

A “Harley Mask” at the Cleveland Museum of Art

More on Masks among the Mano and Dan Peoples (Liberia/Côte d’Ivoire)

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In Memoriam Elze Bruyninx

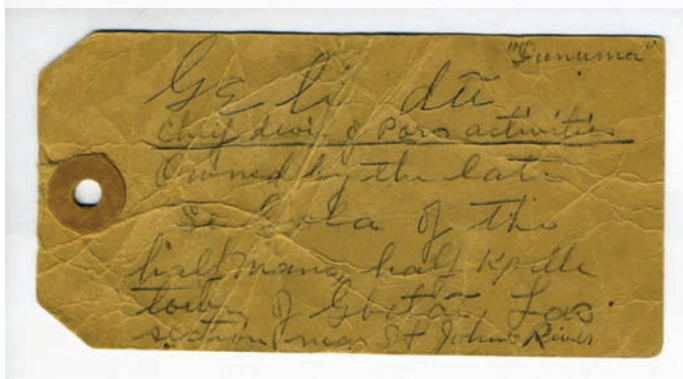
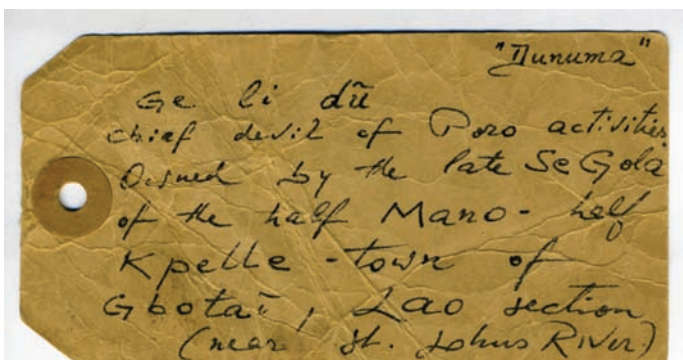
(1944–2011)

This essay offers a few remarks on Monni Adams’s recent article in this journal on masks of the Mano people of Liberia as studied and collected in the field by the American medical missionary Dr. George W. Harley (1894–1966) from the early 1930s to the late 1950s (Adams 2010). Some time ago I initiated research and writing on the same subject after encountering an arresting mask in the storage space of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s Education Art collection, known as the “Art to Go” collection at the time of my “discovery” in 2002. This mask had been acquired in 1953 for the museum’s so-called secondary collection—consisting of some 19,000 objects and destined for on-site and more typically off-site exhibitions and programs with an educational purpose—and proved to have been field-collected in Liberia before 1937 by the same Dr. Harley (Fig. 1). Although the museum’s educational collection typically contains works perceived as inferior to similar objects in the primary collection and therefore not considered apt for permanent display, I deemed this particular mask at least equal in quality to many related masks I had observed in public and private collections worldwide. More importantly, in the museum files I found a label said to have been written by Dr. Harley himself containing various bits of information regarding the mask’s “vernacular” name, the village where it had been collected, and its local meaning and use (Fig. 2). All these primary data obviously added greatly to the mask’s value in both art historical and ethnographic terms and further triggered my interest.¹ I was especially excited about my find because this mask had never been published or even exhibited since its arrival in Cleveland, not even within the educational context for which it had been purchased.

It is, however, not just because of the mask’s visual appeal, the fact that it had remained hidden in storage and unseen for

almost half a century, or even its Harley-related provenance that I decided to pay closer attention to it in light of a more in-depth publication. I have been particularly interested in the arts and culture of the Dan and related neighboring peoples, which include the We, Kran, Mano, and others, ever since my student days at the University of Ghent in Belgium in the late 1980s. This special interest was instilled in me and my fellow students by our professors at Ghent, Herman Burssens and Elze Bruyninx, who in turn owed their interest to the late Pieter Jan Vandenhoute (1913–1978), their respective colleague and thesis advisor.² Vandenhoute, himself a student of the legendary Frans Olbrechts (1899–1958) at the University of Ghent in the 1930s, was truly a pioneer in the field of African art studies. After conducting one year of field research among the Dan and their neighbors in Côte d’Ivoire in 1938–39 (Fig. 3), he was apparently the first scholar in the world to receive a PhD in African art history.

In 1945, its completion having been postponed due to the outbreak of World War II, Vandenhoute submitted and successfully defended his doctoral thesis entitled “The Mask in the Culture and Art of the Upper Cavally Region” (as its original Dutch title translates into English), consisting of more than 1300 typed pages and almost 700 illustrations (Vandenhoute 1945). Based on true participant-observation—its author had even become an apprentice of a Dan artist—Vandenhoute’s dissertation focused on eighty-six mask carvers and their work (Fig. 4). He conducted most of his research among the Dan and We but also spent time and gathered data among the Tura, Diomande (including Mau, Famosi, and Sakulaka), and Wobe. Aside from the information compiled in this dissertation, Vandenhoute’s archives also comprise thousands of pages of field notes, as well as about 2000 field photographs and a 16mm film on sculptors at work and mask performances. During his fieldwork Vandenhoute acquired 264



1 Face mask

Probably Mano people, Liberia

Wood, formica, fibers, metal, seeds; H. 28cm (11")

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Harold T. Clark Educational Extension Fund 1953.457

Provenance: Dr. George W. Harley (possibly field-collected in the village of Gbotai between 1933 and 1937), 1933/37 to 1946; Charles Morrow Wilson, Liberia, 1946 to 1953; Ralph C. Altman, Los Angeles, 1953

PHOTO: HOWARD AGRIESTI, © THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

2 The original tag with Harley's handwriting that accompanied the mask when it was purchased from Ralph C. Altman in 1953.

COURTESY THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART



3 Pieter Jan Vandenhouste, Frans Olbrechts, and Albert Maesen (l-r) in the town of Man, Côte d'Ivoire, December 21, 1938

UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER, COURTESY MAS | ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS, ANTWERP

masks and a wide range of other objects, which ended up in a number of private collections and the collections of the City of Antwerp and the University of Ghent. Until the controversial abolishment of the specialization in so-called ethnic art at the University of Ghent in 2007, the latter collection was actively used as a teaching tool in the art history curriculum as part of an undergraduate practicum.

Although Vandenhouste regrettably published very little from his important and many findings, due both to his extreme self-criticism and his frail health (which would lead to his untimely death at the age of 65), his work was in some ways carried on by his student Elze Bruyninx, who devoted her own PhD dissertation to metal arts in the Upper Cavally area, for which she heavily relied on Vandenhouste's prior research, and who continued to reference her mentor's work in subsequent publications. One of Bruyninx's most recent publications, an essay in which she discusses Vandenhouste's field research in Côte d'Ivoire using information contained in his diaries, was included in a collective volume published on the occasion of an exhibition at the Ethnographic Museum in Antwerp—which has since 2011 been incorporated into the Museum Aan de Stroom (MAS), the newly built museum on the maritime history of Antwerp—about the

role and influence of Frans Olbrechts in the history of African art studies in Belgium (Bruyninx 2001). Indeed, this exhibition and its publication project—which I had the honor to lead—also paid due tribute to the many contributions of Vandenhouste, who was one of Olbrechts's very first students at Ghent. The exhibition included a section devoted to Vandenhouste's field research in Côte d'Ivoire with a selection of masks and other works he collected in the field.

However, despite Vandenhouste's few but pertinent publications on a variety of subjects, I continue to be surprised that so few of his research findings are acknowledged in more recent writings. This is even more surprising given that his monumental work and numerous accomplishments have been discussed quite prominently in many of the publications by his former student Elze Bruyninx (1986, 1988, 1989, 1993a, 1993b, 1996, 2000, 2011), as well as in the above-mentioned exhibition and its companion catalogue on Frans Olbrechts (Petridis 2001), which was extensively reviewed in this journal by Simon Ottenberg (2004). Two of Vandenhouste's own publications, his stylistic classification of Dan and We masks and his "few comments" on masks and the Poro society—the first published in French, the second posthumously published in an English translation from the Dutch (Vandenhouste 1948, 1989)—are especially relevant and cannot be dismissed when assessing the work of his contemporary, Dr. Harley. Indeed, even though both of these titles are cited in Monni Adams's two publications on Harley and Mano masks, her 2010 article in this journal as well as her 2009 article in *Museum Anthropology* (Adams 2009,

2010), I will argue that in light of Vandenhoute's pertinent comments and criticisms, some of Harley's most influential insights and interpretations pertaining to the Mano people and their masks require critical analysis.³ But let me first return to the Mano mask in the Cleveland Museum of Art's collection that led me to look deeper into Harley's research and writings and compare them to Vandenhoute's.

I should emphasize that at first, like Monni Adams, I wanted to find out more about the Mano people and that I, too, had the intention to lift their masks out of the shadow of those of their Dan neighbors. Perhaps unwillingly inspired by the enduring legacy of the "one tribe, one style" paradigm, I was initially convinced that Mano and Dan masks had to be sufficiently different to be distinguished from one another. Like Adams, I believed it possible to expand our scant knowledge of the Mano and their masks through an analysis of Harley's many writings and those of others who had spent time in the region and, not in the least, through a close study of the extensive collections Harley established for the Peabody Museum at Harvard University and various other "Harley masks" today housed in both private collections and public collections like the Cleveland Museum of Art.⁴ The Cleveland mask was purchased from the Los Angeles-based dealer Ralph C. Altman (1909–1967) in 1953. In a letter dated August 27, 1953, preserved in the museum's object files, Altman revealed that the mask had been acquired in Liberia by Dr. Harley, and the object was accompanied by a tag that proved to be handwritten by its collector. This Harley provenance was confirmed to me by Louis Wells, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration and avid collector of African and Indonesian art, who wrote a seminal article for this journal on Harley's work and collections (Wells 1977; see also Wells 2010:100). On the basis of archival materials in his possession, Dr. Wells recognized Harley's handwriting on the museum tag and, most importantly, he found that it had been bought in the field before 1937 (e-mail communication, April 30, 2003). A small black-and-white studio photograph of the mask (Fig. 5)—which shows the object before it suffered some losses to its right eye, which our museum's conservator restored in 2003—was probably taken in Ganta, the missionary post where Harley was stationed during most of his time in Liberia. The number 16 inscribed on the back of this image enabled Dr. Wells to reconstruct the object's history since its acquisition by Harley in Liberia. It was sold as part of a group of masks to Charles Morrow Wilson (1905–1977), an employee at the Firestone Tire & Rubber Company in Liberia, on December 17, 1946, for the then high price of US\$65 (see also Wells 1977:26, 2010:100).

The invoice that accompanied that transaction bears part of the information given in Harley's handwritten label. The mask is identified as "Dunuma, Chief Devil of the Poro, Mano." It is said "never to be seen outside the Poro bush" and to be "greatly feared." The label also mentions the name *Ge li du* and further states that it was "owned by the late Se Gola of the half Mano, half Kpelle town of Gbotai, in the Lao section, near the St. John River." It has not been possible to locate this village with certainty on the detailed foldout map created by Harvard University's Institute of Geographical Exploration in 1938 inserted in George Schwab's *Tribes of the Liberian Hinterland* (1947). Per-



4 The sculptor Tyimoko Gbayoko of the Diomande-Mau (Mahou)—belonging to the Mande-Tan group—at work in the village of Gbulow, Côte d'Ivoire, June 21, 1939

PHOTO: PIETER JAN VANDENHOUTE, COURTESY P. J. VANDENHOUTE ARCHIVES, GHENT, BELGIUM

5 The Cleveland Museum of Art's "Harley mask" before it left its homeland in Liberia, when its ocular decorations were still intact
UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER, COURTESY LOUIS T. WELLS, BOSTON





haps the name refers to a village called Gbotakai on Schwab's map, just west of Petwi, and south of the junction of the Mani (St. John) and the Poni Rivers, as Louis Wells suggested to me in an e-mail of April 29, 2003. Or maybe it is a misspelling of a village named Gbatowi, situated to the southwest of and very close to Ganta. Most likely, however, we are dealing with a village called Gotai, which lies to the southeast of the intersection of the Mani and the Ya Rivers, in between villages called Dintai and Kayi, and appears to be located in so-called Geh, that is in Dan country, rather than in Mano country—even though Schwab (1947:23) believes the Geh to be an autonomous “tribe” made up of a “mixture” of Dan and Mano (see also Harley 1941:19–24 and Fig. 1). Sometime between 1946 and 1952, the piece was presumably given by Morrow Wilson on consignment to Altman who, as mentioned earlier, in turn sold it to the museum in 1953. Interestingly, this sculpture is very similar in style and expression to a mask in a private collection, said to have been called *zo glu*, which Harley would have collected before 1951 but which is believed to be Dan rather than Mano (Wells 2010:Figs. 2, 34).⁵

Before analyzing the contextual data accompanying the mask, I would like to address the object's formal features and style. Whereas Monni Adams's article focuses primarily on so-called feminine-style masks, the Cleveland Museum of Art's “Harley mask” is a prime example of the masculine style. Reflecting character, inherent spiritual power, and behavior as expressed in dance performance, the “standard” styles—as Adams quali-

fies them (2010:24–25)—of feminine masks of the Dan and Mano peoples are clearly related. Nevertheless, following formal analyses by two other Dan art specialists, Eberhard Fischer and Marie-Noël Verger-Fèvre, Adams was able to point out some striking characteristics that would easily allow feminine-style Mano masks to be distinguished from their Dan counterparts. Aside from the typical rendering of specific facial features such as the upper eyelids “drawn halfway down” and the projecting ears, a key element to identify a Mano mask would be its curved base: indeed, when placed face-up on its outer rim, it “turns upward in both the upper and lower parts,” leading the mask “to rock and balance” if touched on either end. As a result,

6 Feminine-style face mask
Probably Mano people, Liberia
Wood, cloth, fibers, metal, cowrie shells; H. 27cm (10½")
Collection of Anthony Atrib, London
PHOTO: © CHRISTIE'S, PARIS

7 Feminine-style face mask
Probably Mano people, Liberia
Wood, cloth, fibers, human hair, metal, animal teeth; H. 24.1cm (9½")
Private collection
Provenance: Walling Family Collection (field-collected in eastern Liberia by Hayden and Odette Walling between 1952 and 1954), 1952/54 to 2011 (by descent)
PHOTO: © SOTHEBY'S, NEW YORK



8 Feminine-style face mask
Dan people, Côte d'Ivoire or Liberia
Wood; H. 25cm (10")
Private collection
Provenance: Hubert Goldet, Paris; Lucien Van de Velde
and Mariette Henau, Antwerp, — to 1975
PHOTO: © STEVEN DECROOS

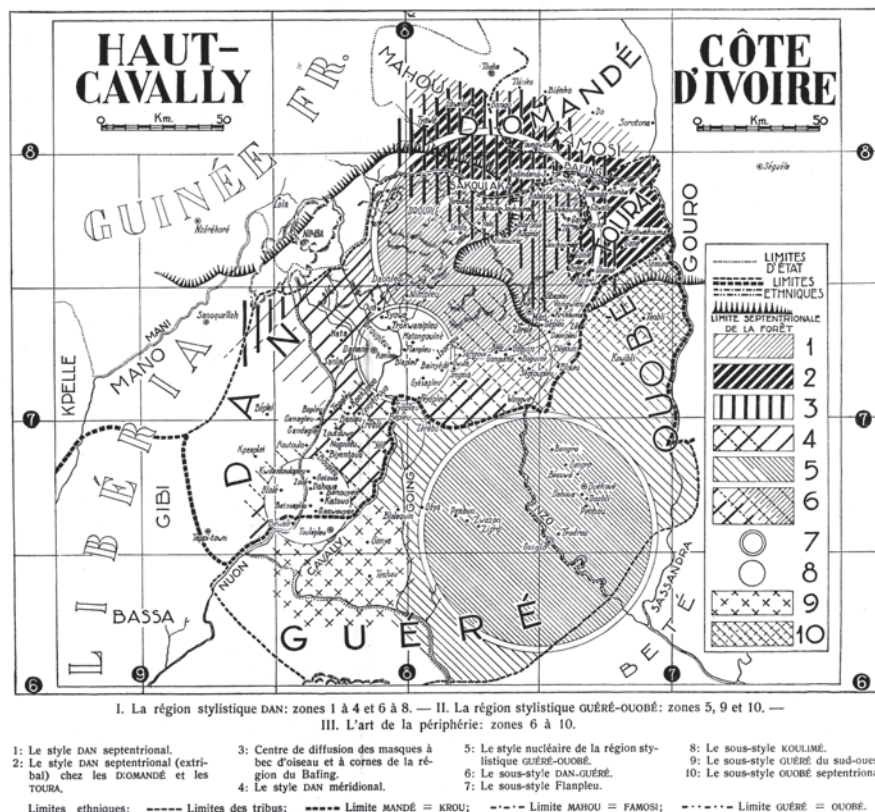
a feminine-style Mano mask will also be more deeply hollowed and thus its facial surface more elevated than in a Dan mask of the same gendered style. These features are illustrated through the various Harley-collected examples reproduced in Adams's article. Eberhard Fischer (in Koloss 1999:Pl. 51) used these exact same insights to attribute a face mask in the Berlin Museum of Ethnology that had been collected in Liberia in the 1930s by Etta (Violetta) (Becker) Donner (1911–1975)—one of the very first to conduct fieldwork in the region and author of a classic monograph on the Dan (Donner 1939; see also Wells 2010:106)—to the Mano rather than to the Dan. Perhaps such formal criteria make it possible to confirm the Mano origin of two other feminine-

style face masks which recently surfaced at auction (see Christie's, Paris, December 1, 2010, lot 42; Sotheby's, New York, May 13, 2011, lot 218) (Figs. 6–7), as much as they underscore the Dan attribution of a feminine-style face mask in a Belgian private collection (Fig. 8).⁶

Still, whereas one could claim that there are sufficient relatively unambiguous stylistic characteristics to distinguish between what Adams has labeled the standard versions of feminine-style Dan and Mano face masks, such differentiation is nearly impossible when it comes to the masculine-style masks of both peoples. Compared to the “normal-size facial features in varying degrees of delicacy” typical of feminine masks, masculine masks—which are more rare than feminine ones, as Adams (2010:24) rightly points out—“are larger than the human face, their facial features aggrandized, distorted, bulging, or sharply angular in form” (ibid., p. 22). Also, on many examples “the eyes are replaced by projecting wooden cylinders” and a protruding open mouth often shows “big teeth and a movable jaw, adorned with a furry beard, bullet casings, or other symbolic material.” This evocative description applies perfectly to the prototypical masculine-style Mano face mask from the Peabody Museum illustrated by Adams (ibid., Fig. 5), as much as it does to the related sculpture in the Cleveland Museum of Art illustrated here (Fig. 1), but it could equally refer to a masculine mask of the Dan.

The complexity of the stylistic map of the border region between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, independent of the essen-

9 Stylistic map of the Upper Cavally region showing Dan and We/Wobe mask styles and sub-styles
FROM PIETER JAN L. VANDENHOUTE, *CLASSIFICATION STYLISTIQUE DU MASQUE DAN ET GUÉRÉ DE LA CÔTE D'IVOIRE OCCIDENTALE* (A.O.F.) (LEIDEN: E. J. BRILL, 1948)



tial distinction between two gendered mask styles, is nowhere made clear more convincingly than in Pieter Jan Vandenhoute's succinct but important publication *Classification stylistique du masque dan et guéré de la Côte d'Ivoire occidentale* of 1948 (Fig. 9). In an attempt to bring some order to the "anguishing stylistic diversity" of the region, as he puts it, the author first identifies two opposing style areas, the first one of which he associates with the Dan, the most important group of the area and part of the Mande language family, the second one with the We (who in those days were generally labeled Guere) and the related Wobe, both belonging to the Kru family.⁷ Each of these two style areas harbors what Vandenhoute (1948:7) calls a "core style" or "nuclear style," being the most accomplished expression of the two stylistic trends. In an effort to capture the essence of these contrasting styles, Vandenhoute (*ibid.*, pp. 8–9) brands the Dan core style as "classical" and the We/Wobe as "expressionistic." A prototypical example of the latter style is found in a mask that was in the possession of Tristan Tzara (1896–1963) when it was published by Vandenhoute (1948:Fig. 21) but is at present owned by the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, Canada (Fig. 10).

The Dan core style is actually one of two basic styles within the Dan style region. Because of its geographic location (see Fig. 9), it is also named the "Northern Dan style." It is exemplified by many great sculptures, including this delicate mask from the collection of Yves J. Hayat in Paris (Fig. 11), which was recently purchased at auction (see Sotheby's, Paris, June 15, 2011, lot 70). It had been carved in the village of Blafleso but was in use in the villages of Kogma and Duwe when it was acquired by Vandenhoute in 1939. As opposed to the Southern Dan style, which

shows affinities with the nearby "expressionistic" We/Wobe core style (Vandenhoute 1948:19), this is the most "classical" style of Dan masks, distributed well beyond the Dan ethnic boundaries but rather rare among the Liberian Dan. It is interesting to note in passing that this mask, testifying to the "idealized realism" proper to the Dan core style, actually represents the face of a young man—it was specifically called Tya, after a famous mask dancer and "runner"—and in other words contradicts the gendered style division as identified with regard to the Liberian Dan by Fischer and Adams, among others.⁸ According to Wells (1977:24–25), this classical Northern Dan core style is hardly represented in Harley's extensive collections, while Vandenhoute's We/Wobe core style is entirely absent.

The stylistic complexity of the region, which presents a major challenge to any classification, becomes especially apparent, however, when one considers a particular stylistic variation within the Northern Dan style: masks proper to the Bafing River region bearing a bird beak and/or horns (Fig. 12). These Bafing-substyle masks combine the essential traits of the Dan core style with a "constructivistic" tendency (Vandenhoute 1948:16). Other hallmarks of this substyle are the decorative application of white metal or aluminum and the covering of the face with white cotton or imported crimson-red wool, the latter practice replacing the ancient red/orange crusted layer resulting from spitting chewed kola nuts on the mask's surface. The addition of a bird's beak or horns to a human face mask would have been inspired by the Kono, Kpelle, and other groups of the Mande family in Liberia and Guinea. While it is generally accepted by many Dan scholars that there is typically no correlation between form and function in masks—a



10 Face mask in the We/Wobe core style
We people, Côte d'Ivoire
Wood, feathers, metal, fibers, cord; H. 24cm (9½")
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift from the Frum
Collection, 1999 (AGO 26314)
Provenance: Georges de Miré, Paris, before 1930
(see Marquetty 1930:cat. 68) to 1931; Drouot, Dec.
16, 1931, lot 23; Tristan Tzara, Paris, 1931 (see Swee-
ney 1935:cat. 85) to 1988; Drouot, Nov. 24, 1988, lot
209; Dr. Murray Frum, Toronto, 1988 to 1999
PHOTO: © ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO, TORONTO

point that has also been emphasized by Adams (2010:23)—these Bafing-substyle Dan masks are one of the very few exceptions to this rule in that all had the same specific role, namely that of “fire-watcher” or “runner,” called Sagbwe. Occupying one of the highest levels in the hierarchy of runners-village guardians, the mask shown here (Fig. 12), which Vandenhoute acquired in the village of Duwe, bore the nicknames “The Bird King” and “The Impetuous Young Chief.” Vandenhoute photographed a similar mask, which is now in the Ethnographic Collections of the University of Ghent, “in action” in the same village of Duwe (Fig. 13).

However, the stylistic classification of the region’s masks becomes even more complicated and somewhat confusing in light of the mutual influences and resulting exchange of style characteristics between neighboring peoples and opposing core styles. All these encounters led to even more hybrid or blurred styles. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in the border areas or the “peripheral” regions, to use Vandenhoute’s terminology (1948:9–10, 26). In fact, the adoption of design elements from neighboring groups in borderland regions is also briefly mentioned by Monni Adams (2010:24–25), who pinpoints foreign commissions as one of many facilitating factors. Moreover, this mixing or mingling of styles occurs as much between the Dan and the We/Wobe and their respective core styles—Vandenhoute’s “internal periphery” (1948:26–33)—as it does between the two peoples and their numerous Kru and Mande neighbors—corresponding with

Vandenhoute’s “external periphery” (*ibid.*, pp. 33–35), which in turn reflects the ethnic expansion of the Dan and the We/Wobe mask styles. As Vandenhoute (*ibid.*, p. 35) already commented, the influence of the “expressionism” of the latter peoples’ core style is especially noticeable in the masks of their southern neighbors, including the Bassa, the Grebo, and, not the least, the (Western) Bete (Matthys 1996:283–84), as seen in a mask from the collection of Laura Ross in New York (Fig. 14).

Two examples will suffice to demonstrate the variation and diversity within the so-called internal periphery of the Dan style region. One is a prime representative of a substyle attributed to the Kulime subgroup of the Southern Dan (Fig. 15). Now at the MAS in Antwerp, this sculpture—carved by an artist named Uwe who originated from the Southern Dan village of Gmanyuwe in Liberia—is of particular interest in light of its striking formal affinities with the Cleveland Harley mask. As with other masculine-style masks, the Kulime substyle is characterized by the exaggerated, protruding rendering of one or more facial parts, especially the forehead and mouth, and sometimes also the cheekbones. However, because of its harmonious and balanced conception, the “expressionistic” feeling of the substyle’s design receives a “classical” overtone. Though it lacks the Cleveland Harley mask’s movable lower jaw—a trait seen on some of the other Dan style variations illustrated in Vandenhoute (1948:Figs. 12, 25)—the Antwerp Kulime mask shares the same overall feeling and similar basic features, including the tubular eyes and marked eyebrows. The final illustration in the present article is a famous example of a Southern Dan substyle called “Flanpleu,” after the village where it was invented, one of the most fertile artistic centers of the Dan in Côte d’Ivoire, at least judging from Vandenhoute’s field research in 1938–39 (Fig. 16). Here, generations of artists of the Uame subgroup have created a most original mask type, which in some ways blends the Southern and Northern Dan styles with the so-called expressionistic art of the Zraban, one of the dominant We/Wobe subgroups. Vandenhoute (1948:28) identifies two of the Flanpleu substyle’s main traits: a shiny, lustrous patina resulting from a “mud bath,” otherwise typical of the Northern Dan masks, and an overall “corpse-like” appearance.

What the preceding paragraphs make abundantly clear in my opinion is that it is rather simplistic to try and reduce Dan and We/Wobe mask production into two “core styles.” There are just too many variations and too many interrelationships to describe the styles of either people’s masks in a single, straightforward way. However, it seems equally far-fetched to attempt a stylistic definition of the masks created by the numerous related neigh-



11 Sagbwe, fire-watcher's or runner's mask "with the face of a young man," in the Northern Dan style

Northern Dan people, Ganmase subgroup, Blafleso village, Côte d'Ivoire
Wood; H. 23.3cm (9")

Field-collected by Pieter Jan Vandenhouste in the village of Kogma in 1939
Collection of Yves J. Hayat, Paris
(Côte d'Ivoire Expedition collection nr. IV.1963)

PHOTO: © ARTDIGITAL STUDIO | SOTHEBY'S, PARIS

12 Sagbwe, fire-watcher's or runner's mask "with a male face," in the Bafing substyle

Northern Dan people, Doo subgroup, Duwe village, Côte d'Ivoire
Wood, aluminum, feathers, fibers, cord, cloth; H. 29.5cm (11½")

Field-collected by Pieter Jan Vandenhouste in the village of Duwe in 1939
Ethnographic Collections of the University of Ghent, Belgium (Côte d'Ivoire Expedition collection nr. IV.2019)

PHOTO: HUGO MAERTENS, © MAS | ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS, ANTWERP

13 A Sagbwe mask "in action" in the village of Duwe, Côte d'Ivoire, March 31, 1939

PHOTO: PIETER JAN VANDENHOUTE, COURTESY P. J. VANDENHOUTE ARCHIVES, GHENT, BELGIUM



boring peoples. Following Vandenhouste's analysis of "peripheral styles"—which long predates recent writings on such issues as "open frontiers" (Bravmann 1973) or "borderland sculpture" (McNaughton 1987)—I would argue that it seems valid to maintain the basic division between a Dan and a We/Wobe *style region* and to consider the multiple associated neighboring traditions against the background of the former's influence on the latter. Thus, despite the fact that some style traits could possibly be proper to a number of feminine Mano masks, rather than to try and differentiate between Dan and Mano mask styles, I believe there is more to be gained from viewing the latter in terms of Vandenhouste's so-called external periphery and to acknowledge that in the end the Mano mask style is just one of many variations on a central theme that is expressed most fully in the Northern and Southern Dan styles.

In fact, Hans Himmelheber (1908–2003), that other pioneer of African art studies, with extensive field experience in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, seems to have arrived at the same conclusion when he wrote that Dan and Mano masks constitute an "artistic province" (*Kunstprovinz*) (Himmelheber 1960:195, 197). Based on his research, the masks of the Kono people (also called Konor) of Liberia and Guinea—at least in terms of their forms and styles—should be added to this province as well, a thesis that seems to be supported by the illustrations in the above-mentioned *Hinterland Liberia* (1939) by Etta Donner, as well as those in *Les Masques kono* (1952) by Bohumil Holas (1909–1979) (see also Wells 2010:Figs. 1, 3).⁹ Eberhard Fischer (1980:88), too, considered Dan and Mano as two variants on the same style when he wrote about being able to differentiate distinct workshops and attribute a certain mask style to the Butulu area in Dan country or to a Mano workshop (see also Fischer and Himmelheber 1976:40). Still, especially when it comes to the masculine masks it is difficult if not impossible to clearly distinguish a Mano carving like the one in Cleveland on formal and stylistic grounds from a Dan mask in the Kulime substyle like the example in Antwerp. In fact, despite his cautionary remarks on the topic, Vandenhouste (1948:29, n. 41; 34, n. 53) also pointed out the likeness of a number of Mano and Kpelle (and even Kran) masks that Donner illustrated in her *Baessler-Archiv* article (1940:Figs. 75–77, 82, 85) to the Southern Dan style in general and the Kulime substyle in particular.

This said, I would now like to consider the viewpoint expressed by Vandenhouste in his *Poro and Mask* (1989, originally published in Dutch in the Belgian journal *Kongo-Overzee* in 1952)—a point of view shared by some other scholars—that the Mano are perhaps not an autonomous people but instead constitute a subgroup of the Dan or that they both are subdivisions of a larger cultural entity. According to Vandenhouste (1989:13–14), there are so many underlying relationships among the many (sub)groups living in northeastern Liberia and western Côte d'Ivoire that despite their different names they have more in common than what Dr. Harley and others have been willing to acknowledge. The close cultural and ethnic kinship between the Mano and the Dan would also explain why they were presented as one and the same group in some earlier accounts (Vandenhouste 1989:45). Rather than viewing them as discrete ethnic units, Vandenhouste proposes a classification into three broad categories. The Dan

and the Mano, whom the author considers very closely related if not identical (1989:13), and to some extent the Kpelle, as well as some other groups, form one of these three categories. All these (alleged) peoples or, better, subgroups belong to the southern Mande or Mande-Fu group. The different so-called ethnic names found within those broader entities, including Mano and Kpelle, may result from the political independence of the various subgroups they comprise. However, the many commonalities between the worldviews of all these peoples or subgroups does justify treating them as part of a larger cultural whole. Yet what brings the Mano and the Dan together, and sets them apart from other Mande-Fu subgroups, are the profusion of masks and the central role of masking (Vandenhouste 1989:16).

Dan masks were indeed more readily available than Mano masks because there simply were many more carvers active among the Dan. As a logical consequence, the Dan mask production far outnumbered that of the Mano and many more Dan masks were exported to the West, as confirmed by the collections that Dr. Harley established for the Peabody Museum and other institutions. The question of why the face masks of the Mano have received less attention than those of the neighboring Dan becomes rather irrelevant in light of this, while the fact that their masks can hardly be distinguished from one another, if at all, *does* most certainly help explain the Mano "fade-out" (*contra* Adams 2010:21). It is also noteworthy that the Mano, like many of the other (sub)groups of the region, occasionally commissioned masks from Dan artists, recognizing their superiority when it came to the creation of spiritually important objects, or even purchased and imported them from the Dan (Vandenhouste 1948:33, 1989:45), something that Harley (1950:24) had already observed. However, I am not convinced that the "neglect of the Mano corpus" should be related to "issues of taste" reflecting the preferences of collectors in the 1920s and '30s (*contra* Adams 2010:30). Not only are the differences between the feminine masks of both peoples (or subgroups) much too subtle to lend support to this argument, the style of some of the most powerful masculine Mano masks—like the one in the Cleveland Museum of Art—is actually fully in line with the modern taste for geometry and abstraction of art collectors and the general public in that period. Instead, I would argue—at the risk of adding to the speculative and subjective nature of the debate—that collectors and scholars seem to have favored Dan masks above those of the Mano and other related groups because—much like the actors themselves—they recognized the superior artistic quality of these masks, even the feminine-style masks (e.g., compare Figures 6 and 13 in Adams 2010).

It is also in part on the basis of his recognition of a shared culture between the Dan and the Mano—whether or not they are separate peoples or the latter a subgroup of the former—and the formal and stylistic similarities between their masks, that Vandenhouste (1989) formulated his main criticism of Harley's linking of Mano masks to the Poro association (Harley 1941, 1950, 1970). According to Vandenhouste (1989:20, 23, 41–43), the Poro association is as foreign to the Mano as it is to the Dan. Indeed, Dr. Harley and others before and after him seem to have mistaken an institution that could be named the "mask association" (Vandenhouste labels it a "mask cult") for the Poro association.



14 Face mask. An example of the “external periphery” of the We/Wobe core style
Bete people, Côte d’Ivoire
Wood, metal; H. 32cm (12½”)
Collection of Laura Ross, New York
Provenance: Jean-Paul Delcourt, Abidjan, — to 1970;
Lucien Van de Velde, Antwerp, 1970 to 2001
PHOTO: © JOHN BIGELOW TAYLOR

In passing, without ignoring the mystery surrounding masks and associations as an extenuating circumstance, Vandenhoute (1989:10–11) notes that some of Harley’s inaccurate conclusions—which are not limited to his *Masks as Agents of Social Control in Northeast Liberia* (1950)—derive from his flawed methodology.¹⁰ One of the problems singled out by Vandenhoute (1989:11) is that Harley willingly accepted the information given to him by the sellers of the masks he obtained, but in fact these “informants” were typically not the owners or even wearers of the masks in question and therefore not the most reliable sources (see also Adams 2009:20–21, for some comments on “Harley’s side of the sales encounter”). The fact that one cannot qualify Harley’s work in any way as relying on the method of “participant-observation,” as confirmed by Adams (*ibid.*, p. 18), and that he apparently did not witness any mask performance and published only one photograph of a Mano masker “in action” (*ibid.*, p. 29, n. 4), further reinforces the suspected limitations of his field research and the conclusions he derived from it.

Although scholars of this region generally accept that the Poro association has never been in place among the Dan (see Donner 1939:62 and especially Fischer 1980)—and even Harley himself in his 1950 book modified and corrected his initial erroneous views on the subject—to this day many believe that among the Mano masks and masking are ruled by this pervasive “secret society.” At first sight this connection seems to be confirmed by one of the most recent scholars with extensive field experience

in Mano country (Zetterström 1976, 1980), but Vandenhoute’s critical comments on the issue are so substantial and convincing that it is simply impossible to dismiss or ignore them. Although Harley, in his *Notes on the Poro in Liberia* (1941:5), mentions that “Poro” is not the name the Mano themselves use for this organization, he insists that this most important association is the source of all secret activity, including the use of masks. However, what he is really talking about, according to Vandenhoute (1989:19), is a mask association that in fact functions as an active form of opposition against the totalitarian authority of the Poro association. True authority among both the Dan and the Mano is indeed vested with a highly developed mask organization that owes its existence to a deeply rooted cult of the ancestors. It is precisely because of this particular political situation, as compared to other Mande-Fu groups where Poro *is* in place, that there is such a profusion of masks among both the Dan and the Mano (Vandenhoute 1989:20).

Further proof of Harley’s confusion between a Poro association and a normal initiation or puberty ritual (or “circumcision school,” as it is labeled in earlier sources) is that the name he recorded for Poro among the Mano, Ge Bon, is in fact the same name that the Dan use for both the initiation as such and the series of masks that are related to it, and that it literally means “mask-circumcised” (Vandenhoute 1989:22). Even though some Mano (sub)groups may over time have been exposed to and affected by a “foreign” Poro authority—and for that matter may have also undergone the influence of the “leopard society” and some other so-called secret associations, and even of Islam, as seems to be indicated by Donner (1939:19)—the impact of the Poro was geographically limited and never took the form of “a centralized and sovereign authority” (Vandenhoute 1989:23). Vandenhoute (*ibid.*, pp. 24–25) identifies Poro and the mask association as two radically different “life systems”: the former being a political authority with control over religious life, the latter a religious authority—in which the ancestors play a prominent role—with control over political life. It is not a coincidence that the Dan and the Mano have one and the same word for “mask,” *ge*, though it is spelled differently in accordance with dialectical variations. In both cases the mask does not represent the ancestor but is rather conceived of as an independent supernatural being—a spirit which is good though feared—that acts as a mediator between the living and the deceased but always to benefit the people. Like a living person, this mask spirit possesses certain characteristics and capabilities.¹¹

According to Vandenhoute (1989:28–30), there are two basic

15 Luwesegle, dancer's mask "with the face of a well-disposed man," carved by Uwe (died shortly before 1939) in the Kulime substyle
Southern Dan people, Kulime subgroup, Gmanyuwe village, Liberia
Wood; H. 24.5cm (9½")
Field-collected by Pieter Jan Vandenhouste in the village of Benuyen in Côte d'Ivoire in 1939
MAS | Ethnographic Collections, Antwerp, AE.
1955.0030.0018 (Côte d'Ivoire Expedition collection nr. IV.719)
PHOTO: DICK BEAULIEUX, © MAS | ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS, ANTWERP

kinds of masks: those worn in front of the face and performed for diverse functions ranging from mere entertainment to important cult actions, and those with their hollowed-out backs filled with spiritual ingredients that have special magical powers. However, as confirmed in the writings of subsequent scholars, Vandenhouste (ibid., pp. 29, 36) also reminds us that a mask can gain in power and climb up the hierarchical ladder during the course of its life or career. Similarly, Adams (2010:23) points out that it is impossible to derive a function or task from a mask's form or shape because a mask's function may change over time and often the mask and its headdress will be altered accordingly. The mask cult is structured following a power hierarchy in four steps: the (ancestor) priest, the mask, the ancestors, and the Supreme Being. Honoring the ancestors is the mask cult's main function, and the priest is the highest servant in the communication between the living and the dead (Vandenhouste 1989:30–31). It is because masks occupy such a central position in the ancestor cult that their functions are so diverse and they vary so widely, and it would at the same time explain the extreme rarity of figurative sculptures—which often play a role in ancestor worship elsewhere in western Africa (Vandenhouste 1948:3). Interestingly, according to Vandenhouste (1989:31), the Dan and the Mano call both the mask association and the ancestor priest *go*.¹²

While acknowledging the unlimited variety of functions that masks can perform in every aspect of private and public life and that a mask "can climb from a lower classification to a higher one," Vandenhouste (1989:36) does propose a categorization of both Dan and Mano masks based on their functional characteristics. Contrary to earlier attempts by Donner (1940) and Harley (1950), however, Vandenhouste's classification does not take into account aspects of form and style.¹³ The basic distinction is between two overarching categories, one called *gebande*, "the mask of higher rank" or "the great or strong mask," the other identified as *genone*, literally, "the mask child" or "mask of lower degree" (Vandenhouste 1989:37–40). Of the five genres constituting the first category, two deserve special mention in the present context: Goge and Sagbwe. Goge or "ancestor mask" is the name of the most venerable of masks among both the Dan and the Mano and occupies the highest degree of the mask hierarchy. It is controlled directly by the above-mentioned ancestor priest, *go* (sometimes called *gonola*) and upon the death of its owner typically will no longer appear in public. The last illustration in this article offers a well-known example of this particular mask genre in the Southern Dan Flanpleu substyle (Fig. 16). Strictly speaking, the distribution of the genre known as Sagbwe or "runner's



mask" is, it seems, limited to the Northern Dan and their neighbors and would not occur as such among the Mano. Of its various tasks, that of "fire-watcher" is directly related to the savanna habitat—during the dry season the *harmattan* wind presenting a constant threat to a village's safety. In general terms, the two Sagbwe examples illustrated here confirm the independence of form and function (Figs. 11–12). The more harmless *genone* category encompasses a large number of genres whose main task is to entertain or amuse the audience. Popular among both the Dan and the Mano—Harley (1950:40–41) labels them as "dancers, minstrels, and clowns" and his discussion indiscriminately addresses masks of both peoples/groups—one of the most common mask genres of this category is called Luwesegle or "dancer's mask" of which the Southern Dan mask in the Kulime substyle illustrated here is an example (Fig. 15).

Does the Cleveland Harley mask—which is stylistically at least somewhat related to the Antwerp Kulime mask—fit in this classification at all? Obviously, our answer to this question cannot be based on the mask's shapes and forms; instead, we must return to Harley's "primary" data as they accompanied the object when it was sold to the museum in 1953. Leaving the relationship with the Poro association aside, in light of Vandenhouste's critical assessment it seems that we are dealing with another example of the Goge, the holy "ancestor mask." Harley's *Masks as Agents of Social Control in Northeast Liberia* is of no use when it comes to understanding the various bits of information provided by his



16 Goge, ancestor's mask "with the face of a malefic boy," carved by Kmantaduwe (died c. 1904) in the Flanpleu substyle
Southern Dan people, Uame subgroup, Flanpleu village, Côte d'Ivoire
Wood, fibers, cloth; H. 22.5cm (9")
Field-collected by Pieter Jan Vandenhouste in the village of Flanpleu in 1939
Private collection (Côte d'Ivoire Expedition collection nr. IV.1706)
PHOTO: HUGO MAERTENS, © MAS | ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS, ANTWERP

handwritten tag. Interestingly, however, the name "Dunuma" does appear in his 1941 publication *Native African Medicine*, which bears the subtitle *With Special Reference to Its Practice in the Mano Tribe of Liberia*. Here, the name is related to the title *zo*, said to be the priest or "medicine man" of the Poro, typically a hereditary position (Harley 1970:16). *Dunuma* refers to a horn of medicine owned by the *zo* "to protect himself against the fatal misfortune of exposing himself while dancing so that people could see that he was a man with a mask, not a spirit" (ibid., p. 129). The author continues, "His mask was called by the same name, and therefore ritually he himself was a *dunuma*," and further states that it "was greatly feared even inside the Poro by young and old" and would never be shown to outsiders (ibid., pp. 130, 171). Upon reception of the *dunuma* horn, a *zo* would have to sacrifice a son "to be killed and eaten in the Poro" (ibid., p. 133). The term *Ge li du*, however, which also accompanies the Cleveland mask, remains unresolved. And it is not clear, either, whether the name of the man who owned it at the time, "Se Gola," is indeed a proper name or instead a title or office.

However, as mentioned earlier, much of Harley's so-called first-

hand data were passed on to him through misinformed sources and should not be taken at face value. As Wells (1977:23) has commented, there is "[n]o doubt that sellers sometimes fabricated a story to satisfy the curious doctor." In fact, the same caution was already urged by Holas (1952:44), who stated, with reference to Harley's *Masks as Agents of Social Control in Northeast Liberia*, that the author's terminology not only lacks a sound theoretical basis but that some of the information he provides appears to be invented. This may also be the case for his few lines about the Cleveland mask. A review of Harley's own publications suggests that his data may even be a corruption of what he has written, with reference to both Mano and Dan, about the Goge, or "great mask of the Poro," as he "translates" it, which is one of the four different functional mask types he identified and one of the many masks under the control of the *gonola* (Harley 1950:11–12); in Schwab (1947:268–71) the mask is called Nyamu or Ge (go) and identified as "The Big Devil." Nevertheless, as Vandenhouste (1989:34) has commented, not only are all of Harley's illustrations of such Goge masks of Dan origin, his identification of the *gonola* of the Mano also matches with the ancestor priest of the Dan rather than with the Poro grandmaster. It is, in any case, at least curious that none of the names and terms accompanying the Cleveland mask or the explanations given in Harley's *Native African Medicine* are repeated in his subsequent *Masks as Agents of Social Control in Northeast Liberia*. In fact, it seems that even the title of *zo*, the Poro priest and "medicine man," was changed or corrected to *gonola* in Harley's later book.¹⁴

Vandenhouste (1948:41–42) sums up his critical remarks on Harley's association between "Poro and mask" by stating that it is the mask association, not Poro, that constitutes the autochthonous and dominant "life system" among the Dan and the Mano, speaking to the lasting authority of the ancestors and their continuous interference in the life of the individual and the community. Possible traces of the presence in the area of the Poro association—the mask association's true antipode—must reflect relatively recent and rather superficial developments imposed from the outside. According to Vandenhouste, the hypothesis that Harley (1950:vii) implicitly formulated, that among the Mano a mask cult would have transitioned into the Poro association, underestimates the profound differences between the two institutions. In truth, acceptance of the Poro association by either the Mano or the Dan would entail a radical break with their most sacred philosophical views. It would obliterate the influence of the ancestors and undermine various social, political, and artistic values. Among other things, it would ultimately lead to the extinction of the production and use of masks. The prominent

role that masks continued to play in Mano and Dan culture, at least at the time of his research in the late 1930s, is one of Vandenhouste's principal reasons to dispel Harley's attempts "to connect all [Mano] masks to actual Poro activities" (1989:23).¹⁵

A final question regarding the presence of the Poro association among the Mano arises, however, if one considers the more recent publications of Kjell Zetterström (1976, 1980), which are based on field research conducted between 1966 and 1970. Indeed, even though he states that "not all Mano have Poro" (Zetterström 1976:105), one wonders if his work confirms the further dispersion of the association over time and testifies to the fact that it has finally managed to "conquer" the Mano. As opposed to Harley's discussions, which deal with the southern Mano of the Ganta area, Zetterström's specifically bear upon the Yamein subgroup (rather than clan) of the northernmost Mano, who inhabit nine villages north of the Ya River (Zetterström 1976:1–2, 1980:41). As mentioned earlier, the Poro association would in fact already have had a stronger presence in northern Manoland in Vandenhouste's days. Still, when it comes to the Poro association and the role of masks in the "Poro bush," his descriptions are very close to Harley's. I am specifically referring to his 1980 article in the *Ethnologische Zeitschrift Zürich*. Perhaps not coincidentally, whereas Harley's work is quoted quite frequently in both of Zetterström's publications, none of Vandenhouste's writings are ever mentioned. Upon closer inspection, Zetterström appears to have repeated Harley's mistakes in terms of the interpretation and translation of certain key concepts. As a result, Vandenhouste's critical comments appear not to have lost anything of their pertinence and are equally applicable to Zetterström's writings as they are to Harley's. Indeed, though it is not impossible that in the interval between Harley's research in the late 1930s and Zetterström's in the late 1960s the Poro association had gained so much influence that his informants willingly assimilated it with their "autochthonous" beliefs and practices, it seems that Zetterström was in truth also dealing with a mask association rather than with Poro. It is not a coincidence that, in the absence of any primary data, it is in fact not possible on the basis of their stylistic features to tell whether the masks illustrated in his 1980 article—including his example of what he calls the "mask of the *Ge go*," worn by "the most important Poro official" (Zetterström 1980:51, 59, Fig. 8)—were created by Dan rather than Mano artists.

In conclusion, I hope, if nothing else, that my review of Vandenhouste's criticism of Harley's work reinforces the call by Monni Adams (2010:32) for extended field research among the Mano and their related neighbors (see also Adams 1982:40). Vandenhouste would obviously fully have agreed with this recommendation: he concluded his 1952 article also by stating

that "intense research in that area shall have to clear up many obscure points" (1989:46). The preceding discussion, it must be emphasized, should not take away from the many lasting and valuable contributions of Dr. Harley's work and publications, some of which were actually also underscored by Vandenhouste (1989:46; see also Wells 1977:22–23). I further hope that what precedes leaves no doubt that the author of the *Classification stylistique du masque dan et guéré de la Côte d'Ivoire occidentale* was much more than a "formalist." Thanks to his training with Frans Olbrechts and not in the least his extensive fieldwork in Côte d'Ivoire, Vandenhouste was fully aware of the contextual setting of African art and its multiple cultural dimensions (see also Gerbrands 1957:78–93, 123–39; Burssens 1983). Two of his publications are of special significance in this regard. One is his article on the "theme of art and society," published in Dutch in the now-extinct journal *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Wetenschappen* (Journal for Social Sciences) of the University of Ghent (Vandenhouste 1960). The other is his review of Herta Haselberger's essay "Method of Studying Ethnological Art" in the journal *Current Anthropology* (Vandenhouste 1961).

In his "notes on art and society" Vandenhouste calls for an in-depth study of the interactions between the work of art and the individual or a community, distinguishing among what he labels the "presence" of a work of art, its "functional content," and, finally, its "social function" (1960:5–6, 8–11, 24–25). His proposed method for the "ethnological study" of the visual arts is described in a concise yet comprehensive manner in his comments on Haselberger's book on the same subject. Considering the material, formal, expressive, and functional aspects of the work of art, and recognizing that the work of art is by nature "a particular entity of form and content," the author recommends an analytical distinction between on the one hand the material and tangible nature of the form, and on the other the content which is of a spiritual order (Vandenhouste 1961:375).¹⁶ It is for this same reason that Vandenhouste (1948:3) argues that a morphological or stylistic classification of masks should at least in an initial phase not take into account their "spiritual functions." These methodological insights clearly derive in part from his observation that among the Dan and their related neighbors in the Upper Cavally region a mask's form typically could not be correlated with its function.

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Notes

Because I lack knowledge in any of the languages spoken by the peoples discussed in this essay, and the existing literature I have had to rely on is rather inconsistent, I have purposely not applied the phonetic alphabet and omitted accents in the transcription of vernacular terms and names. I did take the liberty of attempting to create some consistency by using one and the same spelling for the same words throughout my text.

1 While I had the intention to delve deeper into the matter, I went ahead and included the mask in the newly installed temporary gallery of sub-Saharan African art from October 12, 2003, to September 4, 2005, and published it in the accompanying catalogue of key works from the Cleveland Museum of Art's African art collection (Petridis 2003:Pl. 13). Since June 19, 2010, after having been off view for about five years, the mask—which was recently also formally transferred to

the primary collection—is again featured prominently in the new permanent gallery of African art in the museum's refurbished 1916 building.

2 I have dedicated this article to the memory of Elze Bruyninx (born October 28, 1944), my dissertation supervisor at the University of Ghent, who sadly passed away on January 8, 2011, at the age of sixty-six. A member of the Belgian Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences since 1996, she obtained her PhD degree in art

history and archaeology from the University of Ghent in 1977. After having served as research and teaching assistant at her alma mater since 1970, first to her mentor Pieter Jan Vandenhoute and later to her predecessor Herman Burssens, she was appointed senior lecturer (*Hoofddocent* in Dutch)—which could be considered the equivalent of a tenured associate professorship in the United States—in 1991 in ethnic art and African culture, a post she held until her early retirement in 2005. Throughout her entire career, she taught courses in both African and Oceanic art and in museology. Aside from her publications on the Dan, the most significant of which are listed in the References to this article, she also published an article on the so-called Karagwe Treasury (Tanzania) in the journal *Kleine Beiträge* (Bruyninx 1990), contributed an essay on metal application to African masks to the catalogue *Face of the Spirits: Masks from the Zaire Basin* (Bruyninx 1993), and co-authored a book on the Oceanic art collection of the University of Ghent (Bruyninx and Van Damme 1997).

3 Vandenhoute (1989:13–14, n. 9), however, informs us that because he did not have the opportunity to conduct in-depth research among the Mano, he always made sure to confirm his personal notes with the published literature on the subject. The area inhabited by the Mano (or Manon, as their name is spelled in some early sources), who are very close to both the Dan and the Kono, cuts across the contemporary national borders of Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea (Zetterström 1976:10, 1980:41).

4 According to Louis Wells (1977:22) only a few hundred masks went to museums. The majority are now in private collections. Harley was, however, eager to place masks in museums with the ambition to provide a fitting memorial to his work. Aside from Harvard University's Peabody Museum, Harley masks were also acquired by the College of William & Mary (Williamsburg, Virginia), the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (Washington DC), and Lincoln University (Baltimore Pike, Pennsylvania). A large number of masks ended up at Harley's alma mater, Duke University (Durham, North Carolina), which agreed to establish a special room for his collection and name it after him (Wells 1977:24). Curiously, the Harley Memorial Collection at Duke remains barely known and has, as far as I am aware, never been the subject of any serious study.

5 Wells (1977:25) has made some interesting observations on the surfaces of a large number of Harley masks that he believes might carry some value to help determine their chronology. According to his examinations, almost all of the masks acquired before 1937, including the Cleveland example, were blackened and show traces of frequent ("native") recoating. The author also noted a decline in the quality of the average mask over time; masks Harley acquired before 1937 are generally of a higher level than those collected later (Wells 1977:26–27).

6 This latter sculpture is actually quite similar to the mask that graces the cover of the catalogue on Dan art for the Rietberg Museum in Zurich (Fischer and Himmelheber 1976:cover and cat. 2; see also Himmelheber 1960: Figs. 126a–b), although it should be mentioned that neither possesses what Adams, following Fischer, considers to be the most salient style feature of a Dan mask. Indeed, contrary to what has been stated earlier in this article, seen in profile both these masks do show a curvature and as a result do *not* lie flat when placed face-up on a horizontal plane. I suspect the same is actually true for the feminine Dan mask that Harley collected for the Peabody Museum at Harvard University, illustrated as Figure 6 in Adams 2010. Interestingly, the Christie's mask illustrated here (Fig. 6), which has apparently no provenance data associated with it, was

sold for US\$30,161, while the Sotheby's mask (Fig. 7) field-collected in Liberia by Hayden Walling and his wife Odette in the early 1950s fetched US\$278,500.

7 The Mande language spoken by the Dan is similar to that of their Kono (or Konor), Diomande, Mau (or Mauka), and Tura (or Wenmebo) neighbors in the north and east, and their Mano, Kpelle, and Toma neighbors in the west. Culturally, though not linguistically, they also have much in common with their eastern and southern Kru-speaking neighbors, such as the We (also called Wenion or Weon, and formerly known as G(u)ere, Guerze, or Ngere), who are called Kran in the South, and the Wobe. In Liberia the Dan are mostly called "Gio," and sometimes erroneously also "Ge(h)," while in Côte d'Ivoire they also go by the name "Yakuba" (or Yacouba); there are also some Dan people living in Guinea (Bruyninx 1996:131, Fischer and Himmelheber 1976:4, Fischer 1996:486). It should be said that We and Kran are not unanimously considered to be synonyms, while some believe the Mau are actually part of the Diomande. The Mande languages can be divided into a Northern Mande (or Mande-Tan) group, spoken by the Mau and (other) Diomande, among other peoples, and a Southern Mande (or Mande-Fu) group, spoken by the Dan, Mano, Tura, and still others (Vandenhoute 1989:13–14, Verger-Fèvre 1993a:129–30). However, while according to Holas (1952:16) the Kono also belong to the Mande-Fu group, Vandenhoute leaves them out of his discussion because he believes they are part of the Mande-Tan.

8 In fact, in some of the masks within this core style the realism is pushed to such a degree that Vandenhoute (1948:15) argues that one could indeed speak of "portrait masks." In these rare instances, the artist imitates the face of an actual individual, though he works purely from memory (see also Vangheluwe 2001:29–38). This issue has been elaborated upon by subsequent scholars, most notably Fischer (1970) and Himmelheber (1972), but it also caught Harley's attention (Adams 2010:32–36).

9 I should emphasize, however, that Vandenhoute (1948:34) himself claimed that even if at the time of his writing it appeared that both Mano and Kpelle masks revealed a profound Dan influence, he cautioned that it would be premature to draw any concrete and final conclusions from this observation.

10 Yet Vandenhoute's assertion that Harley was not "trained as a researcher" (which would explain the shortcomings of his work) does not hold true since, in preparation for his missionary assignment in Liberia, he actually did study anthropology in addition to medicine, first at the Kennedy School of Missions in Connecticut and later at Harvard University (Adams 2009:18).

11 According to Fischer (1978:18), rather than representing ancestral spirits, masks should be understood as manifestations of forest-dwelling spirits (see also Fischer and Himmelheber 1976:8–9). However, despite the apparent differences of opinion about the relationship between masks and the ancestors and ancestor worship in the writings of Vandenhoute and those of Fischer and Himmelheber, I do not believe their respective interpretations are as conflicting as Fischer (1980:81) has claimed and as they may appear at first. This issue of interpretation should be the subject of its own in-depth analysis.

12 The name that Harley recorded for the priest among the Mano, *gonola*, though he misunderstood it as meaning "God the Creator," would be a combination of *go* and a phonetic variant on *wala*, that is, "Allah," most probably reflecting a "deification" of the ancestor priest as a result of the pressure of Islam.

13 Eberhard Fischer (1978:20–21) also discusses the changing functions of a particular mask over time and its "promotion" following growing age and related accu-

mulated respect, and emphasizes that as a result of this "one cannot tell simply by looking at a mask what its life history and functions have been" (see also Fischer and Himmelheber 1976:9). Despite this problem, the author does proceed to distinguish between eleven major mask types, connecting specific formal features with eleven "basic" functions (Fischer 1980:21–23; see also Fischer and Himmelheber 1976:10–11).

14 Nevertheless, the *zo* title or office is also discussed by Zetterström (1980:49), who points out that it typically refers to someone who has knowledge of medicine or possesses another special faculty that places him above ordinary people. Even though some high officials of the Poro, called *ge gbuo* or *ge go* here, are indeed at once also *zo* and the titles are often used interchangeably, they are in fact not the same. Interestingly, this most important Poro official is "a much feared medicine man of great renown" who is said "to eat human beings" and who owns a mask that "looks red and dangerous" as a result of the chewed red kola nuts smeared around its mouth—which "is terrible so that people will be afraid when they see it" (Zetterström 1980:51).

15 One might wonder whether the fact that the Cleveland Harley mask would have been acquired in a village with a mixed population of Mano and Kpelle—that is, if Harley's information on the mask's collection history proves to be trustworthy—has any bearing on the veracity of its alleged association with the Poro association. Like their Dan and Mano neighbors, the Kpelle also belong to the Mande-Fu group, but while they do not share the abundant use of masks, they *are* uncontested "Poro adepts." Vandenhoute (1989:21) did actually write about the attempted introduction in the late 1930s in the northwestern part of the Dan region of the Poro of the Kpelle (see also Vandenhoute 1989:23). Yet he also mentions that a formal prohibition was in place that sanctioned an individual's initiation into the Poro association, whether voluntarily or by force, by death through poisoning. Nevertheless, Donner (1939:19) confirmed that some Mano "recently"—referring to her field research in 1934–35—adopted the Poro association, probably from their Kpelle neighbors. Among the Kpelle and other groups who adhere to the Poro, there is a mask that represents the central power of the society and its highest-ranking leader. This central mask, which has fused with the actual Poro leader, is "the mother of all masks," as Vandenhoute (1989:26) learned from some Kpelle informants.

16 The same approach was adopted by Marie-Noël Verger-Fèvre in her unpublished 1980 study for the École du Louvre, Paris, of about 200 Ivorian masks in French museums, summarized in her two-part article in *Arts d'Afrique Noire* (1985). Like Fischer and Adams, Verger-Fèvre's study of the masks of various peoples, including the Dan, We (which she believes comprises both Guere and Wobe), Mau, Kono, and Mano, reveals a basic distinction between a male and a female mask type within each of the ethnic entities (Verger-Fèvre 1985, part 1:25). Inspired by the method of "morphological analysis" as it has been applied to Fang statuary by Louis Perrois, the author established a classification in ten stylistic series which she argues would reflect a geographic distribution (Verger-Fèvre 1985, part 2:26–27, 30–33). It should be pointed out that despite her initial distinction between feminine and masculine masks, Verger-Fèvre (1993b:181–83), like Vandenhoute, also arrived at a basic distinction between a northern and a southern Dan area style. In fact, Verger-Fèvre (1993b:144) also follows Vandenhoute's distinction between "great" and "small" masks, even though her interpretation of the various genres sometimes differs from that offered by the Belgian art historian.

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