

Sixty years ago, American Museum of Natural History anthropologist Clark Wissler began an important treatise on masks with the phrase quoted in this title.¹ His goal was to inform the museum's general audience about a genre of artifact that in "our own civilization and time" might be seen as "something childish, something scarcely to be considered respectable," or "a frivolous object" of entertainment used by "infantile" and "benighted" "savages" (1950:1-15). Wissler noted the broad spectrum of the world's peoples who have made and used masks over the ages. He urged his readers to recognize the donning of masks as a religious "impersonation" of "mythical human beings or their animal counterparts," and masked performance as a reenactment of the acquisition of critical ritual and technological information (1950:22-23). Wissler's reference to masks as an "old trick" is not to a deception from a cultural insider's point of view, then, but to a truly felt if ironic event—that is, one of "deliberate contrast of apparent and intended meaning" (Morris 1969:692).

More recently, anthropologists and art historians have reiterated, improved upon, and extended the discussion of masks to include data and theoretical positions unavailable to Wissler and other earlier writers. Herbert Cole and his colleagues organized the exhibition "African Arts of Transformation," for instance, for which they wrote of the way the person wearing a mask often "becomes an animated but hidden vehicle for meta-human, spiritual expression" (Cole et al. 1970:8). They asserted that "a transforming 'costume' is much more than a mere covering-up or disguise. The masker, like his followers and his audience, forgets his human personality, . . . [as] his character and behavior fuse with those of the spirit he creates, the spirit he becomes" (1970:24).

Although Cole makes no reference to Wissler's work, Wissler's notion of impersonation lies at the heart of Cole's position concerning masks. The etymology of the word makes this clear: the prefix im- indicates "causative func-

TABWA MASKS

An Old Trick of the Human Race



1. TABWA BEADED MASK,
ZAIRE/ZAMBIA BORDER AREA.
GLASS BEADS, RAFFIA, FEATHERS, CLOTH, SKIN.
40.6 x 30.5 x 7.6 cm.
THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART,
THE WILLIAM HOOD DUNWOODY FUND, 89.14.

2. TABWA BEADED MASK COLLECTED
IN THE MID-1970s IN THE ZAIRE/ZAMBIA BORDER
AREA EAST OF LAKE MWERU (SEE ALSO COVER). GLASS
TRADE BEADS, VEGETABLE FIBERS,
JUNGLE FOWL FEATHERS, BLUE MONKEY PELT,
LEATHER THONGS. 89 x 30.5 x 28cm.
THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA MUSEUM OF ART,
STANLEY COLLECTION OF AFRICAN ART, EMS 656.





3. TABWA HELMET MASK OF ERYTHRINA ABYSSINICA WOOD WITH IRON, COWRY SHELLS, SHELL BUTTON, COPPER WIRE. 29.3cm. FIELD COLLECTED IN 1976 AT KILANGA-ZONGWE, SOUTHEASTERN ZAIRE. COLLECTION OF PIERRE DARTEVELLE, BRUSSELS

5. TABWA WOODEN FACE MASK SEEN IN THE MID-1970s IN THE ZAIRE/ZAMBIA BORDER AREA.

4. TABWA FACE MASK. WOOD. 32.4 x 26 x 17cm. THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA MUSEUM OF ART, STANLEY COLLECTION OF AFRICAN ART. 1983.848



tion," with a "basic meaning of 'to cause to become'" (Morris 1969:663); and so in this case, donning a mask *causes* a person to assume the nature and being of some other person, spirit, animal, or even abstract quality. In the jargon of Western psychology, religion, and philosophy, the masked performer effects or experiences what might be called a catharsis, an epiphany, or an ontological shift. In so doing, the actor can be said to make tangible what is otherwise ineffable, and to "express the inexpressible without betraying it" (Heinz Politzer in Crossan 1976:250).

David Napier has recently written that "throughout the anthropological literature, masks appear in conjunction with categorical change" (1986:xxiii). Transformation occurs in a deliberately and dramatically created liminal period of ritual, when, as Victor Turner wrote (1970), performers are "betwixt and between" more ordinary states or categories of being. The masked person "is and is not a human being. So transformed, the new being is saying: 'I am not myself'" (Cole 1985:16). In this curious ambiguity, maskers are free to experiment with the definitions and constraints of their social life that they may take for granted in more usual circumstances (Turner 1970:105). Yet, as Napier observes (1986:xxiii), "the special efficacy of masks in transformation results, perhaps, not only from their ability to address the ambiguities of [particular, personal] point of view, but also from their capacity to elaborate what is paradoxical about appearances and perceptions in the context of a changing viewpoint" for society as a whole. It is paradox, "the acceptance of what empirically is not," that allows formulation of hypotheses and recognition of change: "we are aware that something is no longer what it was" (Napier 1986:1,3).

The contributions of Cole, Turner, Napier, and other writers aid our understanding of masks as objects and of masked performance as social process, as will be demonstrated in this study of Tabwa masks. There is a dimension that is either missing or given insufficient

attention in most of this literature, however: the use of masks as "agents of ideology" (Layton 1981:43) during times of radical social change. The transformations that masked performances assist people to undergo are not limited to those of individual actors' changes of state and their assumption of spiritual form. Rather, all of society may be experiencing radical transformation, and this dynamic process may be conceptualized, dramatized, and made more broadly accessible through the use of masks. As Cole has written, "Masquerades are probably Africa's most resilient art form, continually evolving to meet new needs" (1985:16). I would suggest that this is because the irony and the recognition of paradox in masking, "old tricks of the human race" that they are, are adaptive mechanisms of critical importance to coping with change.

The use of masks for both personal and societal transformation will be illustrated by this study of beaded masks of Tabwa and related peoples of south-central Africa. Tabwa masks appear to be few in number and have yet to be the direct subject of field study (see the *catalogue raisonné* and entries of Roberts & Maurer 1986). Tabwa living along the southwestern shores of Lake Tanganyika, among whom I conducted four years of predoctoral anthropological research in

the 1970s, knew very little about masks and nothing about their current use by other Tabwa well to their own southwest.² Still, with the archival and field data that are at hand, a plausible discussion of mask iconography and use can be presented, and the argument can be made that Tabwa masks are evolving in form and function as people seek to adapt to a changing political economy.³

When Evan Maurer and I conducted research in 1984 in preparation for our 1986 exhibition and catalogue, "The Rising of a New Moon: A Century of Tabwa Art," we found examples of three types of Tabwa mask. All were of wood. One type, known through only two examples, is a helmet form that depicts a human female (Fig. 3). Pierre Darteville was told when he collected one of these masks that it is the female counterpart to a "male" buffalo mask. Another type is an anthropomorphic face mask of indeterminate gender known through three examples, one of which is in the Stanley Collection at the University of Iowa (Fig. 4); another has been seen in the field (Fig. 5). Last is the buffalo mask (Fig. 8), of which we published a dozen examples in 1986. Yet a fourth type of Tabwa mask has come to our full attention only in the last two years, but eight examples are already known. These are multicolored beaded facial masks. It is this last category that will be of primary interest here.⁴

In the spring of 1988, Mrs. Elizabeth Stanley offered a Tabwa beaded mask (Cover, Fig. 2) to the University of Iowa Museum of Art to commemorate the Fourth Stanley Conference on African Art.⁵ The mask was field-collected in the mid-1970s by Marc Félix in the area along the border between Zambia and Zaire, toward and perhaps slightly northeast of Lake Mweru. This is an area of intermingling for Tabwa, eastern Luba, eastern Lunda, Bemba, Shila, and

several other ethnic groups that are closely related through history, language, culture, and the sharing of basic metaphors (Cunnison 1967; Werner 1971; Heusch 1982a). Félix was told only that the mask had been used in Mbudy society activities; we know nothing specifically about its manufacture or use. Still, we do know enough about the Mbudy society and about other Tabwa objects and contexts employing similar or related symbols that a tentative explanation of the beaded masks may be presented here.

The face of the Stanley mask is composed of seven horizontal registers, ranging from the brow, where the beading is surmounted by vertically standing jungle-fowl feathers and the pelt of a blue monkey, to the chin, where the beading tucks under to the throat, following the contour of human physiognomy. Each of these registers is in turn composed of isosceles triangles. These triangles surround and define the eyes in the third register, the nose in the fourth and fifth, and the mouth between the fifth and sixth registers.

Visually, the most dominant of the seven registers is the second one, extending across the forehead just above the bridge of the nose. Triangles of red and white stripes flank a white spiral at the center of the forehead. Yellow beading around the spiral and yellow and white stripes between the triangles provide a color contrast that seems to project the spiral and red triangles outward or inward.⁶ Alternation of red and white concentric stripes within the triangles enhances this effect. Isosceles triangles and spirals are common in Tabwa iconography, and allow one to situate this mask in a broader field of cosmological representation.

The decorative pattern of isosceles triangles, sometimes presented as horizontally divided rhombi, is called *balamwezi* in the Tabwa language, or "the rising of a new moon." This motif is so common in Tabwa art, both before colonial conquest and after it, that Evan Maurer and I chose it as the title for our 1986 exhibition.⁷ The *balamwezi* pattern was painted or incised as scarification on people's faces and bodies; plaited into coiffures; woven into mats, baskets, and hats; embroidered on barkcloth apparel; carved into wooden tool and weapon handles, drums, and musical instruments, ancestral or magical figures, and many other wooden artifacts; and engraved into metal bracelets, hairpins, and knife and axe blades (Weghsteen 1963; Roberts & Maurer 1986; Van Geluwe 1986). More than any other representative device, *balamwezi* unifies Tabwa artistic expression.

The rising of a new moon follows two or three moonless nights of utter darkness, when Tabwa feel that the

forces of evil hold sway. The appearance of the new crescent and the possibility of perceiving and thus taking action against evil, then, are cause for celebration. The contrast between darkness and light provides a ready metaphor for obscurity, ignorance, danger, and destruction versus perception, wisdom, safety, and hope. Yet the moon subsumes both terms in this opposition, and the resultant ambiguity helps people to understand and cope with the ultimate triumph of misfortune and death, despite their every attempt to live righteously. As Father Theuws has written with regard to related beliefs among neighboring Luba, "The moon is as ambiguous as life itself. . . . To be and become, to live and to die are but two faces of the same reality" (1968:11).⁸

Wyatt MacGaffey recently suggested with regard to Kongo art that "metaphorical elements [such as *balamwezi* triangles for Tabwa] earn their places in an assemblage on one or perhaps both of two principles, verbal and visual" (1988:192). The reason why an isosceles triangle should be chosen to represent the *balamwezi* concept is suggested in a number of narratives. For instance, reference may be made to a male moon torn between his loyalties to his first wife, the Morning Star, or Venus rising in the east, and his second wife, the Evening Star, or Venus in the west. Such conjugal politics place the moon at an apex between the two cardinal directions (the basal points of the triangle) associated with beginnings and birth (east) and endings and death (west). The vertical axis defined by the moon at this equidistant apex falls directly upon ego, whoever she or he may be, as any individual strives to define and articulate his or her place in

both physical and social universes (Roberts 1980:103-13).

MacGaffey's verbal principle is that of punning or rebus, "by which an element, by its name, is made to evoke a particular concept" (1988:192-93). The name *balamwezi* is composed of an adverbial root *bala-*, from the verb meaning "to begin, to open, to appear, or to rise," and the noun *mwezi*, "moon." *Kutentama* is the verb used by Tabwa more frequently these days to refer to "the rising of a new moon" and related phenomena. *Kutentama* is the action of something rising and perching on top of something else, as the moon does as it ascends to the zenith. A noun derived from this same verb, for instance, refers to an epiphytic plant like an orchid or a fern that takes root high up in the branches of a tree. The same verb in both Tabwa and Luba languages is commonly used to describe the event of spirit possession, when a spirit "mounts" to "take over" the head of a supplicant. It is this latter usage that is most pertinent to an understanding of the Stanley mask's iconography and probable use.

My Tabwa informants living along the southwestern shores of Lake



7. TABWA BEADED HEADRESS OF BULUMBU DIVINER SEEN IN 1977 AT MPALA, SOUTHEASTERN ZAIRE. GLASS BEADS, FEATHERS, LEATHER, COTTON THREAD. 18 x 12 cm.

6. TABWA BEADED HEADRESS OF BULUMBU DIVINER SEEN IN 1976 NEAR ZONGWE, SOUTHEASTERN ZAIRE. GLASS AND PORCELAIN BEADS, GOAT HAIR, LEATHER, COTTON THREAD. SERIAL PELT. 20 x 8 cm.

Tanganyika knew nothing of beaded masks, but they were very familiar with the related art form of beaded headdresses called *nkaka*, worn by adepts of the Bulumbu possession cult. Those wearing such headdresses cover their faces with white chalk (*mpemba*), an act completing the mask-like transformation. It is my hypothesis that Tabwa beaded masks serve the same purpose as, or one that is closely related to, that of *nkaka* headdresses of possession cult adepts.

The beadwork of the *nkaka* headdresses I have seen shows a great deal of variation. The configuration of an *nkaka* seen near Chief Zongwe's (Fig. 6), for instance, is strikingly similar to the second register of the Stanley mask: a spiral directly over the middle of the bearer's forehead is flanked by divided rhombi. A more complex headdress seen at Chief Mpala's (Fig. 7) has three registers of *balamwezi* triangles, but the central motif looks something like a pinwheel rather than a tight spiral. Another *nkaka* from Mpala (Fig. 10) substitutes a house form for the central spiral. A third *nkaka* from Mpala (Fig. 11) replaces the abstract central motif with what the owner explained was a human skull, which seems to have a long headdress. A beaded rooster stands to the left, facing the skull. A fourth headdress from Mpala, worn in Figure 12 by a Bulumbu medium, has five spirals across the forehead.

Despite such differences, all these Bulumbu headdresses show a "constrained diversity" or "semantic equivalence" (Layton 1981:28-29; cf. Roberts 1988a:72). That is, they are variations on a basic theme or structure that follow some semantic or representational rules. Tabwa say that Bulumbu adepts can "read" and explain *nkaka* headdresses. Use of the word "semantics" implies

something else as well: "the study or science of meaning in language forms, particularly with regard to its historical change" (Morris 1969:1177). The equivalence of the motifs found on *nkaka* headdresses and, I would assert, on beaded masks, is a basic structure, a "visual vocabulary" (MacGaffey 1988), and a message that endures despite individual artistic interpretation, despite the need to convey particular messages in the beadwork of this or that individual's headdress or mask, and despite radical social change.⁹

The principal message of the headdress lies in its central motif, which is most often in the form of a spiral framed, flanked, or set off by *balamwezi* triangles. Before explaining the particular reference of this central motif on beaded headdresses and masks, I would like to present a more general discussion of the spiral as a "dominant symbol" (Turner 1970) for Tabwa.

Precolonial Tabwa conceptualized time as a spiral, an idea they shared with other central Bantu peoples. MacGaffey suggests that nineteenth-century Kongo, for instance, conceived of the universe as having "a non-reversible time dimension and thus . . . a spiral form" marked by "a sense of the dead as moving, by a series of transformation[s] in the after-life, through a hierarchy of increasingly remote but also more powerful and functionally less specific positions in the other world" (1983:128-29). In a somewhat similar manner, Tabwa origin myths tell of the first sentient beings emerging from a seemingly endless tunnel in the earth, or from a deep pool of water. People moved outward from this point in concentric waves to populate the earth (Roberts 1980:35-68).¹⁰

The spiral temporal concept is given tangible form in Tabwa inheritance rit-

ual when a close kinsperson is elected to "wear the belt" of a recently deceased loved one. The Tabwa word for "belt," *kizingo*, is derived from a Bantu root meaning "circle" or "spiral" (Van Acker 1907:74, 94; Van Avermaet & Mbuya 1954:828). These days the "belt" to be worn is usually the European-style clothing with which the dead person was identified. The successor literally dons this clothing to assume the intimate details of the deceased's social being. The name of this event, however, remains as a reminder both of the earlier practice of wearing a loincloth on a belt (Roberts 1980:96-97), and of the underlying concept of the belt as encircling the waist at the navel, in turn the connection to one's mother and matrilineage. Furthermore, as a person "wears the belt" of a deceased kinsperson, she or he also "wears the belt" of those persons that the kinsperson succeeded. In this way, kinship can be thought of as a series of concentric circles or a spiral, leading from ego back through the generations to earliest ancestors. Life is "eternal," then, in that the "belt" is always inherited, but periodic in that it has a beginning and end for any given individual (Roberts 1980:98).

The conceptualization of spiraling kinship and time is recognized in several types of object and realized in several Tabwa art forms, including the beading of headdresses and masks. One such object is the disk cut from a cone shell (perhaps *Conus leopardus* or *Conus imperialis*; see Safer & Gill 1982:97-99). Tabwa and other central Bantu people call these shell disks *mpande*. *Mpande* were brought to Tabwa along the caravan routes from the east African coast. Only chiefs and their immediate kin possessed these disks, and they wore them on the belt, on the forehead, or on a thong around the neck (Jacques & Storms 1886:26; Roberts 1986a:26). *Mpande* disks were rare and important "statement art" for Tabwa chiefs, representing in their spirals the succession of "belts" of the chiefs' lines of descent.¹¹ The *mpande* disk, then, like a mandala, represents "a symbolic pantheon" (Eliade 1969:52) of past chiefs extending backward to an apical ancestor or ancestress.¹² The *mpande* is also an image of time and space, as its spiral of "belts" traces the path backward through the generations to the first named humans who emerged from a hole in the earth or a deep pool of water, represented by the drilled center point of the shell.



8. TABWA BUFFALO MASK. WOOD, COWRY SHELLS, NATIVE RUBBER, PIGMENT. 73.5cm ACROSS THE HORNS. THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA MUSEUM OF ART, STANLEY COLLECTION OF AFRICAN ART, EMS 690.



slave-raiding and colonial conquest was exacerbated by natural disasters such as famine, flooding, epidemics, and plagues of locusts. Kibawa announced his desire to help Tabwa through an epizootic of rinderpest: the scores of dead animals that Tabwa found on the high moorlands of the Marungu Massif allowed them to survive the famine. Kibawa informed Tabwa through a prophet (*kasesema*) that he would continue to assist them on condition that they desist from speaking Swahili, the newly introduced language of intrusive slavers, missionaries, and colonial officials. Reverence paid to Kibawa, then, constituted nativistic resistance to change.

The advent of Kibawa was more than just the discovery of another earth spirit. It marked an important ontological shift for the Tabwa, from a precolonial community focus for religious and politico-economic activities to a new individualistic strategy for coping with social change. With the introduction of colonial capitalism, the focus of Tabwa religion shifted from the community to individual initiative, reward, power, and success. As an invention of distressed and concerned Tabwa actors, Kibawa's role was to facilitate adaptation to the rigors of a new social universe by introducing the highly personal, cathartic triumph of spirit possession. Here, as in other domains of capitalist social life, the individual, "irrespective of kinship and local background, . . . can gain . . . a reputation as a medium far away from his home" (Binsbergen 1981:97-98). The spirit medium would become responsible for his or her own salvation to an extent that would have been unthinkable in precolonial times. At the same time, as a medium, the possessed person would communicate about and comment upon society itself (Firth 1969:xi).

At first, Kibawa was an oracle. People from far and wide, including Tabwa, eastern Luba, Zela, and many others, visited Kibawa's cavern hidden deep in a bamboo thicket in Chief Penge's lands, near the eastern bank of the Luvua River. A *kitobo*, or guide, would lead them through the tangle of bamboo to the cavern in a process that made metaphoric allusion to the supplicants' desire to solve perplexing problems of their own (Roberts 1988c). Once at the mouth of the cavern, the *kitobo* would lead the supplicants deep into the dark recesses, where the gurgling of Kibawa's huge water pipe, the voices of recently departed kin, and other domestic sounds could be heard. The supplicants would be so comforted by these sounds, and especially by the proximity

Analysis of a number of Tabwa myths permits one to place the *mpande* disk in a conceptual set or paradigm with other significant members. In the structure of one myth, an *mpande* shell and the moon are interchangeable (Roberts 1980:417-24). The moon itself is said to be "the eye of Kibawa" (Kalunga Mwela-Ubi, pers. com., 1986), the great chthonic spirit to be discussed shortly. In another myth, an *mpande* may be equated with a clan culture heroine's vagina and her "spiral" of descent (Roberts 1980:377-79).¹³ In still another, death originates at the center of a spiral-shaped building. Such a building is analogous to both an *mpande* shell and to the cavern of Kibawa, the great chthonic spirit that is the keeper of Tabwa dead (1980:353-82). In this latter regard, Aylward Shorter has discussed the

symbolism of cone shell disks among the Kimbu of central Tanzania, suggesting that "concentric circles and other circular designs signify the penetration of a labyrinth to its center" (1972:104). Reference to Kibawa's cavern brings us back to the particular use of spiral motifs in the beading of Tabwa headdresses and masks.

Kibawa is an especially important *ngulu*, or earth spirit.¹⁴ Earth spirits, especially during precolonial times, were the focus of territorial or ecological cults organized to provide rationale and structure for the corporate exploitation of local natural resources (Binsbergen 1981:97; Roberts 1984). Tabwa living along Lake Tanganyika say that they first recognized Kibawa in the mid-1890s, through prophesy. This was a period of extreme duress, when politico-economic turmoil caused by

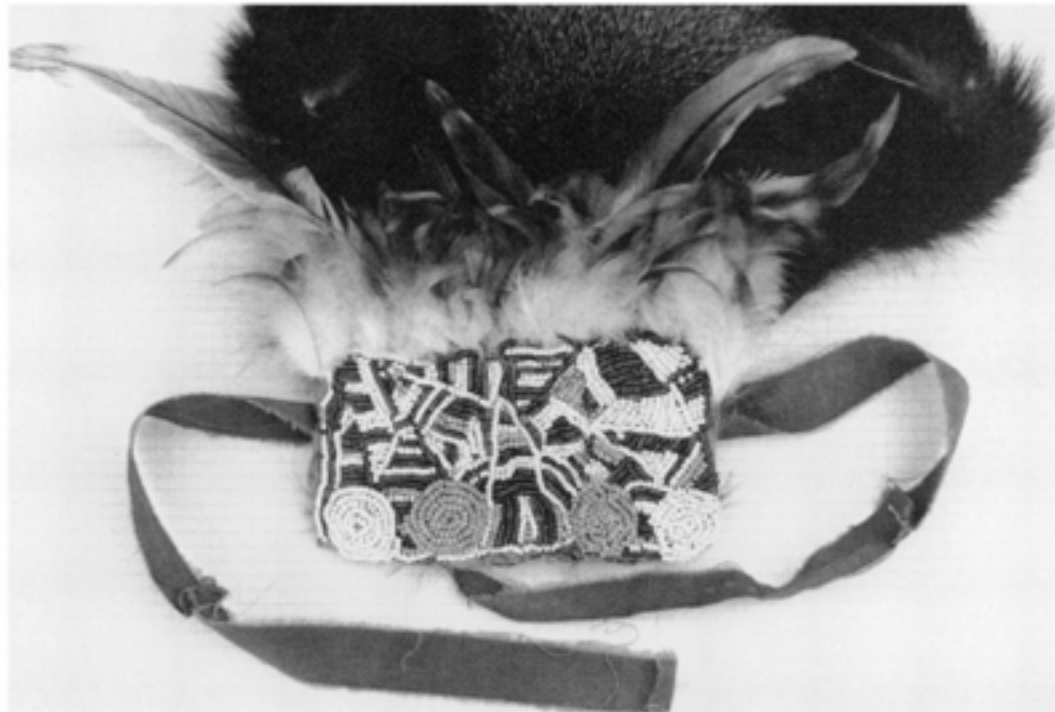
TOP 10 TABWA BEADED HEADDRESS OF BULUMBU DIVINER SEEN IN 1975 AT MPALA, SOUTHEASTERN ZAIRE. GLASS BEADS, FEATHERS, LEATHER, BLUE MONKEY PELT, COTTON CLOTH AND THREAD. 18 x 8cm.

BOTTOM 11 TABWA BEADED HEADDRESS OF BULUMBU DIVINER SEEN IN 1977 AT MPALA, SOUTHEASTERN ZAIRE. GLASS BEADS, FEATHERS, LEATHER, COTTON THREAD. 18 x 10cm.

to deceased loved ones, that they would not want to leave the cavern. The *kitobo* would present the supplicant's problem to Kibawa, and advice or judgment would be rendered.¹⁵

Authors addressing the history of religious change among central African peoples have noted that "in times of stress when secular authority was being undermined, or when chiefdoms could not stand alone against invaders, then links within and between the spirit-realms were activated to provide a framework for political and, sometimes, military activity on a wide scale" (Garbett 1969:113; cf. Oger 1972:1). The best-studied and most celebrated case of this is the role assumed by Shona spirit mediums in the guerrilla movement of preindependence Zimbabwe (Lan 1985). For Tabwa, the 1930s were marked by intense social stress caused by the collapse of the colonial economy in the Great Depression and the politico-economic upheaval resulting from the introduction of a Belgian version of Indirect Rule.¹⁶ Tabwa shifted their religious forms to accommodate such change by adopting a form of the Bulumbu possession cult from neighboring eastern Luba (cf. Werner 1971:21). In particular, Kibawa's cavern began to be seen as the source from which possessing spirits might emanate. These are *ngulu* earth spirits sent forth by recently deceased kin to afflict and so gain the attention of those surviving them, as indicated through divination. Adepts of the Bulumbu cult then assist supplicants to become possessed, so that the spirits may "rise up" and "take" the person to announce their identity and desires. Like "the rising of a new moon," this "enlightenment" (and Tabwa use the word metaphorically in the same way we do in English) allows supplicants to see things anew, and so to construct a happier future. Once recognition and reverence are offered to the spirit, it will continue to offer critical assistance to the person.

Bulumbu adepts wear *nkaka* beaded headdresses during their performances (Fig. 12). The central beaded spiral is "the eye of Kibawa," and so represents the entire paradigm of the moon, contact with the ancestors, and fertility. The placement of this third "eye" over the center of the adept's forehead is significant. Tabwa practitioners of divination and magic are said to have "eyes," and whenever someone states this, she or he



invariably taps the center of the forehead with an index finger. "The face of the cross," a common scarification pattern of Tabwa in precolonial as well as present times, emphasizes this same central point with a vertical line of keloids or tattooing following the body midline intersected by a horizontal line across the forehead (or, sometimes, as on the Tabwa face mask in Fig. 4, from the temples across the eyes to meet at the bridge of the nose; see Roberts 1988b:46-47). The "eye" at this central point allows the practitioner to "see" beyond that which can be known to ordinary people. The center of the forehead is deemed the seat of wisdom, prophesy, and dreams.

The metaphors of the central spiral of beads on the *nkaka* are made instrumental by sewing a magic bundle into the headdress, behind the spiral. The *vizimba* activating agents of such a bundle include tiny fragments of the following:

nzima, the melanistic serval cat (*Felis serval*) that is "cool" and dark and renders the adept "invisible" to evil sorcerers; *radii*, or a piece of wood from a tree struck by lightning, which lends the power of lightning itself to the practitioner seeking to solve problems without evil interference; the head or brain of a domestic jungle fowl cock and of a *kasebu*, or honey guide bird (probably *Indicator indicator*), to lend the capacity to see what ordinary people cannot; the brain of a spotted hyena and a wild dog (*Crocutta crocutta* and *Lycaon pictus*), members of a small set of animals felt to have *malosi*, or an extraordinary vision allowing them to "see" and seek out prey or carrion at a great distance; *mazombwe*, the giant walking stick (*Palophus leopoldii*), to make the adept tremble and quake like this insect, as a sign of impending possession; and *kichi-mankunka*, a kind of woody fungus, which because of its pure white interior

is considered an auspicious sign when it pops up out of the earth and is discovered while farming.

These magical elements do two things: they protect the Bulumbu adept so that she or he can resolve a supplicant's misfortune without interference from the very sorcerers or other evil agents who may be the source of the problem; and they project the adept's vision beyond that of an ordinary mortal, enabling perception of a solution to an obscure and troubling difficulty and to provide a plan of action for resolution. The third eye of the Bulumbu adept provides an ambivalent yet arresting vision: it is both inwardly protective and outwardly aggressive (see Napier 1986 for a discussion of similar symbolism elsewhere in the world). As such, it is a dramatic reflection of the paradox of social life as recognized by Tabwa and their Luba neighbors. The "two faces" of their social reality, represented by the natural symbol of the moon, are a recognition that good and evil exist in the same persons and circumstances, as situationally interpreted by the different parties in local-level politics.

A final activating agent that some Bulumbu adepts place in their headdresses is a scale of a pangolin (either the Cape, *Manis temminckii*, or the tree, *M. tricuspis*). Pangolin scales are burned by Tabwa and other people in central Africa to cause lions and other dangerous animals to flee. Tabwa say that "the king of beasts is not the lion" but the pangolin. Use of the pangolin as an activating agent for the magical bundle of a diviner's headdress keeps sorcerers at bay during a séance. There is more to the pangolin metaphor than this, however. The Tabwa word for "pangolin" is *nkaka*, the very name of the possession-cult adept's headdress.¹⁷ At a superficial level, this is probably due to the visual analogy between the *balamwezi* triangles of the headdress and a pangolin's roughly triangular, trilobed scales (G. Nagant, pers. com., 1977). Other associations are possible, drawing upon the taxonomic preposterousness of the pangolin, a generic equivalence between the scales of a pangolin and the shell of a tortoise, and other factors too complex to present here in detail (see Roberts 1980). What is clear is that when Tabwa call a beaded headdress "pangolin," they propose a rebus ("a riddle . . . depicted by symbols or pictures that suggest . . . the words or syllables they represent" [Morris 1969:1087]) or intellectual game of the sort from which Tabwa,

like the Kongo people MacGaffey describes (1988:202), "derive pleasure and satisfaction."

On many *nkaka* headdresses, two spirals, isosceles triangles, or other figures on either side of the central motif represent the winds (*pepo*) from the cardinal directions. The word *pepo* refers both to "wind" and to "possessing spirits," which, "like the wind, [are] invisible, mysterious, [and] free to move from place to place." Reference is also made to "the suddenness of the happening" of possession; "'it is coming like the wind,' unseen, from nowhere, [like] a sudden gust 'creeping into a human being' . . . like the wind penetrating a house" (Oger 1972:2). The four motifs are the eyes or doors of the most important spirits, the wives of Kibawa (Roberts 1980:366). The "pinwheel" within the central motif of the *nkaka* in Figure 7 was explained by a Tabwa informant to be the four triangular doors of these same spirits from which they emerge to possess people.

Two spirals appear on either side of Kibawa's spiral in the headdress seen in Figure 12. One on the left is said to represent Katambalele, the spirit that opens a path through the bamboo thicket surrounding Kibawa's cavern so that a supplicant can find spiritual aid. The other is Mulenga, the spirit guide within Kibawa's cavern and a figure that is Kibawa's structural equivalent for southern Tabwa and Bemba. On the right are Kaliba, the spirit that possesses the particular adept wearing this headdress, and Kisimba, a spirit associated with the legitimacy of certain Tabwa chiefs. Each of these four spirits has three more associated with it, making a total of thirteen major spirits when Kibawa himself is included. Thirteen is the number of lunar months in a year as well as the number of scutes, or large

scales, on a tortoise's carapace. These associations are important to the discussion of beaded masks that may be used in Mbudyé society performances.

The Mbudyé society exists among Luba, Luba-related, and Luba-influenced peoples. Mbudyé has among its principal purposes the recounting of the mythical charter for sacred kingship and the glorification of the political status quo (Reefe 1981).¹⁸ While some say that Mbidi Kiluwe, the culture hero who established sacred royalty among the Luba (Heusch 1982a), also introduced the Mbudyé society, others assert that it was "a certain Ngoi ya Nkongolo" (Ferber 1932). The same man, according to the Luba informants of W. F. P. Burton, originated the Butwa society found among Tabwa and other groups east and southeast of the Luba (Burton 1961:157).¹⁹ From a structuralist perspective, this indicates that the two societies share basic metaphors. It appears, however, that Mbudyé and Butwa were "in competition" (Ferber 1934a) and did not exist in the same territories: Mbudyé served and continues to serve the needs of people with a centralized, state political economy (or at least its remnants), while Butwa flourished among decentralized, stateless peoples like most Tabwa, but has been defunct since early this century because of the imposition of colonial capitalism (see Roberts 1980). Many Tabwa ancestral figures bear the V-shaped scarification emblem of Butwa initiation (Roberts 1988b), indicating the society's importance as a source of "help in sickness and need, with the prospects of a respectable funeral and worship after death" (Ferber 1934b:62-63), for precolonial people engaged in a community-oriented political economy. That some northern and southwestern Tabwa have adopted the Mbudyé society indicates their borrowing from a Luba idiom



12. TABWA BULUMBU MEDIUM WEARING A BEADED HEADRESS, SINGING WITH TWO SPIRIT "CHILDREN" DURING A SÉANCE IN 1976 NEAR MPALA, SOUTHERN ZAIRE.

as they accommodated a change in political economy toward the sort of centralization of power for which the Luba are locally famous (see Roberts 1986a for other examples of this same process).

According to W.F.P. Burton, at least for turn-of-the-century Luba, the "presiding spirit" of Mbudyé was Lolo Inang'ombe, who oversaw initiation into the society and punished any who might subvert its principles. "For the practical purposes of the society," Lolo Inang'ombe was represented as a land tortoise.²⁰ Mbudyé members were said to "show an extreme respect for" the tortoise, and "to know whether a person is well inclined to the 'Bumbudyé,' a tortoise is put into his hut." How the person reacted to the animal was taken as a sign of willingness and suitability for Mbudyé membership (Burton 1961:159-60, 164). The form of a tortoise was given to the *lukasa* mnemonic device recording the charter for Luba royalty and other lore. The back of the *lukasa* "bears a stylized tortoise shell design" of "striated triangles or squares," each of which "symbolizes an esoteric piece of information" (Reefe 1977:49). The *lukasa*, then, was "the Bible of the Bumbudyé, the dictionary of signs" that could be "read" by Mbudyé members (Henroteaux 1945:104).

Lolo Inang'ombe herself is said to have been the offspring of a woman and a buffalo, a woman married to a buffalo, or, as in an Mbudyé wall painting Burton once saw, a dichotomous being that had the body of an animal (a buffa-

lo?) and the torso and head of a woman (Burton 1961:159-60). Tabwa masks may portray this couple or at least refer to the same play of metaphors, for the wooden helmet mask field collected by Pierre Darteville (Fig. 3) was said to be female and paired with the male buffalo mask in the Stanley Collection (Fig. 8), which he also collected. The inset cowry-shell eyes that Tabwa anthropomorphic masks possess or reflect in their carving are like those of Tabwa buffalo masks (Roberts & Maurer 1986:252-53). The figure represented is said to be a clan ancestress named Musangwe (Darteville, pers. com., 1984). The root of this name is the verb *kusangwa*, "to be found, to desire," with a nuance of sexual promiscuity.²¹ Perhaps the mask was danced to dramatize the bestial excess of the earliest humans, who, like Lolo Inang'ombe, coupled with buffaloes. As Burton suggested, "within the sect [of Mbudyé] promiscuity is practiced" and there are "sensual displays of dancing, where every sexual action and gesture is exploited to the full" (1961:163, 167), probably for the same symbolic purposes.

Buffaloes (*Syncerus caffer*) are still found in Tabwa lands, although they are far less common than they were prior to the introduction of gun-hunting (IAAPB 1892:11). The strength and violent nature of the buffalo are played upon in Tabwa metaphor, ritual, and magic. Magical whisks made from buffalo tails are used to keep at bay smallpox, lion-men (*visanguka*), sorcerers, or other agents of destruction. The name of such a whisk, *mpunga*, derives from a verb meaning "to stay awake and vigilant all night" (Roberts & Maurer 1986:176-77). These whisks are often made with sculpted

wooden handles, some of which are inset with copper wire filigree; they are still used as signs of political status, as they were by earlier Tabwa chiefs (Giraud 1890:522).

Eastern Luba found the same metaphors apposite. A boy leaving the initiation camp was greeted with the cry, "Here is the buffalo, here is the buffalo!" (Colle 1913:275), while Mbidi Kiluwe, the Luba culture hero, was praised as being "shiningly black like the buffalo" (Womersley 1984:7). Darteville was told that a name for a Tabwa buffalo mask is Kiyunde; although the etymology of this term remains obscure, it may derive from a root that means "to heal" or that is associated with the smelting of iron,²² activities associated with Mbidi Kiluwe and other culture heroes. It is quite possible, then, that buffalo masks used by Tabwa living close to and among eastern Luba were either associated with Mbudyé practices glorifying Mbidi Kiluwe or were made to celebrate the same idiom that Mbidi personifies for Luba.

This brings us back to beaded masks like that in the Stanley Collection, said to be associated with Mbudyé. In the past, Mbudyé spirit mediums and those known as Bulumbu were said to be one and the same. Mbudyé members in the higher orders of their society were possessed by spirits and "allowed to wear the 'nkaka' or diamond-decorated bead crown" (Burton 1961:50-52, 55, 154-67) (Fig. 9).²³ These possessing spirits are associated with Luba heroes whose "spirits are believed to have taken up their abode in springs, fountains, waterfalls, and damp caves, where the water oozes from the roof." Among the most important possessing spirits for Luba (like Tabwa) is Kibawa, and the person so possessed "may scratch wildly at the ground with his finger- and toe-nails" to dig a "cave" like Kibawa's (Burton 1961:50-52, 55, 154-67).²⁴ A praise name for Mbidi Kiluwe is "Chief of Kibawa" (Colle 1913:357; Verhulpen 1936:95), and the "fetish" or magical investiture bundle as well as the principal *mukishi* (wooden figure) of the Luba "king of the sacred blood (*mulopwe*)" was called "Kibawa" (Verbeke 1937:55-58).

Mbudyé and Bulumbu adepts among Luba show "reverence for the new moon" (Verbeke 1937:167) and in other ways share the basic metaphors made manifest in Tabwa beaded headdresses and the possession cult séances in which they are used. The beaded headdresses of Luba and Tabwa possession cult mediums are often strikingly similar (Figs. 9,12), and are called *nkaka* in both languages, a word they both use to refer to the pangolin as well (Burton 1961:166; Van Avermaet & Mbuya 1954:216). It is likely that a conceptual association



13. AN MBUDYÉ SOCIETY MEMBER(?) DANCING IN A VILLAGE IN THE ZAIRE/ZAMBIA BORDER AREA IN THE MID-1970s. HE WEARS A LARGE BEADED HEADRESS ON HIS FOREHEAD AND A BLUE MONKEY PELT DOWN HIS BACK.



14. TABWA BEADED MASK, UNKNOWN PROVENANCE.
GLASS BEADS, FEATHERS, LEATHER, COTTON THREAD.
30cm. PRIVATE COLLECTION, CALIFORNIA.

exists among a pangolin's scales, a tortoise's scutes (the emblem of Lolo Inang'ombe, "presiding spirit" of Mbudye), the triangular tortoise shell motif found on the back of *lukasa* mnemonic devices of Mbudye members, and the triangular beading of both Luba and Tabwa headdresses and masks. The signs of Mbudye initiation, painted on the walls of the society lodge and sculpted or represented as clusters of beads tacked to the top surface of the *lukasa* device, were "so rigorously exact throughout the whole of Lubaland [that they] were originally intended to perpetuate some symbolic teaching, or history" (Burton 1961:163; cf. Reeve 1977). The messages encoded in the motifs of a spirit medium's headdress or mask can be read in a similar manner.

Tabwa beaded masks show "constrained diversity" of the same sort as do *nkaka* headdresses. All masks and most *nkaka* seen to date are surmounted by feathers, usually of domestic jungle fowl whose spectacular plumage makes the usual gloss, "chicken," seem wholly inadequate (cf. Davis-Roberts 1980:5). The metaphorical reference is the uncanny ability of the jungle fowl cock to discern and crow at dawn, even before people are aware that daybreak has come; occasionally the feathers of other birds or the stiff mane of a goat are used in a similar fashion, to make different but complementary metaphorical references.

The Stanley mask has the pelt of a blue monkey attached in such a way that it hangs down over the back of the head and shoulders. *Nkaka* headdresses often have blue monkey pelts attached to them in this same manner (Figs. 10, 12; see also Roberts 1988c:fig. 6), and other beaded masks now in museum and private collections may have had such pelts removed. The blue monkey (*Circopithecus mitis*) is arboreal and rarely touches the ground. Tabwa see the animal's high acrobatics as analogous to the way that a possessing spirit will "perch upon" and "take over" a person's head and very being, as expressed in the verb for "to become possessed," *kutentama*, explained above. As shown in Figure 13, agile dancers can make the monkey pelt seem to leap onto or about the head, in imitation of the animal. The *nkaka* headdress in Figure 6 has the spotted pelt of a serval attached to it, whereas a beaded face mask in a field photograph by Marc Félix (Fig. 15) has the spotted skin of a genet (*Genetta genetta*). Spotted skins are (or were) worn in this way by certain high-ranking Mbudye members to "represent the heavens: the black spots stand for the



stars" (Ferber 1932:17); or it may be that the "mottled coat (light and dark) readily connotes the alternation of day and night" as subsumed in the powers and being of chiefs (Heusch 1982a:139-41). These same spotted skins are associated with chiefship by peoples throughout central Africa, and usually it is the prerogative of chiefs to own or wear them. The association here, especially for Luba, is between possessing spirits and the culture heroes who established sacred chiefship.

The Stanley beaded mask has a spiral at the center of the forehead, just as

most *nkaka* headdresses do. Other masks such as those in Figures 1 and 14 do not have this motif, but do have a similar register of isosceles triangles across the brow. On still others (Figs. 16,17) that are flat panels rather than contoured surfaces that fit the curves of the face, this register of triangles is missing and the spiral is placed over the mouth. Unfortunately, nothing whatsoever is known of these masks' provenance, other than that they are said and appear to be "Tabwa." Still, several reasons for placing a spiral motif over the mouth come to mind, based on Tabwa ethnog-

raphy. An *mpande* disk was placed over the mouth of a precolonial Tabwa chief during funeral and succession proceedings. The death of a chief was hidden from ordinary people through a charade orchestrated by his grandchildren. A granddaughter would seclude herself with the moribund chief and, after he had died, cradle his cadaver, moaning as though she were the chief still alive and suffering. After four days, the corpse was placed in a great jar or bark receptacle, its knees tucked to its chest. It would be dressed in a "feathered headdress" and an *mpande* disk would be placed over the mouth "to prevent rapid putrefaction." Decomposition was allowed to continue until the skull fell from the spine. Then the skull would be kept as a revered relic, while the skull of the preceding chief that had been kept in the same way would be placed in a deep pool of water or beneath a streambed with the body of the chief just deceased (Roberts 1980:494-98).

Some time thereafter, the grandchildren would choose a successor from among the chief's sisters' sons. The successor was closed up in a house while the grandchildren circled it in dance. The new chief was then released from the house, given regalia, and an *mpande* disk was bound over his mouth. With the spiral disk sealing his lips, the chief was instructed to no longer commit "foolish acts," often a reference to adultery, but sometimes to other disruptive behavior as well (Roberts 1980:499-500).

In both of these cases, the *mpande* disk sealed the mouth. The spiraled shell disk is of a cognitive set with the moon, the cavern of Kibawa, fertility, and the chief's genealogy. At death, a person's words and wisdom are said to go to the east, to appear as light; again

the metaphor of "enlightenment" is the same as we would have it in English. Jungle fowl first perceive this light, and crow. Possessing spirits may emerge from Kibawa's cavern to the west of where most Tabwa live, but, somewhat paradoxically, they are said to come from the "place of beginnings" in the east when they possess people. In this they are like the new moon that is first noticed in the west but subsequently is seen to rise in the east. The enlightenment these spirits bring their supplicants is informed by the wisdom of chiefs, the "fathers of their people" who are of an idiom with Mbidi Kiluwe, the Luba hero and "Chief of Kibawa" who "came from the east" to conquer what would become the Luba heartland (Roberts, forthcoming A). The spiral of beads over the mouths of some masks is a reference to this richly complex cultural field: speech is to be controlled, carefully uttered, and consistent with the teachings of the ancestors kept by Kibawa.²⁵

A final use of beaded headdresses may be mentioned as an indication of how vitally important their messages and structure are, even in the context of the most stressful sorts of social change in contemporary central Africa. Mrs. Margret Carey, a guest curator at the

Museum of Mankind in London, has been kind enough to send me photographs she recently took at the Moto Moto Museum in northeastern Zambia of objects seized in the early 1960s from one or more followers of Alice Lenshina's nativistic Lumpa Church. These include beaded headdresses that are strikingly similar to the *nkaka* of Tabwa and Luba possession cult adepts: one has five tight spirals to be worn across the forehead; another, four spirals and a diamond of dizzying color combinations; and a third consists of triangles around a large central spiral (Fig. 18).²⁶

In 1953, Alice Lenshina became very ill and "died" four times, but was called back to life each time by Jesus, who taught her instructive songs and gave her a book "in a strange language that only she could read" (Oger 1962:129).²⁷ She began teaching these songs and writings and exhorting people to give up the sorcery that seemed to be condoned by the colonial government, since the administration had condemned use of the poison oracle to identify and eliminate evildoers. Lenshina baptized people and became alienated from local missionaries for doing so. She founded her own church, which by the late 1950s had a following of well over 100,000 among Bemba and Bemba-speaking people, including many southern Tabwa.

Lenshina was thought to be possessed by an *ngulu* earth spirit and "had her analogues among those to whom spirits revealed themselves through dreams and possession" (A.D. Roberts 1970:527).²⁸ Father Louis Oger states that Lenshina was "'possessed' by the spirit of Christ" in a manner similar to, and explained using the vocabulary of, *ngulu* spirit possession (1962:132;

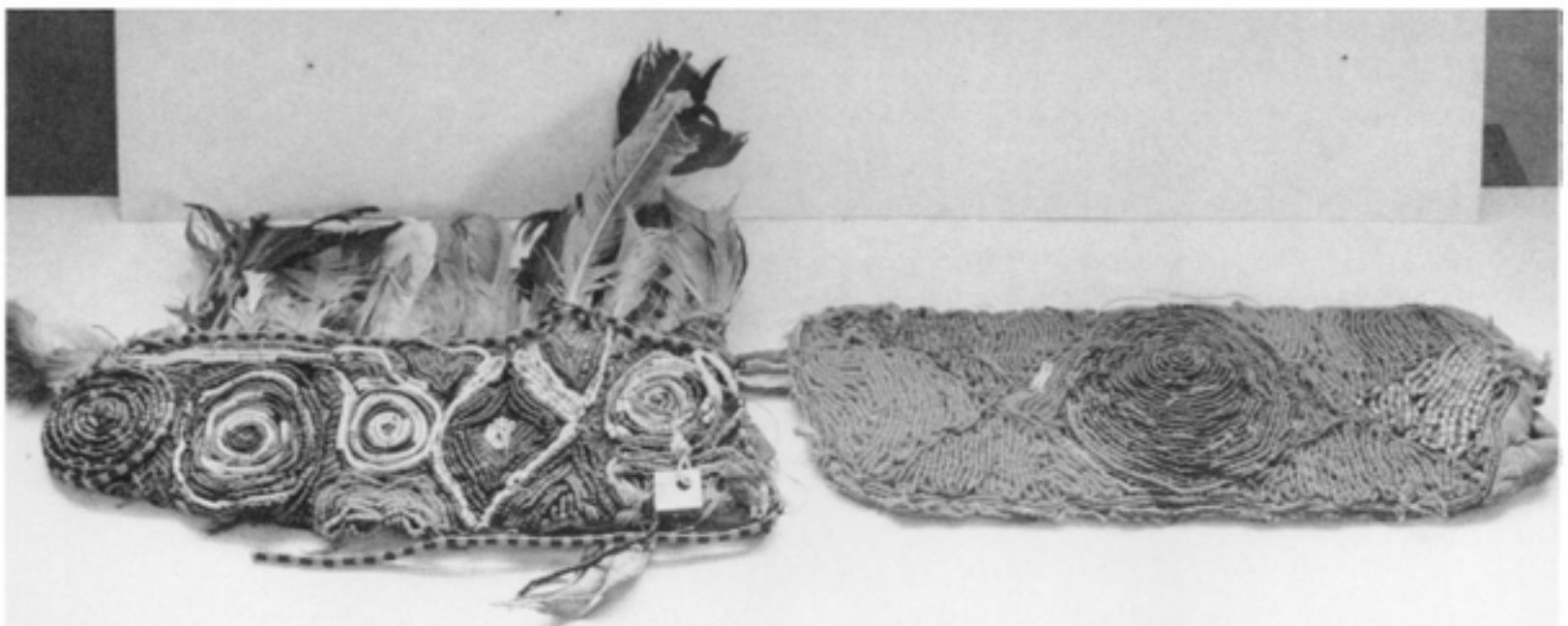


16. TABWA(?) BEADED MASK, UNKNOWN PROVENANCE. PRIVATE COLLECTION, CALIFORNIA.

15. A TABWA(?) MAN WEARING A BEADED MASK, SEEN IN THE MID-1970s IN THE ZAIRE/ZAMBIA BORDER AREA.



17. TABWA(?) BEADED MASK, UNKNOWN PROVENANCE. GLASS BEADS, FEATHERS, LEATHER, COTTON CLOTH AND THREAD. 45 x 30cm. PRIVATE COLLECTION, CALIFORNIA.



18. BEADED HEADDRESS OF FOLLOWERS OF ALICE LENSHINA. GLASS BEADS, FEATHERS, LEATHER, COTTON CLOTH AND THREAD 18 x 18cm. MOTO MOTO MUSEUM, MBALA, NORTHEASTERN ZAMBIA.

1972:6). While "there does not seem to have been any ecstatic behavior or symptoms of spirit possession" during her church services (A.D. Roberts 1970:537), "Lenshina did nothing to dispel reports" of her connection with the *ngulu* spirit system (Werner 1971:23). Indeed, converts to the Lumpa Church said they were inspired to join through dreams and prophesy, during a time when *ngulu* spirit possession was dramatically on the rise among people in northeastern Zambia (Oger 1972:1). Through the *ngulu* idiom, Lenshina offered redemption to sorcerers and provided her own magical charms to protect church members and assure them of successful harvests (A.D. Roberts 1970:531, 542). It is probable that the beaded headdresses seized by the colonial government and now in the Moto Moto Museum were used by Lenshina's converts, perhaps outside of her direct supervision but within the idiom of spirit possession that was her implicit vehicle.

Lenshina made promises of the Millennium, saying Jesus would visit her followers when the Lumpa cathedral was completed. She herself "claimed to provide an answer to the troubles, not just of individuals, but of society at large" (A.D. Roberts 1970:543). "Lumpa," the name of her church, is derived from a Bemba verb meaning "to be the most important," this in reference to missionary churches in the same part of Zambia that Lenshina felt were led by "her enemies" (Oger 1962:133). The Lumpa church attracted many who were hostile to the colonial government (including the brother and mother of soon-to-be-president Kenneth Kaunda), and became a locus of nationalism during the tense years of the late 1950s and early 1960s, prior to Zambian indepen-

dence. Lumpa became "more and more specifically a peasant movement," however, which soon proved "quite incompatible with the nationalist emphasis on wider incorporation and on the state" (Binsbergen 1981:290-91). Shortly before and for some time after Independence, a violent split between conservative, nativistic church members and many nationalists resulted in the deaths of as many as 1,500 Lenshina followers, as President Kaunda banned the movement and arrested Lenshina (Binsbergen 1981:266; A.D. Roberts 1970:553-62). Still, the symbols of Lenshina's movement, including reference to the *ngulu* earth-spirit idiom and use of beaded headbands such as those now in the Moto Moto Museum, served a critical function in allowing people to redefine their social outlook as dissatisfaction with colonial living conditions rose.

For the last fifty or more years, beaded headdresses and masks have been used by possession cult adepts among Tabwa, eastern Luba, Bemba, and other closely related peoples of southeastern Zaire and northeastern Zambia. While the contexts for such use have varied, certain key metaphors remain vitally apposite across time and ethnic difference. The two most significant of these are prominently represented in the beading: *balamwezi* triangles, a motif called "the rising of a new moon," refer to enlightenment, courage, and hope through spirit possession; and spirals of beading or cone-shell disks refer to the paradoxical nature of time and the advance of human generations, fertility, promise, and contact with divinity.

These and other motifs make beaded headdresses and masks "agents of ideology" for both performers and their audiences, as they reflect, make accessible, and inculcate values, social needs, and aspirations. Importantly though, while donning these masks "causes" the bearer to become a spirit or to assume an otherwise ineffable state, such transfor-

mation allows an audience to contemplate change of other sorts. As Raymond Firth has written: "In many societies spirit possession and spirit medium cults offer a field for some degree of individual self-expression, maybe of a fantasy order, going well beyond the conventions of tradition. Spirit mediumship may thus allow of flexibility in the conceptualization of the spirit universe, and presumably thereby offer some possibilities of change in belief" (1969:xi-xii). As is evident in the case of beaded headdress use by Alice Lenshina's followers, coping with and taking full advantage of turbulent, even revolutionary, social conditions can be facilitated by use of masks.

Yet there is irony and paradox in the wearing of a mask, for one is deliberately contrasting apparent with intended meaning, what empirically is with what might be. That is, the masker and the audience know that this is only a performance, but they willingly suspend their disbelief in order to participate in the intended drama. They *want* to witness, think about, and participate in transformation. They *want* to consider alternatives. They *want* to engage in "what-if" hypothesis. While this may sometimes be an entertaining process, maskers' impersonation of spirits, allowing the ineffable to become more accessible, can be a deadly serious business. Bulumbu and Mbudye adepts are possessed by spirits in a catharsis that brings insight, perception, and solutions to nagging dilemmas, sudden crises, and life-threatening circumstances. Lenshina's followers used headdresses similar to those of possession cult adepts as a means of political empowerment, when they reacted to colonial oppression through references to the vitality of indigenous culture and its potential for adaptation and transformation. The ambiguities and paradoxes of wearing masks, then, continue to be "useful, if old, 'tricks of the human race.'" □

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Hoskins), Timor (David Hicks), and Tanimbar (Susan McKinnon).

A collection of this sort should have a coherence other than that provided by geography. Certain themes recur and are developed, more or less successfully, in the articles. Artistic form, as represented here, is consistently related to cosmic order and to a complementary balance and harmony. In several traditions this has produced the image of a mythical being that supports this harmony and guards the community's well-being and fertility. This being appears as a serpent-like dragon on Nias, among the Batak, and on Borneo. Among the Toraja, the protective image, described in careful detail by Nooy-Palm, takes the form of the buffalo, the most important sacrificial animal. All these societies also concentrate on the representation of ancestors, either in personal images (as among the Toraja), in a house dedicated to the founder of a lineage (on Nias), or in ritual buildings, as described by Erb for Flores. This link to the past is seen as essential to future

well-being; it may also be expressed in an image that encompasses the entire community, as is the case with Tanimbar stone boats. By contrast, an artistic representation of social conflict is apparently not present in Tanimbar, although it may be enacted in the society in other forms, even those related to the stone boats. In her discussion of carved Tanimbar prows, McKinnon describes the hostile confrontation that is part of a confirmation of interisland alliances.

Several of the contributions emphasize social stratification. This subject is especially relevant to the discussions of Nias, Sumba, the Batak, and the Toraja. Nobility implies merit. It may be inherited, as in East Sumba or Nias. It may in addition need to be reinforced by acquired status, through headhunting and ceremonial feasting. Feldman and Barbier both concentrate on the theme of community leaders as mediators between the village and divinity, a role that is emphasized by their close iconographic link to a cosmic image. Hoskins interprets the presence of

spiritual power in certain objects that combine female and male images: surprisingly, she is the only contributor to discuss the issue of gender in any detail.

Although some individual articles are disappointing, the volume as a whole provides new information and interpretations. However, one point of criticism has to be raised. Although "Indigenous Styles of Southeast Asia" is the book's subtitle, there is virtually no stylistic definition or analysis in the papers contributed. The exceptions are Newton's introduction and McKinnon's perceptive and concise discussion of Tanimbar boat carvings. The social context of artistic production is, of course, essential, and all of the contributions try to tackle that issue. But in addition art is made by individuals in a specific way that is determined by their tradition and by their personal creativity. Neither the question of the particularity of style nor that of individual creativity is addressed here. These issues are central to the subject of ethnographic art history. □

notes

ROBERTS: Notes, from page 47

1. Wissler's original article on masks was published in *Natural History* (128:28 [4], 339-52) as "The Lore of the Demon Mask. How Savages and Barbarians Make Use of False Faces in Their Weird Religious Ceremonies. Ancient and Modern Uses of These Strange Masks Among the Natives of America and Other Parts of the World." The title was changed (and happily so!) to "Masks," more photographs were added, and the article was then published in the museum's *Senior Guide* series (no. 96). This *Guide* was in its third (and apparently final) printing in 1950, when the issue I found in a Chicago used book store was published. The series is no longer published, although photocopies may be obtained from the American Museum of Natural History. My copy is signed by George Mills, whose own work in the 1950s on Navaho art and "qualitative anthropology" is still well known. It would be instructive to know how many people's enduring interest in masks and ethnographic arts was first piqued by the sort of museum publication that Wissler produced.

2. Four years of predoctoral anthropology fieldwork based at Mpala, Zaire (late 1973 to late 1977), were financed by the U.S. National Institute for Mental Health (grant in aid #1-F01-MH-55251-01-CUAN); the Committee on African Studies and the Edson-Keith Fund of the University of Chicago, and Sigma Xi, the Scientific Research Society. During my years in Zaire, I was a research associate at the Center for Central African Political Studies (CEPAC) at the National University of Zaire, Lubumbashi. Sincere thanks are extended to Mrs. Elizabeth Stanley for her continued support of African art research at the University of Iowa, and for her generous donations in 1988 and 1989 of a Tabwa beaded mask and a Tabwa buffalo mask to the University of Iowa Museum of Art; to Mumba Marselina and other Tabwa friends who taught me about Bulumbu; to Margaret Carey, Marc Félix, Jacques Hautelet, and William Dewey for sharing photographs and information about beaded masks and headdresses; to Robert Cancel, Kalunga Mwela-Ubi, Genevieve Nagant, and Louis Oger for sharing difficult-to-find but invaluable literature on Tabwa and Bemba; and to Jan Vanina, Mary Kujawski, and Christopher Roy for editorial and intellectual guidance. Despite the generosity of these agencies and colleagues, all responsibility for the present paper remains my own. For Seth, Avery, and Mame.

3. The following comments, then, may be considered speculative. This last word is often mistakenly left a sense of that which is spurious, specious, or haphazard. In correct usage it refers to "contemplation of a profound nature" and "implies an orderly process of reasoning based upon inconclusive evidence" (Morris 1969:124); see usage note pp. 281-82. It is hoped that field research can be undertaken in the next several years, to study Tabwa masks and related objects and practices *in situ*.

4. Marc Félix (1989:204-7, 218-19) has recently exhibited and published photographs of three more wooden masks from

northern Tabwa (whom he calls "Hulobolo" and "Tumbwe"); see Roberts 1986a for a discussion of these ethnic labels, one of which is of a different sort from others known to date. Félix and his agents appear to have field collected all three masks. One was used by "moving musicians and dancers at the funeral of a HOLOHOLO elder," another was "in a Bemba-type ceremony along with beaded diadems worn by other dancers," and the third was "the property of an initiatic male society." While this sketchy information allows few conclusions to be drawn, use of the first (Félix's fig. 52) and more certainly the second mask (fig. 53, pp. 204-7), which is decorated with isosceles triangles incised across the brow, the middle of the face, and the chin, seems consistent with the following discussion of beaded masks. The third mask, portraying a zoomorphic being with horns, has no other Tabwa counterpart; one is led to wonder if it was made by Lega or related people north of the Tabwa and used like the stylistically related Lega *kyambé* mask Félix illustrates (pp. 90-91).

5. The theme of the Fourth Stanley Conference on African Art, held April 22-23, 1988, at the University of Iowa, was "Art and Initiation in Zaire." Conference papers will be published in *Less Studies in African Art* (forthcoming 1990).

6. European glass beads have long been available to people in southeastern Zaire in many colors besides the primary white/red/black triad of central symbolic significance to Tabwa and other Bantu peoples. When I asked why such secondary colors as green, yellow, or blue were used in making the *nkwa* headdresses to be presented in this article, I was offered a pragmatic response: either beads of these colors were available and so were used, or they were felt to make the object more pleasing ("kwa mpendza kw"). While color contrasts are used to achieve visual effects, the identity of particular colors seems insignificant, then, although this is usually not true when white, red, or black is used in other contexts.

7. Weghsteen (1963) identifies the pattern as "the rising of a new moon" and provides line drawings of many examples of its use. My informants at Chief Mpala's confirmed the name of this motif. It is curious, then, that Bemba living just to the south of the Tabwa and to whom Tabwa are so closely related linguistically, culturally, and historically should consider a similar zigzag motif as solar rather than lunar (Maxwell 1983:53). Indeed, their name for the motif, *nyongolo* (Richards 1956), refers to a serpent and is a cognate of the name of the Luba solar hero and "drunken king," Nkongolo (see Heusch 1982a). This may exemplify the structuralist principle of the inversion of symbols from one reference group to another (see Heusch 1982a, 1982b, and Lévi-Strauss 1982). Maxwell's assertion (1983:42) that the Bemba "solar" zigzag schematically represents the movement of the sun along the ecliptic is based on Zaire's discussion of Bemba lore (1979) and remains conjecture to be proven through field research among the Bemba.

8. Tabwa dualistic philosophy, Tabwa perception of the moon as fundamentally ambiguous, and the ways and contexts in which this ambiguity generates key metaphors are themes discussed in much of my writing. See, for instance, Roberts 1986b and Roberts forthcoming A.

9. "Semantic equivalence" is exemplified in Roberts 1986a and is best demonstrated by Dominique Zahan (1980) in his *catalogue raisonné* and analysis of over 500 *chi wana* headdresses. My own inspiration in this regard is drawn in part from Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Way of Masks*, in which he asserts that "as in the case of myths, masks, too, cannot be interpreted in and by themselves as separate objects. Looked upon from the semantic point of view, a myth acquires sense only after it is returned to its transformation set. Similarly, one type of mask... echoes other types... while it assumes its own individuality" (1982:13-14). The structuralist writings of Luc de Heusch (1982a, 1982b) allow one to situate Tabwa masks in the "transformative set" of Bantu-speaking peoples, who share a common logic. Werner (1971:101) finds a "basic language correspondence" among Tabwa and their immediate Luba and Bemba neighbors of between 70 and 90 percent, for instance, which underscores the commonality of language, logic, and a "transformative set" implied throughout the present paper.

10. A spiral is a more active representation of the same concept of concentric circles, making the implication of evolution over time more obvious. Thanks to Chris Roy for discussion of this point (*pers. com.*, 1989).

11. Malcolm McLod (1976:99) has proposed a useful distinction between "statement" and "process" art that closely follows Victor Turner's (1970:95) between oration and ritual, respectively. Statement art is confirmatory of one's status quo, as exemplified in the regalia of royalty, while process art is goal oriented and transformative, and often entails the use of magic. On Tabwa statement and process art, see Roberts 1986a:10-16; for a survey of statement art objects among Zairian peoples (although not referred to as such), see Lema Gwete 1986.

12. Chiefs closely related to the Tabwa who live on the southeastern shores of Lake Tanganyika cut these precious disks into *bulumbu*-like triangles called *mbwina* that were given to "direct descendants" (Hatchell 1928:28). A porcelain trade copy of a *mbwina* is affixed to the *nkwa* headdress seen in Figure 6.

13. A turn-of-the-century photograph of a Tabwa woman, reproduced in Roberts 1988b:43, shows a spiral motif "inscribed" in the scarification of the woman's shoulder blades. This, it is suggested, alludes to the same symbolism of a spiral denoting a person's descentance; but reference to one member of a paradigmatic set necessarily allows and makes potential metonymic allusion to all other members as well. See also Roberts 1986c.

14. Details of the advent and significance of Kibawa in the context of radical change in late-nineteenth-century political economy are presented in Roberts 1982, 1984, 1988c. On *ngulu* and related earth spirits among central Bantu peoples, see Werner 1971 and the essays in Schoffeleers 1979.

15. Kevin Maxwell discusses similar use of a cave near Kasama in northeastern Zambia by Bemba (and probably Bemba-speaking southern Tabwa). He suggests that "these places are sacred to the Bemba because their engulfing sounds create a panharmonic center, which can integrate and motivate the rest of their fragmented experience. The wholeness makes them whole again" (1983:88).

16. Similarly, Louis Oger writes of the rise of spirit possession "among the oppressed and downtrodden" Bemba in 1907, when the British implemented far-reaching agricultural and village consolidation reforms, thus disrupting social life; and again in about 1960 when "pre-independence years brought a certain amount of insecurity, uncertainty and changes to traditional society" (1972:1).

17. *Mask* is a proto-Bantu word that finds widespread use among western Bantu-speaking peoples. My thanks to Jan Vansina for discussion of this point (pers. com., 1989). As he suggests, "The mask is the pangolin." Mary Douglas (1975) has described how singular and "good to think" the pangolin is for the Lela of Zaire, and I shall discuss somewhat similar Tabwa beliefs about this singular beast in a forthcoming book. The magical substances used in *slaka* headdresses are discussed more fully in Roberts 1980:367-68 and in Davis-Roberts 1980.

18. It goes without saying that Mbudyé has changed with the times, just as the Luba political economy has. Those days, folklore troupes of Mbudyé dancers perform rationally and even intentionally, and ostensibly, it seems that entertainment has replaced many of the earlier sacred purposes of the society. Still, as is implied by Luba *Bwaza* Vidyé mediums (who may no longer be directly linked to Mbudyé as their predecessors appear to have been) wearing "beaded diadems" and by the use of beaded masks by Luba-influenced Mbudyé members among Tabwa and others living north of Lake Mweru, Mbudyé seems a vital nexus of metaphors that still helps people to cope with their changing circumstances. Thanks to Bill Dewey for discussion of this point (pers. com., 1989).

19. According to another account, Nkongolo originated Mbudyé shortly before his death at the hands of Mbidi Kiluwe's son, Kalala Ilunga, telling his people that the Mbudyé dances would be a way to remember him and that they should oblige Kalala Ilunga to recognize this with gifts to the dancers (Kirschenbiller 1941). Furthermore, the dried genitals of Nkongolo "became the emblem of royal descent and royal authority," and Nkongolo, as a possessing spirit, "consecrated the instalment of the royal court by its spiritual support" (Theuvsen 1964:7). It may seem curious that Nkongolo should be considered the originator of Mbudyé and ancestor of Luba royalty, since Nkongolo was overthrown by Mbidi Kiluwe and his son, Kalala Ilunga, and it is they whom Reece (1981) contends to be the heroes of Mbudyé and the founders of Luba sacred kingship. This is an indication that too liberal an interpretation of these mythical figures may impose a "rational" dualistic structure (as defined in Western terms), when indeterminacy and multireferentiality are being represented. Culture heroes may personally opposed qualities or open hypothesis itself. This is the case for central Bantu origin myths, in which heroes such as Mbidi Kiluwe are explicitly dichotomous, being half-human, half-wax, and so presenting opposition in their very anatomy; and in which the genre of anti-heroes that includes Nkongolo Mwambwa personifies liminality itself. See Roberts forthcoming A and Roberts forthcoming B.

20. The association between Lolo Inang'ombe and the tortoise reflects a more basic linguistic and conceptual set shared by Luba with other central Bantu peoples. Ryangombe is an important culture hero for Rwandan peoples, for instance (see Heusch 1982b). For Tabwa, a *lyang'ombe* is a tortoise shell filled with powerful magical ingredients that allows shaman to fly through the night as they search for victims; they are seen by ordinary people as "shooting stars." Jan Vansina (my thanks for this personal communication, 1989) suggests instead that *lyang'ombe* may be "a borrowed 'chic' name for an older cluster of values/convictions," dating from the mid-nineteenth-century when Tabwa came in contact with Yoke invaders from east of Lake Tanganyika. Through them, Tabwa may have gained indirect information about significant intralacustrine heroes such as Ryangombe. These matters will be discussed further in future writing.

21. The dictionaries of Van Acker (1907:58), the White Fathers (1954:658), and Van Avermaet & Mbuya (1954:575) offer explanations of this important verb in the closely related Tabwa, Bemba, and Luba languages, respectively. Other meanings and associations indicate that the verb points to the magical quality of "finding" or achieving what one "desires," and the manner in which ancestral spirits play a role in this process.

22. See Van Acker 1907:71, White Fathers 1954:821-22, and Van Avermaet & Mbuya 1954:780-81. Iron-smelting and other cultural transformations associated with culture heroes are discussed in Roberts 1980.

23. While some of these Luba *nkaka* headdresses are strikingly similar to their Tabwa counterparts (as is the one shown in Fig. 9), others have a different play of isosceles triangles. One of the two Luba *nkaka* headdresses in the Stanley Collection at the University of Iowa (no. 1986.115) has four squares across the brow, each of which is divided into four triangles whose apices meet at the center of the square; the other (no. 1986.81) has a large central triangle whose base extends across the entire brow, with an internal, concentric triangle of a different color as its central "eye." See the photos of other Luba *nkaka* in Burton 1961.

24. The same manifestation among Lakeside Tabwa would be said to be possession by Mumbi, the anthropomorphic aardvark who is the hero of an important version of the Tabwa origin myth. In important ways, Mumbi is the con-

ceptual equivalent of the Luba hero Mbidi Kiluwe; aardvarks are also metaphorically linked to pangolins in Tabwa thought. See Roberts 1980: chap. 1, and Roberts forthcoming A.

25. Kevin Maxwell (1983) offers some interesting insights into the phenomenology of sound, speaking, and oral traditions among Bemba that are relevant to the study of data such as those from neighboring Tabwa. His sections on "oral time" and "orality and power" are especially useful; but his static sense of Bemba religion and his willingness to dismiss Bemba spirit possession and other recent changes in religious forms as "superstitious" (p. 132) are absurd. My thanks to Robert Canal for bringing Maxwell's work to my attention.

26. My discussion of the Lenshina movement is based upon Andrew Roberts's long article (1970) and Wim van Binsbergen's "Religious Innovation and Political Conflict in Zambia: The Lumpa Rising" (1981:266-316). Both authors review the considerable literature on the Lumpa movement. No author consulted to date discusses the beaded headdresses or other material culture associated with the Lenshina movement. Mrs. Carey's information on the object is limited to knowing that these were among objects seized from a woman associated with the Lenshina movement, probably in Kasama District. As she suggests, Father Corbeil, the founder of the Moto Moto Museum, "is a Hero of the Zambia Republic for his work for Zambian independence, and was thus in a good position to apply to acquire such politically sensitive things as these. . . . In 1971, he kept them in a box under his bed, but by 1980 they were on view" (my thanks for this personal communication, 1989).

27. Bemba believe that composers of songs are divinely inspired and are called *ngulu*, as was Alice Lenshina (Oger 1972:6). The "book" of Lenshina is a reference to the magical powers Tabwa and others in this part of Central Africa attribute to literacy. Lenshina's book could not be read by local missionaries or administrators, and even the Pope was unable to read it when the book was sent to him, some Bemba said (Oger 1982:129). Such a belief follows a mythical structure common to Bemba and Tabwa accounts of conflict between African and European religions and expressive idioms; see Roberts 1984 for a Tabwa example.

28. Douglas Werner discusses the cultural area in which Bemba, Tabwa, and other people in this part of central Africa share a belief in *ngulu* earth spirits, and suggests that "belief in possession by *ngulu* spirits developed in response to the ritual needs of the Bemba people after the establishment of the Bemba royal cult," serving as "an alternative to the ritual system of the *hwa ngulu* chiefs" as state formation progressed (1971:21). It would be interesting to follow up on Werner's work by asking the ethnoarchaeologist's question, "When do ethnic units identify themselves in material culture?" (Hodder 1982:1). In other words, would it be fruitful to consider use of beaded masks and headdresses as an index of membership in a particular social or ethnic reference group?

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LAMP: Notes, from page 59

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Illustration captions are given with the following data, as known, listed in the order indicated here: Description, Attribution, country, Medium, dimension (height, unless indicated otherwise), Current collection, registration number, acquisition date and immediate provenance; prior provenance.

1. The term "prehistory" is used loosely here to define the time, within any given cultural area, before the appearance of written documentation of any kind by first-hand observation, i.e., roughly before the end of the fifteenth century in the area of the Sierra Leone Estuary, before the sixteenth century along the Sierra Leone coast in general, before the end of the nineteenth century in Eastern Province, etc.

2. Some of the ceramic heads have been dated by thermoluminescence analysis, but the results are of little scientific use. TL is extremely unreliable, especially in isolation from an archaeological context.

3. Hill has expressed concern particularly about the variability of dating from diverse portions of the cross-section of a tree trunk or limb, and the time elapsed from cutting to carving (pers. com., 1989). Regarding the first, it is my experience that Sierra Leone carvers today are careful to cut a piece of wood no larger than the size needed for the figure; thus little wood is wasted, and the figure would include the range from oldest to newest tissue. Small figures would comprise tree rings spanning a relatively short period of time. On the second issue, it is unlikely that significant time passes between cutting and carving in the rain-forested regions of Africa, where decay and erosion rapidly consume dead material, both animal and vegetal.

4. I am indebted to William Hart for pointing me to this passage.

5. The emphasis is mine. Simon Ottenberg writes that the term *kauno* is known to one of his Limba informants as "a big tree with very hard wood, a tall tree that grows very old. It is not the cottonwood tree," and it is without fruits or nuts (pers. com., 1989). Ottenberg believes that, since "l" and "n" are interchangeable from one dialect of Limba to another, this may be the *kaunolo* ke wood listed in Clarke 1922:29: "hard, red wood tree, fine for building lumber, also used for mortars." Joseph Opala concurs that *ku-unlo* may be relevant, as the source of a rust-colored pigment used to dye *kaunoko* shirts, and says it is called the "King of Trees" (pers. com., 1989).

6. The emphasis is mine. The implication here is only that the figures were in place before the nineteenth century, but how much earlier is anyone's guess.

7. Some figures are said to have been acquired in a particular locale, but we cannot be certain that they originated there. If they were, in fact, discovered there, were they made there? Can we assume that the style did not originate in areas where it is not discovered? With only negative evidence at hand, the answer, of course, is "no."

8. Twisted headbands or turbans occur in the inland style of stone figures (Figs. 14,15), leading Dittmer (1967) to suspect an influence from the Islamic north, and the presence of the Mande. This is conjecture, assuming that the turban was a common Mande Islamic convention then, as it is not now.

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SILVERMAN: Notes, from page 80

1. Sources for these photos include Timothy Garrard, the Barbier-Muellers, art historian Doran Ross, art dealers René and Denise David, life photographer Eliot Elisofon, and the Basel Mission Archive.

2. The decision not to include full citations apparently was not Garrard's, for in his earlier publications he has been fastidious about citing sources.

3. Support for Garrard's dating of this piece is found in the recent publication by Martha Ehrlich (1989) of several gold beads, stylistically almost identical to the Barbier-Mueller example, that can positively be dated to the eighteenth century.

4. It was formerly in the collection of Sir Cecil Armitage, who participated in a British military campaign against the Asante in 1896. Armitage may have acquired the bracelet at that time as part of the booty taken from Asantehene (King of Asante) Prempeh, who was sent into exile by the British.

5. Garrard writes: "The gold resources of the south-east lie in the territories of a complex cluster of ethnic groups who, for want of a better name, may be termed Akan-related. These are peoples who share a common (though sometimes remote) linguistic ancestry with the Akan of Ghana. Some have argued that they should be termed Akan, citing a number of shared cultural traits. But while they had some historical contact with the Akan, the Ivoirian groups never used this name to describe themselves, and such cultural similarities as exist are outweighed by other marked divergences of language, material culture and social organization" (p. 86).

6. Throughout the chapter Garrard uses the term "Ebric," the name commonly found in the literature for one of the peoples living in the Lagoons region. "Ebric" is in fact a pejorative term used by their neighbors, the Abusa, that means "people of the mud." This term should be permanently abandoned in favor of "Kyaman" or "Tshaman," which is what the Kyaman prefer to call themselves; it simply means "the people" (Monica Visonà, pers. com., June 16, 1989).

7. Garrard's discussion of this event and other uses of gold in the Lagoons region would have been enhanced by reference to Monica Visonà's Ph.D. dissertation (1983:55-62, 69), which deals, in part, with the use of gold among the Akye.

8. There are a few notable exceptions to this general lack of acquisition data: for instance, Garrard notes that the above-mentioned pair of earrings that were commissioned by Madame Barbier-Mueller were made by the Peul goldsmith Amadou Diallo, in Mopti, in 1886 (Fig. 2).

9. Examples of the publications the Barbier-Mueller Museum

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