

MOSSI DOLLS

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Of all the sculpture produced by the Mossi of Upper Volta, the most frequently collected and most widely represented in American and European collections are the small, wooden anthropomorphic figures that are referred to in the literature as Mossi dolls.¹ There are several distinctive doll styles, which, like Mossi mask styles, may be traced to specific geographical regions and to individual carvers. All the dolls, however, share the same basic cylindrical form, with arms and legs rarely represented, and all are female, usually with very pendulous breasts. The figure stands on an integral base that is slightly larger in circumference than the body. The most distinctive characteristic of the individual carving styles is the shape of the head, generally a semicircle with the flat side down. When viewed from the front, the plane of the semicircle is perpendicular to the axis of the body, so that the doll's face, when it exists, is carved on the edge of the form (Fig. 1b). On either side where the ear would be located is a small semicircle or triangle that generally follows the form of the head and gives it additional width. In all cases (especially Fig. 1a), the head shape is simply a stylization of the *gyonfo*, a tri-lobed female coiffure, with the largest, central lobe extending from the front of the head to the back. The smaller shapes on each side represent masses of closely braided hair. Occasionally a little piece of light-colored metal, intended to represent a comb, is inserted in one of these hair forms.

Lines are incised on the figure representing braids, characteristic facial scars, and, most important, chest and stomach scars worn only by women (Fig. 12). The stomach scars often radiate from the umbilicus (Figs. 1a, 1b). Markings on a few dolls indicate facial features (Figs. 1b, 1d). In addition, there is always a small hole in the base for the anus, and occasionally the labia and vagina are indicated (Figs. 1a, 1b).

Some figures are decorated with small strands of colored beads or cowrie shells, and have cheap metal earrings attached through holes at the sides of the head. The carver may stretch wet animal hide over the wooden figure, which shrinks to a close fit as it dries (Figs. 1c, 1e, 6).

Mossi dolls exhibit two basic types of patina. Those in the field are often found lying in a corner of the family compound residence and are abraded, dusty, and a uniform dull grey (Fig. 7). They appear to have been kicked around on the ground for years. Those which have made their way into collections outside Africa more frequently have a dark, polished surface characteristic of an object given a lot of care and attention by its owner (Figs. 9, 10, 12); this type is normally never seen by the casual visitor to a Mossi family compound residence. As will be discussed here, the condition of a doll's surface is an indicator of its function in the family.

It is quite common to see little girls playing with dolls that they or their parents or older sisters have manufactured from found objects. They may be made from roughly carved sticks, short sec-

tions of millet stalk with a blob of mud for the head, rolled-up cardboard, or a corncob with the dried husks braided into an elaborate coiffure. Many children of wealthy families, especially in the larger towns, play with more prestigious plastic baby dolls imported from Taiwan or Ghana (Fig. 3).

Literature

The earliest published mention of Mossi dolls is Mangin's note that "... the little girls have their wooden dolls, and on important festival days they politely come to show them with great solemnity, and whoever takes the doll to hold for a moment must give the child a few cowries when it is handed back" (Mangin 1921:37).² Meurer (1964), who studied the dolls in Koupele, where Mangin had served earlier as a missionary, describes three distinct doll carving styles: those



(LEFT TO RIGHT): 1A. KAYA STYLE, 31.8cm. 1B. BOULSSA STYLE, 26.4cm. 1C. MAY BE OF A TYPE (WITH DANGLING FORELOCK) PRODUCED IN SEVERAL MOSSI AREAS. 23.4cm. 1D & 1E. A STYLE MOST FREQUENTLY ENCOUNTERED IN NORTHERN MOSSI COUNTRY, ESPECIALLY IN RISIAM. 23.9cm, 22.8cm. DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS.

with elongated necks and only cursory attention to human physical characteristics (1964:26, ill. 1a); those with cylindrical bodies, pendulous breasts, and a tall, ridged coiffure (more characteristic of the northern Mossi style of dolls) (1964:26, ill. 1b) (Figs. 1e, 4), and those with forward-jutting heads and an S-shaped appendage at the chin (1964:26, ill. 1c) (Figs. 1c, 10). He notes that this appendage, which hangs like a nose or an elephant's trunk, represents a braid of hair worn by young girls in the front, and by older women at the back of the head (1964:27). Meurer was able to gather information on the dolls' function from the village chief, with the help of the Mossi teacher in Koupela, Eloi Kafando. Young girls play with the wooden dolls, which they call "child" (*biiga*) (1964:28), and carry them tucked in the waistband of their skirts, just as their mothers carry real babies.

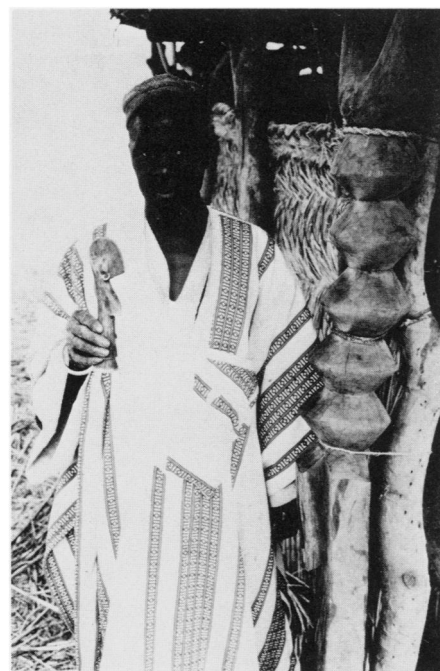
Additional information on function, collected by Kafando, is appended to Meurer's study (1964).³ During the excision ceremonies in the area, girls are given a piece of millet stalk, later replaced by a corn cob with plaited coiffure (Meurer 1964:29, ill. 2a). The girls show their dolls to adult women who say, "May God give you many children." The

straw doll is carried on the back, and after the excision ceremony is placed in a hut until the young woman marries. On the night before the wedding she gives it to a younger sister (1964:28).

The wooden or corn cob dolls are cared for as if they were real children. If a young girl mistreats it, later her own children will become ill or die. When searching for firewood in the bush, the girls bring back wildflowers for their dolls, and when they go to the market they carry the dolls in their skirts, showing them to vendors who give them small gifts. Those who are not able to go to the market position themselves along the path to await the vendors' return, placing their dolls on the ground before them to receive presents (Meurer 1964:30).

Wooden dolls are purchased by mothers for their daughters, who cover them with leather and decorate them with cowries and beads. Before marriage, a woman coyly carries the doll to market on her back. A few days after being married, she is given a bit of straw in place of her doll and is asked if her first child will be a boy or a girl. The doll is given a name and will permit the newly married couple to conceive a child quickly (Meurer 1964:30).

In addition to Meurer's study, the literature on Mossi dolls includes a lengthy article by Ladislav Segy (1972), the following being its most substantive portion: "These dolls are executed in different materials but mostly in wood, hence their name *raog'biiga* (child in wood) or *rad'kaba* (children in wood). Their form is varied according to the region they come from, such as Yako, Ouagadougou, Koupela, Ouahigouya. The main characteristic of these dolls is that they are all female; none of male sex has been seen. The dolls are ornamented with pearls, shells, pieces of bone, leather strips, pieces of fabric or metal. The most beautiful ones were reserved for the small princesses."⁴



2. DOLL IN THE STYLE OF THE REGION OF KAYA, IN NORTHEASTERN MOSSI COUNTRY. THE DOLL IS HELD BY ITS CARVER, THE NAKOMSE CHIEF OF KORSIMORO, NABA SANOM, WHO ALSO CARVED THE POST AT THE RIGHT. MARCH 3, 1977. LEFT: 3. TWO DOLLS IN THE VILLAGE OF BOUBOULOU, SOUTH OF YAKO. THE DOLL ON THE LEFT IS WOOD, CARVED BY A LOCAL BLACKSMITH IN THE RATHER ROUGH STYLE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE YAKO REGION. ON THE RIGHT IS A PLASTIC BABY DOLL PURCHASED BY THE COMPOUND HEAD IN A LOCAL MARKET. BOTH ARE EQUALLY APPRECIATED BY YOUNG GIRLS AS PLAYTHINGS, AND BOTH ARE ADDRESSED AS *BIIGA* (CHILD). FEBRUARY 27, 1977.



"As educational toys, they are dressed, washed, carried on the back, or placed on the mat, etc., all being activities for education of the child as 'mother' of the doll, carried on under the watching eyes of the mother, aunt, or grandmother.

"In spite of their role as toys, they are subject to religious considerations. The young 'girl-mother' considers the doll a child (*biiga*) and has to pay close attention to it. Hence, any damage to the doll, although accidental, calls for consultation with the diviner, who knows invisible things hidden from ordinary people. For this reason the dolls are handled with great care. They are passed down from sister to sister, from mother to daughter, sometimes from a remote great-grandmother. The Mossi dolls are also used the first time a mother gives birth to a child. She has to wash the doll she played with in childhood before washing her own child. The doll is considered the first child of each young girl. They are also used for votive purposes. Women who are still childless after several years of marriage carry dolls richly ornamented with cowry shells under their garments wherever they go—to the markets, to festivities, in traveling—expressing always their ardent wish to have a child. It is said that often their wish is granted" (Segy 1972:38).⁵

Suzanne Lallemand has also provided much useful information in an article based on her field experiences in Yatenga (1973: 235-46), which I shall summarize here. Although the dolls are quite abstract and roughly carved in many cases, they reproduce with precision the most important physical attributes of the young Mossi mother. The *bins-kordo* (sack-breasts) produced by the technique called *peebo* (to draw out) are represented. After the birth of the first child, the older women who have assisted in the delivery vigorously massage the mother's breasts to facilitate lactation (Lallemand 1973:237-38); the stretched breasts are a desirable symbol of motherhood. In addition, incised markings on the chest and stomach of the dolls accurately reproduce the cosmetic scars that every respectable Mossi girl receives as she approaches puberty. Arms, legs, and facial features which are not indexes of the age, sex, ethnic group, and reproductive ability of the woman are superfluous.

Although the dolls have the physical characteristics of the *ma* (mother), they are still called *biiga* (child), and the young girls who carry them affirm that they are children. They give them names, both masculine and feminine, cover them with bits of cloth, and bounce them on their knees. The little girls even practice administering an enema, called *yamde*. Until a child reaches the age of three, his



LEFT TO RIGHT: 4. NORTHERN STYLE, 16.5cm. AUTHOR'S COLLECTION. 5. STYLE OF THE REGION OF ZINIARE, 15.8cm. AUTHOR'S COLLECTION. 6. KAYA STYLE, COVERED WITH ANIMAL HIDE, 15.8cm. COLLECTION OF NANCY & PETER MICKELSEN. 7. STYLE OF THE

REGION OF ZINIARE, 15.4cm. AUTHOR'S COLLECTION. 8. STYLE OF ZINIARE, 14cm. PURCHASED AT THE ZINIARE MARKET IN DECEMBER 1976 FOR 35¢ (75 CFA). AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.

mother gives an enema twice daily, injecting the liquid with her mouth. According to Lallemand, "the enema administered by little Voltaic girls corresponds to the bottle feeding at which European children play" (1973:329).

An adult may also advise the child to place a number of modeled clay figurines, *kamba* (children), on the ancestral altar of the clan to express to the ancestors her desire for many children, the number of figures offered indicating the number of children desired. Each ancestor may use part of his own spirit (*sigha*) to fashion a new being. The ancestor concerned may be identified by a diviner after the child's birth (Lallemand 1973:239).

Although the dolls are playthings aiding the education of the child, they are of greater importance for the adult woman. Lallemand notes that when a woman leaves her father's compound for the home of her new husband, the wooden figure is carried along; it will permit the wife to become pregnant within a month of her first conjugal sexual experience (1973:240). A woman who has not been able to conceive a child after a reasonable period will bestow all of the normal maternal attentions on a wooden *biiga*, even to the point of feeding it, washing it, clothing it, and carrying it in public tied

on her back in a baby wrapper. If, through the associative power of her actions, she bears a child, she will continue to lavish attention on the doll. As soon as the umbilical cord of her first child has been cut, the wooden *biiga* is washed and anointed with shea butter⁶ and placed on the mat beside the new mother, followed a little later by the newborn infant. The first drops of the mother's milk are offered to the doll, and before the new baby is placed on his mother's back for the first time, the wooden figure is tied there for the last time (Lallemand 1973:241).

According to Lallemand's informants, the figure has two major functions: it is the *yisa biiga* (literally, "to call the child"), which permits the infant's soul to enter the world of his parents, and the *gidga ti da biiga lebera me* (literally, "to prevent the child from returning"), which assures that the child will remain with its mother (and clan) and not return to the world of the ancestral spirits (i.e., die). She received conflicting information concerning the fate of the doll after it has fulfilled its role as an aid to conception. Some informants stated that it must be returned to the woman's patrician, where it is placed in the ancestral spirit house among other important sacred objects and perhaps reused by a younger female

relative; others said that once the figure has served its purpose, it is simply discarded. Finally, Lallemand was told that the doll must be given to the female child that it has called into the world: "... if, they say, the little girl cares for the figure like her own baby, she must, nevertheless, address it as her *keema*, 'elder sister,' who, even before the newborn child, drank the milk and was carried on the back of their common mother" (Lallemand 1973:241).

If the mother who has used a doll to help her conceive dies in childbirth, the doll is carefully buried.⁷ If the infant dies at birth, the doll is given to a child to play with because it has not functioned properly (Lallemand 1973:242).

Regional Styles

It is possible to attribute many Mossi dolls to specific geographical regions on the basis of carving style, the shape of the doll's head being the most important indicator. Because a bride takes along her doll when she moves to her husband's patrician residence, which may be a considerable distance away, the village in which a doll has been collected often is not the village in which the doll was carved, resulting in considerable confusion when one attempts to correlate styles with geographic areas. Neverthe-

less, I have discovered several regional styles when I have purchased new dolls from the blacksmiths who carved them.

The best-known regional carving style is the Kaya style (Figs. 1a, 2, 6). The head is placed forward on the neck so that the line of the back and neck extending upward and over the head is an unbroken curve, as is often the line from the base of the chin to the tips of the breasts (Fig. 6). These dolls are carved in the area of the large town of Kaya in northeastern Mossi country.

Among the largest and most distinctive dolls are those made in the Boulssa area in eastern Mossi country (Figs. 1b, 9). A markedly concave face is carved into a flat, disc-shaped head, the neck is long and cylindrical, and the torso comes to a point at the umbilicus. A large number of these dolls have been carved by Somyogede Koudougou in the Logda smith neighborhood of the village of Bonam, only 14 kilometers north of the town of Boulssa, and he frequently sells the dolls in the Boulssa market. His father, Zimwomdya Koudougou, made many in the same style before he died. When I visited his clan's compound residence, two of the young girls in his family were playing with dolls Somyogede had carved.

The most frequently collected style of Mossi doll originates in the village of Ziniare, 34 kilometers northeast of Ouagadougou on the main road to Kaya (Figs. 5, 7, 8). The head is a semicircular disc, usually devoid of facial features, with smaller half-disc on each side. The neck is short and the torso is a simple cylinder mounted on a low pedestal. Large numbers of these dolls are sold in the Ouagadougou market. Some are obviously new, while others have been treated with grease and dirt to make them appear old.

A fourth type of Mossi doll, bearing an S-shaped extension of the lower jaw or lip, which has been called an elephant's trunk or a phallic shape, is not a distinctive regional style at all (Figs. 1c, 10, 12). Many examples have been collected in Kaya and in Pissila, 30 kilometers northeast of Kaya. A major road, which has formed a link in the trade route from Mali to the coast of Togo for centuries, passes through Kaya and Koupela. Meurer, who saw these dolls in Koupela, accurately states that this projection represents the braided lock of hair that unmarried girls wear over the forehead, and which is later worn on the back of the head when a woman is married. Although this hairstyle has become unfashionable in recent years, it can still be seen occasionally in remote villages.

A doll in the collection of the late Katherine Coryton White (Thompson 1974: pl. 78) includes this carved hair form. The placement of the head far forward

on the neck indicates that the doll may have been carved in the Kaya region. Similarly, a distinctly Kaya-style doll covered with leather has a very similar form hanging from the side of the head, which is an extension of the braided hide strip used to sew the leather over the wooden doll (Kamer 1973: no. 77). The S-shaped hair form is carved on dolls of many regional styles and cannot, therefore, be used as a style indicator.

Finally, a number of dolls collected in the north, in the Risiam area, have very small, disc-shaped heads, and breasts that form an inverted V when seen from the front (Fig. 4). Other dolls from the north have small, semicircular heads and pendulous breasts but appear much more attenuated than figures from the south. Three dolls in this style from the Musée de l'Homme are illustrated by Lallemant (1973: figs. 7, 9).

Function

Mossi dolls are made by smiths, who also specialize in utilitarian wooden objects including granary doors, locks, tool handles, spoons, mortars, and pestles. All of these objects are carved during the dry season, when the craftsman has plenty of free time from his fields. Made in the smith's compound, they are then carried from one local market to another, or sometimes to important markets great distances away. They may also be carved on special order. A dozen of the figures are commonly displayed at once in some markets, for smiths produce them in large numbers in their spare time. Prices for new dolls normally range from 10 to 75 CFA (\$.05 to \$.35) depending on their size (Fig. 8). In addition to new carvings, which are easily purchased at local markets, the Mossi sell ones that have seen years of use, whose owners have passed the age of childbearing. Dolls that have not functioned properly as aids to conception, and that were, in the past, given to young girls as playthings, are now sold to dealers who specialize in old, unfashionable brass jewelry and other objects of value on the antiquities market. Those carved for children who have died are quickly sold to these dealers. The appearance of patinated dolls on the art market is not the result of secularization but of the pragmatism of the Mossi, who prefer to profit from objects that in the past simply ended their days abandoned in some dusty corner of the family compound.

Dolls in the Boulssa style, perhaps carved in Bonam, are carried by small girls in Zeguedeguine, about 35 kilometers to the northeast. On market days, the girls may place their dolls on the edge of the straw mat on which a vendor is seated. The vendor is then obliged to give the child a small portion of whatever is being offered for sale—a handful

of peanuts, a few fried peanut rings, a soft mango, or a piece of candy.⁸

Informants in Guilongou, Sapone, and Korsimoro stated that the dolls are never used by older women but may serve as educational toys for little girls, helping to train them for their roles as mothers. The attitude of most Mossi children toward these objects is the same as that of children throughout the world toward their toys. Indulgent Mossi parents may purchase a doll on a trip to the market and smile proudly as their daughter tenderly cradles the plaything, caresses it, feeds it, and carries it like a real baby tucked into her skirt at the back. Ten minutes later the child's attention may be attracted to some novelty elsewhere in the compound, and the doll is abandoned in the dust. Few parents attach any real importance to the way the child treats the doll, and it is a mistake to overemphasize the symbolism associated with most of these toys. It is readily apparent that all Mossi dolls are female, and that, while they are said to represent children, they wear the hairstyles, abdominal scarification, and stretched breasts of mature women. As a result, Segy has described them as "archetypal fertility figures" (1972), and much has been made of their bivalent nature—"physical" child and "spiritual" mother. Again, there is a danger of overemphasizing the importance of the problem: many Mossi state simply that the doll depicts the child as she hopes someday to be. She dresses her doll in bits of cloth and cheap earrings just as a child in our own culture dresses and coifs her elaborate Barbie doll. Mossi girls, like American girls, relate easily to figures of beautiful women, which serve as sexual role models with which they can act out their fantasies about the future.

On certain occasions, however, dolls may take on greater significance. In the village of Zizon (18 kilometers south of Yako, near Noussou), Kando Yili, the senior wife of a dyer, said that they were given to little girls in her compound as instructional toys. If a married woman has trouble conceiving her first child, she places a doll called *biiga*, which is usually larger and more carefully carved than the children's toys, in her skirt at her back where she would normally carry her infant. If this brings her luck and she bears a child, she will treat the doll exactly as she does the new infant. Before the mother washes the child she washes the doll, and she rubs shea-butter on it to give it a beautiful, glossy skin, just as she does her baby. Dressed up in bits of cloth and decorated with bright beads and cheap earrings, these wooden *kwamba* (children) are kept by mothers for many years.

When a woman lavishes attention on a wooden doll in the expectation of soon



LEFT TO RIGHT: 9. STYLE OF THE REGION OF THE KINGDOM OF BOULSA, 26cm. COLLECTION OF MR. & MRS. C. M. STANLEY. 10. THE APPENDAGE AT THE FRONT OF THE HEAD REPRESENTS A BRAID OF HAIR, 21.5cm. COLLECTION OF NANCY & PETER MICKELSEN.

11. FROM NORTHEASTERN MOSSI COUNTRY, 20.3cm. AUTHOR'S COLLECTION. 12. COLLECTED IN THE VILLAGE OF SAPONE, SOUTH OF OUAGADOUGOU, 19cm. COLLECTION OF MR. & MRS. C. M. STANLEY.

conceiving a child, the "message" may be directed to the ancestors of her patriline, as reported by Lallemand (1973:239), or to the *kinkirsi* (sing., *kinkirga*)—spirits or "genies" inhabiting the "bush" or large trees near the compound residence.⁹ Believed to resemble small humans, the *kinkirsi* are universally feared by the Mossi, who frequently offer sacrifices to gain their protection (Ouedraogo 1968:3).¹⁰ The Mossi also attribute to these supernatural beings the power to increase fertility in women. They believe that it is a *kinkirga* entering a woman that causes her to conceive, and if she is unable to do so, she or her husband offers a sacrifice to a *kinkirga* so that it will come to their aid. As a result, every child is felt to be a result of the intervention of a *kinkirga* (Ouedraogo 1968:4). Because these spirits are believed to always travel in pairs, they are responsible for the birth of twins, which are also called *kinkirsi*. According to Mangin, "being of different sexes the *kinkirsi* can unite in marriage and bear offspring. They especially have

the ability always to produce twins, which is why twins are given their name and dedicated to them; it is felt that the spirits live in the twins.

"The birth of twins causes their mother much embarrassment, and in the past both were sometimes done away with, although sometimes only one was killed. When a woman has given birth to twins she builds a small hut at her own door, where the spirits which inhabit the twins' bodies may take refuge. . . . When the mother has passed away, the twins themselves offer sacrifices, it is they who build the little hut which serves as the abode of their little spirit. The last born is considered to be the elder. Both wear the same bracelet, and divide everything which is given to them, and it is a good thing not to give something to one without giving the same to the other" (Mangin 1921:81).

As Mangin reports, then, Mossi women do not want to bear twins. Yet, because the *kinkirsi* are responsible for the birth of twins, the implication is that

any woman who asks them for children is most likely to bear twins. The Mossi, however, deny this. The wooden doll a woman uses to signal her desire for a child represents neither the ancestral spirits nor the *kinkirsi*.

The attention lavished on dolls by older women and their use by young girls as recorded by Segy and Lallemand, and as noted by my informants, account for the extremes in surface quality encountered in collections of these objects. Dolls that have been used only as instructional toys by little girls are grey and dusty, and many carved details are broken or abraded from years of lying abandoned in a corner of the family compound (Fig. 7).¹¹ They have never received the successive applications of vegetable oil that produce the dark, shiny surface European and American collectors find so desirable, and which indicates that the figure has served some woman as an aid to conception, a fertility charm. □

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nual celebrations in neighboring states.

24. Rather than give a full account of the interpretation of the motifs that may be found in all newer works about Grassfields arts, I have chosen to present here additional material that might shed further light on Grassfields symbolism.

25. It might be assumed that the double-headed serpent openwork stool was introduced under King Mbembue's reign (1820s-1840s). On the other hand, an existing motif could have been reinterpreted to reflect Mbembue's particular history.

26. The similarity of rituals was first discovered when analyzing the *fiu tsu* ritual performed by the We after killing a leopard (Geary 1976:180 ff.).

27. Of course one should be aware of the possibility that the disintegration of Bamum as it existed at the turn of the century may very well have influenced the informants' interpretation of the motifs, so that present statements may no longer reflect the traditional meaning intended by the creators.

28. Rein-Wuhrmann also refers to these figures as "court guardians" in the quote given earlier in the text (1931:19 f.).

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This paper is based on a brief visit to the Anlo Ewe in 1977, while I was doing research in the eastern Akan state of Akuapem. I am extremely grateful for the generous help and friendship of Dickson Agbemafle of Anlo-Afiedenyigba. I also wish to thank Professor Peter Morton-Williams, who kindly read an earlier draft of this paper.

1. Nicklin and Salmons (1977) describe and illustrate naturalistic cement funerary sculpture for Christians and traditionalists among the Ibibio. Yoruba cement sculpture seems to be neither funerary art nor portraiture (cf. Beier 1968), though they do make "portraits" in other media (e.g., the Owo heads).

2. The lion is a widespread symbol of kings or chiefs in Ghana, Dahomey, and Nigeria. Cement lions were common on Yoruba houses in Lagos in the 1930s and '40s. These were variations on Portuguese heraldic sculpture introduced by repatriated slaves from Brazil in the 19th century (Beier 1968:149). Whether there is any direct relationship between the lions on funerary monuments in Ghana and the Nigerian examples is uncertain.

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Roy, Notes, from page 51

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2. This accords with information I collected in Zeguede-guin, where dolls are exposed in the market in return for small gifts.

3. Sigrid Paul reviews the information provided by Meurer and Kafando (1970:81-84).

4. Similar information is noted by Kamer 1973:117. It seems very possible that the common source for this idea for both Segy and Kamer is Toumani Triande, Director of the National Museum in Ouagadougou.

5. The rest of Segy's article consists of a discussion of Mossi dolls as "archetypal fertility figures" representing both sexes by their phallic form and female sexual attributes. Segy states very firmly that the figures are not "dolls or toys," when in fact that is precisely what they are.

6. This application of shea-butter, and more recently of cosmetics produced in Ghana and Nigeria and sold in local markets, produces the dark, shiny, well-handled surface characteristic of dolls that have been used as aids to fertility.

7. Such a death is greatly feared because the spirit of the deceased woman will be very dangerous for her family. If an infant dies, in contrast, little time is spent in mourning because the spirit of the child will soon return to the par-

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ents in the form of a second child.

8. This information was collected by George Hutchinson, an American Peace Corps Volunteer in Zeguede-guin from 1975 to 1977.

9. It is not clear whether the ancestors or the *kinkirsi* receive the "message." The relationship between the ancestors and the *kinkirsi* is such that the founding ancestor of the patrilines may be addressed as *kinkirga* when sacrifices are being offered to avoid offending him by pronouncing his name aloud: "In this way the mention of the name of a powerful, supernatural being is avoided by reference to an entity with analogous but lesser powers. Like the ancestor, the twin spirits can also 'send' children to Mossi women" (Hamond 1966:199, fn. 1).

10. The *kinkirsi* usually afflict anyone who offends them with horrible eye diseases.

11. The rough treatment many dolls have obviously received is not easy to reconcile with the information provided by Segy (1972:38) and Lallemand (1973:239) concerning the great care with which the children must handle their "babies."

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