

GENERAL SCIENCE

Woods Move Into Cities

The woods as well as people are increasing in the influential Megalopolis, the wealthiest, best educated and most densely populated area in the United States—By Barbara Tufty

► THE VERDANT TREES, as well as people, are moving into that rich, educated, urban section known as Megalopolis which stretches along the northeastern seaboard of the United States.

Strange as it seems, woodland already covers half of this densely crowded string of central cities and suburbs stretching from north of Boston to south of Washington, D. C. And since 1946, the forests are increasing.

The woodlands, like Macbeth's great Birnam woods advancing to Dunsinane hill, have been slowly moving in over the land, as more farms are abandoned and taken up by suburbanites. Here, amidst the woods and brush, the growing and mobile rural nonfarming population sets up their homes.

Megalopolis is an area with the highest density of population in the U. S., having 700 people per square mile, compared with a national average of 51. Its 37 million Americans, with the highest average personal income of any major region in the U. S., are considered the richest, the best educated, the best housed and best serviced group of similar size in the world, said Wolf Von Eckardt in a 126-page report, "The Challenge of Megalopolis," published May 28 (Macmillan Company, New York).

On the basis of such findings, the new 20th Century Fund report states, "For the nation as a whole Megalopolis is what Main Street is for most communities. It is the place where government, most of the banks, the big offices, the newspapers and broad-

casting stations, the important stores, the schools, libraries and theaters are concentrated. It is the place where policies, decisions and fashions, or most of them, are made. . . . It can be said, in fact, that the economic, political and cultural life of Megalopolis has become an essential factor in the economic, political and cultural life of the entire free world."

Once developed as a great manufacturing and trading area, Megalopolis now is becoming an important center for "tertiary" occupations of performing services such as retail and wholesale trade; clerical, stenographic and general office work; banking and insurance; teaching and education; as well as law, medicine and engineering.

These occupations with their high personal income are steadily increasing the general standard of living. Mr. Eckardt compares them to the "primary" group of occupations of farming and mining, and the "secondary" group of manufacturing.

With the very rapid growth of cities all over the world, analysis of this Megalopolis holds significant meanings, he says in the report which was prepared on the basis of a major study called "Megalopolis" by Jean Gottmann, distinguished European geographer.

While the positive and powerful aspect of the Megalopolis is recorded, the new report also points out some of the faults and failures, such as the gaudy and dismal ugliness that pervades the area, the air and water pollution, the noise and snarls of

traffic. Yet while the slums may be dismal, reports Mr. Eckardt, they still hold greater promise of good jobs and good schools for the children than can be found in rural slums.

Among the continuing difficulties in the region, Mr. Eckardt finds that "The most vexing and most widely and heatedly discussed problem of Megalopolis is transportation. Car, truck, bus, subway, railway and airplane traffic is so intense that it places a severe strain on the pocketbook and the nerves. . . . The transportation crisis . . . is beyond a merely statistical and technical approach. The future viability of Megalopolis depends on more imaginative and more fundamental solutions."

One of the most basic obstacles to working out effective solutions to any problem is the fact of the vast number of governmental units in the area. Megalopolis contains all or parts of 10 states and 117 counties, plus the District of Columbia. These, in turn, are divided into countless smaller political jurisdictions.

Pointing to a number of interstate and intercity bodies that already have been set up, Mr. Eckardt says, "New political frameworks must emerge which reflect political and economic realities. Megalopolis is the laboratory of a new urban way of life which is sweeping the civilized world."

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ANTHROPOLOGY

First U.S. Museum Of African Art Opens

► STARK MALE and female statues, fertility images or fetish objects from Africa, are being shown in the first separate museum in the U. S. for African art and sculpture. The Museum of African Art is devoted exclusively to exhibiting wooden, metal and ivory examples of powerful African creativity.

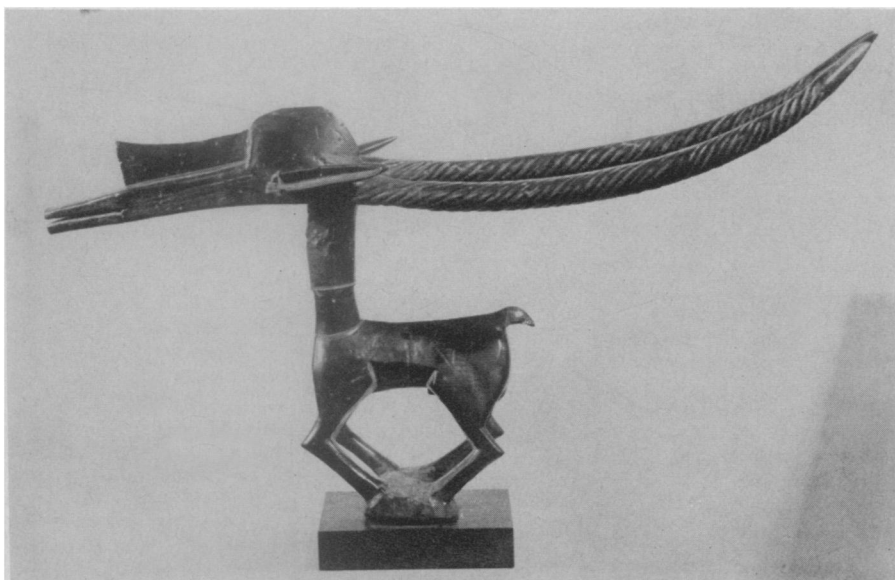
Highly sophisticated, sometimes grotesque masks and headdresses are also on display. These were and still are used in parts of Western Africa to coerce tribal laws or to protect the tribe against catastrophe. Decorative tiny brass figures of animals or geometric designs served as weights for measuring gold dust and nuggets along the African coast.

More than 150 valuable pieces of sculpture and metalwork from 33 tribes in 17 African countries are on display in the museum on Capitol Hill in Washington, D. C. The museum was founded by the Center for Cross-cultural Communication, a nonprofit institute seeking better understanding between peoples of different cultures by exhibiting works of art.

Picasso, Braque and other contemporary painters felt the impact of African sculpture, explained Warren M. Robbins, director of the Center. Some modern European and American paintings directly reflect the force and power of African art.

Most African sculpture has been carved in various woods from the countries' prolific forests, explained Mr. Robbins. Unfortunately in the hot humid climate, very little of this wooden art survives more than 80 to 100 years.

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Museum of African Art

ANTELOPE HEADPIECE—This dark wooden antelope headpiece was carved by the Bambara people of what is today Mali in West Africa. It was worn on the head during harvest and important occasions by young boys or men who imitate steps of the antelope in their dance.