SCULPTURE FROM LA GRANDE TERRE

By WILLIAM DAVENPORT

From April 10 to May 31, 1964 the University Museum presented an exhibition of sculpture and other objects from the South Sea island of New Caledonia, or *La Grande Terre* as it is often called by the French under whose administration it lies. No longer produced, this distinctive art is not so well represented in museums and private collections in the United States as it is in Europe. The University Museum's exhibition of "New Caledonian Art" was probably the largest ever displayed in this country. The pieces shown were assembled from the impressive collection of New Caledonian sculpture owned by the Philadelphia Commercial Museum, some of which are now on permanent loan to the University Museum, augmented by pieces from the University Museum's own small but splendid collection of ethnological material from the island, and by one piece lent by the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley.

As its French name suggests, *La Grande Terre* is one of the largest islands in the southwest Pacific Ocean. It is also the southernmost and terminal island in the chain of groups extending southeastward from New Guinea that is collectively termed Melanesia. The peoples of Melanesia are diverse in race, language, and culture. For the most part they are dark-skinned, hence the name of the region, Melanesia, meaning "Black Islands." More than 200 different languages are spoken in Melanesia, and perhaps half that many distinctive primitive cultures and subcultures can be identified in the region. Melanesian peoples everywhere produce remarkable objects which, by some contemporary Western aesthetic standards, are judged to have significant artistic import, even merit. Along with western

WILLIAM DAVENPORT, Associate Curator of the Oceania Section of the University Museum and Associate Professor in the Anthropology Department of the University of Pennsylvania, is currently engaged in ethnographic and archaeological field research in the British Solomon Islands of Melanesia. One of the ethnographic projects in the Solomons is a study of the sculpture and other art of the islands of Santa Ana and Santa Catalina, its technology, iconography, and stylistic differences among the artists. These two small islands of the eastern Solomons are among the very last places in Melanesia where sculpture and its associated pagan ritual have not been completely snuffed out by the advance of Western Civilization.

Africa, some parts of the aboriginal Americas, and the Polynesian islands of the central Pacific, Melanesia is one of the fountainheads of ethnographic art, and each of its many societies and cultures possesses its own tradition of artistic expression. The sculpture and allied art forms of *La Grande Terre* are one of the most distinctive of these once vigorous traditions of primitive art in Oceania.

Twenty to 30 miles wide and over 200 long, *La Grande Terre* is a complex mass of broken mountains, peaks, and transverse ridges that is much too rugged to be fully occupied and exploited by man, primitive or civilized. Although the island lies well within the southern tropics, except in the uplands it is not nearly so wet and verdant as others in this part of the Pacific. Yet when it was first encountered in 1774 by the great English navigator James Cook, who named it New Caledonia after the ancient name of Scotland, it had a population that has been estimated to have been as great as 100,000. This was an exceptionally large number for a Stone Age people of Oceania. Part of the remarkable success of the New Caledonian population was due to their efficient agriculture. As all over Melanesia, the important staple crops were the Oceanic yam *(Dioscorea* spp.), taro *(Colocasia* sp., *Alocasia* sp.), and coconut *(Cocos nucifera),* but the difference on *La Grande Terre* was that the many fertile hillsides were extensively terraced and perennial streams fed by rains falling in the uplands were skilfully diverted to irrigate the terraces. By these sophisticated means exceptionally high yields of taro, a highly nutritious, starchy tuber, were produced. The warm, coral-studded seas surrounding *La Grande Terre* and its smaller off-lying islands are also richly supplied with fish and shell fish, so in spite of the fact that the land provided no large game and all important domesticated animals were absent, the ancient population had an abundant supply of animal proteins. Appropriately, the pagan religion of old New Caledonia was strongly oriented toward maintaining fertility of the land and abundance in the surrounding seas.

The people of *La Grande Terre* and its satellite islands directly to the north and south, as well as the kindred societies of the Loyalty Islands to the east, lived in villages built in valley bottoms or upon the narrow discontinuous coastal plains. There was virtually no political unity among the many discrete settlements. Each village or loose aggregate of adjacent villages was fully independent and often even hostile toward the next. Because of the broken terrain of the island, communication and social interchange among settlements were frequently more intensive and closer across the island through mountain passes than, as is more often the situation on large islands, along the coasts. Communities across from one another on opposite coasts were often more alike culturally and linguistically to each other than were communities and districts next to each other on the same side. Thus, aboriginal *La Grande Terre* tended to be transversely striated into areas of similarity with cultural boundaries of dissimilarity along its entire length; the Isle of Pines off the southeastern tip and the Loyalty Islands to the east of the main island formed two additional distinctive and detached cultural zones. Local differences in sculptural styles followed this same trend of linguistic and cultural variability. Hence, there is no single art style in the New Caledonian area—rather a series of related local styles.

Sculpture of *La Grande Terre* was in wood, the representations predominately anthropomorphic. It was carved to symbolize the mystical powers of totemic progenitors, as traced only through the female line of descent, and to commemorate ancestors, as reckoned through the male line of descent and common residence in the same village. It is a deeply religious form of plastic expression. Each village had a part-time specialist sculptor who was informally selected, not on the basis of his technical abilities alone, but because of his particularly sensitive attitude toward and close spiritual relationship with the mystical forces he depicted in sculptured forms.

The universe as native New Caledonians conceived it was sustained by mysterious processes of sexual duality and polarity. Unseen were the feminine forces that provided continuity from the remote past into the projected future. They were symbolized in the natural world by the sea—whence everything originated—rain, moisture, perennial plants, evergreens, and other objects that revealed continuity and perpetuity. As a complement to these were the more tangible masculine forces that were symbolized by the land, dryness, annual plants, people, and other things that manifested transience, periodicity, growth and decline. In order for the invisible feminine forces to produce issue, from time to time they had to be seeded, impregnated, or vivified by complementary masculine forces. Religious rituals were symbolic enactments of bringing masculine and feminine cosmic forces together so the important sectors of both physical and social worlds would be perpetuated and increased. The sculptures were the concrete representations of these unseen forces.

During the 19th century the people of *La Grande Terre* came into ever increasing contact and often direct conflict with Europeans who coveted the island's valuable natural resources. New diseases and the introduction of firearms into local fighting drastically reduced the population. Christian missionaries began teaching in 1840; France annexed the whole New Caledonian area in 1853 and commenced using *La Grande Terre* as a penal colony a decade later. Native uprisings and retaliations against these intrusions were violently repressed and were followed by even more European encroachments and large scale economic development of local resources. Following the discovery of valuable mineral deposits, thousands of Asiatic laborers were imported to work in mines, and greater numbers of Europeans came to reside on the island. By 1900 the old New Caledonian cultures were no longer viable, the native Melanesian population but a shadow of what it had been a century before. Very little traditional sculpture has been produced on *La Grande Terre* in this century following the demise of the old social and religious systems. Much of what is preserved today in museum collections dates from the final phase of the aboriginal cultures. All the sculptured objects shown in the University Museum's exhibition and pictured in this article seem to have been produced and collected during this terminal period of aboriginal life. Even though there had been a full century of European impact on every quarter of native life, these influences which ultimately led to the demise of New Caledonian cultures seem to have affected the quality of the sculpture little up until the time it ceased to be carved altogether. Specimens and drawings of carvings dating from the early voyages of discovery and exploration of *La Grande Terre* are indistinguishable in style from the sculpture produced later, even though the former were made with stone and shell tools, the latter with steel blades.

One of the distinctive types of *La Grande Terre* sculpture is the ceremonial mask. Carved in hard wood, heavily sculptured with surfaces often, but not always, finely finished, stained or painted black, masks were made only in the northwestern districts of the island. Facial shapes and forms vary from ovoid with distorted features rendered in strong relief to almost circular with features spread out and somewhat flattened. The mask is but the sculptured unit of an elaborate costume that completely disguised the wearer. From the chin of the mask hang ropes of human hair representing a long beard. Above the forehead is fixed a band of plaited fibers, to the back of which is affixed a ruff of human hair. Surmounting the forehead band is a large topknot of hair, and from the bottom of the mask and lower edge of the forehead band falls a cape made from a piece of fishing net to which a covering of dark feathers are tied. These disguises were used in ceremonies aimed at invoking the perennial totemic powers that brought rain and abundance on land and in the sea.

Another distinctive type of carving is the heads and full figures carved atop a sharpened stake. These were driven into the ground to commemorate a ritual to local ancestors. There is much variation in these figures. Some are of men, some of women, and some of mothers carrying and nursing children. In one style the facial features resemble those of the more circular and flattened masks. Bodies are frequently constructed of simplified and rounded forms. In another style faces are more realistically carved and are often double. Projecting beards are a common motif and heads are sometimes surmounted by a round form that depicts the turban headdress worn by men of *La Grande Terre* and the topknot of the ceremonial masks.

The most impressive series of functionally related sculpture are the architectural accessories to the ceremonial men's houses of each village. These houses were fully circular, built around a massive king post, and covered by a steeply sloped conical roof of thatch. All of the several types of sculpture carved to embellish the house were commemorations of some aspect of the patrilineal ancestors of the household. In contrast to the masks which were of hard and lasting wood and meant to be handed down across the generations in perpetuity, just as the totemic powers they represented were perpetually transmitted and revivified each generation, the architectural sculpture was carved in soft woods, intended to last only as long as the occupants of the house lived. When they died the house and its dedicatory sculpture were allowed to moulder away just as did the body of the deceased. In some districts architectural sculptures were even ceremonially destroyed at the death of the senior

occupant and the consequent disbanding of his household. This is why many of the architectural pieces pictured here, as well as many that are in other collections, are often in poor condition.

Erecting the central king post, building the men's house around it, carving and installing the sculptural embellishments were a sacred series of propitiative rituals. On each side of the doorway were a matched pair of heavy carved slabs,

most typically with a stylized face carved at the top with geometric figures below. Often a similarly carved but smaller face was placed in the ground between or before them as a threshold figure. Across the top of the doorway was a lintel on which was carved or incised an all-over pattern of face figures. On these the ancestral face was reduced to its simplest and essential linear elements. There is a continuity of style between these doorway figures and the rounder masks with the more flattened and broad features.

Inside and at the back of the house, opposite the entrance, were another pair of large figures that balanced the doorway pair. Narrower and less massive, they were often styled quite differently from the figures flanking the door. Some, even, were carved in full round and resembled the style of the most sculptural masks and some of the figures on stakes.

Inside, running from the top of the doorway to the rear of the house, were two tie beams on which were carved further anthropomorphic figures and sometimes animals in low relief. None of these types of carving were displayed in the University Museum's recent exhibition.

The crowning embellishment of the house was a lofty pole with a carved figure midway along it. It was mounted at the apex of the conical roof and projected into the sky as a spire. Along the upper portion of the spire, above the carving, were hung large conch shells, symbolic of totemic origins in the sea. The formal styles of the spire carvings are not only the most distinctive and unique from *La Grande Terre,* they are also one of the rare instances where a mode of execution that has been called "split representation" is found. Split representation is a way of intellectually splitting and cutting a figure in full round so that all its dimensions can be represented on a single plane. It is akin to one of the ways in which the spherical world is represented on a flat surface by cutting the map into gores. In primitive art, split representation is found in such other widely separated cultures as those of the Indians of the Northwest Coast of North America and the Bakota peoples of the Congo. New Caledonian split representation on the spire figures is coupled with a rather rigid longitudinal bilateral symmetry and a vertical balance of sculptural elements. The figure is always repeated in a double faced or Janus type of presentation.

Most typically, the spire figure is topped by a headpiece, representing the topknot, as found in mask disguises, or as an enlarged design of an ornamental comb. Below, this is balanced by an ovoid representation of the chest and thorax. Just below the headpiece element is a form that represents the top of the head as though it were split and brought forward into projections. To balance this element is a similar form representing shoulders and arms. Above the arms a chin, greatly enlarged, is similarly split and projected outward. This is balanced above by elements of the forehead and a forehead band, as found in the mask costume. In the center of the split and projected forms rests the face of the figure, features flattened and extruded with ears—sometimes with top and lobes split apart and independently carved—horizontally projected beyond the cheek line. The total effect is of a group of symmetric and almost abstract forms stacked in a vertical series.

All the architectural sculpture types vary significantly from district to district, sub-cultural area to sub-cultural area. There is a decided trend to this variability, in the spire and door figures particularly, of less and less realism to more and more symbolism and geometrization as one moves from northwest to southeast along *La Grande Terre,* on beyond to the Isle of Pines, and finally out to the Loyalty Islands. Each area of New Caledonia can be said to have its distinctive "dialect" of architectural sculpture. In each the cultural meanings of the carvings are the same; only the formal expression of the iconographic elements changes.

Figure sculpture, miniaturized and conventionalized, is carried over to ornament certain utilitarian objects; even then, its religious significance seems not to be lost. Arrow foreshafts and

lances used in feuding and warfare often carry carved heads. The so-called parade axe, an elegantly hafted blade ground and polished from green, jade-like serpentine stone, decoratively bound and attached to a half coconut shell wrapped in cloth, often has a carved face on the handle. Such axes were carried by the ceremonial leader in one of the important ritual dances of some of the sub-cultures of *La Grande Terre*. Handles of hardwood knives, used to cut yams, are worked into stacked shapes that resemble the most abstractly geometric spire figures. Heads of fighting clubs, which are quite diverse in shape, also resemble some of the more abstractly conceived forms used in architectural sculpture.

In New Caledonia sculpture there is a decided preference for both round, even bulbous, forms and for geometric figures, sometimes angular, sometimes rounded. Often the special quality of a carving is to be found in the interplay of the two in a single composition. In a somewhat different tradition are still other objects of bamboo that are decorated with cut-out shapes, incision, and etching. Combs are one type of these. Shapes similar to those cut out on the tops of the combs are found also as crests on spire figures from the northwestern districts of *La Grande Terre*. But the more interesting bamboo objects —from the ethnographic angle at least—are bamboo tubes on which ritual scenes are engraved and blackened. In these, naively rendered human figures carry such implements as axes, clubs, and guns. Houses, on which the spire figures are disproportionately enlarged, are also a favored motif, for they are the focus of important community rituals. The etched tubes were used as containers for specialized protective magical charms.

The range and variation of sculptural compositions from *La Grande Terre* are another testament of the seemingly inexhaustible creativity of man in his quest to portray his subjective religious ideas and emotions in visible plastic form. Whether or not the New Caledonian sculptor, his clients, and his audiences ever sought to create and derive purely aesthetic experiences, as we think of them in Western Civilization, is dubious and at this time cannot be determined. But that the old societies of the New Caledonia area held sculpture to be a special vehicle of public communication to express their views and concerns regarding the universe about them is certain. What more fitting record could a primitive society without writing leave of itself as civilization engulfed it?

MASKS

A mask with the top portion of the disguise attached. The headdress is carried as a helmet on the wearer's head. A slit between the jagged teeth allows the wearer to peer out. In this mask the exaggeratedly hooked nose is fully joined to the elongated face, the nostrils are accentuated with red paint. Facial surfaces are smoothed and blackened with a coating of pitch, and for contrast the teeth are left unfinished in natural wood. Hidden by the forehead band of fiber and the stringy human-hair beard are flanges to which the soft parts of the headdress are attached. P-3032, height of visible part of face 8 inches.

SUGGESTED READING

JEAN GUIART, *L'Art Autochtone de Nouvelle-Calédonie,* Éditions des Études Mélanésienne, n.d. *The Arts of the South Pacific* (Translated by Anthony Christie). Golden Press, New York, 1963.

PATRICK O'REILLY and JEAN POIRIER, *Nouvelle-Calédonie Documents Iconographiques Anciens,* Nouvelles Éditions latines. Paris, 1959.

FRITZ SARASIN, *Atlas zur Ethnologie der Neu-Caledonier und Loyalty-Insulaner.* München, 1929.

A mask without its feather and fiber accoutrements. The tip of the nose is projected below the nostrils which are moved laterally to the side. The incurving nose form is cut away from the face, and surfaces have been left rough and unstained. The special significance, if any, of the exaggerated nose forms which give these masks their extraordinary sculptural force is not known, but they are a compositional motif found throughout New Caledonian sculpture. P-4994, overall height 17¼ inches.

A masked venerator carrying a club and spear. The topknot of the headdress is frequently depicted in other sculpture as an ovoid disc, and the cape of black, iridescent, aquatic bird feathers appears in other carvings as a composition of geometric elements.

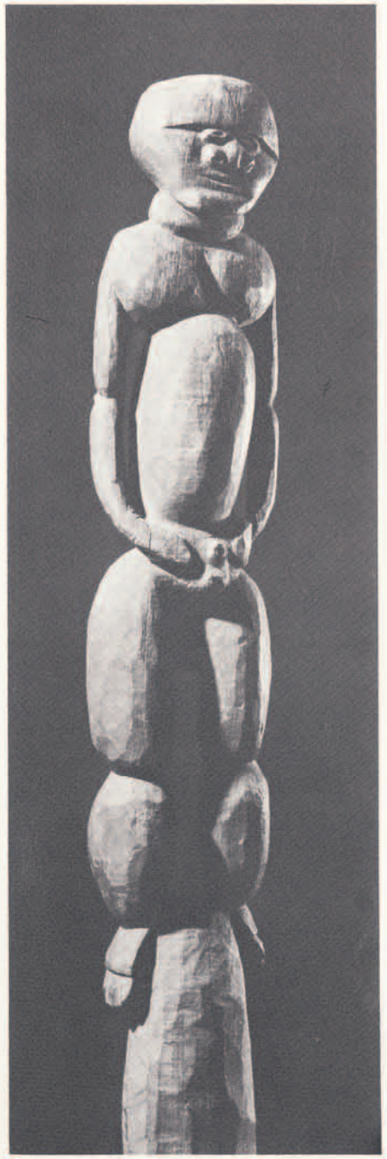
Although the facial forms of this mask are similar to those in other masks, they are arranged in a circular composition instead of being elongated, and the cheeks are portrayed as surface bulges. The nasal composition is flattened into a cloverleaf shape by setting nostrils obliquely against the nose ridge and bringing the tip of the nose to a point. The nose is completely cut away from and overhangs the face which has been stained black. The topknot is reduced in size, and the headband is absent. P-3033, overall mask height 13 inches, visible portion only 10 inches.

The fibrous foundation on which the topknot of human hair is constructed is badly crushed in this headdress. Most of the cape feathers have been lost, revealing the net base. Elongated in composition, the pointed and curved nose is freed from the face, nostril cavities are reddened, and the lips are accentuated by the attachment of shiny black and red seeds. Philadelphia Commercial Museum loan, overall mask height 12½ inches.

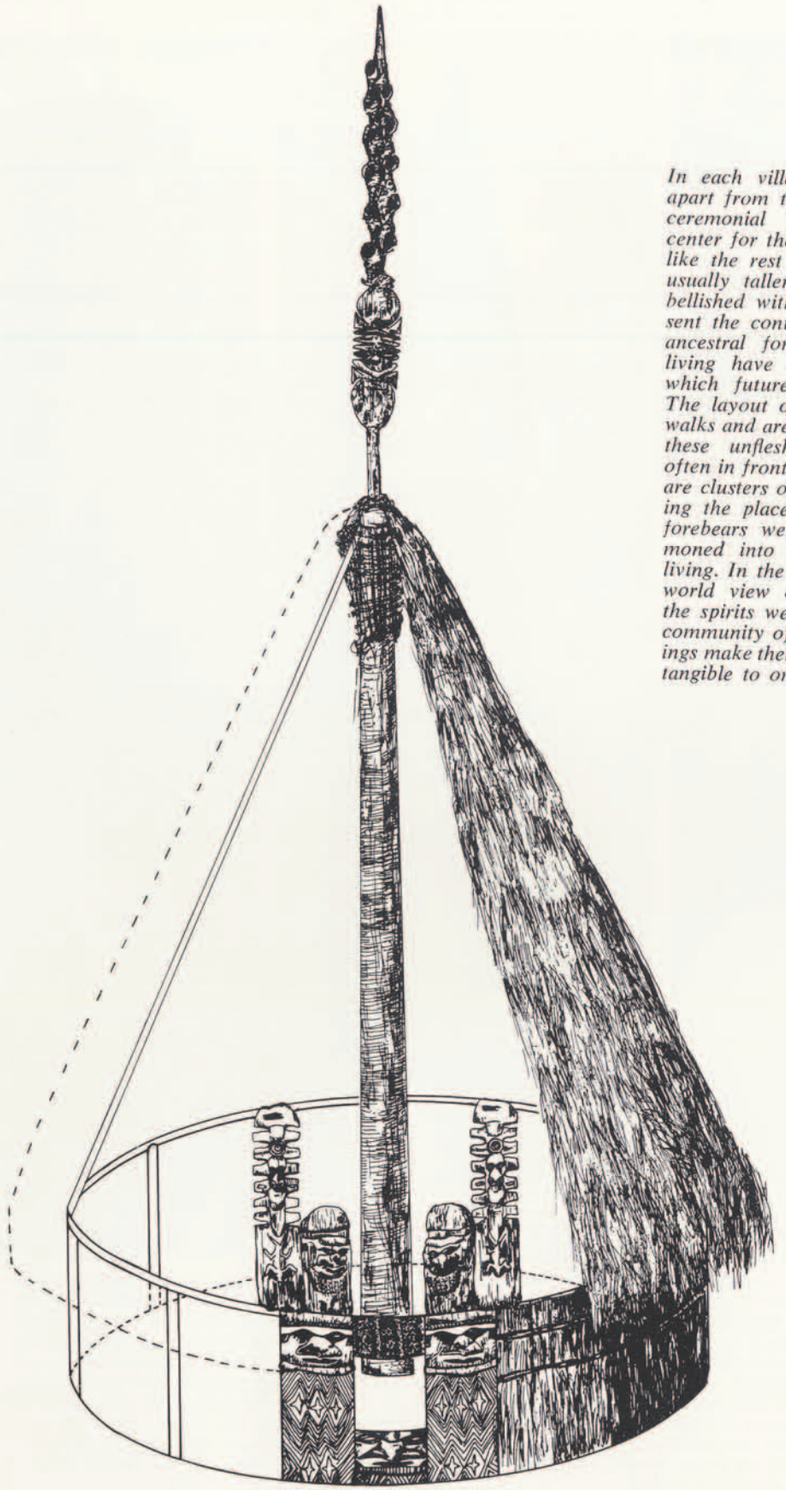
STAKED FIGURES

Head fragment of a staked figure. The facial features are enclosed in a heart-shaped frame formed by the continuous line of the chin and brow ridges. This compositional device is sometimes found on masks as well. P-4981, height from top of head to tip of beard 5 inches.

A double-faced staked figure constructed of beard, face, and topknot forms. Somewhat more realistically carved, this figure combines both angular and rounded forms. The color is the rich natural brown of the wood. P-3217, height from topknot to tip of beard 12¼ inches.



The figure at the right is less fully sculptured than other staked figures. The single face surmounted by a volume of geometric motifs is accented with red ochre added to the incised grooves. Philadelphia Commercial Museum loan, overall height 18 inches, carved portion 10¼ inches. On the center figure, like the double-faced carving on the opposite page, chin and beard receive more formal emphasis than the face. Facial features are angular in contrast to rounded shapes of the headdress. At one time the entire surface was blackened; red and white bands circle the topknot, red and white squares checker the headband, and red accents are added to the brow ridges and nostrils. Philadelphia Commercial Museum loan, overall height over 6 feet, height of carving, beard to topknot, 25 inches. The left figure is in the so-called rounded or bulbous sculptural style. All the principal forms remind one of balls of clay stuck together to make the figure. The five facial feature elements—two eyes, two nostrils, and a nose ridge—are arranged in the same way as on many masks. Philadelphia Commercial Museum loan, overall height 5 feet, figure height 26 inches.



In each village one dwelling, set apart from the others, serves as a ceremonial and commemorative center for the community. Circular like the rest of the dwellings, but usually taller, it is profusely embellished with carvings that represent the continuity of totemic and ancestral forces from which the living have descended and upon which future generations depend. The layout of the village includes walks and areas set aside for use by these unfleshly antecedents, and often in front of the dwellings there are clusters of staked figures marking the place where the spirits of forebears were ceremonially summoned into the company of the living. In the mystical and ethereal world view of New Caledonians, the spirits were co-residents in the community of the living. The carvings make their incorporeal presence tangible to ordinary human senses.

DOORWAY CARVINGS

A pair of figures stood one on each side of the ceremonial house doorway. Each subarea on La Grande Terre *had its identifiable style of these portal figures. The eight figures in these drawings (none of them in the University Museum exhibition) are reproduced here to show part of the range of regional variation. The face on the carving at top left, which most closely resembles some masks in style, is from the northwestern portion of the island. In general, the more southeasterly the area, the less heavily sculptured, the more geometrically conventionalized the face becomes, and the less the carving is divided into a recognizable face placed above a field of simple geometric shapes (drawing at bottom right). Not shown are similar portal carvings from the Loyalty Islands which have an all-over pattern only of diamond-shaped motifs.*

DOORWAY CARVINGS

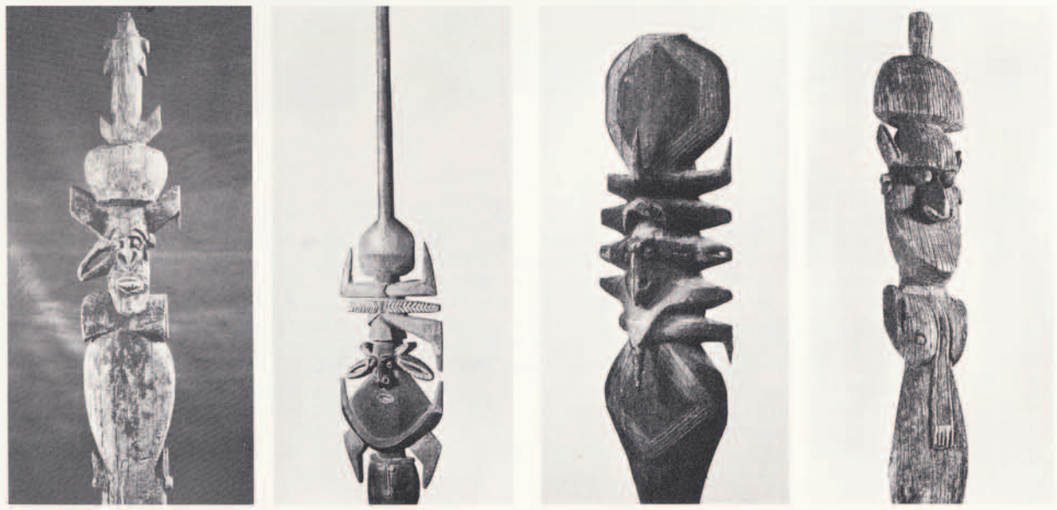
Three doorway sculptures—a matched pair of door-jamb figures and a sill figure—placed on this page in the relationship they occupied when attached to a ceremonial house. Not shown (and not represented in the University Museum exhibition) is a lintel carving that completed the carved ensemble which framed the house entrance. In contrast to the bold carvings at the sides and across the threshold, lintels were carved lightly with an interlocking array of linear motifs derived from the New Caledonian sculptor's way of depicting the nose ridge with the eyes alongside above and two flaring nostrils below. The portal carvings were not an integral structural part of the ceremonial house but were carved and attached to the frame after the house was fully built. Perforations at the top of the three figures pictured here show where they were attached. The pair of carvings (P-3425a, b) are stained black with red ochre applied to the grooves around the geometric figures. Overall heights slightly over 6 feet. The sill figure (Philadelphia Commercial Museum loan) is painted red with all facial features but the tongue in black. Height 35 inches.

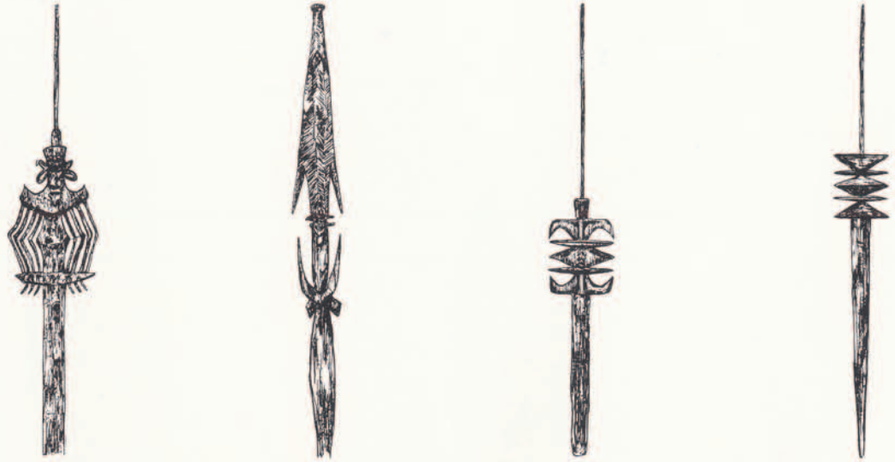
Another pair of door-jamb carvings in a style slightly different from those on the opposite page. The headband, the continuous straight line of the brow ridge, the extremely flared nostrils, small unemphasized mouth, and slightly curved chin ridge are distinctive features of style in the extreme northwestern part of the island. Although this pair is matched in size, the sculptor avoided duplicating the carving by repeating the face on the right-hand figure. The pair on the opposite page and the single figure on the cover with double curved brow ridges represent an areal style just to the east of the figures above. Philadelphia Commercial Museum loan, unpainted, height 51 inches.

SPIRES

The eight drawings on this and the next page are of spire carvings in several area styles. None of these figures were in the University Museum exhibition. Every spire is a double figure, the two sides identical. The four figures above are from districts of the northwestern half of La Grande Terre *and are the most realistic. Although split representation is a feature of all the area styles, each area style derives its distinctiveness by emphasizing some formal elements of the split image over others and arranging all parts of the image into a characteristic composition.*

The eight carvings below on this page and the next, all recently exhibited by the University Museum, are another selection from different area style traditions. The lightly carved necklaces on some of the figures represent talismans worn by New Caledonians to provide constant protection through personal contact with the mysterious forces of the universe. None of the spires pictured is complete, the uncarved portion either below or above the figure and some projecting forms of the carving having been cut or broken off. Left to right: black surface, red accents, 29 inches; black surface with red and white trims, 36 inches; black surface with red accents, 38 inches; unpainted, 60, 23, 43½, 29½, 42 inches. Heights given are of the carved portion of the spire only.





In the southeastern parts of La Grande Terre, *the spire figures become more formalized and more abstract, and those of the Loyalty Islands (right figure) are no more than a series of geometric forms resembling spools placed in a vertically symmetric arrangement. This is the same trend that is found on the doorway carvings illustrated on preceding pages. It is because the doorway and spire figures communicate the same ideas in each district, yet each local style is distinctive from all the others in spite of the fact that there are almost element-for-element correspondences among them, that New Caledonian sculpture can be thought of as a plastic language of many mutually intelligible dialects.*

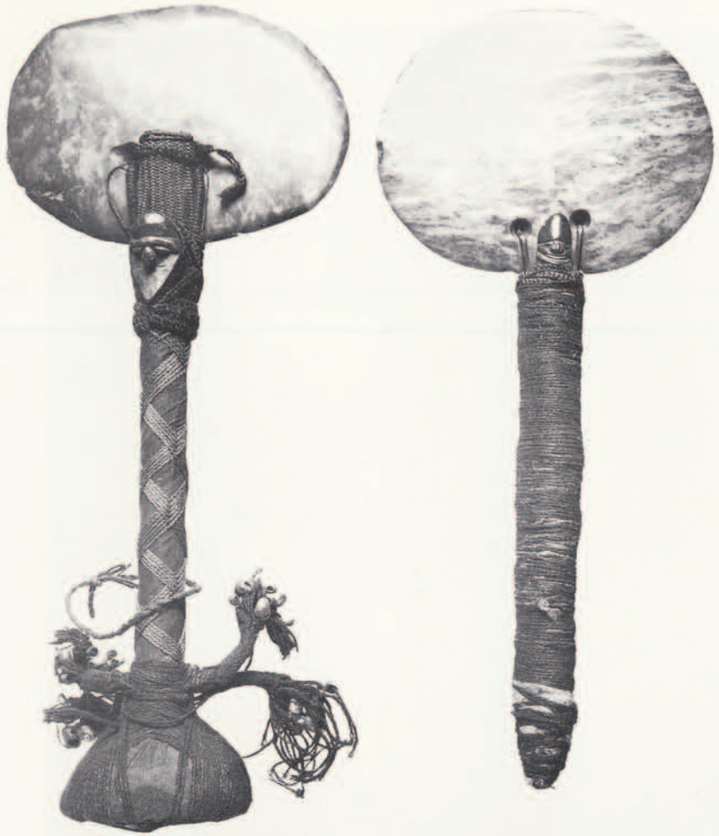
The New Caledonian sculptor, as with most primitive artisans and some religious artists in our own past periods of great artistic achievement, subordinated the expression of his own creative individuality to the conventions of the local style tradition in which he worked. Yet, all individuality was not lost. The differences to be found in at least five of the carvings reproduced here—four on the opposite page, and right this page—when compared with drawings in the same area styles shown above reveal the extent of individual expression to be found among a few anonymous carvers. Of the eight carvings pictured, the second and third on this page are University Museum P-3151 and P-3150; the others are Philadelphia Commercial Museum loans.

INTERIOR SCULPTURE

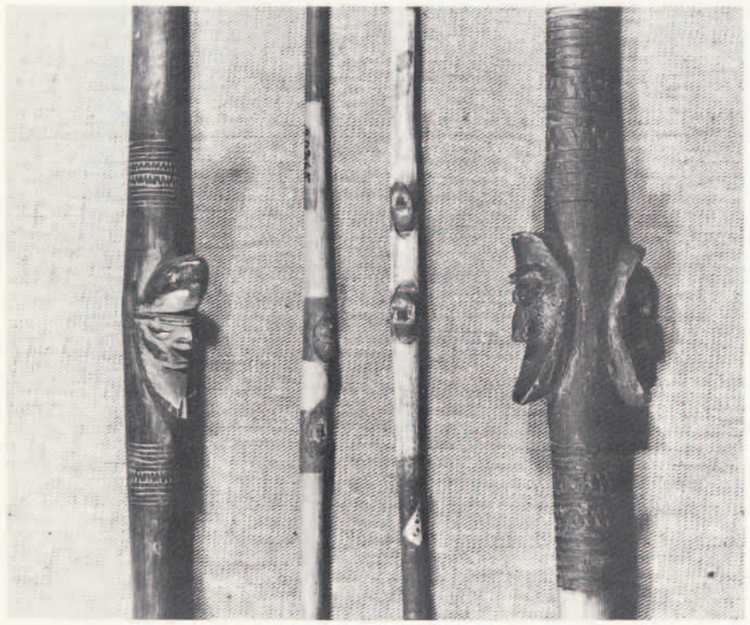
A pair of interior sculptures balanced the exterior pair flanking the entrance. Their carving style, however, resembled the spires and staked figures more than the doorway figures. The pair above, made from convex planks, are flat and carved on one side only, not fully in the round. Originally, the figure at left had a beard nearly three feet long painted on the plank surface below the chin. (Philadelphia Commercial Museum loan; right, top to chin 29 inches; left, top to chin 33 inches; overall length of both figures about 8 feet.)

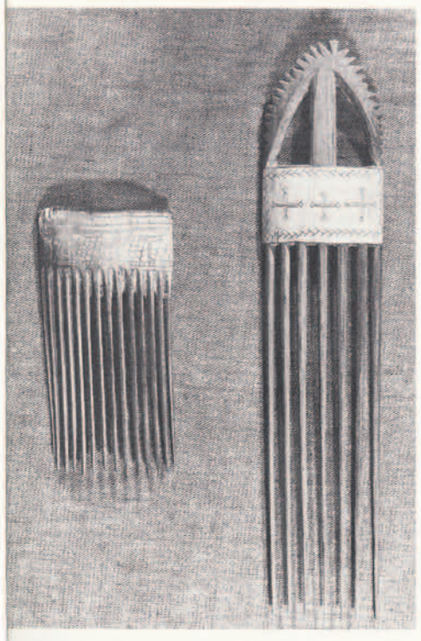
The figure at the right is a masterpiece of large full-round sculpture. The head is in the fully sculptured style of the masks; the body borrows some features of the rounded style of the staked figures. The forehead is covered with a headband of plaited fiber identical with those on some mask headdresses. (Philadelphia Commercial Museum loan, surfaces painted black except topknot, height 67 inches.)

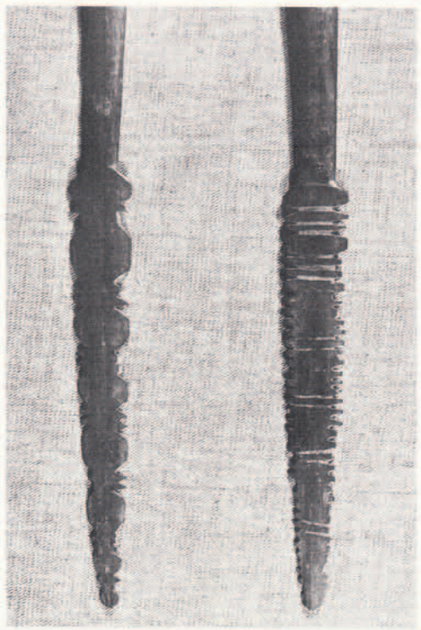
In addition to representational and abstract sculpture, New Caledonian art had also a pictographic tradition in which ceremonial and secular scenes were engraved on bamboo tubes. These tubes were used as containers for potent magical substances to control weather and the seas. The style of these engravings seems to us naive in comparison with the sophisticated ways in which sculptured forms were handled. At the left is an engraving detail of a ceremonial house with its spire in the northwestern local style greatly enlarged for emphasis. At the right, and from the same bamboo tube, a man carries a European axe; below is a fighting club shaped like one of those shown on page 19. The scene seems to be either an actual or a mock ceremonial fight. (Object lent by the Robert H. Lowie Museum, University of California, Berkeley.)



Miniaturized faces, simplified yet sometimes rendered in recognizable area styles, were carved on handles of ceremonial or so-called parade axes (above), on spears (below, outside objects), and on arrow foreshafts (below, inside objects). The faces vary in size from ½ inch long on the arrows to 2¼ inches on the larger of the parade axes. On the axes the carved face, the plaited attachment above it, and the crowning circular form of the greenstone blade are intended also to represent the same configuration of human features, headband, and topknot that is contained in the masked headdress.







(Far left) Ceremonial combs of bamboo with cut-out figures and incised motifs are another type of geometric design in New Caledonian art. The larger of the combs pictured is 10 inches long. Similar compositions, greatly enlarged, are a feature of spire figures in the far northwestern area style. See left figures on page 14.

Handles of wooden knives (left), serrated to improve the grip, are worked into symmetric abstract compositions resembling the spires of the Loyalty Islands local style. See right figures on page 15.

This feeling and high regard for non-representational and abstract design is found in three dimensional form on the heads of fighting clubs (below left) which appear in a variety of rounded and sharpened shapes. Even on such utilitarian objects as the adzes with which artisans carved (below right), the blade-holding devices are finished in spheroidal sculptured forms.