The Two Worlds of *Ciwara*

DOMINIQUE ZAHAN
Edited, translated, and annotated by ALLEN F. ROBERTS

Many readers are familiar with horizontal *ciwara* head crests from the area around Bélédougou, north of the Niger River in the Republic of Mali. We know that several animals are usually represented in the iconography of these headdresses, namely roan antelopes, aardvarks, pangolins, and perhaps others still—all animals presenting "very curious" physical anomalies.[3] For example, the curve of the roan antelope's horns on horizontal *ciwara*s points upward (Fig. 2) rather than along the plane of the animal's back, as found in nature and as reflected in how the horns of the same antelopes are represented in verti-

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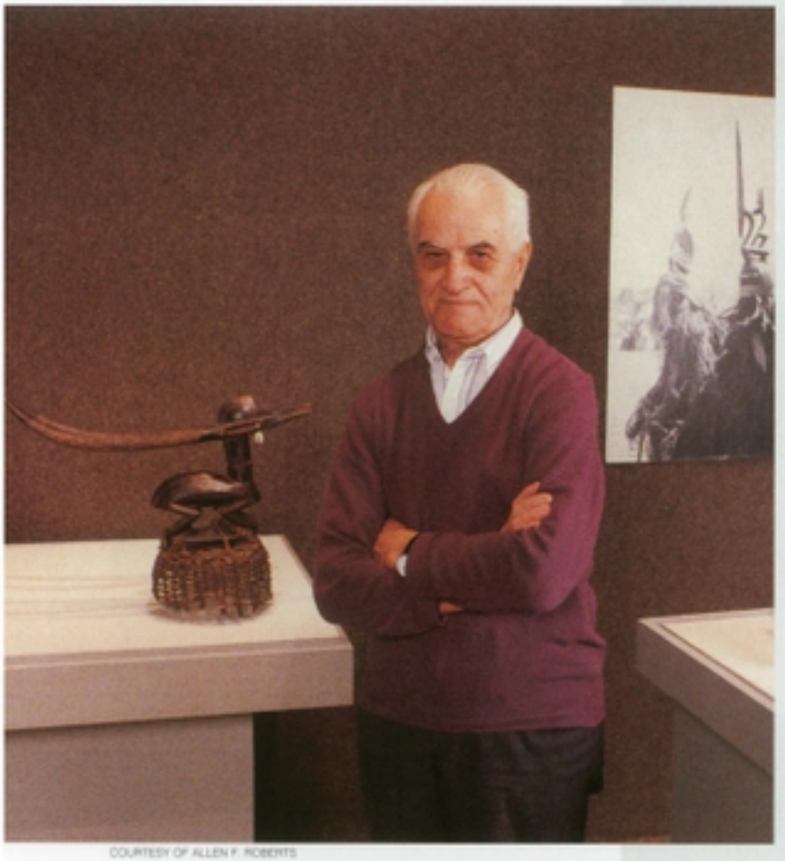
2. Horizontal *chiwara* crest. Bamana peoples, Mali. Wood, iron, cowry shells, vegetable fibers, cloth; length 52.8cm (20.8"). The University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City. Gift of Mr. Gaston de Havenon, 1974.158.

This crest, which retains the wicker cap worn on a performer's head, illustrates many of the characteristics discussed by Professor Zahan. The curved back of the zoomorph may refer to an aardvark and/or a pangolin, and the horns of the upper register may suggest a roan antelope.



COURTESY OF ALLEN F. ROBERTS

1. Dominique Zahan in the Stanley Gallery of the University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City, spring 1991.
The late Professor Zahan was a Stanley Fellow in the Project for Advanced Study of Art and Life in Africa (PASALA) at the University of Iowa when this photograph was taken.

The following text is the last that Dominique Zahan wrote before his death in 1991. Born in Romania in 1915, Zahan moved to France and became a student of Marcel Griaule. In 1948 he began ten years of ethnographic research among Dogon, Bamana, and Bozo peoples of Mali and a number of Mossi-related groups in Burkina Faso, leading to seven justly celebrated books and scores of articles, many concerning art and performance (see selected bibliography, p. 91). Zahan began teaching at the University of Strasbourg in 1960, and in 1968 moved to the Sorbonne, where he completed his career in 1988. He is widely recognized as one of the great French ethnologists and Africanists of the last century.

Among his many intellectual endeavors over the years, Zahan collected images of ciwara *(also* chiwara *or* tyiwara*) sculptures to document their play of differences in what he describes in this article as "a 'perimeter of security' in which they must conform to certain canons." This is similar to the "constrained diversity" of objects of which Daniel Biebuyck has written (1973:179, 164). Creative tension exists between circumstantial symbolic needs and an artist's will to create works that attract attention through their eyecatching departures from past examples of the same genre. Yet this is matched by sufficient "constraint" for there to be semantic equivalence among members of the paradigm: this and that are both* ciwara *crests. Zahan illustrated some five hundred* ciwaras *in his magisterial but hard-to-find monograph* Antilopes du soleil *(1980), providing readers with visual evidence that one cannot fully understand any given object unless one is cognizant of other objects in the semantic set, for each informs the others.*

Zahan wrote "The Two Worlds of Ciwara*" in 1990, while he was the first Stanley Fellow of the Project for Advanced Study of Art and Life in Africa (PASALA) at the University of Iowa (Fig. 1).[1] He left Iowa early in 1991 to accept a guest professorship at the University of Cluj, Romania. There Zahan developed an especially virulent cancer; he passed away after a few short months. Because only a rough draft exists of the paper to follow, its ideas and allusions remain tantalizingly incomplete. Nonetheless, the text presents an exceptional example of a structuralist approach to African arts. In our haste to discard previous approaches through the "post-everything-ism" of current scholarship, we would do well to reexamine what structuralism and other earlier perspectives can still provide to our understanding of African expression.*

Structuralists notice. They take nothing for granted. They probe. They intuit. They speculate. They also aggravate—especially those scholars who eschew the risk-taking of educated guessing in favor of a pallid "scientific" approach to African culture. To be sure, "elegance is not proof," as Jan Vansina has asserted, and the hypotheses structuralists posit should be followed by archival and field research. In the case of the present paper, Bamana artists, ciwara *performers, scholars of all stripes, and other interested parties should be asked what they think of Zahan's assertions. Their opinions should be solicited as to why horizontal—as opposed to vertical—*ciwara *crests are always made in two pieces joined together by iron staple-like bands. Such contemporary information should be compared with earlier data and differences analyzed, to avoid the spurious assumption of "timeless" arts. But there is no denying that the "elegance" of Professor Zahan's hypotheses was based upon many years of profound research in and about Bamana and related peoples.[2] And though* ciwara *crests may be among the best-known works of African art, the following piece should dispel any notion that "we" know all there is to know about these intriguing objects, performances, and cultural contexts.*

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cal *ciwaras* (Fig. 3) and other Bamana art. We now know that horizontal *ciwaras* also make esoteric reference to "Bambara groundnuts" *(Voandzeia subterranea)*, and more recently to peanuts.[4] But perhaps the most interesting "curiosity" of these head crests is their technical and artistic realization. All horizontal *ciwaras* are made in two pieces, usually joined at the neck of the antelope on the right and left by iron staples or U-nails (Fig. 4). This technique is undoubtedly ancient and can be considered "original," for it is found on almost all objects of the sort, even the oldest ones we know.

The question arises: Is the two-piece construction of the object necessary for technical reasons, or does it reflect a different, ideological imperative? To my knowledge, no one has asked this question before. It is certain that from a technical viewpoint, making an average-sized horizontal *ciwara* from a single piece of wood poses no particular difficulty for these sculptors. Most Bamana objects are monoxylic—that is, made from one piece of wood; and even vertical *ciwaras* that are far larger than the horizontal ones that interest us here are monoxylic. So, why is it that horizontal *ciwaras* are so unusual among Bamana sculptures in this regard?

In order to understand this oddity, one must know that horizontal *ciwaras* are constructed as a reflection of the nourishing plant with which they are associated, that is, *Voandzeia* groundnuts. The particularity of this plant—as is true of peanuts which, after their introduction from the Americas, have mostly replaced *Voandzeia* as an important food crop throughout Africa—is that it introduces its inflorescence, or flower cluster, into the ground where it bears its fruit. *Voandzeia* and peanuts are fruit from flowers that develop in the soil, rather than tubers like potatoes or yams. To Bamana thinking, these plants are an inversion of all other flowering plants known to them. In other words,

Opposite page:

3. Vertical *ciwara* crest. Bamana peoples, Mali. Wood, height 91.4cm (36"). UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Joel Breman, X70-951.

Vertical *ciwara* crests are often far more complicated sculptures than horizontal ones; yet they are always carved from a single piece of wood, whereas horizontal ones are divided at the neck.

This page:

4. Detail of horizontal *ciwara* head crest. Bamana peoples, Mali. Wood, brass, leather, iron; length 56.3cm (22.2"). UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History. Bequest of Jerome L. Joss, 87.1417.

The iron staples of this horizontal *ciwara crest* hold the head and body together, but may bear their own symbolism. The curved back divided into three portions may allude to animals such as aardvarks and pangolins, sometimes depicted more explicitly in the lower registers of horizontal crests.

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5. Horizontal *ciwara* head crest. Bamana peoples, Mali. Wood, iron nail, cloth; length 61cm (24"). UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Joel Breman, X70.952.

The head of this horizontal crest may portray a horned "bird-man" related to Baga a-Tshol sculptures (see Fig. 6).

Voandzeia and peanuts represent an "upside-down" vegetal world.

Horizontal *ciwaras* refer to just such reversal. This is their essential characteristic, and this is also what makes for their beauty, for it is not easy to aesthetically realize or otherwise take advantage of a model of inversion through plastic arts. I know of only one other example of this in African art, and that is a mortar for pounding tobacco in which a figure is shown with its feet in the air.[5] In passing I might add that it would be extremely interesting to assemble all photo documentation concerning physical "anomalies" of this sort represented in African art.

The junction of the two parts of a horizontal *ciwara* represents the limit or border between two worlds to which the food crop refers: the one above is the world of vegetation, light and luminosity, and the day. But this is a sterile world in the case before us, for the leaves of *Voandzeia* and peanuts have no utility for Bamana.[6] The earthen world below ground is that of fruit, food, and wealth, but it also possesses the obscurity of night. It is precisely to demarcate both the junction and the separation of these two worlds that horizontal *ciwaras* are carved from two distinct pieces of wood nailed together.

One can now consider the two registers so defined with regard to the animals represented in them, and then the iron staple or U-nail joining them together.[7] The animal central to the upper register is without doubt the roan antelope *(Hippotragus equinus)*. But in this case, the beast has nothing to do with what we know of him from vertical *ciwaras* [see Zahan 1980]. In horizontal *ciwaras*, the roan antelope is usually represented only by its horns for which the curve is inversely oriented from what it ought to be: rather than "reposing" over the back of the animal, the horns are directed upward. Often the head of the animal bearing the horns on the horizontal *ciwara* has nothing to do with the roan antelope itself. Instead, it often presents the long beak of a bird, deformed to such an extent that it changes into an elongat-

ed human face—a sort of bird-man (Fig. 5). And on some of these headdresses, one may distinguish the head of a goat bearing the roan antelope horns or resting between them. It is worth mentioning that in those cases in which the head of a "bird-man" appears, if such a head were presented without roan antelope horns, it would resemble the heads of Baga figures associated with rice culture (Fig. 6).[8] Such an association is not fortuitous, for we now know that the original homeland of the Baga is the Inland Delta of the Niger River in what is now Mali, where they cultivated a particular variety of rice that they took with them in their migrations to their current habitat in the Republic of Guinea.

So as to grasp this association, it is useful to recognize that what happens in African arts also happens in other mythologies of the continent. Thanks to the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, we know that in passing from one culture to another, myths are transformed in ways well known among Native Americans. Art submits to analogous transformations when the circumstance that "brought the object to birth" becomes something else. What happens between Baga and Bamana art, between the ritual object associated with rice culture and the horizontal *ciwara* associated with *Voandzeia* cultivation is, in this way, altogether typical.

Formal similarities between certain Baga figures and some horizontal *ciwaras* leap to the eyes. But whereas the Baga object possesses only one register (although this is debatable because we are not well informed about the base to which the object is fixed), the horizontal *ciwara* possesses two. The figuration of the Baga object is also often very "worked"—that is, meticulously crafted—usually much more so than the upper register of the horizontal *ciwara*. It is easy to understand the transformations to which an artistic creation has been subjected when one recalls that the point of departure for the Baga object is a grain of rice, while that of the horizontal *ciwara* is the *Voandzeia* fruit. Even though these are very different to our eyes, the two plants have something in common for their African farmers: rice is an aquatic plant but it gives forth seeds, as do terrestrial grasses, while the *Voandzeia* is a terrestrial plant that bears fruit under the ground. In other words, rice is a plant "of the below" [the water's surface] that bears its fruit "above," whereas the *Voandzeia* is "of the above" but bears fruit "below" the ground. The inversion of flowering and the fruit-bearing of one plant vis-à-vis another is reflected in objects representing these processes: Baga take great care with the "above" of their objects but pay little attention to the lower part, while Bamana do the opposite by carefully carving the lower part of their *ciwara* headdress (under the line of rupture at the neck) to such a degree that they seem to "symbolize the symbolism." This can be seen when the aardvark's tail is rolled up in the opposite way from nature [see Zahan 1980: figs. III-16-24], to symbolize the "easy" detachment of the ripe husks of the *Voandzeia*.[9]

One can see that in either Baga or Bamana populations, the art object is subjected to transformations which impose upon it a most profound infrastructure, that is, the reality that "gives birth" to it. Bamana art, like that of Baga, is so close to the realities of nature that it is not possible to understand it if one does not first grasp what it attempts to symbolize through very sophisticated artistic devices.

Horizontal *ciwaras* refer to several animals through parts of their bodies. Moreover, such parts are often themselves subjected to distortions, as if the distortions were to be expected by spectators through their sense of symbolic particularities. This allows us to define the presence of different animals as "allusive figuration," and the art of which they are the objects can also be called "allusive art."[10] Bamana are not the only Africans to practice such arts. Indeed, one can say that allusive arts are produced by almost all African peoples, or at least everywhere that art objects are "composed" as "architectural edifices." West Africa, in particular, is very rich in just this sort of art that one might also call "burgeoning art" *(art-brindilles)* exactly because it consists of taking "a little of everything"—but not just anything—to make a meaningful whole in both its assembly and its parts.[11]

"Burgeoning art" is manifested in horizontal *ciwaras*. The upper portion of the object presents parts of animals that are representative of a world above the surface of the earth. The roan antelope, through its horns, is the animal one encounters in all objects of this type. Its presence is explained by the fact that the roan antelope is, for Bamana, the solar animal par excellence. Its zigzag escape when pursued recalls the sun's course around the Earth.[12] The roan antelope "is" the sun as it runs this way and that. Moreover, for similar reasons one encounters the same animal in the iconography of masks of other west African peoples such as the Dogon, Bwa, and Kurumba. That the roan antelope horns are portrayed in horizontal *ciwaras* as curving in the opposite direction from what they do in nature suggests both the reversal that one finds in the *Voandzeia* plant and the constraint that one hopes to impose upon the sun so that it will not shine too brightly. We know that *Voandzeia* thrives in arid conditions, but the plant needs a minimum of humidity nonetheless, lest it be "fried" by the sun. The reverse curve of the antelope's horns, then, reinforces the symbolic mes-

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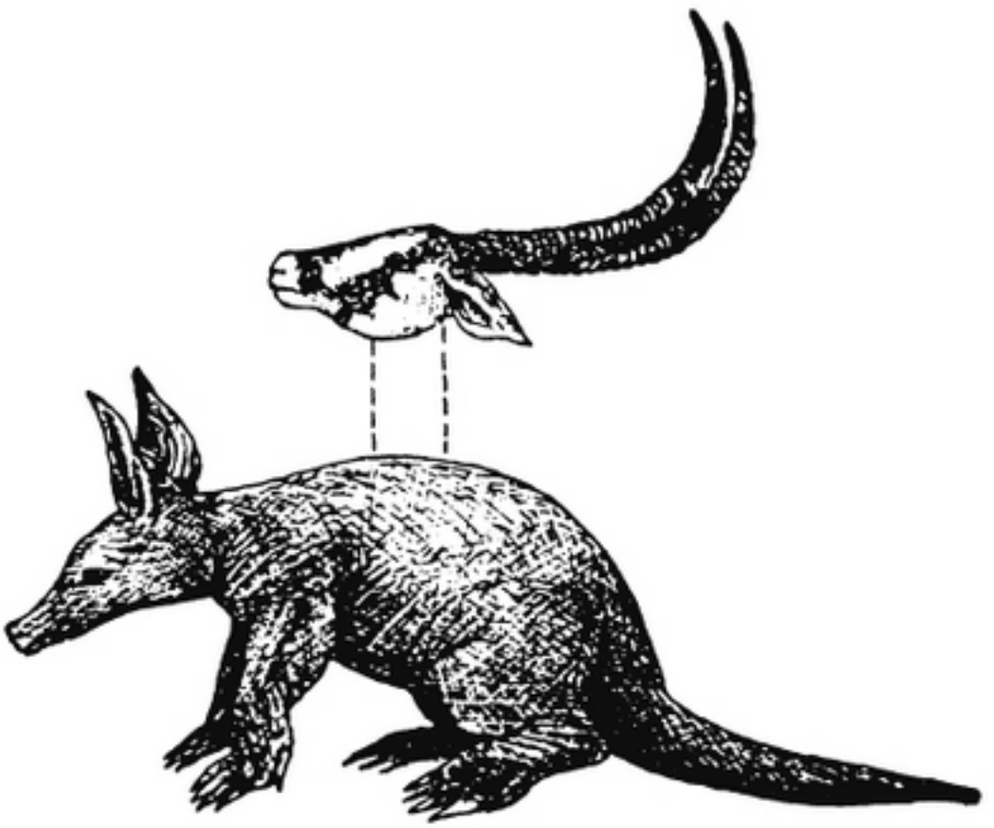
Top: 6. A-Tshol *(elek)* shrine object. Baga peoples, Guinea. Wood, metal; length 79.2cm (31.2"). The University of Iowa Museum of Art, The Stanley Collection, 1986.541.

Both Dominique Zahan and Frederick Lamp have noted historical, symbolic, and stylistic relationships between Bamana horizontal *ciwara* crests and Baga a-Tshol shrine objects (which can also be worn as crests).



Bottom: 7. "Les Modèles," illustration from a lecture given by Dominique Zahan in 1991 at the University of Iowa Museum of Art, after an illustration in *Antilopes du soleil* (Zahan 1980).

This ink drawing shows the relationship between references to a roan antelope in the upper portion of a horizontal *ciwara* crest and an aardvark in the lower register.

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sage of the open beak of the thirsty birdman, which calls to the rain.

The goat is also portrayed on some horizontal *ciwaras*, although not so frequently as the roan antelope. The goat is considered a solar animal because of its perfect adaptation to the heat of the day [see Zahan 1980:82]. One knows (and Bamana may have known this empirically before Europeans did) that goats possess a thermo-regulatory system that follows ambient temperature. The goat is not only a solar animal but one of the oldest domestic animals known to humankind. But the goat is not associated with agriculture, and indeed, Bamana considered it to be opposed to agriculture: goats are pitiless in their destruction, not only of what people plant and hope to harvest, but of any vegetation they find in their path. The presence of a goat on a *ciwara* might seem surprising, then. In reality there is no contradiction, for even if people do not use the upper part of *Voandzeia*, the leaves are an excellent food for goats and sheep.

The opposition between goats and agriculture is specifically demonstrated by the horizontal *ciwara* during the ritual of fabricating a new head crest. The human person, or at least his rough shape represented by a forehead and nose (the mouth is transformed into a long bird's beak), is present on the crest because this is the farmer himself seeking "invisible" fruit. In the manner of a thirsty bird opening its beak, he is looking for what he can find under his feet, hidden under the ground. The artist chooses the forehead and nose to signify the person, for the first refers to thought and judgment, and the second to his sense of smell *(flair)* or perspicacity. Thanks to these two, the farmer is able to evaluate his future harvest of *Voandzeia* through the foliage: the greener it is, indicating healthy plants, the more one is promised good and abundant fruit. These aspects of the "birdman" speak to the existence of and the quest for such knowledge.

Judging from these assertions, one can see the fashion in which the Bamana artist substitutes what one can call a "sculptural language" for oral and written languages. It is nonetheless useful to note that the language he uses with such

8. Horizontal *ciwara* crest. Bamana peoples, Mali. Wood, iron, cloth; height 54.6cm (21.5"). Collection of the Stanley Family, Muscatine, Iowa.

The lower portion of this crest depicts an aardvark with its tail curled contrary to nature. The head may refer to several animals at once, with the long ears of an aardvark combined with what may be a goat's head.

skill and discernment is not destined for communication alone. The art in which the language is invested also carries efficacy. The object fabricated by the artist and sanctified by those responsible for the religious life of the social group will be animated by the person wearing it for dances during agricultural work, so that such performances will be successful. Such an idea of "efficacious art" should be stressed here, for without it the object loses all value.

As for this efficacy, one can add that very often, if not always, African art objects are created for the goals of ritual. They are destined, therefore, to be subjected to a "motion" by those bearing or wearing them that is well defined by a "protocol" no less sophisticated than those known in Christian churches. The motion of objects constitutes, in reality, a sort of dance possessing its own symbolic language and animating and giving life to objects, as if without a certain liaison with space—that is, its choreography—an object would be divested of all efficacy. The idea that an object is animated through movement given to it by the person bearing or wearing it corresponds to the idea of creation itself. We know, for example, that among Dogon, *kanaga* masks represent the creation of the world when they are danced. Extrapolating from this, one can say that in being "danced," an object creates its own identity and is creator, in turn, of what it symbolizes. The "dance" of an object is not destined simply to be seen as a sort of demonstration before a witness; instead, it is a motion that creates the object and realizes what it signifies. If one wishes a comparative image, one might refer to the threading of a spindle *(fuseau de la fileuse)* in weaving, which creates itself during the movement it affects. Such an image belongs to Bamana themselves, for they have a saying: "The spindle grows fatter by its own endeavor."

Let us now return to the second register of the horizontal *ciwara* crest, under the line of rupture at the neck of the sculpture. This lower register denotes the subterranean realm where *Voandzeia* groundnuts grow, and so it is altogether to be expected that the animals referred to by this part of the crest live beneath the ground. Among these the most representative is the aardvark *(Orycteropus afer)* (Fig. 7). Aardvarks are nocturnal animals par excellence, and in the daylight one cannot find them outside their tunnels except by rare chance. As great diggers, they can plunge into the earth in seconds. These two particularities of their behavior contribute to aardvarks' being chosen by Bamana as the model of and for the digging abilities of their best farmers, and also as the image of *Voandzeia* itself. It is in this second instance that the aardvark is sometimes carved with its tail rolled backward to form a complete circle (Fig. 8). This sculptural motif, which we might call the "inverted tail," is extremely interesting. One finds it quite frequently in west African art, in images of aardvarks as well as chameleons on Baule and Asante goldweights, for example. The motif is not, as one might imagine, the fantasy of artists but a symbolic allusion, signifying a prohibition against attachment. The circular inversion of the aardvark's tail on a horizontal *ciwara* indicates that one hopes and expects to be able to harvest *Voandzeia* easily, pulling them from the ground when they are ripe.[13]

The second animal of the lower register of the crest is the pangolin, another nocturnal beast that spends its life sheltered from daylight and defends itself by rolling into a ball. Both of these attributes make the pangolin, like the aardvark, the sculptural "model" for *Voandzeia*.[14]

These observations should not be considered to describe all horizontal *ciwaras*. Some crests exist in which the artists have demonstrated a real sense of beauty from both Bamana and Western points of view. These prove, if there is still any need to say so, that Bamana artists and, more generally, African artists enjoy a significant degree of inventive freedom for their senses of aesthetics, within a "perimeter of security" in which they must conform to certain canons.

The iron staple or U-nail through which Bamana blacksmiths join the two parts of a horizontal *ciwara* remains to be discussed (Figs. 9, 12). It may be that this has not always been the way that the two pieces of wood have been bound together, for occasionally one sees studs or pins *(goujon)* serving the same purpose (Figs. 10, 11). Technically speaking, it is certain that such a joint is not as strong as when the parts are secured by U-nails, especially when several nails are used and the head is further fastened by vegetal cords, as one sees on numerous examples. Use of such devices reflects an extremely important local iron industry; it is known, for example, that prior to the Empire of Mali, there was a Sosso Empire along the Middle Niger known as the "Empire of Blacksmiths." Blacksmiths have always been the most celebrated caste among Bamana, and they guard the secrets of the Komo society [see McNaughton 1988]. It remains to be seen if the production of iron nails used to join the two parts of a horizontal *ciwara* lends additional symbolism to the crest, and if so, of what sort.

Horizontal *ciwaras* are produced by people in the region of Bélédougou, north of the Niger River, who are called Kagoro, or sometimes "the ones covered with buttons" *(les boutonneux)* because of the scarification pattern on their chests of small raised bumps resembling

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Voandzeia fruit [see Zahan 1980:85]. Two social traits lead their neighbors to consider Kagoro to be peculiar. Living among patrilineal peoples, Kagoro maintain bilateral descent, lending equal importance to patrilineal and matrilineal affiliations.[15] Because of this, people consider them mediators upon whom one can call when conflict erupts between those giving and those receiving women in marriage.

The second oddity of Kagoro concerns the place of a child with regard to the two lineages. During its first year, a child lives with paternal relatives, but as soon as she or he can walk, is welcomed into the family of the mother and spends the rest of childhood there. The Kagoro resemble the fruit of that remarkable plant, the *Voandzeia*, in these attributes, for it too is born in the air but grows up under ground: a Kagoro child is born into the sunshine of the father's family, but grows up in the shadow of the mother's. The child is the linchpin of relations between paternal and maternal kin, then, assuring sentiments of solidarity among those who contributed to bringing her or him to life. The child is, in other words, the staple or clamp that joins the "upper" or paternal kin, with the "lower" maternal ones. If the iron bond stands for the child, it is at the same time a figurative representation of the sentiments of solidarity that exist between the families. Can one find a better symbol for this vital feeling than this little piece of hooked iron?[16]

Finally, let us return to the question posed at the beginning of this discussion. The two-piece construction of horizontal *ciwara*s owes nothing to technological necessity. It is due instead to symbolism attached to an ensemble in which each of the two parts possesses its own signification and the whole refers to harmony and equilibrium. The departure point for this symbolism is the *Voandzeia* legume, whose two parts, above and below the ground, should remain attached until harvest, for they are both necessary to the health of the plant and

9. Horizontal *ciwara* crest. Bamana peoples, Mali. Wood, iron; length 64.5cm (25.4"). UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History. Gift of Mrs. Shirley Black, X92-151.

The two parts of this crest are attached with iron staples.

Top: 10. Horizontal *ciwara* crest (incomplete). Bamana peoples, Mali. Wood, length 71.1cm (28"). UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Joel Breman, X70.953.

This *ciwara* is missing its upper head, once secured by the iron spike seen in the photograph. The lower head incorporates human and animal characteristics

Bottom: 11. Horizontal *ciwara* crest. Bamana peoples, Mali. Wood, iron; 75.4cm (29.7"). The University of Iowa Museum of Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gaston de Havenon, 1969.490.

The head of this *ciwara* is attached to the body with a vertical iron pin within the neck.

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the eventuality of meeting the alimentary needs of people. From this is derived the object that has two "stories" *(étages)*, each composed of animals representative of the above-ground and below-ground parts of the *Voandzeia* plant, respectively. The two registers of the *ciwara* are held together by iron staples which themselves provide two degrees of symbolic sense to the object. The first is the reference to agriculture, while the second speaks of the Bamana family, composed as it is of two parts, the paternal and maternal kin that, like the upper and lower portions of the *Voandzeia* plant, should be maintained in harmony and equilibrium. The element assuring family cohesion is the child. One might note that the *Voandzeia* plant possesses a link analogous to the child in its double-flowered stalk between the foliage and subterranean portions.

This analysis, of which the content is strictly from Bamana thought and only the form that of the ethnologist, poses a problem that is not specific to itself but which it shares with all other fields of investigation in which the symbolism of efficacy plays a role. Why do Bamana and many other African peoples resort to such subtleties *(astuces)* on both technological and ideological planes, to seat their discourses and their knowledge of things? In fact, the answer to this question is not simple, but we can reduce it to its essentials. In general, Africans believe that they can act on things by calling upon other things similar to them, through the ancient principles of homeopathy and sympathetic magic. It is useful nonetheless to add nuance to this old saw *(dicton)* by recognizing that in African thought, not just any similarity allows one thing to work upon another, and when one places similar things in symbolic proximity, their juncture is effected by the formal arrangement *(ordonnancement)* we call "ritual," without which the desired efficacy is inoperative. One can conclude by saying that our discussion began with an object of Bamana art, whereas Bamana people have begun with an essential food crop to construct a symbolic object, through which they then associate their family structure. □

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12. Horizontal *ciwara* crest. Bamana peoples, Mali. Wood, iron, cloth; length 76.2cm (30"). Collection of Morton and Geraldine Dimondstein, Los Angeles.

This unusual horizontal *ciwara* has two upper registers with roan antelope horns, attached to sections of neck with iron staples. Following Dr. Zahan's hypothesis, this might connote a hierarchy of social relations.

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function as vehicles for this cultural substance and energy: the mythic 'farming beast' who epitomizes the qualities of the ideal farmer and who gave agriculture to the Bamana; the cult group that preserves the knowledge of agricultural fecundity and the power of the cult's sacred objects (*boliw*); the rhythms, songs, dances, costumes, and headdresses used to motivate the young men's communal hoeing, planting, and cultivating; the young champion farmers whose physical strength, suppleness, and farming virtues imitate the example of the mythic farming beast and qualify them to wear costumes and headdresses in dance performances known as *chi wara*."

5. Thirty years ago, in the pages of *African Arts*, Dr. P. J. Imperato provided what I consider the first socially, culturally, and historically informed description of the performance context of the *ciwara* complex. A decade later, Dominique Zahan contributed to our appreciation of this magnificent tradition with an impressive volume in which he explored its symbolism and documented an impressive range of stylistic variation in the form. I dedicate this essay to these pioneers and hope that it accents their work in some small way.

6. Between 1992 and 1994 I documented the development of market gardening in the area and examined the influence of this process on domestic organization and production patterns (Wooten 1997). Aminata's comments compelled me to watch closely for evidence of the *ciwara* performance tradition during my fieldwork, though the *ciwara* phenomenon was not the focus of my field studies at the time; my exposure to these performances was fortuitous. While I focused my research energies on Kuluduguni, I traveled regularly to neighboring villages, attending labor events, marriage celebrations, hunters' celebrations, as well as various performance events involving masks and masquerades. Overall, I am comfortable stating that there was a considerable degree of overlap within the region with regard to basic social, economic, and religious/ritual patterns.

7. During my stay, the community had no mosque. In fact, I do not remember seeing mosques in any of the Plateau villages I visited most frequently—they certainly were not highlighted on the village tours I was usually given upon my first arrival.

8. The following accounts derive from my direct observation of the events and from subsequent examination of the videotapes and photographs I made during the performances. Jatigi Jara provided various points of clarification and interpretation; I indicate his input where relevant. For short video sequences from two of these performances, see Wooten 1998.

9. Unfortunately, I was unable to record this or the other *ciwara* songs mentioned here. I intend to retrieve whatever I can from the audio component of the videotapes.

10. This masquerade corresponds to the "Namakoroni" phenomenon Imperato (1970) describes in association with many *ciwara* performances. See his description for more details.

11. Jatigi had mentioned that it would be appropriate for me, as a guest, to offer a small sum (1,000 FCFA, then about $3 U.S.) as a gift to, as he put it, "help with the *wara* shi." He explained that each time the *ciwarakuru* were danced, a chicken sacrifice was offered (evidence of which I had noted on the *ciwara* sticks).

12. See Zahan's essay in this issue for a structural analysis of this feature.

13. These lines may be linked to those described in de Ganay's account of cicatrization among the Bamana (1949).

14. For an introduction to this masquerade, see Chéron 1931.

15. Jatigi had mentioned that on such occasions people typically wished each other luck with their upcoming farming activities, so upon hearing the old men discussing plans for the planting I said, "May you harvest many granaries of sorghum" and "May you harvest much corn." The old men loved this! They laughed and joked that I was truly becoming a Bamana man.

16. I had observed various sacrifices, divinatory kola tosses, and protective amulets, but had never seen this type of object. I was very surprised to see such items set out for public view and in conjunction with the headdresses.

17. These necklaces apparently came from the young *ciwara* girls; I observed them wearing the same jewelry before and after the event.

18. Jatigi later told me that Dugukolo had spoken to the ancestors and that his laughter was associated with hearing their replies.

19. He thanked the dancers, drummers, and singers, and especially me and my visiting fiancée. He noted that the community was glad to have us present for their *sanuji* and extended blessings to us.

20. See McNaughton 1988 (esp. pp. 15–18) for an engaging discussion of this important aspect of the Bamana/Mande religious order.

21. While Imperato was told in the 1960s that such items had been used in association with *ciwarata* in the past, he never saw examples of them during his many encounters with the complex (personal communication, 1997).

22. This conceptualization is inspired by Arnoldi's insightful analysis of puppet masquerades in the Segou region (Arnoldi 1995, 1996).

23. Indeed, it should be pointed out that the presence of women and children at various stages of *ciwara* performances was noted in several of the earliest discussions of the complex. See Henry 1910 and Delafosse 1912.

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ZAHAN: *Notes from page 45*

[This article was accepted for publication in January 2000. All notes are by Allen F. Roberts as editor and translator.]

1. As co-founder and co-director of PASALA, I asked Professor Zahan to write a paper marking his stay at Iowa. He left "Two Worlds" in rough draft, full of comments to himself (deleted here), written as he learned to use a computer. As a rough draft, we must forgive Zahan if his prose is a bit chatty, some of his ideas remain incomplete, and a few of his assertions are unsubstantiated. In translating his paper for publication, I have elected to delete redundancies and other superfluities, as a copy editor might have requested had Professor Zahan been able to do so himself; it may be worth noting that some years before his death, I translated another of his articles in the same way, and Zahan was pleased with the results. I have preserved the professor's rather idiosyncratic use of quotation marks for the most part. Because of confusion resulting from Zahan's illness and death, the paper was lost for a number of years, but in 1999 I discovered a copy of it on a disk dating from 1991. Readers interested in Zahan's life and work may wish to consult three volumes collected in his memory: Erny 1992; Erny & Witt 1995; and Erny, Stamm & Witt 1996.

2. Although in the present paper the ethnographic grounding of Zahan's assertions is not documented, in *Antilopes du soleil* (1980:80) he states that "all our informants are unanimous in saying that the [horizontal *ciwara*] crests from Bélédougou refer to *Voandzeia*, the upper level of the object to the above-ground part of the plant, the lower to its buried portion, including the roots." In other words, his argument is based upon the Bamana exegeses he gathered in the 1950s, as he himself asserts in the final paragraph of this paper.

3. A far more detailed discussion of the iconography of *ciwara* crests is presented in Zahan's compendious volume, *Antilopes du soleil* (1980). This work contains line drawings of ninety-two horizontal *ciwara* (figs. III-1 through III-92), providing an unparalleled opportunity to see the play of ideas across a genre. His catalogue raisonne also includes more than four hundred other *ciwara* in several "models."

As Stephen Wooten notes in this same issue of *African Arts*, *ciwara* performers are called *ciwarati*, "farming animals," in the Bamana language, and the head crests they wear in performance *ciwarakuru*, or "farming animal heads." For brevity, I have chosen to refer to the society, its performers, and their head crests by the same term, "*ciwara*." It may also be noted that in a substantial literature, authors have discussed whether or not it is logical to call aardvarks and pangolins "anomalous," as Zahan does here, for although such preposterous beasts may defy culturally constructed animal categories, they are nonetheless situated in and explained by systematic knowledge; see Roberts 1995:17–22 for a review of such writing.

4. Zahan offered the French name for *Voandzeia subterranea* as *pistaches de la terre*, or "ground pistachios." I extend sincere thanks to Raymond Silverman for contacting Professors Richard Bernsten, James Bingen, Christopher Penders, and John Staatz of Michigan State University, who supplied me with information about the plant and its fruit that "look something like kidney beans, called *tiga guwlen* by Bamana." The English term for *Voandzeia* may be "Bambara groundnuts," a name that would clearly indicate the plant's local origin and use, but one that appears not to have wide currency among anglophonic Africanist agricultural economists. Given such uncertainties, it seems better to leave the name in Latin, as "*Voandzeia*." Zahan discusses botanical literature concerning *Voandzeia* in *Antilopes du soleil*, which Bambara "consider a hermaphroditic plant" because the "male" peduncle is "attracted to the femininity of the earth by the same impulse characterizing the attraction of the sexes" (1980:55–57).

5. Here Zahan had intended to supply a slide and a caption identifying the tobacco mortar he had in mind. Unfortunately, this information is now lost, but he may have been referring to Lulua mortars from Congo (Kinshasa), which are often figurative. Zahan was interested in African arts associated with tobacco, and we discussed the possibility of working together toward an exhibition of these. Sadly, this initiative was among those lost with the professor's death.

6. Peanut leaves are eaten as a vegetable elsewhere in Africa, such as southeastern Congo (Kinshasa), so it is not that they cannot be eaten, only that they are not by Bamana.

7. It should be noted that in Zahan's catalogue raisonné of ninety-two horizontal *ciwara* (1980: figs. III-1 through III-92), many possess more complex lower registers than those illustrated in this article.

8. Zahan did not identify the particular type of Baga figure in his rough draft. Frederick Lamp suspects that Zahan was referring to *Tshol* (or *dok*) figures that are sometimes danced as crests, sometimes used as shrines; I thank him for this personal communication of January 2000. Lamp (1996:101–2) suggests that the bird-like head of Tshol figures may reflect the shape of women's hoes, and that "the figure is an anthropomorphized spiritual cultivator. In this capacity, a-Tshol [the singular form of the term] bears comparison with the deified Mandeng figure known as Chi Wara, or 'The Farming Beast', who likewise represents a spiritual being credited with the introduction of agriculture. Chi Wara's formal manifestation is also similar to a-Tshol's: a composite of an antelope and an anteater, he has a long snout that is said to represent the hoe."

9. This unexplained analogy is difficult to understand. Zahan's point more generally, as elaborated in *Antilopes du soleil* (1980:84, passim), is that iconographical details of horizontal *ciwara* such as the reverse spirals of aardvark tails are "counter-verities" and an "inversion of nature" meant to reflect an assertion of human agency in a difficult world. He compares such sculptural ploys to the clowning undertaken by members of the Kore society, whose "intentional burlesque" is meant to make reality a more ready subject of reflection by playfully subverting the expectations of life. "Humans ought to mock death in order to better submit to it" (Zahan 1980:84).

10. The word "allusive" in both French and English refers to indirect reference, "without naming names." In a lecture at the University of Iowa, Zahan and I discussed whether the term is appropriate to describing *ciwara*, for it is not so much that the names of animals and other iconographical elements are not named as it is that a small part is chosen to stand for a large whole—horns for antelope, for example. Sculptural synecdoche of this sort is quite common in Africa, as Zahan suggests (see Roberts 1995). What is allusive is the symbolism whereby the roan antelope "is" the sun, as suggested in a zigzag pattern reminiscent of the way the animal takes flight when pursued. A phrase from *Antilopes du soleil* (1980:81) captures the brilliantly complex mix of named and unnamed references in Bamana art: he called such works "plastic imbroglios," with all the contradictions so implied.

11. The literal translation of *brindilles*, "twig," makes for an awkward phrase in English when coupled with the word "art." Later in his rough draft, Zahan ruminates about the phrase in an appended note. He recognizes that *art-brindilles* may be translated literally as "twig art," but adds that "I think that the best expression for this art would be *art en morceaux* ['lump art' or 'tidbit art']. Personally, I think that in English it would be better to say 'lump art' even though the word 'lump' usually refers to something without form. One can note, for instance, that 'lump sugar' refers to sugar in pieces given distinct form." In my opinion, "lump art" does not convey Zahan's sense very well either. Aside from being a rather comical phrase in English, what Zahan means to suggest is that while parts of animals or other referents may be "lumped together," they "twig"—that is, they extend and grow into a complex whole that is more than the sum of its parts. "Burgeoning" seems to capture this sense.

12. The zigzag of the roan antelope's flight may recall the apparent movement of the sun along the ecliptic, as viewed

from a flat-world perspective (see Zahan 1951). Among his many scholarly accomplishments, Zahan was a pioneer in the study of African ethnoastronomy.

13. Zahan describes aardvark physiognomy and behavior in *Antilopes du soleil* (1980:70–79). For further musing of a Zahanian kind on the oddities of aardvarks and the "inverted tail" of chameleons in west African art, see Roberts 1995:81–87 and 51–52, respectively.

14. Zahan provides many more Bamana observations about pangolins (scaly anteaters) in *Antilopes du soleil* (1980:80, *passim*). In the present paper, he does not identify the species of pangolin at issue. The giant pangolin (*Manis gigantea*) may be the only one found in Mali, and among its human-like oddities that Bamana must notice is the fact that it sometimes walks on its hind legs, using its thick tail for balance. It digs burrows in which it sleeps through the day, making its inversions of expectation somewhat similar to those for the aardvark (see Dorst & Dandelot 1969:35–36, 39).

15. Rather than "matrilineal" (descent traced through a mother to her mother, and so forth, to the exclusion of fathers' lines), Zahan probably means to refer to a bilateral patrilineal descent, through one's father to his father and one's mother to her father, rather like American kinship.

16. Here Zahan reviews the fact that not all horizontal *cisoires* are joined with iron staples, and concludes that those that are not were probably never danced, have no ritual power, and may have been produced recently for sale to tourists rather than for Bamana use.

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***NOLTE:** Notes from page 59*

[This article was accepted for publication in October 1999.]

1. See newspaper reviews in van Bosch 1997 and Muratz 1999.

2. I conducted interviews with the artist in 1999 in January, March 27, and July 26.

3. Bengu was married to the artist Zweletha Mthetwa. She told me: "There is always constant comparison naturally, because he is very well established. People always want to know how much influence he had on my work, but rarely do they look vice versa. When two artists coexist they are always bound to influence one another" (interview, January 1999).

4. These comments were gleaned in conversations with the artist and members of the art community who had viewed the exhibitions.

5. To foreground historical alliances against racism is not to ignore those which have also existed against class privilege, as demonstrated in the alliance of the African National Congress, the South African Communist Party, and the Confederation of South African Trade Unions. However, as indicated by Zine Magubane, the space now exists to "engage those tensions and ambiguities that have existed all along" (Magubane 1997:22). For a history of women's organization in South Africa in the decades prior to the democratic elections of 1994, see Walker 1991 [1982]. For *gender* perspectives

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