

# CPS SOURCE bySunday

**Africa - Colonialism:** Modern-era European colonization of Africa began in the early 1900s, a time when interest in other cultures and the past was becoming increasingly popular. The Belgians and the French began collecting art, and African art began to appear in museums across the world. Because most African art is wooden and deteriorates faster than other materials, many of these artifacts date no earlier than the 1900s, or the years of this colonization period.

One popular art form collected during this time was ceremonial or authoritative staffs, which were used in almost every African tribe. Often the staffs represented the hierarchy among the chiefs of the tribe, who might carry a staff to show their rank as distinguished elders. The ornamental faces on the staffs can represent spirits, chiefs, or the chief's ancestors. They are as much a religious symbol as an authoritative one. The staffs can be crafted of wood, iron, brass, gold leaf, and other metals. More expensive and valuable materials were used on staffs for more powerful carriers. For example, in the Chokwe tribe, brass was the metal of authority, and the staffs or ornaments decorating the staffs were made from brass.

Staffs in the Congo, as pictured below, are speaker staffs, or linguist staffs, and are held by the speaker. First seen in Africa around 1900, staffs were given to chiefs by colonial officers to allocate representatives in the colonial government. A

speaker might have several staffs with different carved images to convey the best meaning within his speech. In Ghana, staffs were made of wood and gold leaf and would generally illustrate specific proverbs such as "it is when one undertakes a worthy enterprise that one gets assistance and encouragement." Some staffs were characterized by their naturalism, and the faces of the figures on the staffs would appear as realistic as possible.

Often, these ceremonial staffs would have an ancestral figure that might represent the portrait of the ancestor, or the faces might resemble the carrier. Whenever a staff was decorated with a female figure, it was generally used to show specific traits within the carrier. For instance, in a wooden staff from Angola, the expression, high forehead, and bodily ornaments revealed the positive qualities the leader might have possessed at the time he carried it. A large forehead meant wisdom, while ornaments around the figure were meant to show social achievement. Among the people of the Luba tribe, women's bodies are considered to be carriers of spirituality and divinity, so female figures adorning the staffs are highly valuable.



#1999-0003



#1999-0005



#1999-0004



#1999-0002

Speaker Staffs  
Congo, Central Africa  
ca 1915

## EXPLORE

To see more artifacts from Africa in the General Collection, visit the Museum of Anthropology's online databases:  
<https://anthromuseum.missouri.edu/?q=online-databases>

### Database Search Words:

Africa, staff, carve, wood

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### Tips for Using the Museum Databases

- Log in as a "Guest."
- Enter search terms into one or more fields and click the "Perform Find" button in the status area on the left-hand side of the screen.
- Use the book icon in the status area to move from one record to another in the found set.
- Click on the magnifying glass icon to return to find mode and perform additional searches.
- When finished working with a database, please be sure to click the "Log Out" button in the status area to close your session.

# Colonialism (1945)



S by S: Africa, part 2—Activity(s)

### **Contextualization:**

Pull the artifacts, only, up on the Smartboard. Working from the artifacts without any other information, undertake an artifact inquiry. What do they think this is? What do they think it is made of? Who might have used it? How might it have been used? Where might it have been found? What other questions do you want to ask about it?

1. What do you see in the artifacts? Be literal in your responses.
2. Where and when do you think the artifacts were created?
3. What was going on in the nation, region, country, continent, and world at that time? Consider politics, economics, religion, society, science, conflict, innovation.....

Then,

Use a range of maps to locate the Congo, in relation to the rest of Africa, and to Europe. Get groups of students to find out who was ruling and what was happening in Belgium, France and other parts of Europe at the time when the speaking staffs were made. Devise parallel timelines and record rulers, clothes, buildings, images, artifacts. In what ways are these artifacts a product of their time?

### **Two essential contextualizing questions:**

- 1. What outside factors shaped, affected, or influenced the events we are talking about?**
- 2. What supportable arguments can you make about the effects of those factors?**

### **Comparison:**

Have students read and discuss the S by S article (see contextualization activity above for anticipatory set, and setting the stage)



Next, utilize Teaching History with 100 Objects, Palace Doors from Nigeria.

[http://teachinghistory100.org/objects/palace\\_doors](http://teachinghistory100.org/objects/palace_doors)

Show students close-up images and details of the door panels. Explain briefly the occasion that the panels depict. Help them to identify and comment on the different characters: the Ogoga, his queen, Captain Ambrose, the porters and what they are carrying, the prisoners, soldiers, animals etc.

About the object:

[http://teachinghistory100.org/objects/about\\_the\\_object/palace\\_doors](http://teachinghistory100.org/objects/about_the_object/palace_doors)

1. Ask students to compare the carving of the meeting on the doors with the photograph in [http://teachinghistory100.org/objects/for\\_the\\_classroom/palace\\_doors](http://teachinghistory100.org/objects/for_the_classroom/palace_doors) .

Ask them to study the images carefully and to compare how the participants are shown, especially in terms of dress and poses. Ask students which of the figures they think is depicted as having the most power and why that might be. Do these two images produce similar or different responses in the viewer and how might a Nigerian and British viewer differ?

2. Compare the carving of Captain Ambrose and the other British on the door and the figures, below:

**WHAT DID NIGERIAN PEOPLE  
THINK OF BRITISH OFFICIALS?**

**What is the carver trying to say  
about the British official and  
Queen Victoria?**

**What attitudes to the British  
government and the Queen  
do these carvings show?**



Source 18: Nigerian carving  
of Queen Victoria  
British Museum



Source 17: Nigerian  
carving of British official  
British Museum



Source 19: Nigerian carving of European official  
British Museum

What impression do these give us of Nigerian perceptions of British rule and the people who enforced it? Students might then compare the carving of a native policeman from the East Africa Protectorate – see [http://teachinghistory100.org/objects/for\\_the\\_classroom/palace\\_doors](http://teachinghistory100.org/objects/for_the_classroom/palace_doors) . Ask students why they think British officials in East Africa employed native men, rather than British residents, as policemen and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this.

3. Make a comparative statement about the colonization of Africa that you could support with evidence from these images (from the Source by Sunday, and 100 objects artifacts).

4. What other specific images would you like to have to better support your comparison statement?

5. How and where might you find those images?