

# THE ART *of* WEAPONS

HOOD MUSEUM OF ART,  
DARTMOUTH COLLEGE



This exhibition presents exemplary highlights from the Hood Museum of Art's rich collection of traditional arms and armaments from Africa. It emphasizes the beauty of the weapons and shines a critical light on their significance in the social, political, economic, military, and spiritual organization of traditional societies in Africa. The selected objects, most of which were collected during the era of Western colonization in Africa, are of impeccable craftsmanship and elegance and thus showcase the creativity and technical skills of their makers. Displayed together for the first time, they represent artistic traditions of nearly forty cultural groups spread across the East, West, Central, North, and Southern African sub-regions. *The Art of Weapons* presents the history of these objects as they have passed from hands of the craftsmen who created them to the warriors who deployed them to the Western collectors who gathered and displayed them.

## WEAPONS AND THEIR MAKERS

Characteristically of African material cultures through the ages, many of these objects combine utilitarian and symbolic functions. They feature intricate geometric and linear patterns embellished on their surfaces, and command attention with their spiral forms, multiple thrusting edges, and beautifully carved anthropomorphic and zoomorphic handles. The weapons reveal the widespread mastery of iron, brass, and copper, as well as the use of wood, animal hides, and plant materials, in weapons production in Africa. Beyond their formal designations as knives, spears, or shields, the weapons come in different sizes, forms, types, and aesthetic classifications. They served varying and sometimes overlapping functions in the past.

One of the weapons on display is a stately *ikula* (fig. 1), a prestige object borne on the right hip by free men in traditional Kuba society. It has an elaborately carved wooden handle with inlaid wire that is arranged as geometric and linear decoration. This particular *ikula*'s wide blade is made of metal; others in the exhibition feature pure brass, copper, or iron blades. It has a slightly elevated central ridge bordered on both sides by flowing grooves. The ridge runs from the base of the blade and tapers to meet its blunted stabbing tip. Largely used in a ceremonial context, the *ikula* was not meant for warfare. Instead, it conveyed the high social rank of the owner and was part of the paraphernalia of state.



Fig. 1. Kuba people, Democratic Republic of Congo, *ikula* ceremonial knife, 19th–20th century, metal and wood. Gift of Ernst Anspach; 180.27.25946



The *mbele a lulendo* (fig. 2) is another important ceremonial object of significant social and political value. Also known as a “sword of royal authority,” it belongs to the Bakongo, or the Kongo people, in southwestern Democratic Republic of Congo and northwestern Angola. There are several variations of the *mbele a lulendo*’s hilt. This prestige sword consists of a carved anthropomorphic hilt with four curved iron quillons, or crossguards. Two of these quillons have flattened ends tilted downward on either side of the sword’s blade. The other two are fully curved loops placed inside the former pair. Aside from its length, the sword’s blade is indistinct with no incisions or designs, yet the weapon is rich in symbolism. It embodies the spiritual essence and political foundation of the Kongo people, and was danced ceremonially on specific occasions. Traditionally, it belonged to the chiefs of the various Bakongo communities or was secured by designated guardians with political authority. It was also used to execute convicted criminals who ran afoul of the laws of the community.

Several weapons in this exhibition, such as the *musele* (fig. 3) of the Kota and Fang cultures in the Upper Ogowe River region of Gabon, are classified according to their formal qualities. This style of weapon is also referred to as the bird-headed ceremonial knife because of its peculiar shape, which resembles the head or beak of a bird. The example seen here consists of an iron blade with a thin extension at the base and a short wooden handle covered in copper wire. The blade has a thin groove running through its breadth and outlining its sparse features. While the bird-headed knife’s practicality as an effective weapon is doubtful because of its unusual shape, it was highly valued. In the past it was mythologized by the Kota and Fang peoples due to its striking resemblance to the head of the hornbill, a bird that is esteemed in African folklores for its intelligence and perseverance. The object was used in ritual and ceremonial contexts, such as rites of passage that involved circumcision, and as a protective charm against antisocial forces.

The Hood’s collection also includes variations of curved and multiple-blade knives or swords, as well as scythes and sickles. Many of these are from the Congo



Fig. 2. Kongo people, Democratic Republic of Congo, sword of royal authority (*mbele a lulendo*), 19th century or earlier, iron, wood, ivory. Purchased through the Hood Museum of Art Acquisitions Fund; 997.20.30355



Fig. 3. Fang or Kota people, Gabon, bird-headed ceremonial knife (*musele*), collected about 1892, iron, wood, copper wire. Gift of William and Christine Bannerman in memory of Reverend and Mrs. William S. Bannerman; 2013.75.1

Basin, an area renowned for its rich, diverse, and large output of weapons. The throwing knife derives its name from its use as a formidable combat and hunting weapon. It is widespread among several cultures in sub-Saharan Africa but notably associated with Central Africa, particularly the northern Democratic Republic of Congo where it proliferated in great number. Among the Azande and Nzakara, it was used exclusively as a weapon of war. When hurled with a quick flick of the wrist from a measured distance, its multiple blades would cut low around the legs of an enemy or animal, digging into bones and inflicting deadly pain. Highly valued, the throwing knife was used as currency for commerce and as a symbol of political office or social status. This is, perhaps, as a result of its complex shape and surface decoration, which tasked the imagination and craftsmanship of the blacksmith—as is apparent in the Bwaka or Gobu knife (fig. 4) seen here. Another object, the Konda ceremonial knife (fig. 5), is prized for its unusual and intricately designed thin blade. The knife's shape varies according to the creative ingenuity of the

blacksmith and/or social rank of the patron. It was used during ritual ceremonies and parades as a symbol of power and high status.

In pre-colonial times talented blacksmiths enjoyed the patronage of neighboring cultures that valued their skills and fame. Other craftsmen were itinerant. They moved farther afield, secured new patrons, offered their skills to other cultures, and created and distributed new forms and styles. This was very much the case in equatorial Africa where there were cross-cultural appropriations among cultures such as the Fang, Kota, Azande, Mangbetu, Kuba, Konda, Ngala, Teke, Ngombe, and



Fig. 4. Bwaka or Gobu people, Democratic Republic of Congo, throwing knife, 19th–20th century, iron. Gift of Claire E. and Dr. Frederick R. Mebel, Class of 1935; 991.48.29011

Yakoma. This area of the continent has had some of the richest deposits of easily accessible ore, which provided the raw materials for the blacksmiths' art. On a similar note, the Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, and Ndebele in Southern Africa share design repertoires apparent in decorated stabbing assegais, knobkerries, and animal hide shields. The tongue-as-blade anthropomorphic axe is another example of a weapon with a wide geographical spread across West and Central Africa. This stunning example (fig. 6) belongs to the Tiv or Jukun people in the middle-belt region of Nigeria. The weapon is an emblem of high social rank and was owned by the leaders of the

community, diviners, and highly regarded warriors.

As the fount and transmitters of the knowledge of metallurgy, blacksmiths have been the subject of rigorous examination in African studies. Because of their understanding of the properties of air, fire, water, and earth, the basic elements required in smelting and forging, they are considered the central figures in weapons production—arbiters of taste and intermediaries between life and death. In traditional African cultures, blacksmiths were also thought to possess metaphysical abilities useful in circumcision, divination, healing, and rainmaking. They inhabited a liminal context between the temporal and supernatural worlds. Although they were admired and respected for their skills and specialized knowledge, they often lived apart from the community, at the outskirts, in the pre-colonial past. Among the Babongo of the Cameroon grassfields and the Fur in western Sudan, blacksmiths were considered dangerous because of their control of elemental forces and therefore had limited social and political mobility. In other cultures, such as the Fon in Benin Republic and Kpelle in Liberia and southern Guinea, they enjoyed elevated social status and belonged to the royal lineage.

### THE WARRIOR COMPLEX IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETIES

African weapons are emblems of authority, social rank, ritual commemorations, royalty, strength, identity, divine power, life, and death. They communicate social codes that governed communities and apportioned societal roles in the past. Male members of society were expected to protect the community and ward off external aggression. A full-fledged man was a warrior in addition to his duties as father, husband, son, or brother. He was expected to show fearlessness, endurance, and above all martial success. According to the art historian Herbert Cole, “[w]hereas female power derives from the giving of life, male power derives from taking it. Woman’s power is internal and hidden like her reproductive organs. Man’s is external and like the weapons he carries forth from the village to realms of conflict or danger.”<sup>1</sup> The highest measure of military achievement was the number of enemy heads a warrior collected in his lifetime. Head-hunting was often mistaken for cannibalism in many European reports and writings, and was the basis for several colonial punitive expeditions.



Fig. 5. Konda people, Democratic Republic of Congo, ceremonial knife, 19th–20th century, steel and wood. Gift of Edith Virginia Calista Spinney Furlong (Mrs. Charles Wellington Furlong); 175.4.25593



Fig. 6. Tiv or Jukun people, Nigeria, ceremonial axe, 19th–20th century, brass and iron. Gift of Claire E. and Dr. Frederick R. Mebel, Class of 1935; 991.48.29009

Weapons served as extensions of social constructions of masculinity, warriorhood, and ideal male beauty. In several cultures young men were schooled in the ways of the warrior during rites of passage. They partook in conventional and mock head-hunting, and learned military tactics and how to use weapons. Among the Maasai and Samburu in the Great Rift Valley region of Kenya, initiation rites were grounds for the ultimate test of masculinity and warriorhood. The initiates were expected to show forbearance in the face of pain and bodily discomfort during circumcision, which transformed them into *morans* (warriors) and full-fledged men. The rites of passage were organized according to age-sets, which the men belonged to for their lifetimes, a practice that continues today. The

statuses of warriors progressed in a hierarchical grade system that shifted every fifteen years, from junior warriors to senior warriors, and ultimately from junior elders to senior elders who make decisions for the community. Although political leadership and spiritual authority were tied to militaristic prowess, as men aged and became elders in the community, status was also linked to proven success in other areas of life.

Social constructions of the warrior found other outlets beyond rites of passage, battlefields, and hunting. Solemn ritual ceremonies, including funerals, and other forms of social gatherings were contexts where male members of the community valorized the strength and beauty of their bodies in staged performances and war parades. In these public displays, weapons and



body adornment were part of the warrior accoutrement. For example, among the Samburu or Wodaabe, a highly nomadic subgroup of the Fulani ethnic group of West Africa, warriors plaited or packed their hair in mud packs, painted their faces and bodies with red and yellow ochre, and wore several pieces of jewelry as part of their sartorial presence.

## WESTERN COLLECTORS IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

African weapons have always fascinated Western collectors. European presence in Africa dates to the Portuguese exploration of African coasts, beginning in 1419, and the vestiges of several centuries of contact are visible in African weapons. While some examples aped European weapons that were brought to Africa as diplomatic gifts and for trade, others were produced in response to the emergence of a Western market for African artifacts. For example, the Kongo *mbele a lulendo*, discussed above, was inspired by trade relations between the Portuguese and the Christian Kingdom of the Kongo in the sixteenth century. Scholarship suggests that its elaborate hilt drew from the style of Iberian weapons in the period, while oral sources recorded in the 1930s claimed that the style, although of an unusual convention, is a commemoration of the ironwork tradition of the Bakongo.<sup>2</sup>

Western fascination with African weapons gathered momentum in the late nineteenth century as a result of colonialism and ethnography. Military officers, colonial administrators, missionaries, explorers, and big-game hunters were some of the early collectors. In addition to individual vocations and aesthetic tastes, their collecting proclivities were arguably shaped by Enlightenment notions of worldliness, imperial ambitions, scientific interests, and the so-called civilizing mission. With its focus on rationality, the Enlightenment discourse demystified religion and emphasized the human subject through intellectual and artistic pursuits. Scientific expeditions were important in widening Western interests in African material culture and art objects. Ethnographic displays of weapons as trophies in private homes and museums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries inferred a triumphalist narrative of conquest, invincibility, and cultural appropriations, steeped in the Enlightenment notion of the imperial Western male.

The objects in the present exhibition were produced between about 1850 and the 1930s. They mirror much of the history and represent many of the characters involved in the early collection of African weapons. In 1885, the Reverend Josiah Tyler (1823–1895), who was the son of the Reverend Bennet Tyler (1783–1858), Dartmouth's fifth president (1822–1828), donated several Zulu weapons collected in Natal, South Africa, where he was a missionary from 1849 to 1889. In 1939, the Dartmouth College Museum (later the Hood Museum of Art) collected 350 objects through direct purchase and as gifts from the Reading Museum in England. The collection included several weapons from East and Central Africa. This was followed in 1949 by the Museum's purchase of ethnographic materials from the British colonial government of Sudan, which included several Shilluk and Nuer spears and shields. The weapons were collected on behalf of the Dartmouth College Museum by the British anthropologist Paul Philip Howell, who was the District Commissioner of the Zeraf and Central Nuer Districts in the Upper Nile Province of colonial Sudan from 1941 to 1946. During the course of the twentieth century, the Museum received significant gifts of African weapons from several outstanding collectors and art patrons, among whom were missionaries, former military officers, Peace Corps volunteers, art dealers, and anthropologists. The objects in the exhibition reflect their discerning eyes and excellent taste.

## THE EXHIBITION

As a teaching museum, the Hood has chosen to present a less familiar, albeit important, aspect of the broader field of the classical canon in African art, moving beyond the masks and votive figures that viewers often encounter in museums. *The Art of Weapons* provides an opportunity to consider the significance of weapons as purveyors of artistic traditions, sociocultural organization, and identity in traditional African societies. It also allows for a comparative assessment of the meaning of masculinity and warriorhood in both African and Western contexts in the historical past, and in light of our changing world. Objects in the exhibition are organized around two main categories: offensive and defensive weapons. The offensive weapons include swords, spears (fig. 7), bows and arrows, knives, and throwing sticks. The defensive weapons are shields and medicine

bundles or containers used as protective amulets. While individual object labels indicate the weapons' intended ceremonial and martial uses, the installation evokes late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ethnographic trophy displays in Western museums and elite homes. The intention is to draw attention to this legacy of display of African objects as well as the process of transforming the weapons from their original context of use into aesthetic objects in a Western museum setting.

Ugochukwu-Smooth Nzewi  
Curator of African Art

## NOTES

1. Herbert M. Cole, *Icons: Ideal and Power in the Art of Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 93.
2. Zdenka Volavkova and Wendy Thomas, *Crown and Ritual: Insignia of Ngoyo* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 35–36.

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Fig. 7. Shilluk or Nuer people, South Sudan, iron-tipped spear, collected 1946–48, iron and wood. Museum purchase; 48.66.11063



## CHECKLIST

1. Zulu people, South Africa  
Spear, collected before 1885  
Steel, wood, rawhide, 90 x 3.3 cm  
Gift of Rev. Josiah Tyler; 13.25.872
2. Zulu people, South Africa  
Spear, not dated  
Steel, wood, hide  
Gift of the New Hampshire Historical Society; 42.21.7930
3. Maasai (Masai) people, Eastern Africa  
Masai child's spear, not dated  
Steel, wood, metal, 123 cm  
Gift of Cynthia Saranec, Class of 1973W; 173.24.25481
4. Azande people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Spear, possibly late 19th century  
Iron and wood, 127 x 3.2 cm  
Museum purchase; 39.64.6957
5. Hadendowa people, Sudan  
Spear, possibly late 19th century  
Wood and iron, 166 x 2.2 cm  
Museum purchase; 39.64.6977
6. Unknown people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Spear/harpoon, late 19th century  
Iron, wood, organic fiber, 168.1 x 5.8 cm  
Museum purchase; 39.64.6958
7. Hadendowa people, Sudan  
Spear, possibly late 19th century  
Iron and wood, 170 x 3.5 x 1.9 cm  
Museum purchase; 39.64.6978
8. Shilluk people, South Sudan  
Spear, collected 1946–48  
Wood, iron, brass, 272 x 3.1 x 2.1 cm  
Museum purchase; 48.66.11061
9. Shilluk or Nuer people, South Sudan  
Iron-tipped spear, collected 1946–48  
Iron and wood, 273.05 cm  
Museum purchase; 48.66.11063
10. Shilluk or Nuer people, South Sudan  
Spear, collected 1946–48  
Wood and iron, 251 x 1.6 x 2.4 cm  
Museum purchase; 48.66.11062
11. Maasai (Masai) people, Kenya and Tanzania  
Spear, about 1920  
Wood and iron, 215.5 x 4.5 x 2.1 cm  
Acquired by exchange from the Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan; 53.30.12899
12. Unknown people, Sudan, Eastern Africa  
Iron spear with wood shaft, collected 1946–48  
Iron and wood  
Museum purchase; 48.66.11052
13. Nuer people, South Sudan  
Ebony-tipped spear, collected 1946–48  
Wood, hide, wire, 164.6 x 2.5 x 2 cm  
Museum purchase; 48.66.11060
14. Shilluk or Nuer people, South Sudan  
Spear, collected 1946–48  
Wood, metal, brass, 174 x 3.45 x 1.7 cm  
Museum purchase; 48.66.11054
15. Azande people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Spear  
Wood, brass, iron, 150 x 1.8 x 0.75 cm  
Museum purchase; 39.64.6959
16. Unknown people, possibly Zulu, South Africa  
Short thrusting spear, early 20th century  
Wood, copper wire, iron blade, 114.5 x 3.7 x 1.7 cm  
Gift of George P. Thomas III; 50.40.12433
17. Zulu people, South Africa  
Spear, early 20th century  
Iron, wood, brass, 91.5 x 2.2 cm  
Gift of George P. Thomas III; 50.40.12432
18. Nuer people, South Sudan  
Spear, collected 1946–48  
Wood and bone  
Museum purchase; 48.66.11058
19. Zulu people, South Africa  
Walking stick, late 19th–early 20th century  
Wood, 90 cm  
Gift of the New Hampshire Historical Society; 42.21.7929
20. Shilluk people, South Sudan  
Throwing club, collected 1946–48  
Wood and copper wire, 73.7 x 12.3 cm  
Museum purchase; 48.66.11029
21. Zulu people, South Africa  
Throwing stick, possibly late 19th or early 20th century  
Wood and brass wire, 73 cm  
Attributed to Rev. Josiah Tyler; 157.46.14271
22. Fon people, Republic of Benin  
Staff in form of a ritual axe, 20th century  
Iron and wood, 44.5 cm  
Gift of Claire E. and Dr. Frederick R. Mebel, Class of 1935; 991.48.29010
23. Tiv or Jukun people, Nigeria  
Ceremonial axe, 19th–20th century  
Brass and iron, 46 cm  
Gift of Claire E. and Dr. Frederick R. Mebel, Class of 1935; 991.48.29009
24. Kuba people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife, 19th–20th century  
Wood and copper, 33 cm  
Gift of Paul S. Cantor, Class of 1960; 181.22.26295
25. Songe people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Ceremonial axe, insignia of rank, 19th–20th century  
Wood, iron, copper, 38 cm  
Gift of Claire E. and Dr. Frederick R. Mebel, Class of 1935; 991.48.29012
26. Kongo people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Sword of royal authority (*mbele a luendo*), 19th century or earlier  
Iron, wood, ivory, 77.1 x 16.3 x 3 cm  
Purchased through the Hood Museum of Art Acquisitions Fund; 997.20.30355

27. Kongo people, Republic of the Congo  
Sword of authority (*mbele a lulendo*), 18th–19th century  
Iron and ivory, 78 x 15 x 15 cm  
Gift of Mary Katherine Burton Jones; 2005.84
28. Tetela or Kusu people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife/dagger, 19th–20th century  
Iron and wood, 41 cm  
Museum purchase; 39.64.6955
29. Konda people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Ceremonial knife, 19th–20th century  
Steel and wood, 40.1 x 14.5 cm  
Gift of Edith Virginia Calista Spinney Furlong (Mrs. Charles Wellington Furlong); 175.4.25593
30. Yakoma people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife, 19th–20th century  
Iron, wood, copper wire, 37.3 x 9 x 3.9 cm  
Gift of Ernst Anspach; 180.27.25944
31. Kuba people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
*Ikula* ceremonial knife, 19th–20th century  
Metal and wood, 38.6 x 11.2 cm  
Gift of Ernst Anspach; 180.27.25946
32. Unknown people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife, 19th–20th century  
Iron and wood, 55.6 x 8.8 cm  
Gift of Ernst Anspach; 180.27.25947
33. Luba people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife/dagger and sheath, 20th century  
Iron, wood, cane, brass tacks, plastic rope, 46 x 12.3 x 3.9 cm  
Gift of Glover Street Hastings III; 181.2.25995
34. Ngala people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife, 20th century  
Iron and wood, 38.1 x 9.5 x 4.5 cm  
Gift of Dana G. Mead; 181.21.26285
35. Fang or Lele people, Gabon and Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife, 19th–20th century  
Iron, wood, copper wire, 40.5 cm  
Gift of Paul S. Cantor, Class of 1960; 181.22.26297
36. Konda people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Display knife, 19th–20th century  
Iron and wood, 52.8 x 7.8 x 3.1 cm  
Gift of Claire E. and Dr. Frederick R. Mebel, Class of 1935; 992.38.29079
37. Oromo people, Ethiopia  
Crescent knife, 19th–20th century  
Iron, wood, animal hide, 56.6 x 5.08 cm  
Acquired by exchange from Hans Oppersdorff, The Clark School, Hanover, New Hampshire; 51.5.12631
38. Unknown people, Sudan  
Ornate prestige knife, 19th–20th century  
Iron, 37.6 x 14.6 x 0.4 cm  
Gift of Claire E. and Dr. Frederick R. Mebel, Class of 1935; 992.38.29080
39. Baganda people, Uganda  
Royal “sword,” 19th–early 20th century  
Wood, yellow copper, brass wire, 64.8 x 7 x 3 cm  
Museum purchase; 39.64.6889
40. Teke or Ngala people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Executioner’s sword, 19th century  
Metal and brass wire, 49.2 x 7.62 x 14.9 cm  
Museum purchase; 39.64.6954
41. Ngala people, Central Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Executioner’s sword, 19th–early 20th century  
Iron, metal, brass tacks, wood, 66 cm  
Gift of Robert L. Ripley, Class of 1939H; 40.15.12622
42. Konda people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife, early 20th century  
Iron, wood, copper wire, 45.3 x 16.8 x 6 cm  
Gift of Dana G. Mead; 181.21.26281
43. Mangbetu people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife (*trumgash*), 19th–20th century  
Iron, wood, copper wire, reptile skin, 50 cm  
Gift of Robert L. Ripley, Class of 1939H; 40.15.12620
44. Bwaka or Gobu people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Throwing knife, 19th–20th century  
Iron, 40.7 x 34 cm  
Gift of Claire E. and Dr. Frederick R. Mebel, Class of 1935; 991.48.29011
45. Nzakara, Azande, Yakoma, or Bangi people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife/machete, 19th–early 20th century  
Iron, wood, copper wire, 74 x 9.4 cm  
Gift of Robert L. Ripley, Class of 1939H; 40.15.12624
46. Ngbandi, Azande, or Bangi people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife, 19th–20th century  
Iron, wood, leather, 92 x 11.3 x 3 cm  
Gift of Robert L. Ripley, Class of 1939H; 40.15.12626
47. Azande people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife, 19th–20th century  
Iron, wood, aluminum wire, 89.6 x 5.7 x 4 cm  
Gift of Dana G. Mead; 181.21.26277
48. Bangi people, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Knife, 19th–20th century  
Iron, wood, copper wire, 96.4 cm  
Gift of Paul S. Cantor, Class of 1960; 181.22.26300

49. Malinke people, West Africa  
Ceremonial hammer, 19th–20th century  
Wood and iron, 64.135 cm  
Harry A. Franklin Family Collection;  
996.25.30240

50. Songe people, Democratic Republic  
of Congo  
Axe with anthropomorphic face on both  
sides, 19th–20th century  
Snakeskin, wood, copper, 33.02 cm  
Lent by Valerie Franklin;  
EL.996.25.30323

51. Unknown people, Western Africa  
Adze with zoomorphic shaft,  
19th–20th century  
Bronze and metal, 46.99 cm  
Lent by Valerie Franklin;  
EL.996.25.30324

52. Fang or Kota people, Gabon  
Bird-headed ceremonial knife (*musele*),  
collected about 1892  
Iron, wood, copper wire, 7 cm  
Gift of William and Christine  
Bannerman in memory of Reverend and  
Mrs. William S. Bannerman; 2013.75.1

53. Fang people, Gabon  
Knife with intricate copper-wire handle,  
collected about 1892  
Iron, copper, wood, 49 cm  
Gift of William and Christine  
Bannerman in memory of Reverend and  
Mrs. William S. Bannerman; 2013.75.3

54. Fang people, Gabon  
White rhinoceros-skin whip,  
collected about 1892  
Rhinoceros skin, 90 x 3.4 x 3 cm  
Gift of William and Christine  
Bannerman in memory of Reverend and  
Mrs. William S. Bannerman; 2013.75.9

55. Fang people, Gabon  
Thick rhinoceros-skin whip,  
collected about 1892  
Rhinoceros skin, 82 x 3.6 x 2.6 cm  
Gift of William and Christine  
Bannerman in memory of Reverend and  
Mrs. William S. Bannerman; 2013.75.10

56. Unknown people, Ghana  
Quiver and arrows, 19th–20th century  
Leather, iron, raffia fiber, 60 x 5.08 cm  
Gift of Mrs. Victor M. Cutter,  
Class of 1903W; 38.25.6031

57. Unknown people, Ghana  
Quiver and arrows, 19th–20th century  
Leather, iron, raffia fiber, 55 x 4.6 cm  
Gift of Mrs. Victor M. Cutter, Class of  
1903W; 38.25.6032

58. Arab, North Africa  
Dagger and sheath, possibly late 19th  
century, collected about 1900  
Wood and brass, 62.5 x 40 x 3.1 cm  
Gift of Emmet Hay Naylor, Class of  
1909; 32.2.5117

59. Shilluk or Nuer people, South Sudan  
Iron spear with wood shaft,  
collected 1946–48  
Iron and wood, 41.6 cm  
Museum purchase; 48.66.11051

60. Shilluk people, South Sudan  
Iron spear (no shaft), collected 1946–48  
Iron, 34.29 cm  
Museum purchase; 48.66.11055

61. Unknown people, South Africa  
Dagger, collected about 1910  
Ivory, horn, blade, leather,  
32.9 x 3.8 x 1.8 cm  
Gift of Marion Walker Neidlinger, Class  
of 1923W; 51.16.12680

62. Oromo people, Ethiopia  
Hippopotamus leather shield, possibly  
late 19th century, collected 1964–65  
Hide, 30.48 x 58.4 cm  
Gift of Joel Whiting; 165.33.15647

63. Ngombe people, Democratic  
Republic of Congo  
Shield, late 19th century  
Organic fiber, wood, paint,  
127.5 x 43.7 cm  
Museum purchase; 39.64.6960

64. Nuer people, South Sudan  
Hippopotamus leather shield, possibly  
19th century, collected 1946–48  
Hide and wood, 141 x 47.4 x 1.9 cm  
Museum purchase; 48.66.11043

65. Shilluk people, South Sudan  
Leather shield, possibly 19th century,  
collected 1946–48  
Hide and wood, 126 x 44 x 2.4 cm  
Museum purchase; 48.66.11044

66. Zulu people, South Africa  
Hunting shield, collected before 1885  
Hide and wood, 70.1 cm  
Gift of Rev. Josiah Tyler; 13.25.842

67. Zulu people, South Africa  
Shield, 19th–20th century  
Hide, 52 cm  
Gift of the New Hampshire Historical  
Society; 42.21.7928

68. Unknown people, Democratic  
Republic of Congo  
Medicine bundle, early 20th century  
Leather, claws, glass beads, shell, bell,  
17 x 8 x 6 cm  
Gift of Robert L. Ripley, Class of 1939H;  
40.15.12616

69. Makonde people, Tanzania or  
Mozambique  
Medicine container, late 19th or  
early 20th century  
Gourds, wood, goatskin, cloth, fiber,  
copper wire, unknown organic materials,  
29 x 26 x 15 cm  
Purchased through the Alvin and Mary  
Bert Gutman 1940 Acquisition Fund;  
2005.70.1

70. Zaramo people, Tanzania  
Medicine container, late 19th  
or early 20th century  
Gourd, wood, seeds, glass beads,  
fiber, copper wire, unknown organic  
materials, 19.5 x 7 x 6 cm  
Purchased through the Alvin and Mary  
Bert Gutman 1940 Acquisition Fund;  
2005.70.2



# THE ART *of* WEAPONS

## Selections from the African Collection

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Maasai (Masai) people, Kenya and Tanzania, spear, about 1920,  
wood and iron. Acquired by exchange from the  
Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan; 53.30.12899

Front cover: Ngombe people, Democratic Republic of Congo,  
shield, late 19th century, organic fiber, wood, paint.  
Museum purchase; 39.64.6960

