

Ritual Masks of the Chokwe

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The majority of the Chokwe, a matrilineal Bantu people estimated to number more than 600,000, inhabit northeastern Angola between the Kwango and Kasai rivers. At some point in a history that dates back to the end of the fifteenth or the sixteenth century and remains rather obscure (Bastin 1978: 30-41), Lunda chiefs invaded what is now Angola, conquering the local people, who may have been of Mbwela stock. From these origins the Chokwe emerged to develop their own culture. From 1860 on, they grew at an astonishing rate (see Miller 1969). At the end of the nineteenth century, the Chokwe had expanded into the regions of Kwango (Bandundu), Kasai, and Shaba, located in present-day Zaire, where a large number still reside (Boone 1961, 1973), and in the first dec-

ades of this century, they pushed into northwestern Zambia (McCulloch 1951).

Chokwe culture seems to have reached its peak during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the era of the great chiefdoms. At their courts a prestigious style of art unfolded, but it disappeared when the important chiefdoms of the original homeland fell into decline; the almost seminomadic lifestyles of the Chokwe of the outer territories did not incorporate works exalting the sovereign, such as statues of the chief and scepters. The deterioration of the ancient courts was not only a result of expansion: famine and disease, mainly smallpox, ravaged central Angola in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and the situation was aggravated by war and the new colonial presence. Nevertheless, the chief (*mwanangana*) today retains his political, legal, and, above all, religious authority over his subjects, ruling with the support of the ancestors, to whom a cult is devoted. Traditional culture has been little disturbed by the various upheavals of the past: despite expansion, the language shows only a few regional variations in pronunciation, and the social, cultural, and religious traditions are characterized by remarkable continuity and homogeneity. This paper will deal with some aspects of Chokwe ancestral beliefs as they relate to certain masks, using information obtained mainly from two Chokwe chiefs, Satchombo and Sakumbu.¹

Hamba

A *hamba* (pl. *mahamba*) is an ancestral or nature spirit to which a cult is dedicated. *Mahamba* are represented by trees, pieces of termite mounds, intentionally simplified figurines, and by masks. It is through these symbolic representations that prayers, offerings, and sacrifices are sent to the spirits in order to insure their protection in everyday life and to soothe them if they have been angered by a follower's neglect, a dispute among their descendants, or the failure to observe some act of homage. An angry *hamba* may cause the offender to fall ill. Women may have gynecological problems, and a man may be unlucky in the hunt. A Chokwe may also become sick if he is caught by a malevolent spirit. When walking through the bush or near a river,

a person might chance to step on or touch scrapings of medicine or clothing abandoned after an exorcism. The banished spirit still remains in these materials and possesses its new victim.

The Chokwe distinguish between the ancient *mahamba* (*makulwana*) of the ancestors and the parasitic *mahamba* (*yipwiya*), which have become attached to the former. Some of the *yipwiya* are foreign in origin. They are at their most dangerous when they cause illness, and they are also the most difficult to appease.

The *mahamba makulwana* include the *ajimu*, who represent the lineage's paternal and maternal ancestors and are symbolized by two termite mounds (Fig. 1). A displeased *ajimu* causes only minor illness, which the cult priest, the ancestors' highest-ranking descendant, can cure by simply crushing a leaf between the palms of his hands.² Other *mahamba makulwana* bring good luck to hunters, insure the fertility of women, and aid diviners; they have their own cults and rituals. Only those *mahamba* that cause sickness (*yikola*) will be considered here.³

When a Chokwe falls ill, his relatives treat him with medicine considered effective. If the desired result is not obtained, a doctor who is knowledgeable about plants, either with respect to their healing powers or their symbolism or magic significance, is summoned. Should the illness continue or worsen, a relative consults the diviner (*tahi*). Of the several traditional Chokwe divination instruments (*ngombo*), the one presently in most widespread use is the *ngombo ya cisuka*, a round basket containing sixty small symbolic objects (Fig. 1). The *tahi* shakes the basket, and the subsequent pattern reveals the cause of the illness, usually a *hamba* spirit that the *tahi* specifically names.

Illness caused by *mahamba* other than *ajimu* requires a ritual process that can be quite lengthy. Treatment is directed by a *cimbanda*, a man or woman who has been exorcised of the same spirit and has subsequently become a member of its cult. It takes place in front of the entire village and some of the victim's relatives who have come especially for the ceremony. Aided by the sound of tambourines and the clapping crowd, the *cimbanda* induces a fit of possession in the sick per-



1. DIVINER SAMBAU MWANDUMBA WITH HIS DIVINATION BASKET (NGOMBO YA CISUKA). WITH THE RATTLE (MUSAMBU) HE CASTS OUT EVIL SPIRITS. THE MOUNDS OF EARTH IN THE BACKGROUND REPRESENT HIS MAHAMB A/JIMU. VALODIA, OCTOBER 1978.



2. SAMUZANGA IN FRONT OF HIS SHRINE (KATUNDA) CONTAINING THE PROTECTORS AGAINST ILLNESS (MAHAMB A YIKOLA)

son (*mwenji*), who lies on a mat. In the atmosphere of collective frenzy, the patient becomes feverish. He begins to tremble and have violent convulsions, speaking loudly and sometimes, if the spirit is foreign, incoherently. The *cimbanda* rubs him with medicine made from plants and clay, particularly the purifying white clay (*pemba*), which symbolizes innocence.

The spirit must leave the body if it is to be appeased. Exorcism is achieved when the *mwenji*, feeling the *hamba* move progressively from his feet to his head, cries out its name in a final liberating spasm; it is believed that the *hamba* leaves through the patient's mouth.⁴ In naming the spirit, the *mwenji* confirms the *tahi's* diagnosis, and an appropriate cure can now be chosen. Frequently a statuette (or one of a variety of objects), also referred to as *hamba*, becomes the exorcised spirit's resting place. After a purification ceremony during which everything that has come into contact with the sick person is thrown into the bush or the river, the *cimbanda* initiates the patient into the cult. A domestic hen or bush antelope (depending on the type of *hamba*) is sacrificed in the village, a little of its blood is rubbed onto the figurine or symbol, and the animal is then cooked and eaten by the *mwenji* and his spouse in the presence of the *cimbanda*. After this meal of communion, the statuette is placed under the new initiate's bed or in his small personal sanctuary (*katunda*) (Fig. 2). Once restored to health, he must

perform a monthly ritual on the appearance of the first quarter of the moon or risk falling ill again: outside his house, he coats his body with the proper medicines and white clay, prays to the spirit, and honors it with a sacrifice. These curative rituals vary according to the afflicting spirit. The objects used to represent, shelter, and honor the spirit also vary, ranging from trees and termite mounds to statuettes and masks.

Mukishi

The Chokwe use the word *mukishi* (pl. *akishi*) to refer to an ancestral or nature spirit that is incarnated by a mask. The masquerader is completely covered by his disguise, wearing a skintight costume made of woven fibers and including gloves and foot coverings. Above the face mask is a sturdy but sometimes crude wicker headdress. The accessory elements of the headdress and of the costume represent in various but always traditionally correct ways the *mukishi* spirit to be summoned.

The *mukishi* is generally believed to be a person returned from the dead who rises from the earth in an area of the bush. Until recently, women and uninitiated children were forbidden to approach it or sometimes even to see it. During the bush school (*mukanda*), the newly circumcised adolescents were taught that the being they feared was actually an initiated man wearing the mask. Despite this revelation, however, the Chokwe preserve the belief that he

who dons the mask loses his human qualities and becomes the incarnation of the spirit.⁵

There are certain hereditary or acquired prerequisites for wearing the mask. In 1956, I asked an informant to put on a mask belonging to the Museu do Dundo so that I could photograph him; he refused, fearing the supernatural consequences, but summoned a friend authorized to wear the mask, who spit on it before placing it on his head. Alfred Hauenstein (1981) who spent long years in Angola and the Ivory Coast, did a brief study of the importance of saliva and spitting in African rituals. He indicates that the act of spitting is at once a benediction, a purification, an offering, and a way of presenting a request. A Chokwe spits on the inside of a mask before putting it on to obtain the spirit's protection and eliminate any danger of evil possession.

The Chokwe distinguish three categories of masks. The first type is the sacred sacrificial *Cikungu* or *mukishi wa mwanangana* mask, representing the chief's ancestors. Made of resin, it is carefully preserved in a small hut built in the bush on the outskirts of the village. *Cikungu* is brought out only on rare occasions, when a sacrifice is required for the well-being of the community. No one, male or female, is allowed to see it, except for a few aged dignitaries.

The second type is the *mukishi a ku mukanda*, which plays a role in the *mukanda* initiation. These masks, most of them of resin, are numerous and have a variety of headdresses (Bastin 1961a: pls. 233-41). They control the *mukanda*, keep women away from the ceremony, and, when necessary, fetch food prepared by the initiates' mothers from the village, the women taking refuge in their homes when the masks approach. At the end of this rite of passage, the masks are burned with the bush camp. In the past, the initiates would remain at the camp for months and sometimes for years.

The third category is the *mukishi a kuhangana*, or dance mask, made of resin or wood. They are the best-known Chokwe masks, appearing in numerous museum and private collections. Several types have lost their ritual meaning, but *Cihongo* and *Pwo*, the two main types, and the oldest and most noble, have retained their magical-religious significance. The others, even in the past, were used mainly for entertainment, although they were still regarded as *akishi*, and therefore could not be approached or touched with impunity. Masks of this third type and their costumes are kept by their owners, the only ones authorized to wear or dance them. One can either inherit a mask or order it from a sculptor if one has shown skill as a dancer during the *mukanda*, when all the types of

dances are taught. All of these masqueraders are propitious as long as they are ritually honored.

The Chokwe have on occasion used a mask (*mukishi*) as a *hamba*, as the object of a cult; it must be worn and exhibited regularly, and, when necessary, be used in an exorcism ceremony. *Cikunza*, the most important mask used in the *mukanda*, has been known to possess this dual mystical quality of *mukishi* and protective spirit *hamba* (Baumann 1935; Bastin 1961a; Lima 1967, 1971). Through my informants, Sachombo and Sakumbu, I

have learned that the *Cikungu*, *Cihongo*, and *Pwo* masks also had this characteristic. These four masks will be the subject of the following discussion.

Mukishi-Hamba Cikunza

The *mukishi wa Cikunza*, the patron of the *mukanda* circumcision ritual, is a resin mask featuring a high conical ringed headdress (Bastin 1982: 11). In Chokwe, *cikunza* refers to a kind of grasshopper, known for its procreative powers; this *mukishi*, in evoking this insect, symbolizes fertility. The pointed headdress,

made of wicker covered with a material made of crushed bark and decorated with gradated rings, represents the horn of a large roan antelope (*Hippotragus equinus*), a symbol of power and virility. The *Cikunza* mask seeks out those to be circumcised and leads them to the bush. On approaching the village the masquerader lets out a long, strident cry so that the women will flee. In one hand he carries the *mukwale* sword or a rifle, and in the other a *citete* branch (Baumann 1935: pl. 23). *Cikunza* is the main protective spirit for the circumcised boys during their initiation.

The *hamba wa Cikunza* aids hunters and infertile women. Baumann, calling it "dämon" (1935: 110), indicates that its cult is widespread outside the *mukanda* bush camp and that it will occasionally possess a person. However, I received only favorable reports on this spirit's influence. Small amulets representing him—with his tall headdress in the shape of a ringed horn—are carried by hunters on their rifle butts and by infertile or pregnant women on their belts (Fig. 5).

Similar in appearance to *Cikunza* is a small figurine used in the divination basket (*ngombo ya cisuka*, a microcosm of Chokwe life). Called *Samukishi*, it symbolizes all masks. *Samukishi* also has a place in the ancestral shrines of both the community and the family along with all the other protective spirits. It takes the form of a miniature table at the center of which is a small post roughly carved in the form of a *Cikunza*.

Mukishi-Hamba Cikungu

The *mukishi wa Cikungu* (Fig. 3), the largest Chokwe mask, belongs to the *mwanganana* and represents the *malemba* spirits, family ancestors. The *mwanganana* makes regular sacrifices to these spirits, killing a goat (*pembe*) or a rooster (*ndemba kasumbi*) with the *mukwale* sword, symbol of power, and attaching the sacrifice to a pole of the large *cota* hut, the village forum and tribunal in the center of the village.

As with all masks used in rites, *Cikungu's* face is made of resin. Its facial features are reputed to be larger than those of any other masks. The imposing headdress, composed of a fan-like structure in the front and back, with wings or large disks at the sides (Bastin 1982: 10), is said to represent the black stork *khumbi* (*Sphenorhynchus abdimi*), and the saw-tooth pattern that usually decorates the headdress is called *yenge lya khumbi*, which means "viper of the stork," a poetic and esoteric allusion to Chokwe animal fables. The band of decorative triangles seen on numerous Chokwe objects is called *yenge*, representing the Gaboon viper (*Bitis gabonica*), or *mapembe*, representing the triangular designs on the viper's back. The names of other *Cikungu*



3. CIKUNGU MASK WORN BY MWANANGANA FROM THE REGION OF CHINGUVO. ARCHIVES OF THE MUSEU DO DUNDO.

headdress patterns are known by all the members of the community, who regard them as a kind of ideogram. In the case of the ritual masks, the lateral disks represent the sun, the crescent above the forehead represents the moon, and the small dots represent stars. Thus a kind of cosmogony is inscribed on these magical objects, charging them with the forces of the universe.

I was told that the *Cikungu* masquerader was always a *mwanangana* and wore the chief's floor-length skirt of black flannel bordered at the bottom with red striped cloth. The masquerader carried the *mukwale* sword or a rifle. Walking slowly and solemnly, like a chief, he announced his approach by blowing into a kind of small kazoo (*lundanji*) attached to the inside of the mask's mouth, which produced long, low sounds resembling howling wind. It could only be viewed safely by other great chiefs or persons of importance. Upon his arrival in the village, men and women fled to their huts. In the case of an accidental meeting, a person risked being beheaded by the sacrificial mask.

Cikungu is represented by a mask, but never in sculpture. However, as the incarnation of the chief's ancestors, this venerated and feared spirit is evoked by all statuettes of *mwanangana* with the characteristic winged ceremonial head-dress (Bastin 1982: figs. 18, 20), as well as by carved heads depicting the chief, particularly on scepters. All of these extraordinary Chokwe creations exalt the sacred power of the *mwanangana* and his beneficial influence on his subjects.

If *Cikungu* was abandoned, or if a person forgot to honor him, the diviner could attribute the illness of someone in the chief's family to the spirit's anger. Usually this person would be his nephew, brother, son, or principal wife. During the divination session, *Cikungu* was shown to have caused the illness if the *Samukishi* figurine appeared amid the marks on the rim of the basket along with a piece of red cloth (*cihela*)⁶ between the accumulated dabs of white clay (*pemba*) and red clay (*mukundu*).

A sacrifice to appease the *Cikungu* was then organized. The *mwanangana* put on his mask early in the morning in the *mutenji* hut constructed in the bush, and then appeared in the village holding the sword and the *cisukulo* "medicine," a leafy branch of *cisangu* (a small savanna plant), *cikuku* (*idem*), or *mutundu* (a plant with edible red fruit).⁷

Preceded by two drummers with hour-glass-shaped drums called *mukupela*, symbols of the chief (Bastin 1982: fig. 169), the masquerader headed for the *cota* hut, where he was awaited by the elderly men of the village. *Cikungu* killed a goat by striking it in the neck, sucked its blood, and gave the leafy branch to the eldest man near him. Then

he returned to the *mutenji* hut. The leaves of the *cisukulo* were given to the wife of the sick person or the wife of the chief himself, who pounded them and mixed them with the white ritual clay (*pemba*), a symbol of innocence and health. The medicine was rubbed over the patient's body. This done, the chief's brother or nephew would cook the head of a goat in the *mutenji*, to be eaten by the chief and his relatives with cassava mash (*cindu*). After the remainder of the animal was eaten by the community in a meal of communion, everyone went to sleep.

The following morning a hunt was organized to kill an antelope—a *kaseshi*, a *kai*, or a *khongo*—which was brought to

the *mutenji*.⁸ A small amount of antelope blood was rubbed with one finger on the head of the mask as an offering. Then the male members of the chief's family, sometimes joined by the eldest men in the village, cooked and ate the animal. These honors accorded *Cikungu* demonstrate the important place of this *mukishi* within the hierarchy of masks and its function as a protective spirit, or *hamba*, exclusively linked to the chief's family.

Mukishi-Hamba Cihongo-Cimyanji

The *Cihongo* dance mask is very well known (Fig. 4). It represents the spirit of wealth and was worn only by the chief, his son, or his nephew. In the past they would go on tours with this mask that



4 CIHONGO (CIMYANJI) MASK WORN BY A DANCER IN DUNDO. THE DANCER'S HIP MOVEMENTS CAUSE THE PANNIER (CIKAPA) TO SWAY

sometimes lasted several months, dancing in the villages and receiving gifts in exchange for the magic force provided. These gifts were also a kind of tribute to *Cihongo's* power. Lima mentions that in ancient times, *Cihongo* was an instrument of justice, accusing spectators of crimes that were often punishable by death (1967:160).

This dance mask, made of resin or wood, had a fan-shaped headdress made of light wicker and traditionally decorated with feathers (*ngona*) from *cisekele*, kites or sparrow hawks (*Milvus migrans parasitus*); *ngungu*, a large bird with black feathers and a red beak (*Bucorvus caffer*); *kanga*, a guinea hen of the bush (*Numida meleagris marungensis*); or *kolomvi*, a forest bird (Bastin 1982: 9). More recently, the fan on the headdress has been covered with cloth, also a sign of fame and wealth. A pannier (*cikapa*) is also characteristic of *Cihongo*. It consists of an oval hoop frame, extending out at the hips, to which are attached several rows of grass fringe (*makindu*). The heavy *cikapa* rustles and sways back and forth when the dancer rotates his hips. This mask is often depicted on decorative objects, particularly chairs, where it can be easily identified by the headdress's fan shape (without lateral wings) and by the fringed pannier.

My informants indicated that *Cihongo* was formerly called *Cimyanji*. Lima mentions having heard it on occasion (1967: 160, n. 3), but the author did not explain its religious connotation. Indeed, *Cimyanji* is a *hamba* as well as a *mukishi*, causing infertility in women, sickness in men, or unsuccessful hunting if displeased. The *Cihongo-Cimyanji* mask was kept with *Cikungu* in the *mutenji* hut. If the chief decided that a propitiatory sacrifice was necessary for the benefit of the

village, he would announce that *Cimyanji* was to dance the following day and that no one could leave the village. Early the next morning, he arrived in the village, wearing the mask and holding the leafy *cisukulo*, and went to the central square where everyone gathered near the *cota*.

There the *namata*, his principal wife, sacrificed a hen over the head of the mask, thus indicating that the wearer was the chief himself.⁹ The *mwana ngana* then began to dance. He handed over the *cisukulo* to the wife of the afflicted person, ordinarily a member of his family, who would later mix the pounded leaves with *pemba* to be rubbed over the body of her husband. Throughout the day, *Cimyanji* danced without stopping, receiving gifts in exchange. At the end of the afternoon, he went back to the bush to undress in the *mutenji* hut and returned home for the evening meal with the gifts.

This description of the exorcism ceremony as it was performed in the distant past contrasts with my observance of the veneration of *Cihongo* by Samuzanga in the Dundo region. When his maternal uncle Sachombo, a *Cihongo* dancer, died, Samuzanga inherited his mask. He danced with it once in the region of Kakolo, beyond Saurimo (more than 240 km. away), and left it there. One day, back in his village, he fell ill. The *tahi* told him, after the *Samukishi* figurine appeared on the rim of the divination basket, that his condition was caused by his abandoning the mask. To be cured, he had to have a new one carved, honor it, and dance again with it. Samuzanga ordered a mask from the sculptor Mwachonji, wove himself a costume of fibers, and also made the *cikapa*. When all was finished, he killed a hen, poured

blood over the mask, gave the bird to his wife for cooking, and danced in the village square near the *cota*. On his return, he placed the mask in the *katunda* hut that he had built in the bush at the rear of his house, and where he also kept his personal *mahamba* (Fig. 2). To end the rite, Samuzanga and his wife ate the hen. The cult is maintained at each new moon with prayer and an offering of a little cassava, which has replaced the rare white clay, and the blood from a bush animal, although the *mwata* admits it is now very difficult to obtain the latter.

Mukishi-Hamba Pwo

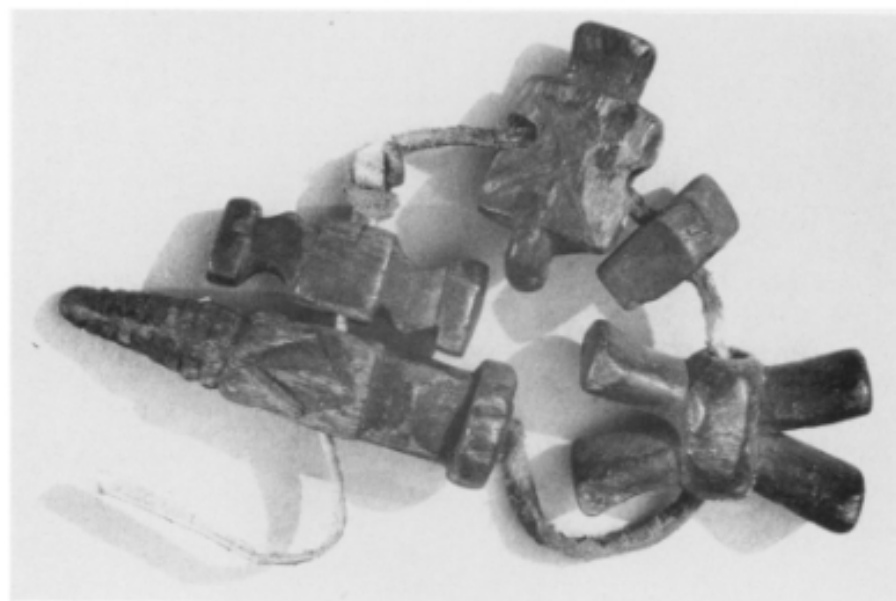
This popular female mask (Fig. 6) also is a *hamba* in nature, but only for its owner. Although usually sculpted of wood, some examples made of resin, brought back by Théodore Delachaux in 1933 from the Upper Cunene region of Angola, are in the collections of the Musée d'Ethnographie in Neuchâtel, Switzerland (Bastin 1982: fig. 38). The name of the mask is *Pwo*, "Woman," or *Mwana Pwo*, "Girl." It used to represent a mature woman who had proven her fertility by having a child. More recently, because of a shift in African values—perhaps under European influence—this mask has represented a girl and the hope of many offspring.

The male masquerader, incarnating the female ancestor, grants fertility to the spectators during his performance. He has fake breasts and wears a loincloth draped around his hips and a heavy beaded belt in the shape of a crescent, which bobs up and down as he moves his back. In the past these gestures were restrained and elegant in order to teach women graceful ways. When commissioning a mask, the dancer gave the sculptor a brass ring, the symbolic price of a fiancée. Treated as if it were a person, the mask was often buried after the death of the dancer, whose profession was generally passed on to his nephew.

A professional sculptor (*songi*) was then commissioned to produce a new mask, a process that formerly took several weeks. He worked in the bush, using as a model a woman whose beauty he admired. To this end he seized every possible opportunity to meet her and observe her physical features, including her tattoos, hairstyle, and jewelry. For this reason, the female masks are often like portraits; although they share the fundamental characteristics of all Chokwe sculpture, each piece varies subtly. The technical mastery of the sculptor, combined with the inspiration provided by his subject, explains the wide variety of sculptural expression always found in Chokwe art.

The *mukishi wa Pwo* adorns many objects, such as drums, sanzans, and knife sheaths. When a female image functions

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5. FERTILITY AMULETS WORN BY WOMEN AT THE WAIST. THE FIGURINE WITH THE HIGH RINGED HEADDRESS REPRESENTS *CIKUNZA*. 3.5cm. HIGH. MUSEU DO DUNDO.



6. PWO MASK, MUSEU DO DUNDO.

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as a counterpart to a representation of the male *Cihongo* mask, reference is also being made to *Puo*.

A *Puo* mask owner who became ill customarily consulted the diviner to see if it was the *Puo* mask spirit that was causing the sickness. If the dancer no longer had a mask, he had a new one carved and inaugurated it near the *cota* after his wife had sacrificed a hen over the mask's head. Then he danced before the assembled village. Finally there was the meal of communion eaten by the dancer and his wife. The same ritual was followed in the case of someone who had neglected a mask still in use. The *Puo* mask was usually kept by the dancer in a *mutenji* hut outside the village or hidden in a basket in his own house.

Masks among Neighbors of the Chokwe

The Lwena, who live south of the Chokwe on the plains of the upper Zambèzi, possess the *Katotoia* mask, an example of which is in the Museu do Dundo's collection (Bastin 1961b: fig. 10). The Lwena chief Salumba, who lived in the Saurimo region and was at the museum in 1956, helped me with its identification and description. It is a mask of a great Lwena chief sculpted in resin on flattened bark. Exaggerated facial features are intended to suggest power and authority: a huge concave forehead, a red cotton strip covering its eyes, and large bulging spherical cheeks (*matufu ja Katotoia*). The headdress, in the shape of an oblong fan, bears, in relief, the images of various *mahamba* (sing. *lihamba*), which bring fertility and luck in the hunt.

Salumbu told me that the *likishi* (pl. *mukishi*), or mask, was worn only by the chief and was most commonly used when making a sacrifice to his ancestors. But unlike the *Cūangū*, the Chokwe chief's ancestral mask, the *likishi Katotoia* does not actually perform the sacrifice. The masquerader, a flywhisk in each hand, appears in the village square, where a goat is immolated by a *ciombola* assistant. *Katotoia* then leans down to wet his mouth with some of the spilled sacrificial blood. With this act, the offering is made to the ancestors, who are incarnated by the mask itself. The *mahamba* carved on the coiffure suggest that in addition to its religious function, it can also have a therapeutic effect on disinherited members of the community.

According to Turner (1968: 32), the Ndembu, eastern neighbors of the Chokwe, call their masks *mukishi* (sing. *ikishi*). They also have a kind of mystical power and participate in circumcision rites, and they are used in funeral ceremonies as well. Turner reports that the Ndembu use the name *mukishi* (pl. *akishi*) to refer to a shade or ancestral spirit who afflicts a relative because he has been forgotten (1962: 1; 1967: 9-10)—what the Chokwe refer to as *hamba*. Thus, different terminology is used for the same concept by these related peoples.

Ndembu masks are rare. Turner indicated that they are believed to be *afu*, "dead people," and that they are helped by spirits of

the famous, such as chiefs, great hunters, rich men, fathers of many children, or people with important ancestors (Turner 1967: 235-45). Muchona, one of my informants, supplied me with the name, nature, and function of Ndembu *mukishi*. The two main ones were *Mweng'i* (called *Nkaka*, "Grandfather"), who was considered their chief; and *Kalotoji*, who was terrible and dangerous. These masks were favorable in healing circumcision wounds. The appearance of *Mweng'i* was believed to be harmful to the fertility of women.

Currently, the Ndembu make use of Lwena (Luvale) masked dancers because, as they explained to Turner, their men are now working in the copper belt or in local firms, which leaves them no time to carve their traditional masks. The masks borrowed from the Lwena are *Cizaluki*, "The Mad One," and *Mwana Pweto*, "The Young Woman." Several photos of *Cizaluki* were published by Turner (1967: frontispiece, figs. 6-9). They were taken during a circumcision rite and during a *usubinda* initiation dance for hunters. The face, carved from fine resin, has a beard, which Turner calls "a symbol of chiefly authority." The dancer holds a flywhisk. The Lwena name for the mask is *Cizaluke*, the same used by the southern Chokwe (Bastin 1961: pls. 246, 247). Among both peoples, the masquerader wears an artificial erect penis attached to the costume.

The Mbwela, who live in the Kwitu-Kwanavale region in southeastern Angola, have a mask that is morphologically similar to *Cizaluke*, known as *Mpumbu* (Kubik 1981: ill. 1). Their *mukishi* (sing. *likishi*) are of diverse origins and are connected with the *mukanda* bush school that follows the circumcision. According to Gerhard Kubik (1981), *Mpumbu* is the supreme mask, representing Chief Nyumbu who, according to myth, circumcised himself to found the tradition of *mukanda*. Although this *likishi* is feared, he never strikes women. His dance, consisting entirely of a "wagging motion" (Kubik 1981: n.p.), inspires respect. The Mbwela, whose establishment in this part of Angola dates back to well before the Lunda invasion, took their *Cikanza* mask from the Chokwe. They believe that this *likishi* represents Chief Kanyika, one of the founders of the Chokwe at the beginning of the seventeenth century, though the Chokwe have never mentioned such an association. However, it can be said that this information from the Mbwela establishes that the cult of *mukishi-hamba-Cikanza* is an ancient one.

These masks, then, function among peoples with cultures strongly similar to that of the Chokwe; the name of the spirit incarnated by the mask is *mukishi* among the Chokwe, *likishi* among the Lwena (Horton 1953), *ikishi* among the Ndembu (Turner 1968: 32), and *likishi* among the Mbwela (Kubik 1981). In addition to these, certain masks of the neighboring Bantu peoples, such as the Pende and Suku of Zaire and the Kongo of northeastern Angola, may be related.

The Pende, of Angolan origin, have lived in the Kwango and Kasai regions since the eighteenth century, after their former homeland

was conquered by the Imbangala, of Lunda stock. Léon de Sausberghe has noted the chief's mask *Giphogo*, of the eastern Pende (Kasai) (1960: 64-65). It is a helmet mask with wide half-closed eyes and a large flat chin, decorated with small triangles (Bastin 1961b: fig. 11) and enhanced with red and white clay. A monkey skin is attached to the wooden peg atop its head. The *Giphogo* is part of the *kifumu*, or treasure constituting the attributes of power. It exercises an influence on the health and fertility of the chieftain, and it cures illnesses. Sausberghe photographed an example in 1952 in the village of Ngimbu, near Njinji, dancing over a sick woman together with another mask (1960: figs. 67-68). The patient, accompanied by her child, was stretched out on a blanket on the ground. The therapeutic function of the *Giphogo* (*Kiphoko*) mask has been confirmed by Malutshi Mudiji-Selenge (1981: 229-30).

Mudiji-Malamba mentions that among the eastern Pende (Kwango) the *Givoyo* mask comes to men like the salutary sun (1979: 193). Shaped like a half a bell, its facial features are sculptured in the purest Katundu Pende style: eyes with lowered triangular eyelids, topped by thick eyebrows flowing together in a V-shape, slightly turned-up nose that reveals the nostrils, and a half-open mouth often with down-turned corners. A very long chin, carved flush with the wood of the face, and a fringe of raffia particularly characterize this mask (Sausberghe 1960: frontispiece). The *Givoyo* is worn horizontally, the face turned skyward. In the case of a sick person afflicted by an evil spell, writes Mudiji-Malamba, the masquerader touches him, attaches a strand of raffia from his costume to the patient's body, and rubs him with white kaolin.

The therapeutic role of certain masks is also noted by Arthur P. Bourgeois among the Suku of the Kwango (1981a, b). The *Kakungu* mask and the *Hemba* helmet mask are associated with circumcision rites (*nkanda*). *Kakungu* is a giant wooden mask, held in front of the face by a handle carved under its chin. Usually it has large eyes split in the middle, a long, narrow nose with small nostrils, and large bulging cheeks, and the rim is fringed with grass. These exaggerated features are intended to impart an impression of power and authority.

In his fine study, Bourgeois (1981a) indicates that *Kakungu* is a *nkisi* (pl. *mukishi*), the equivalent of the Chokwe *hamba*. Although its usage ceased in the 1950s, he was able to collect precious information on his subject. When a new *Kakungu* was made, a goat was immolated to protect the lineage that had commissioned it. On the same occasion, a cock or hen was killed and presented to the future guardian of the new mask. The mask, a symbol of enormous power, was brought out only in times of crisis. Worn by the head of initiation or the charm specialist (*isidika*), it traditionally appeared during the *nkanda* circumcision rite, assuring the rapid recovery and well-being of the young initiates. While *Kakungu* had an ambivalent role, both favorable and harmful, with regard to pregnant women, he was believed to be able to cure male impotence and

female infertility, diagnosed by a diviner (Bourgeois 1981a: 32,33,36,37,39,46).

The *Hemba* mask of the Suku is a wooden helmet with white-enhanced facial features carved slightly in relief. The pupils are lowered toward the crescent-shaped slit that allows the wearer to see out, the nose is often pointed, and the open mouth usually contains sculpted teeth. Suku works often have a stylized zigzag hairline, indented above the forehead and temples. The helmet is almost always topped with a sculpted human or animal figure (Bourgeois 1981b: 32-34).

According to Bourgeois (1981b), this mask type is worn by the most qualified initiates during the closing ceremonies of the *nkanda* initiation and in particular circumstances in connection with the deceased. *Hemba* corresponds to the Suku's collective image of their ancestors, the power of which is embodied by a Manichean vision: "powerful charm with both dangerous and benevolent properties." The latter includes curing gynecological problems and providing luck to hunters (Bourgeois 1981b: 32,34,37,38).

The Kongo of the Kasai, related to the Dinga and Lwalwa in Zaire, live near the Chokwe in northwest Angola, but their culture is completely different. They possess a *Ngongo munene* mask of hammered brass (Bastin 1961b: figs. 4-6), worn by the chief during his investiture. It is also brought out for secret funeral ceremonies. The structure of this mask is very simple. The example I saw was imposing in the nobility of its austere facial features, portrayed in slight relief on the laterally curved metal leaf. *Ngongo munene*, like the Chokwe *Cikungu*, represents the chief's ancestors who watch over their descendants. The mask is donned in a ritual ceremony to counter an epidemic or any other disaster striking the community. When not in use it is carefully housed in a small straw shelter, placed in the fork of a large tree, and watched by a guard who keeps away women and children (Bastin 1961b: fig. 7).

We have seen, then, that among the Chokwe, certain illnesses are believed to be "possession-sicknesses" (Heusch 1981: 175), attributed to a *hamba* spirit angered by the neglect of his cult. The Chokwe *mukishi* is a spirit incarnated by a mask. Its role is benevolent, often involving a kind of social control. Later it was learned that if the *mukishi* was not regularly honored by the donning of its mask, like the *hamba* it would cause illness that was curable only by a ritual of atonement. *Cikunza*, for example, has long been known to possess this mystical power of being simultaneously *mukishi* and *hamba*, probably because it is represented in carved amulets or symbols visible in *mahamba* sanctuaries. Neighboring peoples also have such masks. However, it was only recently that aged informants, recalling a distant past, revealed to me that the *akishi Cikungu*, *Cihongo* and *Pwo* once had this dual function in the religious beliefs and practices of the Chokwe.¹⁹ This new information considerably enriches our knowledge of these prestigious masks. □

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NEW PUBLICATIONS

The Art of Cameroon by Tamara Northern. Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1984. 208 pp., 35 color and 78 b/w photos, 2 maps. \$15.00 paper.

Ekoi by Karl-Ferdinand Schaedler. Panterra, Munich, 1984. Text in English. 40 pp., 16 b/w and 7 color photos, map, bibliography. \$9.00 paper.

Magic with Images by Karl-Ferdinand Schaedler. Panterra, Munich, 1984. 50 pp., 6 b/w and 1 color photos, bibliography. \$9.00 paper.

The Rock Art of Africa by A.R. Willcox. Africana Publishing Co., New York, 1984. 288 pp., 67 color and 71 b/w illustrations, 27 maps, bibliography. index. \$69.50 cloth.

African Myth and Black Reality in Bahian Carnival by Daniel J. Crowley. Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, 1984. Monograph Series no. 25. 47 pp., 37 b/w and 6 color photos, bibliography, map. \$10.00 paper.

The Art and Ritual of Bahian Candomblé by Mikelle Smith Omari. Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, 1984. Monograph series no. 24. 63 pp., 31 b/w and 6 color photos, map, bibliography. \$12.00 paper.

Costumes and Featherwork of the Lords of Chimar: Textiles from Peru's North Coast by Ann Pollard Rowe. Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., 1984. 190 pp., 242 b/w and 37 color illustrations, map, bibliography. \$35.00 paper.

African Folktales by Roger D. Abrahams. Pantheon Books, New York, 1983. 356 pp., bibliography. \$19.95 cloth, \$10.95 paper.

Luba Hemba: Werke unbekannter Meister by Johanna Agthe. Museum für Völkerkunde, Frankfurt, 1983. Text in German, summary and catalogue-texts in English. 162 pp., 114 b/w and 2 color illustrations. DM 15 paper.

A Treasury of African Art from the Harrison Eitelberg Collection by Theodore Celenko. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1983. 248 pp., 169 b/w and 60 color photos, 9 maps, bibliography.

ARNOLDI, notes, from page 33

1. The exhibition "Somalia in Word and Image" is funded by a grant from the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education of the Somali Democratic Republic, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and private grants to the Foundation for Cross Cultural Understanding. The show is tentatively scheduled to travel to the National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C.; the Lowe Museum, University of Miami; the University of Florida, Gainesville; the University of Missouri, Kansas City; the Museum of Cultural History, UCLA; and the Museo Pigorini.

2. Personal communication, John William Johnson, 1984.

3. Personal communication, John William Johnson, 1984.

4. Translation by B. W. Andzrejewski, 1982.

5. Translation by B. W. Andzrejewski, 1982.

6. Pucciani 1960: 5; personal communication, Virginia Luling, 1983.

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FATTON, notes, from page 73

Data for this article, obtained in Kumase in 1975-1976 and 1977, pertain to the traditional Asante capital and imply similar interpretations for metropolitan Asante (Kumase and the major territorial divisions) rather than greater Asante (Kumase, the major territorial divisions, and the peripheral territories). For further information about the traditional political structure and the Golden Stool, see Wilks 1967, 1975.

Grants from the Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, and from the University of Houston made research possible. An abbreviated version of this article was presented at the Symposium of African Textiles, University of Minnesota, May 1982. I also wish to acknowledge the editorial comments of Doran Ross (UCLA Museum of Cultural History) and the translation of the Akan (Ivù) terms pertaining to the umbrella, done by Peter Pipim (National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution).

1. For technical reasons it is not possible to employ the precise symbol occurring in certain words in this article. *African Arts* has substituted β , the nearest equivalent in standard type. Similarly, β has been substituted for the *open o* symbol.

2. Armitage 1901; Boyle 1874; Backenbury 1874; Dupuis 1824; Ellis 1887; T.B. Freeman 1843; R. A. Freeman 1898; Hutten 1821; Ramseyer and Kühne 1875; Reindorf 1895.

3. Bowdich 1819: 33; T.B. Freeman 1843: 42; Ellis 1887: 27; R.A. Freeman 1898: 57; Armitage 1901: 2.

4. Kyereematen simply states that the form is derived from the use of suspended leaves and predates the European-made umbrella (1964: 89). Ludewig Römer's comments of 1760 lend credence to the use of leaves as a symbolic shelter for the Asantehene when he describes the Asantehene as seated "under a big tree made of gold with many branches and leaves" (1965: 33). The context of Römer's or later 19th-century (McLeod 1981: 107) observations is unknown, but it may refer to a funeral celebration when members of the deceased's lineage sit under a canopy of suspended heavy cloth (urban areas) or leaves (rural areas).

5. Personal communication, Joseph Sarpong, Jan. 1976.

6. Richard A. Freeman describes the umbrella's construction (1898: 94), followed by R.S. Rattray (1927: 270; figs. 154, 155). According to Rattray the same woodcarving tools are used except for a piece of spokeshave. Today the set of tools differs from those used in other woodcarvings, Joseph Sarpong, an umbrella artisan, identified eleven tools that include scissors (Kumase, Jan. 1976).

7. They existed among earlier Akan states such as Denkyira and date from at least the sixteenth century. Craft specialty groups indicate the influence of northern, Sudanese culture (Fatton 1980: 123-24; Laundry 1972).

8. A chief alone or with his elders commissions an umbrella. In 1976 a large umbrella cost 400-500 cedis; a medium one, 300 cedis; and a small one, 100 cedis. Umbrella craftsmen do not carve the finials.

9. Bowdich observed one covered in animal skin and a "small black image with rusty hair" (1819: 276-77). The former belonged to the Adumbene, Nana Adam Ata, and the latter to the Asafobene, Nana Kwakyee Kofi. Quarcoo cites an image of a mourning chief (1975: 55). Doran Ross observed painted finials for the Dwabenehene.

10. In 1977, Herbert Cole and Doran Ross recorded at least 100 linguist staff motifs. Ross states that subsequent research indicates 200 motifs (personal communication, 1983), and he believes there are probably 70 or 80 Asante stative motifs. Over 40 finial motifs are identified in the literature and in Asante, from Mampon, Nuta, Kumase, Dwabene, Ejisa, Bekwae, Ofriro, Densyase, and Assumeyga. They are listed as follows, with their Twi name if known: chicken (akikiten), elephant (sono), war horn (akibeni), two birds, palm tree (abɔ), bird turned toward back (senkɔfɔ), stool (fɔfɔ), human head (ɔfɔ), flagrant plant (pɔfɔfɔ), one stool

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BASSANI, notes from page 63

I am grateful to the museum directors and collectors who permitted me to study and publish the ivories. My special gratitude goes to William Fagg, who discussed the problem with me and gave me invaluable advice.

- The full entry is "Elfenbeingüsse, aus zwei Teilen nach Art der Doppelbecher bestehend. Fass und Deckelabschluss von Tierern und Menschen getragene. Alt-Amerikanisch (Mexiko?). Aus Catago?"
- The inventory, now kept in the Biblioteca Esterna di Modena (Ms. Ital. no. 1340), is published in *Documenti inediti per storia della Scultura del Museo d'Italia*. Florence-Rome, 1880, vol. 3, pp. 28-46.
- "2096. Vaso in avorio rotondo, ornato di figure umane e di animali, di cattivo lavoro." "Bibliography
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BASTIN, notes from page 83

- This research on the function of ritual objects was carried out during my second stay among the Chokwe in the Dundo region of northeastern Angola in 1978. It was made possible by a grant from the Jacques Cassel and Ernest Camber Funds of the Université Libre de Bruxelles and by help from the Department of Culture of the People's Republic of Angola.
- I had met Sachombo, then going by the name of Mwafina, in 1956. At that time he was chief of a village near the Museu do Dundo, as well as a diviner specializing in *ngombu za risua*, circumcisor (*nganga mwafina*), and "father" of the brotherhood of hunters (*lelu nu nganga*). Following Chokwe tradition, on the death of his maternal uncle, who was the chief of a village located near Chinguvo, 40 kilometers from Dundo, Mwafina inherited the name "Sachombo" (also the name of the village), the title (*nzimungu*), and the position of his uncle.
- My second informant, Sakumbu, who also lives in the village, is a head master of the *nungungu* adult initiation. The ritual *nungungu*, a voluntary test of physical and moral endurance, places the male adults who follow it in contact with ancestors and the beyond. The equivalent for women exists under the name of *ciwila*. These two institutions have not been followed in Angola for over forty years.
- A similar technique is used by the Ndembu, a people of Lunda origin who inhabit Zambia and are culturally related to the Chokwe. Victor Turner (1967: 350) points out that in order to reinforce the curative power of the remedy or attract the attention of the ancestral spirit to be appeased, the "doctor" crushes a tree leaf, which is placed on the back of his drenched left foot, by violently slapping it with his open right hand, the resulting noise resounds like a rifle shot.
- The doctoral dissertation of Paul Stanley Yoder (submitted November 20, 1981, University of California, Los Angeles) is devoted to the ethnomedical aspects of the Chokwe. Within the three categories distinguished as illnesses, he cites *ngombu za mwafina* (Yoder 1981a: 148-54).
- P. Stanley Yoder (1981a: 162), who stayed among the Chokwe of Zaïre, prefers to use the expression "cleansing rituals" rather than "exorcism" or "conjuration" to describe this ritual process, because the Chokwe believe the spirit leaves a mark (*ciwaga*) on the victim's body, which the therapist has to "wash" or "cleanse" (*ku-kosa*). In his dictionary, Father Barbosa comments that *ku-kosa muni* means to rub the patient with scrapings from *kalimbutu* or *subituburu* branches to drive out the spell that prevents the remedy from taking effect. I myself have never heard *ku-kosa* used in the context of curing illnesses caused by *malanda*. My Chokwe informants used other verbs to describe the curative rituals as well as the functions of statuettes and other symbols kept in the Museu do Dundo. The suffering person is always referred to as *muni*, "the sick one," who has been "seized" (*infinitive, ku-kusila*) by a supernatural be-

- The cure involves expulsion of the spirit from his body. The *hamba* spirit shows itself (*ku-tuluka*) while the patient is in a trance, in his cries and movements. The ritual causes the patient to leave his body (*ku-tuhula*), after which he will be returned to good health (*ku-hindaka*). This terminology, used by the Chokwe of the northern Lunda district, is fully confirmed in the dictionary compiled by Father Barbosa (1973), who for twelve years studied the language of the southern Chokwe, which is more ancient and pure in origin. The verbs he compiled are directly linked to the curative rituals of *nutuntu*. A *hamba*, according to the Barbosa, is a "double," a "shadow," but also an "impalpable manifestation" of an ancestor that inhabits the body of a relative or other person; it is also a protective object representing this spirit and in which the spirit resides. The evidence, therefore, seems to justify the use of the terms "possession" and "exorcism rites."
- The mask is worn by men, although in this region of Angola women played the role of *makishi* during female puberty rites, "masked" by body paint or a piece of cloth over their faces so they could take turns frightening off the men and keeping them away from such rituals (Bastin 1978, Kubik 1981).
- Ciwila* is a European cloth, imported since the eighteenth century and used solely by chiefs, and in the ornamentation of masks.
- In his dictionary, Barbosa (1973: 486) mentions that the *ciwila* is prepared with the leaves of *karaluma* or *nyulubila* (*Mopanea africana* Muell), *musale* (*Bombax reflexum* Sprague) and *mwanga* or *munwanga* (*Paspale* sp.). In his Appendix C, Yoder gives the scientific names of medicinal plants: *ciwaga* (Yoder 1981a: 323) is *ciwaga* or *mwafina*, *Endogone* *Scirchar* (Rubiaceae) or *ciwaga* *ciwaga*, *Discolis* *ramifera* (melastomataceae); *munwila* (Yoder 1981a: 327) is *Aframomum stipulanum* (Zingiberaceae).
- These small antelopes are the usual animals of sacrifice. Dr. A. do Barros Machado has identified these different antelopes: *assesti*, *Garret*, *corulata*; *kat*, *Sylvicapra* *grimmia*; *kongo*, *Cephalopus* *nyrifrons*.
- When one sacrifices a rooster over a mask it is to calm down the *makishi* spirit so that it does not attack anyone in the village.
- Nöthler Baumann (1935), who traveled extensively in the southern Luanda district in 1930, nor José Rodinha (1949, 1956) and Mesquita Lima (1967, 1971), both of whom spent long years in the area, ever mentioned this fact in their writings. The same holds true for Oliveira (1959), who wrote an extensive work on the *malanda*, and Santos (1962), who wrote another one on Chokwe religion. I was not able to obtain full information on the subject during my study mission at Dundo in 1956, for the *makishi-hamba* function of these three masks has completely disappeared among the Chokwe.
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