Reference & Instruction Services for African Art History

Tom Caswell
University of Florida
Reference & Instruction Services
for African Art History

- University of Florida – ca. 48,000 students
- School of Art & Art History – ca. 600
  - ca. 500 undergrads, 90 master’s, 10 doctoral
  - 2 Africanist art history faculty
- Center for African Studies
  - a U.S. Department of Education Title VI National Resource Center
  - over 100 affiliated teaching and research faculty
  - undergraduate/graduate minors and graduate certificates
- Harn Museum of Art
  - large African art collection
  - 1 curator for African art and director is an Africanist
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 Typically reach over 450 students through 20+ art history/museum studies courses

 Of those courses, 2 or 3 per semester (ca. 60-90 students) cover or touch on African arts-related material

 Generally, one-hour guest lecture/demo sessions

 Courses:

 - Arts of Central Africa
 - Arts of West Africa
 - African Visual Culture Seminar
 - Egyptian Art
 - Contemporary African Art
 - Non-Western Art Survey

 Beaded Coronet (Orikogbofo)
 Nigeria, Yoruba People
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Basic research strategy:

- Reference sources
- Books, parts of books, exhibition catalogs, videos
- Magazine/journal articles
- Newspaper articles
- Images/Visual information
- Authoritative web sites
- People resources
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Reference sources:

- Encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, etc.
- Often a good starting point
- Authoritative, background information
- Spelling variations (e.g. Chokwe, Chiboque, Tsokwe...)
- Useful for finding other terms/keywords to possibly use in searches
- Emphasize paper and online sources
- Browse the DT and NB call number areas in the reference collection
Reference sources (cont’d):

Grove Dictionary of Art
http://www.groveart.com/
Reference sources (cont’d):

 Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names® Online
 Full Record Display

ID: 1001889

Lagos (state)

Coordinates:
Lat: 06 35 00 N degrees minutes Lat: 6.5833 decimal degrees
Long: 003 35 00 E degrees minutes Long: 3.5933 decimal degrees

Note: Was administered by British as Colony of Lagos 1914-1954; most inhabitants are Yoruban, but the population recently has grown more heterogeneous.

Names:
Lagos (preferred, C,V,N,English-P)
Lagos state (display, C,V,N)

Hierarchical Position:
- World (facet)
  - Africa (continent)
    - Nigeria (nation)
    - Lagos (state)

Place Types:
state (preferred, C) ............. established 1976
  first level subdivision (C)

Sources and Contributors:
Lagos........... [VP]
............. Webster’s Geographical Dictionary (1984) 848
Lagos state........... [VP]

Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names
http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/vocabularies/tgn/
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Books, parts of books, exhibition catalogs, videos:

- Good, in-depth sources on certain cultures, artists, etc.
- Use local library catalog and library union catalogs such as WorldCat (http://www.worldcat.org) to find items
- Importance of effective search terms and truncation and established subject headings
- Serendipity of browsing stacks and virtual call #s (DT,NB)
- African art research materials often disguise themselves as anthropology, ethnology, archaeology, history or travel, rather than art)
- Survey texts (e.g. A History of Art in Africa)
- All-important footnotes and bibliographies for finding further information
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Books, parts of books, exhibition catalogs, videos (cont’d):


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Central Bantu

12. Kwese (Bakuese, Bakwese).
13. Luwa (Balua, Baluwa, Lua), with the Nzofo and Sonde (Basonde).
14. Mbala (Ambala, Bambala), with the Huana (Baguana, Bahuana, Bauangana, Wengana) and Humbu (Bahumbu, Bavumbu, Bavwmbu).
15. Ngongo (Bangongo), with the Songo (Basongo).
16. Pende (Bapende, Baphendi, Capende, Tupende). They number about 27,000.
17. Suku (Bapindi, Bastuku, Pindi, Pindji), with the Samba (Tsaaan). They number about 80,000.
18. Yaka (Ayaacka, Bayaka, Bayakala, Djakka, Dschagga, Giaca, Jaca, Majacalla, Mayacca, Muyaka, Myaka, Niaka, Yacca, Yagga), with the Lula (Balula).

**KASAI CLUSTER**

The tribes of this cluster lie northeast of the Kwango group on or near the Kasai tributary of the Congo River, and adjacent to the Mongo province.

20. Dzing (Badinga, Badzing, Baringa, Dinga), with the Lori (Alwer, Baloli, Balori), Ngoli (Angul, Bangodi, Bangoli, Bangulu), and Nzari (Banzadi, Bandzala, Bandjadi, Bandzari).
21. Kuba (Bacouba, Bakuba, Tukubba), embracing the Binji (Babindji), Mbala (Bambala), Ngongo (Bangongo), and lesser subtribes. They number about 75,000.
Books, parts of books, exhibition catalogs, videos (cont’d):

- Exhibition catalogs from museums with large African collections (Musées Barbier-Mueller, Geneva; Musée royal de l’Afrique centrale, Tervuren; National Museum of African Art, Washington D.C.; Metropolitan Museum, etc.)
- Videos from companies like PBS, CustomFlix, Films for the Humanities
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Magazine/journal articles:
- Good for contemporary subjects
- Electronic copy not always available
- Searchable in indexing and abstracting databases like Art Full Text, JSTOR, etc.
- African arts covered in many different disciplines (anthropology, history, linguistics, etc.) so often can’t limit to any one database

Newspaper articles:
- Good for current exhibits (NYTimes, LA Times, Times-UK)
- Not always in-depth
Images/Visual information:

- Best digital images from proprietary databases working with contributing museums (RLG’s CAMIO, WilsonWeb’s Art Museum Image Gallery, ArtSTOR, etc.)
- Image search engines (images.google.com) and directories (www.artcyclopedia.com) can lead you to owning museum/gallery
- Magazine/journal indexes (Art Full Text) also index reproductions
- Use local image resources (slide libraries) and local databases like: http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/afa/reserves/poynor/
- Stress importance of copyright and image rights
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**Authoritative web sites:**
- Google vs. the “Deep Web”
- Be very critical of sources of information
- Use authoritative sites when possible
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People resources:

- Authors
- Professors
- Museum professionals
- And of course, librarians!

Costume for Masquerade (Deangle)
Liberia, Mano People

Virgin and Child
Ethiopian

Elephant mask (ogbodo enyi)
Nigeria, Igbo People

All collection images courtesy of the Harn Museum, University of Florida
http://www.harn.ufl.edu/
Instructions for Use of the Harn Museum Object Study Rooms

1. Objects that instructors have reserved for class study are available only to students enrolled in the course.

2. Object Study rooms are open to students:
   - Tuesdays 12:15 – 2:15 PM
   - Wednesdays 9:30 – 11:30 AM
   If you are not available to visit the rooms during the hours above, you may make an appointment by calling Natasha Alexander in the Registrar’s office, at 392-9826 ext.121 or emailing at nalexander@harn.ufl.edu. Appointments must be made in advance and be mutually convenient for both parties. We do not offer appointments on the weekends. Students are expected to arrive on time or risk forfeiture of appointment. If you cannot keep the appointment, please call the museum to cancel as staff time has been reserved for you.

3. Upon arrival at the museum, ask the attendant at the information desk to notify the Registration department. A museum staff member will escort you to the lower level.

4. You will need to sign in both upon arrival to and departure from the object study room.

5. Only note pads and pencils (not pens) will be allowed in the object study rooms. Purses, backpacks, etc. will be left at the door or may be checked in at the information desk.

6. With permission, photographs may be taken, however flash may not be used.

7. STUDENTS MAY NOT HANDLE WORKS OF ART...Please ask a member of the Registration staff for assistance.
If you choose to do your research paper on an 'unknown' object placed on reserve in the Harn Museum you must choose your object and look at it on return visits during visitation periods as noted above. Visitation periods are available for 4 weeks only. When you visit, make a good photograph of your object. Take measurements. Carefully observe and analyze the piece and take notes on what you see.

I have placed only 30 or so objects on reserve, and only one student may do any one object. Thus, if you want to reserve an appropriate object, visit as soon as possible and put your name on the list for that object.

In this paper, I anticipate several types of information to be covered. Consider this to be your beginning outline:

**Visual analysis:** carefully analyze what you see and verbally describe the unknown object. Leave out any interpretation at this stage.

**Comparisons:** Make comparisons to similar published objects should lead you to be able to identify the object, attribute it to a specific group of people, and locate it on the map of Africa. Illustrate the comparative objects and discuss how they are similar and different form the unknown object and how they allow you to identify the object under question.

**Cultural context:** Once you know what the object is, the final portion of your paper is a discussion of the cultural context of the object. This will allow your reader to know why the object was made, how it functioned in the culture, and other things of importance to our understanding of the art object.
Arts of Central Africa: Object Assignment (cont’d)

Harn Identification # S-73-134
approx. 13” high, 1’ diameter
Arts of Central Africa:
Object Assignment (cont’d)
Arts of Central Africa: Object Assignment (cont’d)

Location: ARCHITECTURE/FINE ARTS LIBRARY -- NK2685.75 .S53 [Regular Loan]
Author, etc.: Sieber, Roy, 1923- Title: African furniture and household objects / Roy Sieber.
Notes: Published in conjunction with a major exhibition organized by the American Federation of Arts, held at Indianapolis Museum of Art, Apr. 9-May 25, 1980, and others. Notes: Bibliography: p. 269-276.
ISBN: 0253119278 025328242X (pbk.)
House furnishings -- Africa, Sub-Saharan -- Exhibitions.
Arts of Central Africa: Object Assignment (cont’d)
Arts of Central Africa:
Object Assignment (cont’d)

- Stool of the Bamileke, Cameroon
  Collection Barbier-Müller, Cat. 59
  approx. 37 cm. high

- Stool of the Bamileke, Cameroon
  Collection Barbier-Müller, Cat. 61
  approx. 30 cm. high

- Stool from Cameroon
  Collection Barbier-Müller, Cat. 61
  approx. 30 cm. high

- Harn Identification # S-73-134
  approx. 13” high, 1’ diameter

- African seats / edited by Sandro Bocola.
Arts of Central Africa: Object Assignment (cont’d)

Njoya seated on the throne, Photo: Franz Thorbecke, 1912
Arts of Central Africa: Object Assignment (cont’d)
Arts of Central Africa: Object Assignment (cont’d)

**Stools and Spiders: A Powerful Pair**

The Cameroon Grasslands has a dynamic history during which the Njoya and the Harn people migrated into the area, assembled small, diverse ethnic groups, and worked for years to establish shared associations and kingdoms. This area is a convergence of such diverse art forms such as masks, musical instruments, and other art forms, specific to the earth spider, representing a major connection to a time where the Harn and the Njoya shared a common ancestry.

Through visual representations, the earth spider, reminiscent of the Cameroon Grasslands, appears to be combined with the members of the Harn and Njoya artist group. The earth spider is used to communicate the dynamism of Cameroon Grasslands style of African art.

**Figure 1** Cameroon Grasslands Stool 13 inches high, 1 foot in diameter Identification number: S-73-134

However, the carving of the piece is not complicated including a footrest, geometric and animal patterns, human figures, and beading. The beading is an intricate design of reds, whites, blues, and yellows. The two essential similarities between the Harn piece and Njoya’s stool is the basic shape of the stool—two disks with open work between—and the use of the earth spider. A single, large spider is depicted on each side of the footrest in a similar pattern of interweaving with a central diamond.

**Figure 4** Njoya Seated on the Throne Photo: Franz Thorbecke 1912

**Works Cited**


