a *bai*.

Some show favorite myths and legends, like how the breadfruit tree was first grown and how a spider taught people about natural childbirth. Some show serious historical events, like typhoons or battles. Others make fun of rival villages. Storyboards can also show what happens in everyday life. While they're telling these stories, some boards also teach about proper ways for Palauans to live.



The storyboard here is based on one of the most famous legends in Palau. It's a love story about a maiden who sacrifices her life for the man she loves. When the man's uncle asks for the head of his nephew's love, the man misunderstands and cuts off her head to present it to his uncle. Sadly, the uncle had only wanted to meet the woman, and not have her head chopped off.

MELANESIA

16. Club, Fiji

Before Europeans arrived in Fiji, warfare was common between villages of the same island, between people on different Fijian islands, and between Fijians and people in other island groups. Clubs were Fijians' favorite weapons, so they developed quite a variety of them. Fijian men kept track of a weapon's kills by notching, drilling holes, or inlaying victims' teeth on the weapon.

The most Fijian of all war clubs was the *totokia*. It was designed especially to peck a hole into the head of an enemy. Some very special clubs had fine designs carved along the entire length of the handle.

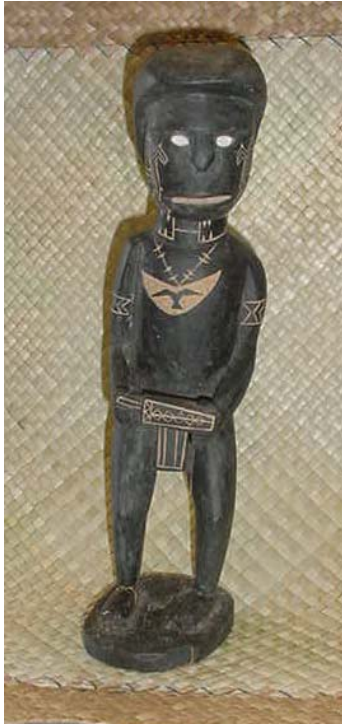


The shell-inlaid club on the right is a copy of the one Chief Cakobau gave to the British in 1874 when he placed his kingdom under their protection. One or two of these clubs would be tucked in men's waistbands at all times. The clubs could be thrown with such force (and accuracy) that they would kill the victims.

Today, Fijian clubs are an important part of dances and reenactment ceremonies.

MELANESIA

17. *Kastom* Figure, Solomon Islands



This figure shows the traditional tattoos and dress of the people in the Eastern Solomon Island villages. The figures depict daily activities such as fishing and making pudding as well as ceremonies.

MELANESIA

18. Hook Mask, Papua New Guinea



Hook masks are a common motif in the art from Papua New Guinea. Sometimes the masks represent the beak of the hornbill bird, which is symbolic of headhunting.

POLYNESIA

19. 'Uli 'Uli, Hawai'i



The 'uli 'uli is used by both male and female hula dancers. It consists of a small gourd made from the *la'amea* tree, which is hollowed out and filled with *ali'i poe* seeds. A handle is attached, and two layers of feathers, in an up and down design, are attached to the top.

POLYNESIAN

20. Tray, Tonga



Men cut masonite boards and drill holes around the edges of these trays. Then Tongan women weave pandanus into patterned sheets that are used to cover the masonite. After that, they use a coil basket technique to cover coconut midribs in order to make the edges and handles of the trays. These trays are usually sold to tourists.

POLYNESIA

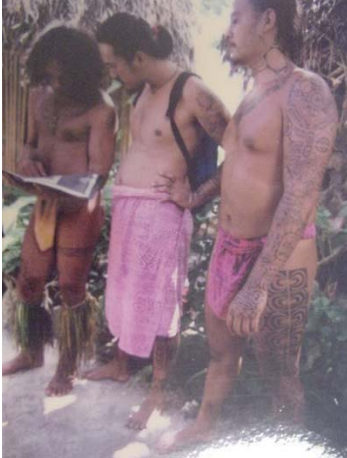
21. Basket (*o'ini*), Tahiti



Note this basket is made of four short strips of coconut frond. This is typical of Tahitian baskets. This one was used for carrying and for decoration when it's hung up with flowers pushed through the plaiting all over the outside.

POLYNESIA

22. Tattooing, Marquesas Islands



Tattooing is an art form in many Pacific Islands. Patterns range from abstract to geometric to realistic. Often these designs represent rank, status, family, lineage, or clan totems.

This is a photo of Marquesan men with tattoos. Once the most fully tattooed of all Polynesians, this practice has recently resurged. Along with being considered attractive, tattoos are considered marks of courage, endurance, and wealth.