

# AFRICAN ART

## at the MUSEUM RIETBERG, ZURICH

### PIET MEYER

Founded only thirty years ago, the Museum Rietberg in Zurich is unique for its diverse collection of non-European art of excellent quality, including works from India, China, Japan, Indonesia, the ancient Americas, Oceania, and Africa. The initial collection was bequeathed to the city shortly after the Second World War by Baron Dr. Eduard von der Heydt (1882-1964), a prominent German collector.<sup>1</sup> It can be seen today in the neoclassical Villa Wesendonck, which houses the Museum Rietberg, together with the gifts and acquisitions added since 1952.<sup>2</sup> Although these later acquisitions were often of considerable importance, the von der Heydt holdings have remained dominant to this day, both in quantity and in quality.<sup>3</sup>

Eduard von der Heydt was raised in Wuppertal, northern Germany, in a wealthy and respected banker's family, which, although tending to be politically conservative, favoring German monarchism, was amazingly open to the artistic avant-garde. His father, Baron August von der Heydt (1851-1929), was an avid collector of contemporary art (especially impressionist and expressionist works, but also those in older styles); co-founder and patron of the art museum in Wuppertal (Aust 1977), he spent much time with artists and intellectuals. Eduard, the younger of his sons, also embraced these two interests: receiving his doctorate in economics, he became a successful private banker, first in London and subsequently in Amsterdam, and then a major collector of art.

In 1908 von der Heydt discovered Indian and Chinese art. He displayed a rare appreciation of sculptural quality in his collecting, and although he sought the advice of experts (W. Cohn, A. Salmony, E. von Sydow, Meier Graefe, and others), surviving acquaintances insist that he chose the pieces himself. Soon von der Heydt was admiring forms not yet considered to be art by the establishment; for example, he purchased large Chinese sculptures when only their porcelain was being collected. This combination of a recognition of quality and a fundamental openness toward the unknown was shown by von der Heydt shortly afterward when he acquired his African collection.

From the very beginning, however, a third element was decisive in his collecting. As a young student, von der Heydt had read the Vedas and the Upanishads, and the sermons of Buddha, Lao-Tse, and Confucius, so he was well prepared for his encounter with East Asian art. However, the writings of Arthur Schopenhauer, as various factors suggest, had an even



1. DÉBLÉ. LATAHA VILLAGE, KORHOGO DISTRICT, FONOBELE. SENUFO, IVORY COAST. WOOD, 95cm.

2. MASK. BAMENDJO, BAMILEKE, CAMEROON, WOOD, 67cm.





3. NIMBA, BAGA, GUINEA/GUINEA BISSAU. WOOD, 108cm.

greater effect on him. They deal to a great extent with Eastern thought but make it more accessible to the Western reader. According to Schopenhauer man is basically a suffering being, a prisoner of his restrictive and thus painful egocentricity. He can only be freed by the sight of great art. Referring to Plato, Schopenhauer said that art embodies "the pure idea of things"; it can open up "the pure essence of human nature" to the viewer. When man realizes this, he can—if only briefly—transcend his worldly existence. East Asian sculpture in particular could fulfill this liberating function (Weischedel 1975:221-29).

Although von der Heydt was extremely reserved and made no mention of Schopenhauer's influence in the few written statements known to us, I believe the philosopher did affect his taste in art.<sup>4</sup> As we will see, various remarks he made on art clearly indicate views close to those of Schopenhauer, and the nature of his collection seems to tend in this direction.

Von der Heydt evinced a deep respect and preference for East Asian art, finding in it "a beautiful, lofty, solemn religious mood."<sup>5</sup> From the moment he discovered that same mood in African art, probably in the 1920s, he began collecting African art as well; "I realized that the sculpture of primitive peoples involved a similar spirit" (1933).<sup>6</sup> He mainly purchased works of the Luba, Kuba, Kongo, Fang, peoples of the Cameroon grasslands, the Baule, Guro, and Dan, and to a lesser extent the Dogon, Bambara and Senufo; choices were of course influenced by market conditions of the time (Donne 1978:111).<sup>7</sup> This selection was largely similar to that of the collectors of his generation, collectors whom Goldwater referred to as the second generation to accept "primitive art" and whose taste he describes as follows: "During the second and third decades of this century, notably in Paris, there were those who began to appreciate precisely those characteristics the 'discoverers' of the first decade had chosen to ignore. In the postwar period the emphasis was on gentler rhythms and more subtle stylizations, on smooth surfaces and fine patina, on subdued rather than violent expressions (or at least on expressions that could be so interpreted), and on a greater naturalism . . . It is no accident that for some years the styles that were the most appreciated were those of the Baule, of the gentler, polished type of Dan mask, and of the Fang. They were all accessible as objects d'art, as antiquities, on these terms" (Goldwater 1969: 35).

Von der Heydt's taste, however, diverged from that of his contemporaries in several respects. One might say that what is common to all the works of art he collected is their transcendental quality, which enabled him to experience the transcendental aspect himself. Seen in this light, he found Benin art to be too preoccupied with external appearances in its depiction of royal power at its most impressive; generally, von der Heydt considered it to be overestimated and un-African. In the same way, handicrafts or ethnographic objects were too directly rooted in the everyday material world to afford him a glimpse of the spiritual purity he sought in classical works of art. Finally, von der Heydt rejected objects that were merely exotic, bizarre, or grotesque as being "disagreeable."<sup>8</sup>

I would like to present here ten representative sculptures from von der Heydt's African collection (Figs. 2, 4-6, 8-10, 12, 14, 15), the majority of which are shown in Leuzinger's *Afrikanische Sculpturen* (1963).<sup>9</sup> Von der Heydt especially valued the calm, contemplative head on a Luba ceremonial axe (Fig.



4. ROYAL RETAINER. BAMILEKE, CAMEROON.  
WOOD, IRON, CLAY, 43.5cm.



5. DEGE DAL NDA.  
DOGON, MALI. WOOD, 63cm.



6. EYIMA BIERI. FANG, GABON.  
WOOD, BRASS STUDS, 42cm.



7. FIGURE. DOGON, MALI. WOOD. 96cm.

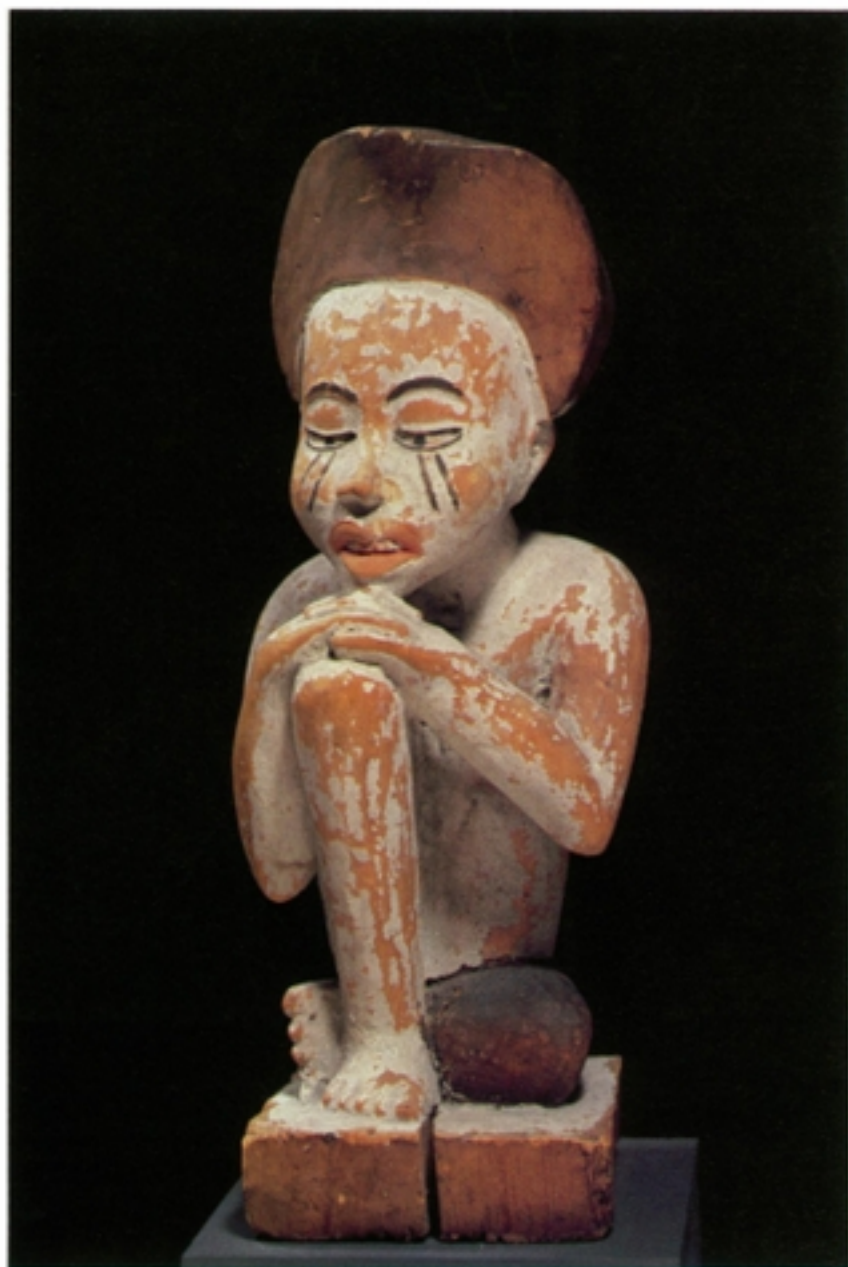
8. GRAVE MONUMENT SUNDI ZAIRE.  
WOOD, POLYCHROME, 51cm.

10).<sup>10</sup> Its facial expression may help to illustrate my comments about the transcendental quality of his choices: intense concentration seems to emanate from it; it is not concentration on a private inner self in a psychological sense, but concentration of an impersonal kind, allowing "pure human nature" to become visible. Von der Heydt may also have been thinking of this small face when he said, "The facial expressions of most of these sculptures express a feeling of suffering and resignation" (1958:52).

Another characteristic of much African sculpture was, in the view of von der Heydt and his friend, the art historian von Sydow, its "monumentality." One of the two Songye *kifwebe* (Fig. 9) possessed by von der Heydt and the so-called Batcham mask of the Bamileke (Fig. 2) clearly express human greatness and majesty. To von der Heydt, "typically African" did not mean "primitive." As he put it, "The artistic creations of the so-called savages are not primitive—they represent religious forces and the severity of a truly monumental style" (1933).

Von der Heydt also appreciated the severe style of the wooden burial figures of the Sundi (Fig. 8). He owned three of these objects, which were considered to be relatively un-African by other observers because of their asymmetry and colored paint (Olbrechts 1959:45). Very little precise information is available on their function. Maes maintains that they are funeral monuments of tribal founders or heroes (1938). Photographs published by Maes (1938: pls. XXIX, XXX, figs. 42, 43)

9. KIFWEBE. SONGYE, ZAIRE. WOOD, POLYCHROME. 60cm. →







10 CEREMONIAL AXE (DETAIL). LUBA, ZAIRE  
WOOD, COPPER, IRON BLADE. TOTAL HEIGHT 36.5cm.



11. OSHE SHANGO. AGBEBI COMPOUND,  
IJEMU, ORO DISTRICT  
IGBOMINA YORUBA, NIGERIA. WOOD, 46cm.



12. OSHE SHANGO.  
IGBOMINA YORUBA, NIGERIA. WOOD, 48cm.  
LATE 18TH/EARLY 19TH CENTURY.

and von Sydow (1930:348; 1954:62c), in which similar figures are seen next to graves, seem to corroborate this statement. More recently, Lehuard made a comparable statement concerning the example shown here. According to him, the figure, with the typical dignitary's hairstyle, represents a prominent deceased person who had distinguished himself, for example, as a warrior, hunter, or healer. Such figures stood, as Lehuard saw it, under a *nganga*, a "gardien du culte des ancêtres" (1974:77, 120). R. F. Thompson recently explained that the two diagonal strokes under the eyes and the head supported by the hands are signs of mourning.<sup>11</sup> It should also be noted that a vertical hole has been drilled through the figure and that the two openings are filled with a substance resembling plant pulp.<sup>12</sup>

Von der Heydt's large collection of Fang sculptures corresponded to the classical tastes noted by Goldwater. It includes seven reliquary figures (*eyima bieri*, according to Fernandez 1973:205) and three reliquary heads (*nlo bian*, according to Fernandez 1974:77), all purchased before 1932. Von Sydow considered them to be definitely part of "the classical works of African art." Of his most beautiful *nlo bian* (Fig. 14), von der Heydt wrote to Elsy Leuzinger, "This head has always been considered to be my best piece of black African art and has even appealed to people who otherwise had no interest in black art."<sup>13</sup> Carved in the simplest form, reminiscent of Modigliani, the object has a stunning presence. It must have been even more overwhelming in its original context on a bark box,



13. TADÉP DUA. MAMBILA, NIGERIA/CAMEROON. WOOD. 42cm



14. NLO BIAN. FANG, GABON. WOOD. POLYCHROME. 39cm.





an even more basic form (e.g., Chaffin 1973: 16, fig. 2). The boxes contained the skulls of ancestors and were apparently meant to represent the figure's belly (Fernandez 1971:361).

If Fernandez is correct, the reliquary figure shown in Figure 6 was considered a masterpiece by the traditional Fang. To them "there should be balance in the figure, and the proportions of opposite members whether legs or arms or eyes or breasts should display that. Without this balance of opposite members, it was said—and this is the important comment—the figure would not be a real one . . . it would have no life or vitality within it . . . This is so because vitality arises out of complementary opposition and for them what is aesthetically satisfying is the same as what is vitally alive" (Fernandez 1971:362, 370). Indeed, the breasts, hands, and legs are balanced with amazing precision to create tension-filled symmetry. In profile, opposition of the folded arms and legs, expressed in rectangular block-like forms, create an almost explosive density.<sup>14</sup> The figure, with its incredible sculptural intensity, fits into different stylistic classifications (one of which may be indicated by the forehead tattoos), which gives the impression of alert, observant calm so typical of Fang sculpture. According to Perrois's stylistic classification (1972:286), it belongs to the southern Fang region. (For a critique of Perrois's stylistic classification of Fang sculpture, see Fernandez 1974, 1975.)

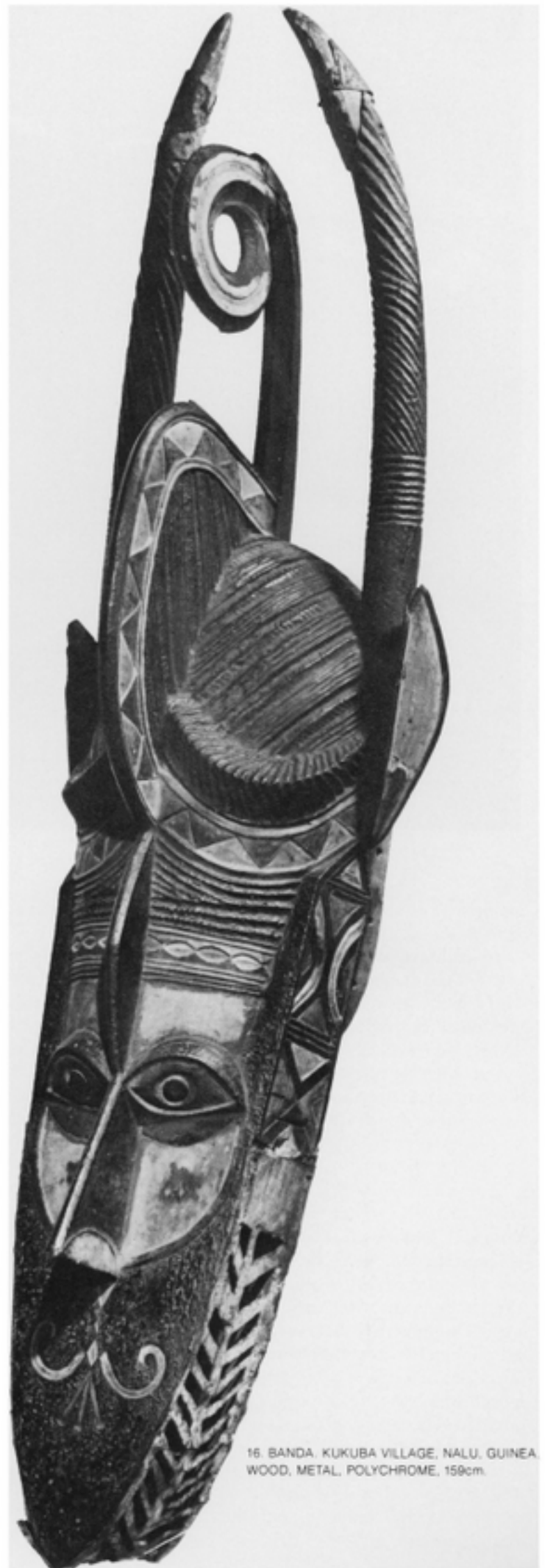
The Bamileke statuette of a royal retainer approaching his master in a humble posture is constructed quite differently (Fig. 4) (Leuzinger 1963:146; Fagg 1968:no. 181). It is asymmetrical, which may be one of the reasons why von der Heydt had to pay all of 15,000 FF for it in Paris at the auction of the Breton and Eluard collection in 1931.<sup>15</sup> This image of a devoted retainer appealed to the monarchistically inclined von der Heydt. Von Sydow called it "one of the most expressive works of African art" (1932:VI).

Von der Heydt also owned four more masks from the Cameroon grasslands and one Babanki elephant tusk with relief carving. Among these sculptures, the so-called Batcham mask, referred to as the finest example of its kind (Harter 1972:20), is especially impressive (Fig. 2). Today the mask is attributed not to the Batcham kingdom but to the Bamendjo, ten kilometers to the north (Harter 1969:410-413, 1972:20; Bascom 1973:119); the stylistically similar piece in the Wellcome collection at the University of California, Los Angeles, certainly comes from this area (Harter 1969: pl. 2, 4b; 1972:22-24).<sup>16</sup>

Little is known about the mask's function: "The masks were royal symbols, of which there was only one example in each kingdom and which were very seldom shown, explaining their lack of patina. They were personally worn by the king or one of his assistants on the head" (Harter 1978:145-46, no. 79; 1969:19). Von der Heydt purchased the object before 1932 from Nierendorff; around 1920 it was still part of the Falk collection.

Of Yoruba art, von der Heydt owned only one *oshe shango*, one *oshun*, a sacred sacrificial staff with a mounted figure, one Gelede mask, one *ere ibeji*, and one Ifa divining bowl. Apparently he did not see many Yoruba pieces at the art dealers he visited as late as 1958, who were probably mostly in Hamburg, Paris, and Amsterdam. Indeed, he remarked to Elsy Leuzinger that Yoruba art was "quite rare."<sup>17</sup>

From the Basel Mission he purchased the *oshe shango*, said to have become part of the museum's collection before 1820 (Fig. 12). According to R. F. Thompson this style has apparently died out, but the headdress and the concave base clearly point to the region of the ancient Igbomina.<sup>18</sup> The crown-like hairstyle (*inu gegebi ade*) indicates that the figure is a royal wife seen as a Shango worshipper. She holds in her left hand *ake*



16. BANDA, KUKUBA VILLAGE, NALU, GUINEA. WOOD, METAL, POLYCHROME, 159cm.

15. MASK, BAULE, IVORY COAST. WOOD, POLYCHROME, 31.5cm.



17. TSHIBANGA-BANGA. BINJI, ZAIRE. WOOD, FEATHERS, 40cm.

*shango*, a simple axe Shango cultists carried in dances in addition to the more common double axe, *oshe shango*.

In addition, draped over her left shoulder is a *laba shango*, the flat red leather bag priests also used in the annual rites to carry prehistoric stone hatchets referred to as Shango's thunder celts. In this example, the bag, like the other sculptures, shows no traces of color. The bag also lacks both the usual division into four parts with the pictures of the thunder cult's founding fathers, and the notched *amila* (tassel) pattern affixed to the lower edge, which is also supposed to indicate Shango. In places, especially the hair, the figure shows signs of use and is heavily worn.

Around her breasts is tied a cloth (*oja*) that a woman ordinarily would wear in her hair, indicating that she is ready for the dance.<sup>19</sup> Obviously, however, she is already possessed by Shango: her *oju inun* (inner eyes) bulge forward and push the *oju ode* (outer eyes) to the side. Carved on both sides of the double axe's shaft is a tortoise, which also refers to Shango. Its eggs, like those of other reptiles, release thunder and lightning when they hatch, symbolizing the procreative power of the deity. Moreover, the regular pattern of the tortoise's shell is supposed to symbolize the order and continuity associated with Shango (Thompson in Guggenheim 1973:48). The tortoise may thus express the fact that the procreative power of Shango is always necessary to maintain cosmic continuity and order.<sup>20</sup> The axes pointing upward and downward might refer to the earth and the heavens, but this again is only conjecture (Guggenheim 1973:48). It is not certain whether this *oshe*

*shango* was actually used during dances or was always retained atop a shrine. Thompson did not exclude the second possibility, in light of this work's great artistic quality.

A very fine Baule mask may serve as an example of the extremely numerous Baule, Guro, and Dan masks in the von der Heydt collection (Fig. 15). It is stained black, shows individual accents in white clay, and has scarification on the temples, along the forehead, and at the bridge of the nose. One should not jump to the conclusion, based on the serrated band framing the face and the lack of eyebrows, that the mask was carved by the Yaure (as a subgroup of the Baule). The Yaure, according to Himmelheber<sup>21</sup> and Roy (1979:79), speak Mande and therefore cannot be Baule. It is difficult to determine the exact original function of this mask: "We can't say whether the female mask is the face of a portrait mask of the *gbagba* cycle or the rarely seen *kpan* mask of the *boli* cycle" (Fisher 1978: 126). Von der Heydt probably acquired the piece after 1932 from Carré in Paris.

Also after 1932, von der Heydt bought a dark brown Dogon statue, with an enamel-like patina in places, from Ratton in Paris (Fig. 5). At that time Marcel Griaule had just brought back a piece of the same type for the Musée de l'Homme (Dakar-Djibouti expedition 1931-33), but only "with great difficulty" (Ratton 1935). At least five more of these statues are known today, which, as Jean Laude suggests, may have been carved by the same person, a "Master of Ogol" (1973).<sup>22</sup> Laude remarks, "The Dogon call these figures *dege dal nda*, 'statuettes on the terrace.' Kept in the dwelling of the *hogon*, they were





20. ARABU. BIDYOGO, CARACHE, BISSAGOS ISLANDS.  
WOOD, 42.5cm. EARLY 19TH CENTURY.



19. KIHONA. BANKS OF THE LUIKA,  
NIEMBO, HEMBA, ZAIRE. WOOD, 29cm.

dressed and placed on the terrace of a dead man's house during his funeral. They were a privilege of rich families. They differ from one another only in the number of bracelets on the arms and of iron rings attached to the ears. They probably represent the master blacksmith, here depicted with the female aspect dominant. The headdress, shaped like a crest, recalls that of the Peuls. The cylindrical motif under the chin is probably a displacement of the labret" (Laude 1973).

These ten works from von der Heydt's African collection seem to point out certain characteristics of his collecting. First, they typify the high artistic quality of all the works the baron brought together; this was by no means always the case from the 1920s to the 1940s.<sup>23</sup> Second, they illustrate to what extent von der Heydt's taste corresponded to that of the collectors of his time and in what respects he went his own way. Third, they tend to corroborate the thesis that his choices were influenced by the philosophy and artistic theory of Schopenhauer.

Besides von der Heydt's initial bequest, other African works were acquired by the museum. Its first director was Johannes Itten, a friend of Baron von der Heydt for many years, and an artist and well-known educator. Gathering together, at times with great difficulty, most of von der Heydt's collection, which had been lent out to more than thirty museums, he set up the first permanent exhibition of it in the Villa Wesendonck. Itten was able to make only a very small number of purchases. He was replaced in 1956 by Dr. Elsy Leuzinger. During the sixteen years she held the post she concentrated, with much success, on two tasks. First, she organized and catalogued the holdings from a wide variety of areas outside Europe and made them accessible to the general public through publications and lectures. Second, she complemented von der Heydt's African collection, which focused on the central and western coastal

areas, by purchasing works from the west African interior. At a favorable moment she acquired important Dogon (Fig. 7), Bambara, Mossi, Bwa, Gurunsi, and Senufo pieces (Fig. 1).

Figure 7 is covered with a red crust that is similar to that on an almost identical statue from the J. Müller collection (*Collection Barbier-Müller* 1977:65, cat. 1) and on a mother and child figure in the M. Nicaud collection, Paris (Meauzé 1967:31, Leuzinger 1978, no. 2b).

According to E. Storrer,<sup>24</sup> the female *deble* figure of the Senufo (Fig. 1) and the male *deble* figure in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (*Sculpture from Africa in the Museum of Primitive Art* 1963: no. 10; Goldwater 1964: fig. 95) form one of the extremely rare, intact *deble* pairs—and a *deble* from the J. Müller collection in Solothurn (*Kunst der Neger* 1953) and two *degele* masks of the Museum Rietberg (Leuzinger 1963: 69) come from the village of Lataha (Korhogo district, northern Ivory Coast). The Fonobe (Senari-speaking smiths) carved the *deble* pair for the Fodombele, the original inhabitants of Lataha, according to Glaze.<sup>25</sup> Of the Senufo statuary, the museum's female *deble* is a masterpiece. Its contours seem to be imbued with a continuous rhythm, as though the initiates' pounding of this *deble* on the ground to accompany drums and singing has been forever preserved in its form.

In those years, Leuzinger also acquired various Baga and Nalu works. Especially interesting is the Nimba (Fig. 3), which diverges from the classical standard to a great degree (see van Geertruyen 1979): the head is unusually small in relation to the torso, and its profile suggests a semicircle, the nose and forehead forming one continuous line. The eyes do not protrude outward but are indicated by simple hollows on either side of the nose. The fact that the breasts are rounded rather than carved as flaps of skin, as is usually the case, may be a significant iconographic element (van Geertruyen 1979:33). As a whole, this example is more severely styled and less baroque than is the typical Nimba mask.<sup>26</sup> It is difficult to determine the mask's exact origin. Storrer claims to have bought it in Boké (Guinea), where he was told it came "from the Portuguese side," that is, what is today Guinea-Bissau.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, very few dates have been published on traditional art in Guinea-Bissau. There are Baga who still live in the extreme southern coast of the country.<sup>28</sup> Because so little is known about them, it is possible that the Nimba shown here is of Nalu origin (cf. van Geertruyen 1979:28, no. 4).

An additional characteristic of this Nimba should be noted: both the incised patterns on the mask and its structure can be reduced to triangles. Triangles are often found in Baga and Nalu art, but what is remarkable here is the consistency with which the entire sculpture is based on them. All of the patterns are composed of triangles, with the exception of the semicircle on the chest of the mask. Seen from the front, the mask as a whole can be placed in a triangle, which is also true of the mask danced with its raffia dress (see drawing in Nordeck 1886:282). The exact meaning of this triangular shape in Baga and Nalu culture does not seem to have been clarified in the literature.

In 1972, after having organized, with René Wehrli, the noted exhibition "The Art of Black Africa" and written its catalogue, Elsy Leuzinger resigned as director of the Museum Rietberg. Dr. Eberhard Fischer, a young ethnologist educated in Basel who had done extensive field research in West Africa (chiefly concerning the Dan) and India was called upon to take over the position. While preserving the original character of von der Heydt's collection, he has made an impressive series of purchases and, like Leuzinger, has had the privilege of accepting



21. FIGURE KASINGO-BOYO, ZAIRE. WOOD, 72cm.

ARTS TRADITIONNELS ET HISTOIRE  
AU ZAÏRE  
TRADITIONAL ARTS AND HISTORY  
OF ZAÏRE

François Neyt *o.s.b.*



SOCIÉTÉ D'ARTS PRIMITIFS  
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TRADITIONAL ARTS  
AND HISTORY OF ZAÏRE

By François Neyt, *o.s.b.*

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important donations to the museum. Most of these new acquisitions have never been published.

The Baga/Nalu collection was complemented by an exceptionally beautiful and balanced Banda mask (Fig. 16), which was photographed by Michel Huet during a dance presentation in the Nalu village of Kukuba (Huet 1954:132-34; Paulme 1956:20-21; Huet 1978:28, 30). At that time the jagged metal crocodile teeth were wider and the colors fresher. For the Nalu, Banda had many different meanings.<sup>29</sup> It was the name of a spirit that watched over the village to which it belonged and punished violations of tribal rules, and it was the leader of the village secret society, controlling initiations. Moreover, Banda also meant the mask with which the spirit could appear during the most important village festivals. The mask illustrates the composite nature of this spirit: it has the teeth of a crocodile, the face of a man, the horns and ears of a buffalo, behind them the horns of an antelope, and between those horns the rolled-up tail of a chameleon. The masked spirit would move like these various creatures, demonstrating that Banda can operate in water (crocodile), in the village (man), and in the bush (buffalo), and therefore possesses supernatural powers.

Two Bidyogo statues were also acquired: a seated male figure (Fig. 20) and a seated female half-figure (Gordts 1976:14; Leuzinger 1978: figs. 16a, b). Both were brought back in 1931 from Karash Island (West Bissagos Islands) by the Bernatziks (Bernatzik 1933, vol. 2: fig. 365), along with a statue closely resembling Figure 20 now in the Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna (Schwegler-Hefel 1960: ill. 9; Gordts 1976:15, fig. 8).

According to Bernatzik, these two statues, as *arabwi* (ancestor figures), are supposed to have taken on the souls (*abata*) of

those who have recently died; in sacrifices involving these statues, palm wine, blood, and salted rice were supposedly used (1933, vol. 1:197-98). According to Gallois-Duquette, who spent time in the Bissagos Islands in the early 1970s, the seated figures, also called *unika*, along with more abstract anthropomorphic sculptures and other objects (both called *ira*), were kept on village shrines or in homes (Gallois-Duquette 1976: 28, 37, 38; Bernatzik 1944: figs. 175-77, 186), to be used by the village community, by separate groups of men or women, and by individuals (Gallois-Duquette 1976).

The figure shown here is seated on a stool like that used by the village council of elders (Gordts 1976:15) and has the proportions typical of figures of this type (Gallois-Duquette 1976:40-41). The band carved around the figure's face and running down the back of its neck and the five holes bored into the underside of either ear are difficult to interpret on the basis of the literature.<sup>30</sup>

The *oshe shango* (Fig. 11) comes from the same atelier (Igbomina; Oro District, Ijomu, Agbebi compound) as an *ere ibeji* from the Arnett collection (Drewal 1980:65, no. 108) and various other works referred to by Drewal.<sup>31</sup> However, the female figure of this Shango staff seems to be finer and more balanced in its proportions than the *ere ibeji*; in its radiation of youthful freshness, it corresponds more closely to the important aesthetic criterion of the Yoruba, translated by Thompson as ephibism (*odo*) (Thompson 1971:ch. 3/3).

In 1977, Dr. Lucy Rudolph of Zurich donated a very beautiful male Mambila statue to the museum (Fig. 13). Schwartz calls such figures "ancestral statues" (*tadep dua*) (1976: 19-24, fig. 10, 12-13, 40; Gebauer 1979:39-40, 185 ff., 317 ff.). According to him, they hung in nets on the walls of "ancestral huts," and

embodied the ancestors in general rather than a specific one. The statues were traditionally painted red, white, and black. If they happened to fall out of their nets, they were left to the termites, and replacements were simply ordered from a carver as seems to have been the fate of the statues shown here. In spite of this, an incredible vivacity has remained preserved in its expression.

The Yaka mask shown in Figure 18 seems to be extremely rare. I know of no other Yaka mask surmounted by an animal and itself depicting an animal's head.<sup>32</sup> One can thus speculate that this is a *mbala*, the mask appearing in dances at the end of initiation celebrations as the last, most beautiful, and most unusual (Himmelheber 1939:25-38; Adelman 1975:41 ff.). Behind it is the typical wooden handle with which the dancer could hold the mask in front of his face during a performance.

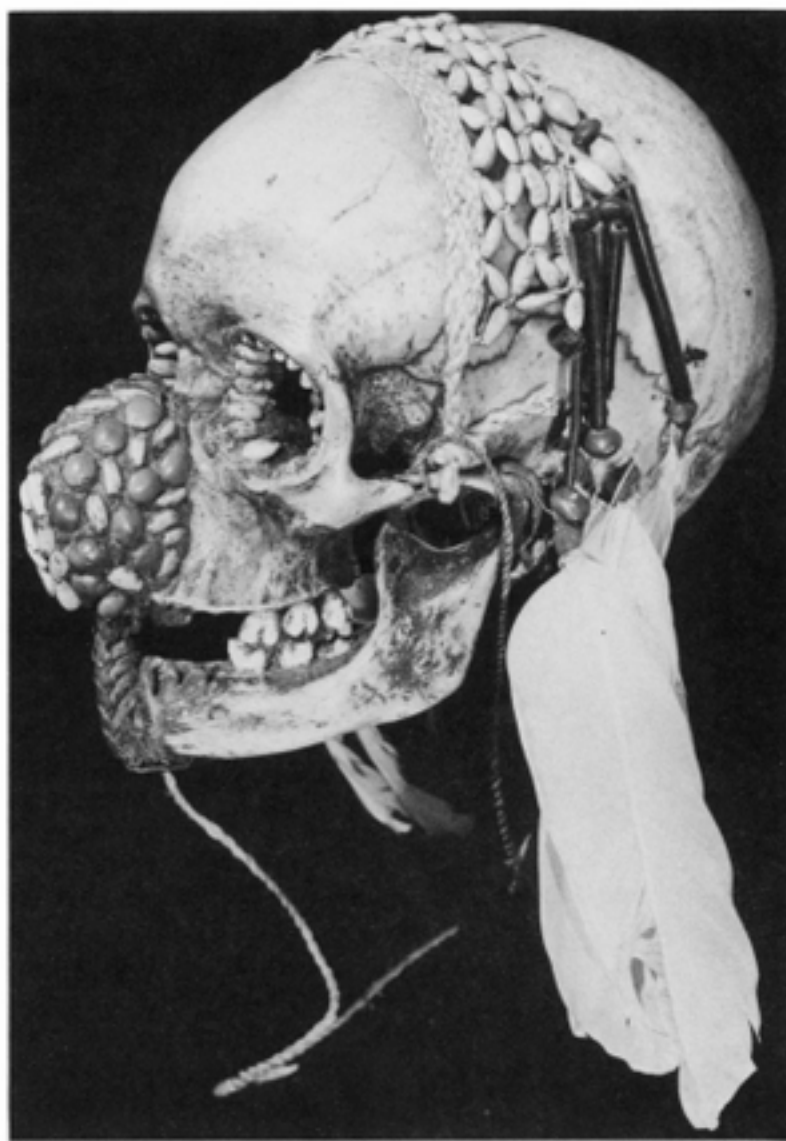
The blackened Binji mask is of a type called *tshibanga-banga* according to Himmelheber (1960:384), who spent a short period of time among the Binji, and it belonged to a secret society (Fig. 17). Cornet sees this type as the last transformation of the Kuba *bwoom* mask (1978:no. 141). The tattoos on the temples and below the cheeks are also reminiscent of the Kuba, with whom the Binji are supposed to have lived long ago.

Two very beautiful Hemba thrones, so-called *kihona* or *kiona*, were added to the considerable Luba, Luba-Hemba, and Hemba collection. Neyt attributes the fragment of a throne stool (Fig. 19) to the banks of the Luika, that is, to central Hembaland (1977:494, no. 92;18). Individual stylistic similarities are apparent between the face of this bearded, highly classical caryatid and certain works brought together by Neyt as the "style niembo de la Luika" (stylistic group V, in Neyt 1977:183, 224). The deeply glossy patina, a brownish bordeaux red, makes this sculpture seem even more classical.

A final example of objects acquired by the Museum Rietberg is a statue from the eastern forestlands of Zaire (Fig. 21). According to modern literature on the subject—excepting de Kun (1979)—the style is Kasingo, an ethnically diverse group living between the Bembe and the Boyo (or Buyu) (Biebuyck 1972:17). According to Gossiaux, Bembe figures display a very wide chin: "It (the chin) is often engulfed by a double chin which seems to smother the neck and even the upper chest" (1974:29). This is clearly not the case in the figure shown here. Gossiaux believes, however, that the Boyo must also be excluded as the area of origin because their figures have considerably sharper chins and more rectangular shoulders than that in the Museum Rietberg (1974: fig. 548). Stylistically, Figure 21 comes closest to the statues published by Biebuyck (1976:9, fig. 3; 1972:12, 78, figs. 2, 26) and Fagg (1965:107-108) under the designation Kasingo. In contrast, de Kun, who brought this work to Europe, refers to it as Boyo (1979: fig. 18).

In addition to being an art museum, in which the visitor is given space to concentrate on objects' formal properties, the Museum Rietberg strives to organize, with a very small staff, several special exhibitions a year at its three locations. These are often planned by specialists who have done many years of fieldwork or other extensive scientific research and who have provided an accompanying catalogue. An example of this in the field of African art is the 1976 exhibition "Die Kunst der Dan," organized by Fischer and Himmelheber.<sup>33</sup> In this way, the Museum Rietberg fulfills some of the tasks of a museum of ethnology. In so doing, it remains true to its greatest patron, Eduard von der Heydt, who in his public lectures strove to bring the cultural meaning of non-European art to a broader public. □

Translation by Matthew McGaughey  
Notes, page 86



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can give. The intensive transporting of metal-covered reliquary guardian figures to Europe went on for about forty years almost without any useful records being made of their sources. This gulf between accumulation and understanding provides an ample field in which a devil's advocate can attempt to forestall the closure of essential questions.

A number of minor flaws in *L'art kota* take us out of the field of academic controversy into that of editorial crotchets. For instance, we are surprised to read that piece 101 on page 200 came into the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin, from the Epstein collection. The museum's catalogue attributes it to a source named Einstein (probably Carl Einstein, the art critic and early writer on African art)(Krieger 1965: 85, pl. 173).

The term "Bwété" is used throughout the book as a general designation for all metal-covered figures from the Kota- and Mbété-speakers. This convention is regrettable on two counts: it is not precise in the case of the Hongwe images that are supposed to have been so called; and it is very imprecise in referring to the images of the southern Kota-speakers and the Mbamba. Our need for a short generic term should not force us into an inappropriate choice.

This is a bilingual book, and the French and English texts sometimes differ in matters of content. In an example mentioned earlier in another connection, the English reader is told that a certain style may be localized southwest of Franceville, while his French counterpart learns that the same style is to be found somewhere in the region of Franceville (p. 226). The French reader, however, is compensated later when he learns that Shamaye figures were discovered in swamps in the canton of Bouéni, while the English one learns only that they were discovered in swamps, further information on locality being withheld (p. 276). The reason for these disparities is obscure. They occur often enough but seem not to follow any strategy. On page 242 the English reader comes out far ahead in verbiage but breaks even in useful information.

I would like to question, parenthetically, the relevance and discretion of inserting photographs of recent African village scenes and villagers into studies of vanished arts. We are usually hard put to find a connection between these illustrations and the subject of the study. The local color that they provide is often glaringly anachronistic, as in the case of the Mbamba village of mud houses running into a motor road (p. 13). The house-walls are made of dried earth, a building material that, despite the authors' according it traditional status, was forced upon peoples of the Ogowe basin by French colonial policy.

Flaws are to be expected in any undertaking of this scope. One must be grateful for the dedication and self-control with which the Chafins have brought together materials that consolidate the study of these intriguing forms and provide a new perspective that will certainly lead to deeper insights.

Leon Siroto  
New York City

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#### MEYER, Notes, from page 67

1. Von der Heydt also collected European art, especially Impressionists, Expressionists, Picasso, and Chagall. He bequeathed this important collection, along with his estate, to the Wuppertaler Kunstmuseum, now called the Von-der-Heydt Museum (Aust 1977).
2. Until 1871 the Villa Wesendonck (built in 1855-57) was the residence of the Wesendonck family, who made the house the cultural center of Zurich. Wagner, Liszt, Brahms, Küller, Meyer, and other artists frequented the villa. In 1943 it became the property of the city.
3. The Museum Rietberg's collection has for the most part been published. The most important publications are: Lohuizen, *Indische Skulpturen/Indian Sculptures*, 1961; Bühler, *Kunst der Südsee/Oceania*, 1969; Haberland, *Kunst der Indischen Amerikas/American Indian Art*, 1971; Leuzinger, *Afrikanische Skulpturen/African Sculptures*, 1963; Siren, *Chinesische Skulpturen/Chinese Sculptures*, 1959; Brasch, *Japanische Holzschnitte*, 1965; Peter, *Ägyptische Terrakotten*, 1976.
4. Schopenhauer was very influential among the German bourgeoisie at the turn of the century; von der Heydt acknowledged that his writings, at that time, were read by "every young man" (1933). He was probably the only European philosopher intensively studied by von der Heydt (von der Heydt 1962). Before von der Heydt bought his first stone Indian Buddha head in 1908, Schopenhauer had one on his writing table (von der Heydt 1962).
5. Letter to Elsy Leuzinger, Zurich, February 10, 1959.
6. It is difficult to determine exactly when von der Heydt began collecting African art. He himself simply said, "On one of my frequent visits to Paris, on the Quai Voltaire, I quite accidentally saw a wooden statue, which had been carved by Africans, among the books, and it fascinated me so much that I bought it" (1958:50). His friend J. Itten states that von der Heydt purchased African works prior to 1914. W. Münsterberger, a relative who seems to have known him early in his life, confirms this and adds that von der Heydt purchased his first African piece in 1911 from Umlauff in Hamburg (oral communication, 1980), but he apparently did not collect this art on a large scale until the 1920s. African works from his collection were publicized for the first time in 1926 by von Sydow (1926:pl. 1, 7, 8). Von Sydow had not received any pieces from von der Heydt's collection (1923). While the baron had his Chinese and Indian collections catalogued as early as the 1920s, he does not seem to have given von Sydow the task of cataloguing his African, Oceanic, and Indonesian collections until somewhat later (von Sydow 1932).
7. These difficulties are reflected in von der Heydt's statement, made in 1958, on the most preferred styles in African art: "Today [the art of] the Pangwe in Gabon, the Gold Coast and the Belgian Congo are considered to be the best" (1958:52).
8. Letter to Elsy Leuzinger, Zurich, February 11, 1959.
9. See also von Sydow 1926, 1932; Leuzinger 1962, 1972. An abundance of additional information on the life and collecting of von der Heydt is contained in Rotzler (1978), Fischer (1980), and Urner (1980).
10. Von der Heydt included this axe (shown in full in Leuzinger 1963:238), in a selection of 16 African works—the majority of which came from his collection—which he suggested in a letter to Leuzinger as an "introduction" (Zurich, Feb. 13, 1960). He was probably referring to the introduction to the Museum Rietberg, 1962 guidebook, which in fact contains 14 of the 16 pieces suggested by von der Heydt (Leuzinger 1962: 102-10).
11. Oral communication, 1980.
12. A Yombe mother and child figure (phimu figure) in the Stanley collection seems to have similar holes drilled through it (Roy 1979:136).
13. Letter to Elsy Leuzinger, Zurich, April 29, 1960.
14. Fernández (1977) has analyzed rectangular structures in diverse areas of Fang life.
15. At the same auction he acquired, for exactly half that price, a beautiful 17th-century Benin plaque with figures in relief, seen in Leuzinger 1963:119, and *Collection A. Breton et P. Eluard* 1972: no. 9.
16. For a summary of the classifications of the carving, which have varied since Einstein (1920), and the respective arguments concerning these classifications, see Harter (1969, 1972). Harter, after analyzing the various styles of this mask, too hastily called "Batcham," advances the hypothesis that this type of mask as such could come from Bandjoun, a kingdom 40 kilometers southeast of Batcham (Harter 1972:43).
17. Letter to Elsy Leuzinger, Zurich.
18. Oral communication, 1980. Most of the following explanations were told us in 1980 by R. F. Thompson, whom we wish to heartily thank for his enthusiastic and generous help.
19. Thompson expressly indicated that this was a 20th-century interpretation of the Yreube and thus not necessarily accurate for this piece, which originated in the late 18th or early 19th century (oral communication, 1980). The warning also applies to all other interpretations quoted concerning this *akir slongo*.
20. These and the following suppositions are not Thompson's but mine.
21. E. Fischer, oral communication, 1980.
22. As early as 1935, Rotton indicated two other figures of this type: a figure in the Pierre Guerre collection in Marseille (in Cunard 1934: 659; Guerre 1970: no. 23), and another in the J. J. Sweeney collection in New York. Today there are similar figures in, for example, the Wunderman collection in New York (Laude 1973: no. 52), the E. Loran collection (Loran et al. 1974:25) and in the Schindler collection (Lunsford 1975). According to Laude (1973), the "Master of Ogoi" could have carved the statue in the Musée de l'Homme, which has been proven to be of Ogoi origin, and those in the Guerre, Wunderman, and Museum Rietberg collections.
23. A glance through the standard works on African art of that time should make this clear.
24. E. Storret, oral communication to E. Leuzinger (1958?).
25. A. Glaze, letter to E. Fischer, Zurich, 1978.
26. Van Geertruyen, who did research on the Nimba (1976, 1979), claims to know of one other example in the same style as that in the Museum Rietberg (letter of April 11, 1980) (shown in Bascom 1967:no. 1, 1973:54; Loran 1974: ill. 1).
27. E. Storret oral communication, 1979.
28. Da Mota 1958, in G. van Geertruyen, letter of April 11, 1980.
29. For a summary of ethnographic literature on Banda, see van Geertruyen 1976:74-79.
30. Other Bidyogo statues supposedly have holes along the temples in which traditional feathers were placed (Callois-Duquette's dissertation may contain more information on the subject, but it is difficult to obtain. Both the female figure in the Museum Rietberg and the statue in the Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna, show holes in the ears.
31. "Two works from the same hand, documented in the Nigerian Museum Archives (neg. 61 XII A6/36 and 61 XII B3/17), are said to have been carved in Ijomu. Another piece from the same school is illustrated in Carroll (1967:pl. 33, 3rd from left). Works from this source are found widely in south and central Igbomina, and Fagg (1980) has documented some further north in Oke Ode. Distinctive sculptural traits are the high pointed ears, large diamond-shaped eyes, bulging cheeks, full downward pointing mouth set low on the face, and especially the streamlined head set diagonally upon a sleek arcing neck" (Drewal 1980:65, no. 108).
32. Yaka masks with a human face and an animal on top are common. Animal masks, however, are topped either by a human figure (Herold 1970:64; Bodrogi 1967:80) or by a cone shade (Fagg 1968: no. 230).
33. Further recent exhibitions and publications concerning black Africa have included "Das Gold in der Kunst West Afrikas" (Gold in West African Art; exhibition and catalogue by Fischer and Himmelheber 1975, rev. 1980), "Gelbgießer in Kameruner Grassland" (Brass and Bronze Founders in the Cameroon Grassland), by Fröhlich (1979), "Masken und Beschnidung . . ." (Masks and Circumcision: A Field Report on the Initiation Camp for Boys in the Village Nyor Diaple of the Liberian Dan; text by Himmelheber, 1979).

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- GEARY, Notes, from page 43
1. Marilene Wittmer's discussion of Bamum village art (1976, 1979) as well as her delineation of the Bamum court style versus a "village style" are very helpful. My own field research in Fouban from January to June 1977 provided important data about Bamum court art. It was sponsored by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a cultural aid project for the cataloguing and photographing of the objects of the Bamum Palace Museum. The data collected in Fouban provide the basis for this paper. I thank Dr. Jean Borgatti for many helpful comments concerning the final version of this paper. I also thank Dr. Monni Adams for her suggestions.
  2. The title fon does not always translate as "king." Rather, it is a widespread term for leaders of polities that cannot all be classified as kingdoms or highly centralized entities.
  3. The correct designation for this motif would be "toad motif." I here follow the common usage in the literature about Grassfields arts.
  4. The dating of the reigns of Bamum kings follows Tardits's chronology (1980:916). His monograph about the Bamum kingdom is the major source on the political and social structure of Bamum as it was at the turn of the century.
  5. The date of this exhibition has been given incorrectly by Dubié as 1930 (1957:357) but was rectified by Tardits (1980:689).
  6. Northern describes these materials as Manilla hemp or jute, and occasionally even raffia weave (1975:118).
  7. The origins of some of these artisan groups are known.
- Brasscasters came from the subdued chiefdom of the Panquot, bead embroiderers and weavers originated in Mamegnam. Potters came from Momarom, a village specialized in pottery to this day. Blacksmiths and carvers seem to have come from different conquered polities (see Geary, in press; chapter "Craftsmen and Artists: Their Techniques and Media").
8. This *Histoire et coutumes des Bamum* is a profound work about Bamum history, social structure, and secret societies that was compiled by Njova and numerous courtiers in the second half of his reign. It is written in a script Njova invented personally, and it was later translated by a missionary into French.
  9. M.D.W. Jeffreys has given a translation of this description that unfortunately is incorrect in some crucial passages. For example, he translates "On place le cadavre sur une chaise ornée d'une statue recouverte de perles" (Njova 1952:82) as "He was then placed on a chair decorated with the carved figure of a man and ornamented with beads" (Jeffreys 1950:39).
  10. Because of restrictions on the use of phonetic symbols, the spelling of the Bamum words in the original text cannot be reproduced and has been simplified. I thank Ms. Kathleen Holman for the translation of this passage as well as for the translation of the following quote from Rein-Wuhrmann.
  11. Translated from the French. Musée du palais du Sultan, inventaire 1941:10.
  12. Obviously, Rein-Wuhrmann did not remember that the male statue holds a drinking horn, the female a receptacle.
  13. Njova never sent a throne to England because the British left Fouban after a few months and turned the town over to the French.
  14. A checkerboard design as a beaded neck ornament also appears on two old throne figures from Kom (Northern 1973:13).
  15. I do not fully agree with Gebauer's statement about the superiority of the throne in Fouban, when taking its present condition into consideration (Gebauer 1979:89, and footnote 18 of chapter V) Although its carving shows more balance, as opposed to the piece in Berlin, the beadwork in its present style is inferior. Gebauer's "iconographic richness" seems to be a tendency toward over-decoration in both thrones after the Fouban throne was desecrated.
  16. In a 1952 letter concerning this throne, another, though less likely, possibility of acquisition is mentioned. Franz Thorbecke, as a subject of the Grand Duke, could have presented him with the throne. In this case it would have been collected in 1912. I thank Dr. Klaus Volprecht, curator at the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, for this reference.
  17. This throne figure comes closer to the proportioning that Willet mentions as a typical feature of African sculpture. The head is disproportionately large in relation to the torso (Willet 1971:161).
  18. Wittmer comes to a similar conclusion about the development of the court style in her examination of head crests in the Palace Museum (1976:175).
  19. Line dancing of men or women is common throughout the Grassfields. Therefore the association of this configuration and dance comes to mind immediately.
  20. The "councillors of the country" (*kom nyu*) were the descendants of the seven retainers who accompanied the first king, Nshare Yen, when he left Rifum to found the Bamum kingdom.
  21. Many of the pieces displayed in Paris and in an earlier colonial exhibition in Naples must have gone back to Cameroon. It is doubtful whether all of them are still in existence. On the other hand, there have always been rumors in Fouban that the palace actually contains more important objects than are shown in the Palace Museum. Thus, there may be some interesting discoveries to be made. I thank the Frobenius-Institut in Frankfurt for providing the copy of this photograph.
  22. The *njifonfon* ranks highest among the three *titamfon* (*tita*=father; *nfon*=king). They are the king's closest retainer advisors and help him with the execution of his many ritual duties.
  23. The annual *nja* festival in December, discontinued in 1924, was probably a celebration after tribute had been given to the king. Its main emphasis lay on the display of wealth and solidarity. Elaborate masquerades and a royal dance were the center of attention. It resembles similar an-

## CONTRIBUTORS

**CHRISTRAUD GEARY**, a research associate at the African Studies Center, Boston University, received a doctorate in anthropology from the University of Frankfurt and conducted field research in Cameroon while affiliated with the Frobenius-Institut, Frankfurt.

**MICHELLE V. GILBERT** is completing her Ph.D. for the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She recently spent two years in the field in Akwapim, Ghana.

**PIET MEYER** is a research associate at the Museum Rietberg. After fieldwork among the Lobi of Upper Volta in 1976-77 and 1980, he wrote the exhibition catalogue *Kunst und Religion der Lobi*.

**CHRISTOPHER D. ROY**, who received his Ph.D. in art history from Indiana University in 1979; is Assistant Professor in the School of Art and Art History, The University of Iowa.