

Material Culture of the Pacific Islands, and Africa

Week Eleven

Goals

- Learn about the various arts produced in Africa
- Learn, through the artifacts, the cultural differences among the Pacific island groups of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.
- Learn about the Moai statues as well as the rise and decline of the people of the Easter Island
- How does preconceived notions about “primitive” art affect our understanding or appreciation of works from Native America, Pacific Islands, and of Africa?

What comes to mind when you hear “African Art”



Art of Africa

- Before 19th century, outside influences in Africa were mostly Islam (Fatimid dynasty, Mamluk)
- Europeans first visited in 16th century
- In 19th century, explorers charted Africa, and missionaries followed
- Colonization of African society
- Much of Africa's art we study are objects that were used in rituals or daily life.



Kente Cloth.
Asante (Ghana).
Circa 1930-40s.
Rayon.

296 x 180 cm



About Kente Cloth

Learn about its
original
function,
production,
meanings

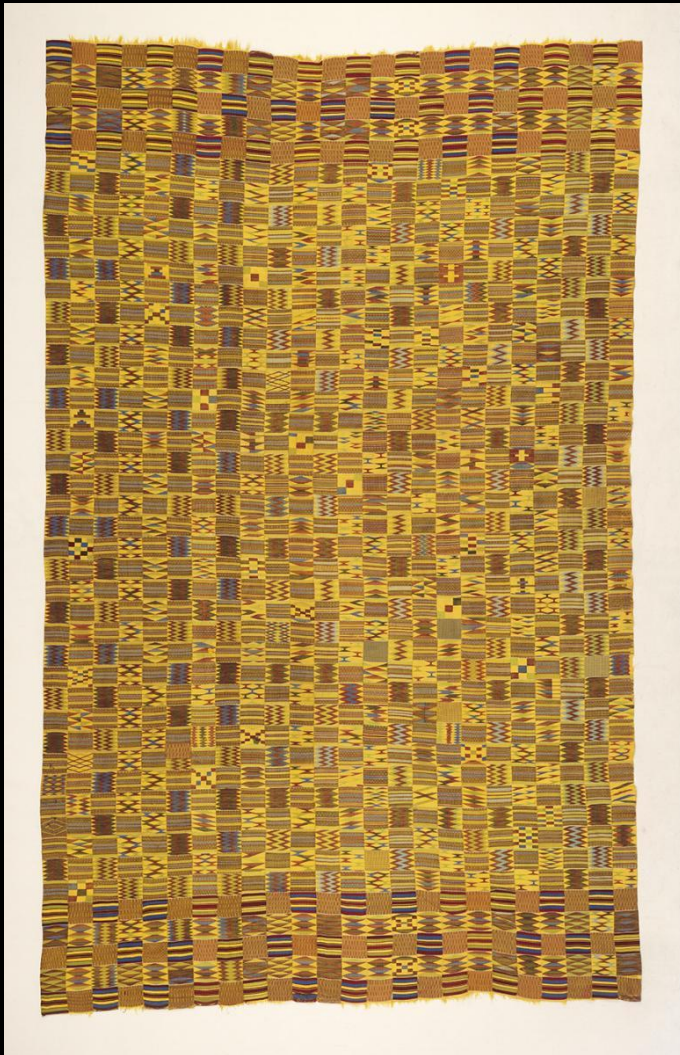
El Anatsui (b. 1944). **Between Heaven and Earth**. 2006. Aluminum, copper, wire. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Audio Interview with artist



Explore similarities and differences



Yinka Shonibare. **Scramble for Africa**. 2003. 14
Life-size fiberglass mannequins, 14 chairs,
table, and Dutch wax-printed cotton.



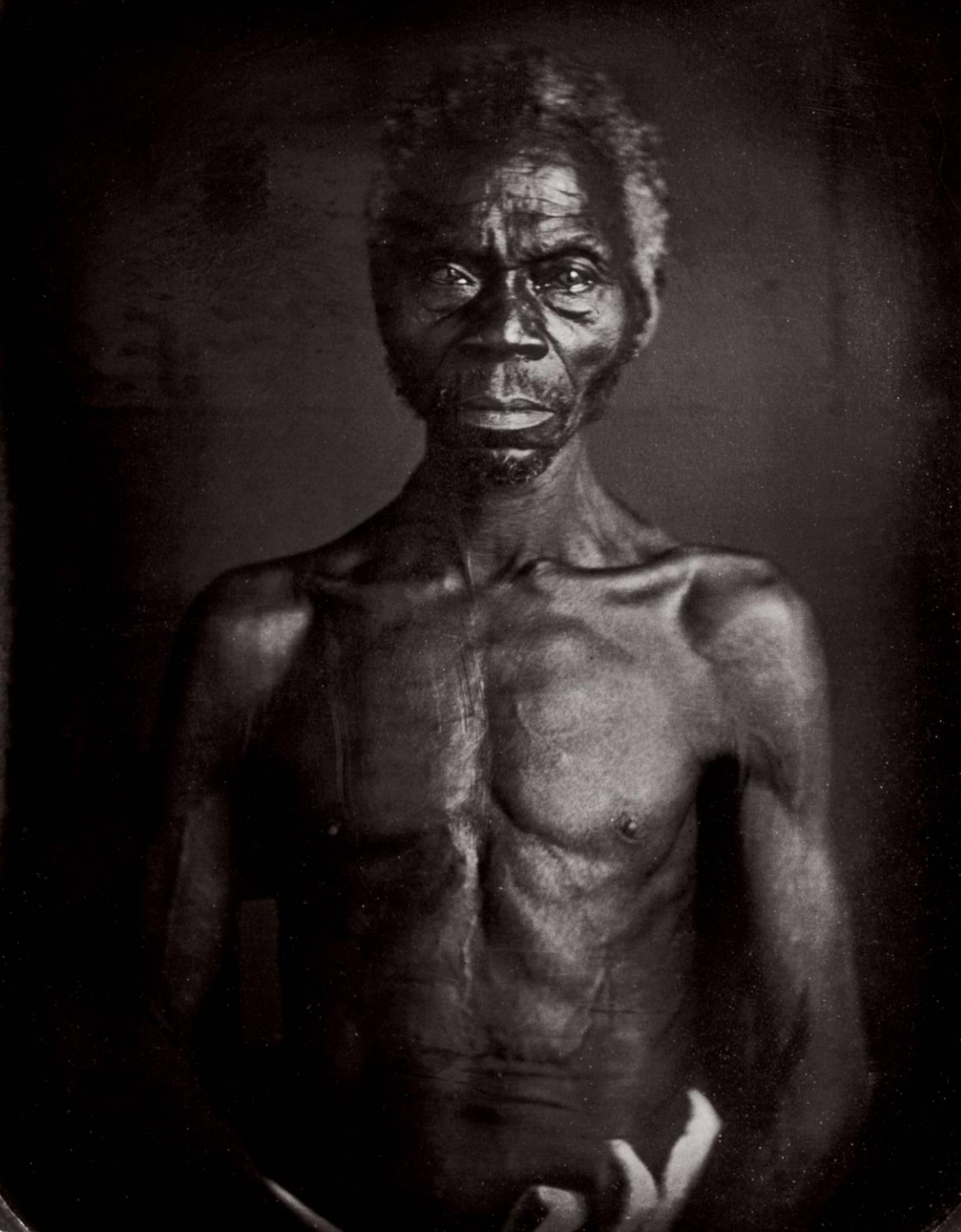
How can we interpret this work?



Striking points: headless sculptures, bright clothing. Seated at a table with map of Africa on it.



[Documentary](#) on Yinke Shonibare and his art

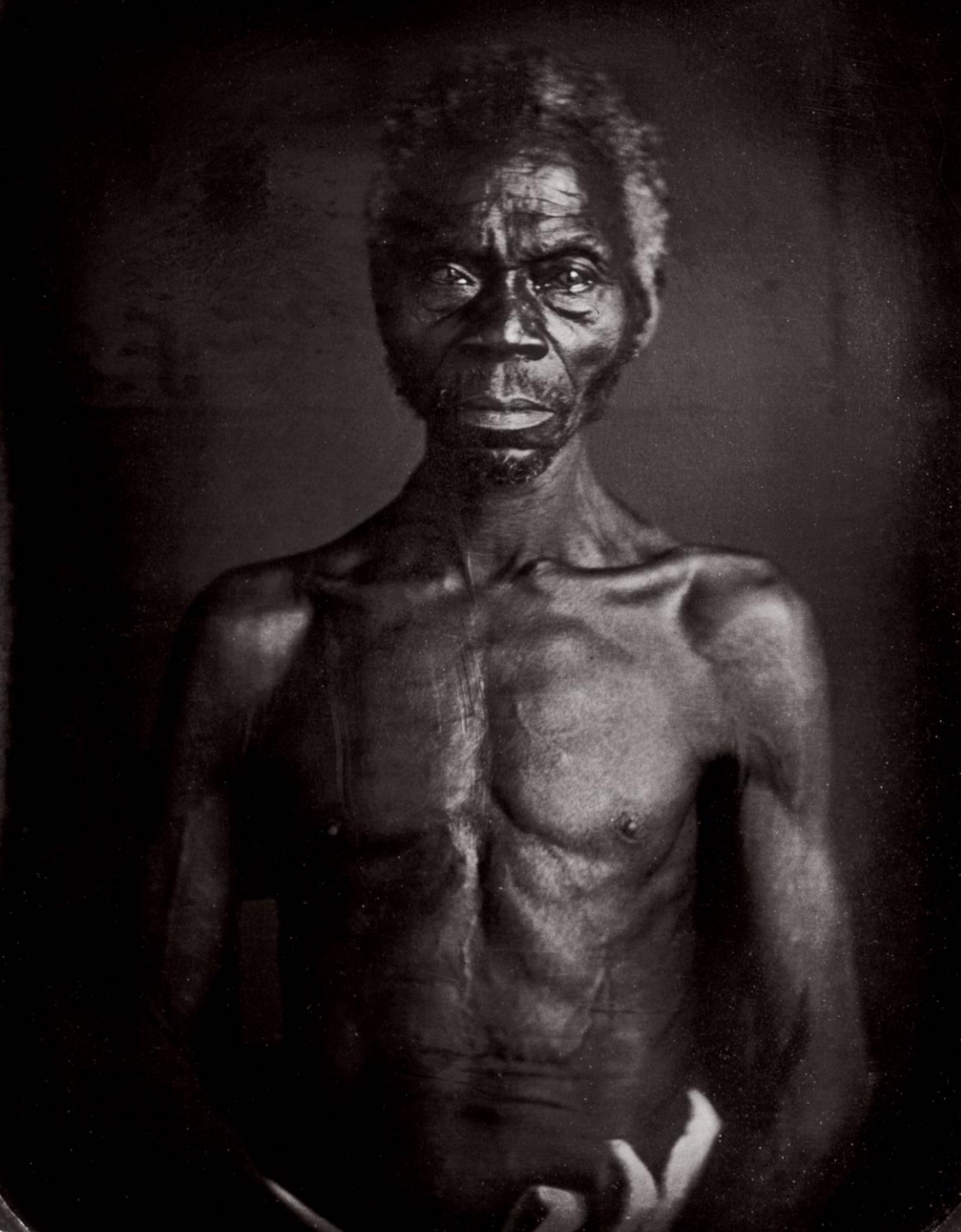


Renty, Congo,
on plantation
of B.F. Taylor,
Columbia, S.C.

JT Zealy.

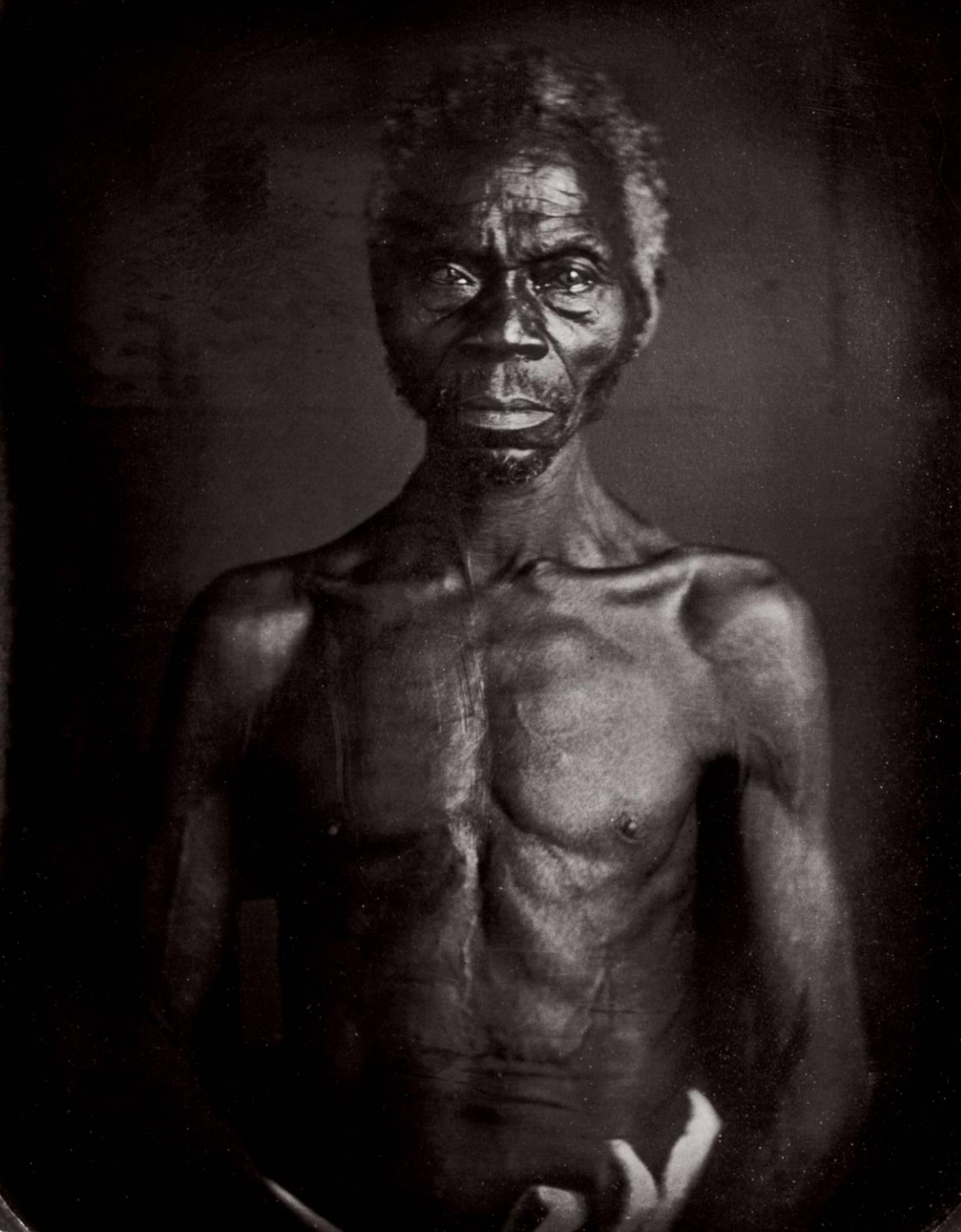
Daguerreotype

1850.



What emotion does this work convey?

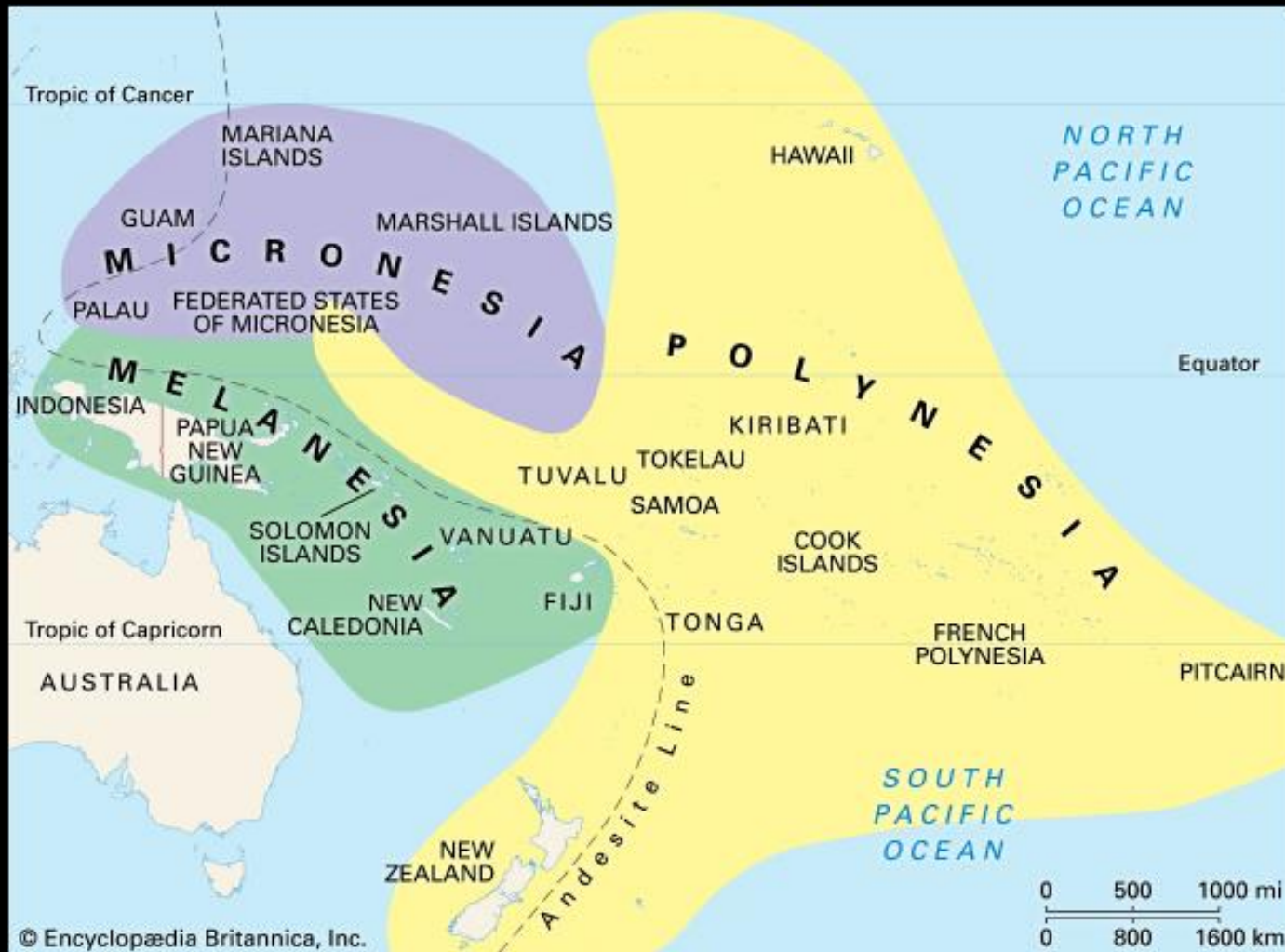
What was the origin use of this work?



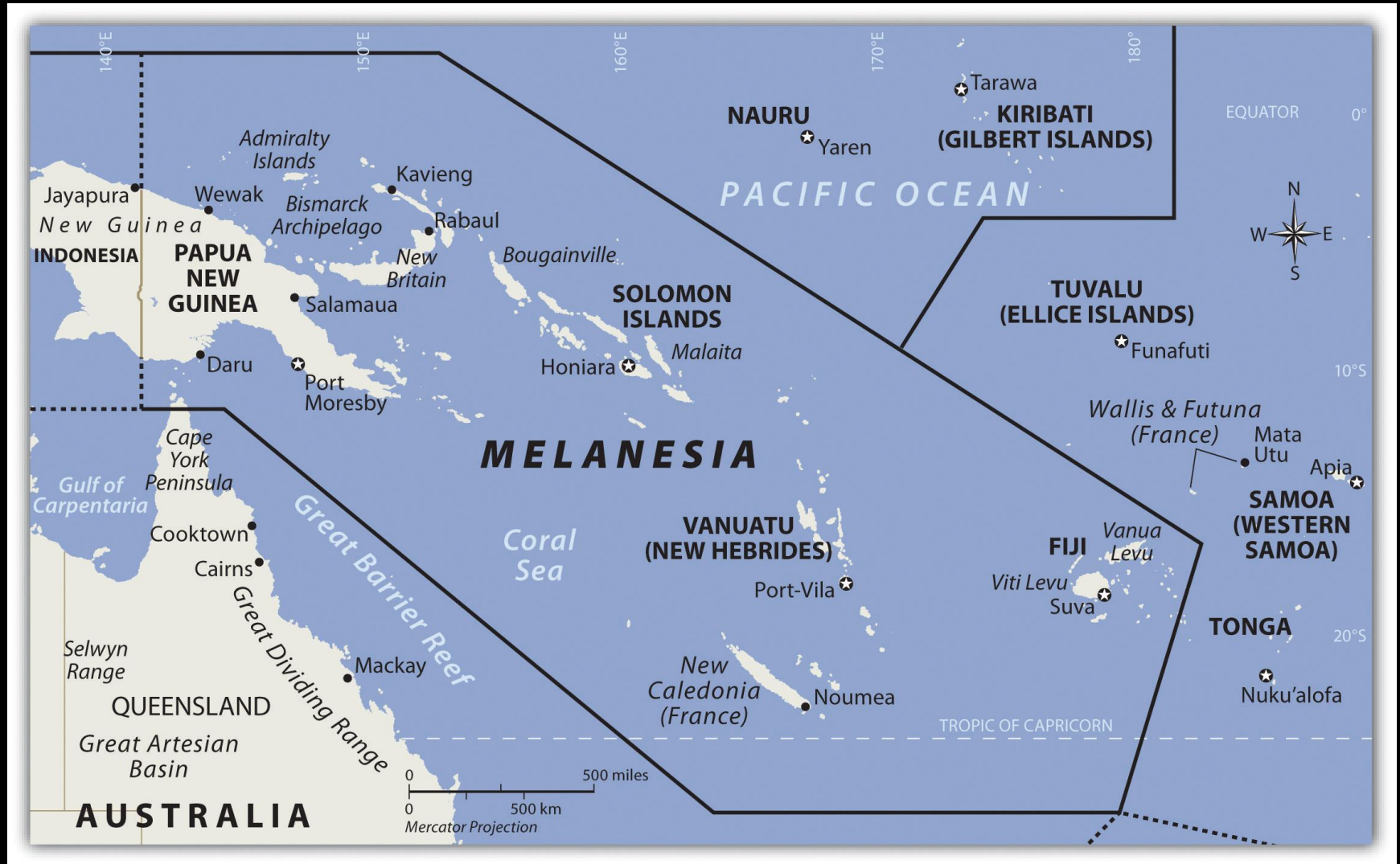
Who decides
what is art and
what is not?

What associations come to mind
when you hear “Pacific Island Art”

Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia



Islands of Melanesia



Islands of Melanesia

- Melanesia means “black islands” for the skin colors of its inhabitants
- New Guinea, islands extending to Fiji and New Caledonia
- Early inhabitants migrated there from Taiwan
- Raised pigs, cultivated taro and yams
- Brought dogs, pigs, and chickens
- Reliance on agriculture, so live in permanent settlements

Exterior of Korambo (Haus Tambaran).
Kinbangwa village. Sepik River, Papua New
Guinea, Abelam. 20th century. Melanesia



How does this structure epitomizes the culture?



Asmat Ancestral Spirit Poles (Bisj). Buepis village, Fajit River, West Papua Province, Indonesia. Circa 1960. Wood, paint, palm leaves, and fiber. 18' (5.48 m). Melanesia.

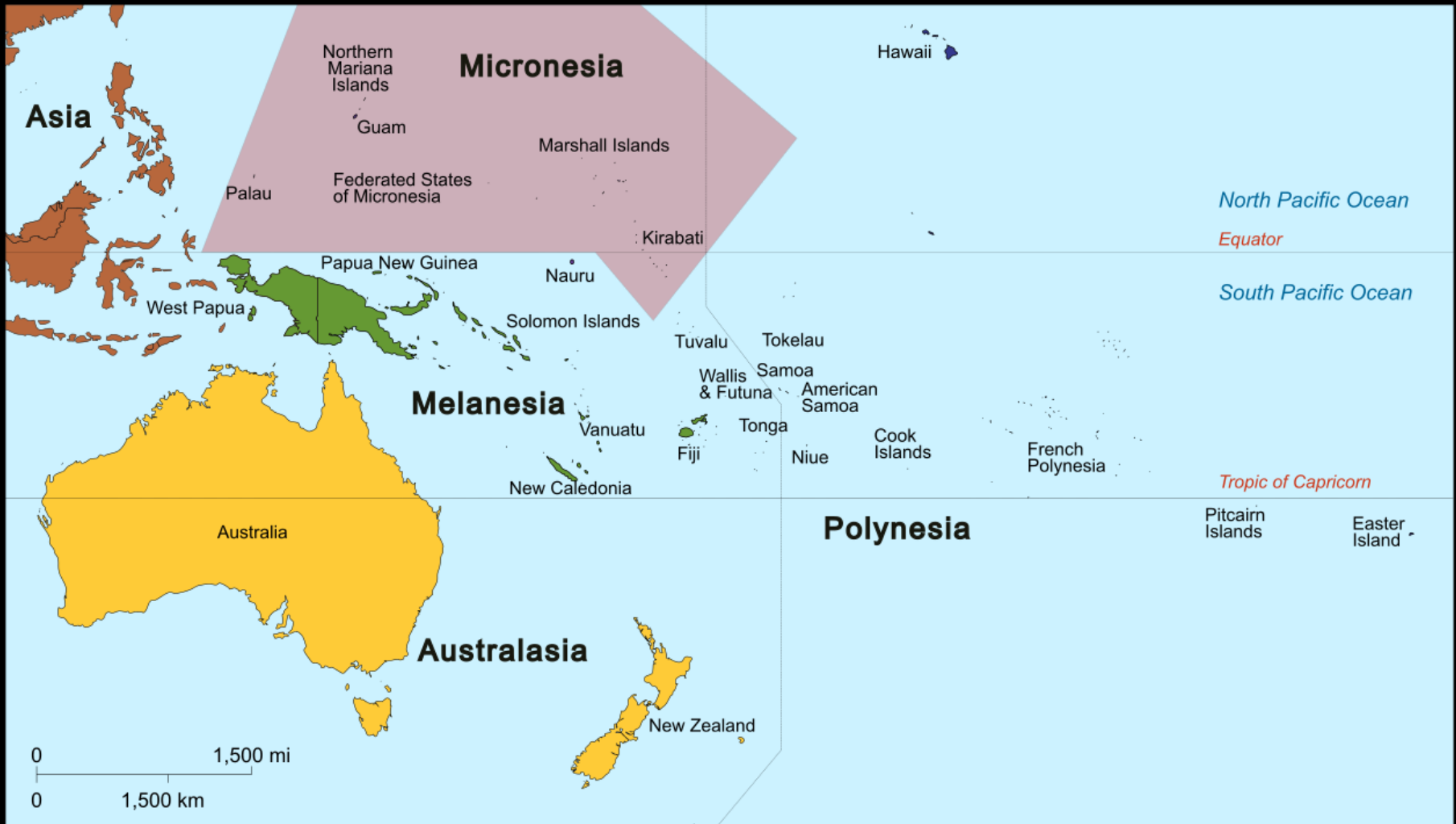


Video.

Consider: What was their purpose? How do they reflect their society?



Islands of Micronesia

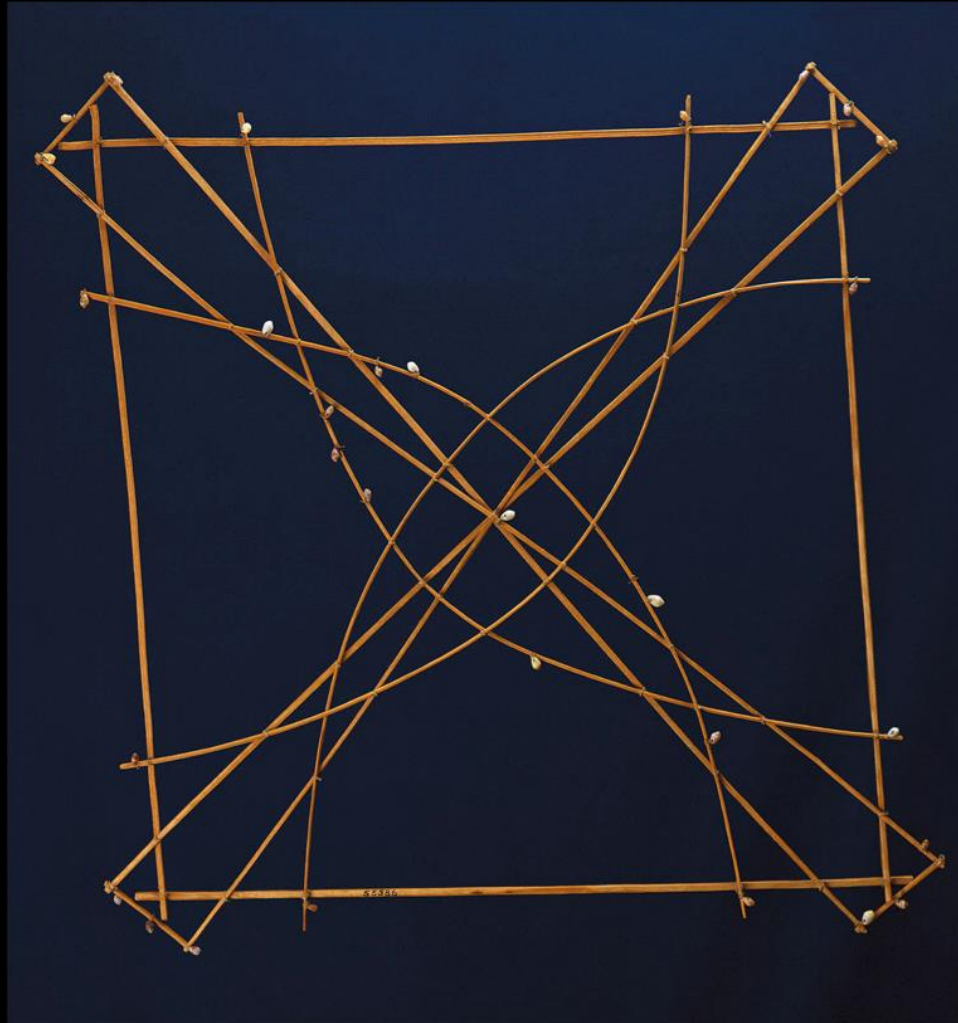


Islands of Micronesia

- Micronesia means “small islands”
- Small islands and coral atolls.
- Islands to the east share cultural similarities with Polynesia. Those on the west, to Melanesia.
- Known for fine canoes and navigation skills.
- Tattooing important.

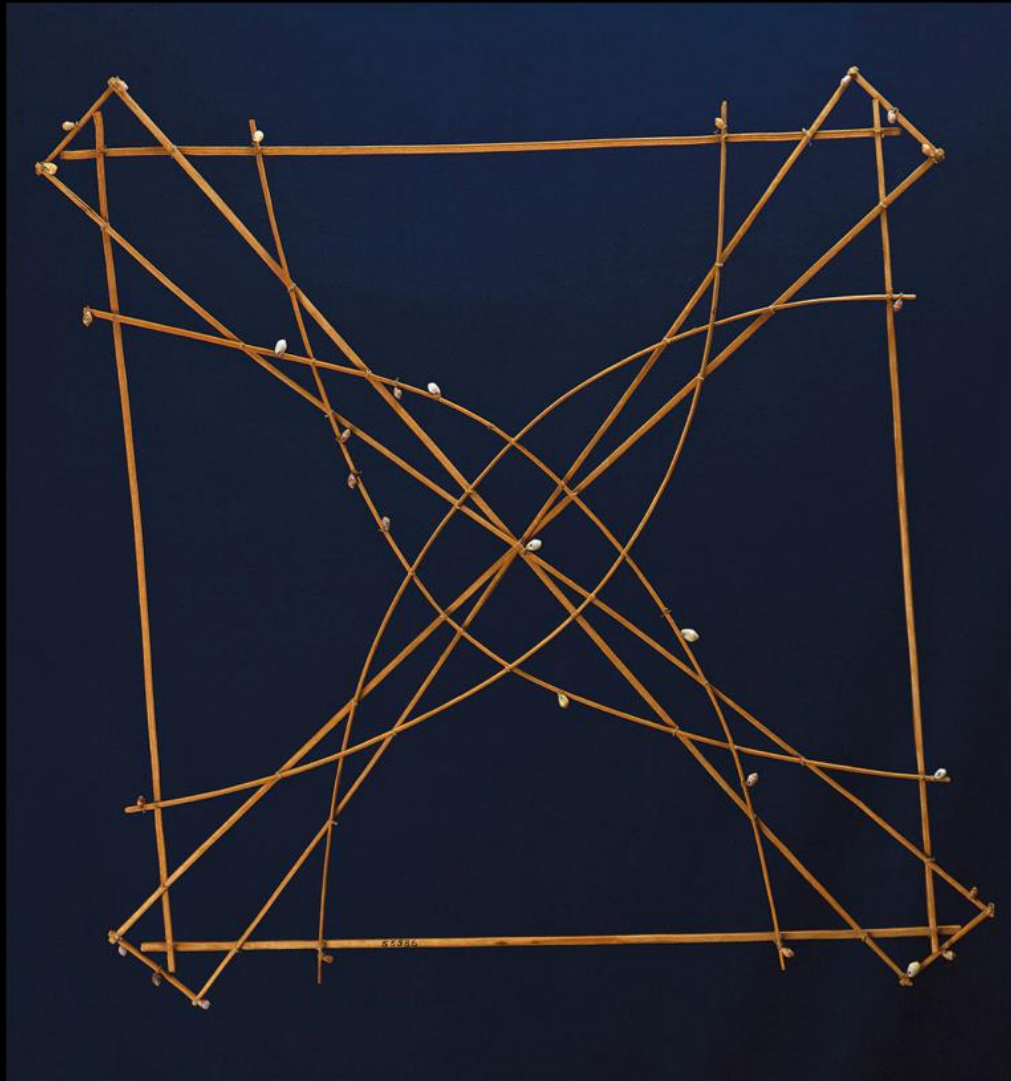


Wapepe Navigation Chart. Marshall Islands.
19th century. Sticks, coconut fiber, and shells.
29 ½" x 29 ½" (75 x 75 cm). Micronesia



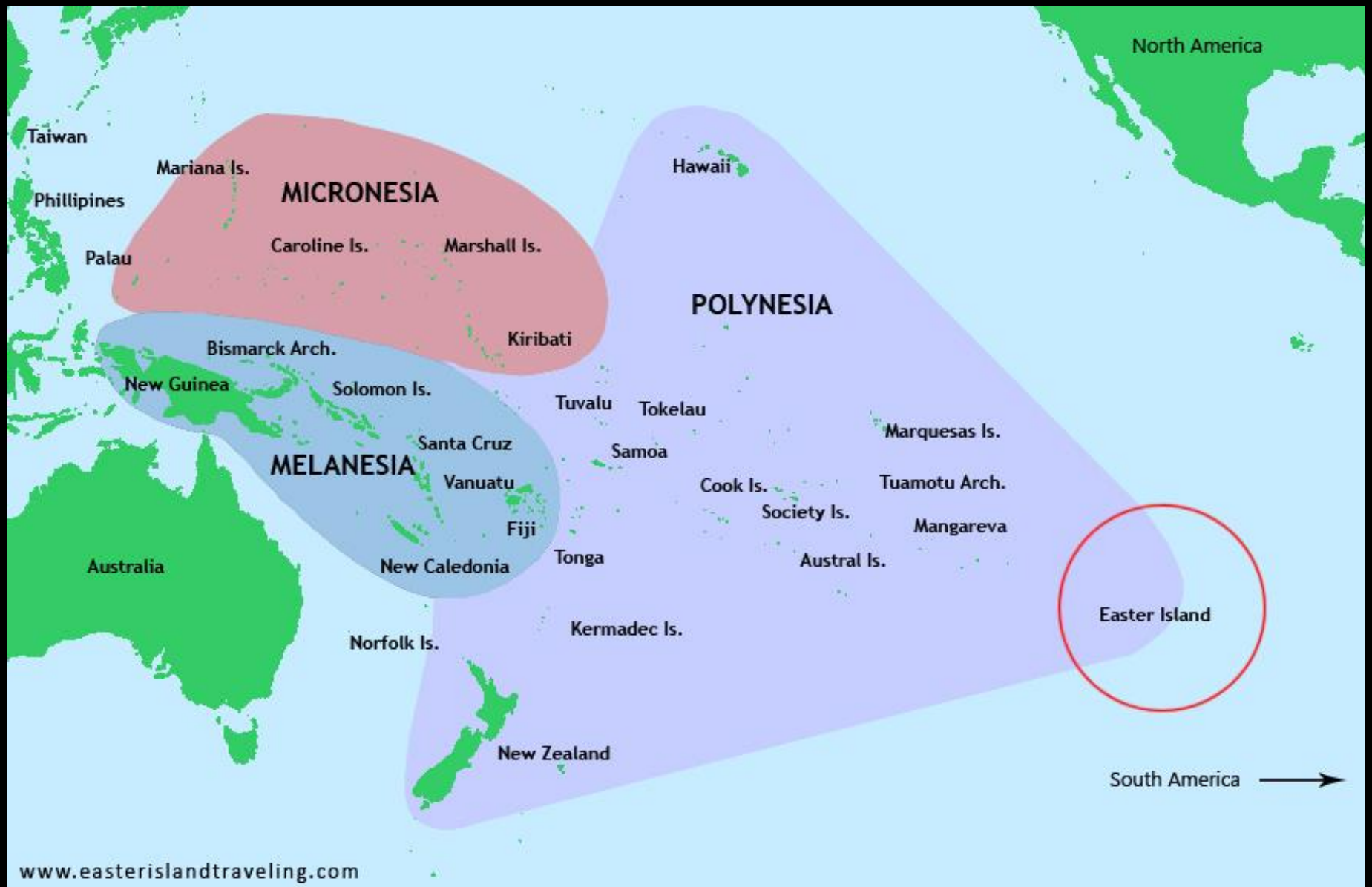


This work is a wonderful reflection of the Micronesian attitudes about the sea. [Video](#) about these navigation charts.



Islands of Polynesia

- Polynesia means “many islands”
- Islands settled by Polynesian seafarers included Hawaii and Rapa Nui (after 500 CE) and New Zealand (around 800-1200 CE; Maori culture)
- Pantheon of gods, including ancestors.
- Shared linguistic commonalities
- Social echelon were more rigid than those of Melanesia.
- Arts and their creations were sacred.



MICRONESIA

Mariana Is.

Caroline Is.

Marshall Is.

Kiribati

MELANESIA

Bismarck Arch.

New Guinea

Solomon Is.

Santa Cruz

Vanuatu

Fiji

New Caledonia

Norfolk Is.

POLYNESIA

Hawaii

Tuvalu

Tokelau

Samoa

Cook Is.

Society Is.

Austral Is.

Marquesas Is.

Tuamotu Arch.

Mangareva

Kermadec Is.

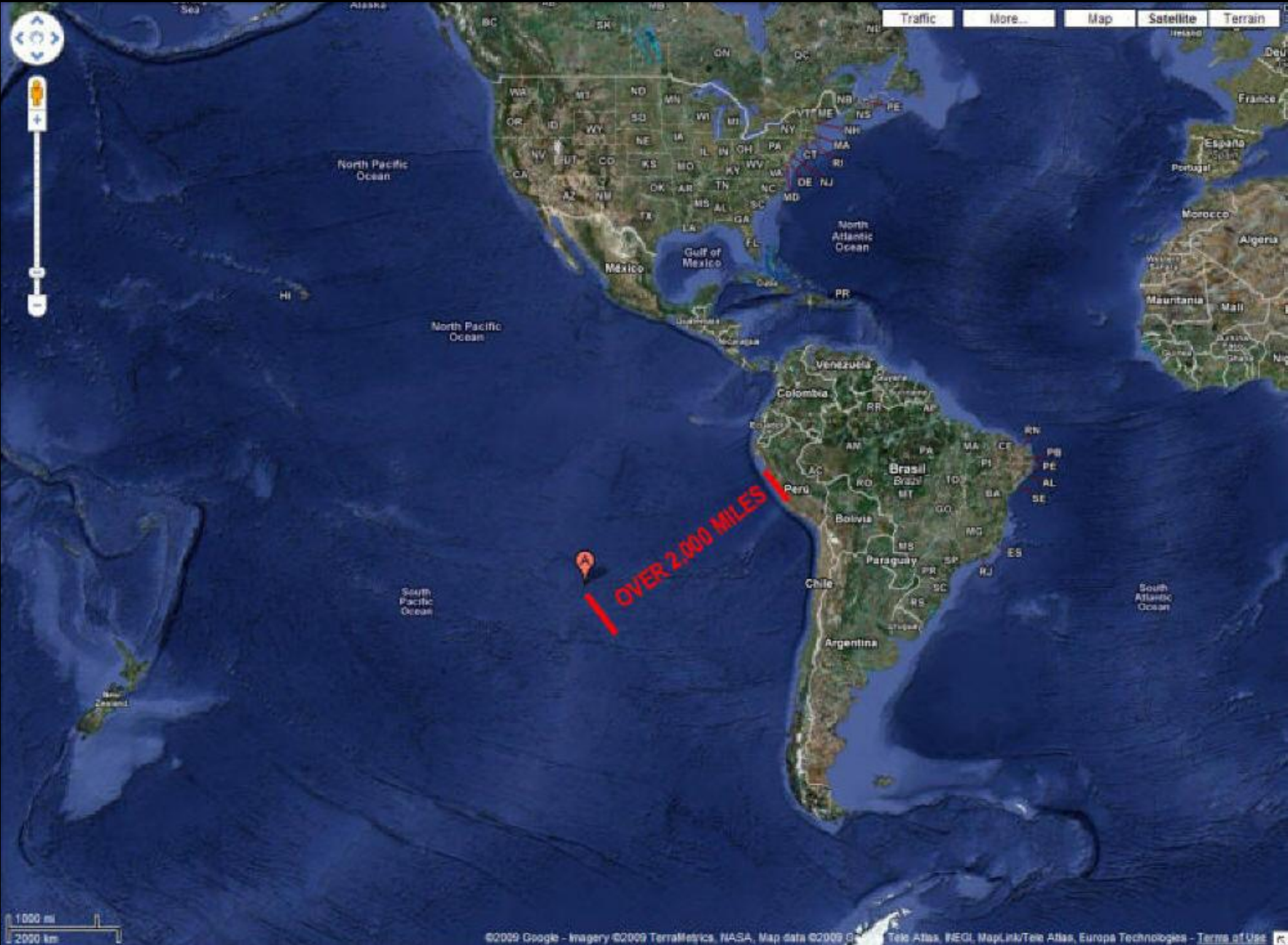
New Zealand

Easter Island

South America →

Moai Ancestor Figures. Ahu Nau Nau, Rapa Nui
(Easter Island). Circa ?1000 – 1500 CE. Restored 1978.
Volcanic stone (tufa) average height 36' (11m)



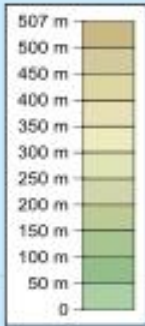


OVER 2,000 MILES

Traffic More... Map Satellite Terrain

1000 mi
2000 km

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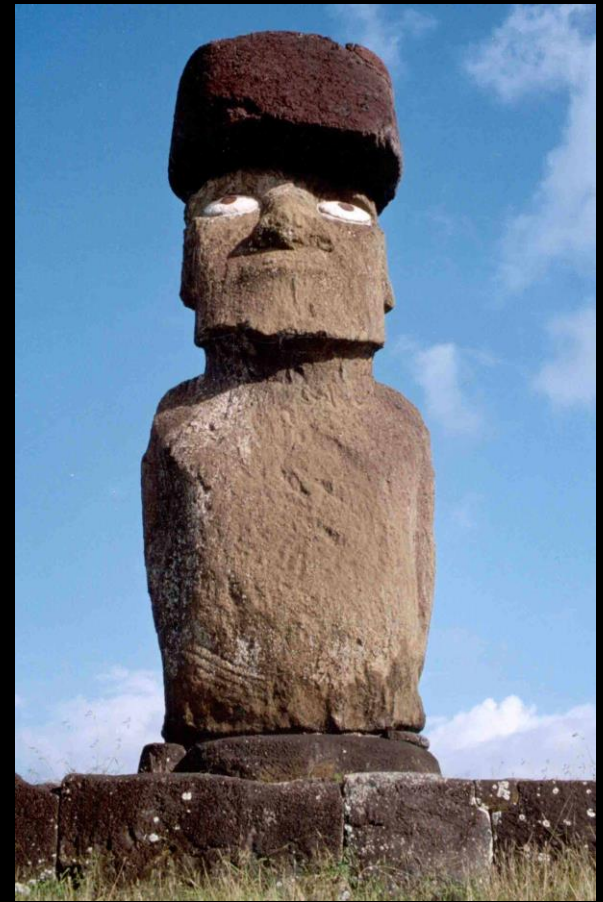
South Pacific Ocean

Easter Island (Rapa Nui)

- Road or major track
 - Minor track
 - Populated place
 - Ahu (ceremonial platform)
 - Moai
 - Petroglyphs
 - Ruins
- UTM projection (WGS84 datum)
Scale: 1:372,000



What we see today is not necessarily how they appeared when first made.





Moai Statues Walk!



Easter Island Landscape





Documentary of Easter Island and Moai

- Explore how these statues were made and moved.
- What are some of their possible functions?