

DAYAKS' ART TRIBAL ART FROM THE INDONESIAN COLLECTIONS OF THE NÁPRSTEK MUSEUM, PRAGUE

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History of the Collection

The collection of the Kalimantan tribal art started during Vojta Náprstek's lifetime in the second half of the 19th century. Objects that were randomly collected were brought to the Museum. Also the whole sets were given to Vojta Náprstek by members of various expeditions and by Náprstek's friends. Two of them, Pavel Durdík and František Czurda, were physicians who entered the Dutch colonial army. Pavel Durdík (1843-1903) spent more than five years in Sumatra and Nias. Beside his professional carrier he did ethnographical and entomological researches. The items that enriched a new Indonesian collection in the Náprstek Museum had originated especially from these islands. In his collection we can find valuable statues of ancestors called adu, jewels, cloths, musical instruments, and objects of everyday use. František Czurda (1844–1887) spent 12 years by studying many branches, such as philosophy, chemistry, and medicine. After that he decided to travel. And because he dreamed to establish the East-Indian Museum, he entered the Dutch Army and moved to Indonesia. He sent articles describing his experiences from his Sunda Islands, Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Moluccas islands journeys to the various Czech magazines. The items that he collected are divided between two museums: the Volksmuseum in Vienna and the Náprstek Museum of Prague. His collection includes models of Indonesian houses, puppets of wayang purva, jewels, and objects of everyday use. Enrique Stanko Vráz (1860-1932) stands out as one of the very famous 19th century Czech explorers. While travelling round the world (which he did twice in his life-time) he went to the northwest Borneo in 1896, and hunted orangutans and other animals. He went into unexplored areas inhabited by the Dayaks and wrote the fascinating book "S lovci lebek na Borneu" (With the head hunters in Borneo) based on the experiences of this expedition. He enriched the growing collections of the Náprstek museum with various items, e.g. pua, swords and jewels. Another contributor to the Náprstek Museum collections, Josef Kořen-

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ský (1847-1938), was a naturalist and a teacher at the grammar school in Prague. As a teacher he had had financial support from city government, educational offices, and even from Ministry of Education in Vienna. He made many trips around the Europe and the North Africa. In 1893-94 he travelled round the world and during this journey he spent some time in Indonesian islands. Josef Kořenský wrote many articles and books about lifestyle of native people, botany, customs, and other interesting aspects of his journeys. Thanks to him the Indonesian collection of the Náprstek Museum was enriched with wayang kulit and other valuables. Růžena Charlotta Urbanová (1888-1978), the painter, travelled and lived at Java and Bali from the 1920s to 1940s. She spent most of her lifetime abroad and as a journalist she travelled round the world. Before she moved to Indonesia she lived in Paris where she participated in many prestige exhibitions. She was known as an author of many novels as well. In 1938 she penetrated as a first European to the islands of New Hebrides where she was captured by native people. After a few days she was rescued and moved to Java and later on to Bali. There she spent World War II imprisoned by the Japanese in 1943. After the war she moved back to Europe and visited also her native country, the Czech Republic. She brought back from Indonesia unique male and female decorative ornaments included nowadays in the Náprstek Museum collections. Joe Hloucha (1881-1957), a significant Czech writer, collector and explorer, gave several items to the museum collection. In 1995 Miloslav Šulc, a businessman of Czech origin who spent most of his life in Southeast Asia, sold more than hundred items to the Náprstek Museum and they enlarged the collection of Kalimantan in a quite significant way. The collection from Kalimantan includes more than 200 items from different locations. Most of the items originated in the 19th or 20th century.

The most unique are wooden statues.² Dayak sculptures from Kalimantan differ in sizes – some are several centimetres tall and some are several meters tall. Different terms are used to describe the Dayaks' sculptures, such as *hampatong*, *tempatong*, *sepundu*, *temadoe*, or death post and amulet. Until nowadays it is still very unclear, no precise criteria have been established regarding either style or iconography, to determine easily which type is being described. Nevertheless I prefer rather old-fashioned classification according to e.g. C. T. Bertling³ because it gives distinction between various types of statues without loosing the opportunity for further discussion. He distinguished three major kinds of sculpture: the amulet, the death post, and the 'bogy'.

Amulets are described as beneficent medicines that we may assume to be fairly typical among the Dayaks. Schärer refers to the objects as 'divine gifts'. 'The man who as regarded by the deities receives beneficent gifts from them. He cannot get them by himself (on the bases of his own decision), but he can receive them only from the deities. They give him *ontong*, i.e. profit, gain, luck, so that he succeeds in everything he does. The deities are invoked at religious ceremonies, to which they (i.e. their servants) bring everything required for the performance of the ritual, for man can do nothing by himself and the godhead must act on his behalf.⁴ Amulets can be used to secure succesful trade, wealth, rice cultivation and hunting, or were associated with warfare and settlement of dispute. They are also related to cosmically differentiated spheres – Upper and Underworld. The objects are often hung next to the entrance into the long house where the guards stand. The purpose is not only to scare enemies and evil spirits, but also to remind people of the victori-

² There are about forty wooden statues in the Náprstek Museum collection

³ Bertling, C. T., 1927.

⁴ SchÄrer, H, 1963.

ous return of warriors. They also are supposed to protect and to ensure a plentiful rice harvest for the whole community, and to protect from floods and diseases.⁵

The second category of carvings is represented with large posts in the form of human beings. These usually represent important individuals or they refer to the significant members of the community (e.g., a hat that had been worn by an ancestor). These life-size statues can be male or female. They have been referred to as *sapundu* or *hampatong* (see pl. No. 1). Some carvings of deformed human faces seem to relate to rituals associated with killing of slaves to accompany the dead.

The third kind of sculpture is the so-called *bogy* or deterrent statue. They are usually mentioned in literature and belong to the most common statues in the museum collections. These statues appear to be symbolic means to avert danger and illness. Some of them are armed with battle-shields; others are characterized by enlarged genitals (see pl. No. 2). It seems that protective figures of some groups were replaced by sculptures. Such a sculpture is thought to be a 'substitute' – i.e.a place into which the malevolent spirit may enter instead of the intended victim. These figures were common within many Kalimantan groups and they belong to the major part of the Šulc's collection in the Náprstek Museum.

Mats and the craft of basket-making in general are also an important part of the handicraft all over Borneo where we can find highly sophisticated ornaments usually made in three-tone by alternating black, red, and natural buff colour. The most common material is "rotang" fibre, which is a name for the cane-palm found generally in South-East Asia (calamus rotan). Baskets offer very sophisticated motif, which is commonly known as the "dog" or "aso". There are various aso symbols and it is usually quite difficult to make difference between the biological, the "decorative", and the "mythical" aso. It is however impossible to find one real example of the "animal". The aso as a motif is used in all art forms over the whole island. We can see it on wooden plates, containers of varied shapes and materials, objects for daily use mostly made from bamboo (Bambuseae) such as drinking cups, tobacco and cigarette boxes, or a quiver for arrows, beadwork, and others. Beside the aso ornament, the zoomorphic or geometric designs, e.g. a loop or a circle (see pl. No. 13) are the most common.

Most of the Dayak tribes highly value beads. Beads play an important role in Kalimantan and in the past they were used as currency. Most beads come from abroad and were probably imported by Arabic or Chinese traders. Only a few come from Kalimantan, where they were made out of shells, bones, fruit stones, or out of semi precious stones still present on the island. Each colour has its name, and each has a protective quality. The beads were believed to have a fate-altering ability. Besides the large beads, the European-made small glass beads are common. They are used to embroider ornaments for various utility goods (see pls. No. 7, 8). Black and yellow are the most common colours. Pineapple fibres were used to thread the beads. The fibres are strong and last long.

Materials from the Bornean forests, like animal skins and tree bark, were widely used to make jackets, skirts, hats and loincloths. Usually the material comprised the inner layer of the trees *Antiaris toxicaria* or was from the *Artocarpus elastica*. Except Austronesian culture this ancient element can be rarely seen now. Plain bark-cloth was just the opposite of decorative weaving of clothing, which is still used untill nowdays. The complex of Ibanic group is especially skilled in the weaving of decorative female skirt, jackets for both

⁵ The Náprstek Museum collection includes five amulets of this type but none of them has been depicted within the presented illustrations.

⁶ Goldman, P., 1975.

sexes, loincloths and ceremonial cloths and weavers use many motifs. There are other decorations that may be added to the weave, such as pieces of embroidery or needle weaving on the edging or important parts of the garment. The finest example of warp ikat represents pua, a ritual textile (see pl. No. 9). The general layout of the pua is: central field filled with a stylised pattern and a distinctive border of vertical lining. Human and animal figures are frequently applied; depictions of crocodiles, snakes and lizards in particular recur regularly and are commonly found throughout the Southeast Asia. All patterns are potentially harmful entities that can bring injury and even death if offended. On the other hand, they can also become powerful allies if enlisted as spirit helpers. There are many questions how to interpret the names and meanings of these highly stylised ornaments. It seems that patterns do not contain a code, or vocabulary of symbols, by which their meaning could be deciphered. Motifs are mostly regionally limited, and the instructions are passed down by generations of women in individual family and longhouse. Pua is an extremely important textile for the community. For example, heads taken in battle by men were wrapped in pua and carried through the longhouse by women when the men returned from the battle. Pua also wrapped millstones during the rites preceding the rice harvest. Perhaps the most important was its use to shroud the bodies of deceased in funeral ceremony. There were two elements the community considered essential for being a good weaver: first, the ability to communicate with gods and to draw the inspiration from the supernatural and second, the technical abilities of dyeing, loom setting and weaving.

Many Bornean people are able to process iron so as to produce everyday utensils, tools and weapons. From the 19th century imported bar-iron was mainly preferred, but there is an indigenous tradition. Many of the Dayak tribes (among such as the Kayan and Kenyah) developed smelting into the high level of good-quality local ores and they manufactured beautiful ceremonial headhunting swords or cutlasses, mandau or parang ilang. Often the blade incorporates curly fretwork along the top edge comprising spirals and tendrils, with inlaid brass circles (see pl. No. 10). The hilts are wooden or made out of light-colored bone, horn, or ivory and they are cut into the shape of anthropomorphic heads, decorated with a bunch of hairs in either original or dyed by the natural dye. Seashells, semi-precious stones, and other materials are sometimes used to emphasize the eyes on the hilts. The carvings on the hilts have a magical significance, hence the depiction of human beings and animals. Pictures present a protection of the mandau owner (see pl. No. 11). The wooden sheath of a sword has a smaller sheath attached to it - for a double-edged knife - that can be detached and used separately. It is usually made of a hard leaf. Mandau is a prestige item in between the local types of swords, having become part of family heirlooms. Another warrior's main piece of equipment is battle shield. The main type of shield, in most of East, Central, and West Kalimantan, is cut from a solid elongated piece of softwood, with a handle and pointed ends. It is either plain or elaborately painted on both sides with frightening and protective spirit faces, dragons, human figures, or sometimes with floral motifs (see pl. No. 12). Some of the shields could be adorned with tufts of human hair as we can see in the style of Kenyah tribe.

All depicted items belong to the Náprstek Museum collection and were exhibited at the first representative exhibition held at the Náprstek Museum from October, 2001 to April, 2002. Most of the depicted items have not been published yet.⁸

⁷ Nabholz-Kartaschoff, M. L., Bavues, R. and Stuart-Fox, D.J. (eds.), 1993.

⁸ Except Pl. No. 7, that was published in the Annals of the Náprstek Museum, Prague, 1999, No. 20, p. 86.

Catalogue

1. Wooden statue. Height: 152 cm Diameter: 26 cm

Material: wood, polychrome

Acquisition: 1995. Collection of M. Šulc

Acc No: A 25 528

A male figure with a crown or war coronet. The lizard figure on his back symbolises gods of the Underworld. It is a funeral post, *sapundu*. Funeral statues, *sapundu* or *hampatong* were erected near the longhouse. In ancient times both human and animal sacrifices were tied to them and ritually offered. Symbols of touching the genitals or erected genitals are connected with fertility.

2. Wooden statue. Height: 49 cm Diameter: 25 cm

Material: ironwood, metal

Acquisition: 1995. Collection of M. Šulc

Acc No: A 25 506

Guardian, *bogy*. A squatting male figure wearing a war helmet. The motif of protruding tongue or open mouth is believed to be apotropaic and is common throughout the South East Asia and the Pacific. As well as the position of squatting figures are typical for Bornean plastic arts. There is a large metal earring in the left ear lobe while the right one is broken off. We can guess that there was the same large earring there. Erected genitals symbolized fertility. Face carving is similar to that one can find at the battle shields – wildly open eyes, diamond shaped mouth and stylized ornaments that scare enemies and evil spirits.⁹

3. Carving. Height: 46.5 cm

Length: 89 cm Material: wood

Acquisition: 1955. Collection of Joe Hloucha

Acc No: 34 521

A hornbill or another mythical bird carved from wood and then painted was used in marriage ceremonies. Many scientists compare these birds with mythical bird Garuda that is considered a Hindu element and it is spread through Java and Bali. In Kalimantan we can find Hindu influence in Southern part of the island but otherwise it is almost unknown. Therefore this statue is undoubtedly hornbill that is a symbol of Kalimantan. Hornbills play an important role in the Dajaks' mythology and people still look for the omens from these birds.

Compare: Avé, J. B. and King, V. T., 1986. p. 16.

4. Carving. Height: 72 cm Length: 42 cm Material: wood

Location: Middle Mahakam

Acquisition: 1995. Collection of M. Šulc

Acc No: A 25 605

Hardwood carving in the shape of turtle, column like feet and a small tail of a turtle; dragon head and water buffalo horns referring to the god of the Underworld. There is a frog on the back in high relief, the carapace decorated with a dragon face having large mouth. This face is usually used in battle shields to intimidate the enemies. This type of carving is very rare and its purpose is unclear.

Compare: Sellato, B., 1989. Plates No. 389, 412.

5. Wooden box. Height: 19 cm Diameter: 22 cm Material: wood, rattan

Acquisition: 1995. Collection of M. Šulc

Acc No: A 25 587ab

Circular ritual box with three squatting figures around the body of the box. The position of the fine carved figures suggest the relation to ancestors' worship. They also protect the content of the box from evil spirits coming from the netherworld. Carving of these figures took the carver near the gates of the realm of the dead. Consequently, only the extremely experienced men who possessed most powerful charms, which could protect them from dangers of such an extraterrestrial adventure, could always carved these

⁹ For more see: Heppell, M. and Maxwell, R.

¹⁰ Heppell, M. and Maxwell, R. p. 65.

figures.

6. Facial mask. Height: 63 cm Length: 21 cm Material: wood

Location: East Kalimantan.

Acquisition: 1995. Collection of M. Šulc

Acc No: A 25 565

A mask representing the pig spirit called Hirung Lakeeq Layaang¹⁰. These masks are used during planting festivals perform the hudog dance. Purpose of wearing these hudog masks is to drive off pig spirits, which might attack the newly planted rice. Facial masks are an integral part of the ritual dances and ceremonies of the Kalimantan native population. They were made to resemble either human or animal faces, and they were polychromatic. Most masks usually depict fertility and soil productivity. Rice is the staple food of the Dayak tribes, and they believe that each grain of rice contains a goddess, or the spirit of rice. The robbing ghosts, who loot the rice fields, rob people of their valuable staple.

Compare: Heppell, M. and Maxwell, R., p. 10.

7. Beadwork. Height: 35 cm Length: 35 cm

Material: beads, cotton fibres

Acquisition: 1995. Collection of M. Šulc

Acc No: A 25 571

Beadwork with the motifs of dragon face, a human body with dragon head-shaped hands, and hornbills. This elaborated beadwork is probably made for the further application of the baby holder -ba. Decorations on the ba show the social rank of the child and his/her parents and protect the child from evil. Dominant colours of this example are black, yellow, and red that are the most common colours used by Dayaks. At the top there stylized ornament of hornbills in mirror composition can be found. Hands and legs of a human body are ending with dragon or aso orna-

ments. At the bottom there are two tigers.

8. Baby holder. Height: 30.5 cm Length: 34 cm

Material: beads, boar tusks, shells, rattan.

Location: Middle Mahakam.

Acquisition: 1995. Collection of M. Šulc

Acc No: A 25 563

Baby holder, *ba*. At the beadwork appliqué one can find a squatting divine figure with hornbill head. Floral ornaments at the end of hands and legs may be connected with the "tree of life" concept. This type of ornamentation is typical for Dayaks from East Kalimantan. Both sides of the holder are decorated with tigers and hornbills. At the top there are two lines of old beads, animal teeth, and shell buttons, which protect the children from evil spirits. Kenyah style. Compare: Sellato, B., 1989. Plate No. 242; Avé,

J. B. and King, V. T., 1986. p. 72.

9. Pua.

Height: 215 cm Length: 100 cm Material: cotton

Location: West Kalimantan.

Acquisition: 1897. Collection of E. St. Vráz.

Acc No: 11 112

Large Iban ikat, pua. This very unique pua in dominated red - dragonblood 11 - colour (coloured by natural pigments) is decorated with motifs of human slaves at the bottom and omen birds at the border. Birds were messengers between human beings and gods, therefore such ornaments are common in case of an important object as pua. Central field is filled with various zoomorphic and floral ornaments, which are regularly changed to make dynamic composition. Human and animal figures are frequently applied; portrayals of crocodiles, snakes and lizards in particular recur regularly and are commonly found throughout the Southeast Asia. We can guess that motifs of snakes. lizards, crocodiles, and birds are also on this

¹¹ Sellato, B., 1989.

¹² For more see: Gavin, T., 1996. and Nabholz-Kartaschoff. M. L., Bavues, R. and Stuart-Fox, D.J. (eds.), 1993.

10. Mandau swords.

Length: from 67,5 to 75 cm

Material: steel, wood, iron, hair, rattan, antler,

copper wire, pandanus leaves. Location: West Kalimantan.

Pl. No. 10a: Acc No: A 3 076 (left). 1965.

Bought from a private collector.

Acc No. 10 794 (right). 1898. Collection of E. S. Vráz.

Pl. No. 10b: Acc No.: A 331 (left). 1961. Transferred from a local museum, Czech republic

Acc. No. A 6 514 (middle). 1966. Bought from an antiquity shop.

Acc No.: A 20 422ab (right). 1988. Transferred from a local museum, Czech Republic.

Mandau is a one edged sword with a steel blade. Small spiral-like engravings and carvings are etched into the blunt side. They have a long and straight, distinctively concave blade with incised designs. One handle is made of deer antler and second one is from wood. Both are elaborately carved in the shape of an animal with ornaments and further adornment of hairs. The handles are reinforced with rattan. According to the long curved blade with a groove along it and to a specific finger-guard we can state that they are of Iban original. The wooden sheaths for the sword are decorated with elaborately carving of stylised aso and floral motifs and adorned with natural or coloured hair. 13

11. Mandau hilt.

Length of *mandau*: 74 cm Material: wood, hair, rattan.

Acquisition: 1898. Collection of E.St. Vráz.

Acc. No: 10 794

Detail of an animal head-shaped *mandau* hilt made of wood decorated with the *aso* and floral pattern and hair, which can be of human or animal origin. Comparing with blades, which are hereditary, the hilts are made by the owners themselves. The hilts are made out of wood or light-coloured bone and cut into the shape of an anthropomorphic or animal head,

with a bunch of hair in either original colour or dyed with natural dye. Sometimes seashells or other materials are used to emphasize the eyes on the hilts. The carving on the hilts have a magical significance, hence the depiction of human beings and animals. The pictures present a protection of the *mandau* owner.

12. Battle shield.

Height: 80 cm Length: 70 cm

Material: wood, polychrome

Acquisition: 1995. Collection of M. Šulc

Acc No: A 25 553

The battle shield with a dragon face and a human figure. Floral decoration at the end of limbs refers to the "tree of life" concept. Eyes are dominating and open mouth with visible teeth served to scare enemies or evil spirits. The effect of scaring is even supported by using the black, red and white colours. At the top of the shield there is a stylized *aso* ornament.

Compare: Sellato, B., 1989. Plate No. 313.

13. Bamboo container.

Height: 29.5 cm

Diameter: 4.5 cm

Material: bamboo, rattan

Acquisition: 1995. Collection of M. Šulc

Acc No: A 25 585ab

Bamboo container used for safekeeping spears – often poisoned. Finely engraved with curvilinear tendrils and hooks, and dog-dragon motif (*aso*), on a black background. Stopper and the bottom are decorated with triangular motif, which refer to tumpal ornament heritage from Dong Son culture.

14. Fragment of a coffin.

Height: 60 cm

Length: 27 cm

Material: wood

Acquisition: 1995. Collection of M. Šulc

Acc No: A 25 532

Fragment of a coffin, *lungun*. A human figure may represents a sacrificed slave carrying

¹³ For more see Sellato, B., 1989. and Avé, J. B. and King, V. T., 1986.

the coffin and accompanying the dead. Compare: Sellato, B., 1989. Plate No. 411.

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