

## OLD POTTERY FROM BRAZIL

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The collections of the Department of Anthropology of Field Museum were recently augmented by fifty-four specimens of ancient Brazilian pottery received in an exchange with the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia.

These were excavated in 1915 on Marajo Island, Brazil, by the late Dr. William Curtis



Mortuary Vessel

Example of primitive art from Marajo Island in the lower Amazon region, probably dating back to about A.D. 1200.

Farabee, former Curator of the American Section of the Philadelphia institution.

Marajo Island is the largest of the many islands which block the mouth of the Amazon River. It covers an area about half the size of the state of Pennsylvania. It is nowhere more than twenty feet above water level. During half of each year the greater part is converted into an immense morass, through the rank grass of which canoes and even sailboats are hauled by wading oxen. Along the principal lakes and streams are found large mounds sometimes covering areas of two or three acres and built up to a height of fifteen or twenty feet. These were doubtless erected by the pre-Columbian population for the purpose of elevating their homes above flood-level, and it was in these mounds that Dr. Farabee excavated and secured the pottery vessels contained in this collection, as well as many others in the University Museum in Philadelphia. All of the mounds are oval or elliptical in shape with broad flat tops. The pottery generally is of large size, but is mostly in fragmentary condition.

The large pottery vessels were evidently used for mortuary purposes. In certain places, or possibly at a certain period, the dead were cremated and the ashes interred in urns. At other times and places immense urns were employed in which the dead were placed in a sitting position. The bones and ashes of the deceased had entirely disappeared in the damp climate, as well as whatever other objects were deposited with the dead, the sole contents found within any of the urns being *tangas*—convex triangular objects of pottery, which were worn by the women. It must be realized that these

people were not even in the stone-age stage of culture, since no stone exists within hundreds of miles of the mouth of the Amazon, and the only non-perishable materials which they possessed were made of pottery and shell.

Practically all the pottery is highly ornamented in several techniques—painted, incised, and relief. The largest burial urns are generally decorated both with relief and with painting in polychrome designs. One of the large specimens in the present collection measures twenty-six inches across the top and is thirty inches in height. The relief decoration on the neck portrays very conventionalized human faces, while the lower part is profusely decorated with painted curvilinear and apparently non-naturalistic designs, mainly in brown with touches of red. Another type of painting is mainly in red, frequently with fine lines in angular, geometric designs. Probably the most ornate type is that in which the entire surface of red pottery is covered with elaborate designs in low carving.

It is impossible to determine the age of these vessels. No trace of objects of European manufacture was found with them, and they can therefore definitely be ascribed to a period before the conquest. How much older they are is problematical, but most probably they can be ascribed to the period of about A.D. 1200. Of the people who made and used them we know practically nothing; they and their descendants have completely disappeared from this region.

In the collection are also a few even more rare and unusual pottery vessels from other islands near the mouth of the Amazon; these are in animal or human form. With some of these were found objects of European manufacture of the colonial period, and therefore they probably may be assigned to the sixteenth century.

## WALNUT WOOD EXHIBIT

By LLEWELYN WILLIAMS

Assistant in Wood Technology

The latest additions to the Museum's exhibits of foreign woods include a series of panels of Circassian, French and English walnut. Although derived from trees of the same species, *Juglans regia*, these three varieties have distinctive differences in color, grain and figure.

Circassian walnut is a native of the Caspian Sea region, but its distribution extends eastward through the Himalayas to China, and also across Persia. The present day supplies, however, originate in several southern provinces of Russia. In early days its delicious fruits were considered a food of luxury. It soon gained popularity among the Greeks and Romans, and was planted so widely that its range became extended to almost all European countries.

Combining beauty of color and figure, strength, durability, ease of working and a beautiful finish, few other woods have enjoyed such favor as walnut. Formerly it was available only to those of wealth and position. Its popularity followed more or less the advance of the Renaissance in various countries.

## Giant Puffball Received

A giant puffball, member of the mushroom family, weighing more than six pounds, and more than a foot in diameter, has been presented to Field Museum by students of the Froebel High School in Gary, Indiana. These fungi seldom grow this large, and this one is the largest brought to Field Museum in fifteen years, according to Dr. B. E. Dahlgren, Acting Curator of Botany.

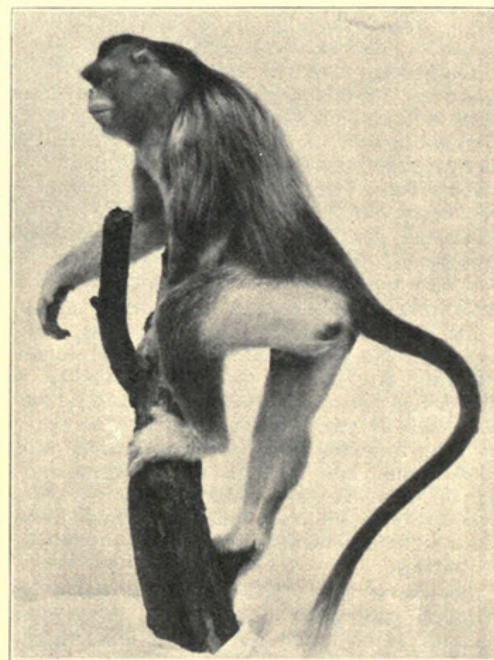
## NEW EXHIBIT OF MONKEYS

A new collection of monkeys from various parts of Africa, Asia and the East Indies, including a number of specimens obtained by recent expeditions, has been placed on exhibition in the systematic series of mammals in Hall 15 of the Museum.

Of unusual interest is an excellent specimen of the rare golden (or snub-nosed) monkey which was obtained by Colonel Theodore Roosevelt and Kermit Roosevelt while leading the William V. Kelley-Roosevelts Expedition to Eastern Asia for Field Museum. This animal is an inhabitant of the great snowclad mountain ranges in the province of Szechwan, China, and is found only in forests in the higher altitudes, according to Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood, Curator of Zoology.

A Himalayan langur, obtained by the Suydam Cutting Expedition to Sikkim, India, is another outstanding specimen. This animal is found only in the upper Himalayas, and is the largest of the langurs, which is the general name for a group of numerous long-tailed, arboreal, and herbivorous monkeys characteristic of southeastern Asia. There are also exhibited a specimen of Kolb's guenon brought from Kenya by Captain Harold A. White of New York, one of the leaders of the Harold White-John Coats African Expedition, and an Abyssinian guereza obtained by the Field Museum—*Chicago Daily News* Abyssinian Expedition. The Crane Pacific Expedition, sponsored and led by Cornelius Crane aboard his yacht *Illyria* is represented in the collection by a maroon langur secured in Borneo.

Other monkeys in the collection include specimens of Indian langur, proboscis monkey of Borneo, nilgiri langur of India, banded



Golden Monkey

Rare monkey obtained by the Kelley-Roosevelts Expedition, now on exhibition with other new specimens in Hall 15.

langur of Malacca, Erxleben's monkey from Cameroon, Hocheur guenon of West Africa, white-collared mangabey, and the Angolan guereza. The specimens were prepared for exhibition by Staff Taxidermist Arthur G. Rueckert.

The peculiar egg-laying mammals of Australia are the subject of an exhibit in the Department of Zoology.





Williams, Llewelyn. 1932. "Walnut Wood Exhibit." *Field Museum news* 3(1), 3–3.

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