

The British
Museum

Water Vessel
20th Century
British Museum

“THE JOURNEY OF THE ZANDE POT”

15 August 2019

Free

Object in Focus

Supported by the de Laszlo Foundation
Supported by the Sino-British Fellowship Trust



The Journey of the Zande Pot

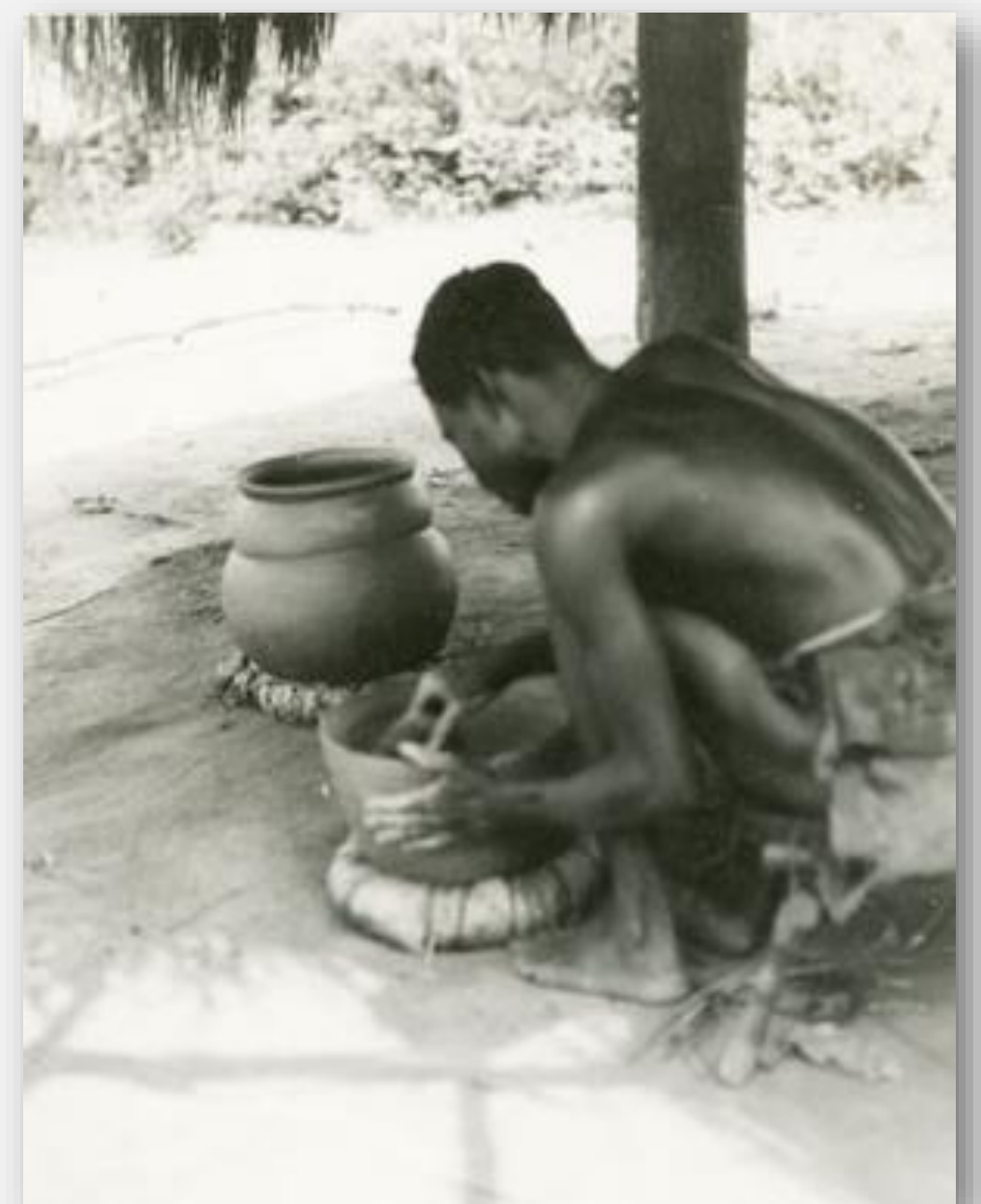
During the early 20th century, European explorers brought samples of the material culture of African groups to European museums. Such knowledge journeys involved the transportation of objects, raw materials and tools - and even the production of audiovisual files - to satisfy the curiosity of European audiences. One such explorer was Percy Powell-Cotton. Having a particular interest in the African continent, he collected local art from several groups, including the Zande.



This map shows the area where Zande People live

The Zande are a large cultural group inhabiting contemporary South Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo. At the time of Powell-Cotton's visits, the Zande were organized into several kingdoms where the power relations between kings, their courtiers and their guests were reinforced through the exchange of objects at court, including pottery vessels.

Being aware of the practice of collecting, local artisans began to produce pottery pieces combining their local techniques and styles with what they perceived as the European standard. Pots were skillfully produced and decorated to be given as gifts to Europeans at a Zande court. By these means, while the Zande elites were reinforcing their power through the practice of gift giving, explorers such as Cotton-Powell were building up their collections and bringing Zande knowledge across the sea.



These pictures show a Zande potter at work and a wooden spatula, an example of the types of tool they use.

Pottery Water Vessel.
Af 1934.0308.27
Zande People, South Sudan
Early 20th Century

This pot was made by the extraordinarily skilled Zande artisan Mbitim and collected by Powell-Cotton who visited his workshop in 1933.

Note the precision of the incisions on the face and hairstyle, including a decorative scar on the cheek,

uncommon among Zande people but common among the neighbouring Mangbetu.

This design is evidence of the close relationship between these two groups at the time. Moreover, these vessels attracted European attention because of their anthropomorphic forms.

Donated by Major Percy Horace Powell-Cotton



Zande Pot Vessel

British Museum Collection Online:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/E_Af1934-0308-27

THE JOURNEY OF THE ZANDE POT

Unlimited Journey, Journey of Art

15 August 2019

In Zande, South Sudan, wooden spatulas, snail shells and fragments of gourd were the anthropomorphic vessels shaped in the hands of Mbitim, a male potter, and are on display in various museums in Europe, including the British Museum, attracting the attention of European explorers.

Taking a long journey from the Zande region of South Sudan the water vessel awaits its visitors in the British Museum Exhibition Hall.

This exhibition is the story of the pot journeying from ZANDE.

Pottery Water Vessel
Zande People, South Sudan
Early 20th Century



Events

Discover the journey of Zande Art and engage in various activities throughout the exhibition.

Workshops

Families

15 August 2019, 11:00 – 16:00

You can explore with Mangu, a master of pottery to discover the art of clay.

Children (age 7 – 10)

15 August 2019, 10:30 – 14:00

Zande pots with children's creativity.

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