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# Sala Mpasu Masks

ELISABETH L. CAMERON

One of the best-known but least understood mask types of Central Africa is the copper-sheathed mask of the Sala Mpasu of south central Zaire. For these fiercely independent people, copper is traditionally a symbol of submission to the Luba, Lunda, and other groups of the southern savanna who sought to dominate them over the last several centuries. Why they would use this metal on their most powerful masks is an intriguing question. The answer may be found by reviewing the literature on Sala Mpasu social structure and the history of their relations with neighboring peoples.

The Sala Mpasu live in the area around the town of Luiza in the Kasai Occidental Province, along with other predominantly noncentralized peoples, including the Lwalwa, southern Kete, Mbagani (or Binji), Dinga (or Tukongo), and Mbala. They are surrounded by peoples who have some form of centralized political structure. To the south and southwest are the Lunda and Chokwe. The Pende to the south and the Lulua to the north both tend toward centralization within the village framework, but are not organized into distinct kingdoms. One of the strongest kingdoms, the Kuba, is situated to the north of the Lulua. To the east is the Kanyoka, a Luba satellite kingdom, and northeast is the Luba kingdom itself (Boone 1961).

Ironically, the Luiza area was unified by the desire of each group to maintain its cultural and political autonomy. As a result, it became a refuge for those who would escape incorporation into Lunda



1. MASK, RAFFIA, 65cm.  
MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, UCLA.  
GIFT OF GEORGE G. FRELINGHUYSEN.

or Luba polities. Organized groups attempting to move into the region were vigorously rejected. While this attitude of resistance sustained these cultures well into the twentieth century, it has also impeded modern academic research. European scholars first gravitated to the large kingdoms because of the comparative ease of investigation once the paramount ruler had given his stamp of approval to a project. Noncentralized societies, in contrast, present special problems because there is no one to sponsor the research and direct the people. As a result, no field research and few written records of any sort regarding the Luiza region and its peoples were produced before 1935, when both

the Four Square Gospel Mission and the Order of Scheut began their work there.

The Luiza peoples had no direct contact with Europeans until the turn of the century. The earliest report, based on information from traders, was written by Manuel Correia Leitao in 1756 (Dias 1938:3-30). It mentions a conflict between the "Mataianvua," or Mwata Yamvo, king of the Lunda, and the "Akongo of Mwene Malaji," referring to the Tukongo who live on the west bank of the Kasai River. An 1847 account of the Lunda includes the earliest mention of the Sala Mpasu and Kete. Joaquim Rodrigues Guara, a Portuguese visitor to the Lunda court, saw a man who was accused of adultery with the king's wife being given to the "Cauandas" people to be eaten (Pruitt 1973:216); the Lunda called the Sala Mpasu and the Kete "Akawanda," meaning "the people downstream" (Pruitt 1973:90, 181). Many Akawanda were cannibals. The Lunda continually conducted military campaigns against them and often took captives back to their capital as slaves. The Akawanda, controllers of desirable resources such as iron and oil palms, had the reputation of being barbaric and impossible to conquer.

The first European to enter the Luiza area was Egard Verdick, a Belgian military commander. In 1903, following a visit to the Lunda, he passed through it on his way back to his home base of Lusambo. In spite of being continually

2. MASK, WOOD, COPPER, CANE, 46cm.  
PRIVATE COLLECTION.



harassed by Sala Mpasu using guerrilla tactics, Verdick carefully recorded the characteristics of the countryside (1952:155-85). The Kasai Company's attempt to occupy the region and set up rubber factories began in 1905. Although it was partially successful, a series of mishaps abruptly ended this enterprise (Jobaert 1925:282). The area remained closed until a Belgian government official, Alfred Jobaert, through his prowess as a hunter and his craftiness as a warrior, was able to earn the respect of the Sala Mpasu and effectively open it up to Belgian exploitation between 1928 and 1929 (Pruitt 1973: 379-88, 412). His 1925 account includes observations on Sala Mpasu customs.

Missionaries constitute another source of primary information. A small pamphlet by Joe Henderson (1936), who opened the Protestant Four Square Gospel Mission station at Moma in 1929, was

primarily directed toward a United States church audience. The most prolific missionary chroniclers of the Luiza area, however, were the Catholic priests of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, commonly referred to as the Order of Scheut. In 1935 the Scheutists established their first permanent station, Masuika-St. Jean, at the village of Masuika (Pruitt 1973:403-5).

The only Westerner to do extensive field work among the Sala Mpasu was the late William Franklin Pruitt. From September 1966 until December 1967, he collected oral traditions in the hopes of reconstructing their history. Pruitt's 1973 Ph.D. dissertation is the most extensive body of information available on the Sala Mpasu and Kete.

Most available references to the arts or material culture of the Luiza area are of limited usefulness. For example, while Henri Bogaerts (1950), a Scheutist priest,

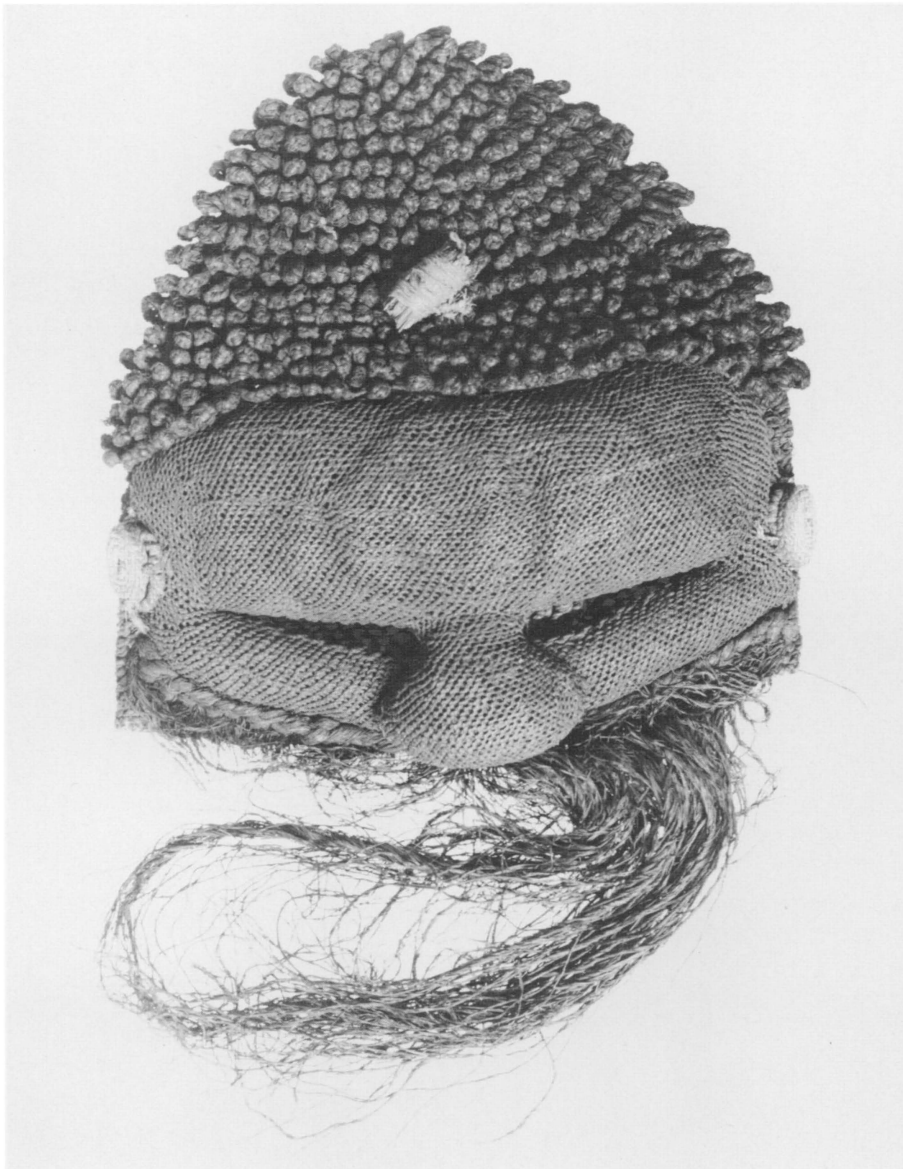
lists the names of masks and the requirements for wearing them, he provides neither photographs nor descriptions, making the matching of name and mask type problematic. Charles Clé (1937, 1948), also a Scheutist priest, gives vague and undetailed descriptions of funerals. More recent discussions simply state that "information is not yet available about the use of these masks" (e.g., Cornet 1978:188). The many types mentioned in the literature do not appear to be represented in collections. Perhaps they were constructed of ephemeral materials that did not survive into the modern era.

One of the three preserved types of Sala Mpasu mask is made of woven fiber (Figs. 1, 3, 4, 7, Cover). It has a finial of woven fiber, feathers, or knobs made of strips of cane. Often it will have a raffia beard or a cane knob at the end of a raffia plait. A second category of masks is made of carved wood. These masks have bulging foreheads and open square mouths that expose pointed teeth (Figs. 5, 6, 8, 11). Headdresses are most often made of cane knobs, and beards are of the raffia or cane knob type seen in the first category. The third type of mask, actually a substyle of the second, is created simply by adding small copper plates to the wooden face mask (Figs. 2, 12).

Sala Mpasu masks served as markers of status and sources of income within this highly independent society. In order to understand their function, their cultural and social context must first be examined. Before about 1880, Sala Mpasu society was centered around the principle of personal freedom.<sup>1</sup> Early observers were surprised that leaders were "few in number, and little paid attention to" (Jobaert 1925:283). Outsiders, such as the Chokwe and Lunda, attempted to conquer the area and establish centralized structures as conduits for tribute payments and slaves, but the Sala Mpasu cultivated a reputation as savages and cannibals in order to discourage their attackers (Pruitt 1973:175-76).

All social institutions functioned to support the autonomy of the individual, specifically by inhibiting inherited wealth and status. The system also had to provide for integration of similarly minded newcomers and to protect the area against interlopers, but not at the expense of the independence of the warrior. Three institutions regulated social life while maximizing individual freedom: the lineage (*mupanga*; pl., *mipanga*), the settlement (sing. and pl., *ikota*), and the warriors' society (*mungongo*; pl., *bangongo*).

The *mipanga* were matrilineal clans that cut across all other political and economic groupings. They were thought to derive from the earliest ancestor of the Sala Mpasu, a woman named Pasu Mukish (literally, "Ancestral Spirit of the



3. MASK. RAFFIA. 62cm. MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, UCLA. GIFT OF THE WELLCOME TRUST

Pasu"), who had six daughters from whom the six *mipanga* are descended (Pruitt 1973:42-44). A person's maternal uncle was a predominant male relative, giving counsel, helping pay the dowry, and providing other kinds of support. When the uncle died, the sister's sons became his heirs, but as it was also their responsibility to pay for the funeral and any other outstanding debts, gaining wealth and status through inheritance was not feasible (Jobaert 1925:285).

There were three levels of *mipanga*. At the lowest level were the lineages that people recognized locally. These comprised the living and their remembered ancestors. The second level was regional in scope, seen most clearly in the divisions of the warriors' society. The broadest level was the national division of all Sala Mpasu, Kete, and Mbala into six *mipanga*. That there were no functional connections between the three levels once again emphasizes the principle of independence (Pruitt 1973:109-12).

While the matrilineal clan served to determine inheritance and the subdivisions of the warriors' society to which a person would belong, the patrilocal settlement (*ikota*) was the predominant economic and political unit. Early observers noticed that the primary locus of authority in the *ikota* seemed to be "old, mainly rich men called *tulamba*" (Bogaerts 1950:383). These rich warriors (*tulamba tumbanji*; sing., *kalamba kambanji*) controlled material resources (livestock, palm groves, iron ore sources, and raw and worked metal) and human resources (in the form of clients, bondsmen, family connections that could be tapped for economic purposes, and craftsmen, especially blacksmiths) within the *ikota*. Wealth could also be accumulated as booty or through success in hunting. Finally, the older warrior who had an established reputation, and was therefore already rich, could obtain additional wealth as an arbitrator.

The Sala Mpasu used the *ikota* to incorporate immigrants into their social system and *mipanga*. As people moved into the area, they became bondsmen, who had much the same status as slaves. They were attached only to the *ikota* and lacked the protection of a *mupanga*. They also included war captives, substitutes for important captives, and debtors. Children of bondsmen belonged to the lineage of the *kalamba kambanji* to whom their mothers belonged. They became part of a shallow lineage, which in several generations became part of the wider *mupanga*.

The third governing institution was the warriors' society, *mungongo*. The *mungongo* served three primary pur-



4. MASK. RAFFIA, 74cm.  
MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, UCLA.  
GIFT OF W. THOMAS DAVIS.

poses: to foster cooperation among the *ikota* in responding to threats from outside, to integrate young men into Sala Mpasu society, and to monitor events where violence was not allowed, such as dances and inter-*ikota* gatherings. The exact organization of the warriors' society is unclear in the literature.

*Tshikita* is the first initiation into the *mungongo*. Boys between seven and fifteen years of age from neighboring *ikotas* were taken to the *tshikita*, an area in the forest where circumcision and the first instruction in the warriors' society occurred. They lived there for approximately one year, receiving instruction in hunting, warfare, and the belief system, and developing their courage and tolerance for pain. The boys were under the authority of the older members of the *mungongo*, of whom the most important was the circumcisor (*kakala* or *kayinda*). At the end of the initiation camp, they became junior members of the society. Full membership was gained with participation in an actual battle, usually an inter-*ikota* fight.

When the *ikota* was threatened, either by another *ikota* or by an outside force, the war horn was sounded to call the warriors together. If the opponent was not Sala Mpasu, a prominent *kalamba kambanji* would coordinate the fighting, but any inter-*ikota* cooperation would be abandoned as soon as the threat was dealt with. When the fighting was over, the warrior was required to eat his victim. By so doing, he took responsibility for the kill before his fellow warriors and before the ancestors.

The primary function of the masks was to signify different titles within a *mungongo*. A warrior attained the right to wear a mask by performing stipulated tasks, paying each *mungongo* member who already had the right to wear it, and paying for his initiation into that particular mask society. The masks therefore represented the warrior's membership in the *mungongo* and were symbols of his economic status. The mask societies to which the warrior belonged brought him additional wealth as new initiates paid for the privilege of wearing the masks. A successful warrior would attempt to buy the right to wear as many as possible during his lifetime, and at his funeral all these would be danced. In this way, masks served to distribute the wealth of the deceased, because each masquerader had to be paid out of the estate. If it was insufficient, the heirs would go into debt to finance the funeral. By acquiring masks, one acquired power: "The more masks a man accumulated, through distribution of wealth to those already entitled to wear the masks, the more metaphysical power he had in the sense that increased knowledge was increased power and control over destiny . . . [older men] had invested their wealth in



5. MASK. WOOD, CANE, 40cm.  
MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, UCLA.  
ANONYMOUS GIFT.

masks, they retained, to their death and beyond, the inside knowledge and the honor symbolized by each mask" (Pruitt 1973:169).

Masks were divided into those that could be worn by any warrior and those worn only by homicides. The right to wear the former was determined solely by economic considerations, and could be obtained for the various masks in any order. Of this type, *nkunubo*, *mukungu nkile*, *sakasiya*, and *tubebebe* (whose forms are not specified in the literature) came out in the *tshikita* in order to frighten the initiates. Near the beginning of the initiation period, however, the maskers took off their masks and revealed themselves to the boys (Bogaerts 1950:392). *Fota wa masele* and *nakabadja* were also worn by initiated warriors but not necessarily those who had killed a man.

Mask types restricted to homicides were called *mukinka*, *nabadi*, *sakuibuku*, *sebamba*, *idangani*, and *ibuku*. Again, their forms are not described in the literature. If someone not entitled to wear these masks saw them, the person would "accidentally" be burned by the fire in his hearth, often dying as a result. If a young man died mysteriously, it was often said that the masqueraders had killed him for this reason (Bogaerts 1950:391, 394). At a funeral, however, the masks were danced in public, and anyone, including women, could see them for a small fee without fearing for his life (Pruitt 1973:171).

The most important masks were those worn by members of the Matambu society. The privilege of the Matambu was very expensive, and usually only powerful *tulamba tumbanji* could afford it.

Within Matambu there appears to have been a hierarchy of masks related to the number of people killed by the warrior, but the literature is unclear on this point (Pruitt 1973:170). *Mudume wa biseba* was a mask of great importance worn only by Matambu initiates.

*Mukinka*, *sakuibuku*, *sebamba*, and *idangani* were worn by members of Matambu and Utshumbu, a healing society. The *ibuku* was danced by members of both Matambu and Utshumbu at ceremonies honoring distinguished ancestors. Bogaerts commented that the right to wear this mask could be passed down from father to son (1950:395). A man who had recovered from illness after treatment by a member of Utshumbu was obliged to be initiated into the society. Bogaerts gives a rare description of the initiation: "It is also on the occasion of an illness and at the decision of a diviner that this dance is held. An initiated man rubs the chest of the sick person with oil. Another initiated man cooks leaves and gives him some of them to eat on the point of their big knife, with the rest the novice is massaged on the chest and back, between thumb and index finger of both hands and between the big toes of both feet. Then they get the roots of dependable trees which the candidate keeps after this. For this he has to pay three chickens.

"Thereafter, two or three months later, he will dance the *utshumbu*. He orders a few tens of gourds full of palm wine and along with that six or 12 or 16 chickens. He beats the drum twice in order to inform the people. The third time everyone begins to shout and the dance begins. The next day the same. The third day the villagers make everything ready to receive the visitors from the surrounding areas. The fourth day the novice dances his *utshumbu* and slays a dog or a goat for the *utshumbu*-men. They tie a cord around his neck which he is then supposed to wear even while he is at home. He is to keep it as long as he lives. He is thereby initiated. The next day he makes the rounds and receives presents" (Bogaerts 1950:407; my translation). Bogaerts's description, however, does not mention the inevitable payment to each of the members of Utshumbu.

The highest level within the Matambu society is the *mukish*. A critical approach to the two main sources of ethnographic data on the *mukish* is essential. Both derive from missionaries: Bogaerts, who emphasized the gruesome aspects of the *mukish*, and Henderson, whose treatment is highly sensationalized; for example, he describes its dance as "the most hideous demonstration of Satanic demon power" (1936:n.p.).<sup>2</sup>

According to Bogaerts (1950:401, 402) there were two types of *mukish*. The *mukish a mpata* ("those who kill in the woods and plains") wore the *mulowa*

mask, and the *mukish a mayi* ("those who kill at riverbanks") wore the *zantombwatombo* or *kasowasowa* mask. (Neither type is described.) A third type of *mukish* mask, the *mabayaya*, was painted red and white and hung in fern trees. It was worn when a *mukish* entered the village, singing bawdy songs (which were then repeated by the women) and stealing such things as chickens and goats. Before a man could be initiated into the *mukish*, Bogaerts reports, he would have to kill his wife, a pregnant family member, a member of the *mungongo*, and an uncircumcised man. Then he would be taken by the *mukish* to the river where they would hold him under the water three times. It seems that few passed this test except those who had family members or friends among the *mukish*. After this, the initiate had the right to wear the masks and to carry a horn filled with medicinal ingredients.

Henderson's information differs in both detail and content from that of Bogaerts. He reported that the *mukish* would communicate with the ancestors and that their spirits were actually contained in his dress. There were four types of masks: "one 'of the forest and plains,' one 'of the trees,' one 'of the ground' and one 'of the water' " (Henderson 1936:n.p.). A woman or uninitiated man was not allowed to see the masquerader on pain of death by poison. If an initiated man for any reason irritated the masquerader, he would have to comply with any of his demands, or be killed. Henderson's photograph of a masquerader he identified as *mukish* wears a crocheted fiber mask (Fig. 7).

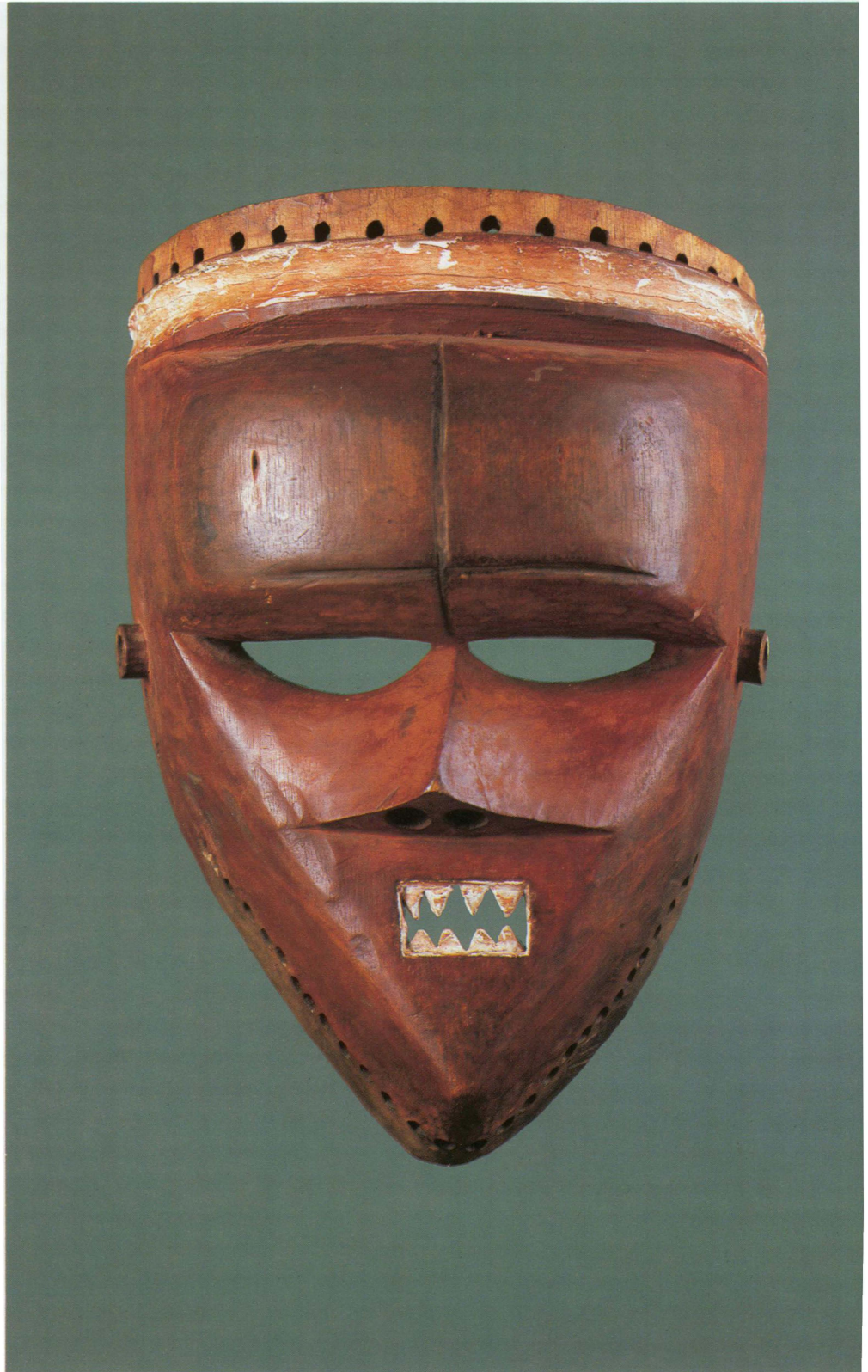
Bogaerts mentioned three more societies within *mungongo*: Tsubembi, Luanda, and Mfuku (1950:393-407). Men were compelled to join them for different reasons. A sick person would join the Tsubembi, paying for both the cure and for the initiation and associated festivities. A man would also become a Tsubembi member after seeing a corpse in the forest. (This may imply that he had killed someone in the woods.) This initiate wore a special mask and was instructed in the making of poison from the corpse. The Luanda dance was given by someone because his cattle had died, or simply because he wished to achieve greater status. The Mfuku was also a healing society.

Other dances and masquerades were associated not with the warriors' association but with the lineages and were held at puberty and marriage. For example, the *rupemba* was a dance given by a maternal uncle to announce that his nephew had been circumcised and was ready to begin collecting wealth for a

dowry. After the dance, the boy entered a house where he remained secluded for three weeks. Then he emerged, covered with white paint, and went to the *ikota* of his *mupanga* to beg for money. This was repeated once a year until the dowry was raised (Henderson 1936:n.p.). The *fumu* dance announced a marriage. It lasted a

week, at the end of which the woman moved to the home of her new husband (Henderson 1936:n.p.).

*Kabulukutu* was a dance given at the end of a girl's puberty rites or when a woman or child was sick. A man had to sponsor the festivities and as a reward received the right to wear *sandando wa*



6. MASK. WOOD, PIGMENT, 27cm.  
MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, UCLA.  
ANONYMOUS GIFT.



*kateleli* or *sandando wa mayizu* masks. Ironically, the women were not allowed to see either of these. After a man had given the dance he was allowed to wear the women's grass bustle and participate in the *kabulukutu*, becoming in effect an honorary woman (Pruitt 1973:171; Bogaerts 1950:408). The *mbunzi mutoke*, the only mask women and children were allowed to see, appeared at women's dances. It teased the dancers and the crowd, especially children (Bogaerts 1950:394).

Jobaert provides a generic description of how a dance was held. It is unclear which one was involved or whether it was associated with a masquerade. However, since women were allowed to participate, it seems unlikely that masks would have been included: "One day, Mugongo sees his wine palm in the forest has dried up, or his nets have been destroyed by crocodiles, or even that the savage beasts succeeded in escaping from his traps. This is sufficient. In all these things he reads an order from his familiar spirit and announces that he will give a ritual dance. He strips off his loincloth, dresses in a short skirt of banana fibers, attaches bells to his belt, fixes his hair in a tall and plumed edifice and to finish, rubs himself all over with white clay. In this costume he visits all of his family, giving invitations and receiving gifts from them. He dispenses of a good part of his belongings and all of the gifts he has received in order to prepare a lavish feast that is capable of lasting several days . . . When the day arrives and all are assembled, he allows someone to announce the beginning of the party, while he goes into the house and stays there throughout the entire ceremonies. His wife, who can take part in the festivities, brings him food. The dances often last a week. At the time of termination, the host leaves his house in ceremony and gives everyone a goodbye gift. These feasts are very expensive, and it often takes a long time for a young man to pay the debts contracted by giving one" (Jobaert 1925:290; my translation).

There were other art forms among the Sala Mpasu, but the literature provides very little information on them, and few examples exist in European or American collections. The most important category of sculpture is a dance platform with human figures and animals carved in relief (Figs. 9, 10). The platform was used in the Matambu society, but whether it was restricted to certain levels or masks is unclear. Carved figures are mentioned in descriptions of other ceremonies. For example, during the *kabulukutu* dance, a figure (*nzambi*) is made and placed in a small house. At the end of the festivities, both house and figure are destroyed (Bogaerts 1950:408). Neyt illustrates a standing figure and associates it with fertility and ancestor cults (1981:208), but he

does not reveal his sources. Another source reports that the Sala Mpasu make "numerous figures of tree trunks surmounted by carved heads" (*Art of the Congo*, 1967:46).

The ancient Sala Mpasu way of life, including the role of masking, existed in isolation from centralized societies of the southern savanna. Because of the absence of cowrie shells and guns in the Luiza area, Pruitt has argued that it was almost entirely cut off from outside trade as a part of its defense against invaders (1973:163, 164, 184, 274, 356). The Lunda used cowrie shells as money, but the only ones in the Luiza area are on Lunda-style headdresses that date from the later period of Lunda occupation (Pruitt 1973:163, 164). Anderson notes that local mussel shells rather than cowries were used as currency (1957:n.p.).

Guns were also very late coming into the Luiza area. When the Chokwe attacked in the late nineteenth century, the Sala Mpasu were armed only with arrows and knives (Bogaerts 1950:380). The Chokwe fired their guns during one of the first battles, and the warriors fled in terror (Pruitt 1973:274). The Sala Mpasu did not yet have guns even when the

Europeans arrived (Pruitt 1973:356). If they had trade relationships with any other group and knew about guns, they would presumably have demanded them in exchange for their fine iron-ware.<sup>3</sup>

When those in the 1903 Verdick expedition moved through the Luiza area, they noticed that indigenous rubber plants were not being exploited (Verdick, n.d., in Pruitt 1973:357). The Chokwe and Lunda were trading rubber with the Belgians and Portuguese; they would have taken advantage of Luiza area rubber if they had been able to do so.

Because the Sala Mpasu and their neighbors controlled valuable natural resources, very early on they came under pressure from the Lunda, whose capital lay only fifty kilometers to the south.<sup>4</sup> The Lunda were few in number and depended on tribute from outlying territories to support their court system. Biebuyck has stated that it was the "primary characteristic" of their political structure (1957:813). If a controlled area paid tribute without causing trouble, it was allowed greater freedom and self-governance. The Lunda preferred to rule indirectly. The traditional chiefs of the conquered peoples became "owners of the land" (*mwaaantaangaand*), while the imposed Lunda chief became the political ruler (*cilool*) (Vansina 1966:82, 83). By cooperating among themselves, the Luiza peoples were able to resist Lunda attempts to incorporate them into their tribute system. Mwata Yamvo Naweef, a Lunda king, died in a campaign against the "Akawanda" and was eaten by them. After this Lunda defeat, Pruitt (1973:205) has argued, "it was almost *pro forma*, almost a part of the Lunda investiture ceremony, it seems, to test the new king's strength against the Akawanda."

The second force to confront the peoples of the Luiza region was the Chokwe, who lived in a small area in what is now east central Angola. The demand for slaves created by the Portuguese on the coast encouraged the development of a network of trade relationships in the interior. While the Lunda participated in the slave trade during the eighteenth century, the Chokwe entered the network between 1830 and 1850, after it had become illegal, and ivory and wax were the primary commodities. They slowly began to expand their territory at the expense of the Lunda, who were suffering from the demise of the slave trade. In 1885 the Chokwe attacked and destroyed the Lunda capital, forcing them to flee into what is now Zaire.

After driving out the Lunda court, the Chokwe continued to the north and attacked the Luiza peoples. While Vansina contends that the Sala Mpasu stopped the Chokwe advance in 1885 (1966:224), the invasion altered the political system



7. FIBER MASK WORN BY "MUKISH," ACCORDING TO JOE HENDERSON, WHO COLLECTED THE MASK AND TOOK THE PHOTOGRAPH IN THE 1930s. FROM HENDERSON 1936. THE SAME MASK APPEARS ON THE COVER.

of the area. The Chokwe used fighting tactics different from those of the Lunda because their goal was the acquisition of war booty; the Lunda, on the other hand, had been interested in controlling the Luiza area and exacting tribute. The Sala Mpasu did not know how to defend against the unprecedented incursions (Pruitt 1973:233, 274). The decisive element was the Chokwe's guns; the Sala Mpasu fled, leaving their *ikota* undefended (Pruitt 1973:274).

The Chokwe attacks forced the *tulamba* to organize for mutual defense, and to maintain the defense structures over an extended period of time. Despite their decline, the Lunda introduced the political and economic models necessary to rebuild the devastated region. *Tulamba* were appointed "chiefs of the land." The Lunda system suddenly became very appealing to the Sala Mpasu because it was aimed at the peaceful development of a trade and tribute network (Pruitt 1973; 264-65).

The final threat to Sala Mpasu autonomy was the Belgians. From 1908 until 1929, they struggled to gain control over the area, establishing collecting points for rubber and undertaking a succession of "military operations" aimed at the pacification of the Sala Mpasu (Pruitt 1973:412-15). These developments reinforced tendencies toward centralization among the Sala Mpasu and their neighbors and increased the appeal of the Lunda system: if the Sala Mpasu or Kete paid tribute to the Lunda, they were not required to pay taxes to the Belgians. The Belgians drove out the Chokwe and disrupted their routes of raiding and trading, eliminating them as a threat in the area (Pruitt 1973:251-54, 395-403).

As a result of Lunda, Chokwe, and Belgian pressure on the Luiza area, within several generations the system of hereditary political authority had become "traditional" (Pruitt 1973:308). Visitors to the Sala Mpasu in the 1950s, such as Wilmet (1958:329), reported that traditionally the chiefs were "omnipotent," although they paid tribute to the Lunda. The chiefs also had "vassals" who worked with the administration. Councils of elders developed to check the power of a new chief (Pruitt 1973:303). In the new system, the balance between the *mupanga*, *mungongo*, and *ikota* no longer functioned to prevent the accumulation of inherited wealth or status (Pruitt 1973:177).

With the incorporation of outside political systems, new materials were introduced. The most important of these was the copper used to cover Sala Mpasu masks. In general, copper in the southern savanna signified power and authority. In her extensive survey of the use of this metal in Africa, Eugenia Herbert states: "Copper as an emblem of leadership... has been the most con-

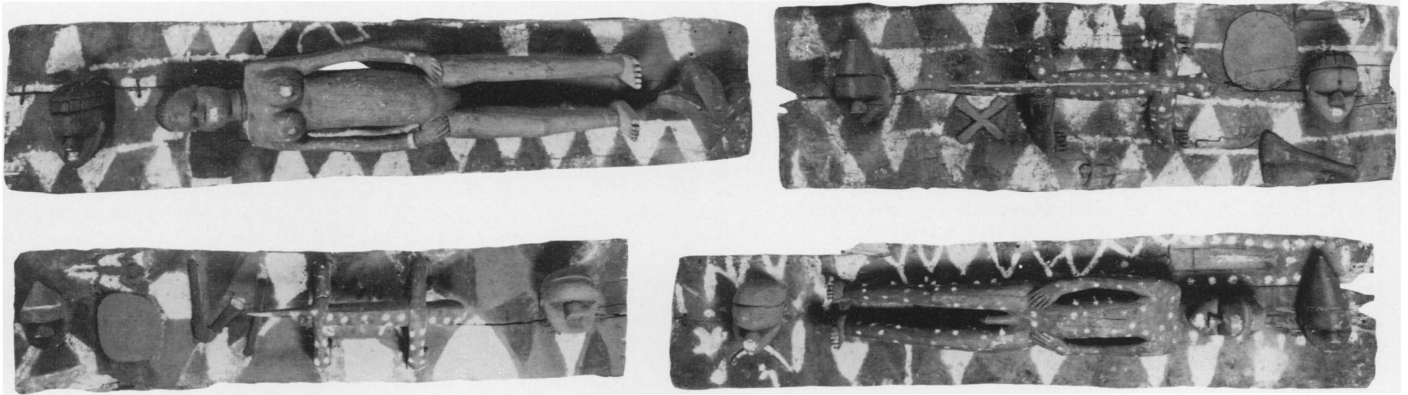


8. MASK PROBABLY MADE FOR SALE TO EUROPEANS. WOOD, FEATHERS, RAFFIA, 104cm. MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, UCLA. MUSEUM PURCHASE.

spicuous use of the metal and its alloys in all parts of the continent for many centuries" (1984:242, 244). Further, "the common denominator... is, or was, the connotation of power, ... power defined within a view of the world that assumes the interpenetration of the political, religious, social, economic, and esthetic spheres." In the southern savanna, copper was used to legitimize a person's or

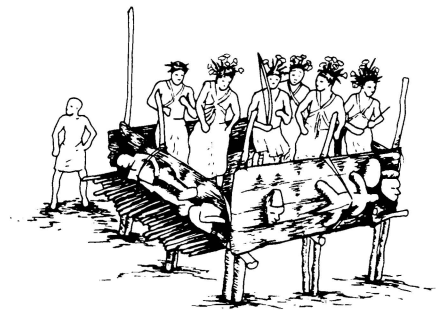
group's control of the majority of the people, and their acquiescence to that control.

Copper is prominent in the myths that establish the political charters of the kingdoms of the southern savanna. In Luba myth, the culture hero Nkongolo gives Kipuku wa Mbuyu a copper bracelet, an ax with a copper blade, a paddle covered with copper strips, and



9. THE FOUR PLANKS OF A DANCE ENCLOSURE. WOOD, PIGMENT, LONGEST PLANK 280.7cm. MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, UCLA. ANONYMOUS GIFT.

10. BELOW: DRAWING AFTER CEYSSENS 1973-74:9, FIG. 12.



the title of *mwadi* (guardian) as emblems of authority (Reefe 1981:86). This importance is reflected in the political structure of the Luba, who live in an area rich in copper. The kings controlled the mining, smelting, and manufacture of the metal. In Kuba society it is the exclusive right of the royal clan to wear copper or its alloys. A war was said to have been fought because the Bokila wore brass, which the Kuba interpreted as an attempt to usurp royal power (Vansina 1978:191). For both the Luba and Kuba, then, copper is used to establish and represent the political power of an individual.

It is also paid as tribute to the kings. The Luba required it from subject peoples, which produced a demand for the metal that they then could supply. The Lunda also exacted copper, especially in the form of crosses, as tribute from their dominions (Herbert 1984:157). The Belgians utilized this system by demanding that taxes be paid in copper crosses, which could only be obtained in exchange for rubber from the state-controlled Kasai Company (Vinson 1921:77, 78).

Finally, copper was used as a symbol of authority. The ultimate emblem of Lunda royal power was a bracelet made of human sinew covered with copper. When an area was conquered, a chief was chosen as representative to the Lunda and given a smaller version of this bracelet as a mark of his authority under the Lunda system (Pruitt 1973:224). The Chokwe also gave a copper ring as an insignia of authority to conquered chiefs (Pruitt 1973:301).

Copper had a very different significance in the Luiza area. The vast amount of Sala Mpasu ironworking and smelting indicates their access to supplies of that metal, but the little geological information available (e.g., Legrand 1955) indicates that there are no copper deposits of the sort plentiful to the southeast in the Luba region. The lack of deposits and the isolation of the area meant that copper

was not available on a large scale for use on ritual or utilitarian objects. Additionally, immigrants fleeing political oppression would have associated the metal with the tribute system of the Lunda and Luba and with the emblems of royalty of the Lunda, Luba, and Chokwe. This meaning of copper was antithetical to the ancient Sala Mpasu social and political system. Even if small amounts had arrived in the area, most likely copper had little value compared to the harder and more practical iron, which was widely exploited. It was probably regarded as a scarce, unusual metal, not useful for exchange and therefore of limited economic value. Its bright, reflective color would have attracted the viewer's eye to the copper-covered mask among the many being danced, its use therefore constituting an ostentatious display of wealth that reflected and reinforced the warrior's ability to attract clients. Covering a mask with copper, however, would not have increased his income or actually furthered his reputation. Thus, within the established network of meaning of the Sala Mpasu, there was no need for copper as a symbol of submission.

After 1885 and the Chokwe invasions, however, the metal took on new meaning. Over the next fifty years, the Sala Mpasu and Kete *tulamba tumbanji* sought to align themselves with larger political forces and to receive the copper bracelet of authority. Trade routes penetrated the

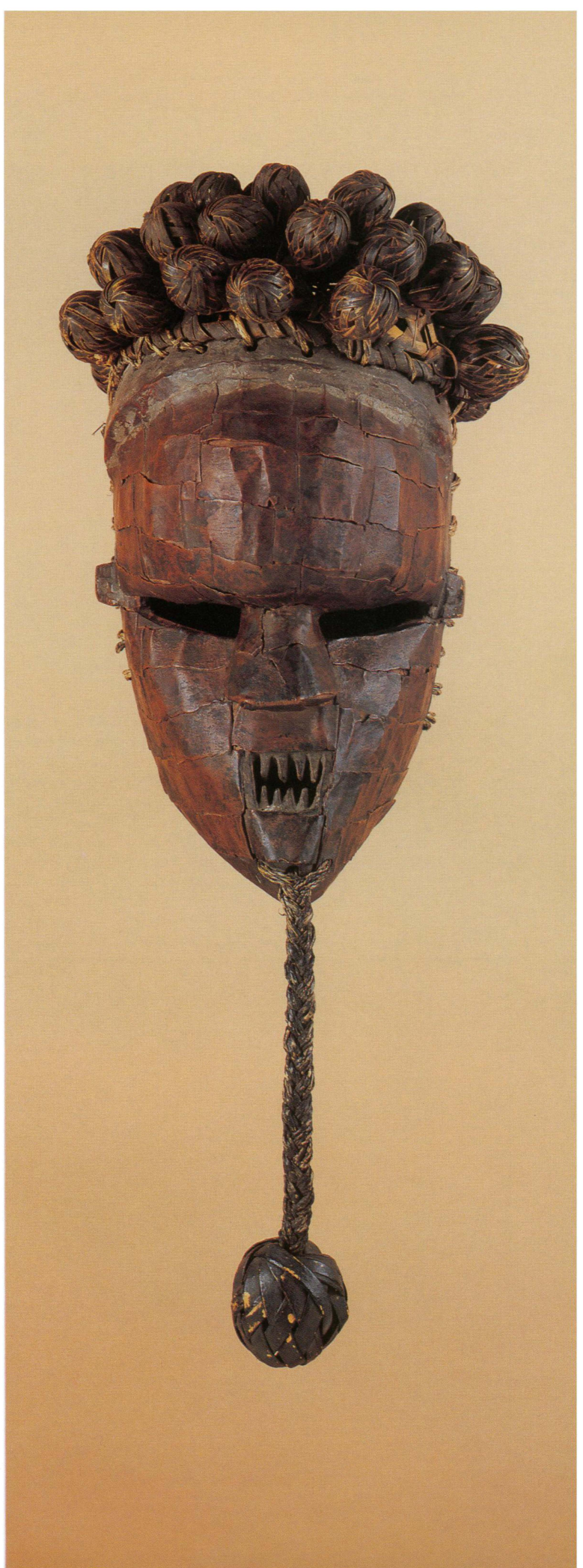
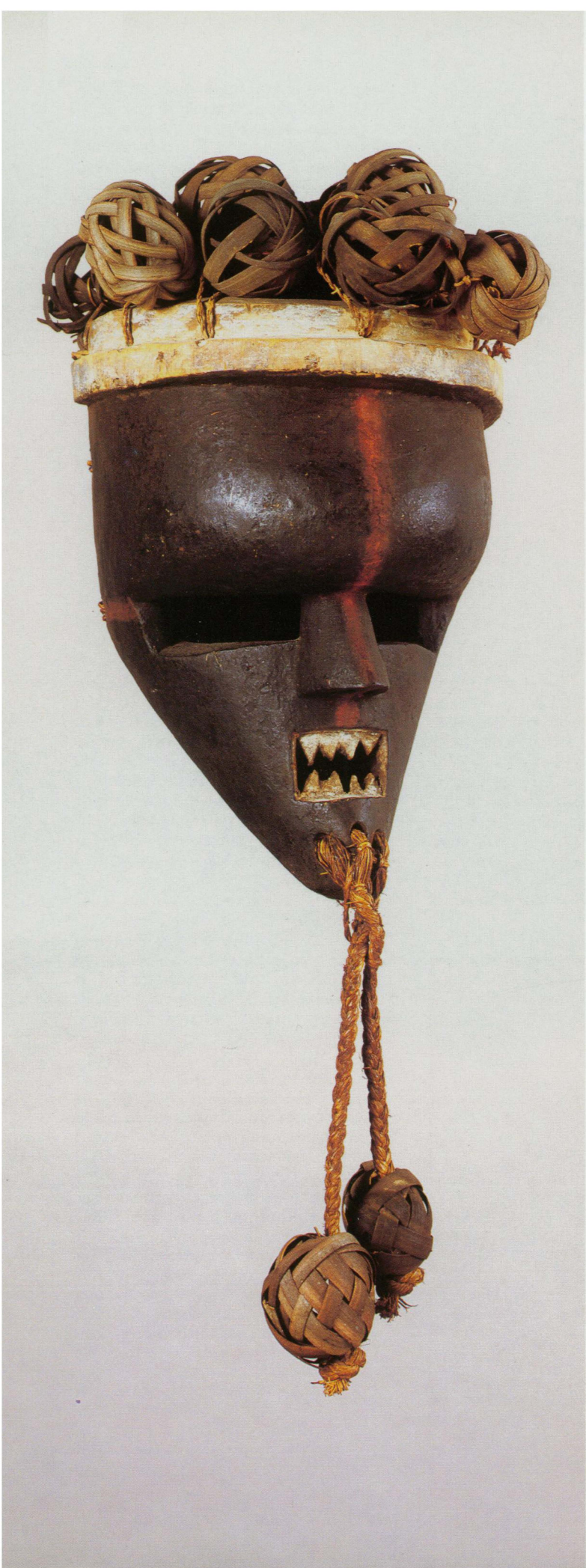
Luiza area, allowing a freer flow of goods, including copper. The Lunda and Belgians also required the Sala Mpasu to pay part of their tribute in copper. As a result, the metal became a staple commodity in the area. Plating masks with copper became a meaningful tradition. It represented a combination of an old form of status — the right to wear masks and the economic benefits it gave — with a new form of status — the chieftaincy whose authority came from an outside power and whose new emblem was copper.

In the early 1960s the Sala Mpasu destroyed their masks and disbanded the *mungongo*. Pruitt argues that these actions were intended to reinforce the authority of the new chiefs and were "symbolic of a determined effort to move into contemporary life" (1973:172, 173). Cornet reported in 1975, however, that the Sala Mpasu had since "increased their production of masks in order to supply growing demand" (1975: 106). Although the source of that demand is not specified, it seems certain that it was, and still is, the European and American art market. Against this background, field research is clearly required to elucidate the complex masking traditions that helped maintain individual liberty, supported by the structural safeguards of *ikota*, *mipanga*, and warriors' society. It is this balance that created the richness of the traditional Sala Mpasu way of life. This research must be undertaken before the information contained in the memories of the last generation of initiated elders is lost to historical and ethnographical inquiry. □

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11. LEFT: MASK. WOOD, CANE, 48.5cm. GALLERY K, LOS ANGELES.

12. RIGHT: MASK. WOOD, COPPER, CANE, 59cm. MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, UCLA. GIFT OF GEORGE G. FRELINGHUYSEN.



## new publications

*Marks of Civilization: Artistic Transformations of the Human Body*, edited by Arnold Rubin. Essays by Arnold Rubin, Robert S. Bianchi, James Faris, Marla C. Berns, Allen F. Roberts, Paul Bohannon, Henry John Drewal, Susan Vogel, Donald McCallum, Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk, Adrienne Kaeppler, Peter Gathercole, Joy Gritton, Aldona Jonaitis, Alan Govonar, Clinton R. Sanders. Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, 1988. 280 pp., 229 b/w & 33 color illustrations, 3 maps, bibliography. \$40 cloth, \$27 paper.

*Images from Bamum: German Colonial Photography at the Court of King Njoya, Cameroon, West Africa, 1902-1915* by Christraud M. Geary. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C., and London, 1988. 152 pp., 88 b/w photos, 2 drawings, map, appendix, notes, bibliography. \$15.95 paper.

*The Work of Z.R. Dmochowski: Nigerian Traditional Architecture*, edited by J.C. Moughtin. Ethnographica, London, 1988. 80 pp., 89 b/w illustrations, map, bibliography. £27 cloth, £9.50 paper.

*Mali: Land im Sahel* by Bernhard Gardi. Museum für Völkerkunde, Basel, 1988. 74 pp., 80 b/w & 11 color photos, 5 drawings, 4 maps, bibliography. Text in German.

*Heroic Figures: African Sculpture from the Justin and Elisabeth Lang Collection*. Introduction and catalogue by Jacqueline Fry; essays by Nkiru Nzegwu and Jean-Claude Muller. Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, Ontario, 1988. 42 pp., 1 color & 42 b/w illustrations, bibliography. Text in English (French text available in insert). \$18 Canadian, paper.

*African Literature, African Critics: The Forming of Critical Standards, 1947-1966* by Rand Bishop. Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies, no. 115. Greenwood Press, New York, Westport, CT, and London, 1988. 240 pp., index, bibliography. \$37.95 cloth.

*Art on the Road: Painted Vehicles of the Americas* by Moira F. Harris. Pogo Press, St. Paul, 1988. 108 pp., 66 b/w & 56 color photos, 7 drawings, 1 map, bibliography. \$16.95 paper.

*Ethnographische Zeichnungen der Lwimbi Ngangela (Zentral-Angola)* by Beatrix Heintze. Franz Steiner Verlag, Weisbaden, 1988. 144 pp., 2 b/w photos, 172 b/w drawings, 4 color drawings, map, bibliography. DM24 paper.

*The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First People*. Preface by Duncan Cameron; introduction by Julia Harrison; essays by Julia Harrison, Ruth Holmes Whitehead, Ruth B. Phillips, Ted J. Brasser, Judy Thompson, Bernadette Driscoll, Martine J. Reid. McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1987. 264 pp., 105 b/w & 116 color illustrations, 7 maps, index, bibliography. \$60 Canadian, cloth.

*Navajo Textiles: The William Randolph Hearst Collection* by Nancy J. Blomberg. University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1988. 258 pp., 23 b/w & 177 color illustrations, map, appendix, index, bibliography. \$45 cloth.

*Western Apache Material Culture: The Goodwin and Guenther Collections*, edited by Alan Ferg. University of Arizona Press, Tucson, for Arizona State Museum, 1988. 205 pp., over 300 b/w & 32 color illustrations, bibliography. \$19.95 paper.

## notes

CAMERON: Notes, from page 43

Attempts to render any Bantu language in Roman characters have proven to be problematic. Early missionaries, explorers, and colonial officials used the spelling rules for their own languages, and the differences in Romance and Germanic languages resulted in many spellings of the same African word. For example, the same sound has been spelled *chi*, *xi*, *ç*, *tshi*, and *c*. To further complicate the orthography, in Bantu languages a prefix is used to indicate the part of speech a word represents. The prefixes have been included and excluded in the literature sporadically. In this paper, place names are spelled according to the local orthography. Following the current common practice, prefixes have been omitted for place names but have been retained for vernacular names of objects and institutions.

My special thanks go to Arnold Rubin, whose interest in the arts of noncentralized peoples inspired me to work with the Sala Mpasu. He read many drafts of my master's thesis, including one when he was very ill. I have profited through his instruction and through his friendship, and believe he will live on through the work of his students.

1. This discussion of the earliest recognizable phase of Sala Mpasu society and the use of masks within it is based on the third chapter of Pruitt's dissertation, "The Ancestral Past" (1973:98-179), unless other citations are given.

2. In his dissertation (1973), Pruitt chose not to deal with the *mukish* because one of his goals appears to have been to desensationalize the literature on the Sala Mpasu.

3. It would be unrealistic, however, to think the Sala Mpasu did not exchange goods and ideas with their neighbors. Waves of Lunda immigrants were being integrated into Sala Mpasu society and lineages through the *bupika* system. These immigrants brought their language and cultural traits as well as some material possessions. Markets developed on the fringes of the Luiza area under the total control of the Luiza peoples in order to protect their independence (Pruitt 1973:184, 272).

4. The brief Lunda and Chokwe history presented here is a synthesis from many sources, including McCulloch 1951: 9-14, 32-35; Davidson 1972; and Crowley 1972:21-24. For more information specifically on the Chokwe see Miller 1969.

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LELOUP: Notes, from page 51

This article is an extension of the special issue on Dogon art, organized by Kate Ezra for *African Arts* (vol. 21, no. 4, 1988). I would like to thank those who have allowed me to use photographs of their objects. Any other illustrations of Dogon sculpture, along with pertinent data, would be welcomed from their private or institutional owners.

1. By Séno, I include Séno-Gondo; Séno-Bankass; Séno-Tambari, Barassara, etc.

2. Evaluating age can be done by other means as well. For instance one can count the number of masks made for the Sigi ceremony, which occurs every sixty years, and also the succession of chiefs in the village. See Dieterlen 1982.

3. Photograph no. 201 by Desplagnes (1907) shows that this hairstyle was still being worn early in this century.

4. This date has been confirmed by the carbon 14 test made on the French piece by the University of Arizona Isotope Geoscience Lab in 1987.

5. The exact region of origin is disputed. Dieterlen has situated it west of Bamako, between Sibi and Niagassola (1982:9).

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