

HIDDEN TREASURES OF THE TERVUREN MUSEUM

GUSTAAF VERSWIJVER

"Hidden Treasures of the Tervuren Museum" opened at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, near Brussels, on May 11 and will run through November 26. The largest temporary exhibition since the museum was established almost 100 years ago, it comprises 250 objects from Central Africa selected from the museum's vast holdings of more than 250,000 artifacts. Many have never before been on public view. The exhibition was organized by the museum and curated by Gustaaf Verswijver, Acting Head of the Ethnography Section, with the assistance of Viviane Baeke, Anne-Marie Bouttiaux-Ndiaye, and Else De Palmaer.

The catalogue (400 pp., 287 color & 253 b/w photos, 1 map) contains an introduction by A. Nicolas and descriptions of objects by twenty-four specialists from Africa, Europe, and the United States. These descriptions provide the basis for the captions in the following essay. The catalogue is available for 2,850 BEF (hardcover) and 1,450 BEF (softcover) from the Royal Museum for Central Africa, B-3080 Tervuren, Belgium.

The Royal Museum for Central Africa, also known as the Tervuren Museum, was founded in 1897–98 by King Leopold II, who wished not only to make the Congo (now Zaire) better known in Belgium, but particularly to publicize trade and other economic opportunities for Belgium in Africa. Impetus for the creation of this institution came from an exhibition in Antwerp in 1894 and from the Brussels International Exposition in 1897, whose African section became a permanent display.

For the initial exhibition of the Congo Museum, as it was then called, the monarch commissioned ethnographic objects and stuffed specimens of animals. The resulting interest convinced him to develop the museum as a scientific institute, whose brief was to be the study of Central Africa in all its various aspects. As of 1898 the museum's scientific policy and methodology were directed toward the collection and comparative investigation of extensive series of base materials in the fields of cultural anthropology and the natural sciences. Thus was the foundation established for the museum's impor-



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Anthropomorphic cup. Ngbandi(?), Ubangi, Zaire. 28cm (11"); wood, metal, headed nails. Registered in 1948. RG 48.29.2.

This unusual cup came to the museum without specific accompanying data. It undoubtedly originates from Northwest Zaire, more particularly from the Ubangi region. The V-shaped carved coiffure and the line of scarification extending down the forehead are found on some sculptures ascribed to the Ngbandi. Although the concave, "heart-shaped" face is also seen in Ubangi, the motif presented here is rather a head placed directly on a pair of legs. Something analogous is sometimes encountered among the Lega, but this is most likely just coincidental. As far as is known, this cup is a rare Ngbandi example.

The question may be raised as to whether this cup had a well-defined use or a special significance in their culture. Tanghe, who is our best source on the Ngbandi, never mentions this type of object. He does state that the Ngbandi occasionally make memorial sculptures and that diviners sometimes have small sculptures with them during divination sessions. Was this cup ever used by them, or was it merely the show-piece of a distinguished individual? Because we lack any cultural context for this object, it is impossible to offer a definite answer.

Herman Burssens

PHOTO: ROGER ASSELBERGHS, COURTESY OF THE AFRICA MUSEUM, TERVUREN

tant scientific collections, for which it is so well known. This interdisciplinary approach has benefited those who study African artifacts. For example, Tervuren's specialists in tropical woods have been able to identify the woods used in carvings. Its zoologists have provided valuable data concerning the ivory, bone, and other animal materials frequently incorporated in these works. And ethnographic and ethnomusicological research has been supported by information gathered on archaeology and linguistics.

Initially the ethnographic objects were acquired by civil servants, missionaries, travelers, and scientists on assignment in the Congo. A few names are specifically bound to ethnographic missions which the museum organized or in which it actively participated: C. Lemaire (1898), E. Torday and T.A. Joyce (British Museum, 1907-1909), R. Hutereau (1911-1912), J. Maes (1913-1914) and, more recently, A. Maesen (1953-1955). One could arbitrarily name others from among the dozens of collaborators who were charged with developing important collections around the turn of the century: H. Bure (1891-1907), E. Cambier (1892-1911), A. de Macar (1885-1888), C. Delhaize (1910), O. Michaux (1890-1917). The value of these collections rests in their variety and aesthetic qualities, as well as in the accompanying detailed firsthand information that underpins them from a scientific standpoint.

Opposite page: Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium. The building, designed by Charles Girault, was completed in 1910.

Female figure. Luluwa. West Kasai, Zaire. 19cm (7.5"); wood, pigments. Collected around 1893. RG 18906.

This female figure, like seven others in the exhibition, is associated with the fertility cult *bwanga bwa cibola* that was active until quite recently. A Luluwa woman who had suffered successive miscarriages or whose baby had died shortly after birth would be advised to join the cult. During her next pregnancy she would obey a variety of prohibitions and prescriptions, and usually receive one or more sculpted figures. It was primarily *bwanga bwa cibola* that made use of anthropomorphic sculptures. Generally speaking, they depict a mother and child, or as in this case, a pregnant woman. Because they were rubbed almost daily with a mixture of oil, red earth, and kaolin, the carvings gradually acquired a glossy patina. The loincloth and the *mubangu* belt worn by a pregnant member of the cult, and the half-shaved head that signals her special status, are reproduced on most of the figures.

The fact that Luluwa never formed one political entity, in essence comprising a collection of near-independent subgroups, has led to much cultural and artistic heterogeneity. Together the eight carvings in the exhibition offer a good impression of the stylistic diversity within Luluwa figure sculpture. The naturalistic and quite detailed style of representation, sometimes refined to the point of mannerism, reflects a period of political and cultural blossoming that took place in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The hairstyles, clothing, ornamentation, and the extensive tattooing indicate that these figures represent women of high rank.

One striking feature is the realistic imitation of various hairstyles. Most notable are the tattoos (*nsasi*) represented in curvilinear and geometric relief patterns, decorating both the face and the body. A number of decorative motifs have a specific significance. Concentric circles and spirals refer to the great heavenly bodies and symbolize life and hope. A double waved line on the forehead, among other locations, stands for life in the human body, specifically the heart beating in the breast and the child growing in the womb. The temples, the place through which human intelligence and common sense penetrate, are often decorated with tattoo patterns. Finally, the anterior and posterior fontanelles—emphasized by the coiffure—refer to a key Luluwa concept: recovering the capacity for clairvoyance and double perception in order to know the past and the future, the world of the visible and invisible.

Constantijn Petridis

Five years after the museum's founding, the collections had already outgrown its original home. King Leopold commissioned Charles Girault, architect of the Petit Palais in Paris, to construct a new building. It was inaugurated in 1910, coinciding with the Brussels Exposition Universelle, and the institution was renamed the Museum of the Belgian Congo.

Certainly up until just prior to World War I, little more than strict ethnographic significance was attached to the collections at Tervuren. However, after the Great War and under the influence of a few important modern artists such as Vlaminck, Derain, and Picasso, the interest in ethnographica grew in the world of art and art collecting. From that time on, and especially since the 1960s, prices for African artifacts considered to be endowed with artistic value have escalated. For budgetary and other practical reasons, the Tervuren Museum (as well as many other similar institutions) suddenly was unable to complete its collections in its customary way, and instead had to limit itself to the acquisition of objects often derogatorily said to be "merely of ethnographic interest." Works of great artistic or commercial value quickly made their way into a particular circuit: that of powerful collectors and financially well-supported museums. An important



PHOTO: ROGER ASSELBERGHS, COURTESY OF THE AFRICA MUSEUM, TERVUREN

Mwanáphwó mask. Chokwe. Chikapa, South-west Kasai, Zaire. 23cm (9"); wood, fiber, beads, metal and coins, pigments, animal material. Registered in 1930. RG 32510.

Among the Chokwe, masks are linked to the boys' initiation school known as *mukanda* or *camvula*. Masks perform in the village during the season of *mukanda*, when newly circumcised boys receive instruction in the initiation lodge outside the village.

Among the great variety of masks manufactured in the *mukanda* lodge, there are some, like this example, which represent archetypal figures. According to the generally accepted interpretation told in Chokwe villages, this mask depicts a generalized female ancestor who died at an early age; it is thus an ever-present reminder of the painful experience of death. The physiognomy of the face is that of a deceased person, with eyes closed to a narrow slit. Her chiseled teeth indicate her Chokwe identity.

Although *mwanáphwó* ("young woman") also symbolizes the prominence women enjoy in a matrilineal society, like all Chokwe masks it is worn by a male dancer. The performer wears a net costume made of looped bast roots, associated with death, that covers his body from neck to toes. The entire mask consists of the headpiece, the torso with carved wooden breasts, and the legs, all loosely connected by strings.

The *mwanáphwó* has been adopted by neighbors of the Chokwe, notably by the Lwena (or Luvale), who call it *mwanapwevo*, and the Ngangela in eastern and southeastern Angola, who call it *mwanampwevo*. Its meaning has been retained, and it is gratifying that the borrowers of this mask type always acknowledge its Chokwe origin.

Gerhard Kubik

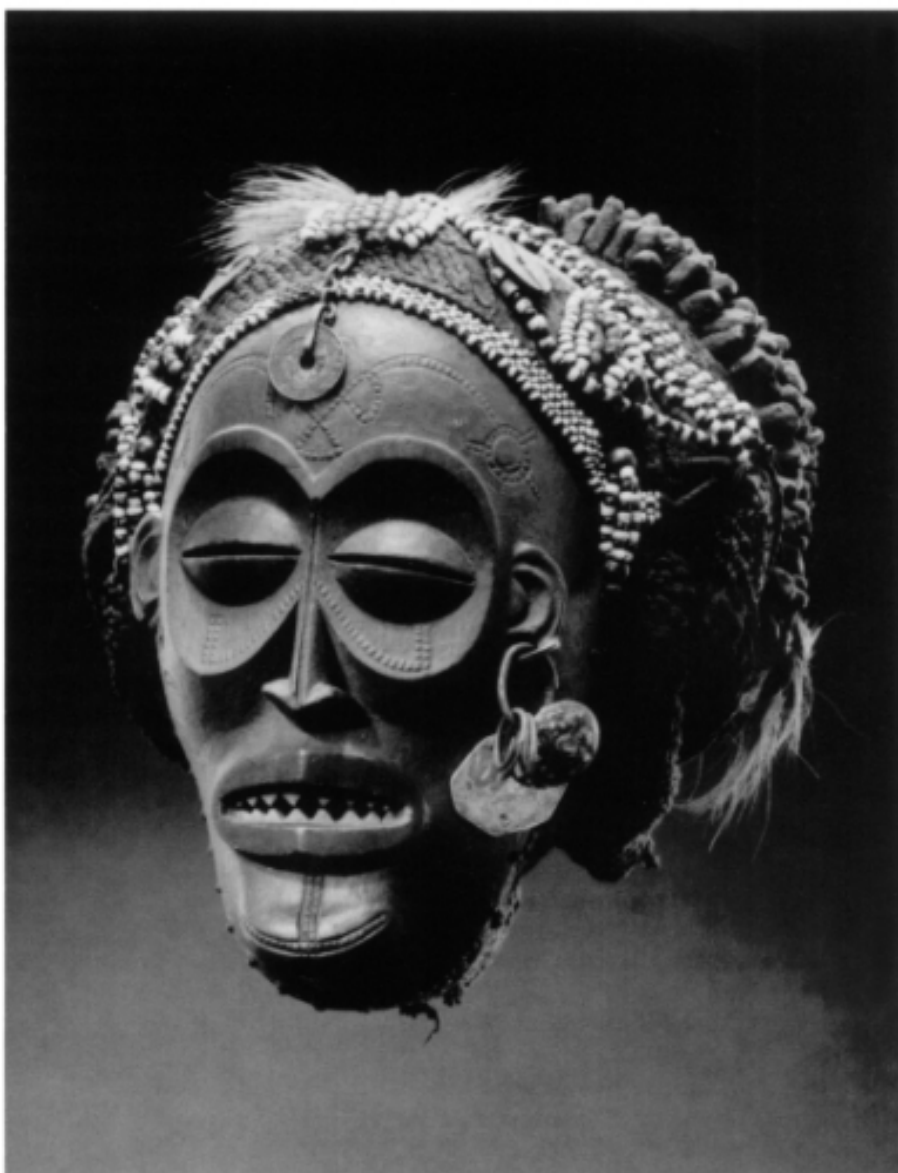


PHOTO: ROGER ASSELBERGHS, COURTESY OF THE AFRICA MUSEUM, TERVUREN

part of the artistic patrimony of Central Africa thus ended up in the hands of private collectors and in museums outside Belgium.

The Tervuren Museum continued to further round out its inventoried comparative series of objects and materials, although, again mainly for budgetary and other practical reasons, the number of scientific missions was reduced significantly. The ethnographic collections are thus primarily important because they are quantitatively extensive, which makes thorough stylistic investigations possible, and also because they are old, having been acquired prior to Western recognition of their artistic and commercial value. These early examples display formal traits that are no longer seen, and indeed they may be counted as products of disappearing or already extinct cultures.

The colonization and evangelization of Africa that took place primarily from the end of the last century into the early decades of this century led to a process of acculturation that was more or less energetically imposed on African societies. The result was the gradual disappearance of traditional cultural values, political systems, rites, and systems of thought—and the destruction or disappearance of related objects. Recent fieldwork by anthropologists and specialists in ethnographic art indicates that the current generation of various African peoples is often unable to supply specific data concerning not only the use and fabrication but also the symbolism and content of the ingeniously elaborated masks and sculptures of their ancestors. Much essential information seems irrevocably lost.

Mwala staff, Kongo (Yombe), Lower Zaire region, Zaire. 124cm (49"); wood, beaded nails, pigments. Registered in 1943. RG 79.1.66.

This superb carving from the Yombe subgroup stylistically has much in common with *nkisi nkondi* figures from the area of the Chiloango River in the modeling of the eyebrows, eyes, and open mouth with filed teeth. It has a fine patination and luster, and the sculpting is careful and refined, displaying a sure and practiced hand for the naturalism of the Kongo style.

The figure is naked except for her essential accouterments—the chief's bonnet (*mpu*), chief's bracelets (*niunga*) on her arms and legs, cowrie necklace with leopard's teeth, and lozenge-shaped scarifications that blanket her shoulders, arms, and chest. In this regard, her scarifications are like the knotted shawls of chiefs seen in some Yombe enclaves and among the neighboring Woyo. The patterns of these Woyo shawls note the route taken by the female founders of the clan from the kingdom of Ngoyo to the south, to the border of the present-day Cabinda Enclave. The chief's shawl therefore becomes a mnemonic device whose very manufacture records history, gives it concrete form, and ritualizes the original act of foundation.

On another level, a woman's scarifications made her beautiful, often included motifs alluding to fertility, and noted her courage in bearing the painful process. In short, they proclaimed that she was destined to be an exemplary wife and fertile mother.

The three elliptic volumes that encircle the shaft refer to the three female founders, who are idealized and immortalized by the figure at the summit of the staff. Tapestry nails allude to wealth. The designs made by these nails also appear in some places to be lozenge designs.

The other items of the figure's regalia reinforce her role as progenitor, and her cowrie-shell and leopard's-teeth necklace allude to wealth and power. Her chief's bonnet, decorated with the lozenge motif as units of larger triangles and bisected lozenges, refer both to the graves of the dead and the houses of the living: like the clan's founders, the chief is the locus of communication between the two worlds. These motifs state powerfully that the clan comprises both the living and the dead in an active and ongoing relationship.

The image of the founding ancestress in a chief's accouterments and in the seated pose of an enthroned chief signals that she is ritually charged with a force and a power to communicate between the worlds of the living and the dead. The child who sucks at her breast is the corporate clan.

Ramona Austin



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Museums such as the one at Tervuren thus have come to possess an enormous treasure in terms of ethnographic dossiers, reports from missionaries or colonial administrators who were familiar with the institution's scientific aims, and photographic archives. For a large number of the oldest pieces, collected around the turn of the century, the date and place of origin are known; discovered in their traditional contexts, they immediately found their way to Tervuren, where their history can be recovered from the archives. Indeed, some dossiers and documents have for decades reposed untouched in the museum's drawers and cabinets.

A thorough study of these documents is mandatory, now more than ever. But the sheer mass of the data poses a challenge. Investigators—anthropologists as well as art historians—have much work ahead of them if they are to sort out information pertaining to any particular object from the mounds of piecemeal data on file. The oldest

dossiers and index cards were compiled in a period when one applied somewhat less care in recording details relating to provenance, place of collection, and so forth. Names of ethnic groups and subgroups were often confused, and the distinction was not always made between where the item was collected and where it was made or used.

Although some parts of the puzzle may remain elusive, such effort, however time consuming, is worth the investment. The quest for the lost identities of objects must not cease!

Although "Hidden Treasures" is the first major exhibition held at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in decades and thus will be a revelation to many visitors, the handful of specialists who have had the privilege of visiting the reserves of the Ethnography Section have known that the museum does possess an outstanding collection that embraces many truly unknown treasures. A new team of ethnologists and art historians has been working in the Ethnography Section since 1990, and together with the director of the museum, they have developed a policy to breathe new life into the institution. The primary aim is to make the scientifically valuable collections better known to the public through a series of exhibitions. Over the last five years the following shows have been organized, each accompanied by a catalogue: "Stanley: Voyager of Discovery in His Majesty's Service" (1990), "The Birth of Contemporary Central African Painting" (1992), "Kaiapo—Amazonia: The Art of Body Decoration" (1992), "Senegal Behind Glass" (1993–94), and "Tuareg" (1994). The exhibitions dedicated to the Kaiapo and the Tuareg were the first in a projected series of larger thematic shows—each extensively treating one particular people or ethnic group.

In the view of this program, the current exhibition of what might be referred to as the "masterpieces" from the collections may cause some confusion. Indeed, the Tervuren Museum has never been an art museum, has never desired to be one, and does not wish to be described as such. Thus, this event calls for some words of explanation.

Helmet mask. Suku. Panzi, South Bandundu, Zaire. 33cm (13"); wood, fiber, pigments. Registered in 1942. RG 79.1.387.

Red-faced helmet masks with a marked tendency toward naturalism are distinctive of the region of Panzi, whose inhabitants, although subjects of Luwa-Yaka overlords, are regarded as Suku. Masks like this example were used in initiation contexts. The small bird image may designate a mask variety called *yilesi*, danced to aid the weak and sickly. *Yilesi* is also used at Panzi to help those who have been unable to bear children.

Arthur P. Bourgeois



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PHOTO: ROGER ABDELREHMANI, COURTESY OF THE AFRICA MUSEUM, TERVUREN

Nkondi figure. Kongo (Yombe). Lower Zaire region. 112cm (44"); wood, metal, pigments, mirror, canines of wild pigs, beads, cowrie, fiber. Collected before 1914. RG 19845.

This *nkondi*, probably called Mungundu, is fairly traditional in style, although the clothing is obviously of European type. Mungundu, the name of the bird whose cry resembles wheezing, is appropriate to *nkondi*, which were believed to cause chest ailments. The head is crowned by a medicine pack guarded by pig's teeth. The upraised arm once held a knife. Nails and other hardware were driven into the figure to arouse it and provoke it to attack the wrongdoer mentioned in the client's invocation. The protruding tongue reminds us that before driving in the nail the client would lick it to associate himself with the violence to come. In the mirror covering the medicines on the belly, a diviner could see the approach of witches from any one of the four directions indicated. The medicine pack itself is "fixed" by the nail in the twelve o'clock position.

Wyatt MacGaffey

During preparatory discussions about the forthcoming series of thematic presentations, it was suggested that the museum first devote an exhibition to those works which, owing to their age, artistic value (at least according to Western notions), or their particular nature and rarity, could be described as the most important pieces in the collections. This idea quickly gained support, from those within the museum as well as from its scientific advisors and collaborators. The title, "Hidden Treasures of the Tervuren Museum," reflects the general aim of revealing pieces that either have never been exhibited or have been "obscured" amid many others in the exhibition cases of the permanent galleries, which formerly showcased 800 of the museum's 250,000 ethnographic objects in 52 vitrines. Only a few of the selections have previously been adequately illustrated and scientifically discussed. This exhibition thus thoroughly fulfills the original aim: to bring the museum's most important ethnographic works to the attention of a wider audience.

As the title of the exhibition suggests, the selection of the 250 pieces was based on aesthetic criteria. An international committee of Belgian and foreign specialists who made the final choices brought their own subjectivities to the process. Such factors as rarity, special nature, age, exceptional dimensions, and other characteristics were also consid-

Kifwebe mask, Luba or Songye, Katombe, Shaba, Zaire. 38cm (15"); wood, fiber, pigments, feather. Registered in 1928. RG 30593.

This white *kifwebe* mask has given rise to a significant debate about attribution. The uncertainty about its origins is evident in the inscriptions and corrections in Tervuren's accession files: a field photograph acquired together with the piece was initially registered as Luba; yet on the basis of subsequent visual comparisons with the striated *kifwebe*, a Songye attribution seems to have been favored.

This confusion is due to the fact that there is a marked similarity between Songye white female masks and Luba masks of the polychrome category. Among the Luba, apart from the well-known round monochrome masks (illustrated in Colle 1913), later polychrome examples, both male and female, are predominantly oblong and white-faced. Those of the post-independence period can be differentiated from Songye models on the basis of their flatter, wider facial forms, their small pouting mouths, and colored scarification markings on the cheeks and under the eyes of female types (Mutiwanwa Wenga-Mulayi 1974:74). However, with early-twentieth-century examples, this regional differentiation is not easily discernible. Even if we were to speculate about the possible link between the diagonal markings that contour the facial form of this *kifwebe* and the later introduction of scarifications on Luba masks, the problem is that comparative Luba examples are few in number and collection data are scarce.

The fact remains that the *kifwebe* tradition is an interregional phenomenon which seems to have originated on the southeastern Songye/Luba borderland among the Bena Gende (Hersak 1986:42; Mutiwanwa Wenga-Mulayi 1974:120). In and around this area of ethnic admixture, as in the region of Katombe not far to the northeast, stylistic borrowings and blurring inevitably occurred. But among the Songye the visual homogeneity among white masks was perpetuated even further afield, since the female mask type was the first to be carved in each new Bwadi society, and strict adherence to a prototypical model seems to have been followed. As such the female *kifwebe* embodied continuity and consistency, expressed not only through its morphology but also through its whiteness, a color associated with the positive



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attributes of nourishment and procreation (e.g., cassava flour, mother's milk, sperm, light, the moon). Significantly though, whiteness is also used in this context as a concealer that veils the underlying magical potential of sorcery and witchcraft, signaled by touches of red and some black pigmentation.

Despite the morphological similarity between Songye and Luba white masks, their function and symbolism are diametrically opposed. Whiteness among the Luba reveals and is contextually associated with the antisorcery activities of healers and magicians. This is in fact suggested in a letter by Mr. Hoofd, the collector of the mask in question, and although his comment is somewhat contorted and general, without any reference to either people, it does make the Luba attribution of this mask worth considering.

Dunja Hersak



PHOTO: ROGER ASSELBERGHS, COURTESY OF THE AFRICA MUSEUM, TERNUREN

Lukwakongo mask. Lega. Pangi, Kivu, Zaire. 19cm (7.5"); wood, fiber, pigments. Collected by D. Biebuyck in 1952. RG 55.3.3.

This mask with fiber beard was collected in 1952 among the southwestern Lega (Pangi zone, Bela sector, Belankuku social group) at the end of the *lutumbo wa yananio* initiations. The owner (an initiate of the highest level of the second highest grade) was a member of the Banamusiga, a lineage incorporated among the Belankuku. Four generations ago a grandfather of the owner had acquired the mask among the Beigala.

This mask, along with two other *lukwakongo* masks in the exhibition, is an example of the Lega wooden maskette style. It exhibits the classic heart-shaped concave face, with white clay applied to the facial area; open slit eyes and an open mouth; a long, narrow, straight nose dividing the face; the important fiber beard (*luzelu*) attached to a set of holes in the area of the chin; and a string in the back to fix the maskette to some other object.

Lukwakongo are owned by men initiated into the highest level (*lutumbo*) of the second highest grade (*yananio*) of the Bwami association. Used during these initiations in a great variety of dramatic performances and manipulated in many different ways, the masks, singly or collectively, represent a number of characters and refer to numerous specific social, jural, moral, and philosophical principles and situations. Ambiguity and ambivalence characterize the usages of the masks. They are carried in the hands, organized in a linear pattern or in a heap, dragged by their beards, hung from a fence or pole, fixed to the side or back of a hat.

Functionally the masks are not merely exclusive emblems reserved for members of the *lutumbo wa yananio* grade; they are also expressions of transcendent relationships between living and dead initiates and symbols of special links that exist between initiates who have "inherited" masks from one another. The *lukwakongo* masks are objects which, used in a particular initiatory configuration and handled in a special manner with standardized aphorisms, movements, and dance patterns, contribute to a vivid presentation of moral values by contrasting good and evil actions. Every possibility is explored in this process, including not only particular forms of manipulation but also the masks' typical formal features: the open, toothless, silent mouth, the open eyes, the fiber beard. No art can be more secret than this one, not simply because it is invisible outside the initiation contexts, but mainly because it is an art whose profound meanings must be learned, a learning process that can only take place in the context of a system of closed initiations.

Daniel Biebuyck

ered. As it happens, even though the museum has, since 1962, broadened its horizons by collecting material from other parts of Africa, only works of Central African origin (Zaire, Angola, Congo Brazzaville) are included in "Hidden Treasures," as they are from the earliest collections. Pieces originating from other parts of Africa or from other regions of the world (Oceania, the Americas), which the museum began to collect in the 1970s, were excluded in order to maintain coherence in terms of the exhibition as a whole.

The objects are arranged geographically, beginning with the Kongo and then following a counterclockwise circuit east (to the Yaka, Kuba, Luba, to mention just a few), north (e.g., Lega, Boa), and west (Mangbetu and, further to the west, Ngbaka and Ngbandi). The museum completely renovated and expanded its exhibition space for "Hidden Treasures," closing down six permanent rooms to accommodate the installation. The huge vitrines normally crowded with twenty or more objects have been replaced with new vitrines containing one or two objects illuminated under halogen spotlights. Nine photographic blow-ups taken in the field, some dating from the early 1900s, appear at the entrance, and a video of masks in their traditional contexts is shown in a separate room.

Negotiations are under way to place the exhibition at other museums after its November closing in Tervuren. With such international exposure, these magnificent sculptures from Central Africa will be hidden no longer. □



PHOTO: ROGER ASSELBERGH, COURTESY OF THE AFRICA MUSEUM, TERVUREN

Anthropomorphic headrest, Luba, Shaba, Zaire. 18cm (7"); wood, beads, headed nails. Registered in 1980. RG 80.2.1293.

Headrests were owned by Luba leaders and other persons of high rank who could afford them. These objects were not only cool and comfortable supports in a tropical climate, but also served to protect beautiful and labor-intensive hairstyles worn both by men and women. The sculptured figures supporting the rest frequently are depicted wearing the same coiffures worn by Luba people in the past.

Early explorers of the region nicknamed the Luba "the headdress people." Turn-of-the-century sources describe the complexity and extravagance of some hairstyles they observed, and one missionary made an entire book of watercolors showing the various styles worn by both men and women to mark identity or to indicate profession, title, or status (Burton 1960). For instance, a coiffure could indicate whether a person was single engaged, married with children, divorced, or widowed. There were also particular hairstyles to indicate the professions of fisherman, herder, diviner, secret association member, and chief. But the primary purpose of styling was and still is aesthetic: Luba people today say that "an elegant coiffure makes a woman radiant" (Nooter 1991:251). A beautiful coiffure, like scarification, is a sign of civilization, a mark of identity, and a visible measure of a person's social worth and self-esteem.

Among Luba, aesthetic beauty is not only synonymous with social value, but also often has apotropaic or healing dimensions. The coiffures of a number of Luba sculptures still contain medicinal substances to empower the figure. Sometimes these are inserted into cavities carved in the top of the head, as in the sculptures of many other Bantu-speaking peoples. But Luba also tuck medicines in the carved tresses, lodging them between the sculptured chignons. Throughout Africa the head is considered to be a primary seat of power, the locus of wisdom and clairvoyance. As the feature of cosmetic beautification that most directly affects the head, it is no wonder that coiffure is attributed such importance in Luba thought and practices.

Mary Nooter Roberts