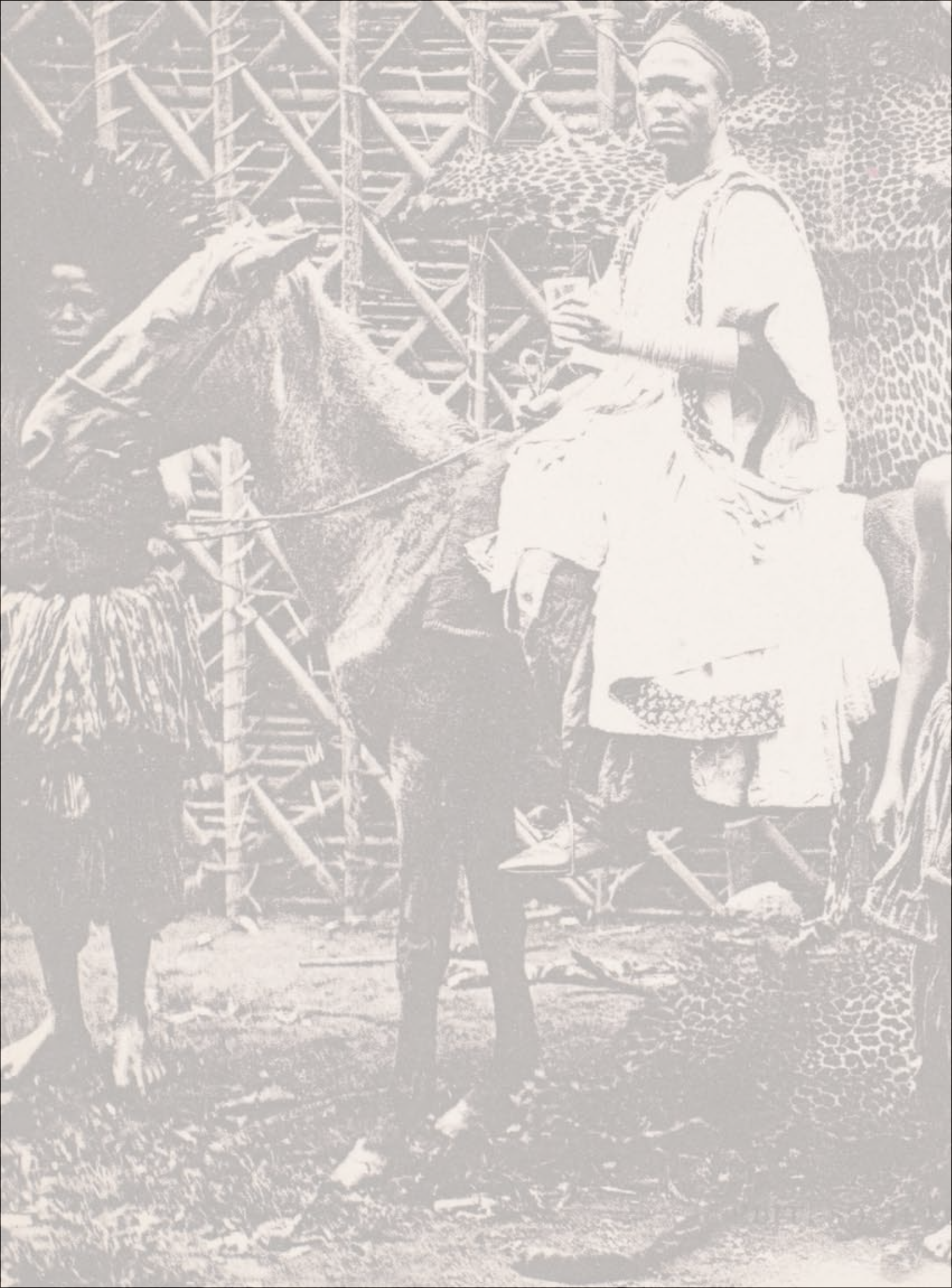


Heroic Africans

LEGENDARY LEADERS, ICONIC SCULPTURES



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Alisa LaGamma



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Chef Vonshatura de Dochaug

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Jacket front: Detail of fig. 217, Hemba peoples, Muhiyha group, D.R.C., Private collection

Jacket back: Detail of fig. 213, Hemba peoples, Niembo group, D.R.C., Private collection

Endpapers, top row, left to right: Eweka II, *oba* of Benin, r. 1914–33, Nigeria; Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Agyeman Prempeh II, r. 1931–70, Asante, Ghana; Mbo, king of Bali, Cameroon; Gara, chief of the Pande, Bania, French Congo (Republic of the Congo), early 20th century; Lawson, king of Aného (Aného), Togo, 1933; chief of royal blood, Urundi (Burundi), early 20th century. *Middle row, left to right:* His Highness Boua Kouassi, king of the Anyi (Ndenye), Côte d'Ivoire, 1910–15; Chief Mumfunuka and his followers, Congo (D.R.C.), early 20th century; King Kindia and his wives, Guinea, postmarked April 23, 1908; King Sri II and his followers, Togo, postmarked October 26, 1925. *Bottom row, left to right:* Ovonramwen Nogbaisi, king of Benin, r. 1888–1914, Nigeria; a chief of the Lunda, Lundi, Angola, early 20th century, postmarked February 15, 1910; Adeyemi I Alowolodu, king of Oyo, r. 1876–1905, Yoruba-Oyo, Nigeria, early 20th century; king of Djolof, Dakar region, Senegal, early 20th century; Agnibilécro-Kangah, chief of the Anyi (Ndenye), Côte d'Ivoire, early 20th century; Jekri chief and family, Itsekiri, Nigeria. All Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection
Pages 2–3: Chief Vonshatura of Dochaug [Dschang], early 20th century. Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

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Director's Foreword

"HEROIC AFRICANS" IS A GROUNDBREAKING EXHIBITION ON SEVERAL LEVELS. Rather than examine landmark artistic depictions by African masters in isolation, curator Alisa LaGamma situates them within the broader continuum of art history. In doing so, she moves beyond presuppositions about the generic nature of African representational forms and guides us to a fuller appreciation of Africa's artistic heritage by reconsidering its aesthetic languages and reconnecting its monuments to their original human subjects. In both the exhibition and this accompanying volume, she reveals critical and new conceptual connections among artistic traditions from distinctive cultural centers across sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

The Metropolitan Museum's staff has realized this project with great imagination. Both the exhibition and the book present masterpieces of African sculpture, generously lent by collectors and institutions around the world, from a fresh perspective. These works reintroduce us to some of the most celebrated icons in African art, including the illustrious traditions of the Yoruba peoples and the Kingdom of Benin, and bring to the foreground for the first time majestic portrayals of Hemba leaders from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We are grateful to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and The Ceil & Michael E. Pulitzer Foundation, Inc., whose support was critical to the exhibition. We also thank The MCS Endowment Fund for making this book possible.

Thomas P. Campbell

Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Preface and Acknowledgments

*Le caractère d'un visage dessiné ne dépend pas de ses diverses proportions mais d'une
lumière spirituelle qu'il reflète. Si bien que deux dessins du même visage peuvent
représenter le même caractère bien que les proportions des visages de ces deux
dessins soient différentes.*

—HENRI MATISSE, *JAZZ*¹

THUS A GREAT TWENTIETH-CENTURY MASTER, WHO WAS AMONG THE EARLIEST IN the West to appreciate African sculpture, reflected on the universal artistic desire to reach beyond the literal likeness of an individual to capture and render some intangible essence of his or her being. Although Matisse admired the formal dynamism and conceptual nature of African sculptural representations, their original significance was unknown to him. This book, and the exhibition it accompanies, examines that larger significance as it relates to the aesthetic conventions developed by African artists from eight distinct cultures. In doing so it seeks to define seminal genres of figurative representation in relation to specific subjects. It demonstrates that underlying each of these forms of expression was a shared imperative to enshrine in sculpture some critical and transcendent quality of those individuals deemed exceptional in their respective societies.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the first photographic portraits and written commentaries providing documentation of African leaders were recorded by Europeans. These archives were informed by Western biases that have indelibly shaped popular perceptions of the region and created a visual inventory of rulers who became colonial subjects. Many of the Africans depicted in this new medium recognized its potential to consolidate and extend their standing and thus were actively engaged in shaping their own images. By the 1870s African photographers had launched careers operating studios in coastal towns. Their clientele included kings and chiefs who commissioned portraits influenced by Western studio practices and conventions. The novel and exotic character of the early pictorial record generated by European and African photographers was such that, from 1898 onward, many of the images were reproduced as postcards by European publishers and circulated internationally. It was not until the mid-twentieth century that a fuller and more complex record and awareness of inspirational leaders from Africa came to international attention. Many were heroic figures in struggles for independence from Western colonialism and beyond: Emperor Haile Selassie I, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Steven Biko, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Nelson Mandela, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Kofi Annan, Wangari Maathai, and Wole Soyinka.

It is poignant to consider that the unprecedented changes that ushered photography into Africa also contributed to the general demise of the sculptural traditions examined in this exhibition. While in some instances the political and social disruptions African leaders experienced under colonialism gradually led to

abandonment of these traditions over the course of the century and replacement with new modes of expression, in others their elimination was more abrupt. Whatever the case, it is critical to realize that the sculptural record presented in this exhibition pays tribute to precolonial African leaders defined and immortalized as larger-than-life figures by artists from their own societies. They achieved this using locally developed vernaculars defined by their own ideals and by values parallel to those in other great artistic centers throughout history.

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN NURTURED OVER THE YEARS BY CEIL AND MICHAEL Pulitzer, whose friendship, intellectual adventurousness, and social conscience have been an important source of inspiration to me. Essential institutional support for *Heroic Africans* was provided by Thomas P. Campbell, Director; Jennifer Russell, Associate Director for Exhibitions; and Julie Jones, Andrall E. Pearson Curator in Charge of the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas at the Metropolitan Museum.

Much cheerful and thoughtful effort and research was contributed by assistant curator Yaëlle Biro, who tracked down sources, combed through photographic archives, identified and secured contextual images, researched provenance, coordinated photography and ensured its accuracy, proofread galleys, and more. Africanist authorities Doran Ross, Christaud Geary, and Louis de Strycker generously agreed to read, respectively, the Akan, Cameroon, and Hemba sections of this publication, and their insightful observations allowed for significant improvements. Chris also shared her incomparable knowledge of the history of photography in Africa, which we have drawn upon. I am immensely grateful that Phyllis Galembo and the Steven Kasher Gallery have contributed Galembo's vibrant photographic portraits to the installation, bringing this project into the present. I am further indebted to the time and thought that Metropolitan Museum colleagues Christopher Lightfoot and Seán Hemingway in the Department of Greek and Roman Art, Jeff Rosenheim in the Department of Photographs, and Catharine Roehrig and Diana Craig Patch in the Department of Egyptian Art devoted to reading early drafts of relevant sections and contributing advice on appropriate references and issues relating to their respective fields of expertise. AAOA interns Roger Arnold, Dominiq Williams, Grace Dingleline, Ramsay Kolber, and Katherine Finerty were invaluable assets at various stages of this project, beginning with developing the exhibition checklist and later contributing their talents to essential assignments: from supervising the creation of customized maps to doing research on archival photographs, video documentation, and public programs that have meaningfully enriched this presentation of great works of sculpture. Exhibitions Registrar Meryl Cohen oversaw the logistics of obtaining loans from nineteen institutions and fourteen private collections in the United States and Europe. In her examination of works in our own collection as well as the many loans gathered for this project, Ellen Howe provided careful analysis, detailed observations, and painstaking treatments when necessary.

The Museum's Photograph Studio, led by Barbara Bridgers, went to extraordinary lengths to document the majority of the works presented. With great patience, Peter Zeray traveled on location to capture far-flung sculptures with accuracy and poetry. Wilson Santiago made the most delicate of corrections to those

photographs, allowing for a seamless integration of the new images with others obtained from lending institutions.

It was a great pleasure to collaborate with editor Harriet Whelchel on this publication, which benefited in innumerable ways from her insightful refinements and care. It has lived up to its potential as a result of a remarkable partnership and her own indefatigable efforts. The beautiful synthesis of text and images that is this publication was wrought by the gifted designer Katy Homans. Penny Jones ably edited the bibliographic materials, and Jane Tai aided in gathering and clearing permissions for contextual images. Peter Antony, with the assistance of Jennifer Van Dalsen, assured the book's flawless production. Marcie Muscat oversaw the editing and exacting review of the extensive didactic text integrated into the installation. Throughout, Michael Sittenfeld provided encouragement and guidance and Mark Polizzotti thought-provoking direction.

The design of the exhibition's installation reflects a fresh approach envisioned by Michael Laphorn. It has also benefited significantly from the talents of Sophia Geronimus's elegant graphic contributions throughout. Taylor Miller implemented the blueprint with unfailing professionalism. Frederick Sager and Jenna Wainwright prepared each work so that it might be presented in an ideal manner. The efforts of Rebecca Fifield and Robert Sorenson provided invaluable logistical support that allowed the installation to move forward smoothly. As ever, I am most appreciative of Linda Sylling's seasoned leadership of our team.

My own role models and personal heroes, Robert R. and Anita LaGamma, have significantly shaped my view of this subject. For their wisdom and the example they afford, I am forever in their debt. I thank them and Ard Tollief Berge for their energizing engagement throughout this effort and for the many critical conversations that allowed me to formulate my thinking. I further want to express appreciation to Philippe de Montebello for the professional standard he has provided for those of us who learned so much from him.

I am immensely grateful to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and The Ceil & Michael E. Pulitzer Foundation, Inc., without whose contributions the exhibition could not have happened, and to The MCS Endowment Fund, which made this publication possible.

1. Henri Matisse, *Jazz* [Paris]: Tériade Éditeur [1947], pp. 57, 58. "The character of a face in a drawing does not depend on its various proportions but rather on the spiritual light that it reflects. It is true that two drawings of the same face can portray the same character, even though the proportions of the faces may differ." English translation: [Munich, New York]: Prestel Verlag [2009], p. 164

Lenders to the Exhibition

Friends and colleagues associated with the collections listed below generously moved heaven and earth to enable the exhibition of some of the greatest sculptural works created in Africa before the nineteenth century.

Belgium

Marc Blanpain

Pierre Darteville

Bernard de Grunne

Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium: Guido Gryseels, Director General, and
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Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière (with the assistance of Elise Longuet)

Musée du Quai Branly, Paris: Stéphane Martin, President, and Hélène Joubert, Curator

Germany

Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin: Peter Junge, Curator and
Deputy Director

Museum der Welkulturen, Frankfurt am Main: Christine Stelzig, former Deputy
Director, and Mona Suhrbier, Curator

Great Britain

The British Museum, London: Julie Hudson and Christopher Spring, Africa Keepers,
and Fiona Grisdale, Senior Administrator

Terence Dickinson

Portugal

Museu Etnográfico–Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa: Manuela Cantinho, Curator

Museu de História Natural–Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade do Porto:

Maria José Cunha, Curator

Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, Lisbon: Luis Raposo, Director, and
Ana Isabel Santos, Administrator

Museu Nacional de Etnologia, Lisbon: Joana Amaral, Conservator

Switzerland

Museum Rietberg, Zurich: Lorenz Homberger, Curator

United States

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Deputy Director
Sheldon Solow (with the assistance of Moriah Evans)
Shelby White
Ziff Family (with the assistance of David Joralemon, Jennifer Elliott,
and Ben Watkins)



MAP OF AFRICA, FOCUSING ON THE SUB-SAHARAN REGION

Heroic Africans



Introduction: Enshrining Greatness

Ο βίος βραχύς, ἡ δὲ τέχνη μακρὴ (*Ho bios brakhys, hê de tekhnê makrê*)

Ars longa, vita brevis / Life is short, art endures

— HIPPOCRATES (460–400 BCE), *APHORISMS*, SECT. I, I

ARTISTS THROUGH THE AGES HAVE RISEN TO THE CHALLENGE OF PORTRAYING notable persons through transcendent sculptural creations that would outlive their ephemeral subjects. Although the fame of an individual may be lost through the vicissitudes of history, such works endure as a monument to his or her life. From ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome to Renaissance Italy and other world cultures, artists working in different traditions have developed their own visual vocabularies for capturing lasting impressions of remarkable leaders. This study explores that concept as it relates to major sculptural traditions from a diverse array of centers in sub-Saharan Africa. Contrary to widely held beliefs, artists from a variety of African cultures were called upon to produce works identified with specific individuals. In assessing the significance of those artistic creations, we are faced with a series of questions: Why is it that the individuals commemorated through works of African art are generally unknown to us today? What was the nature of the connection between such works and the subjects they represent? Who were the people who inspired or merited visual tributes? What social imperative informed their patronage? What formal conventions distinctive to particular African centers were developed to define such depictions? Can we identify certain commonalities in the way African artists from culturally distinct societies elected to portray illustrious personages?

The canon of African art is a rich and highly diverse one in which the human form has been the major focus of artistic expression, although not all of its figurative traditions were originally associated with particular subjects. It is not possible to determine on a purely visual basis which creations by African sculptors were originally conceived to evoke individuals. Consequently, an awareness of the circumstances that led artists to reference specific persons in their work is essential to informing our understanding of these modes of expression. To explore these questions, case studies have been selected to encompass sculptural creations—composed of fired clay and cast brass as well as carved ivory and wood—from eight distinct regional centers across western and central Africa. These sculptural genres were conceived by artists and rulers to pay tribute to highly revered and influential members of their respective societies, which include the kingdoms of Ife and Benin, both in Nigeria; Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire’s Akan chiefdoms; the Bangwa and Kom chiefdoms of the Cameroon Grassfields; Chokwe chiefdoms in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.); and the D.R.C.’s Luluwa, Kuba, and Hemba chiefdoms.¹

Before their transfer to Western collections beginning in the early twentieth century, such works had served for generations as important historical markers within their original communities. The oldest of the cultural traditions considered is

ALTERNATE VIEW OF
FIG. 16

that of the refined, fired-clay likenesses, dated as early as the twelfth century, by Yoruba artists at Ife in southwestern Nigeria. These works precede any written accounts or histories of the region by some seven hundred years. Given the greater vulnerability of wood to fire, humidity, and insect damage, the oldest examples of wood sculptures, from Cameroon, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, generally date to the early nineteenth century. Even the most recent of these, however, predate by nearly a century the earliest written accounts by members of those societies.

Prior to European colonialism, regional histories in sub-Saharan Africa were transmitted orally from one generation to the next. Such traditions are by definition continually evolving representations narrated by individuals who provide accounts of the past as they are handed down and modified in light of their contemporary perspective. Unbound by the constraints of written accounts, oral histories have been reimagined in the retelling to make sense of contemporary experience.² The historian Joseph Miller notes that in systems in which knowledge is transmitted orally, information relating to key events must by necessity be distilled selectively to an essential point.³ This compressed information is in turn easily recalled through the form of a mnemonic device. Referred to by historians as “clichés,” these ciphers for key historic developments serve as secure points of reference to a past that the oral historian can no longer tangibly perceive. They are the central elements around which histories are constructed and through which the past is preserved.⁴ The sculptural genres developed within these same traditions play parallel roles. In each of the cultures examined, it will be evident that the leaders who were destined to become the protagonists in these historical narratives were also memorialized through sculptures that distilled their subjects to essential qualities. The subjects of these visual paradigms were identified both through the recitation of relevant narratives and by the way they were positioned at particular sites. Such representations were in turn at once reproduced, embellished, related to other works passed down to successive generations, and situated within dynamic ritual contexts.

Scholars have noted a tendency among societies that rely upon oral traditions to credit founders of dynasties with not only their own accomplishments but also those of their successors. In Miller’s words, “ascending anachronisms” shift the deeds of later rulers to an earlier “time of origins.”⁵ Oral traditions are also subject to what historians refer to as “telescoping.”⁶ As a result of the practical limitations of human memory, over time the list of names relating to a particular dynasty reaches a point when it no longer continues to expand; instead, as new names are added others fall off. The result is a privileging of references to the earliest leaders of a particular line, as well as those of its most recent members, while intermediate figures are dropped. Further, in order to impart a quality of concreteness to these narratives, they are usually cast in personalized terms.⁷ Accordingly, the nature of the connection between rulers of successive generations is often characterized as that of a familial transition from father to son.

Because the sculptural works to be examined here have been unmoored from essential keys to their interpretation, it is generally impossible today to reconnect them to specific personages. As a result, even though they are among the only extant records of historical figures, they have been considered in ahistorical terms and for the most part discussed as generic expressions of an entire culture. That

they refer to particular individuals has remained largely unacknowledged in the West. Despite the lacuna of biographical information concerning their subjects, however, realization of the profound nature of the connection between these creations and scores of exemplary lives is critical to the appreciation of their original purpose. Ultimately, the surviving sculptural record from these regions constitutes the most direct expression in a fixed form of the precolonial experience of those communities.

SCULPTURE AND THE IMITATION OF NATURE

The very physicality of sculpture endows it with the capacity to fill an absence with an evocative presence. The literal and direct nature of such replication was a quality that informed definitions of sculpture among theorists during the Renaissance. The humanist, author, and architect Leon Battista Alberti is credited with the first writings on this subject in modern times. Alberti emphasized that the ultimate aim of an artist is to imitate nature (*mimesis*), and his treatises *On Painting* (*Della pittura*) (1435) and *On Sculpture* (*De statua*) (1443) direct the practitioner on how to achieve this systematically according to empirical methods derived from Classical theories of optics and mathematical principles. He opens his discussion of *De statua* with reflections on what he imagines as the origins of the plastic art. He proposes that the earliest artists identified naturally occurring physical entities as partially formed images, which they modified in order to achieve likenesses, but that eventually a mastery of elemental matter afforded artists greater creative control.⁸ Alberti's reflections anticipated discoveries relating to what may be among humankind's earliest known three-dimensional symbolic representations, the Makapansgat pebble, a jasperite stone with natural wear patterns whose appearance suggests that of a human face (fig. 1). This artifact was found in the Limpopo region of South Africa in relation to the 2.5- to 2.9-million-year-old remains of *Australopithecus africanus*, who may have recognized in it a human visage and decided to carry it with him as a valued possession.

The active process of carving a representation out of stone, ivory, or wood is defined by a subtraction of matter, which is irreversible and thus does not allow

FIG. 1. Makapansgat pebble. Limpopo region, Makapan Valley north of Mokopane, South Africa. 2.5–2.9 million BCE. Jasperite stone, $3\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$ in. (8.3 x 6.9 cm). The University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg





FIG. 2. Linton panel. San peoples; South Africa. Possibly 18th–19th century. Ocher and other pigments on stone, $31\frac{1}{2} \times 80\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$ in. (80 x 205 x 20 cm). South African Museum, Cape Town SAM-AA 3185

for corrections. The modeling of likeness through clay and wax is more forgiving but is also a tactile reconfiguration and extrapolation of form from solid matter. The merit of sculpture's ability to duplicate reality more fully than painting, which relies on two-dimensional notation, was the subject of a vigorous debate during the Renaissance. This issue, referred to as the *Paragone*, was extensively addressed in the late fifteenth century by Leonardo da Vinci, who expounded on the superiority of painting in the opening section of his *Treatise on Painting* (*Trattato della pittura*, first published in 1651), arguing that painting exacts greater intellectual demands than poetry, music, or sculpture. He noted that ultimately the painter may duplicate three-dimensionality as *relievo* but in order to do so must use ingenuity, *ingegno*, rather than mere physical effort, to master considerations of light, shade, color, body, shape, position, distance, nearness, motion, and rest.

Across the African subcontinent, painting as a medium of expression can be traced as far back as twelve thousand years and is evident in vestigial images depicting human figures, animals, and geometric motifs rendered in natural pigments of black, red, and white and applied to rock surfaces.⁹ This tradition of painting south of the equator is attributed principally to forager peoples who were once the sole inhabitants of southern Africa and whose descendants include the Khoisan or San (also referred to as Bushmen).¹⁰ A striking aspect of many of these site-specific pictorial compositions is their incorporation of features of the natural stone surfaces upon which they were painted as well as evidence of adjustments made over time through the layering of images (fig. 2).¹¹

Some three thousand years ago, Bantu peoples living in the area of modern Nigeria and Cameroon began expanding eastward along the northern fringes of the equatorial forest, ending in the Great Lakes region of eastern Africa and along the Congo River, and ultimately coming into contact with the previously established forager groups.¹² Whereas the foragers commanded a profound understanding of and attachment to the land and its resources, which they believed could be harnessed spiritually, the Bantu groups brought with them ironworking technology and connections with long-distance trade networks. These essential differences between the two groups appear to have been reflected in their respective

preferences in idioms of expression. The migrant Bantu societies introduced and developed sculptural genres such as the ones examined in this study, commemorating notable members of society through a physical presence that served as a shrine for an essential being. On one level, the three-dimensional literalness of sculpture afforded its subjects a concrete point of reference beyond their bodily beings. On another, the aesthetic formulations developed to frame a representation privileged certain aspects of the sitter's identity so that he or she was ultimately defined according to a broader cultural ideal.

SCULPTURAL PARADIGMS FOR HEROIC SUBJECTS

A false dichotomy in popular imagination has come to distinguish Western Classical traditions from those of Africa as formally and conceptually antithetical. To some extent this epistemological distinction can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when the European avant-garde rejected antique Classicism in favor of non-Western traditions as sources for new directions in artistic expression. The historical accessibility and relative naturalism of the Western tradition have also contributed to unfounded assumptions concerning that art's own espousal of mimesis. A look at both classical African and Western artistic genres concerned with commemoration makes evident a shared preoccupation with idealizing specific subjects according to various culturally defined aesthetic measures.

According to the Classical linguist Jorge Bravo, Greeks of the fifth through fourth century BCE applied the term *hērōs* expansively to encompass familial and clan ancestors, eponymous figures identified with landmarks, and subjects of epic narratives.¹³ Those so designated, who shared a capacity to shape the lives of others beyond their own mortal existence, were honored at shrines and their achievements extolled through poetic tributes, which in turn served as inspiration for depictions by visual artists.¹⁴ Given the mortality of their subjects, these works of art served critical roles as both commemorative markers and extensions of specific legacies.

FIG. 3. Funerary relief of a man holding a portrait bust. Roman. Mid-1st century CE. Marble, 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (25 x 35 cm). Villa Albani, Rome. From Eve D'Ambra, *Art & Identity in the Roman World*, 1998. p. 26, fig. 10

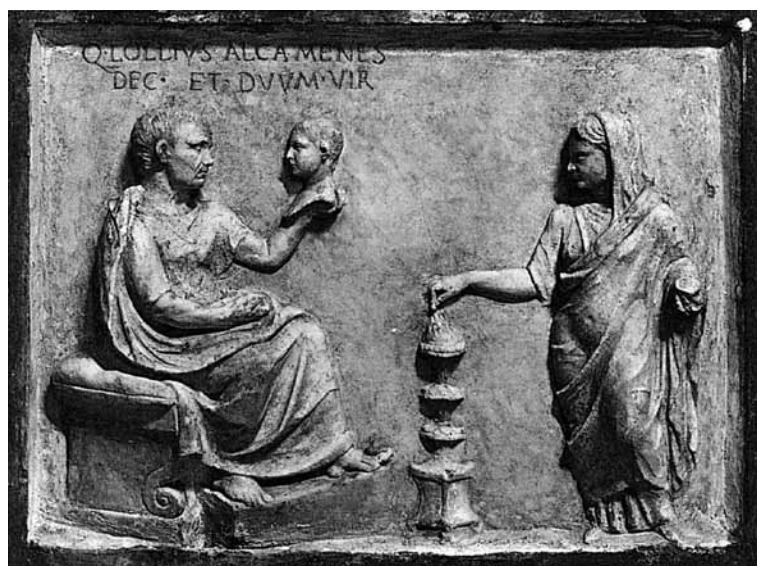




FIG. 4. Head from a statue of Harmodios (copy of Greek original attributed to Kritios and Nesiotes, ca. 477–476 BCE). Roman, Imperial. 1st–2nd century CE. Marble, H. 10 in. (25.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund, 1926 26.60.1

FIG. 5. Statuette of the Diadoumenos (copy of a Greek bronze statue by Polykleitos, ca. 430 BCE). Late Hellenistic. 1st century BCE. Terracotta, H. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (29 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund, 1932 32.11.2

The death mask is believed to have been a precursor to the Western sculpted portrait bust, which was formulated in antiquity as a means of honoring both individuals who merited public recognition and familial ancestors who were the focus of private devotion. The art historian Irving Lavin has noted that the Classical portrait bust in all its iterations essentially distills the body into an abstract idealized form.¹⁵ An illustration of this can be found in a funerary relief of the mid-first century CE (fig. 3) depicting Alcamenes, a Romanized Greek, seated and holding what appears to be a funerary bust made from a death mask.¹⁶ In this image the protagonist and the facsimile of a deceased relation confront one another directly.

Greek sculptors carefully observed nature as a point of departure for developing idealized versions of their subjects. In their scrutiny of human models, they selectively appropriated those attributes that corresponded to their idea of perfection and combined them into a depiction of a single being. Features favored by Classical Greek sculptors include an oval head, smooth skin, regular facial features, widely spaced almond-shaped eyes, a broad chin, an unbroken profile contour from the slope of the forehead to the end of the nose, a hairstyle of wavy locks swept back from a central part, and very specific body proportions (fig. 4).¹⁷ In

order to achieve systematic canonical results, Greek artists developed a set of proportional relationships based upon an ideal morphology of the human figure. By about 450 BCE, the sculptor and theorist Polykleitos of Argos had codified an authoritative set of mathematical rules for producing a perfectly balanced figure. He and other artists improved upon reality to such a degree that the resulting works are in essence a form of abstraction (fig. 5).

The early Romans harnessed artistic representations to emphasize a paragon of individual achievement over that of physical perfection. Representations of notables and distinguished ancestors were created for display following funerals and other public occasions. The immediate and intimate nature of the connection between such depictions and their subjects resulted from the likeness often being derived from a wax impression of the face of a deceased individual. Those *imagines* were the visual focal points of patrician funeral processions, which served at once to honor the deceased and to attest to his or her membership in a distinguished familial lineage. Elite citizens further preserved the memory of deceased family members by commissioning sculptural portraits.¹⁸ Kept in the home or in tombs, such works fulfilled a ritual obligation to honor the departed and keep family history alive, as well as to underscore the prosperity of the patron (fig. 6). Given the importance Roman society placed on exemplary role models of the past as harbingers of future achievement, contemplation of commemorative images was intended to inspire viewers to emulate esteemed ancestors. In addition to family portraits, tributes to dynasts, statesmen, and officials were sponsored by the Senate to mark military victories and other achievements. These were positioned prominently in public places with dedicatory inscriptions indicating the occasion for their creation as well as their subjects' ancestry. In some instances these portraits became separated from their annotated bases. Absent accompanying inscriptions or removed from their original familial contexts, the subjects of Roman sculptural representations would not have been immediately recognizable.¹⁹ Although extensive

FIG. 6. Top of a funerary relief with portrait busts of a young man and an elderly woman. Roman, Antonine. ca. 138–141 CE. Marble, 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 15 x 3 in. (23.8 x 38.1 x 7.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1918 18.145.47



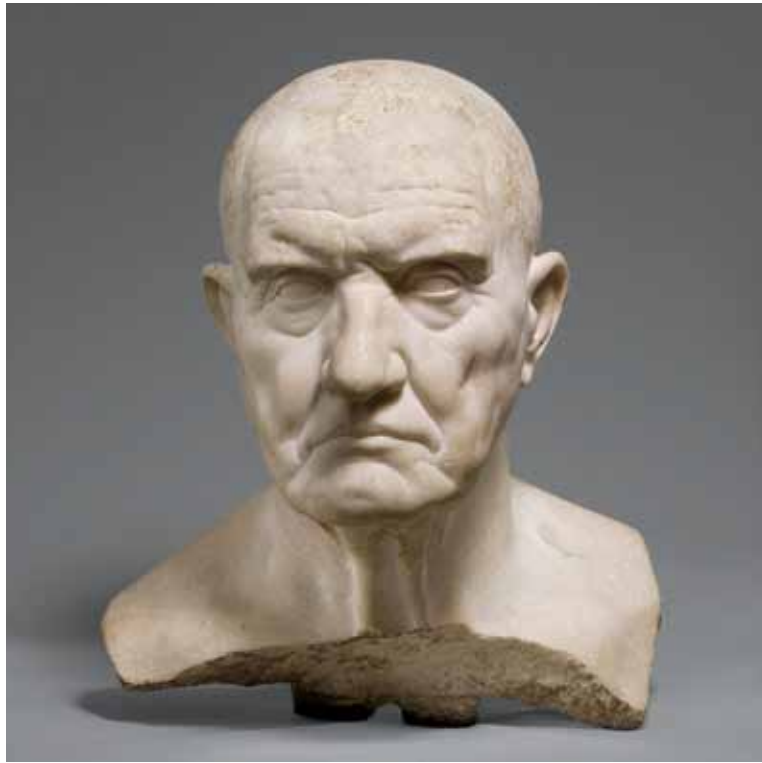


FIG. 7. Portrait bust of a man. Roman, Republican. 1st century BCE. Marble, H. 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (36.5 cm).
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1912 12.233

contemporaneous written histories provide a detailed picture of life in ancient Rome, innumerable portraits of its citizens are no longer identifiable by name.²⁰

During the late Republican period (late second–early first century BCE), artists emphasized the *gravitas* of elite subjects through the articulation of details such as receding hairlines, creased skin, pocked complexions, sagging cheeks, or uneven jowls.²¹ This clinical obsession with portraying the effects of bodily wear and aging, perhaps attesting to the heavy imprint of worldly experience, has been labeled *verism* (fig. 7).²² While at first glance *verism* may appear to reflect a highly realistic naturalism, its emphatic application to the depiction of an entire class of subjects makes evident that, rather than simply providing an unsparing record of physical appearance, it constitutes another formal convention that departs from nature. The Hellenistic sculpture specialist R. R. R. Smith has proposed that this formal cataloguing of physiognomic imperfections evident in depictions of Roman subjects of this period reflects the hypercritical reaction to these individuals by their Greek authors.²³ He suggests that despite such unflattering intent, the likenesses were favorably received by Roman patrons, who valued what they perceived to be visual corroboration of their longevity, modesty, and depth of experience, all evidence of their uncompromising devotion to duty, unwavering patriotism, and steadfast commitment to public service. At the same time, it had been a long-standing tradition for members of the Roman aristocracy to trace their families back to Greek gods or heroes. During the late Republic, ideas of divine patronage and identification with mythological figures also increasingly informed representations of the aristocracy.²⁴ Notable among these were the images promulgated by Marc Antony and Octavian in their rivalry for power. Representations of Marc

Antony emphasized him as the protégé of Dionysus and Heracles, in contrast to Octavian's identification with Apollo.²⁵

In consolidating his successful claim to power, Octavian redefined himself as the emperor Augustus. Essential to that process was his sponsorship of a new portrait type informed by the Classical canon of proportions and characterized by an ageless beauty.²⁶ According to that formula, the emperor appears fresh faced and youthful, with a sharply chiseled nose, prominent cheekbones, thin lips, and a signature hairstyle marked by a fringe parted so that locks are separated and combed in opposite directions, in the manner of Polykleitos (fig. 8).²⁷ The Classical archaeologist Paul Zanker notes that the adherence of the image of Augustus to Classical forms resulted in a highly artificial representation to which a few authentic physiognomic traits were added.²⁸ Although the depiction's relation to Augustus's actual appearance was negligible, it became the official likeness reproduced and disseminated across the empire throughout his lifetime. Into the emperor's late seventies, it served as a readily recognizable statement concerning the vigorous and still ascendant character of his leadership. A companion image of Augustus's consort, Livia, shown as a mature woman with widely spaced almond-shaped eyes, a smooth complexion, and a distinctive coiffure parted in the middle and arranged in rows of crimped ridges, was similarly promoted as the widely emulated paragon of female leadership (fig. 9).²⁹ Zanker suggests that over time the standardization of Augustus's idealized image at the summit of the Roman state led to its adoption as a model for depictions of successive leaders, who wished to promote their affiliation with him by underscoring their familial resemblance, as well as of other prosperous members of society.³⁰

Like their Western counterparts, African artists idealized their subjects and framed their representations according to locally established formal criteria. Often the author introduced nuanced adjustments to the formal definition of a work to reflect the identity of the individual referenced. Although these formulas for commemorating individuals were determined according to specific cultural ideals, they all favored a physical state of youthful vitality and a demeanor of contemplative serenity. This emphasis on rendering their subjects in a timeless state of heightened self-composure is a quality intrinsic to most portraiture.³¹ As with many antique examples, identification of comparable African depictions was often based on their inclusion in an expansive multipart sculptural tableau, positioned in a comprehensible sequence and further expounded upon by oral narrative. With the removal of the works from these contexts, identification becomes difficult to impossible.

An overview of the evolution of the portrait bust in the West provides an example of how artistic conventions are continually adjusted, modulated, and layered to expand their potential for evoking their subject. During the Middle Ages, the genre was adapted as a figurative receptacle for a holy relic—a particle of a saint's body, representing his or her essence—preserved within. Generally created at a considerable temporal distance from the lifetime of the saint referenced, the representation was not based on any familiarity with actual appearance. Instead the vitality and engagement of the sanctified subject portrayed was conveyed through an alert gaze and intense expression. Whether set off by elaborate framing devices or displayed fully in the round during processions, these containers for *sacra* were conceived to be viewed completely free of any set environment.³²





OPPOSITE: FIG. 8. Portrait of Octavian. Roman. 5–15 CE. Marble, 16 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 9 x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (41.6 x 22.8 x 23.6 cm). Private collection

ABOVE: FIG. 9. Portrait head of a matron in the style of Livia. Roman, Late Republican or Early Augustan. ca. 40–20 BCE. Marble, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (26 x 16.5 x 19.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Philodori Gifts, 2000 2000.38

Lavin observes that the middle of the fifteenth century marks the revival of independent portrait sculpture, in the forms of the equestrian monument, the medal, and the bust.³³ Whereas in antiquity such representations were the prerogative of nobility and the imperial family, during the Renaissance any deserving individual or person of means could be so distinguished. As a secular representation of a living individual free of a confining base, the independent Renaissance bust constituted an entirely new genre, displayed both inside the home and as part of its exterior.³⁴



FIG. 10. Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi, known as Donatello (Florentine, ca. 1386–1466). Reliquary bust of Saint Rossore. ca. 1425. Cast bronze, chased, engraved, and gilded, 22 x 23 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (56 x 60.5 x 37 cm). Museo Nazionale di San Matteo, Pisa

FIG. 11. Andrea Pisano (Pisan, 1290–1348). Relief panel with sculptor Phidias. 1334. Marble, 32 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 27 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (83 x 69 cm). Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Florence

In his transitional depiction of Saint Rossore in Pisa (fig. 10), the early Renaissance master Donatello is credited with the fusion of antique busts and medieval reliquaries, leading to the creation of the modern portrait bust.³⁵ This gilded lifesize bronze from about 1422–27 once contained the bones of the saint, making its subject physically present. The bottom edge of the figure’s drapery spills onto an underlying surface so that it appears to be an object resting on a support.³⁶ Although the attention to physical detail and the expressiveness of the face suggest a portrait, no image of Saint Rossore is known. It has been suggested that Donatello appropriated his own likeness in bringing his subject to life.³⁷

To the Neoplatonists, the freeing of pure form from a dull mass was a symbol of catharsis and spiritual rebirth.³⁸ At the most exalted level, masters like Michelangelo were considered visionaries who released their figurative subjects from inert matter and infused them with life. The art historian David Summers notes that Michelangelo himself referred to his sculpture as *viva* (living) and that this idea is evident in a number of his poems: “As by taking away (*levar*), lady, one sets in stone alpine and hard/a live figure (*una viva figura*)/that the more increases as the stone diminishes.”³⁹ In this he looked back to the long-standing metaphorical parallel of the sculptor replicating the act of genesis through the reshaping of matter, evident within the exterior decorative program of the Campanile of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, designed by Giotto in 1334. A sequence of relief panels

by Andrea Pisano, devoted to Creation and to humanity's progress as exemplified by the activities of various innovators, includes the Creator bending forward in a protective stance to bless a supine Adam, who gazes up at him.⁴⁰ In a subsequent panel, clearly modeled upon the earlier one, the sculptor Phidias leans over a figure he is releasing from stone with his mallet and chisel (fig. 11).

According to the art historian Richard Brilliant, Renaissance portraiture's identification with humanist individualism inspires unmerited confidence in its faithfulness to nature.⁴¹ In his treatise on rules of order and proportion, *Trattato delle perfette proporzioni*, the Renaissance sculptor and theoretician Vincenzo Danti drew upon Aristotle's *Poetics* to make an essential distinction between *ritrarre*, which he defines as a desire to replicate exactly the appearance of something as it is seen, and *imitare*, to depict it as it would be in a state of perfection.⁴² Aristotle described the two approaches by contrasting the historian, who describes a thing as it has been, with the poet, who evokes what it might ideally be.⁴³ There can be no better example of that poetic license than Michelangelo's portrayal of Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici in the Medici Chapel of San Lorenzo in Florence (fig. 12). As Michelangelo explained to his contemporary Niccolò Martelli, he

did not take from Duke Lorenzo or Duke Giuliano for his model exactly what had been represented and composed by nature, rather he gave them a grandeur, a proportion, a decorum, a grace, a splendor which it seems to him bears them more praise, saying that a thousand years hence no one will be able to know that they were otherwise, such that, seeing them, people will be stupefied by them.⁴⁴

Although the actual appearance of a given subject may only remotely resemble its artistic corollary, the underlying intention is what ultimately establishes the connection between them. This "gap" between the original appearance of a subject and our experience of it through the work itself is apparent in the degree to which the viewer's imagination is invited to complete the artist's deliberate reconfiguration of the body to evoke essential qualities.⁴⁵ Michelangelo moved beyond the limits of how the Medici *capitani* might have been perceived visually in order to define them according to a transcendent truth of his own envisioning. Danti notes that when an artist's rendition of his subject attains a formal perfection that surpasses that of its actual appearance, the work of art may itself become an object copied by other artists.⁴⁶

Although scholars can trace nuanced changes and developments of the Western portrait bust over hundreds of years and across regional centers, the extant historical record of sub-Saharan African sculptural genres is not comprehensive enough to allow the same treatment. The nature of the connections and historical ties that may have led to exchanges and influences between Egyptian civilization and the precursors of more recent sub-Saharan cultures is likewise unrecorded, although again some parallels are evident. For the ancient Egyptians, creating sculptural works to commemorate the permanent presence of a person was a religious imperative. They conceived of mortal existence as a convergence of the physical body with an individual's life force, or *ka*, and the essence that defined that being, called *ba*. Perpetuation of this dynamic following death required a proper burial, in which the body was preserved through mummification, allowing



FIG. 12. Michelangelo Buonarroti (Florentine, 1475–1564). Tomb of Giuliano de' Medici (detail). 16th century. Marble, H. 68 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (173 cm). Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence

OPPOSITE: FIG. 13. Nikare, his wife, and their daughter. Memphite region, probably Saqqara, Egypt. Old Kingdom, Dynasty 5, Reign of Niuserre, or later. ca. 2420–2389 BCE. Limestone, paint, 22 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (57 x 22.5 x 32.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1952 52.19

the *ba* to reconnect the body to its life force, thereby deriving from it the power of rebirth. The tomb, or “house of the *ka*,” was the locus for offerings to and statues of the deceased, intended to induce the *ka* back into an eternal form. In the absence of a mummified body, a *ka* figure portrayed with mouth open would provide an alternate vessel for the spirit of the deceased. As in many Western and sub-Saharan African visual tributes, the *ka* sculpture of Nikare, an Old Kingdom granary official, shows him as a powerful figure in the prime of life (fig. 13). Nikare is flanked by the significantly smaller representations of his wife and daughter. The faces of all three figures are nearly identical, and anatomical details throughout have been simplified into abstract idealized forms. Their physical unity and rigid posture express a sense of immutability befitting the symbol of a soul impervious to change.



**MODES OF REPRESENTATION IN AFRICAN ART:
THE KINGDOM OF BENIN**

Based on the artistic record, it is evident that, like artists from ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, and the Italian Renaissance, those from sub-Saharan Africa were fully capable of naturalistic representations. This ability is revealed in works relating to sculptural genres examined in this volume, ranging from the refined terracotta heads created in the twelfth century at Ife in southwestern Nigeria to the elegant wood figures carved during the nineteenth century by Hemba masters in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (figs. 34, 206). Much like their Western counterparts, these African artists executed visual tributes to exemplary persons with the intent to produce not a literal likeness but rather a worthy marker that





OPPOSITE: ALTERNATE VIEW OF FIG. 34. Head. Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria. 12th–15th century.
Terracotta, $12\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$ in. (31.1 x 14.6 x 18.4 cm). Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota,
The John R. Van Derlip Fund 95.84

ABOVE: ALTERNATE VIEW OF FIG. 206. Commemorative figure. Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region,
Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, $26\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$ in. (67.9 x 20 cm).
Private collection

would enshrine the subject's essence. Underlying the conception of the African commemorative traditions considered here was a dual imperative to reference subjects physically and to frame them pictorially according to an established artistic vernacular that would transpose them to a state of idealized perfection.

Although most African sculptural works, even ones made as recently as the nineteenth century, lack written commentaries to document the intentions of their authors or patrons, those relating to the kingdom of Benin (in modern Nigeria) are unusual for the quantity of pertinent sources going back to the fifteenth century. Official court histories handed down orally into the twentieth century survive alongside written commentaries by a succession of European visitors beginning in the late 1400s. This record, paired with the fact that works from Benin were composed of durable materials such as ivory and cast metal, affords an unusual historical vista into the past of a highly influential artistic center.

According to archaeological evidence and oral tradition, Benin was a flourishing state by the thirteenth or fourteenth century.⁴⁷ Although the territorial boundaries fluctuated throughout its history, they extended at the kingdom's height to Lagos and beyond Ouidah (in modern Republic of Benin) in the west, to Ekiti and Owo in the northeast, throughout the Ishan area in the northwest, and up to the Niger River in the east (see fig. 28, p. 39).⁴⁸ Benin's earliest leaders are abstractly identified with a dynasty referred to as Ogiso. It is said that during the kingdom's cultural florescence, terracotta commemorative heads called *uhunmwun-ele* were commissioned to honor royal ancestors and distinguish the altars dedicated to their memory.⁴⁹ In the early fourteenth century, a group of influential Benin elders, dissatisfied with the Ogiso dynasty's stewardship, sent an emissary to neighboring Ife to recruit new leadership, which resulted in the founding of the current dynasty of Benin rulers by the Yoruba prince Oranmiyan.⁵⁰ Beginning with Oranmiyan's son Eweka (r. ca. 1300), the title of *oba* (king) was transferred from father to senior son.⁵¹

Because in Benin culture the head is the fount of thought (*iroro*), judgment (*enwue*), and character (*exoe*), it is charged with an individual's well-being and, by extension, that of his or her family.⁵² Thus it has been suggested that, in order to distinguish themselves from the previous dynasty of Benin rulers and to assert their affiliation with Ife, the early rulers of the Oranmiyan dynasty adopted the brass commemorative head as the focal point of their own ancestral shrines. The historian J. U. Egharevba credits the fifth *oba*, Oguola (r. late 14th century), with requesting that the *ooni* of Ife send a brass caster to the Benin court (see also pp. 60–62).⁵³ The idealized character of these heads is the subject of a widely cited account: in his old age, Oba Ewuare (r. mid-15th century) charged the guilds of both carvers and casters to produce his likeness.⁵⁴ Although the carvers rendered him as he was, the casters flattered him with a representation of himself in the prime of youth. Accordingly, the latter were awarded the distinction of depicting the *obas* for posterity. Thus it was during the fifteenth century that artists at Benin, in dialogue with their royal patrons (notably Ewuare), developed a sculptural program for commemorating members of the Oranmiyan dynasty. In doing so, the artists responsible for this tradition subjected the *oba*'s likeness to the process of idealization Vincenzo Danti described as *imitare*, then introduced relatively minor adjustments according to the concept of *ritrarre*. Just as Danti noted of Renaissance artists, African sculptors also perpetuated and adapted successful formal models of representation,

thereby reinforcing the continuity of the dynasty and its identification with a consistent ideal of leadership. Because of this emphasis on a continuum, and the scarcity of written records, seminal leaders were often credited with the accomplishments of their successors in addition to their own. Ewuare was certainly the beneficiary of this tendency, as reflected in his further association with the adoption of Benin leadership's signature coral-bead regalia, the institution of essential court rites, and the rebuilding of an incinerated Benin City according to a new centralized plan.⁵⁵

Each new *oba* ensured dynastic continuity by overseeing construction of an altar dedicated to the memory of his predecessor, sited within a large rectangular compound of the palace (fig. 14).⁵⁶ Designed as a rounded platform, the altar held an array of carved and cast artifacts commissioned to honor the leader being commemorated. Centrally positioned among these were the freestanding brass heads through which the late *oba* transferred his power to the new *oba* and accepted responsibility for successfully directing and defining the latter's life. In addition to its aesthetic qualities, brass conferred on the works a sense of permanence and imbued them with the potential to deflect evil.⁵⁷ The royal paternal shrine served as the site at which the living monarch communicated with his ancestor via the latter's commemorative heads and elicited his intercession on behalf of the kingdom (fig. 15). It remains the setting for the annual rite of Ugie Erha Oba, when the *oba* honors the spirit of his late father and provides sacrificial offerings to the royal ancestors and the earth in which they are buried.⁵⁸ A European visitor to the Benin court during the first quarter of the nineteenth century reported seeing between twenty-five and thirty royal altars.⁵⁹ Although the adornment of the altars must have varied over time, descriptions from before the end of the nineteenth century suggest that each featured multiple heads symmetrically arranged.⁶⁰

Within the African canon, Benin art is striking for the consistency of its essentially naturalistic features. In the absence of contextual documentation that would allow us to identify and date the works, the art historian William Fagg has proposed a typology, refined by the anthropologist Philip Dark, grouping them into Early, Middle, and Late periods based on the designs of the coral-bead crown and collar, the relative naturalism or stylization of the facial features, and the thickness of the casting.⁶¹

According to this classification system, the earliest heads are distinguished by their naturalistic appearance and by the thin walls of the brass casting.⁶² Dated from the early fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, these works evidence a skillful and economical use of metal, reflecting the scarcity of copper alloys before trade with Europe led to their importation in great quantities.⁶³ Depictions of the ten *obas* who reigned during this period thus would have shared an emphasis on the full, rounded volume of the face, delicately framed with relatively simple beaded regalia.⁶⁴ An Early-period head in the Metropolitan's collection includes a rolled collar worn low on the neck, an element distinctive to such imagery of Benin rulers, and a latticework crown that covers the forehead and from which lateral strands are suspended around both ears (fig. 16). The subject's youthful face is rendered with precision, and there is a sensual dimension to the rounded features. The contours of the perfectly almond-shaped eyes are accentuated, and a single bead that extends from the perimeter of the crown down the length of the forehead is aligned with the ridge of the nose and septum, underscoring a bilateral symmetry.





OPPOSITE, ABOVE: FIG. 14. Earliest known photograph of a royal ancestral altar. Inscription on the frame reads JUJU ALTAR, KING COMPOUND, BENIN CITY, MAY 1891. 1891. Albumen print. Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. EEPA 1993-0014

OPPOSITE, BELOW: FIG. 15. Eliot Elisofon (American, 1911–1973). Ancestral altars for Oba Ovonnramwen and Eweka II. Benin City, Nigeria. 1970. Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. EEPA EECL 7595

ABOVE: FIG. 16. Head of an *oba* (two views). Edo peoples; Court of Benin, Nigeria. 16th century. Brass, $9\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{8} \times 9$ in. (23.5 x 21.9 x 22.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979 1979.206.86



FIG. 17. Head of an *oba* (two views). Edo peoples; Court of Benin, Nigeria. 17th century. Brass, 10¼ x 7⅞ x 8¼ in. (26 x 18.3 x 21.1 cm). Collection Laura and James J. Ross, New York

Commemorative heads attributed to the Middle period reflect a sharpening of formal elements and more elaborate regalia, as well as greater physical robustness and relative rigidity of features.⁶⁵ As seen in a classic example, fig. 17, the representation is cylindrical in structure. The face is confined to a rectangular aperture that is tightly circumscribed by boldly defined beaded regalia on all four sides. Within that discrete, windowlike panel, the planes of the slightly convex cheeks and other facial features are rendered schematically. The lattice network of the cap is accented with individual cylindrical beads and bead clusters on either side. From the lower lip to the base of the sculpture, the collar is represented by a stack of individually defined rings. These high beaded collars are also seen in Benin plaques thought to have been created from the sixteenth through the late seventeenth century. Given the prominence of this feature in the plaques, it has been suggested that some Middle-period heads are contemporaneous with the plaques and continued to be produced into the eighteenth century, a time frame spanning eleven different reigns.⁶⁶

Although in Benin culture the head embodied a specific individual's life course and was positioned on an altar dedicated to a particular leader, its idealization imparted a generic formal quality reminiscent of that seen in Roman images of Augustus and his heirs. This emphasis on a consistent visual point of reference from ruler to ruler reinforced the idea of familial succession across a single dynasty and blurred generational boundaries.



IDIA OF THE IVORY PENDANT MASKS

The sense of unity established through the perpetuation of representations defined by a consistent ideal did not preclude the identification of a work with a particular subject. This idea of formal duplication is a striking dimension of the aesthetic of two of the most familiar icons of African art to have been associated with a single individual. They are the closely related ivory pendant masks (figs. 18 and 19) depicting a royal woman identified by Oba Akenzua II (r. 1933–78) as Idia, the mother of Oba Esigie (r. early 16th century).⁶⁷

Each mask features an elongated oval face framed by an elaborately stylized arrangement of hair and complementary collar ornament. The lids of the eyes are emphasized so that the gaze appears subtly averted. The intensity of the gaze is underscored through inlays of iron defining the pupils and rims of the lower lids.

BELOW LEFT: FIG. 18. Queen mother pendant mask. Edo peoples; Court of Benin, Nigeria. 16th century. Ivory, iron, copper, $9\frac{5}{8} \times 4\frac{7}{8} \times 2\frac{3}{8}$ in. (24.5 x 12.5 x 6 cm). The British Museum, London AOA 1910.5-13.1

BELOW RIGHT AND OPPOSITE: FIG. 19. Queen mother pendant mask (two views). Edo peoples; Court of Benin, Nigeria. 16th century. Ivory, iron, copper (?), $9\frac{5}{8} \times 5 \times 3\frac{1}{4}$ in. (23.8 x 12.7 x 8.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1972 1978.412.323





The nostrils are delicately flared and the fleshy lips slightly parted. A rectilinear contour delimits a shaved hairline above which the hair is defined as a dense field of finely inscribed miniature coils. While the nearly identical works are almost certainly by the same artist, subtle formal variations distinguish them. Individual locks of hair on the version in the British Museum (fig. 18) are defined as miniature Portuguese merchant heads aligned to create an elegant tiaralike arrangement crowning the head. The other mask (fig. 19), in the Metropolitan, introduces a slightly more elaborate openwork passage alternating the Portuguese motif with that of a mudfish. Another variation occurs in the definition of the openwork collar, which extends around the perimeter of the lower half of the face. In fig. 18 it takes the form of an interlace pattern, whereas in fig. 19 a repeating band of the Portuguese motif echoes an element from the crown.

Both of the masks are hollow and appear to have served as amuletic containers. Because of their scale and the suspension lugs above and below each ear, it seems likely that they were worn as pectorals. The anthropologist and Benin specialist Paula Ben-Amos refers to them as waist pendants, however, and specifies that they were part of the *oba*'s ceremonial ensemble, to be worn at both Ugie Iyoba, the commemorative rites honoring the *oba*'s deceased mother, and Emobo, the ritual in which the *oba* drives evil forces out of Benin following the fortification of his mystical powers during the annual Igue ceremony.⁶⁸ Based on the delicacy of the carving, which is comparable to that of sixteenth-century ivory spoons and saltcellars commissioned for export by European visitors to the court, the masks probably date to the same period.⁶⁹

Remembered as one of Benin's most dynamic leaders, Oba Esigie presided during the early sixteenth century, a time of extraordinary prosperity and heightened regional influence, and he recognized the support of his mother as crucial to his success. His ascent to power followed the arrival of Portuguese navigators along the coast and the subsequent development of diplomatic and trade relations with Europe, which supplied luxury goods of coral beads, cloth, and brass in exchange for pepper, locally produced textiles, ivory, and slaves. Portuguese mercenaries provided a source of military defense against regional enemies, and beginning in the sixteenth century, imagery of the Portuguese was emblematic of power and affluence at the court of Benin. If the emphatic incorporation of Portuguese imagery in the ivory masks reinforces the theory that they were created during Esigie's reign, as Akenzua II proposed, it is conceivable that these works were executed during Idia's lifetime or soon after.⁷⁰ The motif of the mudfish featured in the Metropolitan's mask is also a ubiquitous one in Benin royal arts and cosmology, which conceives the path to the spirit world as lying across the sea, where in the afterlife its leaders would exist as divinities.⁷¹ A creature capable of existing both on land and in the water, the mudfish provided an ideal metaphor for the *oba*'s dual nature.

Esigie's achievements were especially impressive in light of the internal and external challenges to his leadership. His claim to the throne as firstborn son to Oba Ozolua was contested by his half-brother Arhwaran, leading to a protracted civil war in which Esigie prevailed.⁷² Benin was subsequently attacked by the Igala to the north, and, against what had seemed overwhelming odds, Esigie drove them back across the Niger River and made their leader a vassal.⁷³ In acknowledging the



FIG. 20. Rattle staff (two views). Edo peoples; Court of Benin, Nigeria. 1725–50. Bronze, copper, iron, 63½ x 1⅞ in. (161.3 x 4.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Ann and George Blumenthal Fund, 1974 1974.5



essential role that Idia's political acumen and mystical powers had played in the favorable outcome of both these crises, Esigie created a new title of *iyoba*, or queen mother, in her honor.⁷⁴ The art historian and Benin ivory specialist Barbara Blackmun suggests that the translation of tendrils of Idia's hair into Portuguese imagery refers to her ability to channel that foreign power on her son's behalf. Subsequent *iyoba* have served as trusted advisors to their sons and are commemorated with cast-brass heads on royal altars both at the *oba*'s palace and at their own palace in the village of Urelu, now part of Benin City.⁷⁵

OBA AKENZUA'S SCEPTER AND EZOMO EHENUA'S *IKEGOBO*

Although oral traditions characterize the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a time of vital development and expansion for Benin, they indicate that the seventeenth century was marked by dynastic turmoil and internal strife. Rival independent chiefs challenged the *obas*, and at the end of the seventeenth century, the *iyase*, or leader of the local town chiefs, staged a rebellion against Oba Ewuakpe.⁷⁶ Among Ewuakpe's sons were Akenzua, who was in line to succeed him, and Ehenua, the *oba*'s illegitimate firstborn son.⁷⁷ Although their kinship was generally unknown, Ewuakpe encouraged Akenzua to cultivate a favorable relationship with his half-brother, who was being raised by the *iyase*. While Ehenua was still a boy, however, a diviner foretold that he would one day cause the *iyase*'s demise, leading Ehenua to flee to Ishan, where he became a powerful individual.

Upon Ewuakpe's death, his son Ozuere (Ovbiozuere), with support from the *iyase*, attempted unsuccessfully to usurp the throne from his brother. A formidable

adversary, the *iyase* was one of Benin's two supreme military commanders. Oral traditions relate that his powers were such that he was capable of transforming himself into an elephant. Based in the village of Edo, strategically positioned on a central axis of the ivory trade with the Ishan to the north, the *iyase* likely sought control of that especially lucrative trade, which was at its peak with Europe during the eighteenth century. Thus the reign of Akenzua I (ca. 1715–35) was fraught with tension until Ehenua came to the court as the leader of a delegation bearing tribute and armed forces that quelled the insurrection. Akenzua rewarded his half-brother's loyalty with the title of *ezomo*, or chief military officer, which he made hereditary. Eventually Ehenua eliminated the primary obstacle to Akenzua's hegemony by fulfilling the earlier prophecy that he would defeat the *iyase*.⁷⁸

The triumph of Ehenua and Akenzua was the inspiration for two works now in the Metropolitan's collection. The first is a royal scepter—a brass rattle staff with an elaborate figurative finial—which appears to have been carried by the *oba* on occasions of state (fig. 20). The form of the scepter is based on that of an *uxure*, a wood rattle staff emblematic of ancestral authority, used to accentuate the articulation of prayers, blessings, and curses.⁷⁹ The imagery of this royal finial, however, is utterly unique. It features Akenzua in full regalia holding attributes of his authority and spiritual power: in his right hand is an *uxure* and in the left a stone celt, a Neolithic artifact believed to be a thunderbolt cast down from the heavens. Akenzua stands on top of the *iyase*, represented as an elephant whose front legs rest on a leopard and whose trunk takes the form of an extended arm terminating in a clenched fist.⁸⁰ Associated with ferocity, the leopard is at once a counterpart of the *oba* and an emblem of his power over life and death, which he delegates to his war chiefs when necessary.⁸¹ William Fagg proposed that this work was created during the second half of the eighteenth century under the reign of Akenzua's successor, Oba Eresonyen (r. ca. 1735–50).⁸²

A second work referring to this same alliance is an altar known as an *ikegobo*, or “shrine to the hand.” In Benin society and across southern Nigeria it was the prerogative of individuals who had distinguished themselves by attaining wealth, rank, or political influence to erect a shrine to their hand.⁸³ The *ikegobo* was therefore a form of self-congratulation as well as a statement concerning the personal responsibility and self-reliance of individuals who directed their energies toward the attainment of ambitious goals.⁸⁴ Worship of the hand was especially relevant to the achievements of those who depended upon physical skills and prowess, such as hunters, artisans, and warriors.

Although Benin leaders are said to have worshipped the hand since the fifteenth century, Ben-Amos notes that under Oba Ewuare, it was not until the eighteenth century that brass *ikegobo* became a focus of artistic expression.⁸⁵ Whereas *ikegobo* commissioned by local chiefs were typically composed of wood carved with imagery relating to the owner's accumulation of wealth and power, the *oba*, *iyoba*, and *ezomo* are known to have ordered especially ornate cast-brass *ikegobo*. One such work, dedicated to Akenzua I (fig. 21), is now in the collection of the British Museum.

Due to his unusually high stature in Benin society, Ehenua was accorded leadership over the town of Uzebu as well as semi-independence from the *oba*.⁸⁶ Successive *ezomo* were able to accumulate great wealth and influence, surpassing that of Benin's other chiefs. An *ikegobo* reputed to have been created during



FIG. 21. Shrine to the hand of Akenzua I. Edo peoples; Court of Benin, Nigeria. 18th century. H. 17½ in. (44.5 cm). The British Museum, London, Gift of Sir William Ingram AOA 1897.10-11.2

Ehenua's lifetime was passed on to successive *ezomo* for at least eight generations, until it was gradually disassembled and its parts dispersed during the 1980s. The anthropologist R. E. Bradbury notes that, although large bronzes were cast only by order of the *oba*, warrior chiefs took brass casters on their campaigns in order to repair weaponry, and Ehenua is believed to have directed one of these to cast the shrine with which he is now identified.⁸⁷

In 1958 Fagg photographed Ehenua's *ikegobo* with his descendants, the late Ezomo Omoruyi and his son, who later became Ezomo Asemwota (fig. 22). Omoruyi provided Bradbury with a detailed interpretation of the work as relayed to him by his father, Osarogiagbon.⁸⁸ Of the four separately cast units that made up this especially complex and highly original work (fig. 23), two—the *oba* seated on a dais and the main cylindrical unit that features the *ezomo*—have been reunited in the Metropolitan's collection (fig. 24). Missing are the base, whose perimeter included heads of cows, rams, goats, cocks, segments of kola nuts, and a bird, as well as a miniature leopard that was at the summit in front of the *oba*, directly above the *ezomo*. Despite the belief of Omoruyi's family that the work was commissioned by Ehenua, Bradbury concurs with Fagg that not all the composite elements were created during the same period. Based on stylistic issues, he suggests that the main cylindrical unit is probably from the nineteenth century, although it may represent a replacement of the original piece.⁸⁹

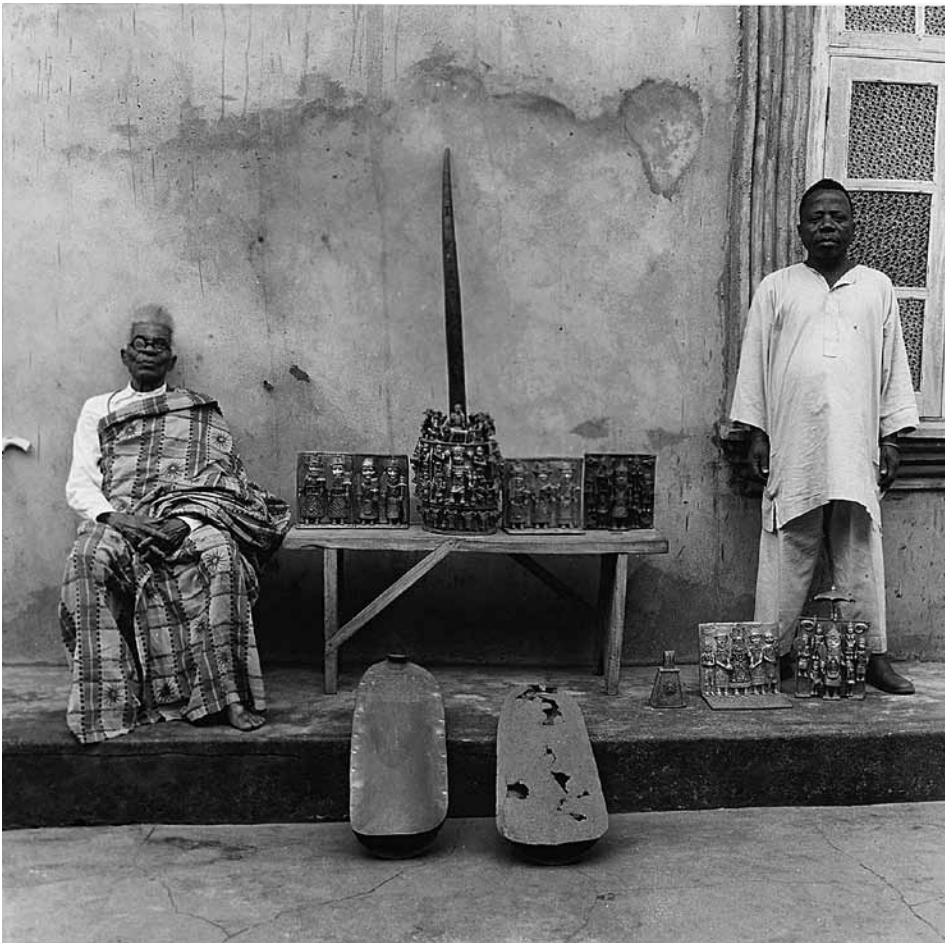


FIG. 22. Ezomo Omoruyi with his son, later Ezomo Asemwota, and his collection of bronzes. Benin City, Nigeria. 1958. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Photograph Study Collection, William B. Fagg Archives, 1986 PSC 1986.3.1211



FIG. 23. View of Ezomo's complete *ikegobo*, or shrine to the hand. Benin City, Nigeria, 1958. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Photograph Study Collection, William B. Fagg Archives, 1986 PSC 1986.3.1220

OPPOSITE: FIG. 24. Shrine to the hand of Ezomo Ehenua (three views). Edo peoples; Court of Benin, Nigeria. 18th–19th century. Brass, 13 x 13 in. (33 x 33 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Klaus G. Perls, 1991 1991.17.113; and Rogers Fund, 1996 1996.11

Seated on a dais positioned at the center of the upper surface, Akenzua I is depicted making offerings to his ancestors. Bradbury notes that the *oba* may be either asking the ancestors for success in an upcoming campaign by Ezomo Ehenua or giving thanks for a victory.⁹⁰ In his right hand, the *oba* holds an offertory kola nut and in his left an *uxure* and a rope to which a cow and goat are attached, ready to be sacrificed. The simplicity of his attire indicates that the occasion is not that of an official annual ceremony, but rather that he is engaged in unscribed prayers. Akenzua is surrounded by several attendants as well as four armed European soldiers who act as bodyguards. This phalanx of European mercenaries, aiming muskets with bent elbows, appears greatly animated and leans inward toward the *oba* to create a human shield.

While Akenzua I presides at the summit of this work, it is the actions of his loyal commander Ehenua that are highlighted in the foreground. Indeed, the



artifact was considered by Ehenua's descendants to be a document of his martial successes.⁹¹ He is shown in prominent relief on the front of the cylinder, dressed for battle and surrounded by his warriors and attendants. In contrast to the expressive movement of the figures in the upper level, the soldiers that extend around the cylinder's perimeter on either side of the *ezomo* are arranged hierarchically in two superimposed tiers. The *ezomo*'s importance is indicated by his large scale, which is twice that of the others. In his left hand is a rope to which five severed heads are attached, and in his right is a two-edged sword known as an *opia*. He wears a helmet of cloth or leather, to which three tiny calabashes filled with protective medicines are attached, as well as circlets of beads around his neck and ankles that denote his chiefly rank. His troops are armed with the various implements of war: spears, shields, drums, swords, and iron gongs. These soldiers also carry single heads featuring different facial markings and hairstyles, which appear to represent enemies vanquished in previous campaigns.

Although Benin's material culture remained a vital dimension of court life until the end of the nineteenth century, colonialism ushered in an acceleration of profound social and political changes across the African continent, fundamentally constraining our ability to understand these works fully. Oral traditions by definition reflect a perspective that is continually evolving, and the fragility of the memories related to Benin's sculptural heritage was compounded by the forceful removal of much of it to Europe in 1897, following the devastation of Benin City and the exile of Oba Ovonramwen (r. 1888–97) to Calabar during the British Punitive Expedition. Ovonramwen's son Eweka II (r. 1914–33) was restored to the throne as a subject of the British Protectorate until Benin became part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1960. In 1979, upon his installation as *oba* at the palace in Benin City, the current *oba*, Erediauwa, resumed the commissioning of altars in honor of his ancestors. Individual altars now commemorate the *obas* Adolo (r. 1850–88), Ovonramwen, Eweka II, and Akenzua II, and a communal one is dedicated to the rest of the dynasty.

HEROIC ANCESTORS IN BENIN AND BEYOND

The extensive and highly diverse sculptural forms produced by Benin's professional casters and carvers provides us with a portrait of its leadership, going back half a millennium, that is unparalleled in sub-Saharan Africa. Like their counterparts across the region, these works of art kept dynastic histories alive and secured the transfer of power from one generation to the next. The treatment of Benin's leadership through its art is instructive as a point of departure for the examination of the seven other sculptural traditions that follow. As at Benin, traditions in many distinct sub-Saharan African centers relied on elaborate rituals commemorating the death of an exemplary figure and the induction of his successor in order to maintain a seamless continuum of leadership. Great leaders thus became both patrons and subjects of highly accomplished African sculptures that embodied the transfer of power. Such depictions underscored the subjects' exceptional strength and beneficence and eliminated any perceived physical imperfections, thus contributing essentially to their heroic reification for the ages. These visual tributes further prescribed the ultimate social and cultural ideal to be emulated. As a result,

each of the sculptural genres considered reflects an intentional parallelism across works relating to different subjects.

The culturally specific aesthetic conventions and rites relating to the artistic traditions considered here are distinct and reflect particular historical circumstances and contexts. Notwithstanding those differences, certain imperatives resonate across cultures. Among the ideas consistently emphasized is the role of representations as physical extensions of a leader. The focus of acts of veneration and prayers for intercession, these works were intimately associated with the subjects for whom they served as surrogates and as loci for their essences. Whether positioned on an altar or within a treasury, such works were crucial both to keeping alive a people's past and to maintaining a connection with revered and especially influential ancestors. Like oral historians and many ancient and Renaissance artists, the sculptors responsible for these creations made adjustments in keeping with culturally codified social and visual ideals of representation. Another common current that parallels more extensively documented Western traditions is that at certain moments especially influential individuals introduced distinctive modes of representation that were adopted as prototypes by those who sought to emulate their example. Accordingly, artists were directed to reference existing sculptural paradigms in favor of human ones.

Richard Brilliant has observed that the very fact of a representation's allusion to the existence of a specific person defines its function.⁹² Individuals, now long forgotten, were the point of departure for many of the great sculptural achievements from Africa. Although in most cases the subjects' identities have not been documented in written histories, the existence of an artistic record attests to the place of distinction they commanded within their own societies. Not only do they survive as enduring landmarks of cultures that have undergone extensive transformation, but they also afford us an appreciation of how the most gifted artists from those traditions channeled their talents into translating some essential dimension of their ambitious patrons into a vision of lasting perfection.



Visual Poems in Praise of an Ever-Present Past: Ife Terracottas

But Joseph explained that it was only natural that the dead should know all about the living ones. After all, they once lived like us and that friendly one might even have been in the compound before. Now, discovering that Osiki had an egúngún which emerged from their compound every year was almost the same as if we also had one of our own. We crowded him and I asked if he knew which of his dead ancestors it was. He shook his head.

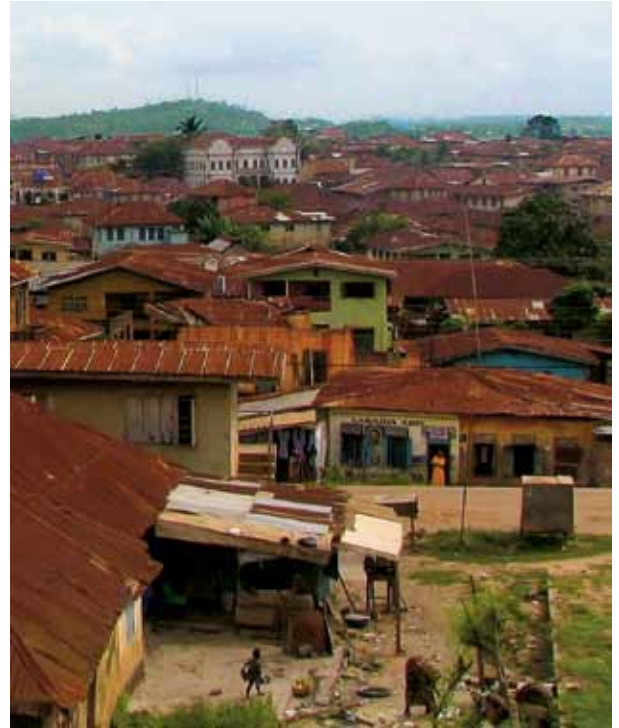
"I only know it is one of our ancient people."

— WOLE SOYINKA IN *AKÉ: THE YEARS OF CHILDHOOD*

IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMING-OF-AGE NARRATIVE, WOLE SOYINKA, THE preeminent literary chronicler of the rich legacy of Yoruba civilization, gazed with wonder at the vibrant community embodying that heritage that surrounded him as a child. The son of a headmaster growing up under British colonialism, Soyinka related his impressions from the vantage point of his parents' somewhat anomalous household of spoken English, Christianity, electricity (including radio), and written narratives. Positioned on the frontier of a world whose long-standing cultural precepts continually infiltrated his consciousness and awakened his imagination, he evoked the essential and vivid place occupied by the ancestors.

The omnipresence of the ancestors is regularly manifested in Yoruba culture through a masquerade known as *egungun*, in which collectively the departed members of an extended family are evoked through an intentionally indeterminate form. In the abstract guise of *egungun*, the body of a performer is enshrouded in a cascading patchwork ensemble of costly textiles. In striking contrast to *egungun*'s indeterminate, shifting form, accented by brilliantly contrasting colors and abstract patterns, is the exactly defined sculptural legacy generated from the twelfth through the sixteenth century at the early Yoruba city-state of Ife. There, generations of artists produced works of terracotta, cast metal, and stone, with each medium accorded its own distinctive *ase*, or life force, and patron *orisa*, a spirit deity that is also a divine creative agent: Obatala modeled clay; Ogun bent iron to his will; and Oramfe the thunder god—shaped stone.¹ The refined naturalism of these works attests to their makers' mastery of highly detailed representations, and the intense idealism of many of them parallels that of Greek Classicism.

The urban character of Yoruba culture in southwestern Nigeria and the Republic of Benin has been traced back more than a millennium through archaeological evidence.² Scholars have noted that emphasis on the sacred aspect of its leadership is also a foundational institution of the Yoruba.³ Ife and Oyo are the oldest of a critical mass of densely populated city-states that have endured into the



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

FIG. 25. Well Street in Ife, Nigeria, 1910. Frobenius-Institut, Frankfurt am Main FoA 04-5022.b

FIG. 26. View of Ife from Ifa temple

FIG. 27. Map of Ife

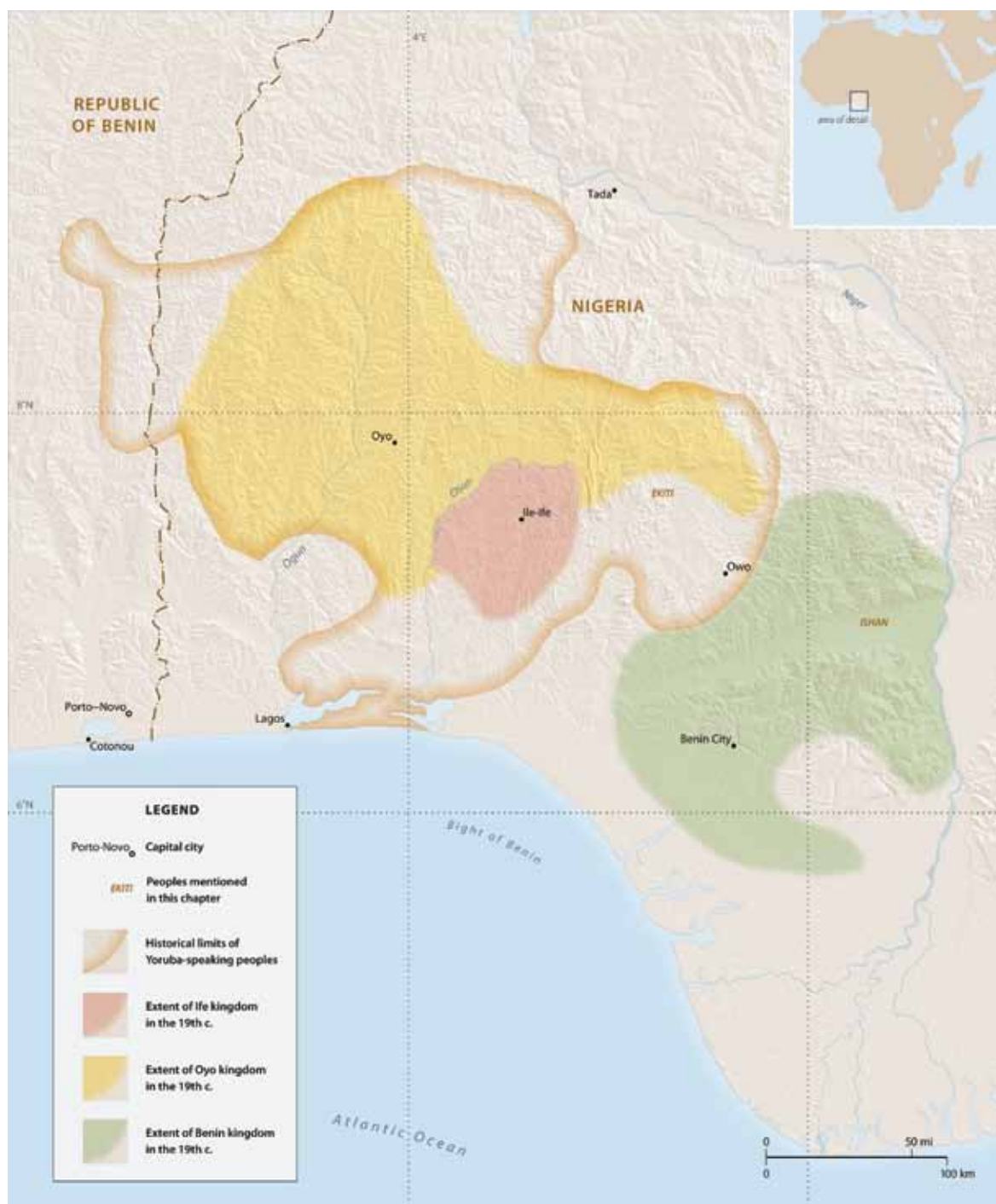


FIG. 28. Yoruba region and extent of the Ife, Oyo, and Benin kingdoms

present as vibrant and thriving cultural centers (figs. 25, 26). The site of Ile-Ife was occupied as early as 350 BCE.⁴ Between 500 and 900 C.E., the city was home to ironworking agriculturalists, and by the eleventh century it had become a major metropolis defined by an orderly arrangement of city walls, streets, stone monuments, shrines, and planned building complexes with multiple interior courtyards, elaborately decorated stone pavements, and altars (fig. 27).⁵ Nearby Oyo emerged about this time as a regional trading center for goods such as shea butter, copper, salt, and beads, which were sent down the Niger River from the Songhai Empire in exchange for kola, cloth, ivory, and slaves. Yoruba scholars have proposed that the especially impressive flowering of Ife's sculptural traditions in the following centuries

may be related to Oyo's expansion.⁶ The archaeologist Peter Garlake has noted that while Ife's standing as an economic or military power was negligible, it was accorded a place of central importance because of its spiritual significance.⁷ By the fifteenth century, the Yoruba city-state of Owo rivaled Ife in cultural importance and came to serve as a political intermediary between it and the emerging leadership of the kingdom of Benin.⁸ Both British colonial policies of indirect rule and regional leaders within the multiethnic nation-state of Nigeria have significantly promoted Ile-Ife's identification as the epicenter for Yoruba cultural and political legitimacy. To this day, Ife resonates powerfully as a uniting point of reference for all Yoruba peoples, despite the diversity of their affiliations with highly competitive regional city-states.⁹

In Yoruba culture, Ile-Ife is where the Creator, Olodumare, set life in motion. Oral tradition identifies the spirit deities called *orisa*—which include Ile-Ife ancestors as well as personified natural forces—as manifestations of a removed and distant Olodumare.¹⁰ In some versions of the Creation myth, responsibility for the shaping of humanity was delegated to the artist divinity Obatala. In others, this role and that of Ife's first ruler, who established the Yoruba model of divine kingship, were assumed by Oduduwa. Oduduwa's sons and daughters were then sent out into the world from Ife to found the major city-states of the Yoruba, each equipped with a beaded crown, or *ade*, as an emblem of divine power and authority. Each of these beaded crowns, conferred upon a ruler (*oba*) at his installation, is

FIG. 29. Plan of Pavement IX (early 13th–late 14th century), Woye Asiri family land. Ife, Nigeria. 1973. From Peter S. Garlake, "Excavations on the Woye Asiri Family Land in Ife, Western Nigeria," *West African Journal of Archaeology* 7 (1977), p. 70, fig. 8

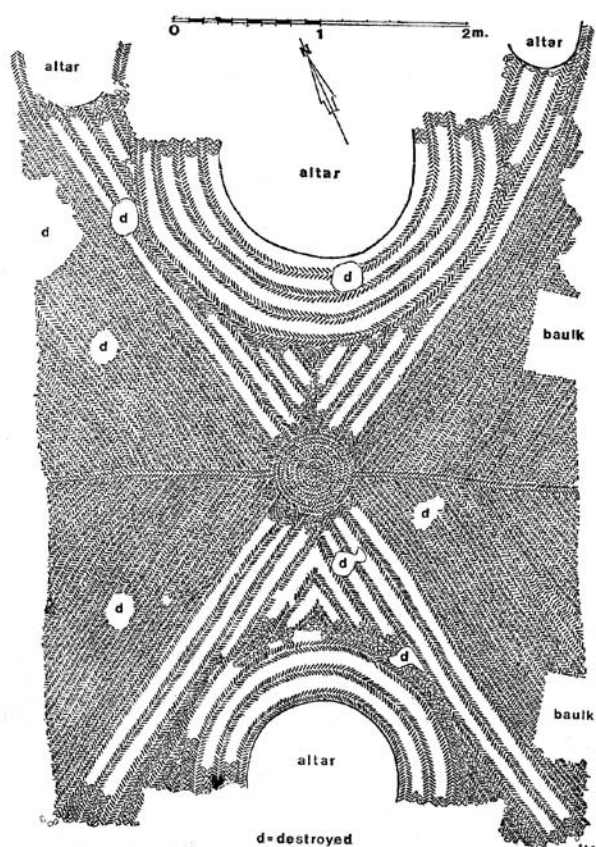




FIG. 30. Vessels placed beside the altar on Pavement I, Woye Asiri family land, Ife, Nigeria. 1973.
From Peter S. Garlake, "Excavations on the Woye Asiri Family Land in Ife, Western Nigeria,"
West African Journal of Archaeology 7 (1977), pl. VI

FIG. 31. Pavement VIII showing the altar at the south end of Woye Asiri family land, Ife, Nigeria. 1973. From
Peter S. Garlake, "Excavations on the Woye Asiri Family Land in Ife, Western Nigeria,"
West African Journal of Archaeology 7 (1977), pl. VII

also conceived of as an *orisa*.¹¹ Ife's landscape is crowded with a profusion of shrines and sacred groves devoted to some of the more than four hundred divinities of the Yoruba pantheon, ranging from esteemed ancestors to cultural heroes. It is at these locales as well as private domestic altars that Ife's citizens direct their appeals for divine intercession.

As in present-day Athens, the richness of Ile-Ife's legacy is such that the ever-present past continually asserts its hold on the imagination and is thoroughly imbricated with contemporary experience. Traces of potsherd and stone pavements, dating back to the first millennium CE, can be seen along stretches of contemporary thoroughfares and in the interior courtyards of domestic compounds. Especially elaborate sections, such as Pavement IX, uncovered on Woye Asiri family land, a site just northwest of Ife's city walls (fig. 29), appear to have complemented interior courtyards of houses or shrines. Of the ten pavements uncovered during excavations led by Peter Garlake at this site, from December 1972 until May 1973, this one is the largest and most complex. Rings of sherds at either end of the pavement indicate where semicircular altars were positioned. Between them, diagonal lines of sherds laid on edge in intricate herringbone patterns draw the eye to ten concentric rings at the center of the pavement. Embedded in the nucleus of these rings, its neck flush with the surface, was a flask, which may have collected libations (see figs. 35, 37 for a parallel example).



FIG. 32. Chief Akogun standing next to the "staff" of Oranmiyan, Ife, Nigeria. 1958. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Photograph Study Collection, William B. Fagg Archives, 1986 PSC 1986.3.1458

At the west end of Pavement I at Woye Asiri, vessels were found deliberately placed around a semicircular altar so that their contents would empty onto the ground (fig. 30). That they were then left undisturbed after the building associated with the pavement was abandoned in the mid-fifteenth century suggests that they were intended as offerings associated with the altar. At the south end of Pavement VIII is the first complete altar excavated at Ife (fig. 31). Built on top of the pavement, the semicircular structure is 15 inches (38 cm) high and 30³/₄ inches (78 cm) in diameter at its base. To the left are the remains of a larger altar. A flared, painted neck of a flask was also found flush with the middle of the pavement.

Unearthed material culture identified with the early chapters of Ife's history was rarely preserved in an unadulterated context, with the exception of pavement remnants and several immovable stone monoliths dating between 800 and 1000 CE, including a granite-gneiss monument more than 16 feet (nearly 5 m) tall, ornamented by approximately 140 spiral-headed iron nails arranged in a trident design of unknown meaning (fig. 32). Oral traditions associate this landmark with the staff (*opa*) of Oranmiyan, son of Oduduwa, who is credited with founding dynasties of leadership in the neighboring Benin and Oyo kingdoms.¹² Local residents showed deference to chance discoveries of ancient artifacts by transferring

them to shrines and integrating them into ritual practices of the day, creating new associations that may not have had any relation to their original function.¹³ For the most part, therefore, evidence uncovered relating to Ife sculptures reveals largely the ways in which they were harnessed by later generations.

Given the lack of written precolonial historical documents and the limited archaeological record, surviving oral traditions and the sculptural corpus itself constitute critical and revealing primary evidence for answers concerning the past. Representations in terracotta and cast metals from Ife are striking for the degree of detailed elaboration accorded to the head (*ori*), which the Yoruba consider to be the site of an individual's essential nature, or *izwa*, as well as his or her life force, called *ase*.¹⁴ These qualities—one informs character while the other is the impetus to action that will set events in motion—are from the time of birth the focus of elaborate rituals in which one strives for fulfillment and transcendence.¹⁵ The art historian Rowland Abiodun has noted that, according to tradition, before coming to earth, all Yoruba, even divinities, are believed to visit Ajala, “the maker of heads,” in heaven in order to select their *ori*, the key to their individual destinies.¹⁶

FIG. 33. Inner head shrine (*ibori*) and house of the head (*ile ori*). Yoruba peoples; Nigeria. 19th–20th century. Cowrie shells, cotton, leather, H. of *ibori* 5¼ in. (13.3 cm), DIAM. 3⅞ in. (9.2 cm); H. of *ile ori* 13¾ in. (35 cm), DIAM. 10 in. (25.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of the William W. Brill Foundation, 1962 1978.412.459a–c



The Yoruba distinguish between the inner, spiritual aspect, or the *ori inu*, and the visible outer head, called the *ori ode*. Ajala's occasional inattention and carelessness is seen as the cause for the imperfections in *ori*. Given that a person's *ori inu* is credited with success in life, it is regularly propitiated and its support and guidance are invoked in advance of any important undertaking. An individual's unique *ori inu* may be given concrete form symbolically through the *ibori*, an abstract conical element that is housed within a personal shrine known as an *ile ori* (literally, "house of the head").¹⁷ Lavishly encasing the *ile ori* with cowrie shells, historically a form of wealth, emphasizes the owner's prosperity (fig. 33).¹⁸

Such elaborate personal altars are the prerogative of individuals of great social standing and are distinct from the altars dedicated to a particular *orisa*, which are conceived of as the *oju*, or "face," of that divinity.¹⁹ The commissioning of artifacts placed at these sites for the meeting of gods and their followers constitutes an act of devotion and form of prayer. And just as the shrine is a nexus for engagement between divinity and devotee, the artistic creations formulated for such sites seek to capture the fusion of the spiritual and human. During religious ceremonies, worshippers of particular deities serve as their mediums by receiving the *orisa's* spirit through possession trances. This state in which the immaterial *orisa* are made manifest through their followers is the subject of the sculptural representations created as tributes for placement in their shrines.²⁰

The notion that one's exterior appearance complements and amplifies essential qualities held within also appears to have informed the emphasis on a tranquil demeanor evident in many of the figurative likenesses rendered by Ife artists, such as fig. 34.²¹ Crowned by a simple ridged headdress, the head intersects with a cylindrical neck that is subdivided into broader horizontal bands representing creases, or fat wrabbles, emblematic of prosperity and success in Yoruba society. The carefully delineated features of the vertically striated oval face—almond-shaped eyes slightly downcast, nostrils lightly flared, and compressed lips—embody the underlying formal aesthetic that the artists would then build on in order to differentiate one subject from another. The care of handling evident in the rare instances in which Ife sculptures have been discovered in their original contexts is reminiscent of that given to actual bodily remains. This may reflect an original association between the works and specific persons, most often royal figures and their attendants, according to the archaeologist Frank Willett.²²

Although some of the heads that survive from Ife are fragments from full figures, others were created as independent sculptures designed to be positioned on altars. The latter role is manifested in a passage of segmented relief decoration that wraps around the perimeter of a fourteenth-century ceremonial vessel excavated by Garlake at Obalara's Land (see also pp. 58–60). The lip of the vessel was embedded in the ground when the pavement was laid around it, and its bottom had been removed, perhaps to ensure that any libations poured in it would penetrate the earth below (fig. 35). The meticulously detailed reliefs around the perimeter of this vessel, which would not have been visible once the pot had been interred, include a pair of figurative staffs and a drum resembling two major insignia of the

FIG. 34. Head. Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria. 12th–15th century. Terracotta, 12 1/4 x 5 3/4 x 7 1/4 in. (31.1 x 14.6 x 18.4 cm). Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota, The John R. Van Derlip Fund 95.84



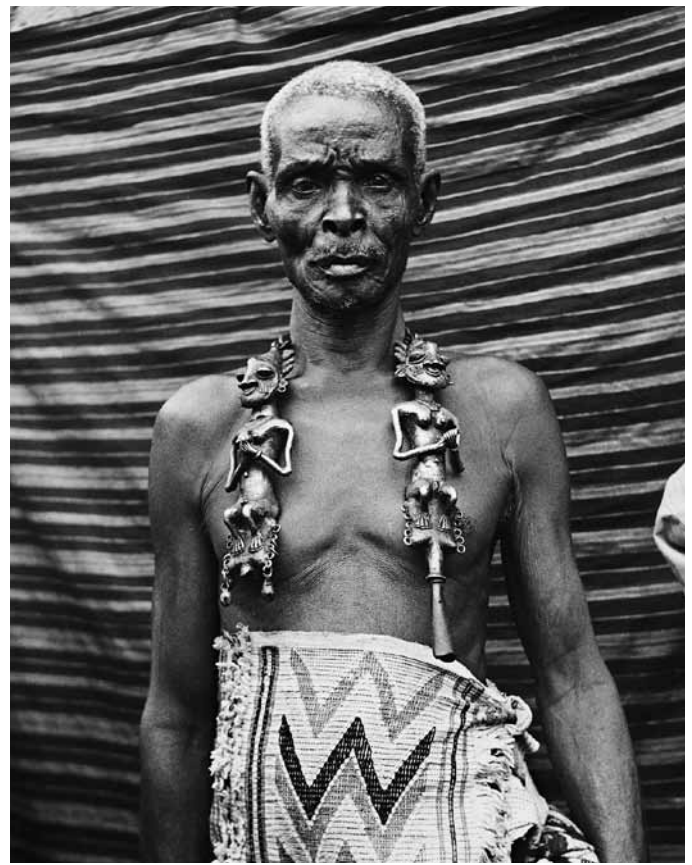


FIG. 35. Terracotta ritual vessel excavated by Peter Garlake. Obalara's Land, Ife, Nigeria. 1972. From Rowland Abiodun, Henry John Drewal, and John Pemberton III, *Yoruba: Art and Aesthetics*, 1991, p. 8, fig. 2

FIG. 36. A member of the Ogboni Society with insignia of membership (*edan ogboni*). 1949–50. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Photograph Study Collection, William B. Fagg Archives

Ogboni Society. This group of male and female elders counterbalances the powers of the king by selecting and installing Yoruba rulers and judging and punishing severe crimes.²³ Designed to be joined at the summit and suspended on either side of the neck, paired male and female brass staffs called *edan* identify the wearer as an Ogboni member (fig. 36).

Also part of the Obalara vessel's relief program are terracotta heads of three different types: a naturalistically rendered head, flanked by two different conical abstractions of the same form, evocative of an *ibori*, rests in the open-fronted structure of a shrine (fig. 37).²⁴ This key scene has served as a Rosetta stone of sorts for interpreting Ife's largely decontextualized sculptural record, and it attests to the long-standing centrality of sculpted heads on altars as well as the contemporaneous existence of both realistic and abstract artistic idioms. Examples of both the abstract-conical and naturalistic terracotta-head genres depicted within the vessel imagery have also been found buried together in caches at the Obalara site. The striking juxtaposition of those minimal forms with the detailed renderings of their humanistic counterparts has fostered the widely accepted theory that they articulate distinctions between the inner and outer dimensions of being.²⁵ The pared-down template of the cone may evoke the intangible dimension at the core of an individual's inner being, or *ori imu*, whereas the other catalogues the physical



FIG. 37. Ritual vessel from Obalara's Land. Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria. 13th–14th century. Terracotta, H. 9¾ in. (24.8 cm). University Art Museum, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife, Nigeria. From Henry John Drewal and John Pemberton III with Rowland Abiodun, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, 1989, p. 65, fig. 70

FIG. 38. Cylindrical representation of a human head. Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria. 13th–14th century. Terracotta, H. 6⅞ in. (16.2 cm). National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Lagos, Nigeria. From Rowland Abiodun, Henry John Drewal, and John Pemberton III, *Yoruba: Art and Aesthetics*, 1991, p. 14, fig. 15

features of corporeal existence perceived by the senses. Garlake indicates that the flat, unbroken bases of the abstracted artifacts make it unlikely that they were ever part of full figures.²⁶ In fig. 38, the eyes and mouth are only perfunctorily indicated; the multiple lobes on top may indicate a crown or headdress. This schematic form is very similar to the leftmost terracotta head represented within the shrine featured on the exterior of the Obalara's Land vessel.

The head distilled to a conical form resonates with both the *ibori*, kept by elite individuals in *ile ori* shrines, and the *adenla*, the beaded crown that is the paramount sign of the authority vested in Yoruba rulers. After being consecrated as leader, a Yoruba *oba* (king) must not reveal his face to the public. Instead, he wears an elaborate conical headdress with a heavily beaded veil covering his face. His features are further concealed by a beaded shield (fig. 39). *Adenlas* usually feature at least one or as many as sixteen frontal faces depicted through applied beadwork. Although their significance is unknown, they appear to suggest the shared destiny of a particular line of rulers embodied by the crown.²⁷ Positioned at the summit of the cone is at least one bird (fig. 40). In Yoruba belief, birds are associated with the



FIG. 39. The *ore* of Otun with his wives. Otun (?), Nigeria. ca. 1906. From Henry John Drewal and John Pemberton III with Rowland Abiodun, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, 1989, p. 30, fig. 28

hidden procreative power of women, upon which social continuity depends, and are celestial messengers associated with the head. Their appearance on royal crowns evokes the idea that life force (*ase*) enters the body through the head and, at death, leaves the body the same way, in flight like a bird. In Yoruba society, the person of the *oba* does not die but rather becomes an *orisa*. This transition may be marked by rites that include the constitution of a shrine at the site where the *oba*'s head is buried so that his *ori* may be petitioned.²⁸

As noted earlier, oral traditions trace to Ife the right to wear this sacred form of regalia identified with deified ancestors in various Yoruba centers.²⁹ When a king wears the *adenla*, his inner being is believed to become one with those of all his predecessors.³⁰ One such leader has explained, "When the crown is placed on my head, the *ori* of the crown and the *ori* of the Oba are brought together. The *ase* of the crown is bound to the head of the man. . . . Two heads, two destinies, come together."³¹ Accordingly, those elevated to the summit of power in Yoruba society must sublimate their individual identity.

The Olojo Festival, a weeklong celebration held annually in October in honor of Ogun, the god of iron and patron of hunters, was traditionally one of the few times a year that the *ooni* (king) of Ife was seen in public and the only time that the sacred *adenla*—here called *aare*, which identified it with Oduduwa, the founder of divine kingship—could be worn (fig. 41).³² Given that an *adenla* is the focus of annual rites of renewal and purification, it has been proposed that the freestanding

brass and some terracotta heads from Ife may have been commissioned as mounts for their display on those occasions.³³ In this context, the vertical facial striations depicted on many Ife heads have been interpreted as shadows cast by the strings of beads that extend from the base of Yoruba crowns, thereby underscoring the wearer's state of transcendence. The striations have otherwise been assumed to depict cicatrization markings denoting the subject's ethnic or other affiliation, although this does not correlate with known Yoruba practices.³⁴

Such striations can be seen on the earliest creation from Ife to have arrived in the West (fig. 42).³⁵ This enigmatic fragment of a terracotta head on long-term loan to the Brooklyn Museum is half lifesize, and Frank Willett has suggested it originally may have been part of a full figure.³⁶ At the summit, a pronounced hair-line separates the two distinct textures that have been exactly impressed into the surface. Above this division, hair is defined by a dense network of delicate interlaced lines. Below, bold equidistant striations extend vertically down the forehead and nose and follow the curvature of the chin to cover the entire face. The contours of the eyes are delicate almond shapes inscribed at either side of the bridge of the

FIG. 40. The king of Oyo (believed to be Adeyemi I Alowolodu [r. 1876–1905]).
Oyo (?), Nigeria. ca. 1900. Postcard. Collection of Arthur F. Humphrey III





FIG. 41. The *oomi* of Ife. Sir Adesoji Aderemi (r. 1930–80). Ife, Nigeria. ca. 1960. From Frank Willett, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, 1967, pl. 71

OPPOSITE: FIG. 42. Head. Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria. 12th–15th century. Terracotta, 6 x 3¼ x 3¾ in. (15.2 x 8.3 x 9.5 cm). Collection of Robin B. Martin, courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum L54.5

nose, which terminates in flared nostrils. The precision applied throughout is also evident in the definition of the rounded, slightly parted lips.

The circumstances under which this work left Ife are unknown. It arrived in Europe sometime before 1910, by which time a plaster cast of it, whose origination is also undocumented, was in the British Museum. Scrutiny of this artifact and its early copy has revealed that a restoration to the right cheek was subsequently removed from the original. Willett proposed that the work was probably taken from the Iwinrin Grove shrine, about one mile from Ife's center.³⁷ In 1930 Wilfrid D. Hambly, the first curator of African Ethnology at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, visited the site and witnessed a ceremony preceding the display of sacred terracottas. He described being led along a narrow path to a circular clearing where a padlocked box stood. Prior to opening the box, the priests performed a ritual of clapping and blowing into their hands. According to Hambly, both priesthood and stewardship of the grove were inherited; the two younger priests in fig. 43 are sons of the third.³⁸ The large head fourth from the right (also visible as third from the right in fig. 44) is one of only two heads known to have raised (as opposed to incised) lines on the face.³⁹

The extant artifacts assembled at Iwinrin were documented by British colonial officials, Henry Lewis Ward-Price and R. "Taffy" Jones, beginning in 1931.





FIG. 43. Priests opening the box containing sacred terracotta heads in Iwinrin Grove. Ife, Nigeria. 1930.
Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago CSA71250

Originally hidden under clay pots at the shrine to secure them from theft, the sculptures were then stored in a padlocked box in a specially constructed mud building in the grove.⁴⁰ In 1934 the *ooni* of Ife, Sir Adesoji Aderemi, had the works brought to the palace for safekeeping until they could be transferred to the National Museum of Ife Antiquities.⁴¹

When the German ethnologist and archaeologist Leo Frobenius visited Ife in 1910, he learned that the center's some four hundred sacred groves were also the sites where antiquities had been buried: "From various interviews I got to know that most remains of this kind were found concealed beneath old trees in the North and I consequently invited the natives to go and dig on their own account in spots where legend said that an ancestral god had gone below."⁴² Among the works unearthed for Frobenius was a freestanding head with an elaborate crown cast in brass (a heavily leaded alloy of copper and zinc), which had been incorporated into a shrine outside Ife dedicated to Olokun, the *orisa* of wealth and the sea (fig. 45).⁴³ Until that time, the work had been unearthed annually for festivals and then reburied. Despite his direct exposure to evidence of this indigenous artistic legacy of naturalistic representation, Frobenius found it inconceivable that artists outside the Greco-Roman tradition would have been capable of such formal and technical mastery of representation. He thus conflated the Yoruba deity Olokun with Poseidon and advanced the theory that he had found on the Atlantic coast of West Africa traces of a Greek colony from the thirteenth century BCE. In the published account of his visit to the region, he equated the blooming-flower design on



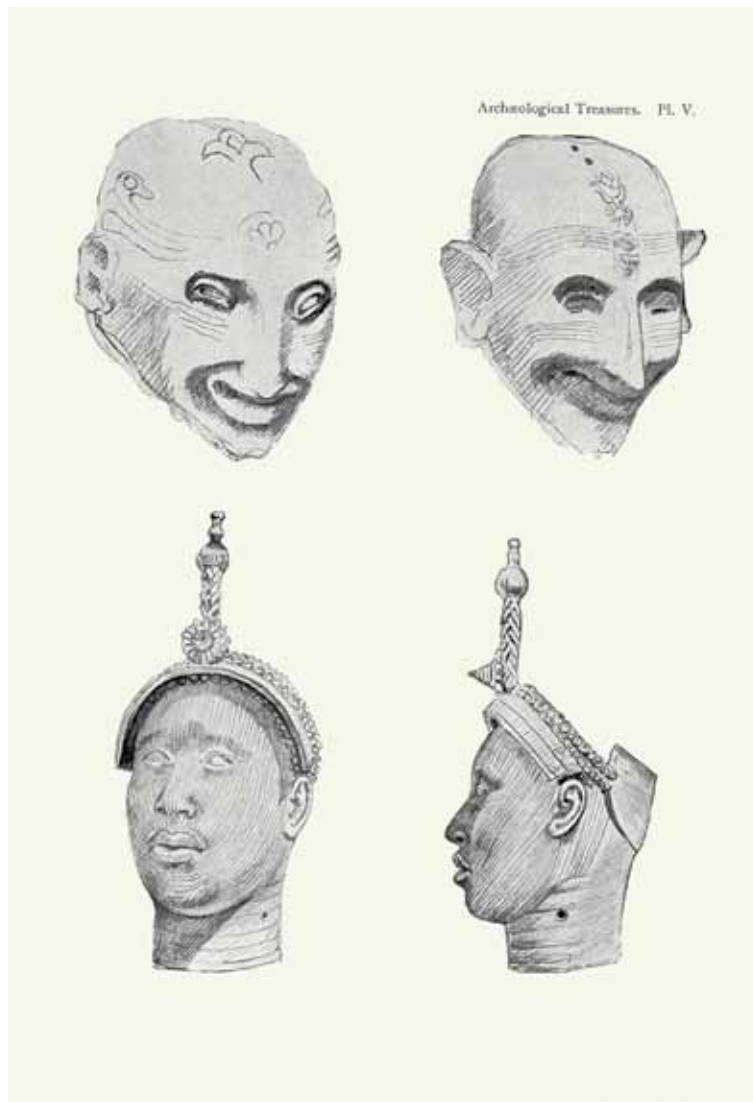
FIG. 44. Terracotta heads in Iwinrin Grove. Ife, Nigeria. ca. 1931. From Frank Willett, *The Art of Ife: A Descriptive Catalogue and Database*, 2004, pl. 57

terracotta masks from Cagliari, Sardinia (drawn by his father, Hermann), with the design of the diadem worn by the Olokun head (fig. 46).⁴⁴

In his December 8, 1986, lecture “This Past Must Address Its Present,” delivered on the occasion of his being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, Wole Soyinka invoked the insidiousness of Frobenius’s paradoxical admiration for the caliber of the artistic creations he encountered at Ife and his denial of their relevance to Ife’s living heirs to that tradition, with whom he interacted.⁴⁵ While still in Nigeria, Frobenius was forced to return the head, which he had purchased for six pounds and a bottle of whisky, to the palace at Ife. Except for annual trips to the Olokun Grove for sacred rituals, it remained there until 1948, when it was examined at the British Museum in London and its authenticity was brought into question.⁴⁶

Frobenius returned to Germany with seven terracotta heads, which are now in the collection of Berlin’s Ethnologisches Museum. Among those works is a more complete head, two-thirds lifesize, from the Olokun Grove (fig. 47).⁴⁷ The face is dramatic for the intensity of its expression—with eyes wide open, deep furrows above the brows, nostrils flared—and the broad raised bands that extend vertically across the surface. The treatment of the hair as separate curls arranged in three lines on either side of a central crest is also distinctive. A circular aperture about 1¼ inches (30 mm) in diameter at the summit of the head appears to have allowed air to escape during firing. At the base, a collar of tubular beads encircles the neck. Willett has suggested that another of the heads collected by Frobenius and now in Berlin is likely from the Iwinrin Grove (fig. 48). While similar in scale





OPPOSITE: FIG. 45. Head called "Olokun." Yoruba peoples; Olokun Grove, Ife, Nigeria. Early 20th-century copy of the original from 14th–early 15th century (?). Copper alloy, H. 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (34.5 cm). National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria 38.1.2

ABOVE: FIG. 46. *Top*: Hermann Frobenius. Drawing of Sardinian masks. 1910. *Bottom*: Carl Arriens. Drawings of head called "Olokun." 1910–12. From Leo Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, 1913, facing p. 312, pl. V

to fig. 47, the latter sculpture reflects a more refined perfection. The neck, back, and top of the head are missing, and the nose at the center of the full oval face has undergone extensive damage, but the proportionately small eyes remain sharply defined almond forms and the contours of the face are accentuated by fine incised striations. Willett has noted that this example is unique for the manner used to dress the head, with raised segmented rings punctuated with iron nails that appear as decorative clusters of small beads rather than ringlets of hair.⁴⁸ Yet another visage (fig. 49), supported by a creased neck, is devoid of striations but features bands of raised keloids that follow the curvature of the brows. A greater fullness to the eyes provides more of a sense of an eyeball in its socket.⁴⁹ The face itself features a high forehead that is extended by a conical caplike coiffure marked by projecting curls arranged in five successive horizontal bands.





OPPOSITE: FIG. 47. Head. Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria. 12th–15th century. Terracotta, H. 7½ in. (19 cm). Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin III C 27527

ABOVE LEFT: FIG. 48. Head. Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria. 12th–15th century. Terracotta, H. 6⅞ in. (17 cm). Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin III C 27526

ABOVE RIGHT: FIG. 49. Head. Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria. 12th–15th century. Terracotta, H. 7½ in. (19 cm). Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin III C 27530



FIG. 50. Lafogido site (11th–13th century) before excavation, featuring an *akoko* tree, Ife, Nigeria. 1969. From Ekpo Eyo, “Odo Ogbe Street and Lafogido: Contrasting Archaeological Sites in Ile-Ife, Western Nigeria,” *West African Journal of Archaeology* 4 (1974): pl. XXVI

FIG. 51. Close-up view of vessels of the upper cultural horizon at Odo Ogbe Street site, Ife, Nigeria. Early 1969. From Ekpo Eyo, “Odo Ogbe Street and Lafogido: Contrasting Archaeological Sites in Ile-Ife, Western Nigeria,” *West African Journal of Archaeology* 4 (1974): pl. XXV

Subsequent archaeological excavations undertaken at Ife have reinforced Frobenius’s strategy of searching hallowed sites for antiquities. In 1969 the first director general of the Nigerian Commission for Museums, Ekpo Eyo, documented a site said to be the burial place of the mid-nineteenth-century ruler Ooni Lafogido (fig. 50).⁵⁰ Other discoveries have resulted through accidental finds relating to established markers. At the foot of a tree on Odo Ogbe Street, where a terracotta head had been casually uncovered, Eyo excavated a shrine consisting of a row of vessels dated to 1630 (fig. 51). He noted that the arrangement suggested this head likely originated from elsewhere and was subsequently integrated into rites relating to the shrine, which may have been dedicated to a water goddess.

Peter Garlake’s excavation of Obalara’s Land, a fourteenth-century site half a mile (800 m) outside Ife’s western walls and about a third of a mile (500 m) north of Iwinrin Grove, has provided the most revealing contextual evidence to date concerning the original ritual use of Ife sculpture.⁵¹ Investigation there began in 1971 when fragments of terracotta sculptures were recovered during gravel-quarrying operations, which led to the discovery of a critical mass of terracotta sculptures in situ within a site. The orientation of the site’s pavements was consistent with a unitary plan in which all its deposits, structures, and finds were made, used, and discarded during a single occupation, which was subsequently undisturbed.⁵²

In addition to terracotta figurative sculpture, a diverse array of vessel types was found at Obalara's Land, including elaborately ornate ceremonial forms (figs. 35, 37) as well as those used for domestic purposes. It was apparent that they had all been broken through use before they were interred but that none of them had been of great age at the time of their burial.⁵³ Among the fragments were heads and torsos relating to six naturalistic figures—one of these larger than life—as well as three independent conical heads of varying degrees of abstraction.⁵⁴ The figures all wear close-fitting caps, beaded girdles, baldrics, and a necklace. While only some of the faces feature vertical striations, they are present on all of the torsos.⁵⁵

The layout and extensive specialized labor invested in this site have led Garlake to propose that it may have been the residence of a senior official of a religious institution.⁵⁶ Its elaborate and costly paving covered open courtyards into which altars or shrines and libation vessels were integrated. These features are consistent with those of traditional Yoruba residential architecture in whose courtyards several altars dedicated to particular *orisa* are typically positioned. Garlake has proposed that the human bones, pottery, and sculpture deposited were shrine offerings made by the occupants of the building complex to address different aspects of mortality.⁵⁷

Two distinctive deposits of terracotta sculpture unearthed at Obalara's Land are especially noteworthy. One featured three highly expressive fired-clay heads placed on a carefully piled collection of some forty skulls.⁵⁸ It has been

FIG. 52. View of terracottas (Concentration C) at Obalara's Land. 14th–early 15th century. Obalara's Land, Ife, Nigeria. 1971–72. From Peter S. Garlake, "Excavations at Obalara's Land, Ife, Nigeria," *West African Journal of Archaeology* 4 (1974): pl. XXXVIII



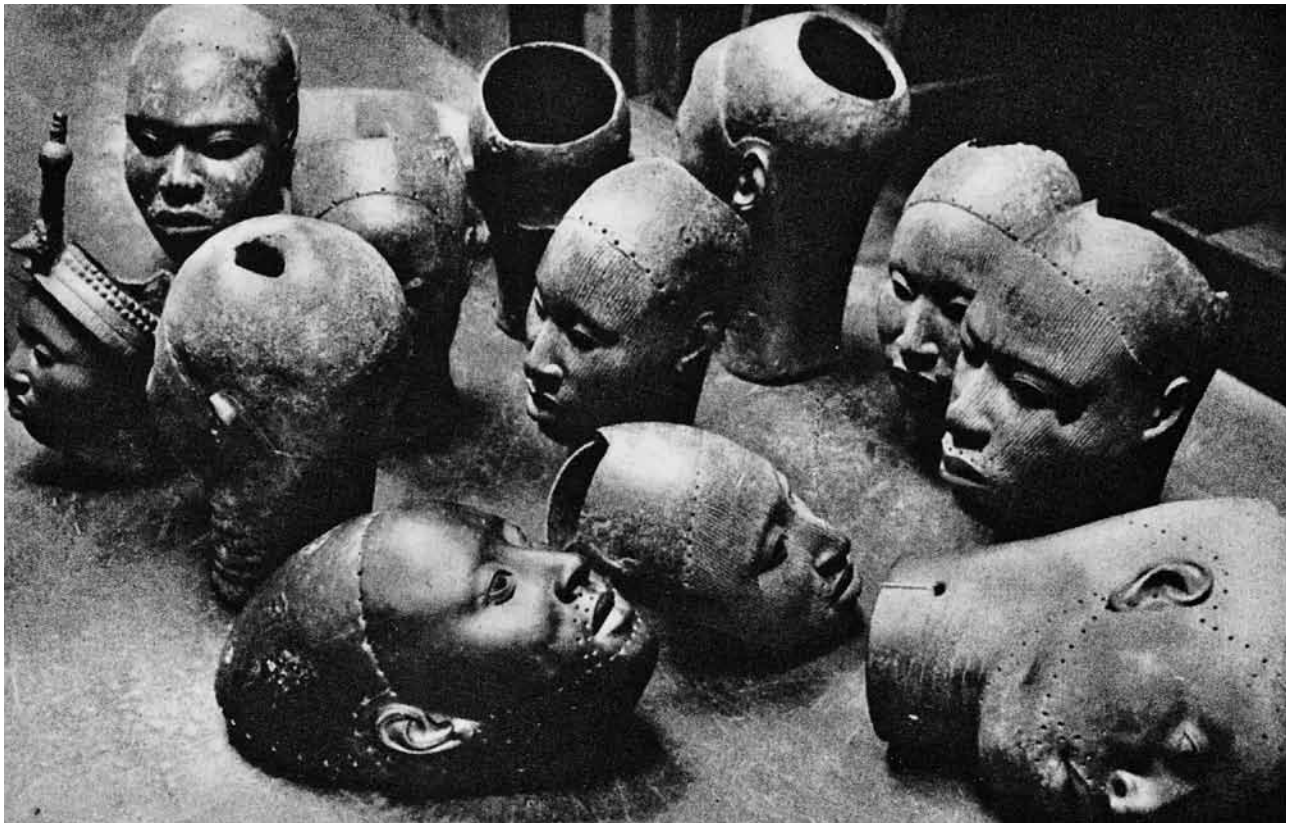


FIG. 53. Bronze heads from the Wunmonije Compound at the British Museum, London. 1948. From Henry John Drewal and Enid Schildkrout, *Dynasty and Divinity: Ife Art in Ancient Nigeria*, 2009, p. 4, fig. 2

proposed that these representations may depict disease, deformity, and suffering. The second cluster consisted of a dense concentration of different terracotta sculptures—including the heads and torsos relating to portions of six naturalistic figures and three conical heads of varying degrees of abstraction—arranged with great deliberation along a north-south axis and interred in a compact group lying face upward (fig. 52).⁵⁹ The head at the top left measures $5\frac{1}{8}$ in. (13 cm) from crown to chin. Radiocarbon testing yielded a date of 1370 CE, plus or minus sixty years. These two juxtaposed subgroupings appear to reflect extreme poles of experience, with the significance of each being formally expressed through representations that suggest a highly stylized, heightened realism. In one, humanity's failings, flaws, and deficiencies are dramatically pronounced. In the other, states of refined perfection, serenity, and spiritual immortality are idealized. The condition of the skulls found makes it unlikely that they were associated with any act of execution or sacrifice. Instead, their presence may relate to practices of burying the remains of those afflicted with certain diseases in order to eliminate their recurrence.⁶⁰ The manner in which the second mass of highly refined terracotta sculptures were buried may represent the commemorative interment of a series of distinguished individuals. Despite the fragmentary condition of these sculptures, the reverence with which they were handled makes apparent the fact that they were precious guarded.

Ife's artistic legacy is identified most famously with a celebrated corpus of some thirty works cast both in pure copper and in brass using the lost-wax method (see fig. 45).⁶¹ These sculptures were found primarily in two contexts, neither of



FIG. 54. Terracotta fragments in situ during excavation at Ita Yemoo, Ife, Nigeria. 1963.
From Frank Willett, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, 1967, pl. 65

which revealed information relating to their original use. The first of these chance discoveries occurred in 1938 when thirteen lifesize heads and a half-lifesize half figure were unearthed behind the royal palace while digging house foundations at the Wunmonije Compound (fig. 53).

Soon after, the same site yielded additional finds of five more works—a lifesize head, three smaller heads, and a torso. It was also established at that time that a lifesize mask cast entirely of copper had been kept in the adjacent palace from the time it was made.⁶² Several decades later, seven more works cast in brass—a standing man, a couple, four staffs, and a vessel encircled by a female figure—were found during construction near an important point of entry into Ife. Excavated by Willett in 1963, that site, known as Ita Yemoo, is situated at the city's northeastern limits.⁶³ In close proximity to where the brass works were unearthed, Willett discovered several shrines with terracotta figures (fig. 54). The first of these appears to have been an enclosure with a mud wall and thatched roof, within which was found an especially elaborate terracotta head, originally from a full-length figure, identified as a queen by its five-tiered beaded crown.⁶⁴ As at Obalara's Land, the objects appear to have been broken before being positioned where they were found.

The creative process that informed the cast works is consonant with those in terracotta, given that each object was preliminarily modeled in clay and wax. Despite the fact that at their inception each metal work potentially afforded its author complete creative license, the representations shaped by Ife casters reflect a highly disciplined adherence to an established aesthetic. The thirteen freestanding

heads from Wunmonije in particular all appear to reference the same individual, an imposing male subject in his prime.⁶⁵ A terracotta sculpture so stylistically similar to the Wunmonije heads that it may be attributed to the same artist underscores the intersection of creativity across these two idioms.⁶⁶

The comparatively greater formal variety and breadth of vision manifest in the overall terracotta sculptural record suggests that it may have been the foundation of and catalyst for creativity in other media at Ife.⁶⁷ This idea is corroborated by thermoluminescence testing of the cores of two of the Wunmonije brass heads, whose results indicate that they may be slightly later in date than much of the terracotta corpus, which spans the tenth to the fifteenth or sixteenth century.⁶⁸ This greater expansiveness of artistic expression is evident on a number of levels. The first of these is quantitative: historically, artists at Ife produced a far more extensive body of work in terracotta than in metal.⁶⁹ The terracottas also exhibit greater stylistic diversity, incorporating both abstraction and naturalism, as well as a more varied array of human and animal subjects. The scope of the human imagery alone encompasses myriad distinctive physiognomies, from elites in attitudes of sublime introspection to prisoners in poses of acute suffering. Finally, artists at Ife shaped and fired clay to create works on an unusually broad spectrum of scales, ranging from objects of larger-than-life, heroic grandeur to the most delicate and precious of miniatures.

It is evident that, despite being represented according to an established formal convention (see p. 44), the nuanced details and degree of originality found in each of these visages suggest that they were inspired by living models. Figures 55, 56, and 57 are distinct both for their facial morphologies and for the treatment of the summits of the heads. The majestic, nearly lifesize head from a figure in the collection of the Kimbell Art Museum (fig. 55) features an unusual squared crown composed of four rectangular panels overlaying a conical form and embellished by a complex network of beading.⁷⁰ Figure 56 is marked by the sweeping lateral brim of a head-dress, and in fig. 57 individual tresses of hair appear as wavy lines that cover the surface of the bare head and are tightly pulled back in a type of chignon. Scrutiny of the masterfully modeled facial structures reveals profound distinctions between the latter two subjects. Although both exhibit a similar idealization, which evokes a degree of strength and assertive power suggestive of a male persona, there is an undeniable delicacy to the perfect ovals of the faces as well as in the narrowly cast, attenuated, and gentle aspect of fig. 56.⁷¹ The scope of the models referenced is apparent in fig. 57,⁷² whose broader features—including a squared jaw and well-defined cheekbones—reveal a very different physiognomy from that of fig. 56, but which has nonetheless been rendered with the same lucidity. It is clear that the authors of these works placed a premium on carefully detailed description of the summit of the head as a key marker of identity. In fig. 58, the fragmentary head from a full figure that would have been three-quarters lifesize, minute precision was applied to describe the distinctly conical form of the crown, which is subdivided into a succession of tapering beaded tiers.⁷³

Clay is among the most unpretentious and ubiquitous of artistic media. As a material it is at once universally accessible and yet infinitely variable: its specific

OPPOSITE: FIG. 55. Head. Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria. 12th–15th century. Terracotta with residue of red pigment and traces of mica, 10½ x 5¾ x 7⅞ in. (26.7 x 14.6 x 18.7 cm).
Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas AP 1994.04





FIG. 56. Head (three views). Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria. 12th–15th century. Terracotta, 6 ⁵/₈ x 4 ¹/₄ x 5 in. (16.8 x 10.8 x 12.7 cm). The Kronos Collections

composition constitutes a literal manifestation of a particular place. In the region of present-day Nigeria, this highly familiar medium has been the vehicle for producing likenesses of exalted individuals as early as 500 BCE. Striking for its fluid sense of immediacy and subtlety of expression, the great creative sculptural output in fired clay at Ife reflects the efforts of many different artists over an extended period of time. No doubt clay's easy availability allowed a greater freedom to experiment than metal did, and a variety of clays—each distinguished by the unique mineral composition that determined its locale—was harnessed for the manufacture of pottery and sculpture.⁷⁴ The technique for sculpting figurative works was closely related to that of domestic pottery.⁷⁵ In both instances, overlapping coils of clay were used to build upward by repeatedly adding a length to the end of the previous one. While traces of these coils were always smoothed away from the inner surfaces of utilitarian receptacles, they remained visible on the hollowed interiors of many sculptures,⁷⁶ which were built up by hand in sections from moist clay and then allowed to dry in the sun, after which finishing details might be incised and surfaces wetted to achieve a smoother finish (fig. 59). Decorative details intended to project in relief were formed separately and pressed into the still moist surface.







FIG. 57. Head (three views). Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria. 12th–15th century. Terracotta, 8½ x 5¼ in. (21.6 x 13.3 cm). Private collection



FIG. 58. Head (three views). Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria. 12th–15th century. Terracotta, H. 11½ in. (29.4 cm). The Kronos Collections





FIG. 59. Sifawu Odewale, a member of a family of potters, pulls a scraper across the surface of a coiled vessel to create diagonal lines. Ooko, Nigeria. 1991. From Boye Agunbiade, Christopher D. Roy, Michael L. McNulty, and Charles Hindes, "Pottery Production, Trading Relations, and Development: Case Studies in Ooko and Ilorin, Nigeria," in *Clay and Fire: Pottery in Africa*, 2000, p. 247, fig. 5

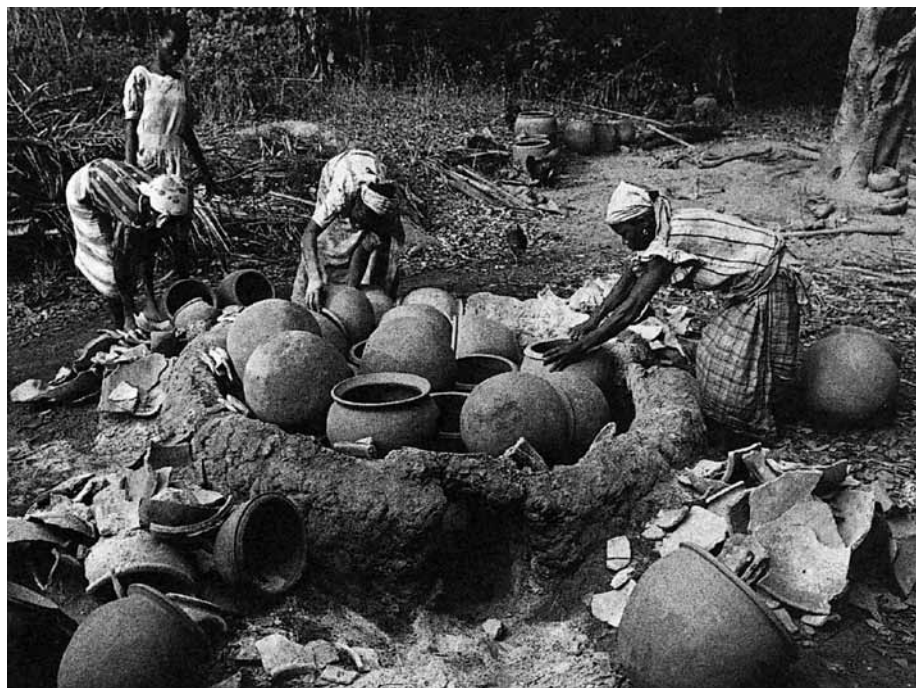


FIG. 60. Potters of the Odewale family preparing vessels for firing. Ooko, Nigeria. 1991. From Boye Agunbiade, Christopher D. Roy, Michael L. McNulty, and Charles Hindes, "Pottery Production, Trading Relations, and Development: Case Studies in Ooko and Ilorin, Nigeria," in *Clay and Fire: Pottery in Africa*, 2000, p. 248, fig. 7

Judging from contemporary firing practices, it is likely that members of the artist's family would then arrange sun-dried objects in an open kiln. Broken sherds around the kiln are an essential part of the firing process in that they are placed on top of the works being fired in order to help regulate the heat (fig. 60). After pots have been fired but remain red-hot, they would be moved, using a hook-shaped stick, to a place where the cooling process could be completed.

Especially ambitious large-scale figurative sculptures would have required iron armatures to support them at vulnerable points. Vents that allowed air to escape during firing would also be introduced near the feet or top of the headdress in order to prevent the collapse of the hollowed structures.⁷⁷ Many of the terracottas show traces of having been painted following their manufacture. Pigment was sometimes introduced to highlight features: white for the whites of the eyes, black for the irises and hair, and red for bead ornaments. There are signs that in some instances surfaces were painted entirely red at a later date, which may have simulated the application of ritual offerings.⁷⁸

According to the art historian Henry Drewal's proposed chronology of Ife's sculptural output, artists between 1000 and 1200 CE favored an idealized naturalism, which from 1200 to 1400 they displaced with a freer, more expressive style.⁷⁹ This interpretation has been disputed by Garlake, who cites the lack of specific evidence for that sequence, given that works reflecting both tendencies appear to have been produced contemporaneously during the fourteenth century.⁸⁰

The deeply rooted identification of female specialists with the processes whereby clay is shaped for domestic and sacred purposes in Yoruba society has led to the proposal that women were the authors of the sculpted terracotta corpus at Ife.⁸¹ Further, although traditional associations and contemporary practice indicate that men were undoubtedly responsible for the transformation of stone, iron, wood, brass, and copper, Drewal has suggested that women may have contributed to the lost-wax process by producing the clay cores upon which modeling in wax was undertaken by men.⁸² Willett has posited the opposite scenario by reasoning that, because the casting of metals is a male specialization and the naturalism of Ife's cast-metal works overlap so significantly with the terracottas, the latter are likely to have been the work of men.⁸³ It has also been noted that representations in both these media at the court of Benin have historically been produced by a guild of male artisans who trace their tradition to that of Ife (see pp. 18–35).⁸⁴

The profound chords of recognition that Ife's terracotta legacy elicits have led to its veneration in multiple contexts, from elaborately interred offerings to centerpieces of shrines and, more recently, as treasures in museum collections. Although the original subjects and roles of the terracottas may forever elude us, through their eloquent evocation of familiar aspects of the human condition they appear to have been conceived at once to capture the foibles and imperfections that afflicted members of their communities in order to discard and eliminate them and to elevate those most highly esteemed to an ideal state of eternal perfection. In articulating a vision of human transcendence informed by idiosyncratic qualities and individualized character traits, it appears that Ife's artists sought to capture in sculptural form the essence of notable members of their fellow citizenry. A parallel to the virtuosity of this form of visual tribute in Yoruba culture is a tradition of praise poetry called *oriki*, which vividly evokes the *iwà*, or essence, of memorable persons or gods through eloquent song performed on festive occasions. During one such performance tradition at Ila Orangun, referred to as Eka kika, the *oriki* of the *oba* is related to those of his royal ancestral precursors. To this day, while this recitation is delivered in the presence of the *oba*, he wears the ancestral crown of Orangun so that the fluid fusion of his identity with all its previous owners, going back to Oduduwa, is further underscored.⁸⁵

In Yoruba society, the ancestors are omnipresent among the living just as physical fragments of the past are integrated meaningfully into the present and, as a result, accorded new significance by successive generations. A clue to the identity of Ife's astounding fired-clay depictions in the most recent past may be reflected in a proverb that states, "To die is to become deified; no one venerates a living person."⁸⁶ Although the specific associations that originally informed particular works but were never recorded have been forgotten, the striking idealization of so many of these creations complements the attainment of a state of perfection whereby important progenitors are elevated to the collective rank of *orisa* for the ages.



Pageantry and Ritual: The Akan

When an elder dies it is as if a whole library had burned down.

— WEST AFRICAN PROVERB

ALONG THE WEST AFRICAN COAST OF PRESENT-DAY GHANA, ALSO KNOWN AS the Gold Coast, both distinguished mortals and divinities were once celebrated through terracotta sculptural representations. In these societies, which traditionally relied on the oral transmission of knowledge, the death of a leader who had not only served as the repository for traditions relayed by past generations, but who also presided over a lifetime of events that came to define his or her community, embodied the loss of a host of irretrievable information. An acute awareness of this was reflected in the creation of terracotta effigies to pay tribute to their role as vessels of the collective experience, wisdom, and memory of their people's history.

Terracotta works modeled as markers of a mortal's transient physical being triggered complex readings concerning their contributions to the community. Those refined and expressive creations by Akan artists of the Gold Coast represent a cultural high point among regional forms of visual expression and afford an enduring but fragmentary impression of how their leaders have sought to be immortalized as far back as the seventeenth century. It is striking that, although the subjects of these works rose to power as purveyors of gold to the world at large, they elected to have their lasting presence in their own communities fashioned from common, and relatively fragile, clay. This tradition survives through isolated artifacts that range in style from highly schematic to intensely naturalistic and that are now preserved in institutional and private collections in Ghana and abroad. Unfortunately, these works became disassociated from their subjects after they were removed from their original shrines and isolated from complex ensembles of related figures. In only a few rare instances have scholars been able to determine which locales such works were associated with.

Akan peoples share closely related languages, matrilineal descent, and systems of centralized political authority. They comprise more than half of the population of the modern state of Ghana and are a significant presence in adjacent Côte d'Ivoire (see fig. 61). Linguistic and archaeological evidence suggests that ancestors of the Akan have inhabited south-central Ghana for at least two thousand years. The subsequent waves of migrants that joined them there included one that left the Lagoon region of Côte d'Ivoire sometime after 1000 CE.¹ In the fourteenth century, the Akan state of Bono rose to prominence by capitalizing on its access to locally mined gold. The major collecting point for such regional resources—before they were relayed northwest through centers such as Kong, Bobo Dioulasso, Jenne, and then across the Sahara—was the market town of Begho.² By the end of the fifteenth century, other Akan chiefdoms had become influential through the exploitation of

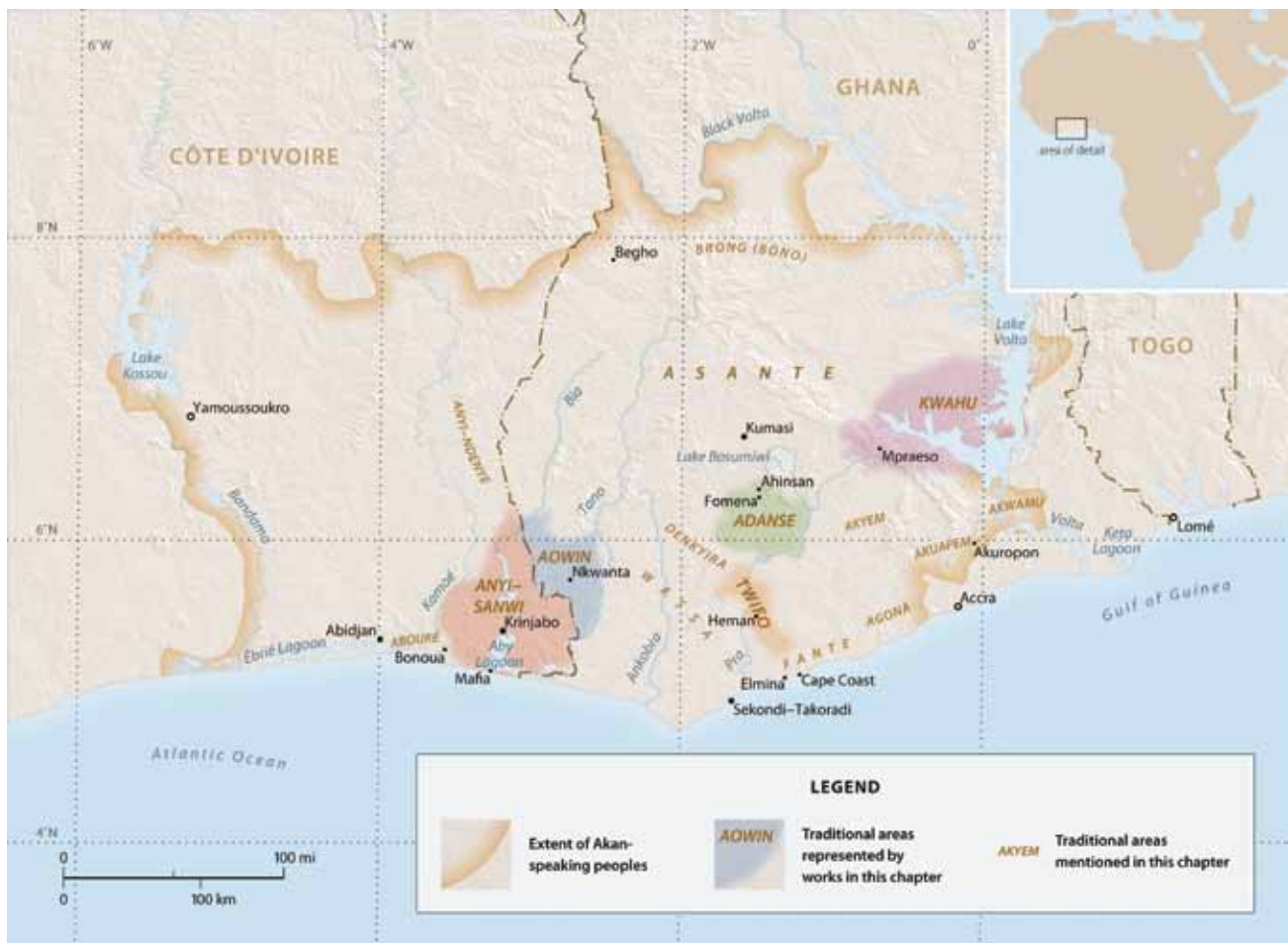


FIG. 61. Extent of the Akan region, including commemorative terracotta centers discussed in this chapter

gold as well as salt, ivory, and kola nuts. The bulk of the local resources disseminated through trade were gold and ivory concentrated in forested areas occupied by Akan polities, including the Wassa, Igwira, Akyem, and Denkyira.³ Coastal groups such as the Fante sought to capitalize on their location by acting as intermediaries between these inland polities and European merchants who began establishing themselves along the coast at the end of the fifteenth century,⁴ gradually shifting their focus from North African to Akan trade outlets.⁵ Earliest among these were the Portuguese, who by 1642 had been displaced by the Dutch. Soon after, Britain and Denmark established rival coastal trading posts. With the demand for labor in New World colonies, the main regional export became slaves.

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, a group of inland forest states to the north were unified under a military leader named Osei Tutu I (r. ca. 1700–17), chief of the town of Kumasi, and his priestly advisor, Okomfo Anokye, as the Asante kingdom.⁶ In founding this political entity, Osei Tutu encouraged member states to renounce preexisting allegiances in order to forge a new political tradition. He became the first Asantehene, responsible for coordinating national interests among the states within his sphere. At the apogee of Asante power in the early nineteenth century, its prosperous capital, Kumasi, was at the center of a system of roads extending outward to all the areas under Asante influence.⁷ Each of the subject states maintained its own leadership but paid tribute to the Asantehene. This structure allowed for Asante's supremacy while also affording regional chiefs considerable latitude over local concerns.⁸

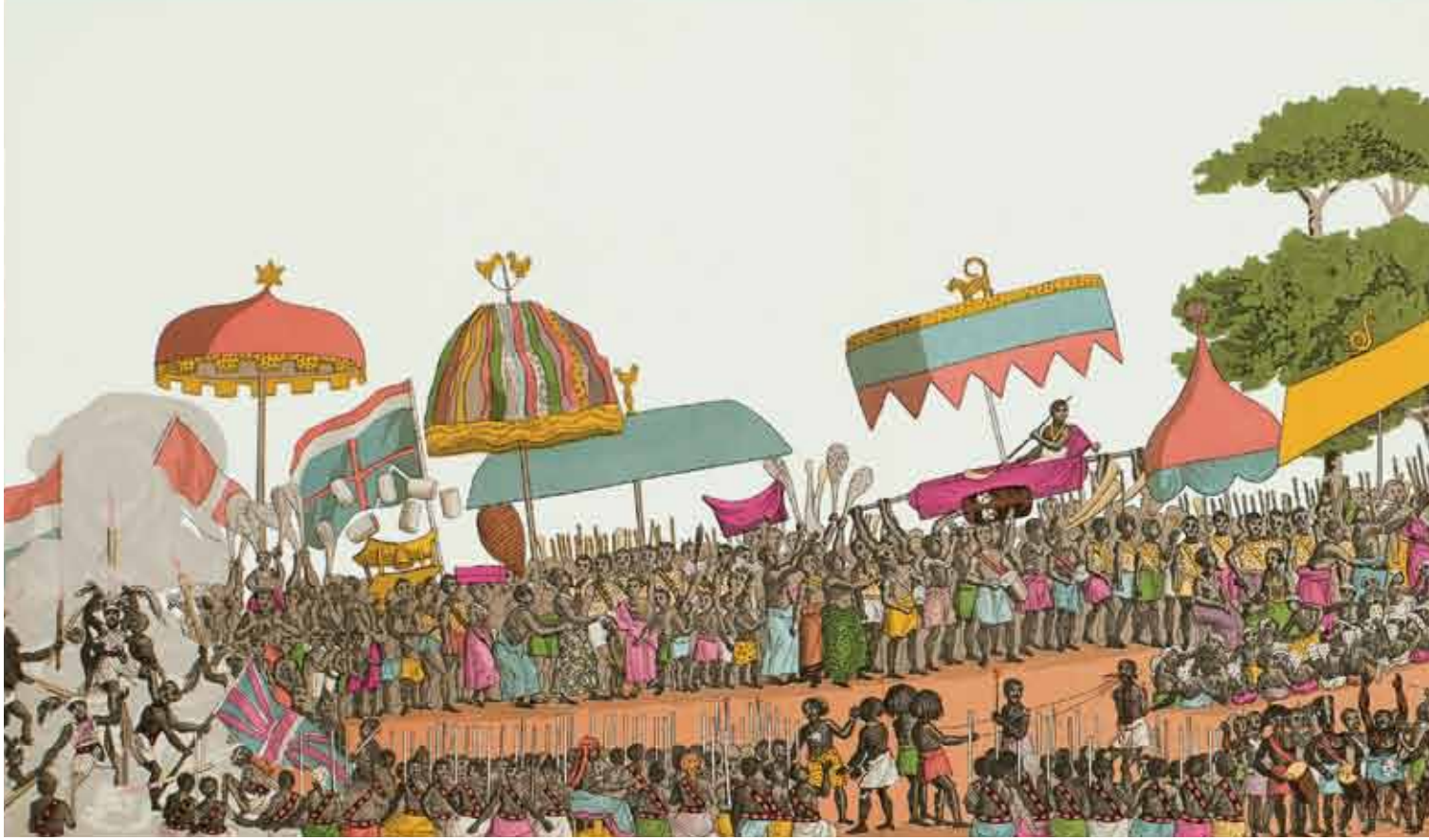


FIG. 62. Chester Higgins Jr. (American, b. 1946). Asantehene Osei Tutu II and the Golden Stool. Manhyia Palace, Kumasi, Ghana. 2005

Although the Asante kingdom figures prominently within the region's political landscape from this time forward, its peoples did not develop a tradition of commemorative terracotta sculpture. Instead, the farthest north from the coast that this practice developed was in the Adanse region, which later came under Asante influence. To a number of previously independent polities, which had been important centers of gold mining (including Aowin, Wassa, Twifo, Akyem, and Denkyira), the advantages of incorporation were not self-evident, and their continued relative autonomy led to periodic resistance to Asante hegemony.⁹ Chief among those who resisted during the early eighteenth century were the Aowin.¹⁰ Osei Tutu prevailed, however, in a series of successful military campaigns and ultimately induced the Aowin chiefs to formalize their allegiance to the Asantehene through the payment of 600 ounces of gold.¹¹ Asante's reach and the degree to which its cultural practices have been documented are extensive. For this reason, many of its traditions are referenced in order to situate the terracotta genres within a broader context.

Opoku Ware (r. 1720–50), one of Asante's greatest warrior-kings, succeeded Osei Tutu and continued the policy of allowing newly conquered states to retain their own chiefs while consolidating power through instituting a binding Great Oath of allegiance.¹² Despite his success in securing control over regional resources, however, ongoing challenges from within prevented him from fully capitalizing on opportunities for trade with Europe.¹³ Some Akan groups had already moved westward to the Lagoon area about 1700,¹⁴ and by the early nineteenth century, Asante territory covered nearly all of present-day Ghana.

The central emblem of Asante unity and power was a Golden Stool (Kofi Sika Dwa), believed to have descended from the heavens, landing on the lap of the first Asantehene to serve as a shrine for the nation's collective spirit (*sunsum*).¹⁵ A photograph of the current Asantehene, Osei Tutu II (r. 1999–present) (fig. 62), shows him surrounded by the emblems of his rank. He holds a large flywhisk and wears *kente*, a traditional togalike prestige garment, as well as numerous items of



ornate gold jewelry and a crown with gold decorative elements. Next to him is the Golden Stool, which is brought out only for special occasions such as for the cyclical Adaye festival during which the Asantehene remembers his departed ancestors.¹⁶

In Akan culture, *kra* is a concept that attributes to royal ancestors a collective soul. *Kra*, or *okara*, is manifested in the world of experience by way of the *sunsum*. It has also been defined as that which links one person to another.¹⁷ This idea of an essential spiritual connection that transcends individual being was further articulated by the art historian George Nelson Preston, who described it as evidence of “a continuum of soul and consciousness which unites the reigning chieftain’s soul, intellect, and character with that of his ancestors.”¹⁸ Akan society recognized this continuum not only across the reigns of individual leaders but also between life and death.

According to Akan belief, hierarchies established by the living were perpetuated in and extended into the afterlife. An annual purification festival known as Odwira was held in September at the time of the first harvest of yams, a staple of life among the Akan. On that occasion, the ancestors were collectively honored with a celebratory feast featuring vibrant visual and musical pageantry. The most important day of the Asante calendar, Odwira was also marked with visits by the Asantehene to the royal mausoleums.¹⁹ The universal observation of Odwira by Akan communities afforded the Asante an institution that transcended differences within the confederation and provided an occasion for its leaders to assemble with a shared sense of purpose and unity.²⁰

An extremely detailed engraving from a drawing by the British traveler Thomas E. Bowdich illustrates the first day of an Odwira festival witnessed in the early nineteenth century (fig. 63). In this image, the Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame (also known as Osei Asib Bonsu, r. 1804–23) is seated at the center of the revelries on a heavy ebony and gold chair under a red umbrella topped with a gold



FIG. 63. T[homas] E[dward] Bowdich. *The First Day of the Yam Custom*. Drawing. From T. E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, 1966 edition, facing p. 275

elephant finial and fringed with gold tassels. Insignia of the Asantehene's stature include the gold regalia of his office, such as a diadem, armbands, bracelets, leg bands, and a massive necklace. British officers in red and white uniforms sit in attendance to the right on plain European-style chairs.

Because a deceased leader continued to occupy a parallel role in the ancestral realm, he required markers that affirmed his status, including wives, servants, cloths, gold, and sustenance.²¹ Brodie Cruickshank, a Scottish merchant and magistrate who traveled on the Gold Coast from 1834 to 1852, described the commemorative ensembles created for Fante elites in the mid-nineteenth century:

Upon the death of a great man, they make representations of him, sitting in state with his wives and attendants seated around him. . . . There is no apotheosis of the dead intended by these representations: they are simply monuments to their memory like the statues of our own great men.²²

Elaborate funerary ceremonies among other Akan groups demarcated the transition between life and death and ushered the soul into the ancestral realm.²³ Ambitious tributes that combined drumming, song, commemorative objects, and offerings of food and wine were orchestrated to mark two distinct moments—the time of burial and a subsequent celebration that was called by different names according to region. The posthumous event generally required long-term planning and was sometimes held up to forty days after the burial.

In their journey to the ancestral realm, the dead were believed to exist in an intermediate zone outlying the community. Post-burial rites often featured the deposition of ceremonial ceramics at a dedicated site identified as the “place of the

pots,” called *asensie* by the Kwahu and *mmaso* by the Aowin and Anyi. The terracotta artifacts assembled included both utilitarian receptacles, used to serve the departed ancestors a votive meal, and figurative representations identified with important individuals and their followers.²⁴ Among the earliest documented Akan terracotta creations, dated to the eleventh century, are elegant bowls and jars coated with slip and polychrome painting produced by potters in a suburb of Begho.²⁵ A survey of the existing excavated record by the archaeologist James O. Bellis corroborates the observation of early European visitors to the region that a tradition of funerary terracotta sculptures was full-blown among Akan communities as early as the late 1600s.²⁶

The richly diverse commemorative terracotta traditions of the Akan, which in some communities continue into the present, were historically concentrated in the southern and southwestern areas of Ghana and southeastern Côte d’Ivoire. It has been suggested that their development and diffusion may have been related to the formation and expansion of the early Akan forest state of Akwamu during the sixteenth century.²⁷ According to that chronology, these dedicatory sculptures pre-date by a century the founding of Asante. Examination of a critical mass of these creations makes apparent at once both the overarching aesthetic that informed them and the nuanced formal departures that signal works by artists from the same center. The culturally shared ideal apparent across these various formulations gives preeminence to the head, defined as an elongated and expansive form whose facial features articulate an expression of supreme calm and serenity. Although we will never be able to reconstruct the original experiential conditions that amplified the visual power of these Akan terracottas and essentially informed their understanding, review of the material record reveals an artistic tradition devoted to capturing the essence of specific individuals in highly idealized visual terms. The authors of these delicate commemorative tributes selectively impressed into and applied onto a basic clay template some defining features of their particular subjects, yielding an artistic corpus inflected by subtle refinements.

The art historian Michelle Gilbert has undertaken extensive research in Akuapem, an Akan polity in southeastern Ghana northeast of Accra that in the seventeenth century was part of the Akwamu kingdom. In the late 1980s, she described the continued use of naturalistic, lifesize terracotta heads, referred to as *ohoni ti*, or “effigy head,” to represent deceased chiefs in after-burial funerary celebrations.²⁸ She notes that in 1979, after an eighty-year lapse, three earlier kings were the focus of a costly posthumous commemorative rite. On that occasion the *ohoni ti* of each king was laid in state on a bed draped with expensive textiles and then carried in procession from one end of the town to the other. Gilbert’s research has also documented the presence of terracotta heads in shrines honoring deities, or *abosom*, which are refractions of the divine.²⁹ *Abosom* were described to her as mediators between men and divinity.³⁰ This instance of two contemporaneous but distinctive contexts and meanings for Akan terracotta heads makes evident that, in the absence of documentation, it is impossible to establish with certainty the original subject or role of an isolated work.

Akan potters have channeled their creative efforts into two major genres of funerary terracottas. The *abusua kuruwa*, literally “cup of the matrilineage,” or clan pot, was incorporated during the finale of a funeral, when the *abusua*, or

matrilineal clan, of the deceased ate together and made an offering of sustenance for their departed member. In this rite marking the closure of an individual's lived experience and his or her assumption of responsibility to support familial unity in the afterlife, hair and nail clippings were collected from living relations and the deceased to be comingled within a vessel.³¹ Aristocratic and wealthy patrons commissioned especially elaborate versions of these ceremonial receptacles. Such works sometimes featured motifs that referenced achievements of the deceased or pictorially evoked statements intended to offer them consolation in the afterlife.³²

A proliferation of creatures associated with the earth in which the deceased has been interred figure prominently among the motifs that unfold around the perimeter of such vessels.³³ In an *abusua kuruwa* in the collection of the Musée du Quai Branly (fig. 64), such a scene at once highlights the base of the vessel and integrates it into an elegant sculptural arrangement. The surface of the flared bowl has been enhanced with a dense program of relief imagery that includes tortoise and lizard depictions. The area that narrows to form the vessel's ridged neck has also been interpreted as the waist of an overarching figure. The segmented treatment of the neck by Akan artists references fat wrabbles, a symbol of prosperity among the Akan as well as the Yoruba. This vessel's neck intersects with a stopper that takes the form of the figure's upper body. At its summit, the flattened disk of the head is joined at an angle by a neck defined by bold wrabbles that echo those of the mid-section. The overall effect is that of a gracefully synchronized alternation of repeating formal elements. This same appropriation of a foundational vessel as a corporeal form is interpreted according to yet another approach in fig. 65, in which the bodily segment is highly compressed into the base of the vessel lid, which is devoid of ornament except for references to breasts, which project as miniature conical forms from the surface. The broad columnar neck of the figural vessel is subdivided into four successive bands. At the summit a boldly rendered head, whose scale is consistent with that of the neck, is oriented at a pronounced upward angle, and its eyes are closed. The facial features project powerfully and are highly angular.

The second distinctive form of Akan commemorative terracotta consists of human representations that may celebrate important men and women, including senior chiefs, priests, and queen mothers.³⁴ These hollow sculptures include full figures as well as freestanding heads and range in scale from 3 1/8 to 11 7/8 inches (8–30 cm). In both instances the head is the focus of intense elaboration and emphasis. As idealized depictions of deceased individuals, such works were surrounded by attributes of their subjects' status and paraded through the community before being deposited by the family at a final resting place.³⁵ In 1602 a merchant working for the Dutch, Pieter de Marees, described Fante funerary customs and ceremonies observed at the Portuguese settlement of Elmina, providing the earliest written account of this practice:

All kinds of food and drink are put on the Grave in order that [the departed] may eat them. The [mourners] also believe in good faith that they actually consume this food and drink and live on it, and the Pots of water and Palm Wine are constantly renewed. All [the king's] possessions, such as his Weapons and clothes, are buried with him, and all his Nobles who used to serve him are modeled from life in earth, painted and put in





OPPOSITE: FIG. 64. Clan vessel. Akan peoples; Ghana.
20th century, before 1962. Terracotta, $12\frac{1}{8} \times 8\frac{7}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{8}$ in. (30.6 x 22.7 x 23.2 cm).
Musée du Quai Branly, Paris 73.1962.8.21

ABOVE: FIG. 65. Clan vessel lid. Akan peoples; Ghana. 19th century. Terracotta, H. 13 in. (33 cm).
Musée Dapper, Paris 5560

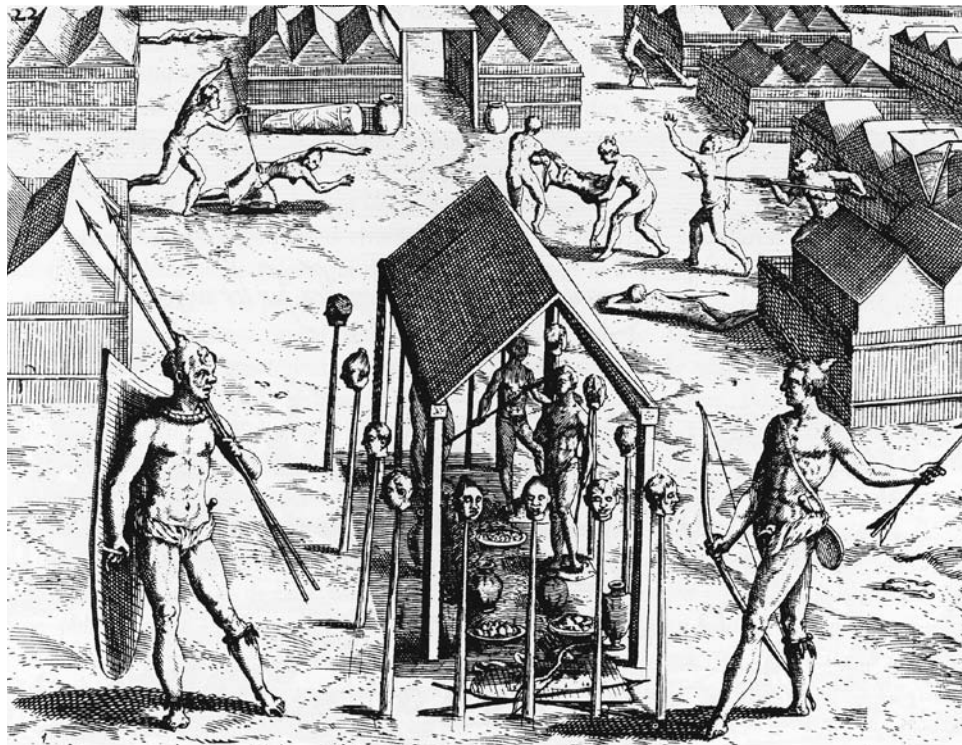


FIG. 66. *The King's Funeral*. Engraving. Germany. 1603. From Pieter de Marees, *Wahrhaftige historische Beschreibung dess gewaltigen goltreichen Königreichs Geuinea*, 1603

a row all around the Grave, side by side. Thus their Sepulchres are like a House and furnished as if they were still alive; and this Sepulchre of the King is kept in high esteem and carefully guarded.³⁶

De Marees's published accounts were accompanied by engravings that include fig. 66, which illustrates his narrative of a king's funeral. In addition to modeled likenesses of nobles, decapitated heads of people chosen to accompany the king on his journey encircle the structure. Underneath the roof appear to be three small full-length statues of nobles who served the king, the earliest representation of Akan memorial terracottas.

Reports of the artistic processes that informed the execution of these works privilege the essential one-to-one nature of their correspondence with their original subjects. The commentary is striking for its emphasis on the artist's ambition to endow such creations with a penetrating degree of accuracy through mystical measures of appropriation, as in the Ghanaian historian and archaeologist James Robert Anquandah's account:

According to this specialist, after completing an order, libation is poured with a brief prayer that the figures may truly represent those whose image appeared in water at the commencement of the work. At the same time, the spirit of the deceased is invoked into the figures before they are handed over to the customers who take them to the ceremony.³⁷

Appeals for intercession to ensure the veracity of the representation are said to yield an accurate image in the reflective surface of water or palm oil. The delicate nature of the operation whereby potters transcribed such authoritative but intangible and

fleeting primary sources is similarly reflected in references to their scrutiny of the fugitive impression of depressions made in a pillow by the subject.³⁸

The visual record of these Akan funerary representations attests to an amazingly rich diversity of styles and formal approaches to rendering human physiognomy. Although some have come to be identified with distinct regional centers, the preponderance of the Akan corpus lacks documentation. As a consequence, in the rare instances that certain works have been identified with particular regional centers, they have become points of reference for attributing formally related works on a stylistic basis. It is important to recognize, however, that Akan patrons may have favored and sought out the talent of specific artists, irrespective of where they were located. One such celebrated potter and clay sculptor, Madam Abena Owu (1866–1956), supplied figures to royal houses in Agona, Akyem, and Asante. In the 1950s, toward the end of her life, she relayed to the archaeologist and former director of National Museums and Monuments of Ghana Richard B. Nunoo the oral traditions relating to her far-flung patrons.³⁹

Akan figurative creations that are formally associated with a single artist tend to be distinguishable from one another by customization of the subject's coiffure and the treatment of facial cicatrization. The cicatrization marks are medicinal scars that reflect protective measures.⁴⁰

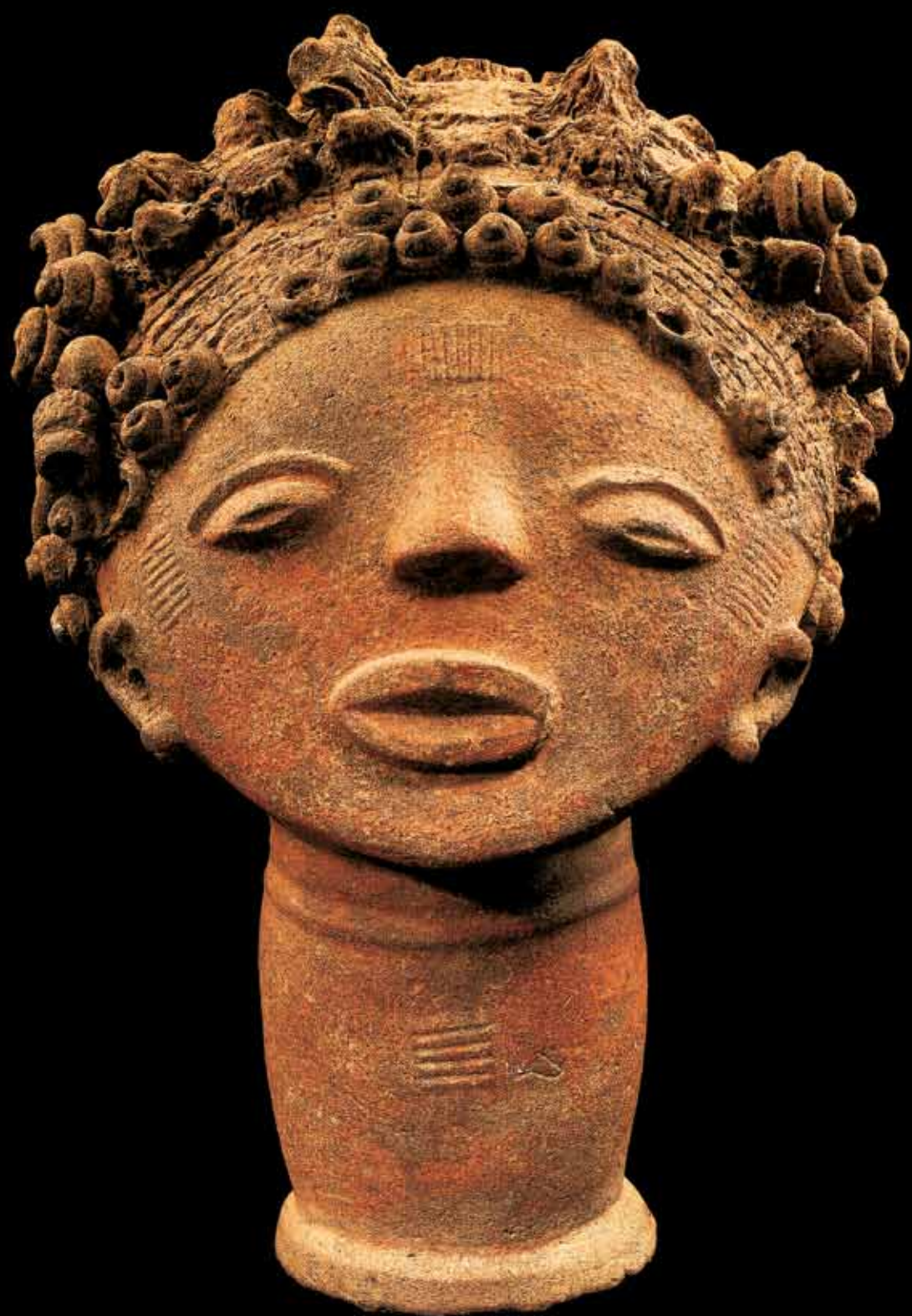
A distinctive stylistic consistency is apparent in works identified with the town of Ahinsan, north of Fomena. Excavated by the British archaeologist Oliver Davies in the 1950s and dating to the first half of the eighteenth century, this site was clearly a commemorative one, separate from places of burial.⁴¹ In addition to small-scale representations of heads, an extensive array of ritual ceramics was found at Ahinsan. Davies suggests that the terracottas may have been made about 1700 by Denkyira peoples who were scattered by the consolidation of the Asante state.⁴² In this center, the head defines the face as a flattened but slightly convex surface upon which features have been added in relief. Davies notes that close examination of these artifacts reveals evidence that the features were individually modeled and applied to the surface of the face. Despite the schematic approach to the articulation of facial elements, the treatment of the coiffures reflects a great deal of variation. Two formally related works now at the Musée Dapper in Paris (figs. 67 and 68) provide examples of the characteristic placement and form of the facial features. The eyes are raised ellipses positioned at angles, their upper contours echoed by a crescent brow. The open loop of the lips repeats this form, and the nose is a raised, rounded projection. Contrasts lie mainly in the greater breadth of both the face and neck of fig. 67 and in the coiffures. Curled tendrils of hair arranged in arced bands have been added to the surface of the head in fig. 67, whereas the relatively simple hairstyle of fig. 68 culminates in an elaborate conical mound of coiled hair.

A pair of male and female heads in the Metropolitan's collection (figs. 70 and 71, respectively) share many of the same formal conventions seen in figs. 67

FOLLOWING PAGES:

FIG. 67. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Adanse traditional area, Fomena or Twifo-Heman, Ghana.
18th century. Terracotta, 11 x 7½ in. (28 x 19 cm). Musée Dapper, Paris 2801

FIG. 68. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Adanse traditional area, Fomena or Twifo-Heman, Ghana.
17th century. Terracotta, 10⅞ x 5⅞ in. (27 x 15 cm). Musée Dapper, Paris 2804





and 68 but have been interpreted in yet another stylistically distinct manner. Traits evident in both the Dapper and Met examples are the precisely inscribed arc that defines the brow, the broad cylindrical form of the neck, the angle of the eyes, the form of the nose, and the aperture of the mouth. The Met works diverge aesthetically in the black dye or colorant that has been applied to their surfaces and in a number of other interpretive details. Both the crescents of the eyes and mouth are bolder in their definition and in the degree to which they are open, underscoring the alert engagement of their subjects, and the ears are more prominent as lateral semicircular projections. The expansive arc of the eyebrows and the beard that highlights the curve of the male's chin have been lightly inscribed into the surface. Finally, the definition of both coiffures is relatively austere and, in the case of the female, confined to a projection from the apex of the head. Yet another example (fig. 69) shares the same volumetric sensibility as the previous four heads but is informed by contrasting details. The face is striking for its oblong form and the fleshiness of its features. Above the crisp arc that delineates the hairline, traces of added coiled tresses project from the surface. Below, the gentle curve of the brows is raised in relief and accentuated with densely inscribed striations above the narrowed open ellipses of the eyes. The subtly raised ridge of the nose extends from the interstices of the brows to broaden dramatically into a horizontal span at the nostrils. That volume is echoed and slightly expanded by the full parted lips.

Parallels to works associated with Ahinsan may be discerned among those identified with the Twifo region.⁴³ Twifo was among the Akan states strategically positioned on the trade route between Asante and the coastal Fante. In oral traditions, the town of Heman is reputed to have been an early capital of the Akwamu empire.⁴⁴ The defeat of the Akwamu by the Akyem in 1730 forced the vanquished group to move 100 miles to the east of where they had been living, so that the Volta River now separated them from the rest of the Akan.⁴⁵ Beginning in the late 1960s, James O. Bellis undertook an archaeological survey in this area that led to the excavation of a three-century-old midden and ceremonial deposits relating to four villages. Bellis's excavations indicate that this site most probably was occupied from before 1690 until sometime after 1730. One of his photographs (fig. 72) documents the clustered distribution of pottery characteristic of deposit sites of Akan memorial terracottas. Discovered accidentally while clearing adjacent areas of undergrowth, it is one of the very few undisturbed deposits to have been excavated and documented by a trained archaeologist. The ceremonial areas—*asensie*—yielded surface finds of terracotta vessels and human figurines arranged around centrally positioned hearths.⁴⁶ The lightly fired vessels found in this context showed little evidence of use and were far more ornate than their more robust utilitarian corollaries, discarded after extensive use in the middens of those same villages.⁴⁷ Among the finds was a terracotta head and torso showing marked stylistic similarities with fig. 73.

In addition to a corpus of isolated heads attributed stylistically to Twifo, evidence from the *asensie* excavated by Bellis revealed remnants of figural elements originally attached to ceremonial vessels and freestanding figures.⁴⁸ Local sources

FIG. 69. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Adanse traditional area, Fomena (?), Ghana. Possibly 17th century. Terracotta, 11 3/4 x 7 1/2 x 7 1/2 in. (30 x 19 x 19 cm). Count B. de Grunne Collection, Brussels





FIG. 70. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Adanse traditional area, Fomena (?), Ghana.
17th–19th century. Terracotta, black dye or colorant, 12 x 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 7 in. (30.5 x 18.8 x 17.8 cm).
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,
Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1964 1978.412.352



FIG. 71. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Adanse traditional area, Fomena (?), Ghana.
17th–19th century. Terracotta, black dye or colorant, $12\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{7}{8}$ in. (31.3 x 19 x 14.5 cm).
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,
Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1964 1978.412.353



FIG. 72. View of the completed excavation of a deposit site of Akan memorial terracottas. Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana. 1967–69. From James O. Bellis, *The “Place of the Pots” in Akan Funerary Custom*, 1982, pl. 2

have underscored the decorative nature of these fragments as contrasted with the more fully developed heads designed as independent works to commemorate specific individuals. While the persons honored appear to have been primarily chiefs, priests, or the heads of matrilineal clans, members of their retinue might have been depicted as well.⁴⁹

Accounts of the creation of Akan heads suggest that the artist, selected by the family, studied the subject in repeated sittings during his or her lifetime. The intimate connection between the work and the individual portrayed could be further heightened through the addition of items taken from the bodies of family members, such as nails or hair, incorporated through an aperture in the back of the sculpture.

The facial expressions of the representations identified with Twifo are striking for their serene, meditative expressions. Preston has emphasized that this demeanor, appropriate to the visages of royalty, projects on the subject an ideal state of being.⁵⁰ The eyes, most often closed, are invariably depicted as rounded projections bisected by a bold horizontal demarcation between the lids. The arcs of the brows are rendered in relief and finely incised to distinguish their actual texture. Their full rounded features are gently modeled. These traits are all present in a Metropolitan Museum work whose idealized symmetry is highlighted by a bold band of cicatrization that vertically bisects the forehead (fig. 73). This pronounced

axis, positioned prominently at the top of the head, is countered at the base by the series of successive horizontal wrabbles that define the creases of the neck, characteristic of individuals who are healthy and well nourished. This signature style, indicative of a regional workshop, is apparent in a critical mass of closely related works (figs. 74 and 75). In each, the head is an egglike form defined by the same tranquil, introspective expression. The egg resonates profoundly in Akan culture as an emblem of creation as well as of continuity, rebirth, and regeneration.⁵¹ Accordingly, it is the ubiquitous sacrificial offering on ritual and ceremonial occasions. Its physical perfection has informed the formal aesthetic ideal of bodily beauty that Akan parents aspire to replicate in modeling the crania of their children. Parents would attempt to shape an infant's appearance at a stage when the body is pliable and malleable, a concept not unlike the modeling of clay (see also pp. 95–96).

Scrutiny of an array of Twifo-style heads reveals nuanced details differentiating one individual from another. In fig. 74, holes drilled into the earlobes and the corners of the mouth allowed for various attachments, including hair. Further distinguishing features include a series of striations inscribed on either temple and clusters of curls that project from the back and sides of the otherwise shaved head. The smooth surface of the dome of the head of fig. 75 is interrupted by a distinctive patch of hair, which projects from the crown and above the ears, as well as by a raised median ridge that extends from the crown to the bridge of the nose. Cicatrization appears in relief as a rectangular cluster of horizontal lines at the base of either eyebrow and at each temple. Formally related male and female depictions (figs. 76 and 77) are distinguished by the luxuriance of their coiffures. The male head is covered in a dense concentration of curls uniformly inscribed into its surface, whereas the female subject's head culminates in a proliferation of ringlets ending in an asymmetrical upward flourish toward the proper right side. Figure 78 provides a study of the contrasts between the refined simplicity of the reflective face and the exquisite elaboration of the highly personalized coiffure. In this instance, each lock has been exploited as an opportunity for abstract formal exploration.

Figure 79 exemplifies the means by which some Twifo commemorative sculptures evoke their subjects with a profound immediacy. The form of the volumetric head appears to be exacting in the idiosyncratic quality of its contours, and it has been "shorn" to dramatic effect, so that only a tuft projects from the proper left side of its crown. The nose is narrow at its bridge, with flared nostrils, and the lips are unusually full. The face of fig. 80 is impressive for both its exceptional delicacy and the degree to which the features are articulated somewhat schematically in light relief so that they appear as a succession of graceful arcs. Whereas the sculpture's relative compression is apparent in the concentration of the features at the base of the face as well as in its shallow profile, the artist has emphasized the expansive breadth of the forehead, which is further accentuated by a conical extension of the coiffure at the summit. Figure 81 is one of three highly distinctive fragmentary works, attributed to the same hand, in which the head is defined as a cylindrical form balanced on an elongated neck.⁵² Both the open eyes and the wide mouth take on elliptical configurations that contrast with the rectilinear ridge of the nose. The motif of three raised vertical lines above the bridge of the nose is repeated on either temple. The partly shaved head has been emblazoned with a crescent-and-dot pattern of hair, an emblem of royalty. The imposingly elegant



FIG. 73. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana. 17th–mid-19th century. Terracotta, kaolin, roots, quartz fragments, $8 \times 5\frac{5}{8} \times 5$ in. (20.3 x 14.3 x 12.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Purchase, Nelson A. Rockefeller Gift, 1967–1978.412.563

OPPOSITE: FIG. 74. Memorial head (two views). Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana. 17th–19th century. Terracotta, $6\frac{3}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$ in. (16 x 12.8 x 12 cm). Count B. de Grunne Collection, Brussels





FIG. 75. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana. 17th–19th century. Terracotta, $6\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{3}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ in. (17 x 11 x 11.5 cm). Count B. de Grunne Collection, Brussels

FIG. 76. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area (?), Ghana. ca. 1800. Terracotta, $9 \times 5\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ in. (22.9 x 14.6 x 11.4 cm). Private collection

face in fig. 82 is framed between an especially complex arrangement of hair and a narrow columnar neck into which grooved wrabbles are delineated. The intricate diadem-like structure of the coiffure is composed of hundreds of individually applied pellets of clay that range significantly in scale, depending on their placement.

The Kwahu are an Akan people whose oral traditions refer to a series of migrations, in about 1700, at the time of the Asante Confederacy, from Adanse to the summit of the Kwahu Scarp east of Kumasi.⁵³ Mirroring the customs of other Akan groups, Kwahu individuals of royal descent and members of the aristocracy were honored posthumously through terracotta representations displayed within a shelter and featured as the focal points of commemorative rites in which they were offered a ceremonial meal.⁵⁴ The works were then either transported to the royal cemetery to be deposited on the grave of the deceased or kept within the village or home of the departed. In a photograph from the mid- to late twentieth century (fig. 83), three memorial terracotta figurines are being readied to be carried in



FIG. 77. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area (?), Ghana. ca. 1800.
Terracotta, $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{4} \times 5$ in. (19.1 x 13.3 x 12.7 cm). Private collection



FIG. 78. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana. ca. 1800.
Terracotta, $8\frac{1}{2} \times 6$ in. (21.6 x 15.2 cm). The Kronos Collections

procession around town prior to their installation at a Kwahu grove dedicated to the dead (called an *asamanferi* in Kwahu). The centermost figure, draped in elaborate *kente* cloth and surrounded by Akan ceremonial swords, occupies the position of prestige, on a high throne. On a lower throne is a second terracotta, also dressed in finery and laden with ceremonial objects. The partially obscured third figure rests on the ground.

Formally, the Kwahu oeuvre is distinctive for its dramatic abstraction of the head, which is consistently rendered as a highly two-dimensional disk with facial features added in relief. The head is joined at an angle to a ringed cylindrical neck (continuing the reference to fat wrabbles as signifiers of beauty and well-being) so that the face turns upward.⁵⁵ This highly mannered treatment of the head echoes in exaggerated form the practice, favored by Akan mothers, of assiduously massaging the heads of infants to encourage a high, flattened forehead. The idealized aesthetic of a broad, expansive forehead is also a notable trait of the genre

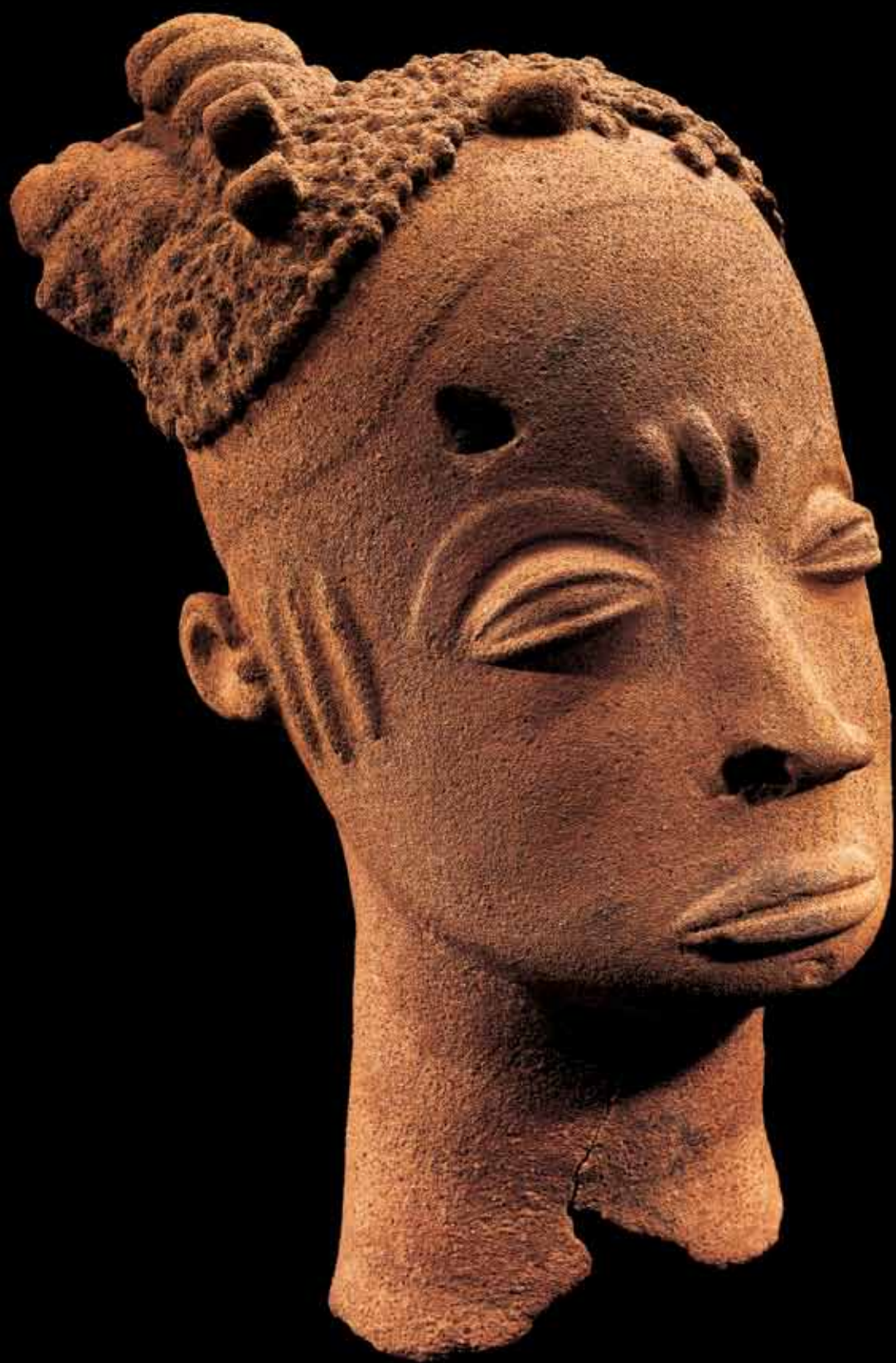


FIG. 79. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana. 17th century. Terracotta, $7\frac{7}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ in. (20 x 13.3 cm). Musée Dapper, Paris 2808

FIG. 80. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana. 17th century. Terracotta, $8\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$ in. (22.4 x 12 cm). Musée Dapper, Paris 5326

OPPOSITE: FIG. 81. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area (?), Ghana. 18th century. Terracotta, $11\frac{7}{8} \times 5\frac{7}{8}$ in. (30 x 15 cm). Musée Dapper, Paris 2799

of Akan wood sculptures known as *akuaba*—schematic figures with flattened heads, in which the facial features are crowded into the lower third—which give physical expression to the desire for a child. In fig. 85, the dramatic upward orientation of the circular face dominates the tapering neck to which it is joined. This striated vertical element progressively narrows toward the base, where the body is alluded to minimally by a navel. A photograph of an *asensie* in the Kwahu traditional region, taken by Friedrich August Louis Ramseyer, a Swiss missionary in the last decades of the nineteenth century, documents the Kwahu aesthetic preference for smooth oval faces and narrow noses on large flat heads (fig. 84). The placement of funerary pottery on the forest floor left these deposit sites exposed to theft during the twentieth century and, as with most other memorial deposit sites, the pottery seen here was undoubtedly dispersed at some time after this photograph





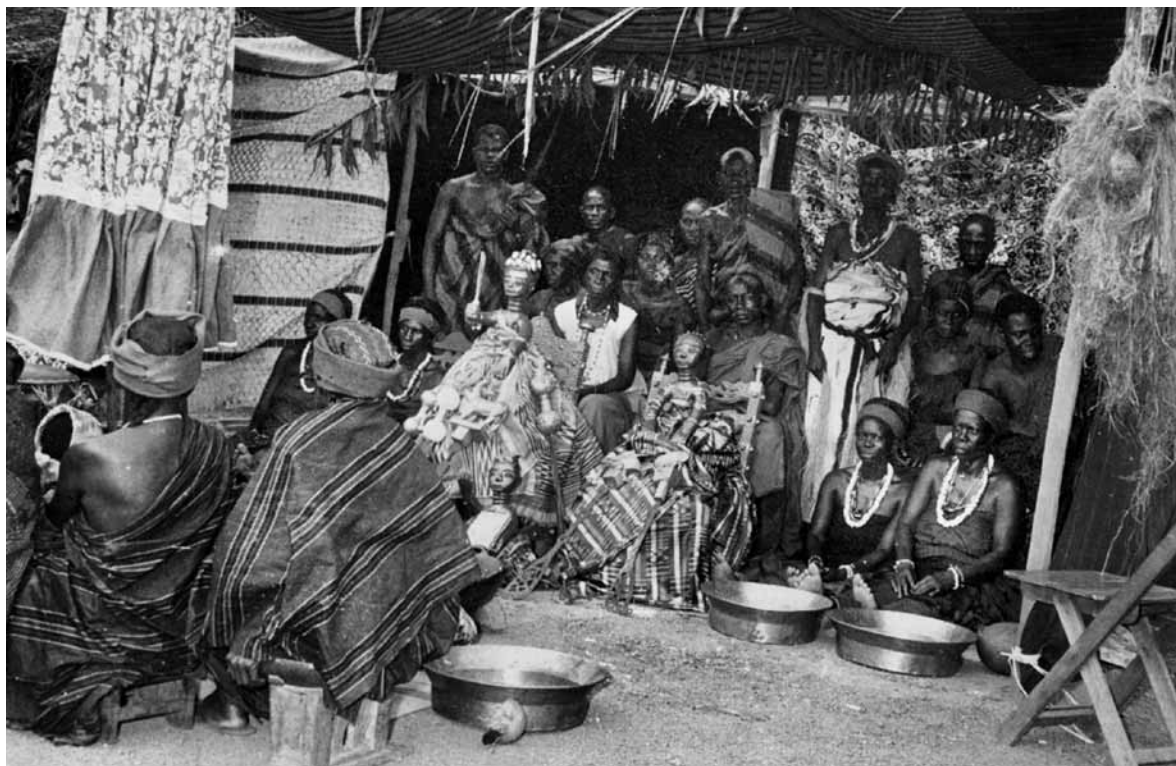
was taken. The Ghanaian art historian Kwabena Ameyaw has noted that, given the vulnerability of such artifacts in such contexts, it later became customary to place them in the more secure setting of a stool or shrine room.⁵⁶

Despite the pronounced severity that invariably informs the design of heads by Kwahu artists, the acuteness of angling and the definition of the features may vary considerably in their interpretation, as is evident in figs. 86 and 88. The art historian Roy Sieber proposed that, as a result of the relative infrequency with which such commissions honoring individuals of exceptional distinction were made, considerable stylistic variety is apparent in the surviving corpus. According to Sieber, in their original context, the incorporation of one or two attributes of the deceased, such as a beard, a particular crown, or a hairstyle, sufficed to associate a given work with its subject.⁵⁷ Michelle Gilbert notes that attributes of the person's status, rather than his or her physiognomy, were depicted and that ultimately the spirit of the deceased was invoked in the representation through prayer.⁵⁸ Thus, both the desire of the living patrons and the assent of the subject commemorated played essential roles in a work's association and affiliation with its namesake.

The fact that formal change was also introduced generationally is apparent between works produced in the nineteenth century, which feature extensive detail, and comparatively simpler ones fashioned in the twentieth century,⁵⁹ as seen in a funerary terracotta from Kwahu made in 1962 by Akosua Foriwa of Mpraeso (fig. 87). Its subject is the last priest of Bruku, the tutelary deity of Kwahu. The

OPPOSITE: FIG. 82. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana. 18th century.
Terracotta, 14 7/8 in. x 9 1/4 in. (38 x 23.5 cm). Musée Dapper, Paris 2798

FIG. 83. Funerary terracottas. Kwahu traditional area, Ghana. Mid-late 20th century.
From Timothy F. Garrard, "Figurine Cults of the Southern Akan," in *Iowa Studies in African Art: Papers Presented at the School of Art and Art History, the University of Iowa*, 1984, p. 188, fig. 1



three subsidiary figures around the vessel's lower half represent (from left) the soul of the deceased, the carrier of the priest's stool, and (not visible) a palanquin bearer. The high-status *asipim* chair on which the terracotta is positioned was the property of the priest.

Another distinct regional vision, developed by Aowin artists in western Ghana, is epitomized by two works now in the Musée Dapper in Paris. Notable Aowin leaders and chiefs were celebrated with highly accomplished effigies like these, created for sacred groves called *mmasos*. Nkwanta was one of five different Aowin *mmasos* sites documented photographically in 1972 by the art historian Patricia Crane Coronel, who found there three terracotta heads, four torsos, several limbs, and a stool (fig. 89). According to the priestess who attended to the figures, Nkwanta was the *mmasos* of an Anyi ruler from the turn of the eighteenth century, Nana Attabra, and this was the last active Aowin *mmasos* in the west of Ghana. Centrally positioned among the found artifacts, supported on a solid clay stool, was a head identified as Nana Attabra (fig. 90),⁶⁰ who was said to have become allied in marriage to an Aowin leader, Ano Assima, who had migrated into her territory. Attabra's likeness was reputed to have been commissioned from a female Anyi artist by its subject prior to her death. It was surrounded by six figures of members of Attabra's courtly entourage. The priestess charged with supervision of the shrine marked each new year by washing the figures, making offerings of libations, and addressing prayers for protection.⁶¹

BELOW: FIG. 84. Place of the Pots. Kwahu, Ghana. ca. 1888–1908. Basel Mission Archive D-30.23.022

OPPOSITE: FIG. 85. Memorial head (lid from a clan vessel). Akan peoples; Kwahu traditional area, Ghana. Possibly 19th century. Terracotta, h. 6¼ in. (17 cm). Musée Dapper, Paris 5574





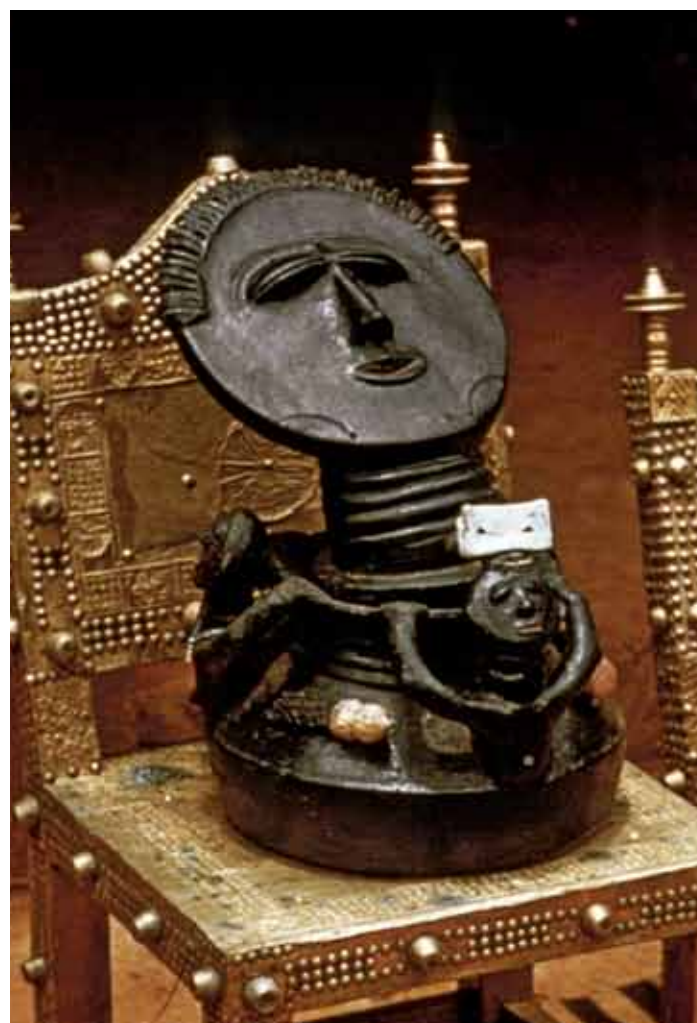


FIG. 86. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Kwahu traditional area, Ghana. 19th–20th century. Terracotta, kaolin, 6 x 7 x 6½ in. (15.2 x 17.8 x 16.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, From the Collection of Nina and Gordon Bunshaft, Bequest of Nina Bunshaft, 1994 1995.64.21

FIG. 87. Akosua Foriwa (Ghanaian, active mid-20th century). Kwahu funerary terracotta representing a priest. Kwahu-Tafo, Ghana. 1962

OPPOSITE: FIG. 88. Memorial head. Akan peoples; Kwahu traditional area, Ghana. 19th–20th century. Terracotta, 20 x 11 x 7 in. (50.8 x 27.9 x 17.8 cm). Drs. Daniel and Marian Malcolm

The Attabra head (fig. 91), which was likely part of a full figure, is notable for its fully rounded, highly three-dimensional cylindrical form. Its face has an oval cast and is impressive for the liveliness of its expression, which combines a pronounced gaze with a smile. The eyes are boldly articulated so that they project in prominent relief below a raised brow. The vivacity of the facial features is complemented by an especially exuberant approach to rendering the hair as coiled units projecting dramatically from the head. Perforations near either corner of the mouth and under the chin suggest original additions, now missing, that likely heightened the lifelike appearance of the representation. The individualized character of such Aowin depictions is evident through comparison with another of the works from Nkwanta (figs. 92, 93), identified as Afukwa, daughter and chiefly successor to Nana Attabra.⁶² This head is especially striking for its dramatic ovoid form. The



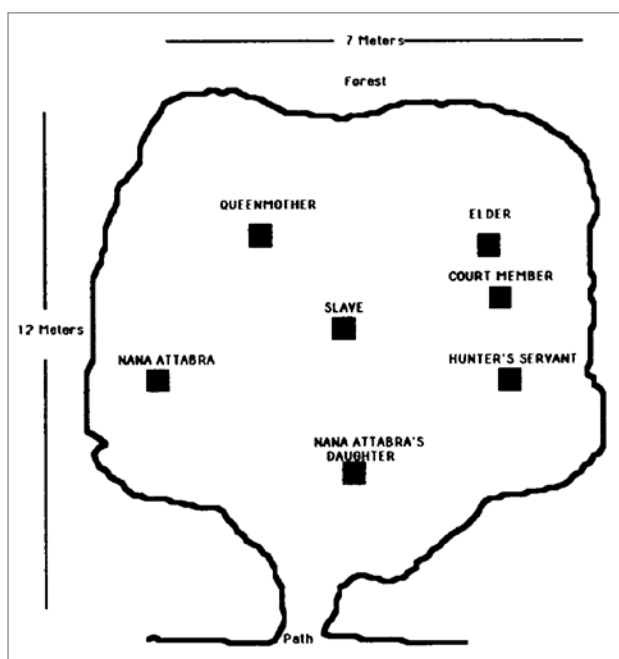


FIG. 89. Diagram of the arrangement of terracottas at the Nkwanta *mmaso*.
Aowin traditional area, Ghana. 1972. From Patricia Crane Coronel, "African Art from Earth to Pedestal,"
Africa Today 36, no. 2 (1989, Qtr. 2): p. 7, fig. 1

FIG. 90. Memorial head of Nana Attabra, in situ. Nkwanta, Aowin traditional area,
southwestern Ghana. 1972

OPPOSITE: FIG. 91. Memorial head of Nana Attabra. Akan peoples; Nkwanta, Aowin traditional area, Ghana.
18th century. Terracotta, 9 7/8 x 5 3/4 in. (25 x 14.5 cm). Musée Dapper, Paris 2802

broad convex expanse of the forehead terminates in the pronounced linear ridge of the brow. The narrow vertical bridge of the nose complements the oval attenuation of the lower half of the face.

A closely related terracotta sculptural genre, conceived as the material support for the souls of select ancestors, was produced by Anyi artists concentrated in southeastern Côte d'Ivoire.⁶³ This tradition, and those of a number of other Akan Ivoirian groups surveyed by the art historian Robert Soppelsa, were introduced to the region in the early eighteenth century by the ancestors of the Anyi and the Abouré at the time of their migration from Ghana.⁶⁴ Like the Aowin, the Anyi assembled such works in tableaux within shrines situated in areas of virgin forest adjacent to royal villages, as seen in fig. 94, a rare contextual document, from about the turn of the twentieth century, of a large *mmaso* in the southern Anyi traditional area of Sanwi.⁶⁵ Only a few fallen figures disturb the otherwise orderly arrangement. Soppelsa suggests that the largest figure's downturned arms at left, a gesture rarely seen in Anyi memorial terracottas, indicates the high status of the individual represented. This photograph was reproduced as a postcard accompanied by a label that misidentifies these terracottas as "fetishes," and its attribution of the location as Mafia—a Nzima village on the coast—is questionable given the style of the figures, which is more typical of Krinjabo, the Sanwi capital





FIG. 92. Memorial head of Afukwa, in situ. Nkwanta, Aowin traditional area, southwestern Ghana. 1972

OPPOSITE: FIG. 93. Memorial head of Afukwa. Akan peoples; Nkwanta, Aowin traditional area, Ghana. 18th century. Terracotta, $8\frac{3}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$ in. (21.4 x 10.5 cm). Musée Dapper, Paris 2791

farther inland (about 20 miles away over the Aby Lagoon). As the region's capital, Krinjabo held an especially important corpus of Anyi terracotta figures.⁶⁶ One king of Sanwi in the late nineteenth century was Akassimadou, who was photographed about 1892 surrounded by members of his household (fig. 95).⁶⁷

The *mmasos* served as a stage upon which courtly groupings were assembled to provide both an enduring tribute to local leaders and a visual record of the royal genealogy of each capital. Commentaries on the creation of such Anyi figurative works at once emphasize the unremarkable nature of their material, identified as the same ordinary clay used for domestic pottery, and the exceptional talents attributed to their authors. The stylistically distinctive Anyi corpus consists of full figures whose large, detailed heads are supported by long, wrabbled necks and abbreviated bodies that are cylindrical in form.⁶⁸ Anyi full figures were consistently depicted with eyes closed and the head leaning back so that the face turned slightly upward. Most of these were standing, although a few—representing the most prominent individuals—were seated. All were of solid clay and painted black. Several coats of the indelible pigment, obtained from a climbing plant called *atapéé* in Anyi, were applied as a colorant to the clay surface and burnished to a luster before the funeral rite in which the work was presented.⁶⁹

As in other Akan centers, Anyi female specialists were responsible for these sculptures.⁷⁰ All those whom Soppelsa interviewed asserted that the works were exact likenesses of those portrayed, as in a photographic record,⁷¹ although spiritual inspiration was ultimately credited with the duplication of a subject's ideal



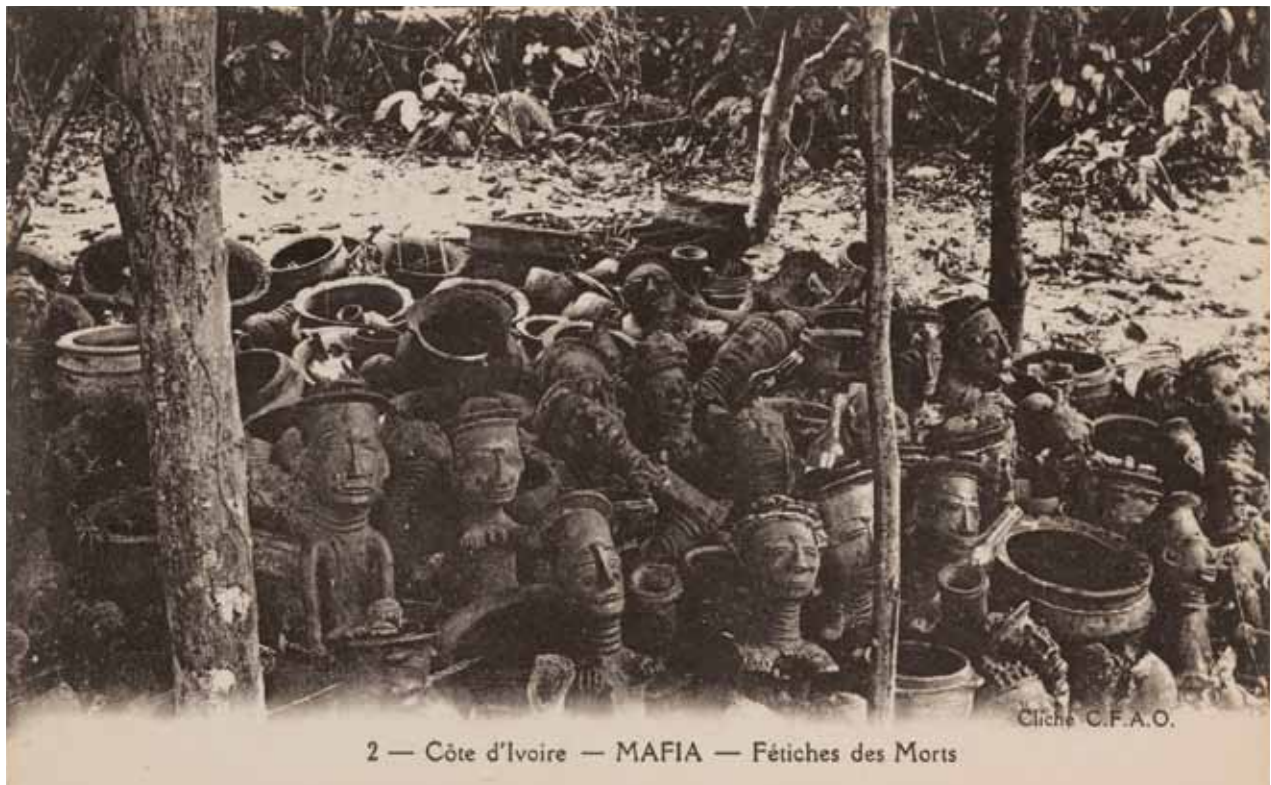


FIG. 94. "Côte d'Ivoire—MAFIA—Fétiches des Morts." ca. 1900. Postcard, $3\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ in. (8.9 x 14 cm).
Published by Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale. Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

essence.⁷² In order to achieve the exacting degree of accuracy demanded, it was assumed that the sculptor must have known her subject. Beyond that, the artist required complete concentration on the challenge at hand as well as cooperation from the individual in question, made apparent in descriptions of the modeling process, which consistently emphasized the isolation of the artist in wilderness outside the village. There, in her quest for an accurate image to draw upon as a reference, she would call upon the spirit of the deceased to make itself manifest before her eyes in a bowl of palm oil (see also p. 82). Soppelsa has proposed that the priority of capturing and portraying the innate physicality of a given subject may be reflected in the unsparingly direct nudity of the figures.⁷³

Anyi artists emphasized the political and social roles the individual subjects were associated with in life, made known through attributes such as distinctive headdresses and accessories.⁷⁴ Soppelsa has observed that this approach to the definition of notable ancestors underscores the continued relevance of their responsibilities in the afterlife. Typically, a prominent seated male leader, such as fig. 96, was positioned at the center of an Anyi *mmasó*. The concave design of the support upon which this figure is positioned, which also serves as the key attribute of his office, refers to the state seat of governance conferred upon the highest level of political authority.⁷⁵ The seated chief and queen mother would have been framed by a hierarchically arranged group of smaller-scale standing courtiers, including sword- or staff bearers, musicians, and other attendants, such as fig. 97.⁷⁶ Figure 98 appears to depict a priest, as indicated by a single strap, worn over the right shoulder and under the left arm, which remains an attribute of Akan priesthood.⁷⁷

Over the centuries, each of the Akan artists responsible for commemorative terracottas adapted a familiar prototype with finesse. She would customize a particular template with vivid details of a mundane nature associated with the person she had been called upon to evoke, thereby contributing to the continuation of a regional vernacular and also providing distinguished ancestors with a degree of permanence. Meaningful creative parallels may be discerned between the approach evident in these visual tributes and those of recitations of histories and musical performance. In each of these, creative expression is informed at once by an adherence to formal convention and license to depart from it and introduce new detail. Thomas Bowdich's observations on the character of Asante musical composition highlighted its linguistic character and alternation between quotation of established precedent and free-form improvisation:

Their graces are so numerous, some extempore, some transmitted from father to son, that the constant repetition only can distinguish the commencement of the air: sometimes between each beginning they introduce a few chords, sometimes they leave out a bar, sometimes they only return to the middle, so entirely is it left to the fancy of the performer.⁷⁸

Among the surviving depictions of musicians is a horn blower stylistically associated with a *mmasoo* at Krinjabo (fig. 99).⁷⁹ The figure's arms are raised, and his hands are held to his mouth. Soppelsa has noted that he is holding a side-blast horn that once extended beyond his left hand, as illustrated in fig. 100, but was at some point broken off.⁸⁰ During his stay at the Asante court, Bowdich surveyed nineteenth-century Asante musical instruments and made the following observations of a performance that featured a mass of end-blown trumpets and a single side-blown one:

FIG. 95. Akassimadou, king of Krinjabo, and his court. Aboisso, Côte d'Ivoire. ca. 1892.
From Marcel Monnier, *Mission Binger: France Noire: Côte d'Ivoire et Soudan*, 1894, pl. between pp. 60–61





FIG. 96. Memorial figure, possibly representing a chief. Akan peoples, Anyi group; Sanwi, Krinjabo (?), Côte d'Ivoire. 18th–early 20th century. Terracotta, 16 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (42 x 21 x 21 cm)
Musée du Quai Branly, Paris 73.1966.1.2

FIG. 97. Memorial figure of a woman. Akan peoples, Anyi group; Sanwi, Krinjabo (?), Côte d'Ivoire. 18th–early 20th century. Terracotta, 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (27 x 11 x 11 cm). Museum Rietberg Zürich RAF451

FIG. 98. Memorial figure of a priest. Akan peoples, Anyi group; Sanwi, Krinjabo (?), Côte d'Ivoire. 18th–early 20th century. Terracotta, 16 x 5 x 8 in. (40.6 x 12.7 x 20.3 cm).
Drs. Daniel and Marian Malcolm

The horns form their loudest sounds, and are made of elephant's tusks, they are generally very large, and, being graduated like the flutes, their flourishes have a martial and grand effect. It has been mentioned in the Military Customs of the Ashantees [*sic*], that peculiar sentences are immediately recognized by the soldiers, and [other] people, in the distinct flourishes of the horns of the various chiefs: the words of some of these sentences are almost expressible by the notes of the horns.⁸¹

Another Anyi terracotta musician, fig. 101, grasps a flattened cylindrical iron gong in his left hand and appears to have once held a clapper, now missing, in his right hand.⁸² Figure 102 holds beaters over a pair of *chenepri* drums positioned before him at ground level.⁸³ Varieties of “talking drum” ensembles continue to be



TOP: FIG. 99. Memorial figure of a horn blower (two views). Akan peoples, Anyi group; Sanwi, Krinjabo (?), Côte d'Ivoire. 18th–early 20th century. Terracotta, $10\frac{3}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ in. (26.4 x 10.8 x 19.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1964 1978.412.394

ABOVE: FIG. 100. Chester Higgins Jr. (American, b. 1946). Court musician performing during the Grand Funeral celebrations, held from March 19 to April 2, 2000, in honor of the first-year anniversary of the death of Asantehene Opoku Ware II and the first-year anniversary of the reign of the new Asantehene, Osei Tutu II. Manyhia Palace, Kumasi, Ghana. 2000



FIG. 101. Memorial figure representing a gong player. Akan peoples, Anyi group; Sanwi, Krinjabo (?), Côte d'Ivoire. 18th–early 20th century. Terracotta, $15\frac{1}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$ in. (38.6 x 14 x 22.2 cm). National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 2005.6.162



FIG. 102. Memorial figure representing a drummer. Akan peoples, Anyi group; Sanwi, Krinjabo (?), Côte d'Ivoire. 18th–early 20th century. Terracotta, $13\frac{3}{8} \times 6\frac{7}{8} \times 6\frac{3}{8}$ in. (34.5 x 17.5 x 16 cm). Musée du Quai Branly, Paris 73.1984.7.1



FIG. 103. Chester Higgins, Jr. (American, b. 1946). Court drummers performing during the funeral of Asantehene Opoku Ware II held in 1999. Manyia Palace, Kumasi, Ghana

signature instruments used on Akan state occasions, invariably accompanying leaders at public appearances. Drums known as *atumpɔn* are held horizontally in front of the musician on the head of a carrier, as seen during the *fontomfɔm* funeral dances for Asantehene Opoku Ware II in 1999 (fig. 103).⁸⁴

The fact that this musical expression also constituted a highly sophisticated tonal language was apparent even to early visitors to the region. Bowdich underscored the role of music as a means of communication: “The natives declare they can converse by means of their flutes, and an old resident at Accra has assured me he has heard these dialogues, and that every sentence was explained to him.”⁸⁵ The potential for musical instruments to articulate missives that transcend ordinary conversation is reinforced by their symbolic inclusion in sculptural ensembles at other Akan funerary sites. Excavation of the seventeenth-century *asensie* at Ahinsan uncovered Adanse clay sculptures of trumpets and trumpeters, and clay sculptures of “talking drums” were associated with the contemporaneous site at Twifo-Heman.⁸⁶

An early twentieth-century photograph by the Swiss missionary Otto Lādrach documents an especially impressive deposit site of memorial terracotta figures in present-day Ghana (fig. 104). Most prominent is the large figure at the center right. The two terracotta drums in the lower right underscore the importance of music in funeral rites. The density of the vegetation around the objects suggests that this site was already of considerable age at the time of the photograph. The orderly arrangement of figures reflects the fact that memorial terracottas were deliberately placed in position rather than discarded, as in a midden heap. On the far right in a second roughly contemporaneous photograph of a site that appears to be in the Kwahu area (fig. 105) is a large ceramic vessel similar in shape to the main Kwahu vessel seen in fig. 84. The orderly arrangement and lack of undergrowth suggests that this photograph was taken relatively soon after the objects were positioned.

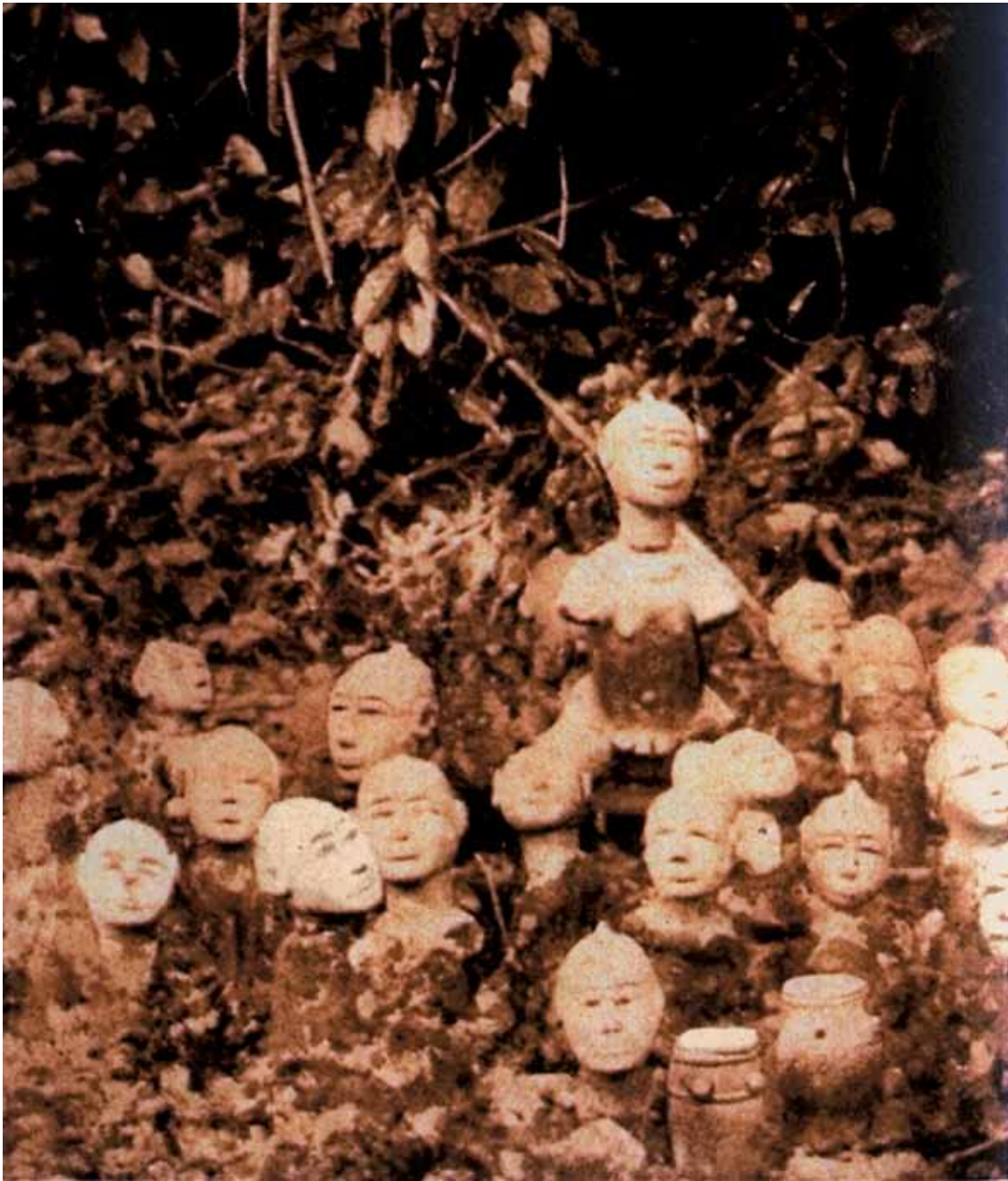


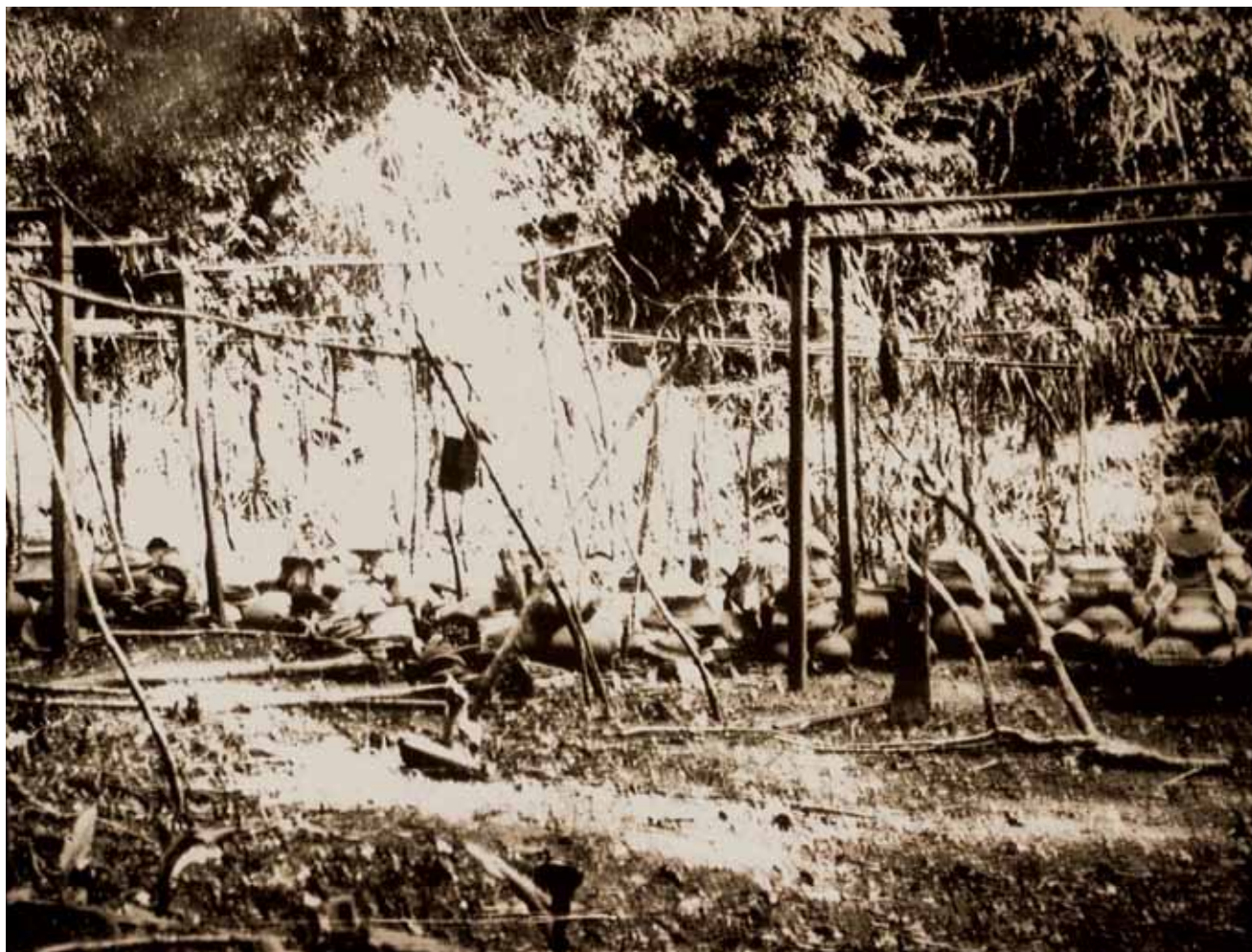
FIG. 104. Deposit site of memorial terracottas. Near Agona Swedru, Ghana. ca. 1898–1911.
Basel Mission Archive D-30.23.023

The act of depositing figurative elements within an Anyi *mmas* was characterized as “planting,” suggesting that the works’ vitality depended on their remaining firmly anchored to that site.⁸⁷ This home to the ancestral spirits was considered sacred but was also dangerous to the living.⁸⁸ Because of the enormous expense required for the ceremonies that accompanied the implantation of an especially important person such as a king or queen mother, those figures created to honor individuals in the period since the last such event were included as part of his or her entourage.⁸⁹ Early nineteenth-century published accounts of such events record that the figures were embellished and richly dressed for the occasion.⁹⁰ Before they were carried in procession from the village, the queen mother would address the

deceased with the invocation: “Today we say our final good-byes to you. Come, come and be incarnate in your *mma* so we can accompany you. Let no harm come to those who are here to sing your praises and carry you to your final resting place.”⁹¹ Accompanied by dancers and musicians, the figures were then paraded in groups three times around the town before their journey to the *mmaso*, where they would assume their new role as vigilant ancestors.⁹²

Women who were charged with maintaining the *mmaso* were thought to benefit from enhanced fertility. This was generally believed to be conferred through the consumption of the offerings of food deposited there.⁹³ Thus such commemorative sites were historically conceived not merely as venues for paying tribute to past leaders but also as a means of reinvigorating the vitality of the communities they left behind through serving as conduits for new life. By the early twentieth century, however, photographs taken of *mmaso* show them abandoned and in disarray.⁹⁴ Soppelsa notes that according to Father Jean-Baptiste Veit, a parish priest in Bonoua from 1921 to 1954, the practice of depositing funerary figures in special cemeteries was largely abandoned in 1914, following the appearance in Abouré country of a charismatic Christian fundamentalist, Prophet Harris.⁹⁵

FIG. 105. Memorial terracotta deposit site. Possibly in Kwahu traditional area, Ghana. ca. 1900.
Basel Mission Archive QD-34.003.0004





FIGS. 106 and 107. Francis K. Honny (Ghanaian, 1914–1998). *Left*: Studio portrait of a woman. *Right*: Glass negative of studio portrait of a woman. Elmina, Ghana. ca. 1970. From Tobias Wendl, “Entangled Traditions: Photography and the History of Media in Southern Ghana,” *Res* 39 (Spring 2001): p. 84, figs. 4a–b

During the twentieth century, new modes of capturing likeness, such as photography, were adopted in order to create permanent visual impressions of notable persons. The anthropologist Tobias Wendl has observed that the pictorial idiom of photography gradually displaced earlier portrait forms, such as the terracottas used to commemorate distinguished ancestors.⁹⁶ It is important to consider, however, that certain adjustments were introduced to such photographic portraits in order to preserve the aesthetic ideals emphasized in those earlier sculptures.⁹⁷ This is apparent in the measures taken to retouch photographs to achieve the same degree of control over the process and to obtain a likeness that similarly synthesized idealization with realistic details. Wendl notes that this “was done with graphite pencils and always resulted in lightening the complexion. Wrinkles and furrows, the individual traces that life had left on the faces, were carefully smoothed over and eventually erased. The ideal was one in which protruding and receding parts of the face were well balanced with almost unnoticeable transitions. The skillful hand of the retoucher made the sitters’ individual traits and idiosyncrasies disappear behind a ‘civilized mask of the cool.’”⁹⁸ Two of the conventions central to Akan terracottas

were actively reproduced in the resulting images.⁹⁹ First, the contours of the physiognomy were adjusted to enhance its fullness and roundness, thereby conferring upon the subject a more youthful aspect. In the second, fat wrabbles were added to the sitter's neck as a traditional symbol of prosperity, as seen in before-and-after images by Francis K. Honny, a successful Ghanaian portrait photographer who ran a studio in Elmina from 1943 to 1990 (figs. 106, 107).

The role of Akan terracottas as physical presences of revered individuals was ultimately transferred most fully to a new regional sculptural genre, which developed in response to the importation of Portland cement at the end of the nineteenth century. The Akan specialist Doran Ross has noted that these very durable cement figures were often integrated into shrines known as *posuban*.¹⁰⁰ This resulted in an aggrandizement of the visual tributes to regional leaders as well as a significant shift in the gender of the artists, who had originally been female but were now male. In addition, the visual tributes no longer served as focal points of a dedicated grove but instead were placed as markers at actual burial sites.¹⁰¹

By the early twentieth century, many of the Akan terracottas that had survived from previous generations were isolated from their original sacred groves and from the oral histories that recounted their relationship to the heritage of adjacent communities. One person alone, the French physician Marcel Lheureux, collected more than two hundred of these works (including figs. 96, 101, and 102) while on colonial assignment in Sanwi during the 1920s.¹⁰²

This dislocation constitutes a barrier to our reconstructing the specific identities of the individual subjects they were intended to commemorate. Our experience of them today is missing not only these critical layers of commentary and placement that defined their significance but also their full original visual impact. Over time, their exposure to the elements has stripped them of color and ornament so that their presence is now far more muted. Thus these now static, decontextualized works represent only vestigial traces of the Akan traditions that were once informed by theatrical pageantry, historical reenactment, and ancestral devotion.



Dancing Figures and Effigy Thrones: Grassfield Chieftdoms

Here is the stone where your fathers' family have sat before they were called to the throne, and it is on this very stone that you sit to-day[;] you are therefore king. May Yoruban [God] bless you. . . . May Yoruban grant you many children and may your war-spear be mighty and your work strong. May Yoruban give you much and good advice and increase your wealth; . . . Yoruban accepts you as king of the Bamum.

— NJOYA, AS CITED IN M. D. W. JEFFREYS

WITH THE CONFERRAL OF THIS BLESSING, A NEW SOVEREIGN OF BAMUM IN Cameroon's Grassfields region was induced to reflect on the legacy of his antecedents and encouraged to fulfill his own potential. In chapter 29 of his kingdom's history, Bamum leader Njoya (r. ca. 1886–1933) provides a detailed account of the rites and protocols observed at such a moment of transition (fig. 108).¹ Exacting measures were taken to honor the deceased leader and secure his favorable engagement with the affairs of his people. At the same time his successor was physically and spiritually fortified in order to take on his responsibilities as heir to an established line of leaders. The intertwining of these two events was critical in establishing the legitimate transfer of power from one individual to another.

Situated about two-thirds to one and seven-eighths of a mile (1,000 to 3,000 m) above sea level, Cameroon's highlands region, known as the Grassfields, extends from expansive rainforests in the south and west to the upper reaches of the Mbam River on the Nigerian border in the north (figs. 109 and 110). The Grassfields have been densely populated for at least three centuries and have been continuously settled going back six millennia.² The region's location, rich agricultural industry, and demography made it a strategic nexus for trade networks between the coast and the interior. Among the commodities generated to meet outside market demands was slave labor.³ Until intervention by German colonial enterprises in the early twentieth century, regional trade was controlled by the heads of households and descent groups.

In the Grassfields, leaders of extended families, villages, and chieftdoms serve as intermediaries with the ancestors on behalf of their constituents. Before the twentieth century, the region was governed by a series of some 150 parallel monarchic polities whose combined royal and commoner populations ranged in size from 200 to 60,000 members. While each of these centers had its own distinctive local identity, the basic precolonial governance structures were similar. A king or chief, called a *fon* (also *fwa* or *foyn*), who had sacred attributes was the leading territorial, civil, and military authority. He presided over a council of lineage elders

ALTERNATE VIEW
OF FIG. 121



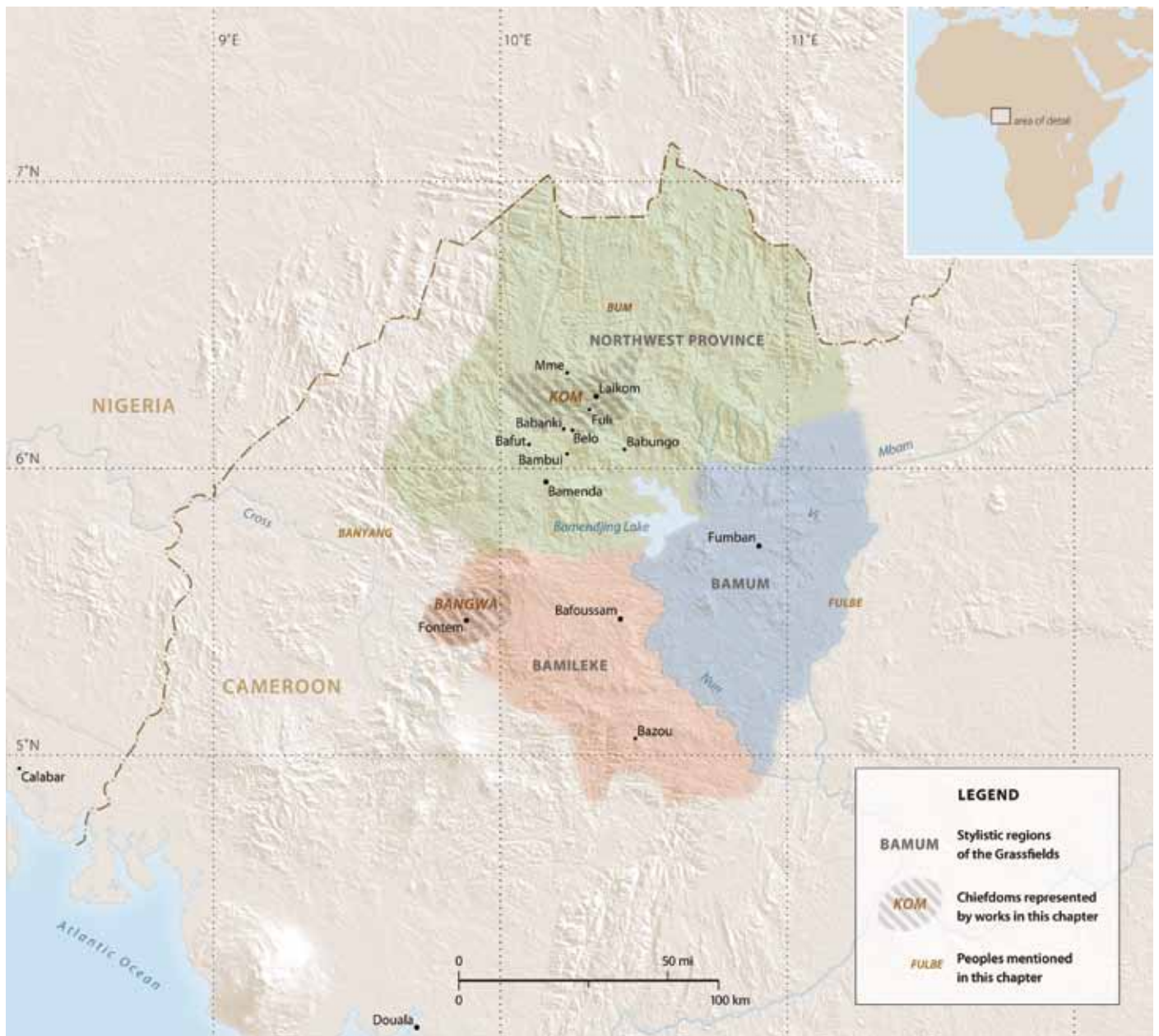
FIG. 108. King Njoya standing in front of his palace. 1913. [From the photographic album *Sammlung Kamerun*, vol. II, 1914]. Gelatin silver print, 9¼ x 6¾ in. (23.5 x 17.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Photograph Study Collection, Purchase, Joseph and Cecil Mazer Foundation Inc. Gift, 2001 PSC 2001.323.2, pl. 150

OPPOSITE, ABOVE: FIG. 109. Cameroon Grassfields region

OPPOSITE, BELOW: FIG. 110. Bamboutos Mountain caldera, the Cameroon Grassfields

who were responsible to the community's unrelated descent groups and balanced the rulers' powers.⁴ During the colonial period most kings and chiefs maintained their influence, although they lost their political, judicial, and military autonomy. Since Cameroon's independence as a nation, these traditional leaders have been integrated into a network of state governance and continue to play a pivotal role in the cultural and religious affairs of Grassfield communities.

Within the palace, the *fon* was paired with a regulatory society, or executive branch, drawn predominantly from freeborn commoners who were carefully selected to undergo specialized training and initiation.⁵ The *fon*'s inherited position was ascribed mystical qualities and his predecessors became venerated ancestors. Frank Christol (1884–1979), a French Protestant minister, arrived in 1917 in what German colonizers called the Bamileke region of the Grassfields, which also encompasses Bangwa chiefdoms. Among the hundreds of photographs Christol took of regional leaders and the key social and political events witnessed over the



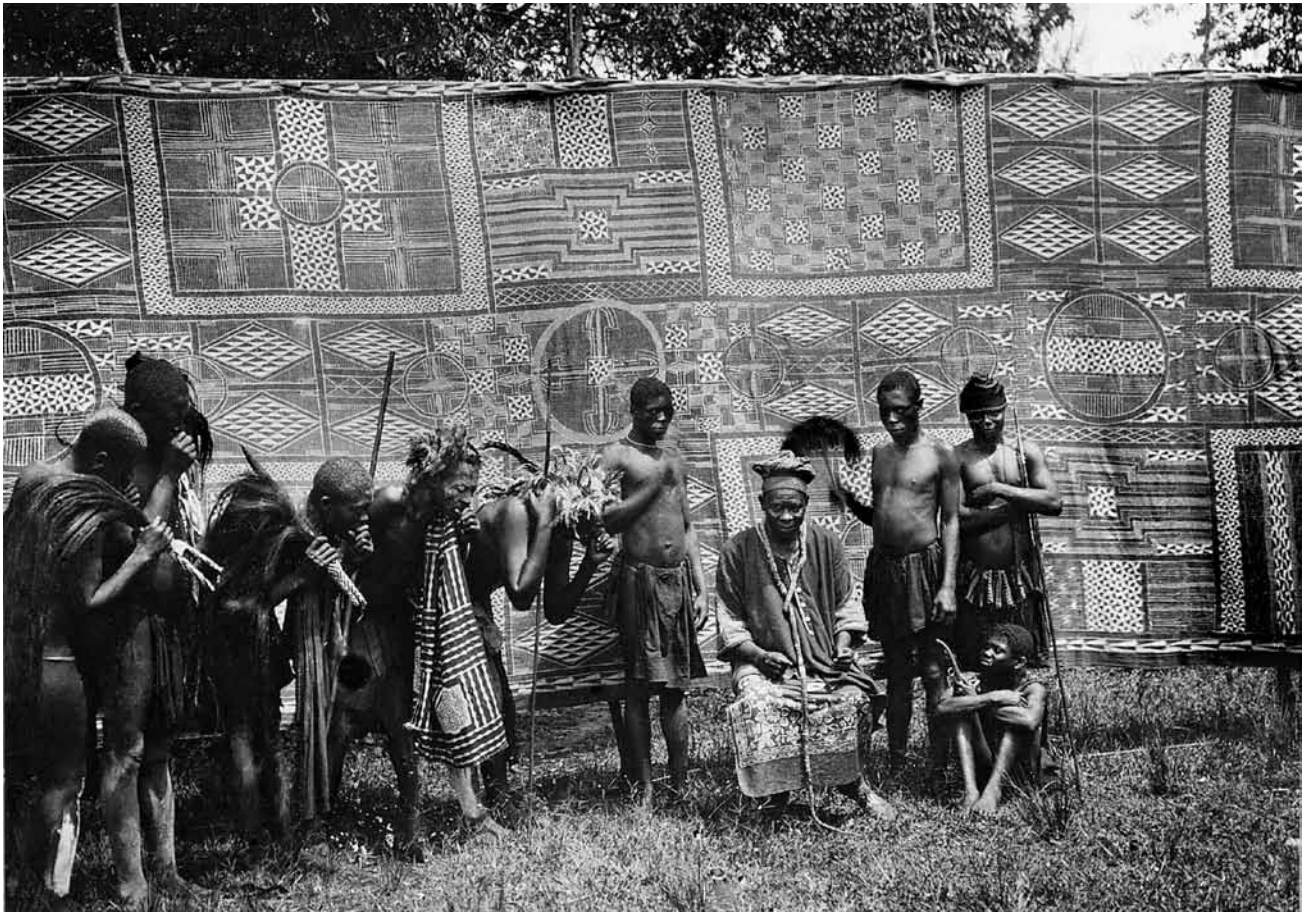


FIG. 111. *Hommage rendu au chef par ses serviteurs, Ouest Cameroun, Circ. de Dschang, pref. de Bangante, Bazou.*
Cameroon. 1930. Musée du Quai Branly, Paris PP0023010

course of a decade is a portrait of the ruler of the Bamileke chiefdom of Bazou surrounded by three attendants and seated on a prestige stool before the elaborate backdrop of a monumental indigo-dyed *ndop* ceremonial cloth (fig. 111). Village notables have formed a line and address him with a gesture of deference in which they bend forward with hand in front of mouth.

The transference of a Grassfields chieftaincy occurs upon the incumbent's death, at which time the successor takes on all his predecessor's defining attributes, visible and otherwise.⁶ The catalyst for all transformations, whether metamorphoses of this order or those that result in the generation of a new being, are attributed to an ephemeral life essence described as "life breath," referred to as *sem* by the Nso, believed to be present in vital bodily fluids such as saliva, semen, and mother's milk.⁷ During rites of succession, the life force or essence and sacred attributes of a chief are transmitted to his heir, whose body is prepared to become an appropriate vessel for receiving them. This may include the physical act of transferring the corporeal fluid, such as saliva, of an expiring leader to his heir. Past leaders are verbally invoked and introduced to their successor while his skin is rubbed with powdered camwood and palm oil.⁸ Once libations are poured, the transfer of power culminates with the new leader being dressed in his predecessor's vestments, handed his regalia, and positioned on an inherited carved seat of office. As the anthropologist Jean-Pierre Warnier has observed, through the rites that accompany his ascension,

the new *fon* in effect becomes the individual he replaced. To underscore this idea of the candidate's surrender of his identity for the sake of continuity, Warnier cites commentary describing such transitions: "So and so was gone, but he is back."⁹

Historically, neither the character of the various Grassfield chiefdoms nor the patronage of works of art by their leadership adhered to circumscribed ethnic or cultural distinctions. Instead they reflected shared concerns that crossed political boundaries and were customized according to local preferences. Art historians have typically subdivided the Grassfields into three broad stylistic centers, each reflecting distinctive spheres of influence: the Bamileke and Bangwa chiefdoms in the west; the Northwest Province, where the Kom kingdom is situated; and the Bamum court to the east.¹⁰ Within each of these, a particular sculptural genre played a pivotal role in the transfer of power from one leader to another. Because the sculptures were accorded such an important role and informed the identity of a given court, artists channeled their greatest talent into their creation. Their successful execution of especially striking and innovative works earned them great esteem as well as parallel commissions from the leaders of neighboring principalities.

In the westernmost region of the Grassfields, freestanding figurative sculptures depicting royal ancestors, in seated or active stances, physically documented a particular reign within a line of dynastic succession. The legacy of individual leaders was given expression through such figures, perceived to be imbued with the essence of their subjects. In the Northwest Province, majestic thrones with figurative elaboration were the primary visual emblem marking the *fon*'s assumption of his title.

BANGWA

Several centuries ago, the Bangwa peoples settled the westernmost mountainous territory of the Grassfields region.¹¹ At the end of the nineteenth century, they became part of the German colonial administrative designation Bamileke, which grouped together some one hundred kingdoms led by sacred chiefs.¹² After World War I, when a League of Nations mandate divided Cameroon between French and British colonial powers, the Bangwa were the one Bamileke group in its western half transferred to the British, who grouped together nine independent chiefdoms under the term Bangwa for administrative purposes.¹³ This cluster of communities was distinguished by the exceptional caliber of its artistry, notably large-scale figures of chiefs and their entourages.¹⁴ Fontem, the most important of these centers and the largest of the Bangwa chiefdoms, was the source of some of the earliest works from the region to enter German museums. One of the principal resisters to German colonization had been the chief of Fontem, Assunganyi (r. ca. 1897–1951).¹⁵ Identified with princely generosity, uncompromising strength, and the ability to provide for his people, Assunganyi was initially defeated by the Germans but reinstated to the throne by the British until his death in 1951 (fig. 112).¹⁶

To this day, each Bangwa chiefdom is led by the sacred person of the *fon*, who is responsible for rites concerned with the well-being and fertility of both the land and his people. Several important societies of nobles are charged with overseeing various political and social functions. Key among these is the Night society, which ensures an orderly transfer of power at the time of a chief's death by combining his funeral celebrations with the inaugural introduction and installation of his successor. On that occasion, the *lefem*, or Gong society, performs music that blesses the



FIG. 112. Fon Assunganyi. Fontem, Cameroon. Before 1950. From Robert Brain and Adam Pollock, *Bangwa Funerary Sculpture*, 1971, fig. 3, p. 4

event and is responsible for the care and display of a series of wood sculptures, referred to variously as *lefem* or ancestor figures, commemorating the late *fon* and other past members of the polity's leadership.¹⁷

Given that the *fon* is a source of "life breath," his saliva is a potent substance through which his blessing may be bestowed. Consequently, intimately held items, which may be inherited by a leader from his predecessors, are conceived to be at once receptacles for their accumulated breath and vehicles for transfer of royal ancestral life breath to others. During an agricultural festival held annually in the middle of the dry season, the *fon* imbibes wine from the buffalo horn drinking cup handed down to him, which he does not swallow but rather sprays, with his saliva, onto those assembled.¹⁸ Warnier has suggested that the striking emphasis on the subjects' open mouths in *lefem* representations underscored the potency of this exhalation.¹⁹

During the nineteenth century, Bangwa chiefs commissioned *lefem* figures that represented them as supreme potentates.²⁰ Rendered in ceremonial dress, arms encased in ivory bracelets and neck encircled by beaded collars as befitting an important gathering, they typically grasped their most valued attributes of leadership, such as a pipe, ceremonial calabash, or drinking horn.²¹ Other members of the *fon*'s entourage who merited depiction were the first, or favorite, wife and princess royals. The especially high-ranking *ankweta* was a sister of the *fon*, typically childless, and a female equivalent of the male second in command, or *nkweta*. Depicted with royal male attributes, she was sometimes portrayed holding a calabash or a bamboo flute used for the dance of queens.²² The *mafwa*, or "female chief," was a princess

royal who represented the chief at public functions and presided over domestic disputes brought before her from across the land.²³ Her role as the *fon*'s surrogate was often underscored through representation of her wearing his regalia. Another subject of *lefem* sculpture was a *njuindem*, literally "woman of God," a priestess of the earth. Often such individuals were so designated because they had borne twins or breech infants, who were considered special in both cases.

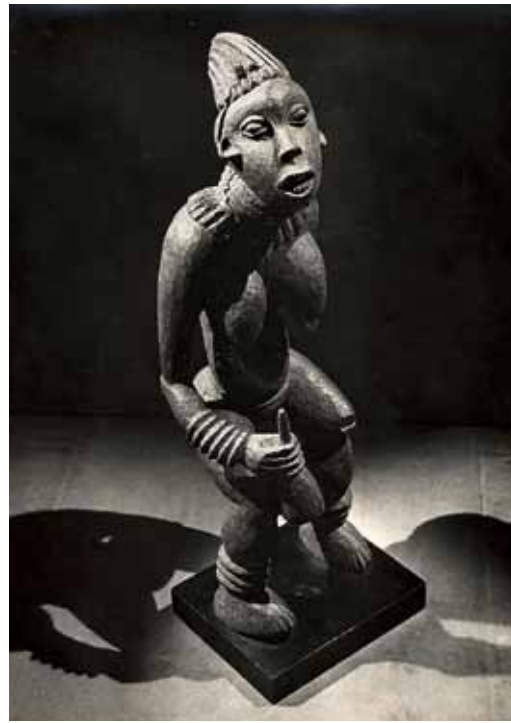
Each *lefem* figure was intimately identified with its subject on several different levels. It has been emphasized that such sculptures were never merely evocative works of art but rather creations addressed by name that allowed the individuals depicted to remain animate and lively presences.²⁴ Artists strove to capture this degree of personification by emphasizing distinctive features, active stances, and expressive qualities of the sitter's character. In order to convey the subjects' enduring vibrancy and dynamism, sculptors exploited idiosyncratic formal postures and attitudes as well as asymmetrical compositions.²⁵ The vital connection between an individual and his or her sculptural counterpart was further reinforced through the pairing of *lefem* figures with relics, such as skulls and intimate possessions, in royal shrines.

Lefem sculptures were infrequently removed from the shrines in which they were kept in order to be placed on display.²⁶ The rare occasions on which they were made accessible included the inauguration of a new ruler and annual blessings of the community. The medical doctor and collector of Cameroon art Pierre Harter notes that the night following a new leader's ascension, members of *lefem* amplified the transfer of power by sponsoring a performance in the sacred grove in which past princes were buried. Through their sculptural depictions, the chiefdom's past leaders were also in attendance as witnesses to the liturgies and offerings that elicited either blessings for the village or fertilization of the earth during the dry season each December or January. In both instances, a premium was placed on such gatherings as an opportunity to view the works in the round, and the artists responsible for their execution were acutely aware of this expectation.²⁷

The work within the *lefem* corpus that most brilliantly achieves the ideal of an unrestrained presence, riveting from every vantage point, is an iconic female figure now in the collection of the Musée Dapper in Paris (fig. 113). The art historian William Fagg noted of this artistic landmark, "[The] celebrated figure of a dancing woman bids fair to be the finest expression of movement in all African sculpture."²⁸ The figure, whose knees are bent, appears suspended in motion, her weight supported by her proper right leg. In her right hand she grasps a rattle, her arm bent at the elbow. The dynamism of this attitude is further accentuated by the fact that its subject gazes upward with mouth open, her head at an angle. The figure's bodily contours are fluid. The downward curve of her breasts is echoed directly below by that of her stomach and above by the form of her headdress. The deeply striated grooves of that crowning element are in turn echoed throughout the composition by the formal definition of the woman's collar, bracelets, anklets, and surviving hand. The work's expressionistic quality is manifested across its surface, which is faceted from head to toe, revealing evidence of its author's adze marks.

This inspired creation was collected among the Bangwa in 1897 or 1898 by the German colonial agent Gustav Conrau. At that time he documented the representation as a *njuindem*, which suggests that its subject was a priestess.²⁹ The sculpture was transferred to the Museum für Völkerkunde (today called the





OPPOSITE: FIG. 113. Commemorative figure of a priestess. Bamileke peoples; Bangwa chiefdom, Grassfields region, Cameroon. 19th century. Wood, pigments. H. 33½ in. (85 cm). Musée Dapper, Paris 3343

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT:

FIG. 114. Man Ray (American, 1890–1976). Untitled. ca. 1934. Gelatin silver print. Man Ray Trust, Long Island

FIG. 115. Man Ray (American, 1890–1976). Untitled. ca. 1934. Gelatin silver print. Private collection, Paris

FIG. 116. Walker Evans (American, 1903–1975). Female figure, Cameroon. 1935. [From the portfolio *African Negro Art*]. Gelatin silver print. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962 PSC 1978.412.2090

Ethnologisches Museum) in Berlin but by 1934 was in the collection of the French dealer Charles Ratton. While in Ratton's Paris gallery, the work came to the attention of the artist Man Ray. The art historian Wendy Grossman has discussed how Man Ray, in creating a series of photographs of the figure, capitalized on the sculpture's asymmetry, textured surface, and suggestion of incipient motion.³⁰ He accentuated and exploited these qualities by choreographing a dramatic play of light and shadow and using oblique and overhead camera angles. According to Grossman, such photographic experiments reflect the Western avant-garde's so-called New Vision, a desire to revolutionize visual language through unconventional photographic practices.³¹ In several of these compositions, Man Ray juxtaposed the dynamic Bangwa female with a nude female model, demonstrating the European avant-garde's conflation of African art with exoticism and charged sexuality. Those associations are especially evident in one photograph, which was not published or reworked at the time, in which a nude model is seated before the Bangwa female figure (fig. 114). The model leans back, her head captured in motion, gazing up at the sculpture, with her proper right arm extended through the aperture of its legs.³²

In 1935, soon after the work was sold to Helena Rubinstein, it was featured in the Museum of Modern Art's landmark exhibition titled "African Negro Art."³³



FIG. 117. Commemorative figure of a chief (three views). Bamileke peoples; Bangwa chiefdom, Grassfields region, Cameroon. 19th century. Wood, 35 x 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 12 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (88.9 x 41 x 31 cm).
Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière, Paris

The highly interpretive nature of Man Ray's images is especially apparent when compared with contemporaneous ones of the same subject taken by Walker Evans as part of his assignment to document the exhibition (figs. 115, 116).³⁴ While Man Ray's oblique camera angle and strongly emphasized shadows reveal the artist's affinity with Surrealism at that time, Evans's frontally shot, softly lit, and narrowly cropped print reflects his direct documentary style.³⁵

Another *lefem* figure collected by Conrau among the Bangwa during the same period depicts a *fon* holding a calabash vessel in his proper right hand (fig. 117).





FIG. 118. Ateu Atsa (Bangwa, 1840–1910). Commemorative figure of a chief (two views); Fontem region, Cameroon. 19th century. Wood, 36¼ x 8 in. (92.1 x 20.3 cm). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund 1987.62

The subject's stance is similarly asymmetrical, with knees bent and angled inward. He gazes intently ahead, his mouth wide open with teeth exposed, and wears attributes of chieftaincy that include a fiber prestige cap and a collar composed of the teeth of a leopard, a creature conceived of as a royal alter ego in view of its unrivaled power in the natural world.³⁶

A corpus of some twenty *lefem* depicting *fons* have been attributed to an influential Bangwa master, Ateu Atsa, and his workshop, active about 1870–1910.³⁷ Ateu Atsa's oeuvre is distinctive for its intense liveliness. The uncompromising manner in which he successfully captured essential qualities of his subjects is reflected in an anecdote documented by Harter at Fontem in 1967.³⁸ Fon Lefang



FIG. 119. Ateu Atsa (Bangwa, 1840–1910). Commemorative figure of a chief (two views); Lelong, Fontem region, Cameroon. 19th century. Wood, $37\frac{1}{4} \times 10\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$ in. (94.6 x 26.7 x 26.7 cm). Private collection

recalled that, according to his father, Assunganyi (see fig. 112), a late nineteenth-century Banyang chief named Fomen commissioned a likeness from Ateu Atsa but became enraged when he realized that the artist had immortalized him in an unflinchingly honest and unflattering portrayal that made evident his disfiguring facial paralysis. In two works representative of Ateu Atsa's signature style, figs. 118 and 119, the respective subjects stand on a ringlike base with knees bent. They both hold drinking horns and wear the same chieftaincy attributes of a cap, collar, and leopard-pelt garment that extends in front between the legs. While the figures are not identical, their formal adjustments are incremental: the shoulders and chin of fig. 118 are slightly broader than those of fig. 119.





OPPOSITE: FIG. 120. Commemorative figure of a chief. Bamileke peoples; Bangwa chiefdom, Grassfields region, Cameroon. 19th century. Wood, H. 31 1/8 in. (79 cm). Musée Dapper, Paris 0297

ABOVE: FIG. 121. Commemorative figure of a chief (two views). Bamileke peoples; Bangwa chiefdom, Grassfields region, Cameroon. 19th century. Wood, 38 x 13 x 11 1/2 in. (96.5 x 33 x 29.2 cm). Clyman Collection

Although all of Ateu Atsa's subjects came to life for their contemporaries in the larger context in which they were positioned and experienced, the subtle nature of the nuanced distinctions differentiating one work from another make it challenging to discern idiosyncratic identifying features on a purely formal basis today. This is also the case for works by another Bangwa master of the same generation, whom the art historian and curator Susan Vogel has referred to as the Master of the Berlin Tanyi, after a sculpture attributed to the same hand in the collection of Berlin's Ethnologisches Museum.³⁹ The shared aesthetic sensibility of two figures by this master, figs. 120 and 121, is in contrast to the tough rawness and emphasis on suspended motion generally favored by Bangwa artists. Instead,

this sculptor idealized his subjects by imparting to them a regal majesty and carefully poised serenity. In both these elegant depictions of leaders balanced on elevated seats of office, the legs are striking for their length, extending the entire lower third of the compositions. The contours of their bodies are gently rounded and their features delicately articulated. When examined closely, the upper body of fig. 120 is more elongated than that of the more compact fig. 121. The facial features of the latter also appear fuller, and the neck of the calabash vessel held in his proper right hand has been preserved. Both works retain their original reddish-brown-black patina of organic matter ritually applied to the surface, just as the body of the *fon* himself was anointed at the time of his ascension.

KOM

Another Grassfields center distinguished for its artistic patronage is Laikom, the capital of the kingdom of Kom, in the heart of the Bamenda mountain range. From 1931 to 1961, the missionary and anthropologist Paul Gebauer documented the cultural landscape of northwest Cameroon, capturing both Kom's spectacular mountainous landscape, 6,800 feet (ca. 2,073 m) above sea level, and Laikom's distinctive architecture (fig. 122). The royal palace's courtyard and the carved pillars flanking its entrance are easily recognizable in the left foreground of the photograph below.

FIG. 122. View of Laikom. Kom chieftom, Cameroon. 1946. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Photograph Study Collection, Bequest of Paul Gebauer, 1977 PSC 1977.1.195



According to legend, a sacred python led the Kom people from Bamessi up to this dizzying height.⁴⁰ Founded in the first half of the eighteenth century by Jinabo I of the royal Ekwu clan (r. 1755–85; also referred to as Njima Boh), the Kom state was informed by the essential precepts of ancestral guidance and matrilineal descent. The challenging ascent to Laikom afforded natural protection from external enemies. Lookouts marked by large sacred basalt monoliths punctuate Kom's hills. From the main stone terrace, Laikom's highest point, Kom kings continue to survey their capital and the spectacular landscape that surrounds it (fig. 123). Careful coordination was required in the construction of what came to be renowned as an architectural jewel.⁴¹ Within its dramatic natural setting, Laikom was impressive for the soaring heights of its structures, characterized by pyramidal thatched roofs, large courtyards, and high ceilings, as well as their dense labyrinthian arrangement and the monumental, ornately carved house posts that circumscribed the exterior of royal facades. Many of the materials were gathered by hand, a labor-intensive process. Workers precisely assembled raffia palm and wood, without using nails or bolts, to erect major buildings (fig. 124). The entrance to the royal palace was marked by elaborately designed entrance pillars, each carved out of a single piece of wood, depicting zoomorphic and anthropomorphic subjects that illustrated courtly etiquette, mythical events, or moments in history (fig. 125). Given the perishable

FIG. 123. Fon Ndi looking out over Kom's hills. Kom chiefdom, Cameroon. October 1940.
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas,
 The Photograph Study Collection, Bequest of Paul Gebauer, 1977 PSC 1977.1.194, frame 29







OPPOSITE, ABOVE: FIG. 124. Construction of a new building on Laikom's public square. Cameroon. 1937. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Photograph Study Collection, Bequest of Paul Gebauer, 1977 PSC 1977.1.32, frame 25

OPPOSITE, BELOW: FIG. 125. Laikom court, detail of carved pillars flanking the entrance. Cameroon. October 1940. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Photograph Study Collection, Bequest of Paul Gebauer PSC 1977.1.194, frame 20

ABOVE: FIG. 126. Fon Ndi and attendant at the Laikom *ntul* lodge. Cameroon. Before 1954. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Photograph Study Collection, Bequest of Paul Gebauer, 1977 PSC 977.1.401.669

nature of these materials, their maintenance was a major preoccupation of successive generations. Gebauer notes that this careful attentiveness to renewal was sustained through 1954, which marked the end of the reign of Fon Ndi (1926–54).⁴²

Under the leadership of its founder, Jinabo I, Kom in the eighteenth century was stable and tranquil.⁴³ A landmark associated with that inaugural reign is the *ntul* lodge, in Laikom's palace complex near the end of the python's trail. The *ntul* lodge is conceived of as a state shrine that is associated with the longevity of the original clans and that fosters harmony and social cohesion.⁴⁴ It was at this site that Jinabo I was eventually buried and where his successors were presented and enthroned. The immovable stone throne there is surrounded by other lithic markers: the sacred *etwi*, a circle of stone stelae, the traditional place of justice; and headstones used as royal grave markers (fig. 126).

The veneration of royal ancestors was among Kom's central institutions.⁴⁵ The *fon* was charged with both secular and priestly responsibilities, and legitimate transfer of the title was required to ensure the peace and prosperity of his people and the land. In the Kom system, heirs to the throne were drawn from the *fon*'s

uterine brothers, sons of his mother's uterine sisters, or his maternal nephews (sons of his own uterine sisters).⁴⁶ The *fon* was supported by the *kwifon*, an institution of hereditary and appointed officials who served as the executive arm of governance.⁴⁷ According to the historian Paul Nchoji Nkwi, who is originally from Kom, at the very moment a new *fon* is installed, the *kwifon* anoint an heir apparent, or *bo-fuli*, the eldest among those who have a right to inherit the throne.⁴⁸ The *nafon*, or queen mother, was second in rank only to her son, and she served as his trusted advisor. This position as counselor emphasized the importance placed on the continuity of the royal lineage, an idea that was underscored by the fact that her residence was at the royal grave shrine at Laikom. Other responsibilities with which the *nafon* was charged were to watch over the children of the palace and to receive visitors.⁴⁹ When she died, the eldest woman in the maternal line was appointed to take on her role.

Kom's most esteemed possessions were the "sculptures of the palace," which were carefully guarded in a sacred enclosure.⁵⁰ Among its contents were the ambitious effigy thrones that synthesized lifesize figurative representations of its leadership with a physical seat of office. In each of these monumental creations, a standing figure faces forward and is extended at knee level by a cylindrical stool. The scale and majesty of the surviving examples of this tradition are such that they are among the most imposing known sculptural forms from sub-Saharan Africa.⁵¹ Rather than serve as functional thrones, they appear to have been created as tributes to past generations of *fon* and *nafon*. At the same time, these large-as-life presences underscored the continuity between past and present at the especially delicate moment of succession. A prominent focal point of the installation rites, their presence affirmed the new *fon*'s legitimacy.

The death of a *fon* has been characterized as the extinguishing of a fire.⁵² At that moment the most senior member of the royal maternal line, the *bo-fuli*, would leave without delay for Laikom, where, in the presence of the other royals, he would untie a strand of ceremonial beads from around the neck of the deceased. After the anointment of the dead *fon*'s body, it would be laid in state so that all might pay their final respects before its interment in a shared burial vault within the royal shrine, at which point the *bo-fuli* would become the focus of succession rites that at once set him apart and identified him with his precursors. Officials from the *kwifon* regulatory society would escort him to the *ntul* lodge and seat him on a stone identified with both the nation and rites of appeasement and reconciliation.⁵³ They would then lead him to the royal burial shrine, where he would be ritually bathed over the grave of the deceased king in order to be cleansed of all past faults. After being anointed with camwood and special medicines and dressed in chiefly robes, he would be seated on the installation throne carved for his predecessor. At the installation of Jinabo II in 1974, as soon as the *fon* was seated on his throne, two officials stepped forward to pledge their allegiance in recognition of his new status.⁵⁴ The figurative couples depicted as extensions of Kom thrones may also have been conceived as witnesses at this momentous transition. The process transformed the candidate into a new man and leader (see fig. 139).⁵⁵

No longer an ordinary mortal, the new *fon* had become "he who does not die," "the great one," "the leopard," one considered to have power over life and death.⁵⁶ Palace officials stood before him to acknowledge this metamorphosis and pledge their allegiance. The new sovereign would then be handed his ancestor's

cup so that he and his entourage might mark the moment with a communal drink of wine. The morning following installation, a delegation of court officials would accompany the new *fon* along a cleared path to a stream east of Laikom where he would be bathed, after which sacrificial offering to the ancestors and libation would be made and the names of the most recently deceased kings invoked.⁵⁷ Subsequently, the *fon* presided over biannual offerings to his royal ancestors called *ibin*, at which the sculptures of the palace might be displayed.⁵⁸

During the nineteenth century, Kom evolved into a confederacy of ten chiefdoms and forty-two villages.⁵⁹ During this period it flourished as a regional economic power situated on an active commercial axis. It shared a monopoly of the kola trade with the neighboring kingdom of Bum and also responded to a growing demand for slaves from the south. Tufoyn, the fifth *fon* (r. ca. 1840–55), proactively pursued Kom's further settlement and expansion by driving out encroaching Kjem populations, initiating challenges to the boundaries of neighboring Bum, and mounting a defense against Fulbe incursions.⁶⁰ Reputed to have been a carver, Tufoyn is said to have succumbed to leprosy and been buried at a site known as *shang nkwo*, directly above the north wing of the palace.⁶¹ Tufoyn was succeeded by his inept elderly brother Kemeng (r. ca. 1855–65), who soon lost control over the southern part of the kingdom.⁶²

Kemeng appointed his nephew Yu as his representative in the southern sector of Fuli.⁶³ Under his uncle's tenure, Yu adjudicated cases brought before him, and his handling of them was such that he came to be perceived as too autonomous. This affront to Kemeng's authority led to Yu's dismissal in 1863, and he was escorted into exile by the palace regulatory society, *kwifon*.⁶⁴ Yu was accompanied by his nephew Ngam (who eventually followed Yu as the eighth *fon* of Kom [r. 1912–26]) to Bambui, where his sister was a royal wife of the *fon*, and where both men learned wood carving.⁶⁵ In 1865 Kemeng called Yu back to Laikom so that they might be reconciled. Shortly thereafter, while in his early thirties, Yu was installed as Kemeng's successor.

Over the course of half a century in power (1865–1912), Yu's ambitions led him to introduce a modern system of administration and to contribute to the dynamism of Kom's creative expression. Under his leadership the consolidated kingdom prospered and was extended to the Belo Valley. Paul Nkwi notes that a number of small chiefdoms were incorporated into Kom but allowed to retain their hereditary leaders.⁶⁶ Additionally Yu raided neighboring Bafut, Bum, Din, Babungo, and Mme in order to obtain slaves who were then exchanged for guns.⁶⁷

At the same time, Yu revitalized military clubs to protect Kom from outside threats. Consequently, when the first German explorer, Eugen Zintgraff, arrived in 1899, he was rebuffed by an armed delegation that denied him entrance into Kom.⁶⁸ The Germans established Bamenda Station in 1901, which became their first point of contact with Kom. In 1904, a German military expedition to Kom was met with strong resistance over a seven-month period. When the Germans began burning down villages, Yu and his people took refuge in the Akua-Mulum Forest, where they remained until an approach to their refuge was betrayed by a Bali soldier. In 1905 the Germans hoisted their flag over Laikom. Although the traditional *fons* remained the spiritual and cultural leaders of their people, a staged photograph asserted the newly acquired power of the German officers, who are



FIG. 127. Members of the German military in front of the palace at Laikom after their defeat of Kom. Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Cameroon. January 1905. Frobenius-Institut, Frankfurt am Main

seen at the center of the scene, comfortably seated in lounge chairs, surrounded by unidentified individuals and, most significantly, by a large ensemble of masks and sculpted figures, many of which were later sent to Germany (fig. 127). One of the Germans assembled was probably Lieutenant Hans Caspar Edler zu Putlitz, who in 1905 offered several of these works to Felix von Luschan, the director of the Museum für Völkerkunde (Ethnologisches Museum) in Berlin (see p. 143).⁶⁹

Among the sculptures transferred from Kom's treasury to German institutions were four key works commissioned during the reigns of Yu's predecessors. Neither an account of the details surrounding the departure of these works nor the history of their patronage was recorded. By the time Harter undertook field research to reconstruct their identity and patronage, they had been absent from Kom for almost a century, and living elders no longer recalled that information with any degree of confidence.⁷⁰

In 1904, two of the works in question, a pair of Kom's royal effigy thrones said to depict Yu's great-grandfather, Nkwain (r. 1825–40), and his *nafon*, Nindum, were among a group of artifacts given by the missionary Reinhold Theodor Rohde to the recently established Museum für Völkerkunde (today the Museum der Weltkulturen) in Frankfurt am Main.⁷¹ A contemporary postcard of the Cameroon Gallery documents the paired portraits shortly after their arrival at this new ethnographic museum (fig. 128). Presented under an array of lances, arrows, and a row of masks, they were displayed as "trophies" of colonized Cameroon and became part of a new field of scholarly discourse that developed in Germany.⁷²



FIG. 128. The Cameroon Gallery, Museum für Völkerkunde. 1906. Postcard.
Museum der Weltkulturen, Frankfurt am Main

Nkwain is remembered as a capable leader who sought both to expand Kom territorially and to unite its constituents.⁷³ In fig. 129, his body is rendered as an elongated, highly compact columnar form. A striking series of visual accents applied to the surface, concentrated in the area of the head, are a study in contrasting materials, textures, and tones. A crescent coiffure in the form of the high-status *mpelet* headdress is covered with actual human hair; copper sheeting has been hammered to the surface of the face; and a collar of blue-and-white beadwork arranged in a checkerboard pattern encircles the neck. The collar recalls the strand of beads that the heir apparent would remove from the neck of his deceased predecessor. Tiny glass beads were among the main European imports into the region, through coastal Calabar and Douala, and served as currency. Similarly, copper was a scarce commodity whose ornamental use highlighted the preciousness of the representation.⁷⁴ The beaded accent is also repeated around the summit of a flute—emblematic of the *kwifon* society—which is held directly under the chin so that it vertically bisects the torso. The heightened animation and realism of the figure's intensely introspective gaze are contrasted with his elegantly hieratic body. His squared shoulders extend into slender arms that frame the upper body, terminating in hands that grasp the instrument at the torso's center. The full, rounded thighs act as backing for a stool that extends from the figure's knees to the base he stands on. The stool's seat is a circular platform supported by an openwork program of repeating buffalo heads around the perimeter, imagery that complemented the *fon*'s use of a buffalo drinking horn and referred to the majestic nature of royal power.



Copper has also been applied to the face of the female companion figure (fig. 130), from the hairline to below the chin. Her head features a distinctive coiffure consisting of a raised sagittal crest to which human hair has been added. On either side of this ridge, the shaved portion of the head is covered with red camwood powder. Like her male counterpart, she wears a blue-and-white-checked beaded collar. Her chest reveals defined pectorals rather than full breasts and her clasped hands are raised slightly. The identity of this figure is disputed: some scholars have recognized her as Nkwain's first wife rather than the queen mother. In arguing for the latter interpretation, the curator Pamela McClusky has noted that the woman depicted is neither young nor seductive, but rather mature, stable, and dignified.⁷⁵ The art historian and Cameroon specialist Tamara Northern has proposed, however, that given the degree of submission implied by the figure's clasped hands, required of all subjects when addressing the *fon*, she may be Nkwain's spouse.⁷⁶ The cylindrical stool at the level of the knees is very plain, featuring a series of eight elegant vertical elements that extend around the perimeter.

In 1905 a second pair of Kom thrones was sent to Berlin by Lieutenant Hans Caspar Edler zu Putlitz. In the previously cited photograph fig. 127, one can easily recognize the commemorative portraits of Fon Tufoyn and Nafon Naya (fig. 132) as the two tallest figures assembled. Both Kom works were subsequently published, along with the Bangwa female figure now in Dapper's collection (see fig. 113), in Eckart von Sydow's 1923 pioneering survey of African art.⁷⁷ This intact pair is of heroic stature. Harter has suggested that, while later in date than the previously discussed pairing, this technically more elaborate couple may be the work of the same artist.⁷⁸

Not only are the figures lifesize but there is also a perfection to their nude bodies, which complement each other with an exactly calculated symmetry: the male figure is incrementally taller, more physically powerful, and bolder than his female counterpart. The subtlety of these physiognomic adjustments is apparent in the area of the hips, which are slightly higher in the female body. Both faces are enlivened with copper sheeting and their gazes are alert—his expression implies that something demands his attention and she has her mouth open, suggesting a living presence. The nuanced naturalism of the Tufoyn figure is especially striking. Compared to Nkwain, the male now in Frankfurt, Tufoyn's form is much more fully defined and rounded, in contrast to the attenuated arms at his sides. His proper right elbow is bent and in that hand, which is encased in copper foil, is a buffalo horn used as both a drinking cup and a vessel for offering libations. The opposite arm is broken at the forearm. At knee level, below powerfully muscular thighs, the projecting circular seat is supported on the backs of two animals that may be leopards. Naya's seat, like that of her brother Nkwain, is supported by an identical series of buffalo heads. Harter has noted that formally she more closely resembles the earlier pairing in the treatment of her squared shoulders.⁷⁹ Her hands

FIG. 129. Commemorative throne of Chief Nkwain. Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Grassfields region, Cameroon. 19th century. Wood, beads, copper sheet, raffia, human hair, H. 69 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (176 cm). Museum der Weltkulturen, Frankfurt am Main N.S. 2150

FIG. 130. Commemorative throne of Queen Mother Nindum (?). Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Grassfields region, Cameroon. 19th century. Wood, beads, string, leather, human hair, metal, pigment, H. 68 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (173.4 cm). The Seattle Art Museum, Washington, Gift of Katherine White and the Boeing Company 81.17.718

are held one above the other while grasping a staff that extends the length of her left side. This implement is one identified with vital agricultural work overseen by women. Harter proposes that it may also depict a staff of office that was the prerogative of the *fon* and other male officials of royal descent.⁸⁰

The reverse side of the Tufoyn figure reveals deep rectangular cavities in the areas of the shoulder blades and the right side of the lower back that were deliberately bored for the addition of empowering matter. Breaks that appeared over the course of use in the areas of Naya's hand, wrist, and the length of the torso were repaired in Kom to extend the life of the work.

In principle, once a *fon* was installed upon the effigy throne inherited from his predecessor, it entered the royal treasury and was not used as a seat of office. In practice, this was not always the case, as, according to oral tradition, Tufoyn's successor, Kemeng, apparently neglected to have a signature work of his own executed. As Tufoyn and Kemeng were brothers and both sons of the same woman, in that particular succession the *nafon* remained the same and thus there would not have been a need to carve a new female effigy throne.⁸¹ Accordingly, upon Kemeng's death, Yu would have been installed on Tufoyn's throne, and he later oversaw the creation of a new series of effigy thrones. While it has been suggested that this was

BELOW: FIG. 131. Workers constructing a new building on Laikom's public square, near the *manjong* clubhouse. Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Grassfields region, Cameroon. 1937. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Photograph Study Collection, Bequest of Paul Gebauer, 1977 PSC 1977.1.32, frame 26

OPPOSITE: FIG. 132. Commemorative thrones of Chief Tufoyn and Queen Mother Naya. Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Grassfields region, Cameroon. Mid-19th century. Wood, copper. H. Male: 74 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (190 cm), female: 72 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (185 cm). Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin III C 20681/82







FIG. 133. Fon Yu standing behind a throne figure of his own creation. Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Cameroon. ca. 1905–10

necessitated by the Germans' removal of the works now in Berlin, Frankfurt, and Seattle, such patronage historically would have been expected, regardless of whether those works had remained in the palace treasury. In fact it is even plausible that the execution of works tied to Yu's patronage made retention of the inherited works less critical once these were in place.

Under Yu's reign Kom's capital flourished as a center of innovative architecture. Notable among its landmarks was the structure of the *manjong* clubhouse, which may have served as a model for the distinctive rectangular great houses that came to be introduced into the royal compounds (see fig. 131). Situated at the edge of Laikom's main square, the clubhouse accommodated the weekly gatherings of the regulatory Society of the Red Feather. In Yu's final years, a new and elegant raised design with a long enclosed verandah introduced a synthesis of traditional elements with some features of European construction.⁸²

In 1960 Laikom's royal palace and most of its sculptural heritage were destroyed by a fire. A series of the creations that were historically the visual focus of its *ibin* rites and integral in the transfer of power between its leaders over the last two centuries survives, however, on three continents. Careful scrutiny of this corpus led Harter to note that Kom's artistic production at the beginning of the nineteenth century was dominated by a gifted master and subsequently maintained for another half century by Yu.⁸³

Upon his return from Bambui, even before his ascension to the throne, Yu had founded a carving workshop with the assistance of Nguo Fang of Belo.⁸⁴ As *fon*, he trained, supervised, and directed both guilds of carvers and blacksmiths. The masks, architectural sculpture, and figurative works produced under his patronage for Kom's treasury were regionally renowned. Evidence of Yu's engagement with

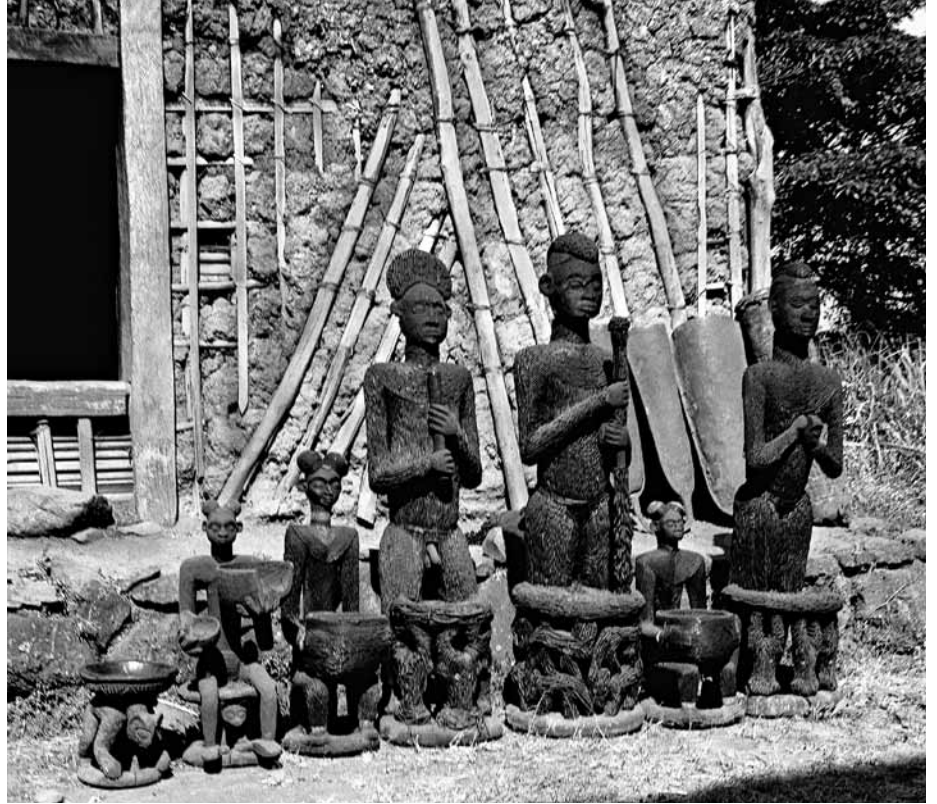
the execution of these works survives in the form of a series of photographs taken by Adolph Diehl.⁸⁵ They include a sequence of images, deposited with the Linden Museum in Stuttgart, of Yu at Laikom holding an adze with three effigy thrones in progress: portraits of a chief, a royal princess, and a queen mother (fig. 133).⁸⁶ Of these three sculptures, only that of the queen mother remains in Kom today.⁸⁷

Nkwi records that late in Yu's reign, one of his adolescent palace retainers, Bobe Johnny Ngong, recalled being charged by Yu to acquire the beads used to enhance the works designated for Kom's treasury.⁸⁸ Among these was a male effigy throne whose subject appears to be Yu. Harter notes that it references the work identified with Nkwain now in Frankfurt but on a more diminutive scale.⁸⁹ The queen mother, Funkuyn, and titled wife are identified as the subjects of two contemporaneous works that entered the treasury: a female figure with a royal head-dress and staff (seen in fig. 133 as the central figure) and a female figure clasping her hands in a gesture of deference. Following their completion, the male effigy throne and related female corollaries produced under Yu became emblematic of the legitimate transfer of Kom's paramount title. They were annually placed on view in

FIG. 134. Fon Lo'o. Before 1966. Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Cameroon. 35mm color slide. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Photograph Study Collection, Bequest of Paul Gebauer, 1977 PSC 1977.1.401.817

FIG. 135. Fon Nsom Nggue holding a prestige pipe of brass and ivory. ca. 1966–70. Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Cameroon. 35mm color slide. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Photograph Study Collection, Bequest of Paul Gebauer, 1977 PSC 1977.1.401.819





FIGS. 136 and 137. Sacred grouping (two views). Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Cameroon. 1958. Schneider Archive

the Laikom compound to inspire Kom's citizens to reflect on their past and to coincide with the *ibiri* agricultural ceremony held in December or January, when the soil is being prepared for planting. Yu and his successors also directed sacrifices to their ancestors. The rest of the year this royal triad was housed within Kom's treasury. It remained intact there through the reign of its tenth *fon*, Lo'o (r. 1954–66; also known as Law-Awn or Loh Neng Funkuin Nain Nayadjoa [fig. 134]). Lo'o authorized access to the enclosure to Gilbert Schneider, who worked at the Cameroon Baptist Mission in Kom from 1953 to 1960. As a result, Schneider had an opportunity to view and photograph its contents five times during the seven years he lived in the region.⁹⁰ One of two photographs documenting the contents of Kom's royal treasury shows the three royal commemorative portraits that were its central elements (fig. 136). At the right is the male figure said to represent Fon Yu himself. The two female figures may represent Yu's mother, Funkuyn (seen at the center of fig. 133, before it was beaded), and Yu's first wife, Wi-Inthoh. Two retainer figures may also be seen in the foreground. The second photograph records the same sculptures displayed in a row outside the treasury along with three retainer figures and a smaller leopard caryatid bowl (fig. 137).

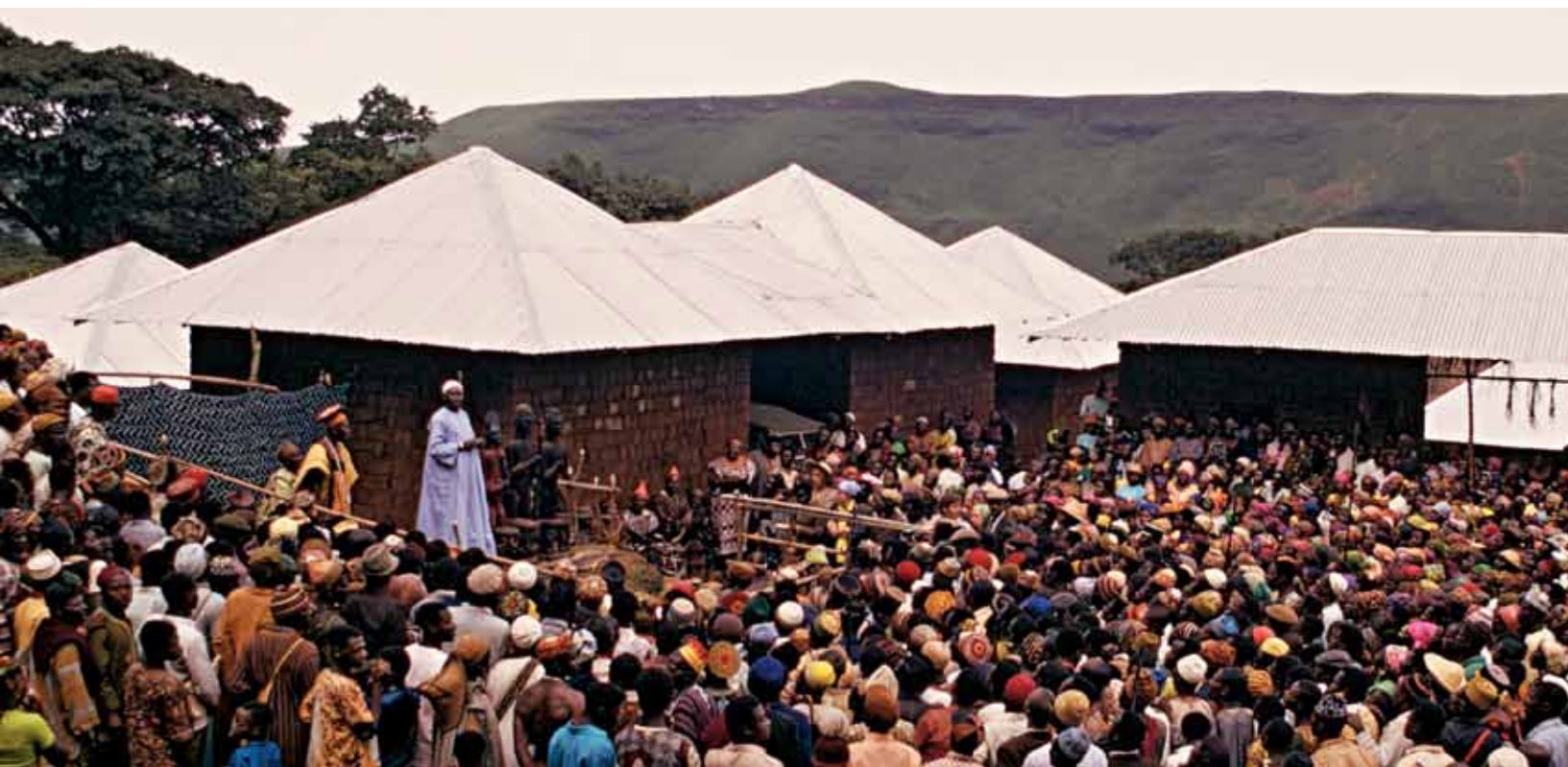
In the final years of Fon Lo'o's reign, a dispute arose concerning the transfer of his title. The contest was between Lo'o's designated successor, Bobe Maya of Füllü, also a sculptor, and another of Lo'o's nephews, Michael Mbain. Bobe Maya was successful in defending his claim to become the eleventh *fon*, Nsom Nggue (r. 1966–74), and Mbain remained a court retainer (fig. 135). About the time of this transition, it was discovered that Yu's effigy throne had been removed from the treasury and Mbain became the chief suspect. In an eyewitness account of Lo'o's funeral rites and the coronation that followed, provided to Paul Gebauer by a member of the Cameroon Baptist Mission, William Tayui, the wrapping of Lo'o's body at the royal burial site, the disinterment and handling of the remains of *fons* Yu

and Ngam by a descendant, and the burial of all of three together are described in detail, yet there is no mention of Yu's throne. In 1968, given that recovery of the work seemed unlikely, Nsom Nggue commissioned "a substitute" from Robert Toh, a sculptor from neighboring Babanki.⁹¹ Although Mbain was held in disrepute for some time following the throne's disappearance, he was eventually forgiven and designated by Nsom Nggue as his potential successor.⁹²

It has been noted that Toh did not attempt to reproduce the missing work. Instead, his creation was said to depict Lo'o, reprising the tradition of a *fon* owning a work that made reference to his predecessor. The fact that Nsom Nggue compensated for this absence rather than commissioning a work identified with his own reign reflected his ongoing insecurity concerning the transition between his predecessor and himself and the need to fortify that connection. The general response to this work, however, suggests that few believed it to be worthy of its Nkwain, Tufoyn, and Yu precursors. Commentary on the subject suggests that what was perceived as "the replacement" was not only devoid of the striking beadwork of earlier sculptures from this tradition, but also that the inferior aesthetic quality of the sculpture lacked the necessary "majesty."⁹³

Following the disappearance of Yu's effigy throne from Laikom, the work was acquired by a European art dealer based in Douala, who in turn sold it to the American art dealer Aaron Furman.⁹⁴ The public surfacing of the work in the United States resulted in extensive media coverage of its history and its significance to Kom, which ultimately led to an initiative that allowed for its return to the palace treasury in 1974. The late philanthropist and private collector Lawrence Gussman financed the acquisition of the work from Furman by Warren Robbins,

FIG. 138. Crowds viewing Afo-A-Kom. Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Cameroon. 1974. Schneider Archive



director of the Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C. Together they oversaw its transfer back to Nsom Nggue and Laikom's treasury following an absence of seven and a half years. In a photograph taken at the ceremony marking that occasion, presided over by Fon Nsom Nggue, the work that had come to be known internationally as the Afo-A-Kom figure is the leftmost of the three commemorative portraits on the stage (fig. 138).

After Nsom Nggue had been succeeded by Jinabo II (r. 1974–89; also known as Michael Mbain), the German researcher and curator Hans-Joachim Koloss documented the restored treasury contents at Kom during a celebration of *kekum njang*, a festival featuring an array of masquerades.⁹⁵ Fon Jinabo II had been enthroned on December 1974 and this celebration, just over a year later, provided an occasion for the new leader and his wives to be presented officially to the public. The head of *kwifon* welcomed the ruler in the presence of three of the sculptures of Kom palace produced under Yu. Koloss has emphasized the attitude of deferential devotion that Jinabo II demonstrated before the works (fig. 139).⁹⁶

During his time in Kom in the 1970s, Koloss was told that these figures were no longer considered to represent particular individuals but instead were perceived to be archetypal ideals of the *fon*, the *nafon*, and the first wife, identified with and tied to continuity of the royal dynasty.⁹⁷ It also was suggested that they had become emblematic of the Kom people's unity and that the kingdom's well-being and prosperity were dependent upon their power. This larger-than-life role for the works themselves seems to have been shaped by the absence of Yu's throne, the failure of subsequent leaders to commission adequate creations during their tenures, and the gradual weakening of the authority of Yu's heirs. It is striking that the works often flanked Jinabo II at gatherings and appeared as participants in celebrations. Nearly a decade later, in 1984, the French ethnologist Louis Perrois photographed Jinabo II flanked by these same works (fig. 140). Displayed outside the palace at the researcher's request, the three portraits are traditionally aligned next to a group of drums and prestige seats from the treasury.

This most recent interpretation of the significance of the works to members of the Kom court suggests a historical shift away from identifying these sculptures with individual leaders to viewing them as generic representations of idealized leadership. Such a change makes evident the delicate nature of the knowledge that anchored works of art to their original subjects. The dispersal of Kom's treasury deprived local sculptors of appropriate models to emulate, and the absence of Yu's throne, although relatively brief, had the effect of dissolving the complex and particularized associations that had defined it in the consciousness of its community. Once the immediacy and continuity of that kind of connection is severed, even temporarily, a work loses its ability to tell a nuanced historical narrative and comes to be viewed even in its own place of creation and original cultural context in a highly generalized manner.

A similar fate befell the Bangwa *lefem* sculptures, which, once removed to the West, were permanently severed from any of their original associations. Yet, despite our inability to tie them to specific historical figures, their animated stances and expressions continue to evoke a sense of vibrant, vital beings captured at a distinct moment in time.



FIG. 139. Installation of Fon Jinabo II, January 10, 1976. Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Cameroon

FIG. 140. Fon Jinabo II seated with objects from the Kom treasury. 1984. Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Cameroon



The Golden Age of Shyáám and Beyond: The Kuba

When they look at this statue they will be able to remember me and think I am looking at them, consoling them when they are sad, giving them inspiration and new courage.

—ATTRIBUTED TO SHYÁÁM ÁMBÚL ÁNGOONG [SHYÁÁM ÁMBÚL ÁNGOONG],
AS TOLD BY KWETE PESHANGA KENA [KOT ÁPE] TO EMIL TORDAY, 1908

WITH THESE WORDS, THE KUBA SOVEREIGN KOT ÁPE SOUGHT TO DESCRIBE THE original intent of a statue of his most illustrious forbearer, the seventeenth-century ruler Shyáám áMbúl áNgoong, who was depicted as a physically imposing and corpulent male figure, seated on a dais with his eyes closed and legs crossed (fig. 141). This exegesis of the wood sculpture was provided to a foreign visitor to the court, the Hungarian ethnographer Emil Torday (1875–1931). A 1908 photograph taken around the time of that exchange captures Kot áPe in an apparently casual attitude—reclining slightly, his hands relaxed, in a relatively unornamented outfit (fig. 142). What is not evident from the view is that Kot áPe is seated on the back of one of his servants, further signaling his authority and power through a posture of knees wide spread.

OPPOSITE: FIG. 141. *Ndop* figure: Shyáám áMbúl áNgoong. Kuba peoples; western Kasai region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. ca. 1630. Wood, h. 21½ in. (54.5 cm). The British Museum, London
Af 1909, 1210.1

FIG. 142. Kot áPe and his court. Nsheng, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 1908. From John Mack, “Documenting the Cultures of Southern Zaire: The Photographs of the Torday Expeditions 1900–1909,” *African Arts* 24, no. 4, special issue, *Historical Photographs of Africa* (Oct. 1991), p. 61, fig. 2



Torday was led to understand that the work in question had been executed during Shyáám áMbúl áNgoong's reign. The sculpture's naturalistic appearance supported this assumption—"the face in particular is that of a living man. . . . The treatment of the collar bones, and the swelling curves of the trunk display an attempt at realism usually entirely foreign [in African art]"¹—and Torday, who resided at the Kuba court from September through December of 1908, faithfully documented the oral traditions relating to the work, today a landmark of the British Museum's collection.² Analysis of it and several other Kuba sculptures now in the British Museum, the Royal Museum for Central Africa (Tervuren, Belgium), and Brooklyn Museum collections, however, makes evident the highly idealized nature of this seminal Kuba genre of representation. Examination of the sculptural corpus and relevant historical sources in relation to other precolonial Kuba art forms provides an especially illuminating opportunity to consider how official accounts of the kingdom and its leadership were formulated and reinforced through a series of signature images referred to as *ndop*.

The extensive body of sources on Kuba precolonial history, which are almost entirely oral, have been examined and interpreted by the historian Jan Vansina, who has characterized these testimonials of the past, "deliberately transmitted from mouth to mouth," as being highly selective.³ He further notes that, "to the Kuba, history is the remembrance of some things past. The main process of building oral history involves not so much a passive, haphazard loss of memory as an active choice of items to remember, and that choice is dictated by their perception of history."⁴

Official Kuba narratives concerning the development of its complex civilization follow an arc that relates the settlement of a diverse collection of peoples in a new territory. Many of these, including the Bushoong, had migrated from the eastern shores of the Kwango River area on the border of what is today northern Angola and southwestern Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.) east to the western Kasai region in what is now central D.R.C., where they were joined by Mongo, Luluwa, Luba, and Pende families.⁵ There their lifestyles, previously centered around subsistence fishing, hunting, and gathering, were rapidly transformed through innovations introduced by enlightened leadership. This progression is defined according to a chronology of kings and events that Vansina subdivides into six distinct phases or chapters: the time of migrations (before 1568); the early kingdom (ca. 1568–1630); the flowering of Kuba culture (ca. 1630–1680); the period of tradition (ca. 1680–1835); the crisis of early European contact (ca. 1835–1908); and inclusion in the Belgian Congo, beginning in 1908.⁶

At the end of the migration period, a paramount chieftaincy of an essentially symbolic nature was instituted and assumed by a leader of Bushoong ethnicity. Over the course of the early kingdom period, the development of increasingly elaborate court etiquette and the introduction of an ideology of divine kingship gradually led to the development of a Kuba state.⁷ During the seventeenth century, the centrally positioned, overarching sovereign of Bushoong ethnicity (called a *nyim* or *nyimi*) emerged as the titular head of a collection of relatively autonomous chiefdoms.⁸ From this position of paramount leadership, the Bushoong sovereign exacted tribute from those constituents and controlled their external policy.

The fifty-year period between about 1630 and 1680, which marked the equivalent of a Kuba efflorescence, is the one associated with the definition of all

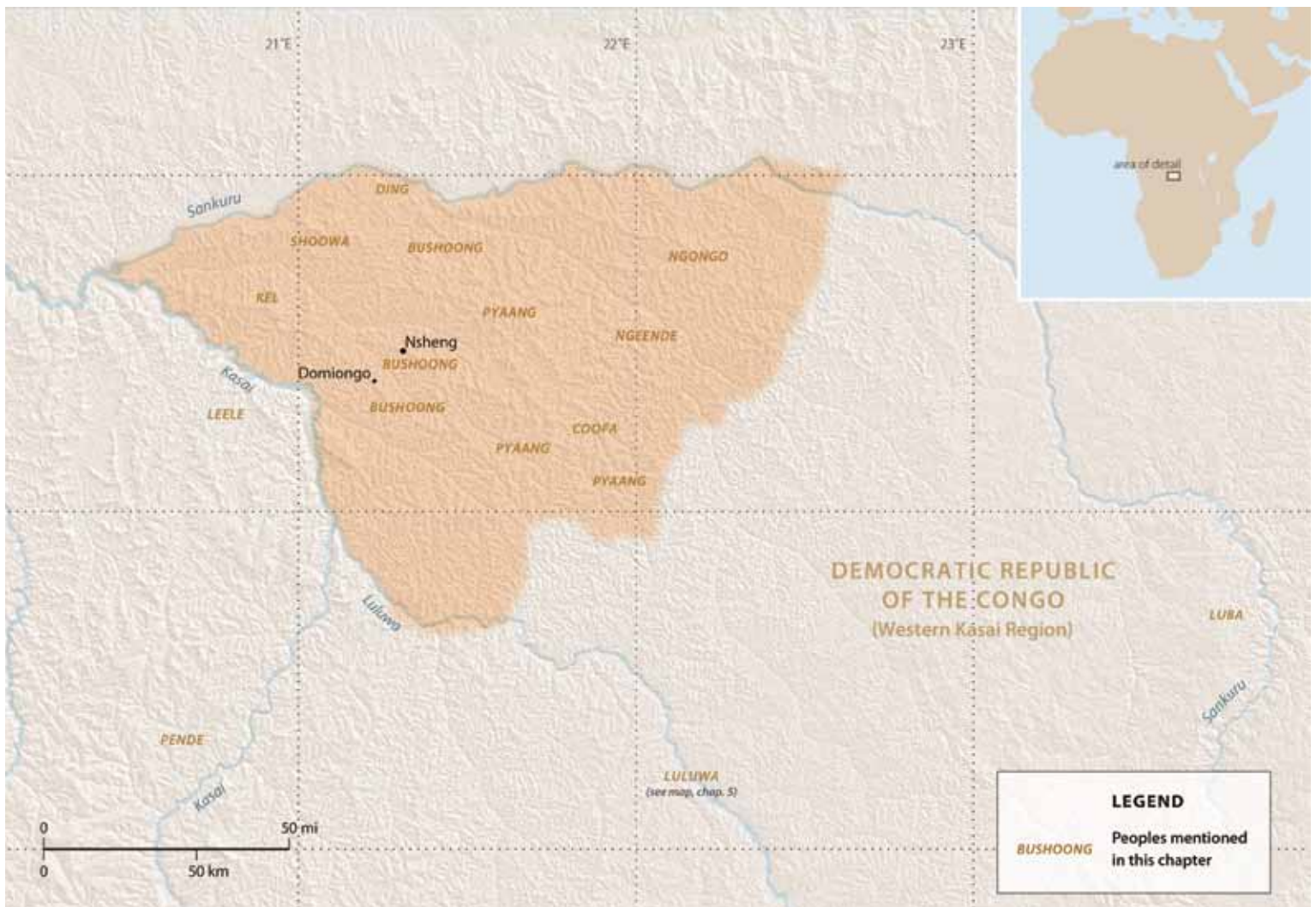


FIG. 143. The Kuba kingdom

key aspects of Kuba identity.⁹ This high point of cultural vitality was made possible by radical economic change, which fundamentally reshaped the relationship of Kuba subjects to their environment. That transformation consisted of a shift to agricultural production in which cultivation of millet and sorghum was expanded and a series of new crops, including maize, tobacco, manioc, and beans, was adopted.¹⁰ The growth in population that followed increased both opportunities for trade and a demand for the services of skilled artisans. Professional metalsmiths, weavers, embroiderers, and carvers flourished under the patronage of the Kuba elite both by adapting ideas and practices from outside sources and by developing inspired innovations of their own. Most important, a state political structure was instituted. The creative spark that ignited this era and defined the beginning of a new political dynasty came to be embodied by the sovereign Shyám áMbúl áNgoong (r. ca. 1630; for reign dates of the Kuba rulers mentioned here, see the chronological chart on p. 165). Vansina has noted that, because oral tradition recalls change by personifying it, this leader's name became synonymous with the memory of the unprecedented changes that occurred not only under his reign but also during those of his successors.¹¹ Beginning with this larger-than-life cultural hero, Kuba kings gradually came to be conceived of as God's "lieutenants on Earth" and to be ascribed a sacred character.¹² As Torday observed:

The Nyimi is the living link that alone can join them through the chain of his one hundred and twenty predecessors to Bamba, the founder. The spirit of Bamba lives in every one of them; it is the life of the living, the memory of the dead, the hope of future generations. It is his spirit that makes the moon wane and increase, that makes the sun shine; it is his spirit that in the shape of rain quenches the thirst of the soil after the months of drought; it is his spirit that makes seeds germinate and presides over the reproduction of all that lives.¹³

The first Western accounts of the court at Nsheng, Kuba's capital city, date from the end of the nineteenth century, when the kingdom extended between the lower Sankuru River on the north and the Kasai and lower Luluwa Rivers on the west (see fig. 143). The size of the territory was two-thirds that of Belgium or Swaziland and encompassed forest, savanna, and great rivers.¹⁴ Its population, estimated at as many as 160,000, comprised eighteen distinct ethnic groups, which by then had become subordinated to the rule imposed by Leopold II, king of Belgium, as part of the Congo Free State (1886–1908).¹⁵ This period was defined by a climate of upheaval and unparalleled disruption as well as by widespread famine induced by the brutality of concession-company agents and colonial administrators. The situation led to revolt and a fundamental crisis of confidence in early twentieth-century leaders such as Kot áPe. In 1908 the Kuba kingdom became subject to Belgian colonial rule, which lasted until 1960, when it was made part of the independent state of the D.R.C.¹⁶

The Kuba are renowned for their extraordinarily dynamic artistic legacy in a broadly diverse array of media. At one end of the spectrum is the celebrated *ndop* tradition of figurative sculpture depicting paramount Kuba leaders, and, at the other, pure graphic design. Ultimately, both served as customized notations for their associated subjects. Graphic pattern was appreciated at once as a form of creativity and innovation in its own right and on an applied level through its translation to decorative arts. While the relative naturalism of the figurative *ndop* works at first glance appears to have been informed by faithful visual description, its approach essentially parallels that applied to two-dimensional abstract patterns in Kuba culture. In both cases, established visual precedents were responded to and reinvigorated by Kuba artists introducing subtle formal departures.

The pervasive importance of graphic design in Kuba aesthetics is reflected in the rich patterning of not only the costume but also the mat in the foreground and the textile displayed behind the *nyim* in a photograph by the American photographer and filmmaker Eliot Elisofon (fig. 144).¹⁷ In this image, the person of Mbop Mábínc maMbeeky (r. 1939–69) is engulfed in *bwaantschy*, the most ornate and formal of the ensembles reserved for the *nyim*. Every element of this elaborate assemblage of more than one hundred fifty pounds of fur, embroidered and painted textiles, beads, cowrie shells, and metal ornament attests to the wearer's status.

Because in Kuba cosmology ordinary mortals were believed to be reborn, little emphasis was placed on familial ancestor cults, although some effort was made to placate the spirits of senior titleholders at the time of burial.¹⁸ In contrast, rites devoted to the king, who was at once his people's political and spiritual leader,



FIG. 144. Eliot Elisofon (American, 1911–1973). Mbop Mábiinc maMbeeky surrounded by attendants, wearing full state regalia. Nsheng, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 1947. Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. EEPA Negative no. 22923 P5, 8

were far more developed.¹⁹ As the highest-ranking Bushoong chief and ruler of the entire Kuba kingdom, the *nyim* was the only person whose title was recognized by all the constituent chiefdoms.²⁰

Not only did the *nyim* unify the polity's diverse peoples but he also embodied continuity with his precursors. Each monarch was celebrated with a type of praise song, the *nyceem ingesh*, glorifying the *nyim*'s elevation to a force of nature empowered to enhance the quality of life of the populace during his reign and beyond. The lyrics were taught to the royal wives by a female official at the court.²¹ In a photograph taken during Elisofon's 1971 visit to Nsheng, Nyim Kot áMbweeky III (r. 1969–present) is seen surrounded by his wives, who recite the *nyceem ingesh* (fig. 145).

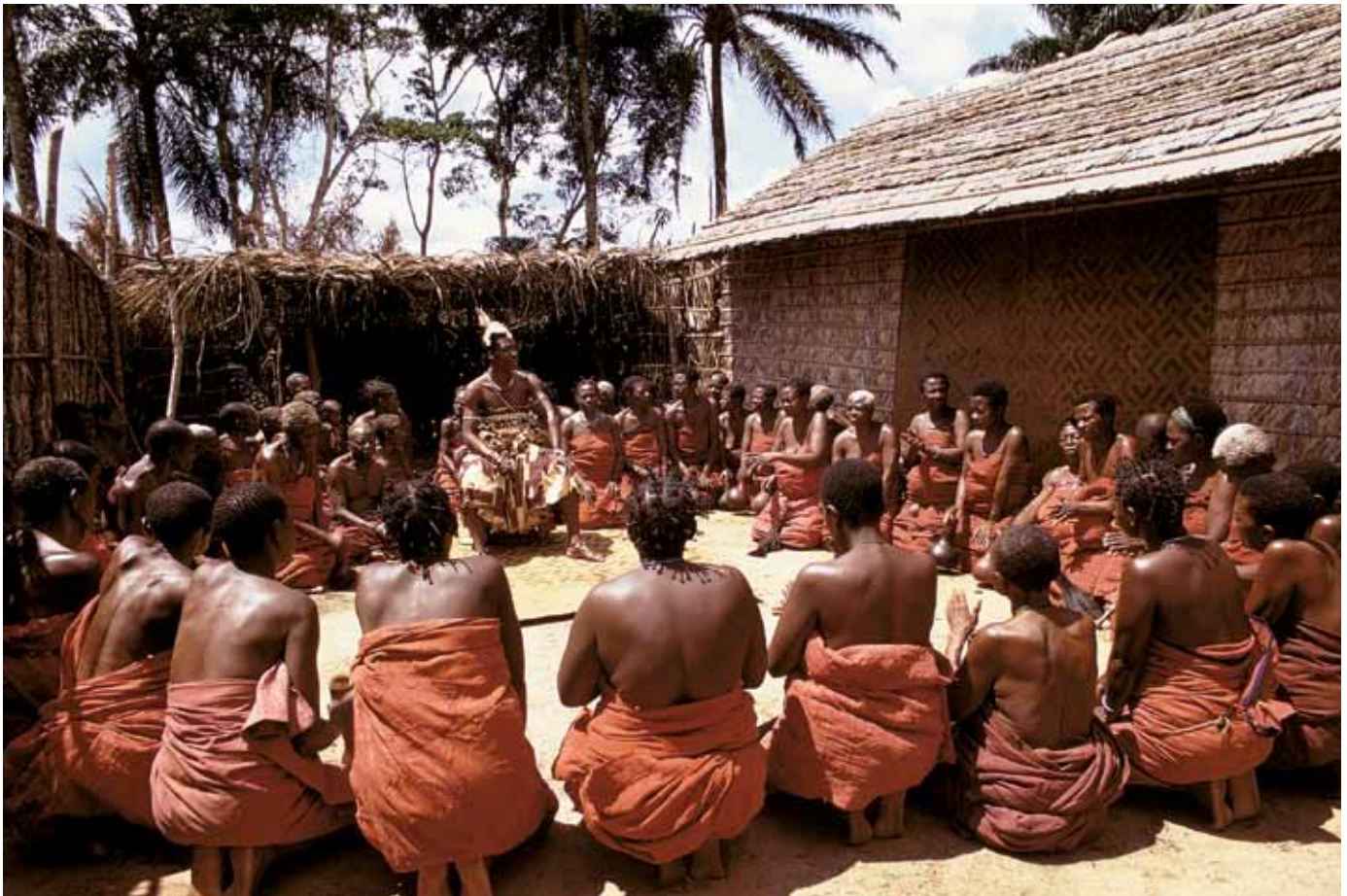


FIG. 145. Eliot Elisofon (American, 1911–1973). Kot áMbweky III surrounded by wives singing *nyceem ingesh*. Nsheng, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 1971. Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. EEPA EECL 2168

In 1928, when *nyim* Kot Mábíínc (r. late 1919–November 1939), accompanied by his court, traveled from Nsheng in order to greet the king and queen of Belgium upon their arrival at the Domiongo train station, he put the wealth and splendor of the Kuba court on full display (fig. 146).²² Each detail of the outfits worn by the courtiers indicates a specific rank, but the king's elaborate *bwaantshy* is an expression of the apogee of grandeur. Kot Mábíínc was also the subject of a widely disseminated portrait taken by the Polish photographer Casimir Zagourski during his travels across central and western Africa from 1929 to 1937 (fig. 147). It was one of four hundred images that Zagourski published in both postcard and portfolio forms.²³

Vansina proposes that the Kuba cult of royal ancestors that set these leaders apart from the rest of society developed gradually over time and in relation to the growth of the kingdom.²⁴ As the king's persona came to be recognized increasingly as sacred and as the focus of a form of ancestral veneration, the *ndop* tradition of dynastic sculptures was introduced. These surviving material extensions of those practices allow interpretation of the rites and other circumstances surrounding their creation.²⁵ By the end of the nineteenth century, the rituals accompanying the burial of a king and the installation of his successor lasted a full year. While in principle any of the king's younger brothers who shared the same mother as the



FIG. 146. Kot Mábiinc at the train station at Domiongo (Kasai), with his ministers and wives. Domiongo, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 1928. From *Le voyage au Congo de leurs majestés le roi et la reine des Belges, 5 juin–31 août 1928*, plate LVII

deceased were in line for succession, as were the sons of both the king and his brothers, the legitimacy of claimants was often disputed and a major struggle occurred within almost every generation.²⁶ Torday relates that, in the king's final days, he would impart to an eldest son his secrets of state and choices of regents and successor. The first in line of succession, or *bweemy*, would immediately be alerted to the passing of the king so that he might take the necessary precautionary measures to protect himself from prospective rivals.²⁷ The official announcement of the death to the kingdom at large would follow several days later. In response to the news that "the great tree is fallen," the people's collective grief would be expressed through crying, followed by several days of profound silence.²⁸

Managing the transfer of office remained the responsibility of the eldest son of the late sovereign. During an extended wake period, he would attend to matters relating to the continuity of the royal line, such as the preparation of an inventory of the possessions of earlier kings and the issuance of official invitations to the funeral. At that event every effort would be made not merely to neutralize the potential that the deceased might become a source of harm but instead to induce him to channel his powers to the benefit of the living. Toward this end, offerings were placed at his feet, his wives intoned a final session of *nyceem ingesh*, and an elder regent recited the complete list of kings, beginning with Woot—in



FIG. 147. Kot Mábiinc. Nsheng, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 1929–37. Silver gelatin print on postcard stock, 5¼ x 3⅜ in. (13.5 x 8.6 cm). Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Kuba myth, the personification of civilization and humanity's original ancestor—and culminating with the deceased.²⁹

Following the funeral, the eldest son would summon the general council and the chief herald in order to apprise them of his father's preferred successor.³⁰ Father Joseph Cornet, former director general of the Institute of the National Museums of Zaire, provides an overview of the series of ceremonies devoted to preparing the way for the installation of the new leader.³¹ The very complexity of Kuba rituals of accession reflects the degree to which they were refined over time. The initiation that the heir to the throne was subjected to definitively separated him from ordinary mortals. During a rite of dressing, the sons of the deceased would present the new king with different items of royal apparel to the accompaniment of drums, horns, and *pluriarc* (a central African bow lute).³² The new king would then be transported to the chief of the notables, *kikaam*, and would reside with him for several weeks in seclusion while he received instruction concerning

his new role.³³ At a subsequent ceremonial trial, referred to as *ibaam*, regents and other nobles would provide him with advice, warnings, critiques, and even insults in order to underscore his humble origins, weaknesses, and faults. A priority was to establish his innocence in causing the demise of his predecessor. To demonstrate this, the newly chosen ruler, accompanied by the late king's sons, would momentarily sit on the tomb of the deceased, and from that time on, he periodically sent offerings and libations to this site.³⁴ At the conclusion of this ordeal, the heir apparent would be awarded the right to wear the *mwaandaan* belt identified with discretion as well as the *lapuum* coiffure.³⁵ The king would then journey by the light of the full moon to the forest, where the keeper of the charms of the kingdom, *myuum*, conserved these sacred items.³⁶ Upon their revelation to him, the king would anoint them with kaolin. His subsequent return and the end of mourning would be marked by dances honoring the last king and his own public accession as the new ruler.

Vansina has proposed that by the eighteenth century the primary vehicle instituted for marking this transition and transformation may have been the candidate's isolation with the *ndop* sculpture of his late predecessor, which was imbued with the royal *mana*, a life essence believed to be transferred to the heir to the throne while he slept in physical proximity to the figure.³⁷ During the first of the enthronement ceremonies, the king would then demonstrate his command of the full extent of the dynasty's membership through a recitation of the official kings list.³⁸ Following his installation later the same day, the new *nyim* would announce his official praise name and indicate his choice of both a signature geometric pattern and an emblem, or *ibol*, both of which would serve as the identifying symbols of his reign. Joseph Cornet notes that each *ibol* is tied to a proverb that expands upon its significance and that, although multiple leaders may select the same visual icon, the accompanying proverb is always unique to each ruler.³⁹

Following the *nyim*'s investiture, he would commission a drum of office, or *pelambish*, to be customized with his chosen geometric pattern.⁴⁰ Covered in rich designs of cowrie shells, metal, and beads, the *pelambish* was used only for court events, when its sound signaled the royal presence.⁴¹ Over time, the ornamentation of such drums with applied copper and beadwork, obtained through long-distance trade, became increasingly elaborate. Examples of these commissioned from the same artist by *nyim* Kot Mábíínc may be seen in another photograph by Elisofon (fig. 148). The drum on the right is called *kweetngom*, while those on the left are replicas of the *kweetngom*, called *mbongom*.

Once installed in his new capital, the *nyim* was also said to commission his likeness in the form of an *ndop* sculpture. Although Kuba ideology credits Shyáám with the introduction of the practice about 1650 and emphasizes that each singular work identified with a particular sovereign was executed during that leader's lifetime, subsequent scholarship contradicts this (see pp. 166, 177–79).⁴² Oral tradition likewise underscored the longevity of the works: they were made of the heaviest and most durable of hardwoods and anointed with palm oil to protect them from insects. When inevitably a figure of great antiquity decayed over time, its replacement with an exact replica was permissible. Insistence on the idea that these carved simulacra served as spiritual doubles of their subjects during life, and as a site for their life forces after death, is reflected in accounts of how they were



FIG. 148. Eliot Elisofon (American, 1911–1973). Retainers of Mbop Mábiinc maMbeeky playing *pelambish*. Nsheng, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 1947. Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. EEPA EECL 2188

handled. The blurring of the boundaries between the *nyim* and his *ndop* figure is apparent in the assumption that anything that happened to his person would be manifested on the sculpture. According to one account, when Shyáám's successor, Mboong áLeeng, was mortally wounded by a sword, a similar cut appeared on his *ndop* sculpture.⁴³ The degree to which subject and likeness were interchangeable was further reinforced by the sculpture's use as a surrogate for the *nyim* in the quarters of the royal wives, where it would be anointed and caressed in his absence. It was said that when one of the royal wives was in labor, the figure would be positioned nearby to ensure a safe delivery. The ultimate conflation of ruler and artifact occurred through the placement of the work at its subject's deathbed so that his outgoing life force, or royal *mana*, might be captured for transfer to a successor.

Not only was the *nyim* credited with fostering fertility in both his people and his land, but his creative gifts also extended to artistic abilities—Mbó Pelyeeng áNíce was a metalsmith, Kot áPe a weaver, and Mbop Mábiínc maMbeeky a sculptor who carved his own *ndop* figure.⁴⁴ In Kuba society dynamic graphic design divorced from form was an aesthetic vernacular valorized in its own right. As Vansina notes: “[A]mong the Kuba . . . design is the very essence of artistic activity; there is no Kuba term for ‘art,’ but there is one for ‘design’ (*bwiin*). . . . Decorative design was the most discussed, the most practiced, the most developed with regard to the formal problems of all Kuba art forms.”⁴⁵ Particular patterns were named either for the individual responsible for their invention or after some salient formal element. The anthropologist Dorothy Washburn distinguishes such official claims on patterns from the creative process itself by underscoring its unrestricted pursuit by all members of Kuba society: “Patterns are created by anyone who sews them.”⁴⁶

While it is established that the legacy of named Kuba patterns is of considerable scope, a comprehensive list of them is untenable, given the lack of historical documentation and the varied interpretations of the patterns within different Kuba groups.⁴⁷ Washburn’s survey of a critical mass of these highly diverse motifs nonetheless reveals their adherence to a coherent design system.⁴⁸ Such was the premium placed on expanding the existing canon of some two hundred patterns that this remained an arena for continual creative exploration. A study of Kuba design by the mathematician Donald Crowe has demonstrated the extent to which a lexicon of formal possibilities developed. He notes that if mathematical symmetries are used to describe the structure of Kuba patterns, all seven of the mathematically possible one-dimensional pattern classes and twelve of the seventeen mathematically possible two-dimensional pattern classes have been exploited in Kuba decorative arts to date.⁴⁹

VARIATIONS ON A THEME: THE LIVES OF KINGS

The Kuba capital of Nsheng was a vibrant center of architecture, decorative arts, textiles, and sculpture from the seventeenth century onward. Its achievements were unparalleled in sub-Saharan Africa for the immense variety and complexity of the abstract decorative patterns employed in those media. Washburn has proposed that a Bushoong aesthetic, marked by a nuanced but deliberate and controlled emphasis on regularity of pattern, may be distinguished from that of other Kuba groups.⁵⁰ It is also noteworthy that at some point in time certain designs came to be classified as appropriate for specific purposes. Some were reserved for enhancing women’s bodies, ornamenting a particular style of female ceremonial garment, or carving a drinking cup in the form of a buffalo horn. Others might be much more broadly applied, to everything from wall decorations to wood artifacts, textiles, and jewelry.⁵¹ Ultimately Washburn’s examination of designs applied to Kuba textiles has revealed that, despite a theoretical embrace of infinite formal variation, there exists in practice a clear preference for a relatively restricted series of pattern structures. Creativity is thus channeled into developing nuanced variations on those designs.⁵²

A parallel sensibility informs the Kuba approach to representational forms of expression. While one might assume royal portraits capture the unique image of each individual who takes on the title of paramount leader, in practice Kuba

sculptors have adapted a preferred figurative convention. The celebrated *ndop* sculptural genre formally commemorates individual rulers in a manner that is striking for its cohesive visual program. Although the *ndop* figures are so homogeneous that they are essentially expunged of any idiosyncratic physiognomic features, the embedded *ibol* signifier, and an accompanying explanatory proverb, invests the image with a particular identity. While scholars who have closely examined the extant corpus differ somewhat in their identification of the subjects of some of the works as well as the sequence of their execution, they agree that seven figures in particular constitute creations of primary historical significance. Of these, five are featured here, providing only the second opportunity for them to be seen together since they left Nsheng. The lives of the *nyim* with whom they have been identified are not only extolled in oral histories but are also believed to be among the pantheon of subjects celebrated in the earliest of the *ndop* figures.

The first was the mortal of humble origins who became a larger-than-life Kuba cultural hero, Shyáám áMbúl áNgoong (see fig. 141). So extraordinary a figure and innovative a leader was this founder of the dynasty that his achievements were attributed to magical powers. Vansina notes that in light of Shyáám's transformative impact on the Kuba kingdom, most inventions in the domain of arts and crafts have been credited to him.⁵³ He presided over a period of great prosperity but did not shy away from waging war.⁵⁴ As Torday reflected on his stature, "To the Bushoong he is King Alfred and Harun Al Rashid and Charlemagne all in one person. Anything good the common people attribute to him."⁵⁵

Reputed to be the son of a Bushoong slave woman, Shyáám traveled west as a youth, seeking wisdom while learning about the world.⁵⁶ His peregrinations carried him to the Leele, Ding, Pende, and Mbuun regions of present-day D.R.C. While in these foreign lands, he acquired knowledge on topics ranging from city planning to the preparation and use of powerful charms. The list of things he is said to have brought back with him from that odyssey is prodigious: the technique of making palm wine, initiation rites for boys, the *makicky* dance, carving techniques, the so-called Bushoong hat, a stick used as a mnemonic device to remember the account of fines, the oil palm (which bears his name), the *mwaandaan* belt of office, the *ncaam mashok* royal charm, the *ikul* ceremonial knife, as well as maize, tobacco, cassava, millet, sorghum, and palm nuts. According to Torday, Shyáám was also responsible for introducing the Kuba people to raffia cloth from the Pende, embroidery patterns from the Kel, the friction drum, and the *lyeel* board game.⁵⁷ The latter is presented to a new sovereign during his installation rites so that he may play against himself and, by winning the match, symbolically establish the fact that the *nyim* always has the final word.⁵⁸

Mbó Mbóósh (r. ca. 1650) distinguished himself as a great warrior. His physical presence made an enduring impression—he is remembered as being very dark in complexion and heavysset—and he was admired among his peers for his beauty. Vansina suggests that his corpulence is represented in the Brooklyn Museum *ndop* figure (fig. 149). By the end of his long tenure of some forty years, the kingdom had essentially reached its zenith.⁵⁹ He is credited with conclusively defeating the Pyaang, overcoming a Luba group in the southeast, and firmly establishing authority over the Shoowa. He also established new legislation concerning the king's family: as candidates for succession, the *nyim*'s brothers and nephews were

PARTIAL LIST OF KUBA RULERS

Woot (mythical founder of the Kuba kingdom)

Shyáám áMbúl áNgoong (r. ca. 1630, see fig. 141)

Mboong áLeeng (r. ca. 1640)

Mbó Mbóósh (r. ca. 1650, see fig. 149)

Kot áMbweeky [I] ikoongl (r. ca. 1695)

Mishé miShyááng máMbúl (r. ca. 1710, see fig. 149)

Kot áNcé (r. ca. 1740, see figs. 149, 150)

MishááPelyeeng áNcé (r. ca. 1760)

Mbó Pelyeeng áNcé (r. ca. 1765, see fig. 151)

Kot áMbúl (r. ca. 1785, see fig. 150)

Mikó miMbúl (r. ca. 1800, see fig. 158)

Mbop Mábíínc máMbúl (r. ca. 1835–late 1885/86, see fig. 158)

Mikó Mábíínc máMbúl (r. ca. late 1885/86–before 1892)

Kot áMbweeky II (r. ca. before 1892–96)

Misháápe II (r. 1896–1900)

Mbop Kyeen (r. ca. three months, 1900, see fig. 157)

Mikó mi Kyeen (r. 1901–2)

Kot áPe (r. 1902–16)

Mbop áMbweeky (r. 1916–late 1919)

Kot Mábíínc (r. late 1919–November 1939)

Mbop Mábíínc maMbeeky (r. 1939–69)

Kot áMbweeky III (r. 1969–present)

Dates taken from Jan Vansina, "Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba–II. Results," *The Journal of African History* 1, no. 2 (1960), and, where possible, Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, 1978.



DETAIL OF FIG. 141, game-board *ibol*



DETAIL OF FIG. 149, drum *ibol*



DETAIL OF FIG. 150, drum *ibol*



DETAIL OF FIG. 151, anvil *ibol*



DETAIL OF FIG. 158, slave *ibol*

confined at the capital and kept under constant control to prevent them from acting as disruptive elements; in contrast, his own children were granted greater privileges.⁶⁰ Ultimately, Mbó Mbóósh's longevity became a liability. By his final years, his people had tired of him and considered him unfit to rule. He met with a tragic end when those who were waiting to succeed him convinced his favorite wife to slip a noose around his neck and strangle him.

Mishé míShyááng máMbúl (r. ca. 1710; also associated with fig. 149) is remembered only through his *nyceem ingesh* song. Composed in the eighteenth century in his honor, it emphasizes the impressive numbers of his subjects: "The king of the people who are numerous, / The king of the people who are a thousand, / The king of the flies and the bees."⁶¹ He appears to have attained his title through an idiosyncratic succession: he had an older brother who may have died before ascending to office.⁶²

Kot áNcé (r. ca. 1740; also associated with figs. 149 and 150), considered the greatest leader of his period, was responsible for restoring the supremacy of the Bushoong in the interior.⁶³ He led an expedition against the Ngongo and waged a war against a Luluwa group, the Kabamba, which had attempted an invasion of the Pyaang region in the southwest.

Mbó Pelyeeng áNcé (r. ca. 1765; associated with fig. 151) is credited with initiating a major unifying reform. In order to dilute the influence of the ethnic identities of the kingdom's constituent groups, which threatened its solidarity, he abolished or "killed" the "national" spirits they recognized.⁶⁴ It is likely that this was instituted through the enactment of a rite in which the spirits were replaced by a new ancestor cult dedicated to the veneration of the king. The sculptural *ndop* tradition tied to this practice was thus probably introduced during this period, rather than at the time of Shyáám's reign as Kuba oral tradition suggests (see pp. 154–55, 158, 161).⁶⁵ Perhaps as a result of Mbó Pelyeeng áNcé's identification with the purging of long-standing religious practices, he is remembered as a puritanical figure who refused to dance and who prohibited his fellow Bushoong from doing so as well.⁶⁶ He is also, however, recognized as a consummate achiever who distinguished himself as both an outstanding farmer and an excellent metalsmith. The *ibol* that he adopted as his personal emblem was that of the anvil. Iron smelting and smithing were associated with specialized knowledge in Kuba society, and a proverb reflects the smith's value as a fount of wisdom: "Listen to the smith; don't listen to the one who works the bellows. The word of the smith is the one that is the true word."⁶⁷

OPPOSITE: FIG. 149. *Ndop* figure: Mbó Mbóósh, Mishé míShyááng máMbúl, or Kot áNcé. Kuba peoples; western Kasai region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. ca. 1760–80. Wood (*Crossotrix febrifuga*), camwood powder, 19½ x 7¾ x 8¾ in. (49.5 x 19.4 x 21.9 cm). Brooklyn Museum, New York, Purchased with Funds given by Mr. and Mrs. Alastair B. Martin, Mrs. Donald M. Oenslager, Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Blum, and the Mrs. Florence A. Blum Fund 61.33

FOLLOWING PAGES:

FIG. 150. *Ndop* figure: Kot áNcé or Kot áMbúl. Kuba peoples; western Kasai region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. ca. 1785. Wood (*Crossotrix febrifuga*), H. 20⅞ in. (51.1 cm). The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium, Gift of the Compagnie du Kasai, 1913 EO.o.o.15256

FIG. 151. *Ndop* figure: Mbó Pelyeeng áNcé. Kuba peoples; western Kasai region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. ca. 1765. Wood, H. 21¾ in. (55 cm). The British Museum, London Af 1909, 0513.1









FIG. 152. Mbop Mábiñc maMbeeky with a group of his people. Nsheng, Democratic Republic of the Congo. ca. 1940s. From Joseph Cornet, *Art royal kuba*, 1982, p. 31, fig. 3

Kot áMbúl (r. ca. 1785; also associated with fig. 150) was confronted with the challenges of revolts by the Ngeende and Pyeeng chiefdoms during his reign.⁶⁸ He also battled the Coofa and succeeded in obliging them to pay tribute in exchange for their encroachment upon Kuba lands. The legacy of his successor, Mikó miMbúl (r. ca. 1800; see fig. 158), was his marriage to a slave girl, which led to official recognition of such unions, a reform especially beneficial to the royal couple's offspring.⁶⁹ Mikó miMbúl's *ibol* is that of a half figure identified with this wife, and the lyrics of his spirit song emphasize the importance he placed upon agricultural production.

The material of choice selected by Kuba carvers for the creation of prestige items including these refined sculptural figures appears to have been *Crossopterix febrifuga*, also called *iloonc* wood, which has been verified through testing of five *ndop* works, including figs. 149 and 150, by a Belgian wood specialist.⁷⁰ These volumetric representations, distinctive for the rounded contours that define the head, shoulders, stomach, and buttocks, are framed at the summit and base by the rectilinear forms of a visorlike headdress and raised base. Each head is given greater

proportional emphasis in contrast to the diminutive lower body with crossed legs. The arms extend vertically at either side of the torso, with the proper left hand grasping the handle of a ceremonial knife and the proper right hand resting on the right knee. The knife depicted has variously been identified as an *ikul* (peace knife) or *ilwoon* (war sword).⁷¹ Each subject's regal bearing and still composure impart balanced bilateral symmetry. The serene and intense inner concentration of the facial expressions suggests a degree of detachment from ordinary concerns in order to focus on matters of the utmost importance.

The five *ndop* sculptures illustrated here feature the same elements of royal regalia.⁷² The distinctive headdress depicted on each, called a *shody*, is one of the two most important worn by a king. The part that covers the crown of the head is designed to hold vertically inserted feathers.⁷³ Its projecting fabric panel, which may extend 15¾ inches (40 cm) and to which cowrie shells are applied in abstract patterns, serves as a visor.⁷⁴ Associated with a hoe, this distinctive horizontal element underscores the importance of agricultural production. The shaded face is additionally framed by a stepped hairline, or *bosh*. A knob at the nape of the neck refers to a cluster of cowries, called *lapash lakwoon*, to which elite coiffures were attached. It is flanked by shoulder ornaments called *pang angup*, made of decorated cloth stretched over a cane frame. Bands composed of cowries stitched to fabric, *mabiim*, and metal, *shop*, encircle the upper arms, with brass versions, *ntshyaang*, on the forearms. At the level of the abdomen is a wide belt, or *yeemy*, worn by both male and female elders. Composed of a raffia backing to which cowries are applied, this very elaborate belt is noted for the exacting precision of its workmanship.⁷⁵ Directly below it sits a belt in the form of a broad rope, terminating in two knots. Called a *mwaandaan*, this belt is restricted to members of the crown council and judicial court, testifying to the great privilege accorded to keepers of state secrets.⁷⁶ Affixed to the back of the belt, a padded raffia panel, or *ngwoon*, covered with leopard hide extends over the buttocks.⁷⁷ Many items of ceremonial regalia depicted in *ndop* figures—including the *pang angup* on the shoulders; the *yeemy*, crossed over the abdomen; the brass *ntshyaang* on the forearms; and the *mabiim* encircling the upper arms—may be seen in an ensemble worn in the 1940s by Mbop Mábínc maMbeeky (fig. 152).

The outer surfaces of the bases upon which the five figures are seated are exactly inscribed with graphic motifs that extend around the perimeters. This base structure refers to either a padded rectangular throne, called a *bulell*, or a royal platform.⁷⁸ Centrally positioned at the front of each base and aligned with its upper limit is a representation of the ruler's *ibol*, carved in prominent relief. Designed to distinguish the otherwise deliberately parallel depictions from one another, the form of the *ibol* also provides the conceptual tension within the *ndop* compositions. On the one hand, the degree to which the artists emphasized formal standardization underscores the fact that all successive members of the Kuba dynasty of kings sought to emulate the example of Shyáám, in whose image they were depicted, and to reinforce the continuity of the tradition and the idea that the king was considered the living representative of his predecessors.⁷⁹ On the other hand, incremental customization introduced by the *ibol* instills in each work a degree of singularity that ties it to a particular reign. In the photograph fig. 153, a Kuba sculptor carves a replica of an *ndop* figure. Although it is not clear exactly which

ruler the work reproduces, the shape and position of the drum on its front suggest that it may represent Kot áNée (see fig. 150). In a second photograph (fig. 154), the tools used by the carver, including an adze, knife, and burnisher, are clearly arrayed.

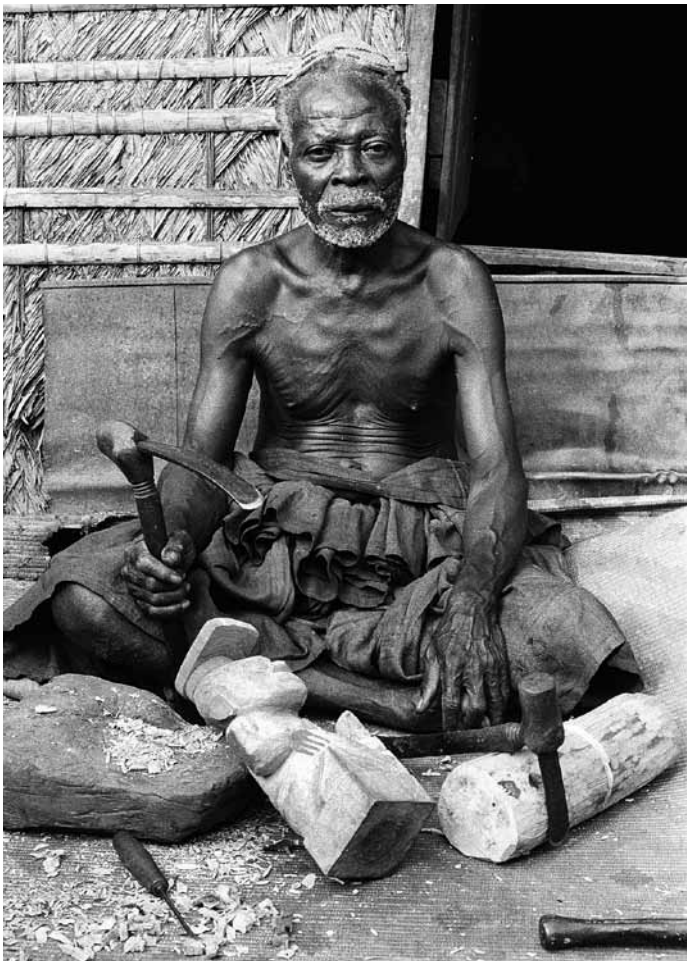
THE *NDOP* TRADITION BEYOND NSHENG

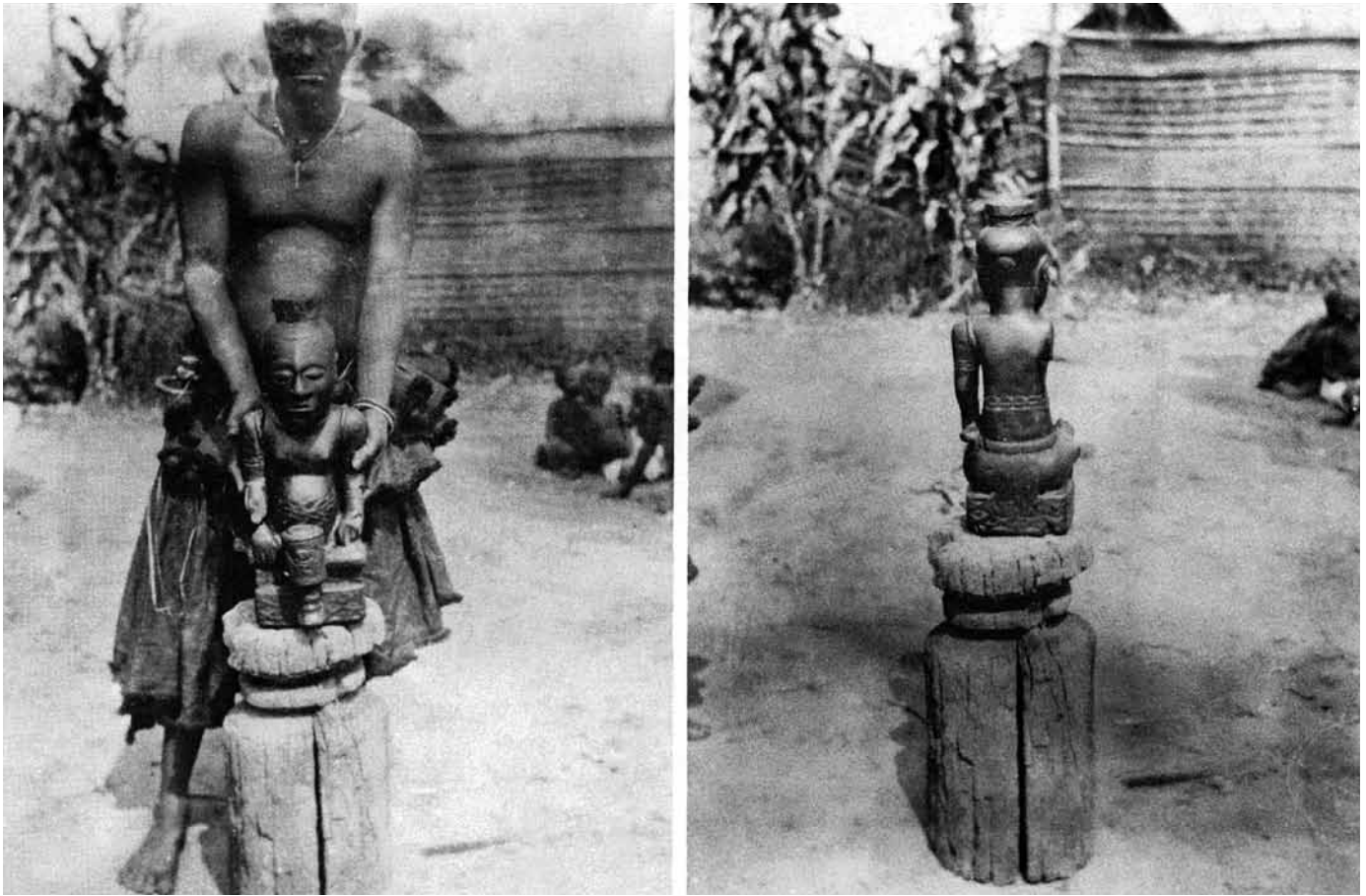
In 1892, William H. Sheppard, an African-American missionary, became the first Westerner to visit the Kuba capital and to make reference to this sculptural tradition. In his written account of that experience, he reported: “On an elevation [in the *nyim*’s council chamber] were statues of four former kings. . . . They were highly prized and regarded as sacred. One of them represented King Xamba Bulngungu [Shyáám]. On his lap was something like a checkerboard. . . . Another had a blacksmith’s anvil before him, for he loved the art of blacksmithing.”⁸⁰

Fifteen years later, during his stay at the Kuba court, Torday compiled a collection of artifacts, including three of the *ndop* figures reproduced here (see figs. 141, 150, 151).⁸¹ Torday’s engagement and respect for the traditions he documented were unusually enlightened for his day. His account of his extended stay,

FIG. 153. Eliot Elisofon (American, 1911–1973). Kuba sculptor carving a replica of an *ndop*. Nsheng, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 1970–71. Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. EEPA EENG 03246

FIG. 154. Eliot Elisofon (American, 1911–1973). Kuba sculptor carving a replica of an *ndop*. Nsheng, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 1972. Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. EEPA EECL 7148





FIGS. 155 and 156. Kuba courtier (*left*) with the *ndop* of MishááPelyeeng áNée (front and back). Nsheng, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 1908 or 1909. From John Mack, "Documenting the Cultures of Southern Zaire: The Photographs of the Torday Expeditions 1900–1909," *African Arts* 24, no. 4, special issue, *Historical Photographs of Africa* (Oct. 1991), p. 61, fig. 12

his ability to communicate in local languages, and the substantive relationships he developed with individuals such as the sovereign Kot áPe inform his especially rich portrait of the Kuba kingdom and its leadership, even though some of the details have since been disproved.⁸²

Torday collected nearly three thousand artifacts for the British Museum alone. Key among these were three *ndop* figures, which he documented as Shamba Bolongongo (Shyáám áMbúl áNgoong, fig. 141), Misha Pelenge Che (Misháá-Pelyeeng áNée; see figs. 155 and 156),⁸³ and Bope Pelenge (Mbó Pelyeeng áNée, fig. 151).⁸⁴ He recognized that these works were conceived by Kuba society as embodying the legitimacy of royal power.⁸⁵ Torday's report, together with that of his associate, M. W. Hilton-Simpson, suggests that the determining factor in the successful purchase of the figures was Torday's characterization of the British Museum as the ultimate safe haven for them:

The "Nyimi" was quite willing to give me the statue of Shamba; he wanted it to go to a safe place and be seen by people of all nations; but how could he part with this treasure belonging to the nation? Of course, if the Great Council consented, that would be another matter. . . . [T]he king knew that in the Mushenge it might perish any day by fire, or by some unfortunate foreign invasion. We talked about it a long time, and finally we came,



FIG. 157. *Ndop* figure: Mikó Mábiínc máMbúl or Mbop Kyeen. Kuba peoples; western Kasai region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Before 1904. Wood, H. 21 3/4 in. (55 cm). Formerly Institute of the National Museums of Zaire, Kinshasa; present location unknown. From Joseph Cornet, *Art Royal Kuba*, 1982, p. 107

OPPOSITE: FIG. 158. *Ndop* figure: Mikó miMbúl or Mbop Mábiínc máMbúl. Kuba peoples; western Kasai region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. ca. 1905. Wood, metal, H. 21 3/4 in. (55 cm). The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium, Gift of the Friends of The Museum, 1924 EO o.o.27655

at his suggestion, to the following resolution: I would go to the Kimi Kambu [prime minister] and explain to him the advantages of removing the statue to a safe place, i.e. the British Museum.⁸⁶

As he prepared to leave Nsheng, Torday was presented with a parting gift: “The day before our start the Nyimi sent me another of the ancestral statues [fig. 150] as a token of his friendship.”⁸⁷

The collection of *ndop* sculptures in the West was augmented in 1909 when, soon after Torday’s departure, Kot áPe received a visit from the Belgian colonial minister, Jules Renkin, who was undertaking a fact-finding mission in Congo. Kot áPe appears to have marked that occasion by transferring to his guest one of the early figures not seen by Torday (fig. 149), a work now in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum.⁸⁸ Finally, two additional and stylistically distinct *ndop* figures entered the collection of the Royal Museum for Central Africa at Tervuren (figs. 157, 158). While the bodily proportions of these figures are more lifelike and

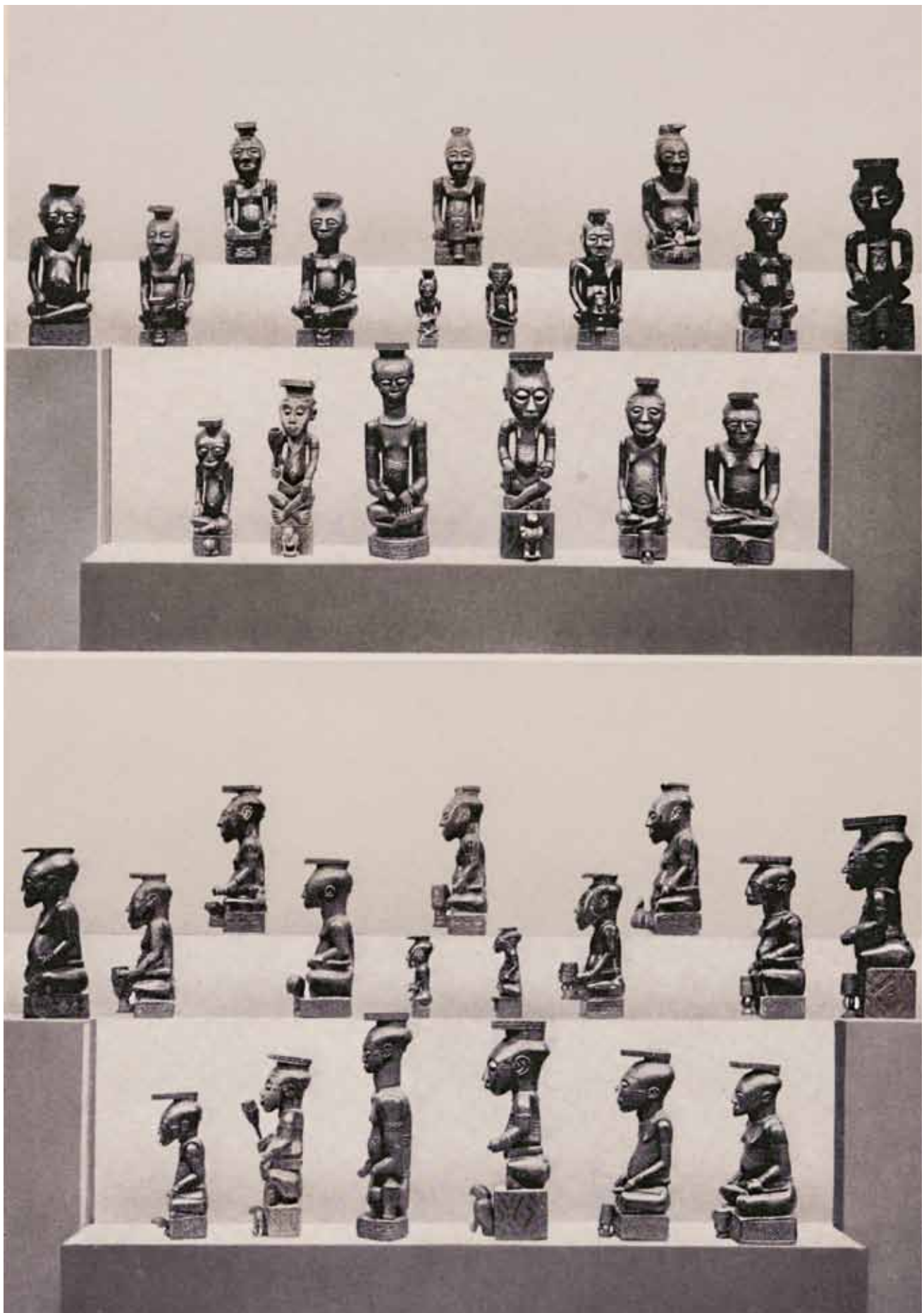


feature far greater detail in the carving of certain elements, such as the hands, they are otherwise relatively stiff in comparison to the five figures previously mentioned.⁸⁹

Kuba commentary on the *ndop* tradition, as relayed by Torday, has been subjected to analysis by art historians. The first to examine this corpus was Frans Maria Olbrechts (1899–1958), a director of the Tervuren museum, who sought to situate the *ndop* works within the full context of Kuba artistic expression. In doing so, he identified eighteen examples of these works and noted that this small grouping is especially striking as the exceptional instance of figurative art in Kuba culture. He thus advanced a theory that the combined prestige of court patronage and veneration of royal ancestors led to a monopoly on representational creation, which he labeled “court style.” He notes that in the absence of figuration in non-courtly expression, other craft traditions, which he referred to as “folk style,” were especially well developed and rich.⁹⁰ In both the landmark exhibition of central African art titled *Kongo Kunst* (Congolese Art), held in 1937–38 in Antwerp, and his 1946 study, *Plastiek van Kongo* (Congolese Sculpture), Olbrechts presented a catalogue raisonné of the *ndop* figures he had identified, including those of “modern workmanship,” in a chronological sequence that correlated their subjects with the Kuba king list.⁹¹ To survey formal differences as comprehensively as possible, he brought together for the exhibition eleven originals as well as seven plaster casts of other examples in Western collections (figs. 159, 160).⁹² Olbrechts was able to discern a close formal consistency among five of the earliest-collected works, which he characterized as “archaic,” and to distinguish them from works in what he called a “‘modern’ revival” style.⁹³ He emphasized the degree of continuity between both styles and also questioned Torday’s claim that the works were contemporaneous with their subjects.⁹⁴

Nearly three decades later, the art historian Jean Rosenwald’s analysis of this sculptural genre focused on the seven works that can be dated positively prior to 1913.⁹⁵ In doing so, she observed that three of them portray a succession of kings who reigned during the period of tradition (ca. 1680–1835), when the power of the *nyim* was at its height: MishááPelyeeng áNée (see figs. 155, 156, 159, and 160, top row, middle), Mbó Pelyeeng áNée (fig. 151), and Kot áMbúl (fig. 150). On stylistic grounds she attributes these three works, as well as those identified with Mbó Mbóósh (fig. 149) and “Shamba” (Shyáám, fig. 141), to a single artist, whom she refers to as the Shamba Master.⁹⁶ Rosenwald suggests that all five figures were commissioned by a single patron and executed over a five-year period. She argues that the tradition was introduced during the reign of Kot áMbúl and that the impetus for it was the advent of the ideological shift in which devotion to national spirits was displaced by rites of divine kingship. She assigns the figures identified with Mikó miMbúl (fig. 158) and Mbop Kyeen (fig. 157), both closely related stylistically, to another workshop. Rosenwald notes that Torday recorded seeing the

FIGS. 159 and 160. Installation views of ten *ndop* and seven plaster casts during the exhibition *Kongo Kunst*, City Festival Hall, Antwerp, Belgium, December 24, 1937–January 16, 1938. Represented are (top row, left to right): Shyáám áMbúl áNgoong (fig. 141), MishááPelyeeng áNée, and Mbó Pelyeeng áNée (fig. 151); (middle row): Kot áNée or Kot áMbúl (fig. 150), Mikó miMbúl (fig. 158), the regent Tulantshedy Matak, a second Shyáám áMbúl áNgoong, Mishé miShyááng máMbúl (fig. 149), Kot áMbúl, and Kot Mábiinc; (bottom row): two unknown kings with parrot-symbol *ibols*, Mbop Mábiinc máMbúl, Kot áMbweeky II, and two unknown kings. From Frans Maria Olbrechts, *Plastiek van Kongo* (1946), plate XIII, nos. 63 and 64



ndop sculpture of Mikó miMbúl and proposes that the figures of both leaders were commissioned during the first decade of the twentieth century in response to a period of upheaval and challenges to Kuba leadership.

Jan Vansina introduced further refinements to Rosenwald's chronology.⁹⁷ He contends that, because the figure previously identified as Mbó Mbóósh is closely associated with those of MishááPelyeeng áNíce, Mbó Pelyeeng áNíce, and Kot áMbúl, its subject could instead relate to their direct precursor, Kot áNíce. He additionally suggests that the formal parallels between the works identified with Mikó miMbúl and Mbop Kyeen are such that the latter could more convincingly be related to Mikó miMbúl's successor, Mbop Mábíínc máMbúl. The revised chronology that factors in Vansina's adjustments indicates that a nineteenth-century master was responsible for creating an iconic depiction of Shyáám as well as one figure per king from the mid-eighteenth century to 1886. After 1904, a series of different artists began to create representations inspired by that earlier corpus.

Joseph Cornet's investigations at the Kuba court and comprehensive formal analysis of the sculptural record have led him to an alternative interpretation.⁹⁸ During the 1970s, he undertook several research visits to Nsheng, where his sources emphasized that the *ndop* figures were carved posthumously as commemorative monuments and were commissioned individually by each successor of a deceased ruler. His review of the corpus identifies the following seventeen formal details as points of comparison: upper surface of the visor; upper edge of the visor; band of the supporting hat; outline of the hair at the temples; knob at the nape; shape of the ear; temple scarifications; shape of the brows; shape of the eyes; upper arm-band; principal belt; outline of back cloth; designs on the base; number of shoulder rings; number of forearm rings; proportion of head to body; height of figure.⁹⁹

Cornet presents a different chronological sequence, based on his premise that the least elaborate figures were likely the earliest, and names fig. 149 as the first to have been executed. Beyond the relatively extensive surface wear, Cornet cites supporting evidence in the height of the figure, which is slightly shorter than that of the others; the simplicity of the eyebrows, mouth, nose, and nape decoration; and the pared-down ornamentation, consisting of only one shoulder ring and narrow *yeemy* belt adorned with a single row of cowries.¹⁰⁰ He also identifies this figure, originally associated with the seventeenth-century *nyim* Mbó Mbóósh, as Mishé miShyááng máMbúl, who ruled at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Cornet additionally proposes that the figure in Tervuren's collection (fig. 150) that Torday connected with the late eighteenth-century ruler Kot áMbúl is instead Kot áNíce, who was in power during the first half of that century. According to this alternative sequence, it was Mbó Pelyeeng áNíce who initiated the *ndop* tradition by commissioning images of two of his recent predecessors as identified above in order to enhance his own prestige. His successor, Kot áMbúl, commissioned three additional works, commemorating MishááPelyeeng áNíce, Mbó Pelyeeng áNíce, as well as the founder of the dynasty, Shyáám. Given that the Shyáám figure is the most stylistically refined and iconographically complex of the series, Cornet suggests that it may in fact represent the culmination of this series of sculptures, rather than an archetype replicated by later generations.¹⁰¹

The fact that the subjects and dates of some Kuba *ndop* sculptures are disputed attests to the priority their authors placed on conformity. It was of paramount



FIG. 161. Eliot Elisofon (American, 1911–1973). Two students in class at Nsheng Art School. Nsheng, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 1972. Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. EEPA EENG 04608

importance that the formulaic design template be perpetuated in order to present the illusion of a seamless continuum of enlightened governance. The dynasty was defined by this visual lexicon of Kuba potentates that imposed upon it an ideological coherence and unity. Yet just as the particularities of individual reigns commemorated through Kuba oral history selectively highlighted successive adjustments to the state as defined by Shyáám's leadership, their visual counterpoints were likewise carefully composed as variations on an original prototype. While the *ibol* at the front of the base constitutes a form of label, even that feature can be fully appreciated on an individualized level only with the knowledge of verbal commentary provided by the original patron concerning its relation to the subject.

The appeal of and interest in this major central African sculptural genre was such that, during the 1940s and 1950s, artists at the Kuba capital reproduced figures for patrons outside the court—namely European collectors.¹⁰² The art historians David Binkley and Patricia Darrish have noted that in the early 1950s members of the royal carving atelier were recruited to teach at a new art school in Nsheng, founded by the Catholic Mission to respond to that demand and to foster an engagement of Kuba youth with their heritage.¹⁰³ The ongoing importance of this iconic form of expression and its subject matter is evident several decades later in a photograph of two students carving replicas of *ndop* (fig. 161). Chalk drawings behind them reproduce three famous figures now in European museums (*from left to right*): Mikó miMbúl (fig. 158), Mbop Mábíinc máMbúl (Danish National



FIG. 162. Eliot Elisofon (American, 1911–1973). Kot áMbweeky III in state dress. Nsheng, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 1971. Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. EEPA EECL 2139

Museum, Copenhagen), and Kot áNée (fig. 150).¹⁰⁴ In a photograph of *nyim* Kot áMbweeky III (fig. 162), the current Kuba ruler wears not only the elaborate *bwaant-shy* costume but also an imposing royal headdress known as *ntshuum aniyim* and a necklace, or *lashyaash*, made of leopard teeth. He holds a sword, or *mbombaam*, and lance, *mbwoom ambady*, and is flanked by *pelambish* and a basket called *kveemishaam'l*, all attributes of royalty that attest to the aesthetic preeminence and imposing visual grandeur commanded by the heirs to Shamba's legacy in Kuba society.

Although examination of the *ndop* corpus has yielded some interesting hypotheses about the sequence of their execution and their original one-to-one relationship with particular subjects, we will never know definitively which if any of these interpretations is the most accurate. What we can establish with certainty is that at some point in time a visual notation for an ideal of Kuba leadership was codified. That sign was subsequently repeated with nuanced formal adjustments so that each new instance of its depiction became an original variation on an established theme. This approach to figurative imagery of individual leaders is in essence the same as that applied to abstract design in other Kuba arts. In the end, a particular visual paradigm was identified by name as were many closely related reinterpretations of that figural motif. Given the subtlety of these formal adjustments, the distinction between Shyáám and his successors was discernible only to the royal spouses, who handled such works as vehicles for a particular life force, or to the court historians responsible for the commentary that expanded upon them as signifiers. There can be no doubt that the authors of these works intended to confound all other viewers. While the genre is by definition one designed to manifest a individual leader, at the same time a pronounced formal blurring of boundaries among all the depictions underscores their dynastic unity through the generations.



Of Hunter Princes and Cherished Maidens: The Chokwe and Luluwa

Meanwhile, Ilunga, son of Mutombo, potentate of the Luba, as soon as the latter had died and his funeral rites had been completed, being a great hunter (chibinda [sic]), assembled all his friends and got ready to explore the forests to the south. . . . Ilunga came where Lueji was, and she invited him to sit by her side. . . . Lueji, surrounded by her female attendants . . . heard the story of Ilunga. How he intended to leave his land for ever, and here he showed them the chimbuia axe, symbol of his status, which was passed round and much admired.

— LUNDA EPIC

THIS STORY—OF THE FIRST ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE TWO INDIVIDUALS identified with the founding of the Lunda dynasty—was among the highlights of an epic that chronicled the diffusion of a system of governance and a cultural ideal of leadership among the peoples of present-day Angola and Zambia. One of innumerable variations, this iteration was recorded in 1887 by the Portuguese scientist and diplomat Henrique Dias de Carvalho at the court of the Lunda supreme leader Mwata Yamvo, shortly after the capital of Mussumba had been overrun by Chokwe usurpers. Ironically, its male protagonist is the inspiration for the superhero archetype in whose image the Chokwe invaders had modeled themselves. Despite the fact that the Chokwe rulers were very much self-made men, they sponsored imagery that positioned them as heirs to an earlier established regional ideology of enlightened leadership. The impressive artistic creations that resulted were likely the stimulus for the development of a series of parallel traditions among their far-flung contacts with culturally distinct centers in the interior, notably that of the Luluwa of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

TRANSLATING LUNDA MYTH INTO CHOKWE SCULPTURE

The ascendancy of the Chokwe as a regional power during the precolonial era was articulated by artists who created wood sculptures of their leaders in the form of heroic, physically commanding figures devoid of any discernible personal attributes, a visual typology applied consistently in other idioms. In contemporaneous oral histories, references to overarching titles and emblems of authority were privileged over accounts of individual feats or accomplishments.¹ Given that such precolonial narratives use a single proper name to denote a succession of holders of a particular title or role over multiple generations, early Western histories erroneously assumed that they reflected the names of individuals. Accordingly, the occupant of a particular title was identified with all those who had served in that capacity both before and after him.² As the transitory holder of an enduring position, he was in turn

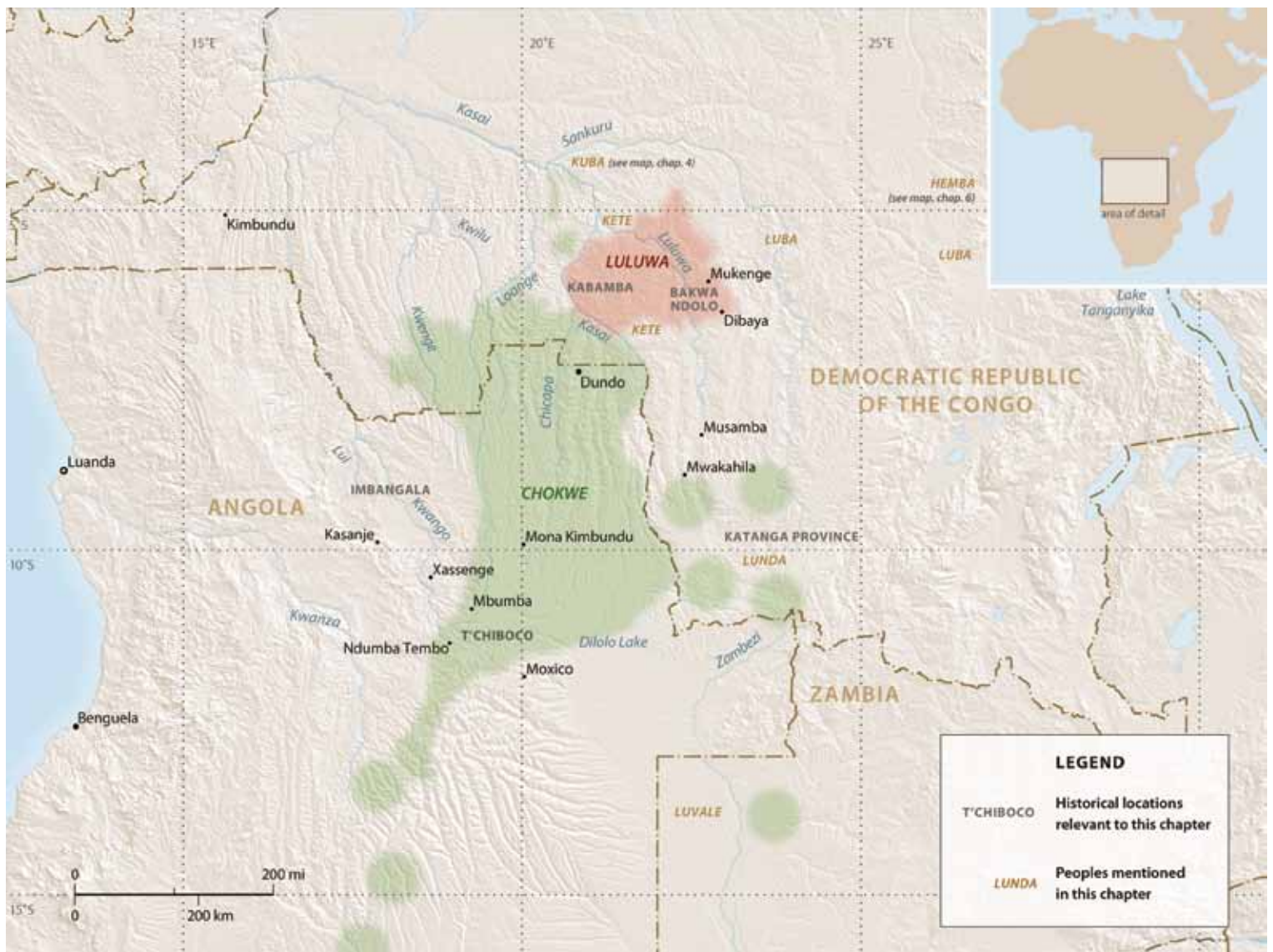


FIG. 163. The Chokwe and Luluwa regions

integrated into an all-encompassing network of relationships with other comparably defined titleholders. Certain roles were ascribed spiritual potency, which was harnessed through a physical object that mediated between the worlds of the living and the supernatural.³ For Chokwe chiefs, the spiritually charged emblem of their position was a genre of elaborate sculptural representations.

The cultural landscape that informed the imagery of Chokwe chieftaincy was shaped by regional events extending back to the beginning of the sixteenth century. Oral traditions relating to the Luba people recount the migration of a northern group whose leader was named Kongolo, or Nkongolo, to the area between Lake Tanganyika and the upper Kasai River.⁴ Kongolo was the first chief of what became known as the Luba kingdom. (As noted earlier, such named references typically collapse together the group of individuals who have held a particular title rather than apply to a single person.) Shortly thereafter, a hunter from the east, Ilunga Mbili (also known as Mbidi Kiluwe), arrived in the region and married Kongolo's half sisters.⁵ The foreigner attempted to impart chiefly customs to Kongolo but was thwarted, and he eventually departed, leaving behind his son Kalala Ilunga, a gifted warrior, to control the territory. Kalala Ilunga was gradually

alienated and also went back to his fatherland, although he subsequently returned to usurp Kongolo and expand the Luba state.

According to myth, Kalala Ilunga's descendants played a role in the founding of the Lunda state, southwest of the Luba empire.⁶ Like the Luba, the Lunda have identified the transformational moment in their history as one ushered in by a charismatic foreigner and civilizing agent, in this case the Luba prince Cibinda Ilunga. The Lunda origins epic recounts that the leader Nkond had two sons, Kinguri and Cinyama, and a daughter, Rweej (the Lueji of the excerpt on p. 183).⁷ The cruelty and laziness of the sons led Nkond to designate his daughter as his successor. When Cibinda Ilunga visited Queen Rweej's court at the dawn of the sixteenth century, she married him, fostering a formative cultural alliance with the Luba and providing the new Lunda state access to secrets of the great hunter's art and principles of governance.⁸ When their partnership brought no offspring, Rweej chose Kamonga Lwaza as a second wife for her spouse; that union produced a son, Luseeng, who succeeded to the throne. The blood of this line of chiefs was subsequently vested with a sacred quality inherited from Kalala Ilunga, affording them the divine right to rule.⁹ As the heir to a new dynasty and as its first ruler, or Mwata Yamvo, Luseeng was credited with building the Lunda state's political structure, which was still in evidence in 1875–76, when the German explorer Paul Pogge visited its supreme leader. The Mwata Yamvo Chamana is depicted in an engraving, likely made from Pogge's written description, standing proudly with one hand on his hip and in the other holding a large elephant tusk, the key source of regional wealth and power (fig. 164).¹⁰

Implementation of this new structure became the catalyst for a succession of southwest migrations by disenfranchised Lunda headmen during the mid-sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Among these was Kinguri, a chief who settled on the high plateau between the Kwango and Lui Rivers and founded the state of Imbangala, with its capital at Kasanje.¹¹ There he and his followers positioned themselves as intermediaries between suppliers of resources from the interior and the Portuguese, who were intent on developing trade along the coast at Luanda and Benguela. By 1660 they had developed a regular relationship of exchange, which would continue for the next two hundred years, during which the Lunda provided them with the slaves demanded by the transatlantic slave trade in exchange for cloth and salt.¹² Other Lunda migrants settled among the Chokwe peoples, who had long been concentrated in the nearby forested territory situated at the watershed of the Kasai, Kwango, Zambezi, and Kwanza Rivers of present-day east-central Angola.¹³

The Chokwe, renowned for their hunters and metalsmiths, were organized around a basic structure of matrilineal clans led by chiefs.¹⁴ The historian Joseph Miller has suggested that the resettled Lunda initially offered their services arbitrating disputes for Chokwe lineage heads. They married Chokwe women and became assimilated into Chokwe society in all things except for their retention of Lunda kingship ideology. This ideology was grafted onto the development of Chokwe governance, which consisted of a decentralized network of "chiefs (or lords) of the land," called *mianangana* (sing. *mwanangana*). According to Miller, the Lunda transplants took on the role of Chokwe *mianangana*.¹⁵ Until the mid-nineteenth century, the economy of Chokwe communities was largely based on harvesting



FIG. 164. *Mwata Yamvo*. Engraving. From Paul Pogge, *Im Reiche des Muata Jamvo*. *Beiträge zur Entdeckungsgeschichte Afrikas* 3, 1973 reprint of 1880 ed., p. 145



FIG. 165. Lunda chief Hitenda. Photograph. Mid-20th century. Musée du Quai Branly, donated by the Museum of Dundo, Angola PP0075640

resources obtained from the forest through hunting, gathering wax and honey, and extracting rubber from vines and roots.¹⁶

In 1830 the Portuguese abolished slavery in Angola, thus setting in motion a major economic realignment.¹⁷ As the Portuguese sought alternative exports, wax and ivory emerged as regional resources for which there was the greatest demand. In addition to beeswax, elephants abounded in Chokwe territory. The Chokwe hunters were thus ideally positioned to deploy their exceptional skills at the moment that prices for ivory were growing exponentially. Virtually overnight, their strategic access to the commodities desired by emerging markets propelled the Chokwe to unparalleled prosperity. Since the seventeenth century they had been gradually stockpiling European firearms—for the most part flintlock muskets—imported through regional trade networks.¹⁸ Because they were skilled ironworkers, they were able to carefully maintain these and thus accrue a formidable arsenal over time. By the mid-nineteenth century they had acquired so many guns that they wiped out the elephant population in their own lands within five years.¹⁹

In response to this depletion of local resources, the Chokwe ventured beyond their traditional homelands. Resourceful and highly mobile, bands of half a dozen men or more began to leave on hunting expeditions, for as long as a month

in duration, to pursue game farther afield. In their absence, their wives and daughters maintained their villages by overseeing the planting and harvesting of crops.²⁰ At the same time, the Chokwe also embarked on a campaign to add non-Chokwe women to their lineages.²¹ The acquisition of these women, through trade and slave raids, led to a dramatic increase in the size of Chokwe communities and the rapid overpopulation of their lands.²² By midcentury, the Chokwe were compelled to expand farther to their north, east, and west. In some cases, they became middlemen who acquired resources from the local residents. In others, they harvested on behalf of neighboring populations the same resources they had previously exhausted in their own territories. Such was the situation when, in about 1840, spurred by the Lunda's need for new exports to replace the slave trade and by the reputation of the Chokwe men as unrivaled elephant hunters, the Lunda Mwata Yamvo Noeji II and Chokwe chief Ndumba Tembo (see fig. 175) came to a mutually beneficial arrangement that allowed the Chokwe to hunt on Lunda lands in exchange for equal division of the spoils.²³ In the interest of a prestigious association, Chokwe chiefs professed a formal allegiance to the Lunda supreme leader.²⁴ This affiliation was not, however, based on any obligations on the part of the Chokwe to the Lunda, and by the end of the nineteenth century, tensions arising from their increasing assertiveness would deteriorate into open warfare.

Miller has noted that, even in the face of greater population masses, the firepower and agile military strategies of Chokwe migrants made them a dominant regional force with which to contend.²⁵ Typically the Chokwe positioned themselves on the wild forested periphery of previously settled communities as accommodating guests, but gradually their armed supremacy allowed them to assert control over their hosts.²⁶ During the 1860s and 1870s, certain Chokwe chiefs opportunistically served as mercenary captains of forces engaged by Lunda leaders to influence the outcome of their succession disputes. A new generation of Chokwe leaders increasingly defied and clashed with Lunda interests, however, and by 1887 Chokwe chief Mawoka had overrun the Lunda capital, taking its population captive.²⁷ By 1880–90, the wave of migrations that led to the extension of Chokwe territory northward had carried them as far as the Kwilu, Kasai, and Shaba regions of what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After 1890, however, a series of reverses forced the Chokwe to retreat, and after Belgium took control of lands they had commandeered, rights were restored to the Lunda.

Unlike the Lunda, the Chokwe never had a single state or overarching leader but rather the series of chiefdoms led by *mianangana*, each of whom was succeeded by a maternal nephew.²⁸ Investiture rites conferred upon each ruler a sacred state of being and the divine right to his position of leadership.²⁹ Through his ancestors' collective power, he was afforded not only authority over the affairs of men but also influence over the fertility of the land, the growth of the populace, and the yield of the hunt.³⁰ These chiefs ruled with a council of nobles, or *mwata* (pl. *miata*).³¹ Each councilor administered a segment of the chief's land and was accorded a special role, such as guardian of the royal insignia. While the highest-ranking *mwata* resided at the chief's capital, others were based in villages throughout the territory.

A Chokwe chief's legitimacy was invested in him through the powers of his predecessor, as reflected in his adoption of the latter's name. The beginning of a

reign was marked by the ceremonial planting of a tree in the chief's sanctuary as a shrine for the ancestral spirits charged with protecting the community. The degree of a chief's identification with his precursors was reinforced and intensified through his ownership of carved images that both depicted them and contained their essences.³² When traveling, a chief always paid his respects to a neighboring leader's sanctuary, reflecting the idea that they were ultimately all related. That connection was further reinforced through ownership of a parallel series of insignia: the sacred *lukano* bracelet and *mukwale* sword of justice. Drawn from Lunda culture, these emblems were closely tied to those who had held the position in the past. According to tradition, the original *lukano* was given to Rweej, the female chief of the Lunda, by her father. Rweej in turn transferred it to her husband, Cibinda Ilunga, who passed it on to his successor. According to Chokwe and Lunda oral traditions, early *lukano* were made of copper and brass strands interlaced with human tendons and covered with antelope skin. By the middle of the twentieth century, they were made of brass and sometimes took the form of a *manilla* (a braceletlike unit of currency introduced by the Portuguese for trade along the Atlantic coast), open on one side. They were also sometimes decorated with a trefoil of valuable cowrie shells, called *pashi*.

In addition to their skill as metalsmiths, the Chokwe emerged as the pre-eminent wood carvers within the region, and by the mid-nineteenth century, their leaders were regularly commissioning works of art for chiefly treasuries.³³ The professional vocation of sculptor, *songi* (derived from *kusonga*, "to carve"), was practiced by men held in high esteem who worked in the service of chiefs.³⁴ Their artistic efforts were recognized as fundamentally distinct from those of religious specialists, who created highly abstracted forms that symbolically evoked the ancestral and nature spirits, or *mahamba*, addressed in prayer.³⁵ Whereas *songi* emphasized exacting features such as regalia, coiffure, or cicatrization motifs when visually describing their subjects, ritual practitioners avoided any details that might relate the representation to the world of the living. In 1956, during her first stay among the Chokwe of the Dundo region in present-day Angola, the art historian Marie-Louise Bastin observed a divination session led by Mwafima, who is seen in fig. 166 surrounded by divination instruments. Among them is the *ngombo ya cisuka*, composed of a circular basket, called a *kasanda*, containing some sixty small elements, or *tupele*, which include schematic wood figurines, bits of metal, animal matter (horns, hooves, claws, feathers, bones), fruit, et cetera. Each *tupele* has a name and a fixed symbolic value that associates it with everyday social and religious affairs. The basket and its contents represent a microcosm of Lunda society.³⁶

Bastin has identified two "stylistic currents" among the creations of Chokwe professional sculptors. The first of these flourished during the first half of the nineteenth century and emphasizes figurative depictions of an ideal of leadership developed in the original Chokwe homeland, or Uchokwe region.³⁷ These representations are distinctive for their emphasis on an idealized nude body that features both finely carved anatomical detail and pronounced exaggeration of certain key passages. Invariably, the subject exudes a formidable physical dynamism and is portrayed in either a standing or seated posture. In an exceptionally graceful interpretation now in the collection of the Museu Nacional de Etnologia in Lisbon (fig. 167), the figure's slender torso is laterally framed by massive arms and supported at the base by legs with a pronounced bend at the knees and by especially broad, flat feet

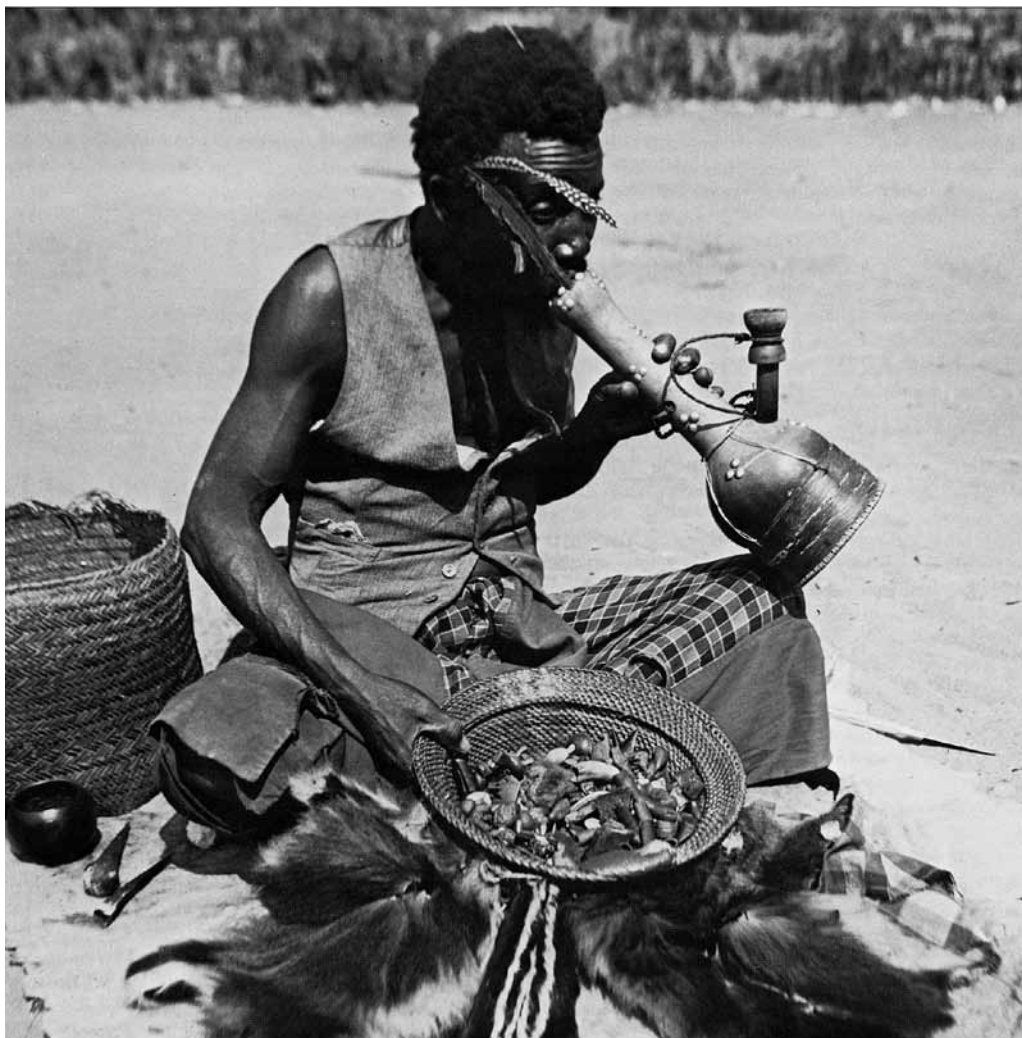


FIG. 166. The diviner Mwafima during a session. Dundo, Angola. 1956. From Marie-Louise Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, 1982, p. 56, fig. 9

whose toes are individually articulated. A closely related work in a private collection remarkable for the soaring domelike extension of the headdress (fig. 168) features a nuanced adjustment in the overall attenuation of the form so that the breadth of the hands and feet is even more pronounced in relation to the lithe body. Bastin suggests that the outsized scale of the bodily extremities expresses the idea of tireless endurance and the ability to overcome all obstacles.³⁸ In both renditions, the expansiveness of these passages contrasts with the precision and delicacy used to articulate the facial features. The aesthetic sensibility of the figures' undulating limbs culminates in a crescendo of curves that also define the elaborate headdresses.

A pivotal item of ceremonial regalia, the headdress invested the figure with a specific rank. The complex and imposing forms of headgear associated with Chokwe chiefs are of two varieties: *mutwe wa kayanda* and *cipenya mutwe*.³⁹ The *mutwe wa kayanda* headdress features a broad brass headband or diadem and lateral wings that turned outward, as can be seen in figs. 167, 168, 170, 176, and 181. The latter style, worn by paramount Lunda and Chokwe notables to mark important ceremonial occasions and celebrations, is most frequently depicted in sculpture (see figs. 171, 172, 177, 178, and 179).³⁹ Its exuberant design, incorporating a diadem





OPPOSITE: FIG. 167. Commemorative figure of a chief. Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th–mid-20th century.
Wood, H. 13¾ in. (35 cm). Museu Nacional de Etnologia, Lisbon, Portugal AA-964

ABOVE: FIG. 168. Commemorative figure of a chief (two views). Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th century.
Wood, H. 15 in. (38.1 cm). Private collection

called a *cipenya* and lateral wings that sweep back horizontally rather than outward, consists of a leather structure embellished with copper ornaments. These accents were made from imported metal that was beaten into narrow strips and embossed with hand-punched designs. The diadem was placed at an incline in front of the hairline so that it would push back the mass of hair in an expansive arrangement. A portrait of the Chokwe chief Simòe Chaùto, photographed in 1903 by the Portuguese captain major and anthropologist Artur da Fonseca Cardoso, is the only surviving visual document of this genre of chiefly regalia so prominently evident in artistic representations (fig. 169).⁴¹



DETAIL OF FIG. 172



FIG. 169. Chief Chaùto wearing a *cipenya mutwe* headdress. Photograph. 1903.
From A. da Fonseca Cardoso, *Em terras do Moxico*, 1919 (1903), plate 1 (top)



FIG. 170. Commemorative figure of a chief. Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th century.

Wood, brass, human hair, glass beads, $18\frac{1}{8} \times 6\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{7}{8}$ in. (46 x 17 x 17.5 cm).

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FIG. 171. Commemorative figure of a chief. Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th century.

Wood, brass, human hair, $19\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{8} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$ in. (49 x 18 x 20 cm). Museu de História Natural-Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade do Porto, Portugal 86.04.04

Another key element of these sculptures is the articulation of a distinctive gesture at the midpoint of the figure. The hands held in front of the chest signify *taci*, a gesture of power and physical strength. Clapping, or *mwoyo*, is associated with a chief's enunciation of a blessing for his people's long life, good health, and fertility. In two works that capture that act of benediction (figs. 170, 171), the chief is poised on a proportionately high seat of office in the form of a type of folding chair introduced into the region during the eighteenth century through trade with Europe. The figures' hands come together directly above the intersection of their crossed legs, thus echoing the design of the chairs' structure at the base. Both of



FIG. 172. Commemorative figure of a chief playing a *sanza* (thumb piano) (two views).
Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th–20th century. Wood, kaolin, H. 9 $\frac{9}{16}$ in. (24.5 cm). Private collection

these works additionally particularize the passages of the face with strategically applied additions—the eyes feature brass inlays and the beards are composed of human hair. These have the effect of enhancing the lifelike qualities of the representation by intensifying the figure’s gaze and incorporating matter drawn from life into the sculpture. In some instances, the gesture of powerful hands held outward is bridged with a musical instrument, as seen in fig. 172. In this example, the seated chief grasps a *sanza*, or thumb piano, so that the fingers support the base of the instrument with thumbs extended outward to pluck the metal tines (or prongs). In this interpretation, the action is highlighted through the pronounced exaggeration of the proper left thumb. The *sanza* is generally considered a leisure instrument, often played by a soloist, and the sound it produces is characterized as allowing it to “speak.”⁴² This musical attribute of the chief who gazes forward with a reflective

expression appears to underscore his role in giving voice to and personifying his people's cultural legacy in all its manifestations.

Other chiefly figures wield attributes that further qualify their roles, conflating them with that of the Luba prince Cibinda Ilunga.⁴³ The Lunda who left their ancestral lands broadly disseminated the legacy of this exalted personage as the avatar of a superior civilization and proponent of advanced hunting techniques, which allowed him to tame the natural world.⁴⁴ This archetypal cultural hero was identified with the hunter's profession (*maya* or *uyanga*), whose membership extended beyond particular familial or ethnic ties. The renowned Chokwe hunters called on an extensive repertory of strategic approaches and protective spirits in their pursuit of a varied spectrum of game. The array of implements in the Chokwe hunter's arsenal—a magical dagger, or *kapokolo*, special bows called *yitumbo* (sing., *kitumbo*), and the *cimbwiya* hatchet—were featured as emblems of authority in the commemorative imagery that identified their chiefs with Cibinda Ilunga.⁴⁵ In a 1946 photograph, a young hunter carries a large bow and arrows with characteristic wide tips (fig. 173). Suspended from his waist is a type of knife with a trapezoidal blade often seen on figures representing Cibinda Ilunga.

FIG. 173. Young Ucokwe (Chokwe) hunter. Photograph. 1946. From Marie-Louise Bastin, *Statuettes tshokwe du héros civilisateur "Tshibinda Ilunga,"* 1978, p. 45, fig. 4

FIG. 174. A hunter of T'Chiboco (Quioco). Engraving. From Brito Capello and Roberto Ivens, *From Benguela to the Territory of Yacca,* 1882, vol. 1, facing p. 214





FIG. 175. Ndumba Tembo. Engraving. From Brito Capello and Roberto Ivens,
From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca, 1882, vol. 1, p. 176

Additional hunting accoutrements that might be referenced sculpturally included a cartridge pouch, powder flask, knife, and a tortoise shell filled with magical substances worn around the waist as a protective charm and often left in a special place during hunting expeditions.⁴⁶

While any Chokwe man could hunt, one could also pursue initiation into a society of professional hunters (*yanga*). Aspiring hunters, “children of the *cibinda*,” apprenticed themselves to a master of this art, who would teach them knowledge of animal behavior, stalking tactics, and the harnessing of charms before they were eligible for a mystical initiation ceremony. A master bequeathed to his trainee a mediatory object that was crucial to future success and that served as an emblem of his status as hunter.⁴⁷ The death of a celebrated *cibinda* was marked with ceremonies that drew together other practitioners from afar. While guests of the Chokwe chief Ndumba Tembo, the late nineteenth-century Portuguese explorers Brito Capello and Roberto Ivens encountered a hunter whom they described as “tall, straight, thin, but sinewy, with a couple of feathers and an antelope horn in his head-dress, a string of small bones and horns round his neck, a chin tuft, with false hair plaited in to make it longer, a couple of jackal or hyena skins suspended from his belt,

thick bangles on his wrists and ankles, and armed with gun, hatchet, and knife.”⁴⁸ (See fig. 174.) Their description of Ndumba Tembo himself is even more detailed:

[He was] a well-shaped man, with features indicative of intelligence and dignity, and with a certain refinement of manner. He wore an undergarment of gingham, drawn in at the waist by a belt, from which was suspended a small antelope’s skin, while a coat of some dark stuff, striped with bands of little beads completed his simple but not inelegant attire. A brass crown, not dissimilar in shape to that of the early monarchs of Europe [. . .] encircled his brows, the lower part of which had a band embroidered with coloured beads. A singular collar was round his neck, having as pendants a couple of shells and a small antelope-horn. His fingers, which were covered with brass rings, terminated in long pointed nails of the same metal [. . .] (see fig. 175).⁴⁹

When represented sculpturally, however, the chief would have conformed to the more abstractly idealized physiognomy of a formidable hunter. In a sculpture of a Chokwe leader as Cibinda Ilunga now in the Kimbell Art Museum’s collection (fig. 176), detailed anatomical definition of the figure is apparent in areas such as the Adam’s apple, pectorals, and Achilles tendons. His physical strength is complemented by the intensity of his gaze. The figure wields in his proper right hand a carved staff that extends the length of his body and, in his proper left hand, an antelope horn. The hooked staff, known as a *cisokolu*, was carried as a device from which a container filled with hunting charms used to attract game might be suspended.⁵⁰ The horn was also a receptacle for magical medicines harnessed to enhance success in the hunt. Bastin has proposed that this attribute may reflect an early iconographic feature that was subsequently displaced in favor of the flintlock rifles the Chokwe amassed through trade with Europe.⁵¹

This change is evident in several closely related works that emphasize the chief’s prowess as a hunter and by extension establish him as a man of action. In fig. 178, a work collected in 1903 or 1904 in the Moxico region of present-day Angola by da Fonseca Cardoso, the artist highlighted the figure’s flared nostrils and ever so subtly shifted his weight to suggest movement. His belt supports hunting apparatus and the staff in his proper left hand is balanced on the opposite side with a flintlock rifle. Slightly behind the rifle on the base is a small secondary figure. Bastin’s sources in Dundo interpreted the inclusion of such figures as explicit references to the forces responsible for the chief’s invulnerability and heightened powers of perception in the form of spirits that would protect hunters or apprise them of the presence of game.⁵² A variation on this arrangement is apparent in fig. 177, in which the rifle is raised so that it extends from the figure’s chest to the lateral extension of his headdress. The figure also wears the hunter’s *mukata wa yanga* charm as a bandolier extending from his right shoulder diagonally across his chest.⁵³ This work suffered damage sometime after 1914, which led to the elimination of two miniature figures originally positioned at the summit of the headdress.

The most celebrated of the representations that commemorate Chokwe chiefs as hunters became part of Berlin’s collection in 1880, following its acquisition by the explorer Otto H. Schütt from a Chokwe trader on the route leading to Kimbundu from the Ndumba Tembo and Mbumba territories (fig. 179).⁵⁴





OPPOSITE: FIG. 176. Commemorative figure of a chief as Cibinda Ilunga. Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th century. Wood, natural fibers, H. 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (40 cm). Kimbell Art Museum, Forth Worth, Texas AP 1978.05

ABOVE LEFT: FIG. 177. Commemorative figure of a chief as Cibinda Ilunga. Chokwe peoples; Angola. Before 1914. Wood, 15 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 4 in. (40.4 x 12 x 10.1 cm). Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, Lisbon, Portugal E. 5256

ABOVE RIGHT: FIG. 178. Commemorative figure of a chief as Cibinda Ilunga. Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th century. Wood, human hair, 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (40 x 14.5 x 12 cm). Museu de História Natural-Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade do Porto, Portugal 86.04.3



The sculpture's prominent pairing of the vertical elements of staff and rifle is bisected by the pronounced extension of the figure's beard made of human hair and plant fiber terminating in a glass bead. This chief wears a broad copper belt designed to hold his hunting paraphernalia and is inclined subtly forward. The forces charged with guiding him are depicted as seated figures that gaze outward from either of the lateral wings of his ceremonial headdress. Their presence formally underscores the bilateral symmetry established at the center of the composition.

The massive influx of women from outside communities throughout the nineteenth century profoundly transformed the character of Chokwe society. It has been estimated that by the early twentieth century, 80 percent of Chokwe women were foreign transplants, or "pawns."⁵⁵ The Chokwe social structure allowed for their rapid assimilation by affording them equal status with other women and making their children members of the father's matrilineage.⁵⁶ The expanding populations of Chokwe communities thus encompassed both new female members adopted by lineages and their offspring. Their role as mothers compounded the exponential population growth given that, unlike the sons of Chokwe-born women who left their villages to join the households of their oldest maternal uncles following puberty rites, those of the transplants remained at home.⁵⁷

Chokwe artists portrayed female subjects in several distinct idioms, invariably depicting the ideal state of maturity attained following the initiation that transforms a young girl into a woman. The art historian Elisabeth Cameron has described this process among Lunda and Luvale women in Zambia as a metamorphosis overseen by the initiate's teacher, who shaped an unattractive and infertile being into a desirable and potential mother.⁵⁸ In a system in which matrilineal succession was observed, a chief's sister was capable of advancing her son's claim as heir through building a coalition of followers. The mother of the Chokwe leader Cimbu was closely identified with such astute advocacy.⁵⁹ The importance of the matrilineage, and especially influential and cherished female members of a chief's entourage, are celebrated in a number of powerful female figures in the Chokwe corpus. While information documenting the identities of the subjects of specific works has not been recorded, Bastin has noted that the individuals thus honored included queen mothers, senior wives, and the youngest wife charged with preparing the chief's meals. These creations are likely contemporaneous with those depicting Chokwe chiefs and similarly have been described as "incarnations" of their female subjects.⁶⁰ At the same time, however, the approach developed to represent elite women generally appears less formulaic than that of their male counterparts.

A rare intact pair of male and female figures now in the collection of Lisbon's Museu Nacional de Etnologia provides an instance in which a female representation is clearly intended as a formal complement to the idealized representation of a Chokwe chief (figs. 180, 181). Both the stances and attitudes of the pair are essentially symmetrical except that the male's oversized hands grasp a pair of secondary figures representing protective spirits. Additionally, although both figures appear to be of almost equal height, the male is crowned with the elaborate

FIG. 179. Commemorative figure of a chief as Cibinda Ilunga. Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th century. Wood, human hair, fibers, dried nuts, H. 15 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (39 cm). Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin III C 1255



FIGS. 180 and 181. Commemorative couple. Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th century. Wood, H. Female 11 7/8 in. (30 cm), Male 13 in. (33 cm). Museu Nacional de Etnologia, Lisbon, Portugal AO-333/334

OPPOSITE: FIG. 182. Commemorative female figure. Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th century. Wood, human hair, red clay, H. 13 3/4 in. (35 cm). Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin III C 2969





structure of a chief's headdress, whereas the female is actually taller and her squared shoulders more imposing.

A female figure collected before 1886 by Gustav Nachtigal in Benguela, now in Berlin's collection, is striking for her adoption of a stance and gesture similar to those of Chokwe chiefly figures (fig. 182). This woman's physiognomy, however, introduces a new level of dynamism into that template through the pronounced bend of the knees echoed by the projection of the conical volumes of the breasts. The figure's heightened degree of animation is further enhanced by the dramatic untamed mass of locks of human hair affixed to the top of the head. Below this explosion of hair, the pronounced jaw extends forward. The finely carved face combines a flattened treatment of the eyes and mouth as incised ellipses with a fuller handling of the nose as a raised ridge with flared nostrils. Another work collected in Benguela in 1883 depicts a chief's youngest wife, or *mukwakuhiko*, discharging her duty by presenting to her spouse sustenance that she has prepared exclusively for him (fig. 183). This female presence is less a personification of unfettered vitality than one of controlled elegance. Her engaging asymmetrical gesture extends a lidded basket of cassava porridge (a Chokwe staple) in the proper left hand while holding a platter of boiled meat aloft in her raised right hand.⁶¹ The intense naturalism of her face is heightened by inlaid brass eyes. She is further defined by a plethora of delicate details, ranging from the filed teeth exposed by her open mouth, bodily cicatrizations, added jewelry, and exposed labia. A coiffure of real hair has been laboriously refined into individual tresses matted with clay and arranged in a caplike structure, a feature that is also represented in a later genre of Chokwe sculpture (see pp. 214–23).

A PARALLEL VISION: THE LULUWA

With the retreat of elephant herds north of Mona Kimbundu, those Chokwe who followed in their pursuit across the Kasai reached the Muyawo region about 1865.⁶² They referred to the population they encountered there as the Lulua, or Luluwa. This term refers to a number of subgroups whose languages are variants of that of the Luba and who trace their origins to the former Katanga province, in present-day southwestern Democratic Republic of the Congo, from which they migrated in a succession of waves beginning in the seventeenth century.⁶³ Their earliest interface with the Chokwe is invoked in oral tradition as an encounter in the Muyawo valley between the Chokwe hunter Mukwadianga and the Luluwa leader Kalamba Mukenge, the latter immortalized in a photograph taken during a German expedition to the Kasai region led by Hermann von Wissmann in 1883–85 (fig. 184).⁶⁴ The partnership that followed centered on a long-term exchange of Luluwa ivory and slaves for guns. In contrast to the Lunda, the Luluwa hunted elephants and gathered rubber themselves.⁶⁵ In Luluwa society, hunters belonged to an association known as *buyanga*.⁶⁶ Members honored the guardian spirit of the hunt through *mvidye wa buyanga* altars in which skulls and bones of game were suspended within an enclosure of trees.

FIG. 183. Commemorative female figure. Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th century. Wood, brass, human hair, red clay, seed, beads, H. 23¼ in. (59 cm). Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin III C 1886

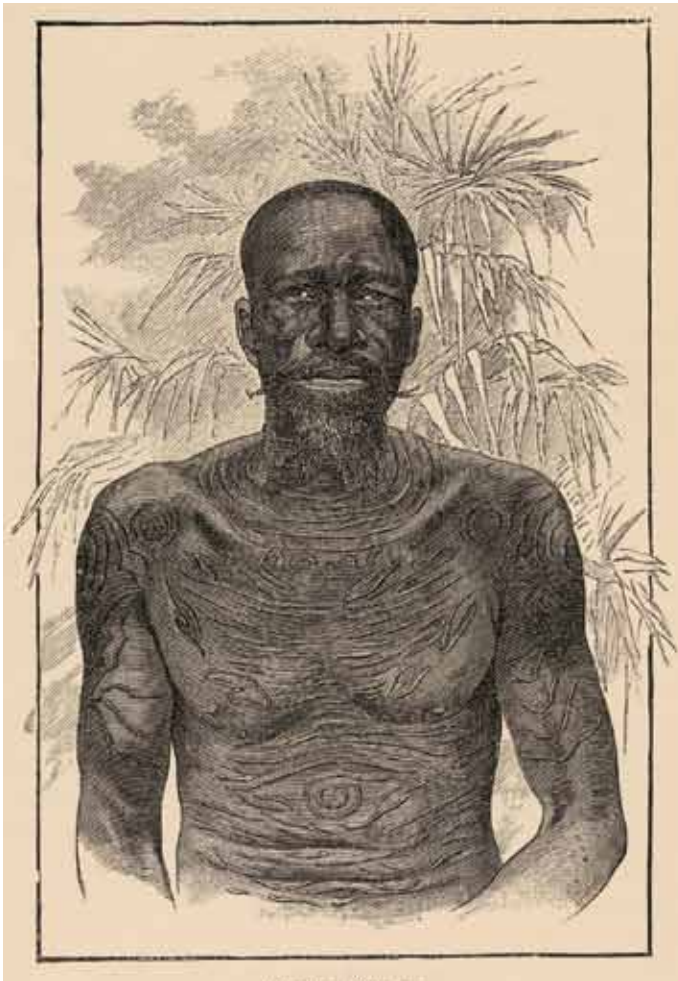


FIG. 184. Kalamba Mukenge. Engraving. From Hermann von Wissmann, *Im Innern Afrikas: Die Erforschung des Kassai während der Jahre 1883, 1884 und 1885*, p. 165

FIG. 185. Heavily tattooed man from Muluba. From Hermann von Wissmann, *Im Innern Afrikas: Die Erforschung des Kassai während der Jahre 1883, 1884 und 1885*, p. 167

Once the availability of ivory in these territories declined, the Chokwe supplied the Luluwa with cloth and guns in exchange for slaves, who were transported farther inland to the Luba in exchange for ivory. After 1875, the north-south passage from Mona Kimbundu to the Luluwa region became a major artery of trade dominated by Chokwe caravans. Thus the Chokwe increasingly took on the role of middlemen, supplying ivory and wax to the coast and slaves to peoples in the northeast.⁶⁷ Contact and commerce with the Chokwe had a transformative impact on the Luluwa economy during the second half of the nineteenth century. Luluwa participation in regional trade networks led to the emergence of social distinctions between elites and commoners and an increased centralization of authority. In adapting to these shifts, the Luluwa were greatly influenced by Chokwe models of political organization and leadership.⁶⁸ And according to Bastin, Chokwe migrants on the move carried their sculptural creations with them as precious insignia of status and ritual power from their country of origin.⁶⁹ The art historian and curator Constantine Petridis has noted that this in turn sparked their adoption of elements of Chokwe culture, which was manifested in their body decoration,

architecture, masking, and figurative works. Although no supporting documentation survives, it is likely that the elaborate figurative representations sponsored by Chokwe leaders served as a significant point of reference for the development of a parallel sculptural genre among the new Luluwa elites.⁷⁰

While a very small corpus of Luluwa figures, produced by professional sculptors, similarly depicts its subjects as active hunters and warriors, it does so according to a distinctive, locally defined aesthetic of power.⁷¹ The works relating to this Luluwa tradition appear to have been the exclusive prerogative of chiefs who subscribed to *bwanga bwa bukalenga*, a cult dedicated to fortifying their authority, safeguarding the well-being of the people, and promoting ties with the ancestors.⁷² The term *bwanga* denotes the role of the figure as a vessel for potent, mystically charged substances referred to as *bisimba*, which were inserted either into small cavities in the figure itself or into receptacles appended to it.⁷³ The field doctor Jules-Auguste Tiarko Fourche recorded that a work he collected in the 1930s was associated with *bwanga bwa nkuba*, an antidote to lightning strikes (fig. 186).⁷⁴ The Belgian ethnographer Paul Timmermans emphasizes that such figures were packed with a great variety of ingredients.⁷⁵ He further cites a village elder who explained that because the power derived from these works instilled warriors with the necessary confidence to place themselves in danger, they were often carried into battle. Petridis notes that the documentation of such figures collected in the field indicates they had proper names, and it has been proposed that they originally commemorated individual leaders.⁷⁶ Fourche identified two other examples in Tervuren's collection respectively as *Ilunga Mukulu* (fig. 187) and *Chibwabwa Ilunga* (fig. 188). In each of these instances, the Luba praise name, *Ilunga*, has been qualified by an honorific: *Mukulu* means "great" and *Chibwabwa* is the term used to identify the elder of twins.

The imposing, large-scale Luluwa male figures were customized to depict the highest ranks of leadership through an exact accounting of the subjects' instruments of warfare, attributes of authority, and commanding physiques. An especially striking aesthetic dimension is the complex and exuberant cicatrization designs that were applied in order to endow the body with physical and moral perfection of the highest order, as seen in a photograph of a Luluwa man taken during Wissmann's expedition (fig. 185).⁷⁷ An elder of a Kete village suggested to Timmermans that the repeated concentric-circle motif inscribed on the elbows, temples, navel, and calves was originally inspired by the ripple effect produced by a stone dropped into a pool of still water.⁷⁸

The main item of regalia featured is a lower garment composed of the pelt of a leopard or related predator worn by the holder of the title *mukalenga wa nkashaama*, or leopard chief (fig. 189).⁷⁹ A variation of this is the *mukaya wa nkuba* skirt produced from the hide of a carnivorous mammal—a type of mongoose called an ichneumon—suspended from the belt of one of the figures collected by Fourche now in Tervuren (fig. 186). The select individuals who underwent the complex investiture rites through which such offices were awarded were said to command the leopard's formidable powers and prowess. Petridis indicates that additional insignia of exalted status included chiefly headgear, elaborately dressed beards, a necklace of blue-and-white beads, a drinking horn, and amulets suspended from the figure's neck and waist.⁸⁰ A series of these are prominent elements of the figure





OPPOSITE: FIG. 186. Figure of a leopard chief. Luluwa peoples, Bakwa Ndolo; western Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood (*Vitex madiensis*), pigments, metal, plastic, h. 26 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (67 cm). The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium EO.o.o.43845

ABOVE LEFT: FIG. 187. Figure of a leopard chief: Ilunga Mukulu. Luluwa peoples, Bakwa Ndolo, Bumba; western Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, h. 26 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (67 cm). The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium EO.o.o.43854

ABOVE RIGHT: FIG. 188. Figure of a leopard chief: Chibwabwa Ilunga. Luluwa peoples; western Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood (*Trichilia gilgiana*), cowrie shells, h. 30 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (77 cm). The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium EO.o.o.43848



FIG. 189. Figure of a leopard chief (three views). Luluwa peoples; western Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, H. 22 ¼ in. (56.5 cm). Collection Laura and James J. Ross, New York





FIG. 190. "Baluba fetish (*bwanga*).⁸⁰" From Hermann von Wissmann, *Im Innern Afrikas: Die Erforschung des Kassai während der Jahre 1883, 1884 und 1885, 1891*, p. 265

OPPOSITE: FIG. 191. Figure of a leopard chief. Luluwa peoples; Makabu-Buanga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 19th century. Wood, H. 29 1/8 in. (74 cm). Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin III C 3246

identified as Chibwabwa Ilunga (fig. 188). The head is crowned with a distinctive helmet form, the beard extends as a tapering vertical element that spans from the base of the chin to directly above the navel, and a gourd receptacle is suspended from the back. This figure is striking for the addition of cowrie shells to the surface of the eyes. The idea of heightened powers of perception is suggested in another example, now in Berlin's collection, through the application of red dye to the proper left side of the face (figs. 190, 191).⁸¹ This depiction of a Luluwa leopard chief, acquired in December 1884 from a chief of the Benam-Behlu subgroup by Dr. Ludwig Wolf, a member of Wissmann's Kasai expedition, is further equipped with an amulet in the form of a crouching figure suspended from his neck and with a shield and double-edged sword, which he brandishes.⁸² In other examples, conventional weapons are substituted for an animal horn filled with potent ingredients known as *lusengu kwa nkuba*. These mystically charged scepters were conferred upon those belonging to the association of lightning senders, capable of striking down social miscreants.⁸³

Both the enhancing of the body with elaborate cicatrization patterns such as those evident on these works and the sculptural tradition itself were cultural practices ultimately challenged by the Luluwa leader Kalamba Mukenge of the Beena Kashiya subgroup. During the late nineteenth century, Kalamba Mukenge emerged as one of the most powerful of Luluwa chiefs and is identified with the institution of a new faith, a hemp cult, which sought to ensure longevity and immortality for its followers.⁸⁴ In areas over which he gained influence, Kalamba



Mukenge instituted reforms that banned cicatrization of the body and called for the destruction of power figures. These edicts did not, however, extend to the northern reaches of the Luluwa territory, where the commissioning of elaborate sculptural works was concentrated.⁸⁵ Nonetheless, this Luluwa sculptural genre ultimately proved to be short-lived, ending by the early twentieth century with the elimination of local hierarchies of leadership by colonial authorities.

FAMILIAR FACES AS IDEALS OF WOMANHOOD: *PWO* MASKS

As with the Luluwa, the autonomy of the Chokwe chiefs diminished as a result of European colonization, ultimately leading to the demise of the figurative tradition that had celebrated them. Instead, the talents and energies of professional sculptors were increasingly channeled into mask forms representing a more enduring ideal. Bastin situates this second stylistic current in Chokwe art as beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century.⁸⁶ Among the key mask genres is *pwo*, “woman,” or *mwana pwo*, “young woman.” Although *pwo* embodied the ideal of Chokwe womanhood and ancestry, it was worn by male performers (figs. 192 and 193). In a photograph from the 1930s or 1940s, a male dancer wears a *pwo* mask ensemble of a woven body outfit, breasts, and a protruding navel. Like the hairstyle seen in fig. 194, the coiffure of this mask incorporates buttons, safety pins, and metal rings. Here, however, the scale of those decorative elements is significantly exaggerated in order to emphasize the mask’s femininity. The heavy beaded belt and bustle of woven ropes attached to the back draw attention to the movements of the performer’s buttocks, and the choreography emphasized graceful movements and elegant gestures appropriate for a female personage. According to Bastin, the appearance of the masked and costumed dancer was credited with enhancing the fertility of the assembled audience.⁸⁷ The German ethnographer Hans Himmelheber further observed that these masquerade ensembles were the property of individual elders, who wore them for public theatrical entertainments accompanied by drumming and song. Such spectacles were often staged in the dancer’s own and neighboring villages in order to elicit remuneration from the audience.⁸⁸ The connection that developed between a mask and its owner/performer was an especially close (and secret) one, and the dancer frequently accorded his mask a proper name.⁸⁹ The acquisition of such a work has been characterized as a mystical marriage and often involved payment of a symbolic bride-price to the artist. Ultimately, this cherished possession was buried with its owner.⁹⁰

Although the mask element adhered to overarching conventions developed to pay tribute to idealized female beauty, its visage was typically informed by that of an individual closely studied by the sculptor. The process has been described as one in which the artist drew inspiration from the world around him through a subject with whom he was intimately familiar. Because the masks’ proportions were modeled on those of a particular face, Himmelheber has referred to such works as “half-portraits.”⁹¹ Bastin corroborates that in the execution of such works, when a sculptor was observant of historical practice, he would seek to augment the realism and thus the efficacy of the work by selecting as his model a woman renowned for her beauty and exemplary character traits.⁹² She further notes that the physiognomy of a muse most likely to be cited formally was in the depiction of features such as the nose, mouth, ears, coiffure, and cicatrizations on the forehead and



FIG. 192. *Pwo* mask performer. Dilolo Village, Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo. ca. 1930s–40s.
Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium



FIG. 193. *Pwo* mask performer. Angola. 1890. Engraving. From Henrique Dias de Carvalho,
Ethnographia e historia tradicional dos povos da Lunda, 1890, p. 245

cheeks, which were once considered signs of aesthetic perfection in a Chokwe woman.⁹³ Obtaining such nuanced information required liberal access to and familiarity with the subject. Consequently, if an artist had previously reproduced the features of his own wife, betrothed, or girlfriend, he might select a married woman and request that her husband provide the necessary details. Yet just as the human identity of the masquerade dancer was withheld from women, the appropriation of a particular female model was also undertaken through subterfuge. Therefore, certain information about the visage in question, such as its length, the distance between the eyes, and the relationship of the nose to the mouth, was ascertained by caressing the face with a stealth tape measure in the innocuous form of a vine. According to Himmelheber, once the template for a mask's proportions was established, the artist worked in isolation.

An example of the lengths to which a Chokwe artist based his rendering of an archetype on a particular model is suggested by the striking oval configuration of the face and full, rounded contours of an especially naturalistic mask now among Tervuren's holdings (fig. 194). Collected between 1933 and 1942 by Fourche in the southern Kasai at Mwakahila, the mask's lifelike qualities are accentuated through the rendering of the ears as leather attachments. The knotted fiber collar that was an extension of the original bodysuit also survives. The dotted-cruciform motif, called *cingelyengelye*, on the forehead, the vertical marking, or *kangongo*, on the



chin, and the parallel vertical lines, *masoji*, below the eyes on either cheek, are all highlighted through embedded metal elements. There are many variations on *cingelyengelye*, which was introduced to the region in the seventeenth century by the Portuguese and which denotes divinity in Chokwe culture.⁹⁴ The perimeter of the forehead is defined by a beaded band that extends into the voluminous fiber coiffure, throughout which beads have been festooned. All such masks were tinted a vibrant red tone derived from a red earth, *mukundu*, found in the Kwilu region.⁹⁵ Obtained in powder form, it was added to boiling oil and then applied to the wood surface. Many of the features in this mask can also be seen in a 1933 photograph by the Swiss ethnographer Théodore Delachaux of a royal Chokwe woman (fig. 195), notably the elaborate, helmetlike hairstyle that fans over the nape of her neck, the multiple materials incorporated into the mass of the hairstyle, and the thin ridge of beads that frame the face. In addition to being forms of personal adornment, such hairstyles may have indicated an individual's social class or rank.

The array of formal approaches found within the corpus of related works reflects the aesthetic preferences not only of individual sculptors but also of a number of regional centers to embrace the styles and fashions of female subjects in different locales. Another especially intact interpretation of a *pwo* mask (fig. 197), now in the collection of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art, attributed by Bastin to the Musamba School, reflects a sensibility entirely distinct from

OPPOSITE: FIG. 194. *Pwo* mask. Chokwe peoples; southern Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th century. Wood, fiber, pigments, metal, plastic, animal and plant material, 8¼ x 7⅞ in. (21 x 18 cm). Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium EO.o.o.43143

FIG. 195. One of the wives of the king of Nyemba with her child. Katyila, Angola. September 1933.

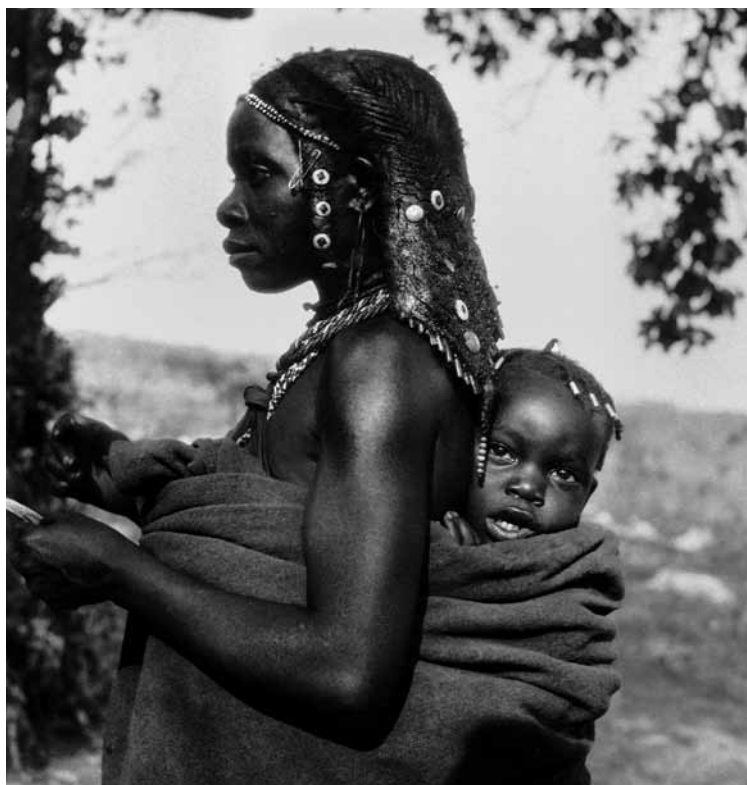




FIG. 196. Chokwe woman. Katyila, Angola. September 27, 1933

OPPOSITE: FIG. 197. *Pwo* mask. Chokwe peoples; Musamba region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Early 20th century. Wood, fibers, metal, red and white clay, $15\frac{3}{8} \times 8\frac{3}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{4}$ in. (39.1 x 21.3 x 23.5 cm). National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., Museum Purchase 85-15-20

that of fig. 194. As in the previous example, the expression is deeply reflective and the eyes are closed. Dramatic emphasis has been added here, however, in that the ocular recesses have been accentuated with white kaolin and outlined with inscribed dots. The raised horizontals of the closed lids are echoed by the form of the lips, which are similarly contiguous with the flattened semicircular curve of the chin. This bold treatment underscores the narrow delicacy of the nose. Extending at an angle from the top of the head, the coiffure is a caplike structure tighter than that of fig. 194. Directly over the forehead, the favored arrangement featured is that of *kambaja tota*, in which many *tota*, carefully knotted tufts of hair, are worn close to the scalp and smeared individually with red earth (see fig. 196).

Matota may also be transposed into two-dimensional motifs, as seen in the deeply incised crosshatching above the hairline of fig. 198, representing tightly woven rows of *tota* divided by longitudinal braids. Increased stylization is apparent in this more standardized approach from a workshop in the Xassenge region, whose masks consistently depict a relatively rounded face crowned by a coiffure defined by finely carved striations. The bold horizontal ovals of the closed eyes are echoed in the form of the open mouth. Both of these elements are unified and





FIG. 198. *Pwo* mask (two views). Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th century. Wood, fiber, pigment, 20½ x 7¼ x 7½ in. (52.1 x 18.4 x 19.1 cm). Private collection

contrasted with the fine vertical ridge of the nose. A more subdued approach and greater naturalism in definition of the facial structure are apparent in still another *pwo* mask, which is also distinctive for the manner in which the facial cicatrizations are centered on the forehead in light relief (fig. 199). The zigzag design is associated with the Gabon viper, or *yenge*. Diagonal lines cross the cheeks and accent the temples.⁹⁶ The immediacy of two other delicately calibrated examples further underscores the richly diverse array of individual facial physiognomies that captivated artists working in this genre. The purity of the oval face in fig. 200 is accented by a delicate *mohenga* double-arc motif on the forehead centered between the gently curved ridges of the eyebrows.⁹⁷ The leather ears intended to introduce a lifelike quality to the face have survived. The author of fig. 201 has applied many layers of red pigment to the wood surface, endowing it with a textural quality suggestive of actual skin.

The titles held by Chokwe and Luluwa leaders were provided critical definition through representations produced by their most gifted artists, who created figures



FIG. 199. *Pwo* mask (two views). Chokwe peoples; Angola. ca. 1820. Wood, fiber, metal, 10¼ x 6½ x 10¼ in. (26 x 16.5 x 26 cm). Private collection

that framed their specific subjects as the embodiment of a larger-than-life cultural ideal. During the nineteenth century, ambitious and affluent Chokwe chiefs sought to heighten their standing by commissioning works that portrayed them as heirs to the legendary cultural icon Cibinda Ilunga. Their Luluwa trading partners attempted to emulate them by devising a parallel approach, rendering their leaders as powerful and engaged men of action. Ultimately, however, forces from both within and without the Luluwa and Chokwe culture led to the demise of their traditions of chiefly representations. Chokwe sculptors adapted to a shifting sociopolitical landscape by focusing their talents on the sculptural elements of Chokwe masquerades. In giving expression to an abstract ideal of female ancestry, they drew on the familiar faces of their beloved wives, daughters, and sisters and elevated them to the role of cultural icon through inspired interpretations of *pwo*. In a sense, the artistic process was reversed: where individuals were once represented in the guise of a culture hero, later artists evoked a state of transcendent perfection using specific individuals as their point of reference.



FIG. 200. *Povo* mask. Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th–mid-20th century. Wood, leather, metal, 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (19.4 x 16.5 x 5.4 cm). The Kronos Collections



FIG. 201. *Pwo* mask. Chokwe peoples; Angola. 19th–early 20th century.
Wood, fiber, metal, clay, $7\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2} \times 7$ in. (19.7 x 14 x 17.8 cm). The Kronos Collections



Sublime Chiefs and the Persistence of Memory: The Hemba

We ask of you our ancestors and spirits good health and fertility. Of you, Kibikelo and Kalume, Mbivu and Kabenja, and Kivilile, we ask of you today to give us many children so that we may have much bounty, assure that our eyes continue to see clearly. We ask that the children progress in the world, that they be in good health and visionary. This is our prayer today.

— PRAYER TO THE ANCESTORS AND THEIR SPIRITS
BY A NKUVU NOTABLE LIVING IN SOLA

THE DEPARTED, TO WHOM SUCH PETITIONS WERE ADDRESSED, REMAINED PRESENT in Hemba communities through the inspired sculptural creations of regional masters. Among the corpus of the representations that survive in Western collections are works that are among the most sublime yet least familiar in the history of art. The princely subjects exalted by these visual tributes were the leaders of communities situated across the vast grass plains extending from the east bank of the Upper Congo River north and south of one of its tributaries, the Luika (see fig. 202). These depictions are notable for their majestic stature, unequivocal intensity, and refined elegance as well as for their serenely tranquil gazes and the delicate sensitivity with which they were carved. Originally housed within darkened ancestral mausoleums, these contemplative figures express a preoccupation with concerns of transcendent significance. Among the paradoxes of this artistic genre is that, despite the lengths to which Hemba masters went to produce rarefied and nuanced likenesses, their achievements were generally removed from the line of vision of ordinary mortals. Instead, the originally intended audience for their refined perfection appears to have been an otherworldly one.

The fertile volcanic soil and abundant rains of the Hemba territory afford its communities several maize crops annually as well as a variety of other agricultural produce. The average population of a community is three hundred but can range in scale from ten members to four thousand.¹ Historically, Hemba leadership was of a highly decentralized, segmentary nature.² Villages, which were variously named for titular heads, well-remembered ancestors, or particular lineages, were autonomous entities within which individuals identified themselves primarily in relation to their extended families and clans.³ Each Hemba clan was identified with its own history of conquests, migrations, alliances, and battles. Its genealogy, which would have been well known going back eight to fifteen generations, was essential in establishing that group's title to a specific area of land.⁴ Although ancestry was traced through both the mother's and father's lines of descent, the

DETAIL (BACK OF
HEAD) OF FIG. 213

latter's line was generally given priority.⁵ In the northeast, chiefly succession was transmitted through the maternal clan.⁶

Familial cohesion was the key value shared by precolonial Hemba communities.⁷ The vitality of that relationship was of an enduring nature, transcending death to extend ties between living and departed members. Existence was believed to continue in a distinct but accessible ancestral realm. A funeral was in essence a rite of passage for the deceased to enter into a new state of enlightened being, one that would engage relatives as well as outsiders.⁸ The degree to which life and death were considered to be closely interrelated states was reflected in the inclusion at burial sites of many ordinary implements and articles, ranging from hoes and clothing to pots and dishes. Those who led exemplary lives became key ancestors and eventually, it was believed, would be reborn back into their families.⁹ As ancestors, they were credited with the power to influence the well-being of their living relations, for example by engendering sterility or fertility in female members or by influencing climatic conditions. Thus, descendants directed prayers and sacrifices to their attention in order to alleviate the effects of calamities, such as a drought, or to request support for anticipated undertakings such as a hunting expedition or act of war.¹⁰

A traditional Hemba funeral facilitated a peaceful transition for the deceased and impressed upon the ancestors that they were remembered and appreciated.¹¹ To privilege the positive nurturing tenor of the relationship, petitioners not only demonstrated due respect but also made an effort to dissipate any potentially lingering destructive hostility, residual conflicts, or tension within the community. The degree of elaboration conferred upon such events—in terms of their scale, complexity, and duration—was based upon the age, gender, and social position of the individual in question. The funeral of an elder might last several months, culminating in the cleansing, expiatory performance of *musuusa* to mark the end of mourning. *Musuusa* consisted of formal discussion and oratory led by the female relatives of the deceased's extended family.¹² Its commentary on the underlying causes of the death openly addressed that sensitive subject through a combination of dance, song, and critique. The departed was summoned to preside as the ultimate arbiter of the caliber of the performance that either preceded or accompanied a negotiation of death payments.¹³ Performances could be organized for either the burial day or years later during purification ceremonies.

The belief that all successive generations of a familial group's ancestors remained present in their home territory was a defining tenet of the group's identity and authority in precolonial times.¹⁴ The family thus generated both its clan's political leadership and its spiritual focus on ancestral devotion.¹⁵ Its founder, an especially powerful and sacred member, was conceived of both as the representative of his living and deceased relatives and as their mediator with divinities. The family continued to define itself in relation to this revered individual even as he became increasingly distant temporally and generationally. Shared attachment to this common ancestor distinguished family members from foreigners or slaves, who lacked this filial connection.¹⁶ Each new generation of leadership assumed its responsibilities on the basis of genealogical ties to that individual. According to the historian Ngasha Mulumbati, only the direct descendants of the founding ancestor were eligible to succeed to power.¹⁷ At the time of a chief's death, the eldest among

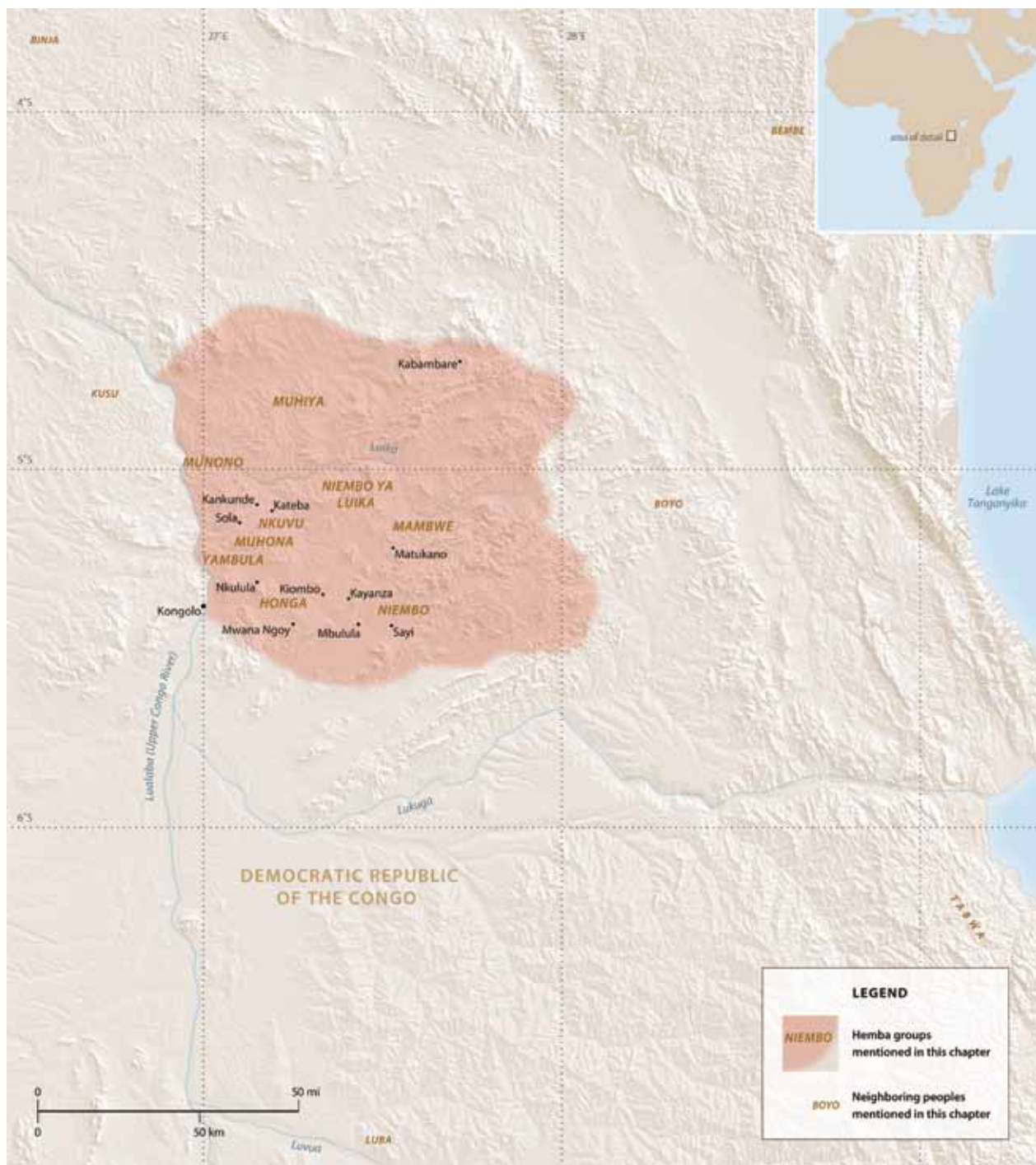


FIG. 202. Hemba region

his brothers and cousins became his successor. During the investiture rite, the new chief adopted the name of an important ancestor as a way of drawing upon that individual's life force and charisma and acquiring supernatural powers. The installation thus elevated a mortal candidate for a Hemba chieftaincy to a leader endowed with spiritual authority.

Whereas a Hemba family's founding ancestor acted as the primary intercessor between his descendants and divinities, ultimate power among the living was delegated to the community's chief. The chief was considered the representative of the ancestors from whom he derived his political power, as well as the guardian of his community.¹⁸ Direct lineal ancestors were petitioned to redress problems caused by

the ancestors of other families.¹⁹ The art historian François Neyt notes that at the center of every Hemba village a great tree, *muvela* (*Chlorophora excelsa*), was planted to evoke the presence of familial ancestors.²⁰ Accordingly, the same wood was translated by Hemba sculptors into the figurative works designed to house the spirit of the founding ancestor of a patrilineal segment. The especially heavy and dense nature of this material and the massive scale of the representations made the carving an exceptionally challenging feat.

Known as *lusingiti* (pl. of *singiti*), these figures afforded the possibility of direct engagement with the most influential ancestors of an extended family.²¹ Consequently, petitions were made at the site of the sculptures themselves (they were usually kept within an enclosure, not on public view). Their surface patinas constitute evidence of spoken prayers for intervention fortified by the application of sacrificial libations of chicken blood.²² Multiple figures commissioned and conserved by a family embodied a charter of their owners' kinship system by providing reference points for counting and temporally situating each ancestor within a particular family tree. In the past, certain Niembo families possessed as many as twenty such figures. A chief's ownership of this evidence established his ties to a particular territory as well as the legitimacy of his authority. Neyt has thus characterized the figures as genealogical milestones.²³ The significance of their identity as genealogical markers is reflected by the fact that the representations generally highlight the passage of the navel through the placement of the hands. Although the Hemba articulated descent through mothers, the subjects of *lusingiti* were invariably male chiefs. Related and parallel genres of male ancestry images flourished southeast of the Hemba among the Tabwa, to the north among the Binja, and northeast among the Boyo and Bembe.²⁴ In distinct contrast, their Luba neighbors developed a sculptural tradition in which female figures served as idioms for the transfer of power.²⁵

In their original context, these Hemba figures constituted eloquent artistic programs. The commissioning of a commemorative image was not undertaken immediately following the death of a leader but rather was built upon a foundation of mediation that embraced personal forms of commemoration and communication through dreams. The legacy of that exchange was eventually made concrete through the creation of a marker named for its subject. The sophistication of the representations and the depth of the related oral narratives are evidence of a cultural tradition developed and continually refined over many generations, although the extent of its past is not known. As the cherished inheritance of each precolonial leader, the sculptures not only validated chiefly authority but also provided aspirational exemplars of how that role should be fulfilled, reflecting the profound nature of the relationship between a new chief and his precursors. Given the degree of idealization of that depiction, the name of a work was related to its individual subject by word of mouth.

In her 1970s study of material culture in the Hemba community of Buhemba, situated in the northern Shaba region, the sociologist Pamela Blakely notes that the terms *muyanzi* and *noongoo* refer to individuals who command a



particular expertise distinguished as a professional vocation beyond subsistence farming.²⁶ Historically, *muyanzi* was used to describe someone capable of working metal and smelting iron, although typically such specialists also carved tool handles as well as other wood implements. The term *noongoo* referred to a carver responsible for producing a wide range of items, the most demanding of which were figurative sculptures, and who was also charged with performing circumcision. Blakely notes that, in practice, a single person might command both *muyanzi* and *noongoo* roles.²⁷ During his lifetime, one such talented individual, Munanga, not only forged metal and produced household implements and tools but also carved *misi* (statues and masks embodying ancestor spirits) and *bafu* (used for protection and divination). Additionally, he wove raffia cloth. Often such skills were passed on to a nephew, and in this instance it was expected that, following Munanga's death in 1976, his nephew Sulebika would be the beneficiary. Neyt and the art historian and Hemba specialist Louis de Strycker have further recorded the names of masters active during the first half of the twentieth century in six different chiefdoms: Yambula, Muhona, Nkuvu, Munono, Niembo, and Mambwe.²⁸

The established protocol for executing an ambitious figurative work would begin with the sculptor's cutting down a dead tree to bring back to the village in the form of a wood block. He would then proceed to carve the ancestor representation standing in a symmetrical position, hands placed on the stomach on either side of the navel. Pamela Blakely notes that "to carve" any type of wood object is generally described as *usooya*. Specific verbs also refer to cutting (*ukwala*), chopping (*uungulula*), digging out with a chisel (*ufula*), chiseling (*ukvyula*), finely carving or trimming (*ukekenya*), and finishing (*ulongalola*).²⁹ The basic volumes of the head, coiffure, neck, and torso were defined according to formulaic isometric measurements.³⁰ The general form of the body was then extended so that the arms, stomach, and legs were rendered from the front before the artist turned to the back and coiffure. Finally, details of the facial features (eyes, nose, ears, and beard) were introduced. Although the artist gave priority to the frontal view, he worked the block from all four sides. Once the carving was completed, he refined the surface by using tree leaves in a sanding action to eliminate any facets produced by the blade of the adze and to achieve a translucent finish. The wood was then coated with river mud, tree root, palm oil, manioc flour, and chicken blood.³¹

The formal structure of Hemba ancestor figures typically emphasizes the bodily passages of the head and torso, whose epicenters are the eyes and navel, respectively. These areas are highly volumetric in their definition and designed to be fully appreciated in the round. Representations of the head are generally distinctive for the sensitivity with which the facial structure is modeled. De Strycker has noted that in Hemba sculptural depictions the head is often disproportionately large in relation to the rest of the body and the gaze carefully articulated.³² He suggests that the head's imposing volume may serve to highlight the importance of the conserved ancestral cranium (see p. 266). The anthropologist Thomas Blakely underscores the primacy of the gaze, which the Hemba privileged among all other senses as the principal means for visually acquiring knowledge, or *ubatizha*. *Ubatizha* is associated with the dignified contemplation portrayed in Hemba ancestral sculpture and is conceived of as an observational means of learning in depth about a person, thing, or event.³³



DETAIL OF FIG. 213

Similarly, definition of the torso is at once proportionally exaggerated and elegant in its articulation. The figure stands with powerful arms gathered to the area of the stomach's pronounced curvature. In works produced by Sayi sculptors, the Adam's apple, substernal depression, and collarbone are finely rendered. As noted previously, the umbilicus is emphasized for its importance as the line of connection between family members. In marked contrast, the lower body, originally obscured by a textile garment that was attached from below the waist, is abbreviated so that the genitalia, stocky legs, and squared feet are rudimentary in their definition.³⁴ The perfect verticality of the carved Hemba ancestral figures is at once commanding and supremely stable.³⁵ The dominance of this axis is further amplified by the bilateral symmetry that is apparent from both the front and the back.

De Strycker proposes that this endows the figures with a sense of immobility and timelessness.³⁶

The social stature of the subjects of Hemba ancestral sculpture was fleshed out through the exacting depiction of a series of iconographic elements. Principal among these was an elaborate, highly labor-intensive arrangement of the hair, whose design relates to an array of different regionally preferred styles. Each of these complex constructions reflected the wearer's ethnicity and elevated rank.³⁷ Among the most exuberant of these arrangements was a cross-shaped design worn by men and women who lived along the banks of the Lukuga River. Creating this hairstyle took two full days. The coiffeur began by carefully combing the hair and dividing it into four equal parts: one at each ear, the third above the forehead, and the fourth at the nape of the neck. During this time, the person whose hair was being dressed laid on his or her stomach or side.³⁸ Additional attributes included a diadem or band at the summit of the forehead; necklaces placed around the neck; and beards.³⁹ Most important was a belt of hippopotamus hide that was passed from a chief to his successor as an emblem of authority. Like the lance, the axe, and the display knife wielded by some figures, it was an insignia of power.⁴⁰

Despite the relative inaccessibility of the representations, the virtuosity of their authors invariably received mention in the earliest accounts provided by visitors to the western bank of Lake Tanganyika.⁴¹ Among these was Major-General Émile Storms (1846–1918), who in 1870 was a commissioned officer of the Belgian Armed Forces and from 1882 to 1885 was commander of an expedition to central Africa that explored the southwest shores of Lake Tanganyika. During his stay in the region, he gathered a group of Hemba-related works for the Royal Museum of Central Africa at Tervuren.⁴² Storms commented upon the impressive caliber of Hemba sculpture and its relative naturalism: "Some peoples, however, are more artistic than others, as in the case of the Waguha [Hemba], the Warungu, and the Waholoholo, who are distinguished by their love of sculpture. . . . [In] the effort to imitate nature as completely as possible . . . the artist has not omitted any detail."⁴³ Although Hemba sculptors invested their creations with a plethora of precise details that suggest careful examination of a given subject, the depiction was not a literal recounting of that particular individual's appearance. Certain distinctive physical traits characteristic of the subject might be introduced formally into the representation, but a specific work was ultimately identified through its association with a proper name.

In his monograph devoted to Hemba sculpture, Neyt identified one hundred twenty of the most significant works in the corpus in relation to twelve formal groupings. Examination of the Hemba corpus has led Neyt to identify twelve different regional styles produced within thirteen chiefdoms grouped in ten or fewer villages.⁴⁴ The historian Jan Vansina has suggested that each of these distinctive styles may constitute the output of a workshop that served around a dozen settlements.⁴⁵ Twenty-two of those figures reproduced here, relating to nine of the twelve regional groups, have been assembled for the first time. They were selected both for their aesthetic excellence and for the range of regional and individual styles they represent.⁴⁶



In some instances, several works that are closely related formally afford an insight into the sensibility of particular masters and their followers.

Among the earliest Hemba works to enter Western collections are the examples in the Berlin and Antwerp museums that Neyt relates to a Group 1/Classic Niembo style (figs. 203 and 204). The former was collected in 1897 by a German colonial official named Captain Hans von Ramsay and identified with the name Sanamu.⁴⁷ Its retention of a lower garment makes evident the calculation that Hemba carvers made to focus their efforts on representation from the navel upward. This regal figure features broad shoulders and a narrow torso. The spherical head, framed by a lateral extension of the coiffure toward the summit and by a beard at the base of the chin, is defined by a strong face whose elliptical eyes and mouth are rendered with exacting precision. Its symmetry is underscored by a ridge that bisects the forehead and extends down the length of the nose, terminating in arched nostrils. That form is echoed above by the pronounced curvature of the brows. The especially graceful Antwerp figure is notable for the fluidity of the formal transitions across bodily elements. Key passages of the head, neck, torso, and legs are defined by a delicate outward projection of the nose, Adam's apple, pectorals, navel, and knees. The convex curvature that extends from the chest to the stomach is especially lyrical. A related *singiti* of quiet power, impressive for its considerable scale, has been recorded as being in honor of Kalala Lea, a celebrated ancestral leader of the Kitunga clan from a village north of Mbulula (fig. 205).⁴⁸ Said to have been obtained through the Niembo chief Kiombo, the deeply reflective Kalala Lea stands in a sentinel-like attitude. The spherical form of his head, supported by a robust columnar neck, is defined by strong, perfectly balanced features, including a bold vertical nasal ridge that terminates in arrowlike nostrils, convex crescent eyelids bisected by a pronounced horizontal aperture, full lips that project as a raised ellipse, a beard finely incised along the contours of the lower half of the face, and an elaborate cruciform arrangement of hair at the back of the head. Within this same grouping, figs. 206 and 207 are also exceptional interpretations that afford a sense of how subtle the sculptor's formal departures can be. Viewing the two side by side reveals that the neck, stomach, and legs of fig. 206 are slightly more attenuated when compared to the bolder but otherwise parallel passages in fig. 207.

The composed serenity of Group 2/Niembo- and Honga-style *lusingiti* is evident in the tranquil presence of a figure striking for its soulful facial expression and regal body (fig. 208).⁴⁹ The length of the figure's columnar neck is accentuated with deeply inscribed parallel horizontal grooves and crowned by the pearlike volume of the head. Directly below, the compact torso is flanked by gracefully curved arms that rest on either side of the elongated volumetric stomach. At the apogee of the exquisite works in this style is one that survives vestigially via the outer shell of the body and head, which were preserved when the core of its wood body decayed (fig. 209).⁵⁰ The face is defined by the elegant curves of the brows, which intersect to form the ridge of an aquiline nose, and narrows dramatically at the chin.

FIG. 203. Commemorative figure. Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, fibers, fur, 31 7/8 x 9 1/4 in. (81 x 23.5 cm). Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin III E 5200





FIG. 204. Commemorative figure (three views). Hamba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, $35\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{7}{8} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$ in. (89 x 22.5 x 22 cm). MAS–Etnografisch Museum, Antwerp A.E.0864



FIG. 205. Commemorative figure (two views). Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–20th century. Wood, $37\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ in. (94.6 x 24.1 x 24.1 cm). Private collection, Los Angeles



FIG. 206. Commemorative figure (two views). Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, $26\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$ in. (67.9 x 20 cm). Private collection







FIG. 207. Commemorative figure (three views). Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, h. 29¾ in. (75.6 cm). Private collection



FIG. 208. Commemorative figure (two views). Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, raffia, H. 26¾ in. (67.9 cm). Private collection





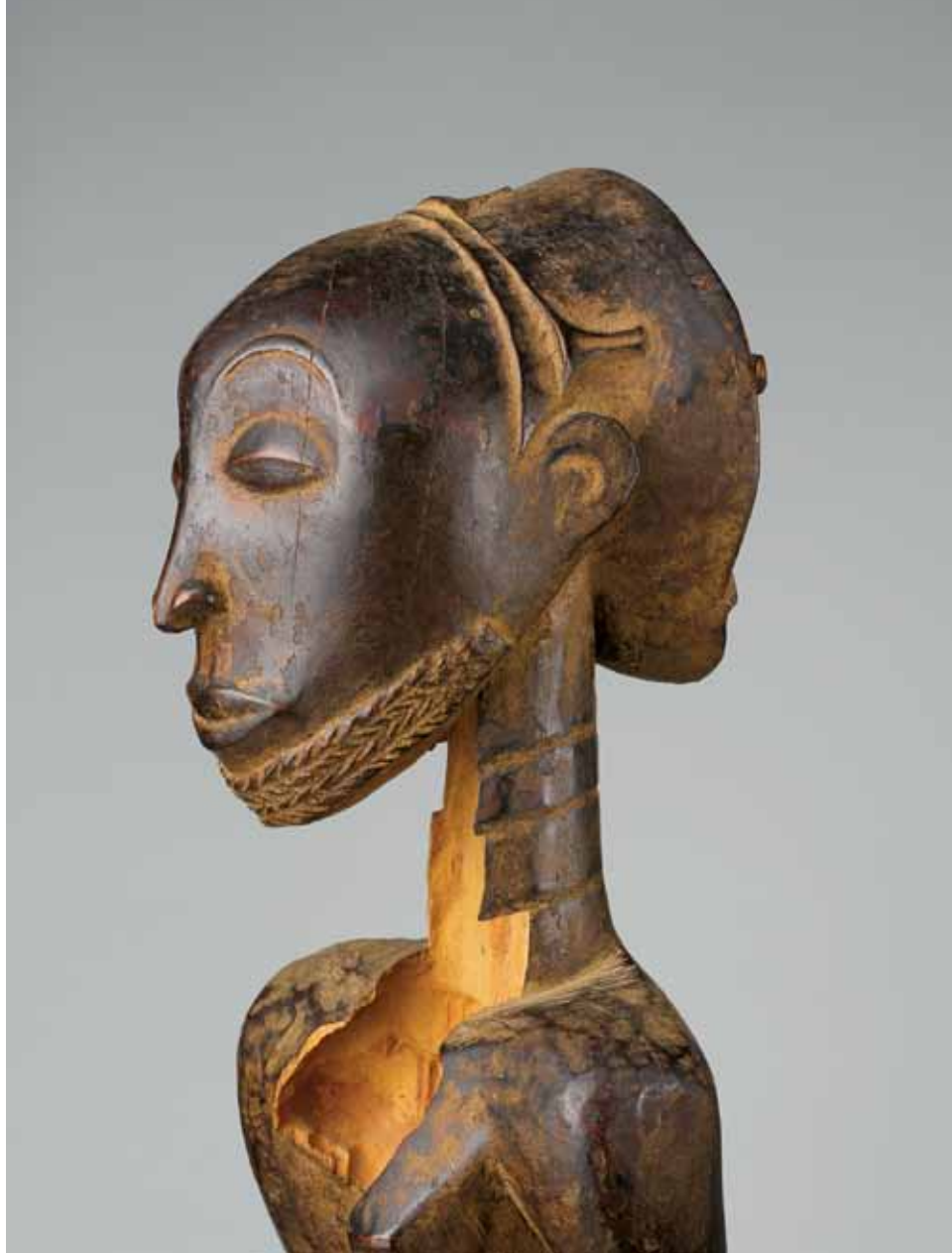


FIG. 209. Commemorative figure (two views). Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, H. 27 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (71 cm). Private collection

There the lips converge with the textured beard, which is subdivided into bands of herringbone pattern carved in relief along the contour of the chin.

A Group 3/Sayi-style figure, originally owned by Chief Liemwe of the Baga Mbele clan in the village of Lubundi, gazes beyond the viewer with eyes wide open (fig. 210).⁵¹ The oval cast and intense naturalism of its face is in extreme contrast to the rectilinear definition of the shoulders, arms, and blocky hands. At the point of transition between these two approaches, the sternal notch and clavicle are delineated with great delicacy. A chieftain's roped belt is boldly rendered at the base of the lower back. A closely related work (fig. 211), identified by one source as Ilonda Kasinga Mukolo of the Baga Mbele, chief of the village of Kundu, accentuates similar features, including the chieftancy belt and the formal alternation between the rounded definition of the pectorals and stomach and the squared hands.⁵² The ovals of Ilonda Kasinga Mukolo's eyes are further defined by broad pupils. The apertures of his nostrils are pierced and the channel extending to his



FIG. 210. Commemorative figure (two views). Hemba peoples; Sayi region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, H. 26¾ in. (67.9 cm). Private collection

full lips is articulated. Although the face of fig. 212 is quite unique, its expression is similarly alert and direct and features the same distinctive treatment of clavicles as seen in fig. 210. The *singiti* fig. 213 is distinctive for its balanced bodily symmetry in which the head and lower body are comparable in scale. Between these extremities, the torso is rendered with graphic clarity, its upper and lower parts delimited by the lateral extension of the shoulders and hands. A gesture of open palms at the level of the navel constitutes an expressive departure from other Hemba figures.

Among the most impressive of the Group 4/Niembo *lusingiti*, which encompass a range of substyles, is a commanding work that is framed at either side by dynamic attributes of leadership (fig. 214).⁵³ This leader grasps in his proper left hand the vertical shaft of a lance, which anchors him to the ground, and raises with the other the sinuously curved form of an elaborate blade. These two vertical axes parallel those of the figure's torso and upper arms. The figure's head is raised so that he gazes up and beyond the viewer with an expression of composed resolve.



FIG. 211. Commemorative figure (three views). Hemba peoples; Mbeya village, Sayi region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, fibers, 29½ x 9¼ in. (75 x 23.5 cm).
Chevalier Blanpain Collection

FOLLOWING PAGES:

FIG. 212. Commemorative figure. Hemba peoples; Kahongo village, Sayi region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, 31⅛ x 9⅞ in. (79 x 25 cm).
The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium EO.1992.28.1

FIG. 213. Commemorative figure. Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Sayi region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, h. 27⅞ in. (70 cm).
Private collection

The transitions between bodily passages are far more dramatically pronounced in a Group 6 figure (fig. 215), whose openwork coiffure projects as an autonomous domelike structure from the crown of the head.⁵⁴ The full convex forehead contrasts strongly with the rectilinear chin, and the contours of the face are strongly circumscribed by a diadem that intersects with a beard. The torso, subdivided into chest and stomach, is dynamically framed by arms that descend as serpentine extensions.









OPPOSITE: FIG. 214. Commemorative figure. Hamba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, $33\frac{1}{8} \times 10\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{8}$ in. (84.1 x 26.0 x 23.2 cm). Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas AP 1979.03

ABOVE: FIG. 215. Commemorative figure (two views). Hamba peoples; Luika region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, $29\frac{1}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$ in. (74 x 21 x 19.5 cm). Musée du Quai Branly, Paris 70.2004.11.1



FIG. 216. Commemorative figure (three views). Hemba peoples; Kaboja village, Makutano region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–20th century. Wood, fibers, 29 1/8 x 9 1/2 in. (74 x 24 cm). Private collection, Brussels

The massively rotund form of a Group 7/Southern Hemba figure from the village of Kaboja, about 81 miles (130 km) north of Makutano, features pronounced curves in its convex stomach, which extends outward in a knoblike navel, and powerful buttocks (fig. 216).⁵⁵ The figure's dreamily reflective facial expression is bounded by the projecting shelf of a beard. The deeply pensive head is joined to the exuberant body by a powerful neck. A degree of asymmetry suggestive of movement is apparent through a slight raising of the proper left side of the shoulder blades and buttocks. Another work associated with this grouping (fig. 217) is more subdued, although it too hints at a shifting of weight to the proper right side while in a state of repose.⁵⁶ Its disklike face is defined by subtly raised angular features bisected by the crisp ridge of the nose, which terminates in a triangular tip. The arc of the eyebrow, the hairline, and the beard are all defined as finely striated linear accents. An ever-so-slight Adam's apple is evident directly below the chin.





FIG. 217. Commemorative figure (two views). Hamba peoples, Muhiya group; Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, fiber, 25 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (64 x 19.5 cm). Private collection

OPPOSITE: FIG. 218. Commemorative figure. Hamba peoples; Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, 31 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (79 x 21 cm). Museum Rietberg Zürich RAC 105





FIG. 219. Commemorative figure (three views). Hamba peoples; Makutano, Mambwe region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, H. 25 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (65.6 cm). Private collection

The structural design of the coiffure at the back of the head is one in which tresses of hair extend as a raised arc from the crown to the nape of the neck, intersecting with horizontal tresses that extend laterally. The surface of this work has a very matte, rich brown residue of sacrificial matter. In contrast, the elongated figure of fig. 218 appears to be fully contained within a columnar form.

The compact body of a Group 8/Mambwe figure from the village of Makutano is more minimal in its definition (fig. 219).⁵⁷ Physical evidence indicates the loss of the proper right arm to damage, yet this missing limb was interpreted by later generations to depict the result of a hunting accident experienced by the subject. The intense gaze is framed within the pronounced upside-down pear-shaped face, in which the eyes are inscribed as almonds on either side of the long vertical ridge of the nose and a broad lozenge mouth, which conforms to the pointed chin.





FIG. 220. Commemorative figure. Hemba peoples; Kabambare region, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, H. 14 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (37.9 cm). Private collection

A highly eclectic Hemba category designated by Neyt consists of stylistically atypical works of northern Hemba and Kusu provenance (Group 12). In a Group 12 figure that has been subjected to extensive erosion, definition of the features has been articulated in a more consistent manner than seen in examples from other groups (fig. 220).⁵⁸ At the summit of the head, the coiffure takes the form of a semicircular headdress, and the contour of the chin is extended by a striated beard. The form of the elliptical eyes, positioned at slight angles in relation to the apex of the broad triangular nose, is echoed on a larger scale by the mouth. The pectorals and navel are accentuated and the arms extend parallel to the torso, with bent elbows and hands positioned on the stomach. Another formal extreme is a highly stylized Mambwe figure from the village of Kayenge (fig. 221).⁵⁹ In this work the body appears highly compressed within a rectangular format, and the head and torso meet directly without any division of a neck. The arms at either side are dynamic extensions joined to the thighs, appearing angular in profile but as sweeping curves from the front. The slight asymmetry of the raised proper right shoulder is apparent given the emphasis of the sharply delineated shoulder blades



FIG. 221. Commemorative figure (three views). Hamba peoples, Mambwe group; Kayenge village, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, H. 12 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (32.1 cm). Private collection

and inscribed vertical channel of the spine as an axis. The highly abbreviated legs are bent at the knees and terminate in the blocklike base. Whereas the forehead projects as a domed form, the facial features are inscribed in relief within a heartlike configuration, outlined by the brows, that extends down to the chin.

Neyt's Group 9 category encompasses what he describes as Kusu- and Buli-style ancestor figures. The *singiti* fig. 222, a work in the Kusu style, is striking for the strong horizontal line of the shoulders, which extend into arms that meet the stomach as lateral flourishes. Their outward flare is echoed in the lower half of the figure by the rounded forms of the thighs. Among the most remarkable achievements of the many gifted Hamba sculptors active during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, are those attributed to the Buli Master.⁶⁰ The distinctive hand of this individual, who was in demand by both Hamba and Luba patrons, was first identified in 1929 by the Belgian art historian Frans Olbrechts.⁶¹ The artist's signature expressionistic style features exaggeration of the face and hands through elongation, which allowed him to reinterpret and ingeniously exploit the formal possibilities of different genres of prestige sculpture: standing figures act



FIG. 222. Commemorative figure (two views). Hemba or Kusu peoples; Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, H. 23¼ in. (59.1 cm). Private collection

as caryatid supports for seats that they strain to hold above their heads; seated *mboko* (bowl bearers) wrap their physical being around a vessel positioned at their very core; and stately male figures stand proudly upright as independent presences, despite the ravages that time and experience have wrought on their bodies. Fieldwork by Neyt and de Strycker has established that the artist responsible for these inspired creations lived in the village of Kateba between 1810 and 1870. They found that he was remembered there by the honorific Ngongo ya Chintu, or “the great leopard, the father of sculpted things.” Based on this information, the art historian Bernard de Grunne proposed referring to this artist as the Master of Kateba.⁶²

As many as twenty-nine works have been discussed in relation to this master and his several followers. The first of these to be attributed to him was a *mboko*, or female figure holding a vessel (fig. 223), collected before 1895 from a Luba treasury on the left bank of the Lukuga River by the Belgian Fernand Miot. In 1913 a caryatid stool in the same style was obtained at this same location by Father Henri Maurice, a Catholic missionary and doctor in the former Katanga province. Field-collection provenance also exists for several other works in this style, including a



female figure holding a vessel, now in Tervuren's collection, and an ancestor figure from the village of Kankunde, now in the Malcolm collection (fig. 225).

The art historian William Fagg distinguished what he believed to be the sculptor's earliest and most inspired creations, made from a light wood, from more derivative ones using a medium-weight wood, which he attributed to the master's acolytes. In subscribing to this reading of the corpus, Neyt has attributed six works to the master himself; among these are caryatid seats in the collections of the British Museum and The Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 224), as well as the two ancestor figures in the Berlin and Malcolm collections. In a catalogue raisonné compiled in 1996 by the collector Claude-Henri Pirat, nineteen works are attributed to the master and members of his atelier.⁶³ These include eleven caryatid seats, seven figures, and a figurative headrest. Pirat proposes that thirteen of these, six seats and all seven of the figures, were executed by the master himself.

Bernard de Grunne concurs with Fagg that the corpus was produced by an atelier of three successive generations of carvers, which he identifies as the Master of Kateba, Buli Master the Elder, and, finally, Buli Master the Younger. He suggests that the latter of these was active until about 1915, some fifty years after the life of the original master, and that his clientele consisted primarily of European

FIG. 223. Buli Master, possibly Ngongo ya Chintu (Hemba, ca. 1810–1870). Female vessel bearer. Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th century. Wood, H. 14 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (37.1 cm). Private collection



visitors to the region.⁶⁴ De Grunne's study credits the original Master of Kateba with authorship of the six works in the corpus he considers to be the most aesthetically accomplished and that show the most evidence of use: the caryatid seats now in the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum, as well as one in the Irma Stern Museum (Cape Town, South Africa); the female vessel bearer in Tervuren; the ancestor figure in the Malcolm collection (fig. 225); and a figure collected in 1970 at Bugana Kalenga, now in a private collection (fig. 226). He suggests that the pronounced angularity and ascetic character of the male-chief figures, in which each individual depicted is reduced to his physical essence, were probably inspired to a significant degree by the appearance of the original subjects.⁶⁵

Among those works consistently attributed to the original Buli, or Kateba, Master is the figure of a Hemba chief now in the Malcolm collection (fig. 225). At the time of its collection in 1972 in the village of Kankunde, north of Sola, the figure belonged to the Lubusu (Luswaga) clan and was celebrated throughout the Nkuvu region as *Kalala Luhembwe*.⁶⁶ Recovered information identifying the sculptor suggests that he was born in the early nineteenth century.⁶⁷ At the time of

FIG. 224. Buli Master, possibly Ngongo ya Chintu (Hemba, ca. 1810–1870). Prestige stool: female caryatid. Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th century. Wood, metal studs, H. 24 in. (61 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Buckeye Trust and Charles B. Benenson Gifts, Rogers Fund and funds from various donors, 1979 1979.290





FIG. 225. Buli Master, possibly Ngongo ya Chintu (Hemba, ca. 1810–1870). Commemorative figure (three views). Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th century. Wood, 27 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 9 x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (70.8 x 22.9 x 14 cm). Drs. Daniel and Marian Malcolm

the work's sale to a European art dealer, the clan leaders decided to commission a replacement work, which was subsequently documented by Neyt. The sculptor's original adze marks are apparent throughout the faceted surface. At the summit, the strong convex curve of the forehead is gracefully extended by the backward sweep of the projecting coiffure. The attenuated face is defined by the pronounced vertical ridge of the nose, arched brows, and strong definition of the cheekbones. The slender vertical axis of the narrow torso is framed by arms that extend down from the curved shoulders and are angled back so that they bend sharply at the elbow. The forearms are defined as gentle curves terminating in rectilinear fingers splayed on either side of the stomach. The angular pectorals are raised in light relief, whereas the stomach reads as a pronounced convex volume accentuated by a projecting navel. The face of a related figure (fig. 226), less elongated overall than



that of fig. 225, features a broad forehead and terminates in a well-modeled chin. Its unusually petite scale is complemented by the delicacy of its features. Beneath bold brows, the closed eyes are rendered in high relief within deep ocular cavities. The broad elongated neck creates a striking contrast with the scale of the body, whose compact form is defined by the concentration of sharp angles of the pectorals, elbows, and navel.

Hemba sculptors have emphasized that the presence of a model, which could be either a human being or a sculpted object, was important to their artistic process.⁶⁸ The fact that both living rulers and existing artistic creations were conceived of as required foundational sources reflects the combined importance of capturing a subject as a vital being and of doing so through adherence to established precedents. Ideally, the subject of the representation himself served as a model. If he was no longer alive, however, the family might propose that the relation who most closely resembled him serve as a surrogate model. Such figurative creations are of a paradoxical nature. While they were executed to portray specific former leaders in a relatively naturalistic idiom, the representations themselves do not literally reproduce those individuals' specific physiognomies. Instead, the Hemba ancestor figures depict chiefly intercessors according to a cultural ideal of physical strength, stability, and judicious reflection. Each depiction is a synthesis of the artist's sensitivity to the world around him and his awareness of the formal precedents of earlier works. These two sets of references allowed for measured artistic license in which the figure consciously provided continuity with the past yet also expressed a convincing human immediacy.⁶⁹

Accounts by Émile Storms and Father Pierre Colle, European travelers to the region during the 1880s, suggest that, historically, special structures of considerable scale were dedicated to housing such works: "Especially on the western bank of Lake Tanganyika a hut of the same form as the others but much smaller contains statuettes in wood that are said to represent the former chiefs."⁷⁰ Due to the particular circumstances of specific communities or historical developments that rendered the sculptures vulnerable to theft, the figures were also conserved in the residence of the chief, who might conceal them within a trunk.⁷¹ The figures relating to a particular extended family tended to be dispersed among a number of different households as that lineage fragmented into new segments. Thus the figures owned by a clan might be held physically among factions based in different villages. In one such instance, the section of the Kilumba lineage based at Kayanza owned some twenty figures divided among the various member households.⁷² This played out differently among various groups so that while owners of Hemba chief figures generally had between three and four works, others might possess sixteen.⁷³

Although *lusingiti* were not directly accessible unless removed for certain private and public ritual occasions, their presence was prominently evident given that the structure in which they were housed was in front of the chief's residence. In this somber setting, placed in the back of the dark interior, the tranquil, meditative founding chiefs of the clan lived on.⁷⁴ According to Neyt, the crania of these Hemba chiefs were also conserved in a special enclosure, which may have been distinct from the one in which the figures identified with the same individuals were kept. In 1976 Pamela Blakely observed a related practice during her residency in a Hemba community: one of its members, although not an active leader, demonstrated

respect for his paternal line by building a small grass structure in front of his home in honor of an ancestral father. In that instance, the primacy of maintaining a strong and lasting connection to founders of one's lineage was further underscored by its proximity to a rock identified as a landmark carried from the site of an ancestral settlement.⁷⁵

Closely associated with the ancestor figures was a distinct genre of ritual sculpture known as *kabeja*. Despite the small scale of *kabeja*, their potency was unrivaled in Hemba society. They were rendered as Janus figurines, in stark contrast to the introspective ancestor figures, and nothing escaped the heightened powers of observation afforded by their magnified multidirectional gaze. The creation of a *kabeja* was tied to the establishment of a *bakwa*, or new branch of a family in the form of a lineage or clan segment, acknowledged by common agreement and sanctified by certain propitiatory sacrifices.⁷⁶ Whereas a village clan faction might possess a series of ancestral figures, it owned only a single *kabeja*, which remained in the possession of the chief.⁷⁷ *Kabeja* are variously described as being positioned in physical proximity to the ancestor figures within the funerary enclosure or in the chief's residence. This formidable work presided over any ritual offering or sacrifice, whether related to the exercise of justice or to payment of tribute to an ancestor.

As an artifact of an intrinsically unique character, each *kabeja* was associated with specific powers.⁷⁸ Beyond the basic protection they afforded, they were especially valued for enhancing fertility. Given the intensity of a *kabeja*'s potency, women and children were kept away from it, and it could be handled only by the head of the extended family who owned it.⁷⁹ So fundamental was the notion of power being concentrated in a limited number of such works that when a lineage emigrated to another area within the region, the clan chief returned to borrow his family *kabeja* each time it was needed.

The advent of Belgian colonialism, in 1885, brought drastic change to the region. Precolonial Hemba villages and their leadership had long been defined by their long-standing ties to a particular site. It was through these strong affiliations that particular territories were distinguished and identified with a specific Hemba group. Their bond with the earth was a profound and enduring connection with the ancestors who had originally conquered it and whose physical beings it had absorbed. In 1917, however, the Belgian colonial authorities regrouped various Hemba villages into the larger political and administrative entities of thirteen chiefdoms.⁸⁰ Those appointed to be in charge of these new entities were elevated for their malleability rather than for their fulfillment of established regional criteria of leadership. Hemba villages became administrative subdivisions of a chiefdom in which people from different familial lines coexisted, resulting in systemic conflict in which the new titular heads were continually challenged by the village chiefs placed under their jurisdiction.⁸¹ Land that had been collectively managed, a unifying bond shared by members of an extended family, became individual property.⁸² Hemba villages gradually ceased to be centers of collective production, education, and faith for a constituency of members issued from the same ancestors.⁸³

The imposition of colonial rule displaced the village chiefs formerly charged with serving as guardians over their constituents. The very nature of leadership, previously awarded internally through familial networks, was irrevocably transformed





FIG. 226. Buli Master, possibly Ngongo ya Chintu (Hemba, ca. 1810–1870). Commemorative figure (three views). Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th century. Wood, 12 x 4 x 4½ in. (30.5 x 10.2 x 11.4 cm). Private collection

by the new secular system of political patronage imposed from the outside. Chiefs were legitimized by their association with the colonial government rather than their kinship ties to previous leaders of their community. The religious responsibilities they exercised before the colonial era were eliminated and replaced by new administrative ones.⁸⁴ Once the most sacred personages in their communities, charged to act as protectors, intermediaries, and benefactors to their constituents, village chiefs were deprived of the means to fulfill those obligations and thus became less accountable for or responsive to the population's needs.⁸⁵

As the role of Hemba chiefs changed, practices of ancestral devotion also came under assault by missionaries. Beginning in 1910, the White Fathers founded their first mission at Sola in the region of Nkuvu. From there Christianity was disseminated throughout the Hemba territory.⁸⁶ In its name, missionaries condemned the cult of the ancestors as superstition and, with the blessing of the colonial administration, even destroyed ancestral sculptures.⁸⁷ By the second half of the twentieth century, the social and political changes spanning several generations had significantly altered the Hemba landscape and led to the gradual obsolescence of *lusingiti* and the practice of ancestor veneration. These eloquent visual tributes were no longer deployed by those who inherited them to validate territorial claims or augment their influence. Instead, they had become relics within communities that no longer collectively invested in their veneration or preservation.

In chronicling the history of the Zairian state (now the D.R.C), the political scientist Crawford Young has noted that Belgian colonial rule, which lasted until 1958, was a period of uninterrupted state construction culminating in a loss of control by colonial authority and a tumultuous, fragmented nationalist movement. The turbulence and crisis of state deflation following independence was temporarily interrupted in 1965 by the coup presided over by Joseph Désiré Mobutu. During the mid-1970s, currents of decline once again came to dominate national politics and Zairian society experienced a severe economic crisis.⁸⁸ The political turmoil that consumed the region, the dire economic needs of local populations, and the growing interest in Hemba sculpture in Europe converged. The sculptures remaining in the possession of Hemba families had become disconnected heirlooms that were vulnerable to theft, given their value outside the region. Some families made the understandable calculation that their children had more pressing needs and that the sale of such works afforded them life-altering opportunities, such as a mode of transportation or even a school. As Pamela Blakely noted, the situation escalated to such a point that repeated thefts discouraged the carving of replacement pieces for local use and instead led carvers to focus their efforts on producing works for a European clientele.⁸⁹

Throughout the nineteenth century, the impressive series of commemorative figures positioned at the political and spiritual epicenter of Hemba communities were collectively invoked to intervene on behalf of the future well-being of their constituents. The very presence of the *lusingiti* was essential to the establishment of a sense of unity and social cohesion, and the virtuosity they display attests to a long-standing tradition refined over many generations. As a result of the profound transformation that Hemba villages underwent over the course of the twentieth century, the traditional chiefs ceased to identify with the ideals embodied by the figures and no longer presided over this former focus on devotion or served as ancestral intermediaries on behalf of their communities. The tradition of *lusingiti* came to an end and the figures came to be seen as anachronisms in the very communities where they had once been revered. Yet they were soon highly prized by European collectors. Thus the global tides of commerce led to the release of the Hemba heritage into the world, essentially alienating this corpus from the original oral tradition that had tied each sculpture to the experiences of particular families and to the life histories of their ancestors.

Notes

Works in the Exhibition

Selected Bibliography

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Photograph Credits

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Epigraph: This famous aphorism, rendered in the original Greek as well as the more familiar Latin, can also be translated as *Life is short and art long*, or *Art is long-lasting, life is short*.

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33. Ibid., p. 207.
34. Ibid., pp. 212–13.
35. Brilliant, *Portraiture*, p. 127.
36. Lavin, "On the Sources and Meaning of the Renaissance Portrait Bust," p. 212.
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56. Ibid., p. 53.
57. Ibid., p. 88.
58. *Royal Art of Benin: The Perls Collection*, exhibition catalogue by Kate Ezra, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1992 (New York, 1992), p. 30.
59. Ben-Amos, *The Art of Benin*, p. 53. It appears that some of these were gradually consolidated given that by 1897 only seventeen remained.
60. *Royal Art of Benin: The Perls Collection*, by Ezra, p. 30.
61. Ibid., p. 31. The Late Period heads, which are not discussed here, are extremely heavy castings that reflect increased access to metals through trade with the West. Iconographically, they emphasize the trappings of kingship in the form of highly elaborate crowns and collars, which are the focus of the representations.
62. These are classified as Type 2.
63. *Royal Art of Benin: The Perls Collection*, by Ezra, p. 32.
64. Ibid., p. 312. The Early Period rulers were Ohen, Egbeka, Orobiru, Uwaifiokun, Ewuare, Ezoti, Olua, Ozolua, Esigie, and Orhogbua.
65. These are classified as Type 3 and span the reigns of Ehengbuda, Ohuan, Ahenzae, Akenzae, Akengboi, Akenkpaye, Akengbedo, Ore-Oghene, Ekwuakpe, Ozuere, and Akenzua I. Ibid.
66. Ibid., p. 31.
67. Three other ivory pendant masks from Benin depicting a royal woman are known, but these are formally distinct from the examples in The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the British Museum.
68. Ben-Amos, *The Art of Benin*, p. 114; *Royal Art of Benin: The Perls Collection*, by Ezra, p. 20.
69. Barbara Blackmun (personal communication, April 2006; AAOA curatorial files) notes that two related ivory pendant masks by another hand may have been created at a later date.
70. Ben-Amos, *The Art of Benin*, p. 114.
71. Ibid., p. 68.
72. Ibid., p. 34.
73. Ibid., p. 35.
74. Ibid., p. 36.

75. *Royal Art of Benin: The Perls Collection*, by Ezra, p. 41.
76. Ben-Amos, *The Art of Benin*, p. 49.
77. Bradbury, "Ezomo's *Ikegobo* and the Benin Cult of the Hand," p. 130.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
79. R. E. Bradbury, *Benin Studies* (London and New York: The International African Institute; Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 144, 204, 258.
80. Ben-Amos, *The Art of Benin*, pp. 48–50.
81. *Royal Art of Benin: The Perls Collection*, by Ezra, p. 156.
82. William Fagg, letter of April 26, 1974, in AAOA curatorial files.
83. Ben-Amos, *The Art of Benin*, p. 80; Bradbury, "Ezomo's *Ikegobo* and the Benin Cult of the Hand," p. 133.
84. Bradbury, "Ezomo's *Ikegobo* and the Benin Cult of the Hand," p. 134.
85. Ben-Amos, *The Art of Benin*, p. 50; Egharevba, *Benin Law and Custom*, p. 88.
86. Bradbury, "Ezomo's *Ikegobo* and the Benin Cult of the Hand," p. 129.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
89. Ben-Amos, *The Art of Benin*, p. 46; Bradbury, *Benin Studies*, p. 260; Bradbury, "Ezomo's *Ikegobo* and the Benin Cult of the Hand," p. 133.
90. Bradbury, "Ezomo's *Ikegobo* and the Benin Cult of the Hand," p. 131.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
92. Brilliant, *Portraiture*, p. 7.
9. Drewal, "Ifè: Origins of Art and Civilization," p. 45.
10. Drewal and Pemberton, with Abiodun, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, p. 14.
11. Pemberton and Afolayan, *Yoruba Sacred Kingship*, pp. 73, 90.
12. Though there are many readings of its slightly curved shape, the monument's overall form is distinctly phallic. Henry John Drewal suggests that the large scale of this and other monoliths positioned in and around Ife relate to its Archaic Era, before 800 CE. See Drewal, "Ifè: Origins of Art and Civilization," p. 55.
13. Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*, p. 126.
14. Drewal and Pemberton, with Abiodun, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, p. 26. Frank Willett's 2004 catalogue raisonné lists some 250 terracotta heads in both complete and fragmentary states; see Frank Willett, with Barbara Blackmun and Emma Lister, *The Art of Ife: A Descriptive Catalogue and Database* (Glasgow: The Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, [2004]).
15. Drewal and Pemberton, with Abiodun, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, p. 16.
16. Rowland Abiodun, "Verbal and Visual Metaphors: Mythical Allusions in Yoruba Ritualistic Art of Ori," *Ifè: Annals of the Institute of Cultural Studies, University of Ife, Nigeria*, no. 1 (1986), p. 16.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Drewal and Pemberton, with Abiodun, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, p. 27.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
21. L. Lincoln, "Portrait of the Past," *Arts: The Magazine for Members of the Minneapolis Society of the Fine Arts* (May 1996), p. 6 and cover ill. Willett, with Blackmun and Lister, *The Art of Ife*, no. T731.
22. *Treasures of Ancient Nigeria*, exhibition catalogue by Ekpo Eyo and Frank Willett; Detroit Institute of Arts, California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1980 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), p. 34.
23. Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*, p. 132.
24. P[eter] S. Garlake, "Excavations at Obalara's Land, Ife: An Interim Report," *West African Journal of Archaeology* 4 (1974), p. 145.
25. Drewal and Pemberton, with Abiodun, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, p. 27.
26. Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*, p. 145.
27. Pemberton and Afolayan, *Yoruba Sacred Kingship*, p. 92.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
29. Suzanne Preston Blier, "Kings, Crowns, and Rights of Succession: Obalufon Arts at Ife and Other Yoruba Centers," *The Art Bulletin* 67, no. 3 (September 1985), p. 398.
30. Drewal and Pemberton, with Abiodun, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, p. 33.
31. Pemberton and Afolayan, *Yoruba Sacred Kingship*, p. 90.
32. *Adenla* is the universal term for sacred beaded crowns. *Aare* is the specific title given by a leader for his particular crown and is associated with the name of the original ancestor who owned that crown.
33. Drewal, "Ifè: Origins of Art and Civilization," p. 67.
34. Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*, pp. 125, 136.
35. Frank Willett, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, New Aspects of Antiquity ([New York]: Thames and Hudson, 1967), p. 13; Willett, with Blackmun and Lister, *The Art of Ife*, no. T737.
36. Willett, with Blackmun and Lister, *The Art of Ife*, no. T737.
37. Blier, "Kings, Crowns, and Rights of Succession," p. 398. The head first came to international attention in 1954 when it was lent by J. J. Klejman to the exhibition "Masterpieces of African Art," organized by the Brooklyn Museum. See *Masterpieces of African Art*, exhibition catalogue by William Fagg, The Brooklyn Museum, 1954–55 (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, 1954), pl. 113. It has been widely published since that time.
38. Hambly published the first account of Iwinrin Grove in 1935: Wilfrid D. Hambly, *Culture Areas of Nigeria*, Field Museum of Natural History, Anthropology Series, 21, no. 3 (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1935).
39. The other head being fig. 47, collected by the German anthropologist Leo Frobenius in 1910. See Leo Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa: Being an Account of the Travels of the German Inner African Exploration Expedition in the Years 1910–1912*, translated by Rudolf Blind, 2 vols. (1912–13; London: Hutchinson and Co., 1913), vol. 1, pl. 7, facing p. 318, top left.
40. The effort was spearheaded by H. L. Ward-Price, the District Officer of Ife who in 1931 became the Resident in Charge of Oyo, and R. "Taffy" Jones, the provincial engineer of Ife. See Willett, with Blackmun and Lister, *The Art of Ife*, chap. II.1, n.p.
41. The title of *ooni*, as opposed to the more generic term *oba*, is specific to the king of Ife. Concerns for the vulnerability of the works proved well founded in April 1993, when all but this head and the head farthest to the left (the head second from the left in fig. 44) were stolen from the museum, though the one second from the right (farthest right in fig. 44) was subsequently returned.

CHAPTER ONE

Epigraph: Wole Soyinka, *Aké: The Years of Childhood*, *Aventura: The Vintage Library of Contemporary World Literature* (1981; New York: Vintage Books, 1983), p. 31.

1. Henry John Drewal, "Ifè: Origins of Art and Civilization," in *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, by Henry John Drewal and John Pemberton III, with Rowland Abiodun (New York: The Center for African Art; Harry N. Abrams, 1989), p. 46.
2. Drewal and Pemberton, with Abiodun, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, p. 13.
3. John Pemberton III and Funso S. Afolayan, *Yoruba Sacred Kingship: "A Power Like That of the Gods"* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), p. 1.
4. Drewal, "Ifè: Origins of Art and Civilization," p. 46.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
7. Peter [S.] Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*, Oxford History of Art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 121.
8. Pemberton and Afolayan, *Yoruba Sacred Kingship*, p. 2.

42. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, p. 90. See also Ekpo Eyo, "Odo Ogbe Street and Lafogido: Contrasting Archaeological Sites in Ile-Ife, Western Nigeria," *West African Journal of Archaeology* 4 (1974), p. 100.
43. Willett, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, p. 14.
44. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, p. 310. The head was an integral part of Frobenius's theory that the site of Atlantis had been located in West Africa. Scholars now believe the head represents an *ooni* (king) of Ife.
45. Wole Soyinka, "This Past Must Address Its Present," Nobel lecture, December 8, 1986, in http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1986/soyinka-lecture.html.
46. Conservators determined the head to be a modern copy made by sand casting. Frank Willett has suggested that Carl Arriens, an artist who accompanied Frobenius on the 1910 expedition, made the copy from a cast of the original; Willett, with Blackmun and Lister, *The Art of Ife*, no. M4. Research into the authenticity of the head is ongoing.
47. Willett, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, pl. 22; Willett, with Blackmun and Lister, *The Art of Ife*, no. T709.
48. Willett, with Blackmun and Lister, *The Art of Ife*, no. T59.
49. *Ibid.*, no. T710.
50. The arrangement of the five animal forms, fourteen pots, and one small head uncovered here suggest that this site was a temple or tomb associated with royalty. Charcoal between the potsherds used in the pavement gave a date of 1110 +/- 95 CE years. Eyo, "Odo Ogbe Street and Lafogido," pp. 105, 107.
51. Garlake, "Excavations at Obalara's Land, Ife," p. 112.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 142, 128.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
55. A short distance from this cache of figurative sculpture, the ritual vessel featuring relief ornamentation (fig. 35) was found embedded with its mouth flush with the pavement and its bottom broken and removed. See *ibid.*, p. 127; Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*, p. 128.
56. Garlake, "Excavations at Obalara's Land, Ife," p. 134.
57. In contrast to the portable *ile ori* shrines belonging to an individual, altars to particular *orisa*, erected within the residences of acolytes as demonstrations of devotion and sites of prayer, are generally accessible to other devotees as well.
58. Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*, p. 128.
59. Garlake, "Excavations at Obalara's Land, Ife," p. 122; Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*, p. 128.
60. Garlake, "Excavations at Obalara's Land, Ife," p. 146.
61. Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*, p. 122. See also Willett, with Blackmun and Lister, *The Art of Ife*, Table I.13.1, for the detailed composition of each work in metal.
62. Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*, p. 123.
63. *Treasures of Ancient Nigeria*, by Eyo and Willett, pp. 12–13.
64. The work, accession no. 79.R.7, is now in the Museum of Ife Antiquities. See *ibid.*, p. 103.
65. The extent to which these works are formally and technically consistent suggests that they were executed in a relatively concentrated period of time by a few artists. Suzanne Blier has argued that in light of their stylistic coherence, the distinctive Ife cast-brass heads may be identified symbolically with the founders of sixteen Yoruba royal city-states. Blier, "Kings, Crowns, and Rights of Succession," p. 398.
66. Willett, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, p. 57; Blier, "Kings, Crowns, and Rights of Succession," p. 394. Though reputed to have been kept in the palace at Ife since the time of its creation, this lifesize head, designed to be freestanding, shows signs of having been previously buried. The work remains at the palace in Ife. See *Dynasty and Divinity: Ife Art in Ancient Nigeria*, exhibition catalogue by Henry John Drewal and Enid Schildkrout; Real Academia de Bellas Artes, San Fernando, British Museum, London, and venues in the U.S., 2009–12 (New York: Museum for African Art, 2009), p. 53. It is identified in oral tradition with a specific historical subject, Lajuwa, the chamberlain of Ooni Aworokolokin, the twelfth *ooni* of Ife, whose role may have been that of trusted adviser and deputy to the king. While the smooth complexion of the face is devoid of striations, it is framed by stylized wavy impressions of locks of hair and a succession of horizontal ridges that extend the length of the neck.
67. Drewal, "Ife: Origins of Art and Civilization," p. 49.
68. Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*, p. 134. The mean date indicated is 1152–1448 CE.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
70. Willett, with Blackmun and Lister, *The Art of Ife*, no. T852.
71. *Ibid.*, no. T867.
72. *Ibid.*, no. T895.
73. *Ibid.*, no. T906.
74. Among the different mineral types identifiable from the sculptural record are quartz and mica.
75. Willett, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, p. 70; also Willett, with Blackmun and Lister, *The Art of Ife*, n.p.
76. Willett, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, p. 71. The potter's wheel was never used anywhere in precolonial Africa. Ceramics across the region are all hand coiled.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
78. Willett, with Blackmun and Lister, *The Art of Ife*, n.p.
79. Drewal, "Ife: Origins of Art and Civilization," p. 46.
80. Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*, p. 134.
81. Pat Oyelola, "Terracotta Sculpture Tradition in Nigeria," *Nigeria Magazine*, no. 149 (1984), pp. 20–21; Drewal, "Ife: Origins of Art and Civilization," p. 71.
82. Drewal, "Ife: Origins of Art and Civilization," p. 74.
83. Willett, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, p. 77.
84. William Fagg and Frank Willett, "Ancient Ife: An Ethnographical Summary," *Odu: A Journal of Yoruba Edo and Related Studies*, no. 8 (October 1960), p. 31; Willett, with Blackmun and Lister, *The Art of Ife*, n.p.
85. Pemberton and Afolayan, *Yoruba Sacred Kingship*, p. 24.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Robert T. Soppelsa, "Terracotta Traditions of the Akan of Southeastern Ivory Coast" (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, Columbus, 1982), p. 10.
2. *The Arts of Ghana*, exhibition catalogue by Herbert M. Cole and Doran H. Ross; Frederick S. Wight Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 1977–78 (Los Angeles: Museum of Cultural History, University of California, 1977), p. 6.
3. J[ohn] K[ofi] Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700–1807*, Legon History Series (London: Longman Group; Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 28. Igwira is an ill-defined seventeenth-century construct for the Aowin, Sefwi, and Ahafo peoples. Doran H. Ross, personal communication, April 14, 2011.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
5. M[alcolm] D. McLeod, *The Asante* (London: Trustees of the British Museum; British Museum Publications, 1981), p. 14.
6. *The Arts of Ghana*, by Cole and Ross, p. 6.
7. McLeod, *The Asante*, p. 17.
8. Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700–1807*, p. 153.
9. Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order*, Asante in the Nineteenth Century, African Studies Series, 13 (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 29.
10. Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700–1807*, p. 42.
11. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 23.
12. Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700–1807*, p. 81.
13. *Ibid.*

14. Soppelsa, "Terracotta Traditions of the Akan of Southeastern Ivory Coast," p. 10.
15. Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700–1807*, p. 152.
16. There are two types of *adae*: the Wednesday *adae* (*Awukudae*) and the Sunday, or "Big," *adae* (*Akwasidae*), pictured here. Each *adae* occurs once during the forty-two-day cycle in the Akan calendar.
17. J[oseph] B[oakye] Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God: A Fragment of Gold Coast Ethics and Religion*, introduction by Kwesi A. Dickson, 2nd ed., Cass Library of African Studies, Africana Modern Library, 2 (1944; London: Frank Cass and Company, 1968), p. 21.
18. George Nelson Preston, "Twifo-Heman and the Akan Art-Leadership Complex of Ghana" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, New York, 1973), p. 42.
19. David Owusu-Ansah and Daniel Miles McFarland, *Historical Dictionary of Ghana*, 2nd ed., African Historical Dictionaries, 63 (1985; Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1995), p. 176.
20. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 75.
21. Thomas C. McCaskie, "Death and the Asantehene: A Historical Meditation," *The Journal of African History* 30, no. 3 (1989), p. 428.
22. Brodie Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa, Including an Account of the Native Tribes, and Their Intercourse with Europeans*, introduction by K. A. Busia, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (1853; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), vol. 2, pp. 270–71.
23. R. S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti*, reprint ed. (1927; New York: AMS Press, 1979), p. 104.
24. McLeod, *The Asante*, p. 39.
25. James [Robert] Anquandah, *Rediscovering Ghana's Past* (Accra, Ghana: Sedco Publishing; Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1982), p. 102.
26. James O. Bellis, *The "Place of the Pots" in Akan Funerary Custom* ([Bloomington]: African Studies Program, Indiana University, 1982), p. 35.
27. Thurstan Shaw, *Excavation at Dawu: Report on an Excavation in a Mound at Dawu, Akuapim, Ghana* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons; Accra: University College of Ghana, 1961), p. 87.
28. Michelle Gilbert, "Akan Terracotta Heads: Gods or Ancestors?," *African Arts* 22, no. 4 (August 1989), p. 40.
29. Ibid., p. 41.
30. Ibid., p. 42.
31. *The Arts of Ghana*, by Cole and Ross, p. 120.
32. McLeod, *The Asante*, pp. 157–58.
33. *The Arts of Ghana*, by Cole and Ross, p. 119.
34. McLeod, *The Asante*, p. 158.
35. *Terres cuites anciennes de l'Ouest africain/ Ancient Terracottas from West Africa*, exhibition catalogue by Bernard de Grunne and others, Institut supérieur d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art, Collège Érasme, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1980, Publications d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie de l'Université catholique de Louvain, 22 (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1980), p. 144.
36. Pieter de Marees, *Description and Historical Account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea* (1602), translated and edited by Albert van Dantzig and Adam Jones (1602; Oxford and New York: The British Academy; Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 184–85. In 1601, Dutch merchant Pieter de Marees stayed in the Fante coastal town of Moree for eleven months. His account of this time was published in Amsterdam in 1602 and the following year translated into German by the de Bry family of publishers in Frankfurt.
37. Anquandah, *Rediscovering Ghana's Past*, p. 104.
38. Fred Attah, *Clay Figures Used in Funerary Ceremonies* ([Accra]: Ghana Museum and Monument Board, [1973]), n.p.
39. Anquandah, *Rediscovering Ghana's Past*, p. 104.
40. Doran H. Ross, personal communication, March 11, 2011.
41. O[liver] Davies, "Human Representations in Terracotta from the Gold Coast," *South African Journal of Science/Suid-Afrikaanse Joernaal van Wetenskap* 52 (January 1956), p. 147.
42. O[liver] Davies, *Excavations at Ahinsan, Ashanti, Ghana: A Seventeenth-Century Site with Ritual Pottery and Terracottas. Abridged Report, Issued 1977* ([Pietmaritzburg: O. Davies], 1977), p. 2.
43. Bellis, *The "Place of the Pots" in Akan Funerary Custom*, pp. 2, 34.
44. Ibid., p. 36.
45. Doran H. Ross, personal communication, April 14, 2011.
46. Bellis, *The "Place of the Pots" in Akan Funerary Custom*, p. 6.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., p. 21.
49. Ibid., pp. 16, 27.
50. George N[elson] Preston, "People Making Portraits Making People: Living Icons of the Akan," *African Arts* 23, no. 3 [Portraiture in Africa, Part 1] (July 1990), p. 76.
51. Ibid., pp. 72–73.
52. George N[elson] Preston, "An Akan Terracotta Head in the Collection Barbier-Müller," *Comnaissance des arts tribaux: Bulletin . . . Musée Barbier-Müller*, no. 6 ([1980]), pp. [1–4].
53. Roy Sieber, "Kwahu Terracottas, Oral Traditions, and Ghanaian History," in *African Art and Leadership*, edited by Douglas Fraser and Herbert M. Cole (Madison, Milwaukee, and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1972), p. 173.
54. Ibid., p. 178.
55. Ibid., p. 176.
56. Kwabena Ameyaw, "Funerary Effigies from Kwahu," *Ghana Notes and Queries*, no. 8 (January 1966), p. 12.
57. Sieber, "Kwahu Terracottas, Oral Traditions, and Ghanaian History," p. 177.
58. Gilbert, "Akan Terracotta Heads: Gods or Ancestors?," p. 38.
59. Ameyaw, "Funerary Effigies from Kwahu," p. 12.
60. Patricia Crane Coronel, "Aowin Terracotta Sculpture," *African Arts* 13, no. 1 (November 1979), p. 30.
61. Similarly, before these figures were released to enter into a European collection, the priestess would have washed them and offered libations to the gods.
62. Coronel, "Aowin Terracotta Sculpture," p. 30.
63. Soppelsa, "Terracotta Traditions of the Akan of Southeastern Ivory Coast," pp. 1, 7.
64. Ibid., p. 47.
65. Ibid., p. 413.
66. Ibid., p. 41.
67. A French expedition, led by Captain Binger, stayed with Akassimadou in the early 1890s and took this portrait at the king's own request. At the time, he was more than sixty years old and half paralyzed. See Marcel Monnier, *France noire (Côte d'Ivoire et Soudan): Mission Binger* (Paris: Librairie Plon; E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie, Imprimeurs-Éditeurs, 1894), pl. following p. 60.
68. Robert T. Soppelsa, "Western Art-Historical Methodology and African Art: Panofsky's Paradigm and Ivorian Mma," *Art Journal* 47, no. 2 [Object and Intellect: Interpretations of Meaning in African Art] (Summer 1988), p. 148.
69. Soppelsa, "Terracotta Traditions of the Akan of Southeastern Ivory Coast," p. 52.
70. Ibid., p. 14.
71. Soppelsa, "Western Art-Historical Methodology and African Art," p. 152.
72. Soppelsa, "Terracotta Traditions of the Akan of Southeastern Ivory Coast," p. 56.
73. Soppelsa, "Western Art-Historical Methodology and African Art," p. 150.
74. Ibid., p. 152.
75. Ibid., p. 150.
76. Ibid., p. 151.
77. Soppelsa, "Terracotta Traditions of the Akan of Southeastern Ivory Coast," p. 36.
78. T[homas] Edward Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, edited, with introduction and notes, by W. E. F. Ward, 3rd ed. (1819; London: Frank Cass and Co., 1966), p. 364.
79. MMA 1978.412.394. Robert T. Soppelsa, "A Mma in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *African Arts* 23, no. 3 [Portraiture in Africa, Part 1] (July 1990), p. 78.
80. Ibid., p. 77.
81. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, p. 362.

82. Soppelsa, "A *Mma* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," p. 78.
 83. Gerhard Kubik, "Intra-African Streams of Influence," in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol. 1, *Africa*, edited by Ruth M. Stone (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), p. 316.
 84. Ibid.
 85. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, p. 361.
 86. Anquandah, *Rediscovering Ghana's Past*, p. 102.
 87. Soppelsa, "Western Art-Historical Methodology and African Art," p. 147.
 88. Soppelsa, "Terracotta Traditions of the Akan of Southeastern Ivory Coast," p. 13.
 89. Ibid., p. 16.
 90. Ibid., p. 150.
 91. Ibid., p. 59.
 92. Ibid., pp. 58–59.
 93. Soppelsa, "Western Art-Historical Methodology and African Art," p. 152.
 94. Ibid., p. 151.
 95. Soppelsa, "Terracotta Traditions of the Akan of Southeastern Ivory Coast," p. 19.
 96. Tobias Wendl, "Entangled Traditions: Photography and the History of Media in Southern Ghana," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 39 [*African Works*] (Spring 2001), p. 97.
 97. Ibid., p. 83.
 98. Ibid., p. 81.
 99. Ibid., p. 83.
 100. Doran H. Ross, "'Come and Try': Towards a History of Fante Military Shrines," *African Arts* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 2007), pp. 13, 15, 21.
 101. Doran H. Ross, personal communication, March 11, 2011.
 102. Soppelsa, "Terracotta Traditions of the Akan of Southeastern Ivory Coast," p. 15. Following his return to France in 1933, Lheureux exhibited a selection of these at the Galerie Braun in Paris. Fifty-four of the Anyi terracottas from his collection were eventually acquired by Helena Rubinstein.
- CHAPTER THREE
- Epigraph: M. D. W. Jeffreys, "The Bamum Coronation Ceremony as Described by King Njoya," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 20, no. 1 (January 1950), pp. 40–41.
1. Sultan Njoya, *Histoire et coutumes des Bamum*, translated by Henri Martin, Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Afrique noire, Série populations, 5 (Dakar: L'Institut Français d'Afrique noire, 1952).
 2. Jean-Pierre Warnier, "The King as a Container in the Cameroon Grassfields," *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 39 (1993), p. 304.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.
 5. E. M. Chilver and P. M. Kaberry, "The Kingdom of Kom in West Cameroon," in *West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Daryll Forde and P. M. Kaberry (London: International African Institute; Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 127.
 6. This extended description of ritual is given in the present tense because religious beliefs and the practice of ancestor veneration remain ongoing, although the political role of leaders has changed since the colonial period.
 7. Warnier, "The King as a Container in the Cameroon Grassfields," pp. 306–7.
 8. Ibid., p. 307.
 9. Ibid., p. 305.
 10. *Cameroon: Art and Kings*, exhibition catalogue by Lorenz Homberger, Christraud M. Geary, and Hans-Joachim Koloss; Museum Rietberg Zürich, 2008 (Zürich, 2008), p. 17. Because an extensive literature on Bamum art and its patronage under King Njoya exists, in this particular exhibition we chose to focus on the less-familiar patronage of commemorative portraits commissioned by Bangwa and Kom leaders.
 11. Pierre Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun* (Arnouville: Arts d'Afrique noire, 1986), p. 300.
 12. Robert Brain and Adam Pollock, *Bangwa Funerary Sculpture* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 7.
 13. Ibid., p. 5.
 14. *Cameroon: Art and Kings*, by Homberger, Geary, and Koloss, p. 18.
 15. Brain and Pollock, *Bangwa Funerary Sculpture*, p. 9.
 16. Although European colonial powers did not recognize Assunganyi's rule between ca. 1902 and 1915, he retained his title in the eyes of his own people.
 17. Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, p. 309; Brain and Pollock, *Bangwa Funerary Sculpture*, p. 83.
 18. Warnier, "The King as a Container in the Cameroon Grassfields," pp. 308, 311.
 19. Ibid., p. 312.
 20. Brain and Pollock, *Bangwa Funerary Sculpture*, p. 119.
 21. Calabashes are often used as basic liquid containers. Ornately beaded ones are created for the *fon*'s exclusive use to hold palm wine. Such elaborate receptacles are a major item of regalia associated with the person of a *fon*.
 22. Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, p. 352.
 23. Brain and Pollock, *Bangwa Funerary Sculpture*, p. 123.
 24. Ibid., p. 119; Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, p. 313.
 25. Brain and Pollock, *Bangwa Funerary Sculpture*, p. 121.
 26. Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, p. 313.
 27. Brain and Pollock, *Bangwa Funerary Sculpture*, p. 120.
 28. *The Art of Cameroon*, exhibition catalogue by Tamara Northern; National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., New Orleans Museum of Art, Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, American Museum of Natural History, New York, 1984–85 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1984), p. 84.
 29. Ibid. It was published in Eckart von Sydow's pioneering survey of non-Western art in 1923 (Eckart von Sydow, *Die Kunst der Naturvölker und der Vorzeit*, Propyläen-Kunstgeschichte, 1 [Berlin: Propyläen-Verlag, 1923], p. 115). In 1929 the work was exchanged for two Yaka masks, from what at that time was the Belgian Congo, owned by the collector and art dealer Arthur Max Heinrich Speyer (Maureen Murphy, "Voyages d'une reine bangwa dans l'imaginaire occidental," *Afrique: Archéologie et arts* 4 [2006], p. 25). By 1934 Speyer had sold the Bangwa figure to the French dealer Charles Ratton.
 30. *Man Ray, African Art and the Modernist Lens*, exhibition catalogue by Wendy Grossman, Ian Walker, and others; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque, University of Virginia Museum of Art, Charlottesville, University of British Columbia, Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, 2009–11 (Washington, D.C.: International Arts and Artists, 2009), p. 20.
 31. Ibid.
 32. Murphy, "Voyages d'une reine bangwa dans l'imaginaire occidental," pp. 25, 27.
 33. When the Rubinstein estate was sold in New York in 1966, it was purchased by the American collector Valerie Franklin. In 1990 the Dapper Foundation in Paris acquired the renowned masterpiece from the sale of the Franklin collection.
 34. *Man Ray, African Art and the Modernist Lens*, by Grossman, Walker, and others, p. 22.
 35. Evans produced a limited-edition portfolio on the occasion of MoMA's 1935 first blockbuster exhibition of African art curated by James Johnson Sweeney. The Bangwa priestess was among the some six hundred works featured in that pioneering presentation. See Walker Evans, *African Negro Art: Photographs by Walker Evans* ([New York]: The Museum of Modern Art, [1935]).
 36. *The Art of Cameroon*, by Northern, p. 85. This work entered the collection of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin, where it remained until it too was acquired by Arthur Speyer. Speyer eventually sold the work to the Franklin family, and it has since been transferred to several successive private owners.
 37. *Cameroon: Art and Kings*, by Homberger, Geary, and Koloss, p. 19.
 38. Ibid., p. 317.

39. *African Aesthetics: The Carlo Monzino Collection*, exhibition catalogue by Susan Vogel; Center for African Art, New York, 1986 (New York, 1986), p. 121.
40. Eugenia Shanklin, "The Path to Laikom: Kom Royal Court Architecture," *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 31 (1985), p. 112.
41. Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *Traditional Government and Social Change: A Study of the Political Institutions among the Kom of the Cameroon Grassfields* (Fribourg: The University Press, 1976), p. 11; Paul Gebauer, "Architecture of Cameroon," *African Arts* 5, no. 1 (Autumn 1971), p. 46.
42. Gebauer, "Architecture of Cameroon," p. 46. Tragically, most of Kom's historical buildings were consumed by fire in 1960. See also p. 146 in the present volume.
43. Paul Nchoji Nkwi and Jean-Pierre Warnier, *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields* ([Yaounde]: Publication of the Department of Sociology, University of Yaounde, 1982), p. 173.
44. Paul Nchoji Nkwi, "The Kom Palace: Its Foundation, Growth and Significance," *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 31 (1985), p. 105.
45. Chilver and Kaberry, "The Kingdom of Kom in West Cameroon," p. 146.
46. Shanklin, "The Path to Laikom," p. 124.
47. Chilver and Kaberry, "The Kingdom of Kom in West Cameroon," p. 127.
48. Paul Nchoji Nkwi, "'Becoming Foyn' among the Kom of the Cameroon Western Grassfield," *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 36 [Afrika-Studien II: Eike Haberland zum 65. Geburtstag] (1990), p. 236.
49. Chilver and Kaberry, "The Kingdom of Kom in West Cameroon," p. 136.
50. Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, p. 209.
51. *The Art of Cameroon*, by Northern, p. 94.
52. Nkwi, "'Becoming Foyn' among the Kom of the Cameroon Western Grassfield," p. 237.
53. Chilver and Kaberry, "The Kingdom of Kom in West Cameroon," p. 137.
54. Nkwi, *Traditional Government and Social Change*, p. 32.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
56. Nkwi, "'Becoming Foyn' among the Kom of the Cameroon Western Grassfield," pp. 235, 239.
57. Nkwi, *Traditional Government and Social Change*, p. 50.
58. Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, p. 212.
59. Christraud [M.] Geary, "Ludwig Brandl's Historical Notes on the Kingdom of Kom (Cameroon)," *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 26 (1980), p. 43. Detailed information about Kom history before the reign of Yu, its seventh *fon*, is sparse.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
61. Nkwi, "The Kom Palace," p. 105.
62. Chilver and Kaberry, "The Kingdom of Kom in West Cameroon," p. 131.
63. Nkwi and Warnier, *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields*, p. 175. A great soldier and driven politician, Yu was born about 1830 to Princess Funkuyn, sister to Kemeng, and Nsom Su, the son of a noble lineage.
64. Nkwi, *Traditional Government and Social Change*, p. 22; Nkwi and Warnier, *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields*, p. 175.
65. Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, p. 216.
66. Nkwi, *Traditional Government and Social Change*, p. 22.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
69. *Cameroon: Art and Kings*, by Homberger, Geary, and Koloss, p. 220. The museum was renamed the Ethnologisches Museum in 1999.
70. Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, p. 209.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 212; *Cameroon: Art and Kings*, by Homberger, Geary, and Koloss, p. 222.
72. *Art from Africa: Long Steps Never Broke a Back*, exhibition catalogue by Pamela McClusky, with Robert Farris Thompson; Seattle Art Museum, 2002 (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 122. The male figure remains in Frankfurt's collection, now the Museum der Weltkulturen, but its female counterpart was deaccessioned in 1934 and sold to Arthur Speyer, who in turn eventually sold the work to Charles Ratton. In 1966, the American collector Katherine White acquired it from Ratton's Paris gallery and subsequently gave it to the Seattle Art Museum.
73. Nkwi and Warnier, *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields*, p. 174.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 91–93.
75. *Art from Africa: Long Steps Never Broke a Back*, by McClusky, p. 119.
76. *The Art of Cameroon*, by Northern, p. 98; Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, p. 213. The queen mother is also required to address the *fon* in this manner, but the emphasis on the gesture of submission in this representation makes it more likely to be of the *fon*'s spouse than of his mother.
77. Von Sydow, *Die Kunst der Naturvölker und der Vorzeit*, p. 112.
78. Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, p. 213.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
82. Shanklin, "The Path to Laikom," p. 120.
83. Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, p. 209.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
85. Christraud Geary identified several versions of these in German museum archives. See Christraud M. Geary, "Photographs as Materials for African History: Some Methodological Considerations," *History in Africa: A Journal of Method* 13 (1986), pp. 103–6.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
87. All trace of the royal male portrait has been lost, and the portrait of the royal princess is in a German private collection.
88. *The Art of Cameroon*, by Northern, p. 96.
89. Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, p. 214.
90. Fred Ferretti, *Afo-A-Kom: Sacred Art of Cameroon* (New York: The Third Press, 1975), p. 62.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
94. *Royal Art of Cameroon: The Art of the Bamenda-Tikar*, exhibition catalogue by Tamara Northern; Hopkins Center Art Galleries, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H., 1973 (Hanover, N.H., 1973), p. 11. Furman had the work on offer in his New York gallery and lent it to the survey of Cameroon art organized by Tamara Northern at Dartmouth College.
95. Hans-Joachim Koloss, "Court Art and Masks in the Kingdoms of the North West Province of Cameroon," in *Cameroon: Art and Kings*, by Homberger, Geary, and Koloss, p. 82.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

CHAPTER FOUR

Epigraph: E[mil] Torday and T[homas] A[tol] Joyce, *Notes ethnographiques sur les peuples communément appelés Bakuba, ainsi que sur les peuplades apparentées, les Bushongo*, Ethnographie, Anthropologie, 3, Documents ethnographiques concernant les populations du Congo Belge, 1, pt. 1 (Brussels: Ministère des colonies, 1910), p. 27; Monni Adams, "18th-Century Kuba King Figures," *African Arts* 21, no. 3 (May 1988), pp. 33–34.

1. Torday and Joyce, *Notes ethnographiques sur les peuples communément appelés Bakuba, ainsi que sur les peuplades apparentées, les Bushongo*, p. 2.
2. Torday's expedition to the region ran from the fall of 1907 through December 1909. During Torday's visit to the Kuba court, Kot áPe gifted four of the royal *ndop* portrait figures to him (including figs. 141, 150, and 151) and one to the Belgian minister, Jules Renkin (fig. 149).
3. Jan Vansina, "Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba—I. Methods," *The Journal of African History* 1, no. 1 (1960), p. 45; Jan Vansina, *The Children of Woot: A History of the Kuba Peoples* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), p. 227.
4. *Ibid.*
5. J[an] Vansina, "Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba—II. Results," *The Journal of African History* 1, no. 2 (1960), p. 261.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 258.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 265.
9. Vansina, "Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba—II. Results," p. 266.

10. Ibid., pp. 266–67.
11. Jan Vansina, “The Power of Systematic Doubt in Historical Inquiry,” *History in Africa: A Journal of Method* 1 (1974), p. 114.
12. Vansina, “Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba—II. Results,” p. 267.
13. E[mil] Torday, *On the Trail of the Bushongo: An Account of a Remarkable and Hitherto Unknown African People, Their Origin, Art, High Social and Political Organization and Culture, Derived from the Author's Personal Experience Amongst Them* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1925), p. 118.
14. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, pp. 3–4.
15. The Congo Free State was created as the private holding of a group of European investors headed by Leopold II, who was recognized as its sovereign following the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884–85. Because of the extreme brutality of this regime, the Congo Free State was abolished in 1908 and replaced with the Belgian Congo, a colony controlled by the Belgian parliament.
16. In 1971 Mobutu Sese Seko changed the country's name to Zaire, but the name of Democratic Republic of the Congo was restored in 1997 after he was deposed.
17. Elisofon made three visits to the Kuba court at Nsheng between 1947 and 1972.
18. David A. Binkley and Patricia Darish, *Kuba* (Milan: 5 Continents, 2009), p. 46.
19. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 7.
20. Ibid., p. 133.
21. Ibid., p. 23.
22. The king and queen visited the then-Belgian colony from June to August of 1928. The distance from Nsheng to the train station was about twelve miles.
23. The portfolio was published as Casimir Zagourski, *L'Afrique qui disparaît!*, [1929–37], ser. 1, no. 7.
24. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 237.
25. In the absence of documentation, however, the fluid and intangible nature of most other aspects of veneration have been more difficult to chronicle.
26. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 130. Generally, the oldest brother of the outgoing king was considered first in line. See Torday and Joyce, *Notes ethnographiques sur les peuples communément appelés Bakuba, ainsi que sur les peuplades apparentées, les Bushongo*, pp. 62–63.
27. Joseph Cornet, *Art royal kuba* (Milan: Edizioni Sipiel, 1982), p. 311.
28. Ibid., p. 312.
29. Ibid., p. 314.
30. Torday, *On the Trail of the Bushongo*, p. 177.
31. Cornet, *Art royal kuba*, p. 41.
32. Ibid. A pluriarc consists of a hollowed wooden resonator with strings running either parallel or slightly inclined to the soundboard. Either the pluriarc was invented in central Africa and spread with coastal contacts from Gabon or the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ancient Benin, as well as south into Angola, or it was an invention of the ancestors of Edo-speaking peoples of Nigeria. See Gerhard Kubik, “Pluriarc,” *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/21954> (February 16, 2011).
33. Cornet, *Art royal kuba*, p. 43.
34. Ibid., pp. 36, 44.
35. Ibid., p. 44.
36. Ibid.
37. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 130.
38. Torday, *On the Trail of the Bushongo*, p. 138.
39. Cornet, *Art royal kuba*, p. 73.
40. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 219.
41. Those drums identified with the rules of MishááPelyeeng áNée (r. ca. 1760) onward were preserved at the capital until 1969.
42. Jan Vansina, “Ndop: Royal Statues among the Kuba,” in *African Art and Leadership*, edited by Douglas Fraser and Herbert M. Cole (Madison, Milwaukee, and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1972), p. 44.
43. Ibid.
44. Cornet, *Art royal kuba*, p. 34.
45. Jan Vansina, *Art History in Africa: An Introduction to Method* (London and New York: Longman, 1984), p. 123; see also Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 221.
46. Dorothy K. Washburn, *Style, Classification, and Ethnicity: Design Categories on Bakuba Raffia Cloth*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 80, pt. 3 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1990), p. 24.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., p. 25.
50. Ibid.
51. Vansina, *Art History in Africa*, p. 126.
52. Washburn, *Style, Classification, and Ethnicity*, p. 25.
53. Vansina, “Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba—I. Methods,” p. 50.
54. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, pp. 62–63.
55. Torday, *On the Trail of the Bushongo*, p. 142.
56. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 59.
57. Ibid., p. 60.
58. Cornet, *Art royal kuba*, p. 44.
59. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, pp. 67–68.
60. Vansina, “Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba—II. Results,” p. 268; Torday and Joyce, *Notes ethnographiques sur les peuples communément appelés Bakuba, ainsi que sur les peuplades apparentées, les Bushongo*, pp. 62, 63.
61. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, pp. 69, 181.
62. Ibid., p. 156.
63. Vansina, “Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba—II. Results,” p. 269.
64. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 70.
65. Ibid., p. 208.
66. Ibid., p. 70.
67. Vansina, “Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba—I. Methods,” p. 46.
68. Vansina, “Recording the Oral History of the Bakuba—II. Results,” p. 269.
69. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 72.
70. Ibid., p. 213. Information on the testing can be found in Roger Dechamps, “Première note concernant l'identification anatomique de bois utilisés pour des sculptures en Afrique,” *Africa-Tervuren* 16, no. 3 (1970), pp. 77–83. The reference to the five analyzed ndop figures is in an unnumbered table, p. 79.
71. Christopher Spring, *African Arms and Armour* (London: British Museum Press, 1993), p. 89.
72. Monni Adams, “18th-Century Kuba King Figures,” *African Arts* 21, no. 3 (May 1988), p. 36.
73. Cornet, *Art royal kuba*, p. 219.
74. This distinctive feature is associated with the form of a hoe that a certain faction of mythical leaders, engaged in a dispute over power, wore to identify themselves.
75. Cornet, *Art royal kuba*, p. 202.
76. Ibid., p. 201.
77. Ibid., p. 210.
78. Adams, “18th-Century Kuba King Figures,” p. 34.
79. Jean B. Rosenwald, “Kuba King Figures,” *African Arts* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1974), p. 30.
80. William Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo* (Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, [1917]), p. 112.
81. Educated in Hungary and Germany, Torday had become interested in central Africa while working in a Brussels bank. He first traveled to the region in 1900, securing a position in a remote outpost of King Leopold's administration in the province of Katanga. Upon his return to Europe four years later, he established contact with the British Museum. John Mack has characterized the work Torday subsequently undertook in central Africa through his affiliation with the museum as that of a field anthropologist. See John Mack, *Emil Torday and the Art of the Congo, 1900–1909* (London: British Museum Publications, 1990), pp. 11, 16.
82. Ibid., p. 71.
83. Figures 155 and 156 represent the only photographs of an ndop figure taken in situ before its removal to the West. In another image from the same series, the figure's arm is attached, which suggests that the statue was damaged during the photography process.
84. Mack, *Emil Torday and the Art of the Congo, 1900–1909*, p. 71.
85. Ibid., p. 17.
86. Torday, *On the Trail of the Bushongo*, p. 149.
87. That work subsequently entered the possession of the territorial administrator Blondeau

- and in 1913 was given by the Compagnie du Kasai to Belgium's Musée Royal de l'Afrique Central at Tervuren. See *ibid.*, p. 201.
88. See Cornet, *Art royal kuba*, p. 51; Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 213.
 89. One of these (fig. 157) was eventually transferred to the Musées Nationaux du Zaïre in Kinshasa.
 90. Frans [Maria] Olbrechts, *Congolese Sculpture*, translated and introduced by Daniel J. Crowley and Pearl Ramcharan-Crowley, microfiche plates and figs. (1939; New Haven: HRAflex Books [Human Relations Area Files], 1982), p. 51.
 91. Frans Maria Olbrechts, *Plastiek van Kongo* (Antwerp: Standaard-Boekhandel, 1946).
 92. Frans M. Olbrechts, 1899–1958: *In Search of Art in Africa*, exhibition catalogue by Constantine Petridis and others; Etnografisch Museum, Antwerp, 2001–2 (Antwerp, 2001), p. 178, no. 33. Those other collections are the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium; the British Museum, London; and the Danish National Museum, Copenhagen. Although Olbrechts identified eighteen figures in total, the number illustrated in figs. 159 and 160 is only seventeen because one arrived too late to be included in the Antwerp photographic record.
 93. Olbrechts, *Congolese Sculpture*, p. 44.
 94. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
 95. Rosenwald, “Kuba King Figures.”
 96. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
 97. Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 214.
 98. Cornet, *Art royal kuba*.
 99. Adams, “18th-Century Kuba King Figures,” p. 38.
 100. Cornet, *Art royal kuba*, pp. 78–82.
 101. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
 102. Adams, “18th-Century Kuba King Figures,” p. 34.
 103. Binkley and Darish, *Kuba*, p. 52.
 104. Although the drawing farthest to the right is not of an *ndop* figure, the visage resembles Mbop Mábiinc maMbeki.
- CHAPTER FIVE
- Epigraph: V. W. Turner, “A Lunda Love Story and Its Consequences: Selected Texts from Traditions Collected by Henrique Dias de Carvalho at the Court of Mwatianvwa in 1887,” *The Rhodes-Livingstone Journal* 19 [Human Problems in British Central Africa] (1955), pp. 7, 9.
1. Joseph C[alder] Miller, *Kings and Kinsmen: Early Mbundu States in Angola*, Oxford Studies in African Affairs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 12.
 2. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
 3. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
 4. Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (Madison, Milwaukee, and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), pp. 70–71.
 5. *Art and Power in the Central African Savanna: Luba, Songye, Tshokwe, Luluwa*, exhibition catalogue by Constantine Petridis, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 2008 (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2008), p. 135. *Ilunga* is a standard praise name introduced by the Luba peoples.
 6. Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p. 75.
 7. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
 8. Marie-Louise Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe* (Meudon: Alain et Françoise Chaffin, 1982), p. 37.
 9. *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 97.
 10. From December 9, 1875, through January 27, 1876, Pogge was stationed in Musumba, the capital of the Lunda empire. Pogge's journals contain the earliest written transcriptions of Lunda oral tradition and remain an important early source of information concerning this center.
 11. Jan Vansina, “The Foundation of the Kingdom of Kasanje,” *The Journal of African History* 4, no. 3 (1963), p. 355; Joseph Calder Miller, *Cokwe Expansion, 1850–1900*, African Studies Program, The University of Wisconsin, Occasional Paper no. 1 (Madison: African Studies Program, The University of Wisconsin, 1969), p. 28.
 12. Miller, *Cokwe Expansion, 1850–1900*, p. 28.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 18; Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p. 216.
 15. Miller, *Cokwe Expansion, 1850–1900*, p. 18.
 16. Joseph C[alder] Miller, “Cokwe Trade and Conquest in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Pre-Colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900*, edited by Richard Gray and David Birmingham (London, New York, and Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 175.
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
 18. Skilled Chokwe ironworkers were able to carefully repair and maintain these firearms. See *ibid.*, p. 189.
 19. Miller, *Cokwe Expansion, 1850–1900*, p. 33; Miller, “Cokwe Trade and Conquest in the Nineteenth Century,” p. 178.
 20. Miller, “Cokwe Trade and Conquest in the Nineteenth Century,” p. 180.
 21. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
 23. *Ibid.*, p. 179; Miller, *Cokwe Expansion, 1850–1900*, p. 55.
 24. Miller, *Cokwe Expansion, 1850–1900*, p. 61.
 25. Miller, “Cokwe Trade and Conquest in the Nineteenth Century,” p. 191.
 26. Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p. 218.
 27. Miller, *Cokwe Expansion, 1850–1900*, pp. 64–65.
 28. Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 43. Nineteenth-century European visitors to Chokwe chiefdoms also characterized them as autonomous. See Joseph Calder Miller, “Cokwe Expansion, 1850–1900” (Master's thesis, African Studies Program, The University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1967), p. 25.
 29. Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 43.
 30. Miller, *Cokwe Expansion, 1850–1900*, p. 20.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
 32. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
 33. Marie-Louise Bastin, *Statuettes tshokwe du héros civilisateur “Tshibinda Ilunga,”* reprint ed., *Arts d'Afrique noire* 19, supplement (October 1976) (Arnouville: Arts d'Afrique noire, 1978), p. 63.
 34. Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 62.
 35. Bastin, *Statuettes tshokwe du héros civilisateur “Tshibinda Ilunga,”* p. 119.
 36. During this visit, Bastin recorded a wealth of information from a selected group of elders, leaders, and diviners. See Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 26.
 37. *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 246.
 38. Bastin, *Statuettes tshokwe du héros civilisateur “Tshibinda Ilunga,”* p. 110.
 39. *Ibid.*, pp. 98–100.
 40. Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 77.
 41. Bastin, *Statuettes tshokwe du héros civilisateur “Tshibinda Ilunga,”* p. 100.
 42. François Borel, *Les Sanza: Collections d'instruments de musique*, Collections du Musée d'Ethnographie de Neuchâtel, 3 (Neuchâtel: Musée d'Ethnographie, 1986), p. 15.
 43. Bastin, *Statuettes tshokwe du héros civilisateur “Tshibinda Ilunga,”* p. 79.
 44. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
 45. Miller, *Kings and Kinsmen*, p. 127.
 46. Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 40.
 47. Miller, *Kings and Kinsmen*, p. 53.
 48. Both officers of the Royal Portuguese Navy, Capello and Ivens traveled across the Angolan territory between 1877 and 1880, with the stated intention to “join Europe in the great African crusade.” H[ermenegildo de Brito] Capello and R[oberto] Ivens, *From Benguela to the Territory of Yacca: Description of a Journey into Central and West Africa . . .*, translated by Alfred Elwes, 2 vols. (1881; London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1882), vol. 1, p. xxv. For the hunter, see *ibid.*, p. 214.
 49. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
 50. Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 137.
 51. Bastin, *Statuettes tshokwe du héros civilisateur “Tshibinda Ilunga,”* pp. 81–82.
 52. Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 42; Bastin, *Statuettes tshokwe du héros civilisateur “Tshibinda Ilunga,”* p. 66.
 53. Bastin, *Statuettes tshokwe du héros civilisateur “Tshibinda Ilunga,”* p. 72.
 54. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
 55. Miller, *Cokwe Expansion, 1850–1900*, p. 15.
 56. Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p. 219.
 57. Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 41.

58. Elisabeth L. Cameron, "Potential and Fulfilled Woman: Initiations, Sculpture, and Masquerades in Kabompo District, Zambia," in *Chokwe!: Art and Initiation Among the Chokwe and Related Peoples*, edited by Manuel Jordán (Munich, London, and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 1998), p. 79.
 59. Miller, *Cokwe Expansion, 1850–1900*, p. 24.
 60. Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 155.
 61. Ibid.
 62. Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p. 219. The regional designation took its name from a small river in the Luluwa region between the Tshikapa and Luebo Rivers. It does not appear on current maps.
 63. *Art and Power in the Central African Savanna*, by Petridis, pp. 119, 122. Officially, the Katanga province ceased existing as an administrative entity in 2009, when the Democratic Republic of the Congo restructured its eleven provinces into twenty-six. Katanga is now divided into four provinces: Tanganyika, Haut-Lomani, Lualaba, and Haut-Katanga.
 64. Hermann von Wissmann, Ludwig Wolf, Curt von François, and Hans Mueller, *Im Innern Afrikas: Die Erforschung des Kassai während der Jahre 1883, 1884 und 1885*, 3rd ed. (1888; Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1891), p. x. The photographer, Lieutenant Franz Mueller, was both photographer and meteorologist for the expedition.
 65. Miller, "Cokwe Trade and Conquest in the Nineteenth Century," pp. 182–83.
 66. *Art and Power in the Central African Savanna*, by Petridis, p. 158.
 67. Miller, "Cokwe Trade and Conquest in the Nineteenth Century," p. 184.
 68. *Art and Power in the Central African Savanna*, by Petridis, p. 122.
 69. Bastin, *Statuettes tshokwe du héros civilisateur "Tshibinda Ilunga"*, p. 118.
 70. *Art and Power in the Central African Savanna*, by Petridis, p. 135.
 71. Bastin, *Statuettes tshokwe du héros civilisateur "Tshibinda Ilunga"*, p. 131.
 72. Ibid.
 73. *Art and Power in the Central African Savanna*, by Petridis, p. 123; Hans-Joachim Koloss et al., *Africa, Art and Culture: Masterpieces of African Art, Ethnological Museum, Berlin* (Munich, Berlin, London, and New York: Prestel-Verlag, [2002]), p. 224. These cavities were often found in the crown of the head and are thus not necessarily visible in photographs.
 74. Constantine Petridis in *Masterpieces from Central Africa: The Tervuren Museum*, exhibition catalogue by Gustaaf Verswijver and others; Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa/Hull, and other venues, 1996–98 (Munich and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 1996), p. 169.
 75. P[aul] Timmermans, "Essai de typologie de la sculpture des Bena Luluwa du Kasai," *Africa-Tervuren* 12, no. 1 (1966), p. 18.
 76. *Art and Power in the Central African Savanna*, by Petridis, p. 135.
 77. Ibid., p. 127.
 78. Timmermans, "Essai de typologie de la sculpture des Bena Luluwa du Kasai," p. 19.
 79. *Art and Power in the Central African Savanna*, by Petridis, p. 135.
 80. Ibid.
 81. Petridis in Koloss et al., *Africa, Art and Culture*, pp. 223, 224.
 82. Wolf left the rest of the group in Mukenge. His assigned goal was to reach the western frontier of the Kasai region in order to meet the Kuba ruler Lukengo and to develop a friendly relationship with him. During this excursion he also collected several works for Berlin's Museum für Völkerkunde, today's Ethnologisches Museum.
 83. Petridis in *Masterpieces from Central Africa*, by Verswijver and others, p. 169.
 84. *Art and Power in the Central African Savanna*, by Petridis, p. 137. Initially a ruler with little power, Kalamba Mukenge used the relationships he developed with European explorers as a means of gaining wealth and prestige. Wissmann in particular played an important role in enhancing Kalamba Mukenge's emergence as one of the most powerful Luluwa chiefs of the period.
 85. Ibid.
 86. Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 253.
 87. Ibid., p. 90.
 88. Hans Himmelheber, "Art et artistes batshiok," *Brousse* 3 (1939), p. 22.
 89. Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 89.
 90. Ibid.
 91. Himmelheber, "Art et artistes batshiok," p. 21.
 92. Marie-Louise Bastin, *Art décoratif tshokwe*, Subsídios para a história, arqueologia e etnografia dos povos da Lunda, Museu do Dundo, Publicações culturais, 55 (Lisbon: Companhia de Diamantes de Angola, Serviços Culturais, 1961), p. 58.
 93. Ibid., p. 90. The rich repertoire of Chokwe graphic designs were drawn upon in this context as well as in Chokwe decorative arts.
 94. Bastin, *La Sculpture tshokwe*, p. 72.
 95. Himmelheber, "Art et artistes batshiok," p. 28.
 96. Bastin, *Art décoratif tshokwe*, p. 98.
 97. Ibid., p. 96.
- #### CHAPTER SIX
- Epigraph: François Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, Publications d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie de l'Université Catholique de Louvain, 12 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut supérieur d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art, 1977), p. 488.
1. Pamela A[nn] R[ese] Blakely and Thomas D. Blakely, "Ancestors, 'Witchcraft,' and Foregrounding the Poetic: Men's Oratory and Women's Song-Dance in Hémhá Funerary Performance," in *Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression*, edited by Thomas D. Blakely, Walter E. A. van Beek, and Dennis L. Thomson, with Linda Hunter Adams and Merrill E. Oates (London: James Currey; Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1994), p. 400.
 2. Ngasha Mulumbati, "L'Impact de la colonisation belge sur les institutions socio-politiques traditionnelles de la République du Zaïre: Le Cas de la société Hemba" (Ph.D. diss., Université de Bordeaux I, 1975), p. 169.
 3. Pamela A[nn] Reese Blakely, "Material Culture in a Hemba Village" (Master's thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1978), p. xi.
 4. Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, p. 25.
 5. Ibid., pp. 25, 38.
 6. Ibid., p. 38.
 7. Mulumbati, "L'Impact de la colonisation belge sur les institutions socio-politiques traditionnelles de la République du Zaïre," p. 13.
 8. Blakely and Blakely, "Ancestors, 'Witchcraft,' and Foregrounding the Poetic," p. 405.
 9. Mulumbati, "L'Impact de la colonisation belge sur les institutions socio-politiques traditionnelles de la République du Zaïre," p. 69.
 10. Ibid., p. 74.
 11. Blakely and Blakely, "Ancestors, 'Witchcraft,' and Foregrounding the Poetic," p. 422.
 12. Ibid., p. 425.
 13. The size of payment made to the family varied depending on the prestige or standing of the deceased.
 14. Mulumbati, "L'Impact de la colonisation belge sur les institutions socio-politiques traditionnelles de la République du Zaïre," p. 24.
 15. Ibid., pp. 52, 75.
 16. Ibid., p. 11.
 17. Ibid., p. 99.
 18. Ibid., p. 103; Louis de Strycker, "La Statuaire Hemba du culte des ancêtres: Éléments de différenciation des Hemba par rapport aux Luba et Luba-Hemba" (Mémoire de licence, Institut International de Catéchèse et de Pastorale de Bruxelles affilié à l'Université Catholique de Louvain, 1974–75), p. 140.
 19. Blakely and Blakely, "Ancestors, 'Witchcraft,' and Foregrounding the Poetic," p. 408.
 20. Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, p. 482.
 21. Blakely and Blakely, "Ancestors, 'Witchcraft,' and Foregrounding the Poetic," p. 408.
 22. Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, p. 488.
 23. Ibid., p. 489.
 24. De Strycker, "La Statuaire Hemba du culte des ancêtres," p. 122. Personal communication

- with Louis de Strycker on February 22, 2011, established the following correction to this citation: "Par contre [la statuaire masculine] était florissante au sud-est du territoire hemba jusque chez les tabwa, et, au nord—Binja du sud—et nord-est chez les boyo et bemba [*sic*; author intended Bembe]."
25. *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History*, exhibition catalogue by Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts; Museum for African Art, New York, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1996–97 (New York, 1996), p. 216.
 26. Blakely, "Material Culture in a Hemba Village," p. 1.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
 28. Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, p. 466.
 29. Blakely, "Material Culture in a Hemba Village," p. 9.
 30. Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, p. 452.
 31. François Neyt and Louis de Strycker, *Approche des arts Hemba*, reprint ed., *Arts d'Afrique noire* 11, supplement (Autumn 1974) (Villiers-le-Bel: Arts d'Afrique noire, 1975), pp. 15–16.
 32. De Strycker, "La Statuaire Hemba du culte des ancêtres," p. 123.
 33. Thomas [D.] Blakely, *To Gaze or Not to Gaze: Visual Communication in Eastern Zaïre*, Sociolinguistic Working Paper 87 (Austin, Tex.: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1981), pp. 6–7.
 34. De Strycker, "La Statuaire Hemba du culte des ancêtres," p. 123.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. François Neyt, "La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre: Approche méthodologique," in *Anthropologie de l'art : Formes et significations (Arts de l'Afrique, de l'Amérique et du Pacifique)*, Séminaire de recherche de Louis Perrois, directeur de recherche à l'ORSTOM, et Claude-François Baudez, directeur de recherche au CNRS, pt. 2, 1988–89 (Paris: Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1988), p. 19.
 38. Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, p. 404. According to Neyt (*ibid.*, p. 402), "These luxurious coiffures are worn by men as well as women."
 39. De Strycker, "La Statuaire Hemba du culte des ancêtres," pp. 95–97.
 40. Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, p. 429.
 41. Neyt, "La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre: Approche méthodologique," p. 18.
 42. Neyt and de Strycker, *Approche des arts Hemba*, p. 26. In their published account, Victor Jacques and Émile Storms illustrate eight Tabwa and Holo sculptures collected by Storms as plates XII and XIII (Victor Jacques and Émile Storms, "Notes sur l'ethnographie de la partie orientale de l'Afrique équatoriale," *Bulletin de la Société d'Anthropologie de Bruxelles* 5 [1886–87]).
 43. "Certains peuples cependant sont plus artistes que les autres: ainsi les Waguha [Hemba], les Warungu, et les Waholoholo se distinguent par leur amour de la sculpture . . . le souci d'imiter la nature aussi complètement que possible . . . l'artiste n'a omis aucun détail" (Jacques and Storms, "Notes sur l'ethnographie de la partie orientale de l'Afrique équatoriale," p. 111).
 44. Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*.
 45. Jan Vansina, *Art History in Africa: An Introduction to Method* (London and New York: Longman, 1984), p. 89.
 46. The survey is, however, not a comprehensive overview of Neyt's classification system. Examples of works included in his Group 5/ Niembo of the Luika, Group 10/Western style; Group 11/Coiffures with tresses are absent from this overview.
 47. Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, p. 87. Captain von Ramsay (1862–1938) was responsible for obtaining the Hemba work that entered Berlin's Museum für Völkerkunde in 1897.
 48. *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.
 49. *Ibid.*, pp. 96–99.
 50. *Ibid.*, pp. 94–95.
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
 52. *Ibid.*, pp. 136–37.
 53. *Ibid.*, pp. 178–79.
 54. *Ibid.*, pp. 242–45.
 55. *Ibid.*, pp. 264–67.
 56. *Ibid.*, pp. 278–81.
 57. *Ibid.*, pp. 296–97.
 58. *Ibid.*, p. 360, no. 16. Note that on p. 360 there is a single view of this work, which is labeled no. 16, and two views of another work labeled nos. 17 and 18. On p. 370, however, where the works are identified, Neyt made a numbering error, so that this work is listed as no. 18 and identified as a Bangubangu/Hombo figure from the Kabambare region, and the works listed previously as nos. 17 and 18 are there listed as nos. 16 and 17.
 59. *Ibid.*, p. 361, nos. 19, 20, 21, and p. 370.
 60. *Ibid.*, pp. 307–25.
 61. *Masterhands: Afrikaanse Beeldhouwers in De Kijker/Mains de maîtres: À la découverte des sculpteurs d'Afrique*, exhibition catalogue by Bernard de Grunne and others; Espace Culturel BBL, Brussels, 2001 (Brussels: BBL, 2001), p. 185.
 62. *Ibid.*
 63. Claude-Henri Pirat, "The Buli Master: Isolated Master or Atelier? Toward a catalogue raisonné," *The World of Tribal Arts/Le Monde de l'art tribal* [English edition] 3, no. 2 (Summer 1996), pp. 54–77.
 64. *Masterhands/Mains de maîtres*, by de Grunne and others, p. 188.
 65. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
 66. Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, p. 321.
 67. Neyt, "La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre: Approche méthodologique," p. 23.
 68. Neyt and de Strycker, *Approche des arts Hemba*, p. 14.
 69. De Strycker, "La Statuaire Hemba du culte des ancêtres," pp. 98–99; *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History*, by Roberts and Roberts, p. 215.
 70. Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, p. 481.
 71. *Ibid.*, p. 482.
 72. *Ibid.*, p. 481.
 73. *Ibid.*, p. 480.
 74. De Strycker, "La Statuaire Hemba du culte des ancêtres," p. 124.
 75. Blakely, "Material Culture in a Hemba Village," p. 52.
 76. Neyt, *La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, p. 483.
 77. *Ibid.*
 78. *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History*, by Roberts and Roberts, p. 40.
 79. Neyt, "La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaïre: Approche méthodologique," p. 18.
 80. Mulumbati, "L'Impact de la colonisation belge sur les institutions socio-politiques traditionnelles de la République du Zaïre," pp. 163–64, 169. Those chiefdoms were Yambula, Bawezia, Bena-Nkuvu, Matala, Muhona wa Kabija, Muhona wa Seya, Bena-Kayngu, Wagenia, Bena-Honga, Bena-Niembo ya Luika, Wazamba, Mambwe, and Bena-Kahela.
 81. *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 183.
 82. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
 83. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
 84. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
 85. *Ibid.*, pp. 172, 238.
 86. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
 87. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
 88. Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 7.
 89. Blakely, "Material Culture in a Hemba Village," p. 7.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

The following works were included in the exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 6

Top of a funerary relief with portrait busts of a young man and an elderly woman
Roman, Mid-Imperial, Antonine
ca. 138–41 CE
Marble, 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 15 x 3 in. (23.8 x 38.1 x 7.6 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1918 (18.145.47)
Ex-collection: Purchased by John Marshall, 1918

Fig. 8

Portrait of Octavian
Late Augustan
5–15 CE
Marble, 16 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 9 x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (41.6 x 22.8 x 23.6 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 9

Portrait head of a matron in the style of Livia
Roman, Late Republican or Early Augustan
ca. 40–20 BCE
Marble, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (26 x 16.5 x 19.7 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Philodori Gifts, 2000 (2000.38)
Ex-collection: Private collection, Germany; [Ward and Company Works of Art, New York, 2000]

Fig. 13

Nikare, his wife, and their daughter
Egypt, Memphite Region, Saqqara probably
Old Kingdom, Dynasty 5, Reign of Niuserre
or later
ca. 2420–2389 BCE or later
Limestone, paint, 22 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
(57 x 22.5 x 32.5 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1952 (52.19)

Ex-collection: Formerly Levi de Ben-Zion Collection, Paris (purchased from Joseph Khawam, Cairo, between 1936 and 1939); purchased for the Metropolitan Museum from Paul Mallon in Paris, 1952

Fig. 16

Head of an *oba*
Edo peoples; Court of Benin, Nigeria
16th century
Brass, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 9 in. (23.5 x 21.9 x 22.9 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979 (1979.206.86)

Ex-collection: A West African mine official, 1885; [John J. Klejman, New York, April 29, 1958]; Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York, on permanent loan to The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, April 1958–79

Fig. 17

Head of an *oba*
Edo peoples; Court of Benin, Nigeria
17th century
Brass, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (26 x 18.3 x 21.1 cm)
Collection Laura and James J. Ross, New York
Ex-collection: Webster Plass, before 1947–52; on loan to The British Museum, London 1952–56; (Sotheby & Co, London, Nov. 19, 1956); H. Weinberg, 1956–58; Nelson Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Mo., 1958–89; private collector, New York, 1989–2000

Fig. 19

Queen mother pendant mask
Edo peoples; Court of Benin, Nigeria
16th century
Ivory, iron, copper (?), 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 5 x 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.
(23.8 x 12.7 x 8.3 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1972 (1978.412.323)

Ex-collection: Sir Ralph Moor, Benin City, Nigeria, 1897; Prof. Charles Gabriel Seligman, Oxford; Brenda Z. Seligman, London; Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York, 1958; The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, 1978

Fig. 20

Rattle staff
Edo peoples; Court of Benin, Nigeria
1725–50
Bronze, copper, iron, 63 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (161.3 x 4.8 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Ann and George Blumenthal Fund, 1974 (1974.5)
Ex-collection: Benin City, Nigeria, 1897; Henry Stevens, April 10, 1900; Pitt-Rivers Museum, Farnham, Dorset, 1900–1972; [K. John Hewett, London, 1972]; [Donald Morris Gallery, Detroit, 1974]

Fig. 21

Shrine to the hand of Ezomo Ehenua
Edo peoples; Court of Benin, Nigeria
18th–19th century
Brass, 13 x 13 in. (33 x 33 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Klaus G. Perls, 1991 (1991.17.113) and Rogers Fund, 1996 (1996.11)

Ex-collection:
For 1991.17.113—Mr. and Mrs. Klaus G. Perls, New York, 1991; for 1996.11—Chief H. A. Ezomo of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, 1994; [Abdullah Ibrahim, Cotonou, Benin, 1994]; [Charles B. Davis III, New Orleans, 1996]

Fig. 33

Inner head shrine (*ibori*) and house of the head (*ile ori*)
Yoruba peoples; Nigeria
19th–20th century
Cowrie shells, cotton, leather, H. of *ibori* 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (13.3 cm), Diam. 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (9.2 cm); H. of *ile ori* 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (35 cm), Diam. 10 in. (25.4 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of the William W. Brill Foundation, 1962 (1978.412.459a–c)

Ex-collection: Roy Sieber, Indiana, 1958–62; William W. Brill, New York, until 1962; The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, 1962–78

Fig. 34

Head
Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria
12th–15th century
Terracotta, 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (31.1 x 14.6 x 18.4 cm)
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota, The John R. Van Derlip Fund (95.84)

Fig. 42

Head
Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria
12th–15th century
Terracotta, 6 x 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (15.2 x 8.3 x 9.5 cm)
Collection of Robin B. Martin, courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum, New York (L54.5)

Ex-collection: Collected in Ife before 1910; [John J. Klejman, New York, by 1954]; The Guennol Collection, New York

Fig. 47

Head
Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria
12th–15th century
Terracotta, H. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (19 cm)
Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (III C 27527)

Ex-collection: Collected in 1910 in Ife by Leo Frobenius; Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin, 1913

Fig. 55

Head
Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria
12th–15th century
Terracotta, with residue of red pigment and traces of mica, 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (26.7 x 14.6 x 18.7 cm)
Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas (AP 1994.04)

Ex-collection: Private collection, Switzerland; [L & R Entwistle & Co., Ltd., New York and London]; Kimbell Art Foundation, Fort Worth, 1994

Fig. 56
Head
Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria
12th–15th century
Terracotta, 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 5 in. (16.8 x 10.8 x 12.7 cm)
The Kronos Collections

Fig. 57
Head
Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria
12th–15th century
Terracotta, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (21.6 x 13.3 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 58
Head
Yoruba peoples; Ife, Nigeria
12th–15th century
Terracotta, H. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (29.4 cm)
The Kronos Collections

Fig. 64
Clan vessel
Akan peoples; Ghana
20th century, before 1962
Terracotta, 12 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (30.6 x 22.7 x 23.2 cm)
Musée du Quai Branly, Paris (73.1962.8.21)
Ex-collection: Collected in 1962 by the Mission Denise Paulme-Schaeffner; Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Paris

Fig. 65
Clan vessel lid
Akan peoples; Ghana
19th century
Terracotta, H. 13 in. (33 cm)
Musée Dapper, Paris (5560)
Ex-collection: Count Baudouin de Grunne, Brussels

Fig. 67
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Adanse traditional area, Fomena or Twifo-Heman, Ghana
18th century
Terracotta, 11 x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (28 x 19 cm)
Musée Dapper, Paris (2801)
Ex-collection: Count Baudouin de Grunne, Brussels

Fig. 68
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Adanse traditional area, Fomena or Twifo-Heman, Ghana
17th century
Terracotta, 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (27 x 15 cm)
Musée Dapper, Paris (2804)
Ex-collection: Count Baudouin de Grunne, Brussels

Fig. 69
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Adanse traditional area, Fomena (?), Ghana
Possibly 17th century
Terracotta, 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (30 x 19 x 19 cm)
Count B. de Grunne Collection, Brussels

Fig. 70
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Adanse traditional area, Fomena (?), Ghana
17th–19th century
Terracotta, black dye or colorant, 12 x 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 7 in. (30.5 x 18.8 x 17.8 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1964 (1978.412.352)
Ex-collection: [Luther, 1959]; Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York, on permanent loan to The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, 1959–64; The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, 1978

Fig. 71
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Adanse traditional area, Fomena (?), Ghana
17th–19th century
Terracotta, black dye or colorant, 12 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (31.3 x 19 x 14.5 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1964 (1978.412.353)
Ex-collection: [Luther, 1959]; Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York, on permanent loan to The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, 1959–64; The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, 1978

Fig. 73
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana
17th–mid-19th century
Terracotta, kaolin, roots, quartz fragments, 8 x 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 5 in. (20.3 x 14.3 x 12.7 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Purchase, Nelson A. Rockefeller Gift, 1967 (1978.412.563)
Ex-collection: [John J. Klejman, New York, 1967]; The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, 1978

Fig. 74
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana
17th–19th century
Terracotta, 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (16 x 12.8 x 12 cm)
Count B. de Grunne Collection, Brussels

Fig. 75
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana
17th–19th century
Terracotta, 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (17 x 11 x 11.5 cm)
Count B. de Grunne Collection, Brussels

Fig. 76
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area (?), Ghana
ca. 1800
Terracotta, 9 x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (22.9 x 14.6 x 11.4 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 77
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area (?), Ghana
ca. 1800
Terracotta, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 5 in. (19.1 x 13.3 x 12.7 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 78
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana
ca. 1800
Terracotta, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 6 in. (21.6 x 15.2 cm)
The Kronos Collections

Fig. 79
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana
17th century
Terracotta, 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (20 x 13.3 cm)
Musée Dapper, Paris (2808)
Ex-collection: Count Baudouin de Grunne, Brussels

Fig. 80
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana
17th century
Terracotta, 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (22.4 x 12 cm)
Musée Dapper, Paris (5326)
Ex-collection: Count Baudouin de Grunne, Brussels

Fig. 81
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area (?), Ghana
18th century
Terracotta, 11 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (30 x 15 cm)
Musée Dapper, Paris (2799)
Ex-collection: Count Baudouin de Grunne, Brussels

Fig. 82
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Twifo-Heman traditional area, Ghana
18th century Terracotta, 14⁷/₈ in. x 9¹/₄ in. (38 x 23.5 cm)
Musée Dapper, Paris (2798)

Ex-collection: Count Baudouin de Grunne, Brussels

Fig. 85
Memorial head (lid from a clan vessel)
Akan peoples; Kwahu traditional area, Ghana
Possibly 19th century
Terracotta, H. 6³/₄ in. (17 cm)
Musée Dapper, Paris (5574)

Ex-collection: Count Baudouin de Grunne, Brussels

Fig. 86
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Kwahu traditional area, Ghana
19th–20th century
Terracotta, kaolin, 6 x 7 x 6¹/₂ in. (15.2 x 17.8 x 16.5 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, From the Collection of Nina and Gordon Bunshaft, Bequest of Nina Bunshaft, 1994 (1995.64.21)

Ex-collection: [John J. Klejman, New York, 1966]; Nina and Gordon Bunshaft, 1995

Fig. 88
Memorial head
Akan peoples; Kwahu traditional area, Ghana
19th–20th century
Terracotta, 20 x 11 x 7 in. (50.8 x 27.9 x 17.8 cm)
Drs. Daniel and Marian Malcolm

Fig. 91
Memorial head of Nana Attabra
Akan peoples; Aowin traditional area, Nkwanta, Ghana
18th century
Terracotta, 9⁷/₈ x 5³/₄ in. (25 x 14.5 cm)
Musée Dapper, Paris (2802)

Ex-collection: Count Baudouin de Grunne, Brussels

Fig. 93
Memorial head of Afukwa
Akan peoples; Aowin traditional area, Nkwanta, Ghana
18th century
Terracotta, 8³/₈ x 4¹/₈ in. (21.4 x 10.5 cm)
Musée Dapper, Paris (2791)

Ex-collection: Count Baudouin de Grunne, Brussels

Fig. 96
Memorial figure possibly representing a chief
Akan peoples, Anyi group; Sanwi, Krinjabo (?), Côte d'Ivoire
18th–early 20th century
Terracotta, 16³/₈ x 8¹/₄ x 8¹/₄ in. (42 x 21 x 21 cm)
Musée du Quai Branly, Paris (73.1966.1.2)

Ex-collection: Helena Rubinstein, Paris; Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Paris

Fig. 97
Memorial figure of a woman
Akan peoples, Anyi group; Sanwi, Krinjabo (?), Côte d'Ivoire
18th–early 20th century
Terracotta, 10³/₈ x 4³/₈ x 4³/₈ in. (27 x 11 x 11 cm)
Museum Rietberg Zürich (RAF451)

Ex-collection: Eduard Von der Heydt, Zürich, since at least 1932

Fig. 98
Memorial figure of a priest
Akan peoples, Anyi group; Sanwi, Krinjabo (?), Côte d'Ivoire
18th–early 20th century
Terracotta, 16 x 5 x 8 in. (40.6 x 12.7 x 20.3 cm)
Drs. Daniel and Marian Malcolm

Fig. 99
Memorial figure of a hornblower
Akan peoples, Anyi group; Sanwi, Krinjabo (?), Côte d'Ivoire
18th–early 20th century
Terracotta, 10³/₈ x 4¹/₄ x 7¹/₂ in. (26.4 x 10.8 x 19.1 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1964 (1978.412.394)

Ex-collection: Collected by Dr. Marcel Lheureux, Paris, 1920s; P. Alsace (Elsass); [John J. Klejman, New York, 1960]; Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York, on loan to The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, 1960–64; The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, 1978

Fig. 101
Memorial figure representing a gong player
Akan peoples, Anyi group; Sanwi, Krinjabo (?), Côte d'Ivoire
18th–early 20th century
Terracotta, 15¹/₈ x 5¹/₂ x 8³/₄ in. (38.6 x 14 x 22.2 cm)
National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (2005.6.162)

Ex-collection: The Tishman Collection of African Art, Los Angeles

Fig. 102
Memorial figure representing a drummer
Akan peoples, Anyi group; Sanwi, Krinjabo (?), Côte d'Ivoire
18th–early 20th century
Terracotta, 13³/₈ x 6³/₈ x 6³/₈ in. (34.5 x 17.5 x 16 cm)
Musée du Quai Branly, Paris (73.1984.7.1)

Ex-collection: Collected by Dr. Marcel Lheureux, Paris; F.-H. Lem Arts & Métiers Graphiques, Paris; (Hôtel de Ventes, Enghien); Isaac Païles

Fig. 113
Commemorative figure of a priestess
Bamileke peoples; Bangwa chiefdom, Grassfields region, Cameroon
19th century
Wood, pigments, H. 33¹/₂ in. (85 cm)
Musée Dapper, Paris (3343)

Ex-collection: Collected by Gustav Conrau, 1897–98; Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin; [Arthur Speyer, Berlin, 1929–34]; [Charles Ratton, Paris, 1934–35]; Helena Rubinstein, New York and Paris, 1935–66; (Sotheby's New York, 1966); Valerie Franklin, Los Angeles; (Sotheby's New York, 1990)

Fig. 117
Commemorative figure of a chief
Bamileke peoples; Bangwa chiefdom, Grassfields region, Cameroon
19th century
Wood, 35 x 16¹/₈ x 12¹/₈ in. (88.9 x 41 x 31 cm)
Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière, Paris

Ex-collection: Collected by Gustav Conrau, 1897–98; Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin (III C10518); [Arthur Speyer, Berlin, 1929–34]; Valerie Franklin, Los Angeles; (Sotheby's New York, 1990); Private collection, Japan, 1990–2009; (Christie's, Paris, 2009)

Fig. 118
Ateu Atsa (Bangwa, ca. 1840–1910)
Commemorative figure of a chief
Fontem region, Cameroon
19th century
Wood, 36¹/₄ x 8 in. (92.1 x 20.3 cm)
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund (1987.62)

Fig. 119
Ateu Atsa (Bangwa, ca. 1840–1910)
Commemorative figure of a chief
Lelong, Fontem region, Cameroon
19th century
Wood, 37¹/₄ x 10¹/₂ x 10¹/₂ in. (94.6 x 26.7 x 26.7 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 120
Commemorative figure of a chief
Bamileke peoples; Bangwa chiefdom, Grassfields region, Cameroon
19th century
Wood, H. 31¹/₈ in. (79 cm)
Musée Dapper, Paris (0297)

Ex-collection: The Carlo Monzino Collection, Switzerland, before 1986

Fig. 121
Commemorative figure of a chief
Bamileke peoples; Bangwa chiefdom, Grassfields region, Cameroon
19th century
Wood, 38 x 13 x 11¹/₂ in. (96.5 x 33 x 29.2 cm)
Clyman Collection

Ex-collection: Collected in Cameroon in the late 1960s

- Fig. 129
Commemorative throne of Chief Nkwain
Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Grassfields region,
Cameroon
19th century
Wood, beads, copper sheet, raffia, human hair,
H. 69 7/8 in. (176 cm)
Museum der Weltkulturen, Frankfurt am Main
(N.S. 2150)

Ex-collection: Collected by missionary Reinhold
Theodor Rohde, 1904
- Fig. 130
Commemorative throne of Queen Mother
Nindum (?)
Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Grassfields region,
Cameroon
19th century
Wood, beads, string, leather, human hair, metal,
pigment, H. 68 1/4 in. (173.4 cm)
Seattle Art Museum, Washington, Gift of
Katherine White and the Boeing Company
(81.17.718)

Ex-collection: Collected by missionary Reinhold
Theodor Rohde, 1904; Museum für Völkerkunde,
Frankfurt am Main, 1904; [Arthur Speyer,
Berlin, 1934]; [Charles Ratton, Paris, until 1966];
Katherine White, 1966
- Fig. 132
Commemorative thrones of Chief Tufoyn and
Queen Mother Naya
Laikom, Kom chiefdom, Grassfields region,
Cameroon
Mid-19th century
Wood, copper, H. of male 74 7/8 in. (190 cm),
H. of female 72 7/8 in. (185 cm)
Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen
zu Berlin (III C 20681/82)

Ex-collection: Collected by Lieutenant Hans
Caspar Edler zu Putlitz, 1905
- Fig. 141
Ndop figure: Shyáám áMbúl áNgoong
Kuba peoples; western Kasai region, Democratic
Republic of the Congo
ca. 1630
Wood, H. 21 1/2 in. (54.5 cm)
The British Museum, London (Af 1909,1210.1)

Ex-collection: Collected by Emil Torday at
Nsheng, 1907–8
- Fig. 149
Ndop figure: Mbó Mbóósh, Mishé miShyááng
máMbúl, or Kot áNcé
Kuba peoples; western Kasai region, Democratic
Republic of the Congo
ca. 1760–80
Wood (*Crossopteryx febrifuga*), camwood powder,
19 1/2 x 7 7/8 x 8 3/8 in. (49.5 x 19.4 x 21.9 cm)
Brooklyn Museum, New York, Purchased with
Funds given by Mr. and Mrs. Alastair B. Martin,
Mrs. Donald M. Oenslager, Mr. and Mrs. Robert
E. Blum, and the Mrs. Florence A. Blum Fund
(61.33)

Ex-collection: Jules Renkin, Brussels, 1909–34;
Maurice Renkin, Brussels, 1934–61
- Fig. 150
Ndop figure: Kot áNcé or Kot áMbúl
Kuba peoples; western Kasai region, Democratic
Republic of the Congo
ca. 1785
Wood (*Crossopteryx febrifuga*), H. 20 1/8 in. (51.1 cm)
The Royal Museum for Central Africa,
Belgium, Gift of the Compagnie du Kasai, 1913
(EO.o.o.15256)

Ex-collection: Given to Emil Torday at Nsheng,
1908; Belgian territorial administrator Blondeau;
Compagnie du Kasai, until 1913
- Fig. 151
Ndop figure: Mbó Pelyeeng áNcé
Kuba peoples; western Kasai region, Democratic
Republic of the Congo
ca. 1765
Wood, H. 21 5/8 in. (55 cm)
The British Museum, London (Af 1909,0513.1)

Ex-collection: Collected by Emil Torday at
Nsheng, 1907–8
- Fig. 158
Ndop figure: Mikó miMbúl or Mbop Mábiínc
máMbúl
Kuba peoples; western Kasai region, Democratic
Republic of the Congo
ca. 1905
Wood, metal, H. 21 3/8 in. (55 cm)
The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium,
Gift of the Friends of The Museum, 1924
(EO.o.o.27655)

Ex-collection: Mr. and Mrs. Van den Abbeele,
before 1924
- Fig. 167
Commemorative figure of a chief
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th–20th century
Wood, H. 13 3/4 in. (35 cm)
Museu Nacional de Etnologia, Lisbon, Portugal
(AA–964)

Ex-collection: Collected by António de Oliveira at
Kilenge in the region of Lola, Angola, before 1959
- Fig. 168
Commemorative figure of a chief
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th century
Wood, H. 15 in. (38.1 cm)
Private collection

Ex-collection: René Rasmussen, Paris; (Hôtel
Drouot Rive Gauche, Paris, December 14, 1979)
- Fig. 170
Commemorative figure of a chief
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th century
Wood, brass, human hair, glass beads, 18 1/8 x
6 3/4 x 6 5/8 in. (46 x 17 x 17.5 cm)
Museu Etnográfico–Sociedade de Geografia de
Lisboa [Lisbon], Portugal (SGL-AB-924)

Ex-collection: Collected in Mozambique, before
1885
- Fig. 171
Commemorative figure of a chief
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th century
Wood, brass, human hair, 19 3/8 x 7 1/8 x 7 7/8 in.
(49 x 18 x 20 cm)
Museu de História Natural–Faculdade de
Ciências da Universidade do Porto, Portugal
(86.04.04)

Ex-collection: Collected by Arthur Augusto
Fonseca Cardoso, Moxico region, Angola, 1904;
Gift from the Ricardo Severo family, ca. 1937
- Fig. 172
Commemorative figure of a chief playing a *sanza*
(thumb piano)
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th–20th century
Wood, kaolin, H. 9 3/8 in. (24.5 cm)
Private collection
- Fig. 176
Commemorative figure of a chief as Cibinda
Ilunga
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th century
Wood, natural fibers, H. 15 1/4 in. (40 cm)
Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas
(AP 1978.05)

Ex-collection: Fred Abecassis, probably Angola,
before 1900; private collection, from 1940;
(Christie, Manson & Woods, Ltd., London,
June 13, 1978); [Walter Randel Gallery, New
York, 1978]
- Fig. 177
Commemorative figure of a chief as Cibinda
Ilunga
Chokwe peoples; Angola
Before 1914
Wood, 15 7/8 x 4 3/4 x 4 in. (40.4 x 12 x 10.1 cm)
Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, Lisbon, Portugal
(E. 5256)

Ex-collection: Gift of Joao C. de Castro, 1914
- Fig. 178
Commemorative figure of a chief as Cibinda
Ilunga
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th century
Wood, human hair, 15 3/4 x 5 3/4 x 4 3/4 in.
(40 x 14.5 x 12 cm)
Museu de História Natural–Faculdade de
Ciências da Universidade do Porto, Portugal
(86.04.3)

Ex-collection: Collected by Arthur Augusto
Fonseca Cardoso, Moxico region, Angola, 1904;
Gift from the Ricardo Severo family, ca. 1937

Fig. 179
Commemorative figure of a chief as Cibinda Ilunga
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th century
Wood, human hair, fibers, dried nuts, H. 15 3/8 in. (39 cm)
Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (III C 1255)
Ex-collection: Collected by Otto H. Schütt near Kimbundu, Angola, 1878

Figs. 180 and 181
Commemorative couple
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th century
Wood, H. Female 11 1/8 in. (30 cm), Male 13 in. (33 cm)
Museu Nacional de Etnologia, Lisbon, Portugal (AO-333/334)
Ex-collection: Victor Bandeira, Portugal, before 1965

Fig. 182
Commemorative female figure
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th century
Wood, human hair, red clay, H. 13 3/4 in. (35 cm)
Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (III C 2969)
Ex-collection: Collected by Gustav Nachtigal in Angola, ca. 1886

Fig. 183
Commemorative female figure
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th century
Wood, brass, human hair, red clay, seed, beads, H. 23 1/4 in. (59 cm)
Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (III C 1886)
Ex-collection: Collected by Heinrich Kawen at Benguela, 1883

Fig. 186
Figure of a leopard chief
Luluwa peoples, Bakwa Ndolo; Western Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood (*Vitex madiensis*), pigments, metal, plastic, H. 26 1/8 in. (67 cm)
The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium (EO.o.o.43845)
Ex-collection: Collected by Jules-Auguste “Tiarko” Fourche, 1933–42

Fig. 187
Figure of a leopard chief: Ilunga Mukulu
Luluwa peoples, Bakwa Ndolo, Bumba; Western Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, H. 26 3/8 in. (67 cm)
The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium (EO.o.o.43854)
Ex-collection: Collected by Jules-Auguste “Tiarko” Fourche; acquired by the Royal Museum, 1946

Fig. 188
Figure of a leopard chief: Chibwabwa Ilunga
Luluwa peoples; Western Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood (*Trichilia gilgiana*), cowrie shells, H. 30 3/8 in. (77 cm)
The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium (EO.o.o.43848)
Ex-collection: Collected by Jules-Auguste “Tiarko” Fourche, 1933–36

Fig. 189
Figure of a leopard chief
Luluwa peoples; Western Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, H. 22 1/4 in. (56.5 cm)
Collection Laura and James J. Ross, New York
Ex-collection: Gustave E. De Hondt, Brussels (exh. Antwerp, 1937–38); Jacques Kerchache, Paris; private collection, France

Fig. 191
Figure of a leopard chief
Luluwa peoples; Makabu-Buanga, Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th century
Wood, H. 29 1/8 in. (74 cm)
Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (III C 3246)
Ex-collection: Collected by Ludwig Wolf and Hermann von Wissmann between Kasai and Sankuru Rivers, before 1886

Fig. 194
Pwo mask
Chokwe peoples; southern Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th century
Wood, fiber, pigments, metal, plastic, animal and plant material, 8 1/4 x 7 1/8 in. (21 x 18 cm)
The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium (EO.o.o.43143)
Ex-collection: Collected by Jules-Auguste “Tiarko” Fourche, 1933–42; gift of Mrs. Fourche to The Royal Museum for Central Africa, 1946

Fig. 197
Pwo mask
Chokwe peoples; Musamba region, Democratic Republic of the Congo
Early 20th century
Wood, fibers, metal, red and white clay, 15 3/8 x 8 3/8 x 9 1/4 in. (39.1 x 21.3 x 23.5 cm)
National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., Museum Purchase (85-15-20)
Ex-collection: Private collection, Brussels; [Galerie Dierickx, Brussels, 1969]; Emile M. Deletaille, Brussels, 1969–85

Fig. 198
Pwo mask
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th century
Wood, fiber, pigment, 20 1/2 x 7 1/4 x 7 1/2 in. (52.1 x 18.4 x 19.1 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 199
Pwo mask
Chokwe peoples; Angola
ca. 1820
Wood, fiber, metal, 10 1/4 x 6 1/2 x 10 1/4 in. (26 x 16.5 x 26 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 200
Pwo mask
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th–mid-20th century
Wood, leather, metal, 7 3/8 x 6 1/2 x 2 1/8 in. (19.4 x 16.5 x 5.4 cm)
The Kronos Collections

Fig. 201
Pwo mask
Chokwe peoples; Angola
19th–early 20th century
Wood, fiber, metal, clay, 7 3/4 x 5 1/2 x 7 in. (19.7 x 14 x 17.8 cm)
The Kronos Collections

Fig. 203
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, fibers, fur, 31 7/8 x 9 1/4 in. (81 x 23.5 cm)
Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (III E 5200)
Ex-collection: Collected by Captain Hans von Ramsay, 1897

Fig. 204
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region, Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, 35 1/8 x 8 7/8 x 8 3/4 in. (89 x 22.5 x 22 cm)
MAS—Etnografisch Museum, Antwerp (A.E.0864)
Ex-collection: Possibly Henri Pareyn, Belgium; Bela Hein, Paris; Charles Leirens, Belgium

Fig. 205
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–20th century
Wood, 37 1/4 x 9 1/2 x 9 1/2 in. (94.6 x 24.1 x 24.1 cm)
Private collection, Los Angeles
Ex-collection: Baron Freddy Rolin, Brussels and New York, before 1977–83

Fig. 206
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region, Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, 26 3/4 x 7 7/8 in. (67.9 x 20 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 207
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region,
Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, H. 29¾ in. (75.6 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 208
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region,
Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, raffia, H. 26¾ in. (67.9 cm)
Private collection

Ex-collection: Baron Freddy Rolin, Brussels and
New York

Fig. 209
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region,
Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, H. 27⅞ in. (71 cm)
Private collection

Ex-collection: Count Baudouin de Grunne,
Brussels

Fig. 210
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples; Sayi region, Democratic
Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, H. 26¾ in. (67.9 cm)
Private collection

Ex-collection: Chief Liemwe of the Baga Mbele
clan, Kasingu region; Count Baudouin de
Grunne, Brussels

Fig. 211
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples; Mbeya village, Sayi region,
Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, fibers, 29½ x 9¼ in. (75 x 23.5 cm)
Chevalier Blanpain Collection
Ex-collection: Pierre Darteville, Brussels,
before 1975–78; Lee Bronson, Los Angeles, in
1978; Arnold and Lucille Alderman, until 2002;
(Sotheby's, New York, May 17, 2002)

Fig. 212
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples; Kahongo village, Sayi region,
Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, 31⅞ x 9⅞ in. (79 x 25 cm)
The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium
(EO.1992.28.1)
Ex-collection: Count Boël, Brussels

Fig. 213
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Sayi region,
Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, H. 27⅞ in. (70 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 214
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples, Niembo group; Mbulula region,
Democratic Republic of Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, 33⅞ x 10¼ x 9⅞ in. (84.1 x 26.0 x
23.2 cm)
Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas (AP
1979.03)

Ex-collection: Frank D. Lambrecht, Congo and
Brussels; [Armando Scamperle, Rome and Paris];
[Jacques Kerchache, Paris, until mid-1970s];
[Ben Heller, Inc., New York, 1975]; Kimbell Art
Foundation, Fort Worth, 1979

Fig. 215
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples; Luika region, Democratic
Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, 29⅞ x 8¼ x 7⅞ in. (74 x 21 x 19.5 cm)
Musée du Quai Branly, Paris (70.2004.11.1)
Ex-collection: Jacques Kerchache, Paris

Fig. 216
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples; Kaboja village, Makutano region,
Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–20th century
Wood, fibers, 29⅞ x 9½ in. (74 x 24 cm)
Private collection, Brussels

Fig. 217
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples, Muhiya group; Democratic
Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, fiber, 25⅞ x 7⅞ in. (64 x 19.5 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 218
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples; Democratic Republic of the
Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, 31⅞ x 8¼ in. (79 x 21 cm)
Museum Rietberg Zürich (RAC 105)
Ex-collection: Han Coray, before 1928

Fig. 219
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples; Makutano, Mambwe region,
Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, H. 25⅞ in. (65.6 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 220
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples; Kabambare region, Democratic
Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, H. 14⅞ in. (37.9 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 221
Commemorative figure
Hemba peoples; Mambwe group, Kayenge village,
Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, H. 12⅞ in. (32.1 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 222
Commemorative figure
Hemba or Kusu peoples; Democratic Republic of
the Congo
19th–early 20th century
Wood, H. 23¼ in. (59.1 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 225
Buli Master, possibly Ngongo ya Chintu (Hemba,
ca. 1810–70)
Commemorative figure
Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th century
Wood, 27⅞ x 9 x 5½ in. (70.8 x 22.9 x 14 cm)
Drs. Daniel and Marian Malcolm
Ex-collection: Collected in village of Kankunde,
D.R.C., 1972

Fig. 226
Buli Master, possibly Ngongo ya Chintu (Hemba,
ca. 1810–70)
Commemorative figure
Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th century
Wood, 12 x 4 x 4½ in. (30.5 x 10.2 x 11.4 cm)
Private collection
Ex-collection: Count Baudouin de Grunne,
Brussels

POSTCARDS

[Works illustrated in this volume are indicated by
references that precede their entries.]

[Endpapers]
Eweka II, *oba* of Benin, r. 1914–33
Nigeria
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5½ x 3½ in. (14 x 8.9 cm)
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

[Endpapers]
King of Djolof
Dakar, Senegal
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5⅞ x 3⅞ in. (13.7 x 8.7 cm)
Photograph by Metharam Brothers
Published by Levy Fils & Cie, Paris
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

[Endpapers]
Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Agyeman Prempeh II,
r. 1931–70
Ghana
Early 20th century
Silver gelatin print on postcard stock, 5⅞ x 3½ in.
(13.7 x 8.9 cm)
Published by Methodist Book Depots, Cape
Coast
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

<p>[Endpapers] Lawson, king of Anécho (Aného) Togo 1933 Postcard, 5⅜ x 3½ in. (13.7 x 8.9 cm) Photograph by AA Aclaise Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>King of Sakete French Dahomey (Republic of Benin) 1905 Postcard, 5⅜ x 3½ in. (13.7 x 8.9 cm) Photograph by N. Walwin Holm Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>Béhanzin, former king of Dahomey, r. 1889–94 Dahomey (Republic of Benin) 1906 Postcard, 3½ x 5½ in. (9 x 14.2 cm) Published by Bensimon Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>His Highness Gi-Gia, king of Allada, and his advisers Nigeria 1905 Postcard, 5⅜ x 3⅜ in. (13.8 x 8.6 cm) Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>[Endpapers] Mbo, king of Bali Cameroon Early 20th century Postcard, 5½ x 3½ in. (14 x 8.9 cm) Published by Afrikanische Frucht-Comp, Hamburg Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>Bankoa, chief of the Bateke Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo Postmarked June 26, 1920 Postcard, 5½ x 3⅜ in. (14 x 9.1 cm) Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>[Endpapers] Gara, chief of the Pande Bania, French Congo (Republic of the Congo) Early 20th century Postcard, 5½ x 3½ in. (14 x 8.9 cm) Photograph by Jean Audema Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>King Daudi Uganda 1909 Postcard, 5⅜ x 3½ in. (13.8 x 8.9 cm) Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>Chief Missangha French Congo (Republic of the Congo) Early 20th century Postcard, 5½ x 3⅜ in. (14 x 8.6 cm) Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p>	<p>The Great Chief Okodongwe Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.) Early 20th century Silver gelatin print on postcard stock, 5½ x 3⅜ in. (14 x 8.6 cm) Published by Casimir Zagourski for the series <i>L'Afrique qui disparaît!</i> Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>Wife of the chief Niapu (D.R.C.) Early 20th century Postcard, 5⅜ x 3½ in. (13.8 x 9 cm) Photographed and published by Casimir Zagourski for the series <i>L'Afrique qui disparaît!</i> Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>Bongélina notable Eastern provinces (Republic of the Congo) Early 20th century Postcard, 5⅜ x 3¾ in. (14.4 x 9.5 cm) Photographed and published by Casimir Zagourski for the series <i>L'Afrique qui disparaît!</i> Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>[Endpapers] Chief of royal blood Urundi (Burundi) Early 20th century Postcard, 5⅜ x 3⅜ in. (13.7 x 8.7 cm) Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>Demba-war, king of Cayor, and his two sons Senegal Early 20th century Postcard, 5½ x 3½ in. (14 x 8.9 cm) Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>Madam Hamonyah, chief of Kennema Sierra Leone 1905–7 Postcard, 5⅜ x 3½ in. (13 x 7.8 cm) Published by Lisk-Carew Brothers, Freetown Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>Chief Kétounou of Bonou Village French Dahomey (Republic of Benin) Postmarked March 21, 1905 Postcard, 5½ x 3½ in. (14 x 8.9 cm) Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>District chief French Dahomey (Republic of Benin) Early 20th century Postcard, 5½ x 3⅜ in. (14 x 8.7 cm) Published by Imprimeries Réunies, France Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>[Endpapers] Jekri chief and his family Itsekiri, Nigeria Early 20th century Postcard, 5⅜ x 3⅜ in. (13.7 x 8.7 cm) Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p>	<p>[Endpapers] Adeyemi I Alowolodu, <i>alafin</i> of Oyo, r. 1876–1905 Nigeria Early 20th century Postcard, 5¼ x 3¼ in. (13.3 x 8.4 cm) Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>[Endpapers] Ovonramwen Nogbaisi, <i>oba</i> of Benin, r. 1888–1914 Nigeria Early 20th century Postcard, 5½ x 3½ in. (14 x 8.9 cm) Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>Ovonramwen Nogbaisi, <i>oba</i> of Benin, with family Nigeria Early 20th century Postcard Published by Jacob Vitta Terence Dickinson Postcard Collection</p> <p>Adeyemi I Alowolodu, <i>alafin</i> of Oyo, r. 1876–1905, with servant Nigeria Postcard Terence Dickinson Postcard Collection</p> <p>Adeyemi I Alowolodu, king of Oyo, r. 1876–1905 Nigeria Early 20th century Postcard Collection of Arthur F. Humphrey III</p> <p>[Endpapers] Agnibilécro-Kangah, chief of the Anyi (Ndenye) Côte d'Ivoire Early 20th century Postcard, 5⅜ x 3⅜ in. (13.5 x 8.7 cm) Photograph by Jean Rose Published by G Kanté Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>[Endpapers] His Highness Boua Kouassi, king of the Anyi (Ndenye) Côte d'Ivoire 1910–15 Postcard, 3⅜ x 5⅜ in. (8.7 x 13.8 cm) Published by G. Lerat Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>Chief of Dschang Cameroon Early 20th century Postcard, 5½ x 3⅜ in. (14 x 8.7 cm) Photograph by ATM Lawao Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>[Pages 2–3] Chief Vonshatura of Dochaug (Dschang) Early 20th century Postcard, 3⅞ x 5⅞ in. (8.7 x 13.8 cm) Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p> <p>Sultan Nijoya in the courtyard of his palace at Foumban Cameroon Early 20th century Postcard, 3⅜ x 5½ in. (9.2 x 14 cm) Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection</p>
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[Endpapers]

A chief of the Lunda
Angola
Postmarked February 15, 1910
Postcard, 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (13.8 x 8.9 cm)
Photograph by Eduardo Osorio
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Moata Vamoa, a chief of the Lunda
Angola
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (13.7 x 8.7 cm)
Published by Nels, Brussels
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

[Fig. 147]

Kot Mábiínc, r. 1919–39
D.R.C.
Early 20th century
Silver gelatin print on postcard stock, 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.
(13.5 x 8.6 cm)
Photographed and published by Casimir
Zagourski for the series *L'Afrique qui disparaît!*
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Sultan of Ngambé, his sister, head of harem, and
his wives
Cameroon
Early 20th century
Postcard, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (9 x 14.1 cm)
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

King Jigla of Alada.
Abomey, Dahomey (Republic of Benin)
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (13.8 x 8.9 cm)
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Sultan of Bamum
Cameroon
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (13.8 x 8.9 cm)
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Mayombe chief and his son Mioko
Lower Congo, Congo Free State (D.R.C.)
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (14 x 8.9 cm)
Published by Charbonneau, Brussels
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

[Endpapers]

King Kindia and his wives
Guinea
Postmarked April 23, 1908
Postcard, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (8.9 x 14 cm)
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Chief Famayaneh
Sierra Leone
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (13.7 x 8.7 cm)
Photograph by Lisk-Carew Brothers, Freetown
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

King of Uganda
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (13.7 x 8.7 cm)
Published by D. V. Figueira, Mombasa
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

[Endpapers]

King Sri II and his followers
Togo
Postmarked October 26, 1925
Postcard, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (8.9 x 13.8 cm)
Published by Alexander Abaglo Accolatse, Togo
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

King Musinga, his mother, and his wives
Ruanda (Rwanda)
Early 20th century
Postcard, 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (8.7 x 13.7 cm)
Published by Père Blancs, Missionnaires d'Afrique
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Bakete chiefs
Luébo, Kassai, Congo (D.R.C.)
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (14 x 8.6 cm)
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Béhanzin, former king of Dahomey, r. 1889–94,
and his wives
Republic of Benin
Early 20th century
Postcard, 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (9.2 x 13.8 cm)
Photograph by J. Geiser
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Untitled
Early 20th century
Postcard, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (8.9 x 14 cm)
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Lawani Agogoja, Bali of Ibadan, r. 1905–11
Nigeria
Early 20th century
Postcard, 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (8.6 x 13.8 cm)
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

His Highness Agoli-Agbo, king of Dahomey,
r. 1894–1900
Abomey, Dahomey (Republic of Benin)
Early 20th century
Postcard, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (8.9 x 13.7 cm)
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

[Endpapers]

Chief Mumfunuka and his followers
Congo (D.R.C.)
Early 20th century
Postcard, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (9 x 14.1 cm)
Published by Mission des RRPP, Jésuites au
Kwango
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Chief of Sankuru
Congo (D.R.C.)
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (13.8 x 8.9 cm)
Published by Nels, Brussels
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

King Yakpawolo
Buze Interior (Liberia)
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (13.5 x 9 cm)
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

The Chief of the Nembão peoples
Belgian Congo (D.R.C.)
Postmarked June 30, 1914
Postcard, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (14 x 9.4 cm)
Published by Nels, Brussels
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Angola-Bié, chief of the Jamba region
Angola
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (13.8 x 8.9 cm)
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Benguella. chief of Ganda, and his son
Uganda
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (13.8 x 8.7 cm)
Published by Tiberio d'Oliveira
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

Ojo chief
Nigeria
Early 20th century
Postcard, 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (13.8 x 8.7 cm)
Photograph by N. Walwin Holm
Holly W. Ross Postcard Collection

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PHYLLIS GALEMBO
[Not illustrated]

All © Phyllis Galembo, Courtesy Phyllis Galembo
and the Steven Kasher Gallery

Nyakandaiy, Julie Kapeku with a Chiwimba,
Zambia
2007
Ilfochrome print, 20 x 20 in. (50.8 x 50.8 cm)

Chief Nosa Isekhure, The Isekhure of Benin,
Benin City, Nigeria
1994
Ilfochrome print, 20 x 20 in. (50.8 x 50.8 cm)

Oba Oladokun Oyewusi, The Time of Ede,
Osun State, Nigeria
1994
Ilfochrome print, 20 x 20 in. (50.8 x 50.8 cm)

Priest of Oluorogbo, Ife, Nigeria
1989
Ilfochrome print, 20 x 20 in. (50.8 x 50.8 cm)

Nana Saforo Okoampah, Koforidua, Ghana
2010
Ilfochrome print, 20 x 20 in. (50.8 x 50.8 cm)

Okao Aiwarioghene, Benin City, Nigeria
1991
Ilfochrome print, 20 x 20 in. (50.8 x 50.8 cm)

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