

CHAPTER I: TRADITIONAL ART

Susan Vogel

All traditions were invented or brought into being; all traditions change. This discussion is predicated upon these two self-evident facts. A standard dictionary definition of "traditional" reads "based on an order, code or practice accepted from the past."¹ African artists have always drawn upon ideas, symbol systems, and art styles received from forebears both near and remote. But they have also always digested contemporary events and adapted to change. Traditional African art forms and styles all began somewhere, obviously, and new ones are always in the process of being established. The word "traditional," then, is used here to denote an elastic heritage.

The word needs no apologies, no quotation marks or prefixes. Recently scholars have realized that "tradition" has been used to connote an art impossibly static and unchanging, and one now

ELASTIC CONTINUUM

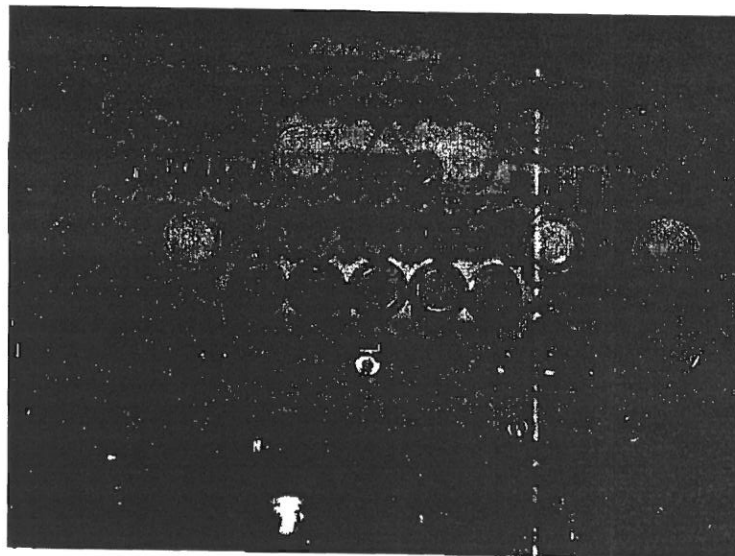
finds writers diluting the term with qualifiers, or advocating that it be abandoned altogether. Some factual qualifiers can be helpful, but the

practice seems otherwise unnecessary and self-defeating: there is simply no better word available for Africa's village arts, especially when they are considered in conjunction with other strains of African art. Nor is there significant disagreement among specialists about the true nature of traditional African arts. Eric Hobsbawm writes, "Where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:8). The distinction between "invented traditions," which bear a factitious relationship to a historic past (ibid.:2), and "genuine" or "old" traditions (ibid.:8, 10) seems to lie partly in the self-conscious and deliberate process of creating an invented tradition; "invented traditions" are portrayed as rigid and unchanging, and "genuine traditions" as flexible and mutable.² "Genuine" traditional art is certainly alive today, especially in rural Africa, though not necessarily in the old familiar forms.

In some measure, of course, all art everywhere is traditional, including the art of our own time. New generations cannot and do not invent styles, media, techniques, and systems of meaning that have no relation to the art that has gone before. The origins of traditional African art styles are typically portrayed as anonymous and remote in time, even those that we can document as relatively recent. In



Fig. 2. Ndebele decorative shelves, South Africa, 1979, molded and painted by women to decorate house interiors. Though the shapes are inspired by Welsh dressers and by patterned shelf paper with scalloped edges, the geometric, high-contrast aesthetic is typically mid-twentieth-century Ndebele. Assorted factory-made objects frame the small, locally made, beaded doll placed dead center—the star of this stage. Photo: Susan Vogel.



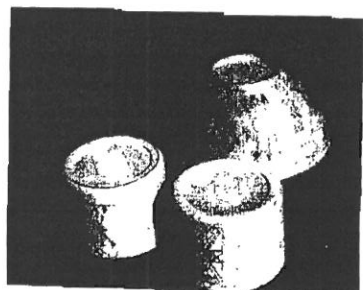
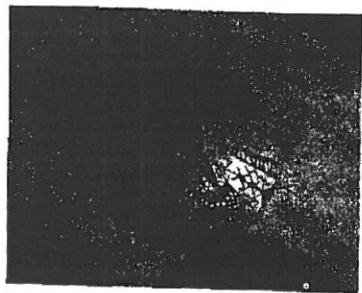
◀ Fig. 1. *Flali* mask carved by the Guro artist Saou bi Boti of Tibeita village for dancers in Bangofla village, Côte d'Ivoire. The new aesthetic intention is to stun the viewer with bright colors, perfect carving of the delicate features, and an arresting motif—a smartly dressed musician playing the percussion gourd that is typical of *flali* bands. The only Westernism is the writing on the coiffure—the name of the mask's owner, not of the artist. Boti is the highest-paid sculptor of the region, and admired for having introduced numerous novel subjects in his masks. Of his carving of a trio of acrobats from the unrelated Dan ethnic group he explains, "People talked about them for a long time in the village so, I thought, I am going to carve these dancers because they please everybody" (Fischer 1985:32). Photo: Lorenz Homburger, 1983.

traditional African art, the age of a practice and its continuity with the past are valued to the point where they are often exaggerated; in the West, what is emphasized is the artist's originality or inventiveness, his or her break with the past. But the individual artist's experience of balancing imitation and innovation may in fact be quite similar in the two cultures.

There is a broad consensus today that traditional African art has never been static or unchanging, and was never a rote reiteration of inherited forms; that the societies that produced it were not closed to the world outside; that its styles were never homogeneous; and that events and individuals have periodically changed its history. At the same time, it has long been recognized that African art is also strongly rooted in repetition, and in the production of objects that correspond to predetermined types. As Joseph-Aurélien Cornet has written, "African art is more an art of stereotypes than an art of creation" (Cornet et al. 1989:56). Traditional art is a continuum of many small incremental changes, along with occasional sudden halts, fresh starts, and radical shifts in direction. Traditions do not survive unless they can respond to changes in the surrounding world. Long-distance trade, migrations, and the formation and dissolution of states in past centuries required large-scale transformations in African art. The long survival of core African cultures, both in Africa and in the countries of the diaspora, might be taken as evidence of their adaptability.

Fifteen years ago, Arnold Rubin wrote, "The entire body of inherited cultural patterns, representing the accumulated experiences, accomplishments, and wisdom of the past [in Africa] is typically evaluated in each generation and reinterpreted or adjusted where deemed desirable in the light of available options and altered circumstances" (Rubin 1975:39). Innumerable other scholars have also recognized that a particular kind of change is integral to traditional African art.

Fig. 3. Engraved gourd (top) and engraved plastic cups and bowl (bottom) of the Wodaabe, Niger. Without missing a beat, Wodaabe artists have engraved their traditional designs on new, industrially made plastics. Plastic vessels have taken their place alongside gourds—which now are sometimes painted with enamels to give them a more modern look. Identical in function to the gourds, and, like them, received “ready made,” the soft-plastic vessels can be worked with the same tools. This is a traditional art in a new medium, rather than a Westernism. Collection: Mette Bovin, Copenhagen. Photos: courtesy Labelle Prussin.



Traditional, “Traditional,” Transitional, Neo-, or Post-?

The view that the word “traditional” does not suit the art of African villages today rests upon a belief that traditional arts are static. Only if immutability is a defining trait of these arts do they need a new name as they change. But traditional art does evolve, and does have a history. The word “traditional,” then, can (and often should) be qualified with a temporal designation: nineteenth-century traditional art is different from eighteenth-century or twentieth-century traditional art.

Traditional works that show the conspicuous use of Western imagery or materials have sometimes been called “transitional,” without any reference to when they were made. This witless designation is peculiarly dismissive, because it arbitrarily relegates certain works to an ill-defined limbo between “pure” tradition and some presumably more fully realized (Westernized?) art of the future. Elsewhere, contemporary traditional art—that made today—has been called “neotraditional,” or “post-traditional,” to distinguish it from art of the precolonial era. This preference is based on the false assumption that “traditional” denotes an era. There is of course no moment when traditional art ends and “neo-” or “post-traditional” begins. Complete ruptures with the artistic practices of the past are rare, even in the twentieth century. Recently, rural Africans have lived with social changes faster and larger than any previous, but they often do not seem to have experienced these changes as different in kind from earlier transformations.

In fact, this book is filled with instances that suggest Africans have not regarded contact with the industrialized West as fundamentally different from contact with other alien cultures. Typical is the experience of a Yoruba elder who stated, as television arrived in Nigeria, that “television is the European’s version of *apepa* [a form of sorcery in which one gazes into a pot of water, summons a person’s image, then pierces the water with a knife]. The difference is that they can summon images from a great distance and use theirs for more good. We can only call images from about 200 miles away [the extent of Yorubaland].” This elder felt that the Yoruba would have invented television “if only we would have had the technology. We had the idea long before the Europeans had it” (Houlberg 1988:5).

It has been argued that the changes in African village arts today are fundamentally different from those of the precolonial past, for they involve influences from a dominant culture radically alien to Africa. This argument ignores the fact that contacts with the Mediterranean, Europe, and the Islamic world have long made those cultures available to African artists and thinkers, who have drawn from them what they have found useful. Further, conquest and domination are hardly a new experience in Africa, though previously they were mostly intra-African.

The argument that Africa’s contact with industrialized nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe eclipses all previous contacts with outsiders may rest on nothing firmer than the West’s conviction of its own cultural superiority. There is ample evidence that in a traditional



Fig. 4. The curvilinear outline of the panel below the face on this beautiful old Chokwe staff from Angola is debatably derived from European scroll ornaments (Bastin 1988:52). The staff, collected in 1875, is considered a masterpiece central to the canon of traditional art. Nonetheless, it incorporates European materials and influence, and was purchased from a trader outside the Chokwe area—factors that might qualify a more recent work as “transitional” or “nontraditional.” It is time to acknowledge that traditional art includes such works, new and old. Collection: Berlin Museum für Völkerkunde.

context, Africans have consistently regarded Europeans as uncivilized and ignorant, if powerful, and have considered the sources of European power as no different in kind from their own. (When automobiles first were seen in Mali, around 1900, people in Sansanding and Segou, ten hours apart by foot, compared automobile travel to the exploits of Moussa Traoré, who was known to visit both towns in rapid succession, though nobody had ever seen him traveling between them.³) African perceptions of their contact with the West are often so different from the Western versions they seem almost humorous. But if a culture or epoch may validly interpret experience in terms of its own world view and values, African readings of Western culture and artifacts cannot be dismissed as ignorant or naive. Parallels between television and *apepa* must be considered seriously.

In the past as now, Africans have so thoroughly digested and interpreted foreign forms in terms of their own value systems and visual codes that the foreign origins of those forms have become virtually unrecognizable. The adoption of a foreign element without modifying it is rare. Certain nineteenth-century Chokwe chiefs' staffs (fig. 4) from Angola use a European scroll for the outline of their tops. Around 1900, when the Kuba of Zaire first saw a bicycle, they immediately found it useful for their own concerns: the pattern its tires made on the ground could be added to their repertoire of textile designs. Should a Chokwe staff with a scroll profile, or a Kuba textile embroidered with a tire pattern, be differentiated from every other example? What other art forms would then also have to be relabeled “post-” or “neotraditional”? Some of the impulse to distinguish current contacts from earlier ones comes from a sense that African culture is being contaminated by Western culture in a new way. Descriptions of contemporary traditional art are laced with words like “decadent” and “corrupted,” words that presume a fall from a prior state of purity—as if Africa had been untouched until the arrival of transistors, *Dallas*, and mirror sunglasses. Ultimately this argument rests on an ideal of cultural purity that persists as a dream even when it has been exploded as romantic nonsense.

In its place should come a recognition that African societies have a long history of contact both with each other and with cultures abroad, and have long demonstrated a readiness—even an eagerness—to appropriate art forms, objects, and ideas from remote sources. In every case we see them exercising great selectivity in the traits they adopt. Writing and the wheel, for example, were available to Africans for centuries but, unlike gunpowder and alcohol, were not widely adopted until colonialism made it expedient to acquire them.⁴ Seldom in traditional African culture is a foreign element simply imitated or borrowed unchanged. Forms appropriated in the nineteenth century and earlier are usually so completely digested and translated into African cultural expressions that they are hardly separable as borrowed or imported. The architectural style of Sudanese mosques, for example, which combined North African and Sahelian forms beginning in the twelfth century; the bronze vessels modeled on Islamic ones that were made by the Akan in Ghana from at least the fifteenth

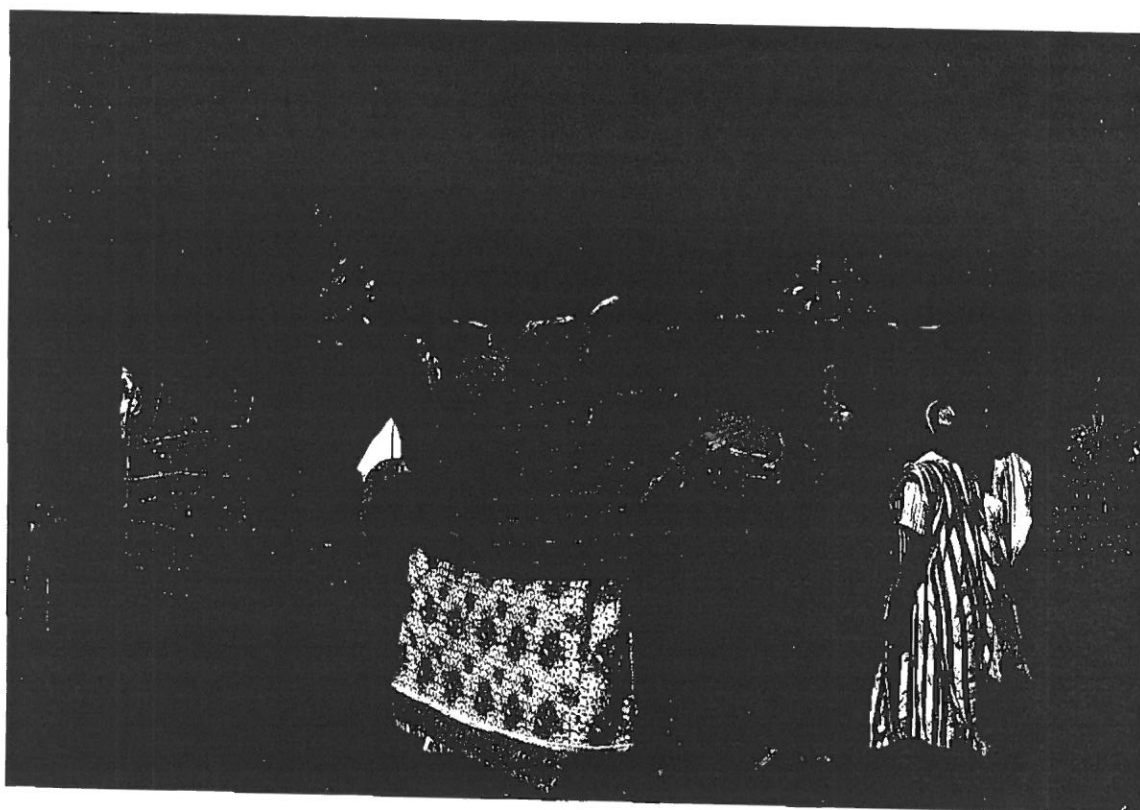
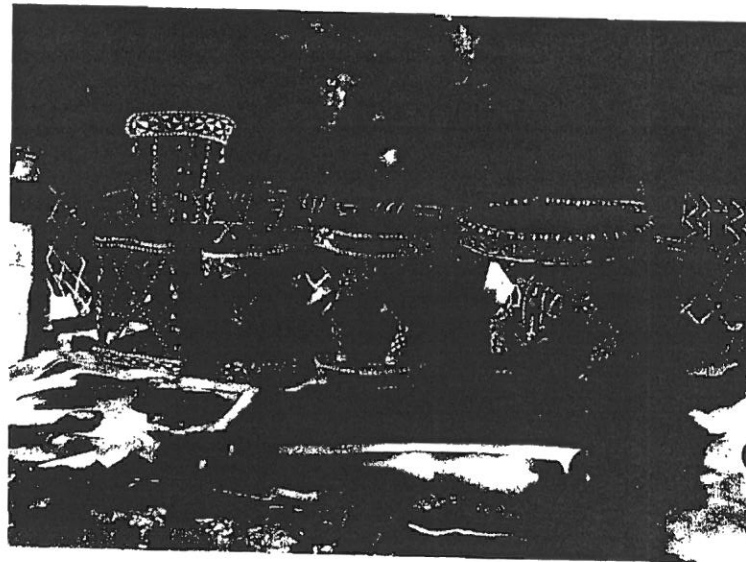


Fig. 5. Bamana marionettes performing in Kiranko village, Mali, in 1986. The marionettes, part of a performance adopted by the Bamana from a neighboring group in the first decades of this century, have changed little in style aside from a slightly more organic treatment of the angular face and the use of bright enamel paints in new colors. The puppets traditionally depict notable humans, animals, and birds. Newly added subjects conform to the earlier repertoire—one portrays a white researcher carrying a pen and notebook; another represents the nation as the "Great Bird of Mali," in a form similar to many other bird puppets. Even the rudimentary rod-and-string mechanism used to move the puppets remains unchanged. Photo: Susan Vogel.

century (Silverman 1983:11-14); the rectangular plaques of Benin (cat. 117-119) that echo Renaissance pictures in their shape and pictorial mode—these and many other cultural expressions show a will to recast the foreign trait in an African mold.

Researchers have described traditional cultures in a mode of discourse known as the ethnographic present, generally repudiated in recent years because of its misleading implication of timelessness. It is revealing, however, to consider how much the ethnographic present was jointly constructed by researchers and their informants. Because traditional African cultures received truths from forebears, and because legitimacy often rests on the presumption that present beliefs and practices are the same as those of the past, change is often suppressed or denied. Informants generally describe art forms and their meanings as very old, indeed as constants, and have often represented a replacement object as the original one—because, for their purposes, the two are indistinguishable. My own experience among the Baule of Côte d'Ivoire accords with what Allen Roberts found among the Tabwa in Zaire: "History is not absolute. Knowledge is not immutable. Rather, understanding is an ongoing process. People have no history with a capital 'H'; instead, they engage in 'historization' . . . Personal past and collective 'tradition' are invented as the need arises, despite what inside informants and outside observers may say to the contrary" (Roberts 1988:123). Because the ethnographic present continues to be used by informants, it has proven hard to avoid.⁵

Fig. 6. The regalia of a Cameroon grasslands king, including beaded stools, ivory horns, and cloth hangings, late 1970s. A beaded kitchen-type chair has joined the assemblage. Prestige textiles include locally dyed indigo and imported hangings with images of the leopard and the elephant, animals associated with the king. Glass beads, made in Venice and Poland, and cowrie shells from the distant Indian Ocean were essential to the creation of traditional Cameroon grasslands art long before the arrival of Europeans. Photo: Hans-Joachim Koloss.



Traditional Art Today

Traditional African art is any art that continues either the form (object or performance type) or the function of a received art, or both.⁶ Also traditional are art forms that recast formulas received from the past. Some newly invented art forms may become traditional in the twenty-first century if they are continued by the next generation. Even a relatively new art form should be considered traditional if it is communally recognized as a continuation of an older practice, and is accompanied by a complex structure of use and belief. Style seems a much more variable factor than form or function, and cannot be traced as a constant over time. As discussed in the Introduction, however, there is a clear, continent-wide drift toward certain well-defined stylistic features, though the causes for this are obscure. What, then, is traditional art today?

Traditional art has thrived through most of the twentieth century, nurtured in the early decades of colonial rule by the availability of new tools, the imposition of peace, and a new degree of prosperity. The destruction and removal of works of art by colonial forces, missionaries, and collectors both stimulated and inhibited the making of art. Social and political shifts, and some redistribution of wealth, created a need for new art objects, including many that served to allay anxiety and explain change. The introduction of new materials, motifs, and ideas must also have encouraged the creation of new works. It is impossible to estimate how many works of art were made in the twentieth century compared to the nineteenth, but it seems likely that much more than half of the traditional African art in collections today was created in this century, during what was certainly one of the great expansive flowerings of the arts anywhere.

In the last decade, however, creativity in the traditional arts has diminished, and the extinction of art types has been noticeable. As the old cults wane in the face of Islam, or of Christianity, or through their simple inability to protect their devotees from new dangers.



Fig. 7. Cover of a Nigerian guide to television programs showing the diviner Yemi Eleburur-Ibon. It has always been important for diviners to be able to deal with current problems, and in earlier years they "advertised" their special skills with remarkable behavior, buildings, garments, and impressive performances. Yemi Eleburur-Ibon has successfully adapted these traditional practices to modern times: since about 1985, he has performed traditional Ifa divination—essentially unchanged—on a weekly television series. (Nigerian Television Authority Ibadan TV Guide, Jan.-March 1987. Collected by Marilyn Houfberg.)

fewer resources are dedicated to creating elaborate new shrines or to maintaining old ones. New avenues to prestige and visibility have come into favor among Africans who grew up in the second half of the twentieth century: they prefer to buy a motorbike, or Western-style clothing, for example, rather than commission new shrines, sculptures, or masks. Furthermore, as the powers of traditional rulers are usurped by national governments and police forces, some royal courts and the artworks that expressed their prestige and authority have become less imposing. There are exceptions: as Doran Ross has pointed out, "Traditional royal regalia is thriving among the Akan, Yoruba, and at the Benin and Kuba courts. Traditional leaders are protecting their status through the only outlet left to them, which is public display during traditional festivals."⁷

Traditional art is most vigorous today in conservative, relatively isolated, rural communities, where it is patronized mainly by those with the least formal schooling. It is also found among leaders of kingdoms such as those Ross mentions above. Traditional art is also made and used by some residents of every town and city in Africa, and city-dwellers join their rural relatives in many village art events, especially funerals and healing rituals. In general, the arts that were once the most political and secret seem to have fared less well in recent times than the arts of entertainment, and those that help people to cope with personal problems. Healing and divination cults have frequently expanded, almost always becoming "modernized" in some way. The old secret cults and activities that bolstered political power suffered most, for they attracted the suspicion of colonial administrators, who often tried to suppress or exterminate them. Ironically, many of the art forms that have survived best are precisely those entertainment performances that mock or challenge authority. In the past, they sparked change, as they were the traditional means to unveil hypocrisy, to express skepticism about power, and to question the status quo—as they still do.⁸ Many arts that had other primary functions in the past have become entertainments in recent years.

Many African art forms and cults strove to be continually and visibly up to date long before the twentieth century brought its dramatic changes. It can be important for diviners and healers to advertise their familiarity with the outside world, for they often claim to use the ancient powers of their cults to deal with modern problems. One of the most successful Yoruba diviners now has a televised weekly divination session that is followed closely by hundreds of thousands of people (see fig. 7). The association of what is new with vigor, youth, and strength is well documented in African art, and is often expressed as a preference for freshly painted or newly made sculptures and costumes. To sustain a following, a cult had to maintain its effectiveness in dealing with current problems, or people would say it had "lost its power" and would discard it for another.⁹

Ibibio Idiong diviners of Nigeria, and members of the more recent Mami Wata cult (which began in the 1920s or earlier), in the 1970s used a Westernism to signal their connection to today's world. A Mami



Fig. 8. Bamana masquerader accompanying the marionettes (fig. 5) in Kiranko village, Mali. He plays an archetypal buffoon role in mask performances, not dancing but behaving as an antiideal character, kicking over water buckets, rolling in the dirt, making lewd gestures, chasing women and children, and mocking anyone of importance. The masquerader acts as a crowd controller and provides comic entertainment between the appearances of the marionettes. The sculptural form of the mask is nineteenth century or older. Photo: Susan Vogel.

Wata diviner, for example, might put a "Mami Wata telephone" at the entrance to her or his compound. This was a tall pole with a small version of the shrine sculpture on top, connected to the house by a rope. Diviners said that the "telephone" warned them of any stranger entering the compound, and informed them of the reason for the visit (Salmons 1977:11). This old concern was fulfilled in the past by bundles of medicines and other items hung or buried at the entrances of houses and compounds. The telephone is only a new metaphor for the old powers.

Overall, traditional African artists today have more choices than in the past. Available to them now are more materials, more themes, more ideas, more disparate sources for inspiration than ever before. The living traditional arts today exist in every possible relationship to the arts of the past. We find: 1) arts that preserve traditional forms and functions, sometimes while serving a new purpose as well; and 2) arts that adopt new forms to serve traditional functions. We shall examine these types here, and in chapter II will deal with what may eventually become traditional art: new art forms that serve new functions.

Continuity of Form and Function

Among traditional arts that have preserved both the form and the function of older practices, masquerades with an entertainment aspect are the most conspicuous and widespread. Eberhard Fischer writes,

There have also been passing fashions in Africa from the earliest times: a new song suddenly becomes popular, a new rhythmic combination or sequence of steps is specially admired and is copied on all sides, soon having its own name and its own "look." Within the last thirty years the *seri*, *uale*, *sauli*, *flali*, and many other solo dances have been in favor for a time, all associated with masks crowned by a particular emblem. Many of the dance styles are created by well-known personalities, they spread rapidly, remain popular for ten years or so and are then forgotten. In some cases, the masks survive the dances, for they are expensive and carefully tended properties and can be used for other dances. The masks are designed to surprise the public with their novelty (Fischer 1985:30).

For a very long time, the Guro of Côte d'Ivoire have performed secular entertainments in which masked dancers appear with their bands at commemorative feasts for the dead, in regional or national festivals, or to celebrate an event such as a good harvest or the return of some respected citizen. Tourists or other spectators unrelated to the performers have been readily accepted at such performances in Africa, and the masks are commonly also manufactured for the external market. Tourism, however, has changed over time. In the 1920s and 1930s, celebrity tourists—royalty, singers, cardinals, poets—motored across the continent visiting remote areas that have not seen a tourist in years. White tourism today is concentrated in a few locations, and the village arts' outside audience is at least half composed of urban Africans who have come home to visit or who watch traditional entertainments on television and in live performances in hotels,

Fig. 9. A Guro dance troupe entertains Ivorian political officials and foreign tourists near the poolside hors d'oeuvre table at the Hotel le Président in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, 1978. Photo: Susan Vogel.

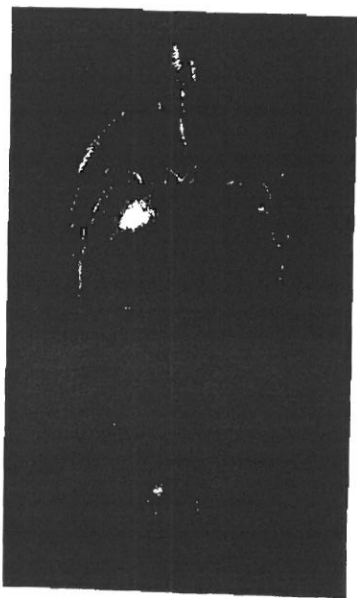


Fig. 10. Guro mask, Côte d'Ivoire, late nineteenth or early twentieth century. This mask once belonged to Paul Guillaume, and was published in the 1920s. Many older works have been darkened to suit the tastes of collectors, but this one still retains its original bright pink color (produced from a seed) and blue highlights under its eyes. When the Guro gained access to even brighter, factory-made enamel paints, they took to them quickly. Collection: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Wing, Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller.

stadiums, and street parades. Africans are also substantial buyers of "tourist" art.

Gaining a new audience of foreigners or a national public has often enhanced traditional performances in the esteem of the original village audience. Modifications made for external presentations may add new luster to the home version. More often, however, the external audience, seeking something "authentic," exerts a conservative influence by discouraging all but superficial change. (Outsiders' notions of what is authentic, however, may vary widely from actual past practice.) The emphasis on theatricality that creeps into a performance created for outsiders can lead to subtle alterations in performances for the original audience. Art forms commercialized for outsiders often lose some of their deeper meanings for their original audience, particularly when other forces have simultaneously diminished their importance.

The Makonde of Mozambique¹⁰ were subject to extensive secularization and Christianization during the colonial period; since then, nationalist African politics have made many of them refugees, often in the Tanzanian capital of Dar es Salaam, where they have found

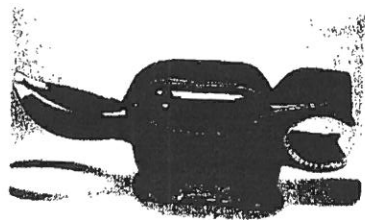
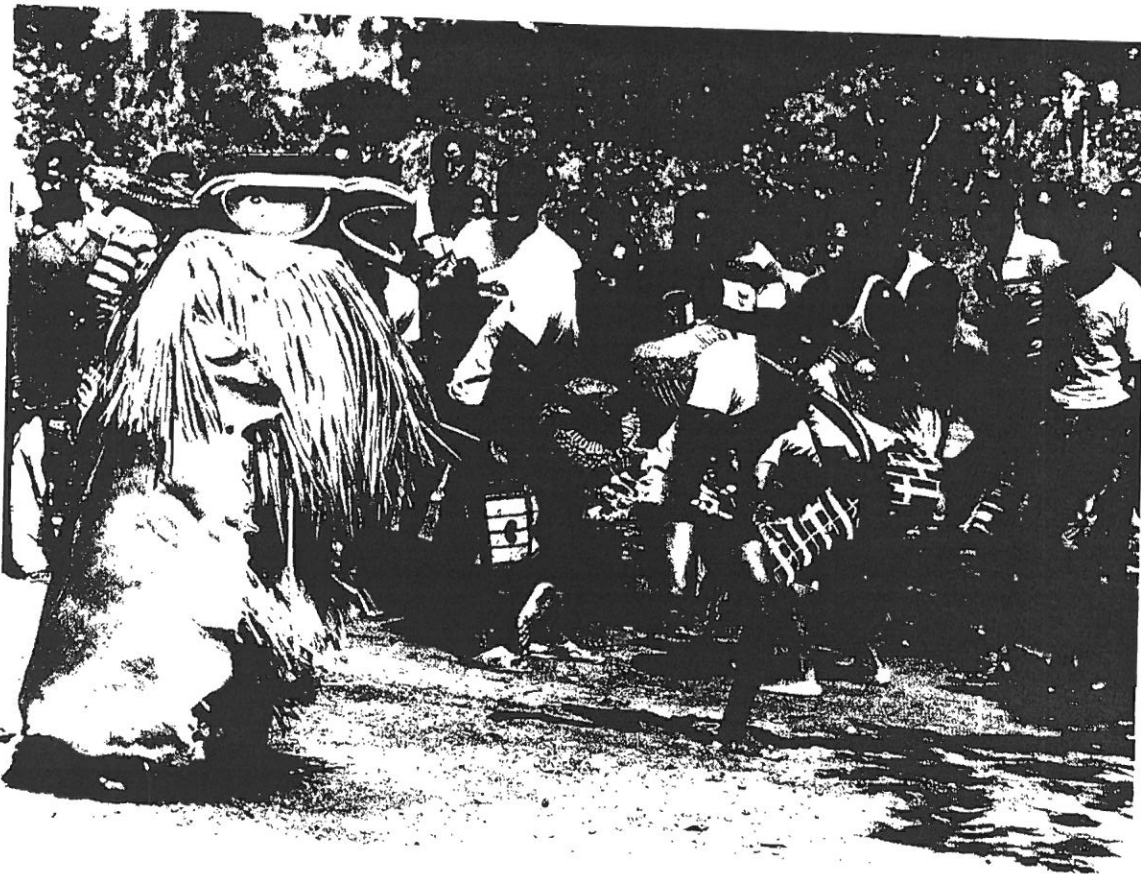


Fig. 12. This Goli Glin mask entered the collection of the Musée de l'Homme, Paris, in 1931, making it a relatively early example. The sculptural forms of such masks have remained almost exactly as they were when they were introduced, except for the use of enamel paint—though still in the old colors. The performance sequence seems subject to change, however, and Goli's deeper meaning (which for the Baule lay in its sequence) is gradually losing ground to its theatricality. Collection: Musée de l'Homme, Paris. Photo: M. Delaplanche.

work making carvings for the tourist market. There, Makonde youth, no longer able to retire to initiation camps in the bush, undergo initiation rites secluded in suburban houses, where Mapiko mask dances occur as they did before. The mask carvers have somewhat expanded the repertoire of local characters their masks depict, including not only Makonde personages but Indians, Arabs, Portuguese, and guerrilla fighters. These and other African masks, once used only for functional performances, now sometimes also entertain external audiences, a practice that expands a widespread older custom of sending mask dancers and orchestras to represent the ward or village in another village, or at the local ruler's court.

The earliest Makonde masks we know are morphologically similar to those used today. The masks still consist of a whole head and neck worn on top of the dancer's head. Superstructures have not appeared where none existed before: even new subjects have taken the traditional form. Guro masks also continue to be carved as before—as small face masks with coiffures surmounted by decorative motifs. The main difference between early- and late-twentieth-century versions of these masks and many other traditional art forms consists of an updating of some of the subjects, which now often include conspicuous modernisms. On recent Guro masks, for example, we find themes from modern life carved above the face—an elephant (symbol of Côte d'Ivoire), famous soccer players, the president, an airplane.

Fig. 11. Baule Goli Glin performance in Bende-Kouassikro village, Côte d'Ivoire, 1980. The dancers of this village have been commissioned to perform for tourists so often that they have proudly gotten themselves matching T-shirts, emblazoned "Golli de Bende-Kouassikro," which they now wear during all performances—to the dismay of tourists hoping for something more "traditional." The Goli dance, newest of the Baule dances (it was introduced only after 1910), is frequently performed on television and has become part of the repertoire of the Ivoirian National Ballet. Photo: Robert Rubin.



Fig. 13. In the 1980s, a popular Baule singer and electric guitarist who performs under the name Jimmy Hyacinthe produced a record album featuring Goli music, with Goli Glin masks pictured glamorously on the cover. Village dance troupes are called to perform Goli on national holidays and for official visitors. All this attention has tended to validate the importance of the dance in Baule villages, where Goli seems to be replacing all other mask dances.

These images refer to important people and concerns of the day—just as they did in the past.

Newly made Makonde and Guro masks are typical of contemporary traditional art in showing only minor changes in style compared to earlier examples. These and other sculptures are all somewhat more finely detailed and somewhat more naturalistic, with modeling that suggests flesh and bone; surmounting motifs are more likely to show tableaux or figures in action than in the past, and people are of course portrayed in contemporary clothing—as they always were. New and old masks are now painted or repainted with bright imported enamels and often include writing.¹¹ These tendencies—toward naturalism and an emphasis on color—are part of a trend that can be seen in many contemporary art forms all over the African continent (see the Introduction). The most striking realization to emerge from this examination of recently carved traditional sculptures is that formal changes have been exceedingly modest.

In a discussion of art today around the world, Paul Faber writes that certain traditional art forms

aim to reflect current events in microcosmic concept. This was customary a century ago and the same applies today. This flexibility, dating from time immemorial, is capable of absorbing the waves of the new times without any real breaks with tradition occurring. Changes can therefore take place within the realm of materials, techniques, colors, and even forms and themes without the transition being of any real significance to the makers and users.¹²

The changes in Makonde and Guro masks, and in other entertainments that have followed the same course, have been experienced not as ruptures with the past or as abandonments of tradition, but as gradual shifts consistent with earlier practice. It seems reasonable to assume that the scarification patterns on Makonde masks and the coiffures lovingly detailed on old Guro masks were mainly those in fashion when the masks were made, and that to their original audiences they too were a comment on and a connection to the present. Continuous, gradual innovation of this sort was evidently widespread, though it is virtually impossible to detect retrospectively because we almost never have a complete chronological sequence of masks from a single place, which would permit us to distinguish chronological change from regional and personal differences.

New Art for Old Functions

New art forms invented to fit old functions can become new traditions, in a process that duplicates the genesis of earlier traditional arts. Recent inventions are integrated into the artistic complex of a society, and their late arrival may be somewhat suppressed by the community, which presents the new cult as of a piece with the old ones. Consider the case of the Baga of Guinea reported by Frederick Lamp (1989:6-7, and personal communication, December 1990). The popular Baga bird-masquerade Koni fell out of use in the 1930s, to be replaced by another young people's performance, Sibondel. But by

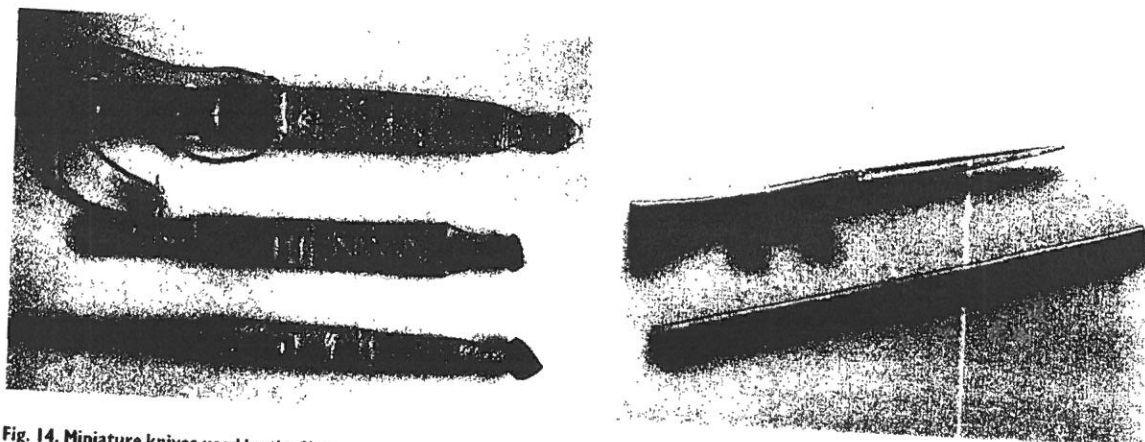


Fig. 14. Miniature knives used by the Shona of Zimbabwe to commemorate their ancestors. Recent examples commemorating those who died in guerrilla warfare sometimes take the form of miniature automatic weapons (Dewey 1986:65). Collections of the American Museum of Natural History (left) and of William J. and Barbara Dewey (right). Photos: William J. Dewey.

the mid 1950s, traditional dances, including Sibondel and the much older D'Mba masquerade (also known as Nimba), were considered passé by young audiences, were depleted by the art market, were under attack from the government, and were challenged by Muslim clerics. They were finally all abandoned, to be succeeded by a dance named al-Barak (after Mohammed's winged steed), which used Islamic imagery and was controlled not by old men but by young, nominally Muslim men. While the object types were new, their style was recognizably derived from earlier Baga art. All these successive masquerades conformed to the same broad patterns of practice and belief. To the Baga, their culture remained a seamless whole, traversing periods of difficulty and change in the broad sweep of history. Because of the way Baga informants talked about the al-Barak tradition, Lamp was surprised to learn that the dance was less than thirty years old.

In other cases, much older art forms than al-Barak may continue to be seen by foreign scholars as foreign implants. The people of the Niger delta have paid homage to water spirits since time immemorial. The cult of Mami Wata, a water spirit, was adopted by the Ibibio before 1922, and was still expanding in the 1970s (Salmons 1977). Though the cult is relatively new, and both the name and imagery are non-African in origin, its structure is traditional. In the powers attributed to its practitioners, the role it plays in the community, and the structures of its performances, shrines, and sacrifices, it draws upon much older Idiong divination cults. It also includes an interlude very like the traditional practice of fattening young women and presenting them to the community before marriage. It is a perfect example of twentieth-century traditional art bringing a new form to an old function.

Late-twentieth-century traditional art can serve a traditional function not only with new forms but in an entirely new medium. The Yoruba traditionally honor deceased twins with images carved of wood; in recent decades they have occasionally replaced the old carved figures with local factory-made molded plastic dolls. More radically, they may now use a photograph in place of a carved figure for a twin shrine (Houlberg 1973:26-27): when no picture exists of a dead twin, the surviving twin is photographed in appropriate pose and

Fig. 15. Hélène Leloup, a Paris and New York art dealer, during a collecting expedition in Boko, Guinea, in 1956. Nimba headdresses, made by the Baga of Guinea, are both large and scarce, and have always commanded high prices on the African art market. The truck full of traditional Baga art, including such a headdress, is indicative of the art market's hunger for traditional objects, and of the ambivalence the Baga felt about retaining their masquerades during a time of increasing Islamization. About this time, Nimba ceased to be made or performed. Photo: courtesy Leloup Gallery.

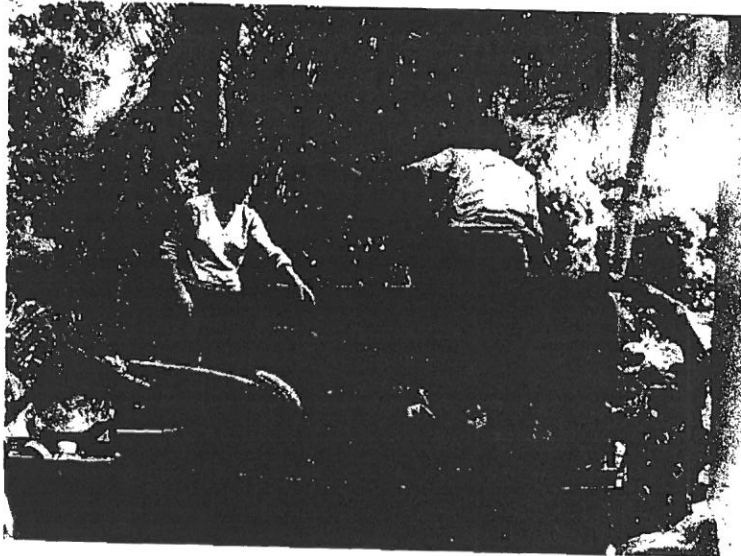


Fig. 16. Al-Barak headdress in performance, Baga Sitemu, Guinea, 1990. Baga masquerades have traditionally taken the form of a high headdress over a bulky, haystack-like costume, and the mid-twentieth-century ones preserve this general configuration. The al-Barak headdress, named for the horse that carried the prophet Mohammed through the air to Medina, was invented in the 1950s partly in response to the growth of Islam in the area. Its conspicuous newness, which is part of its appeal, lies in its boxy non-organic shape, and in the fact that it is predominantly carpentered rather than carved like older headdresses. Photo: Frederick Lamp.





Figs. 17a-17c. The Yoruba of Nigeria consider twins minor deities and carve figures to be used in a twin cult after they die. In the nineteenth century these took the form of carved wooden figures of a kind still made today (fig. a). Muslim and Christian families have avoided the traditional figures and replaced them with a photograph or mini-

mally carved figures (fig. b). The school-teacher who lost one of her twins carries the surviving twin and holds—in place of the carved figure—a factory-made plastic doll which she uses in the twin cult (fig. c). These practices represent an updating of the tradition without a rupture. Photos: Marilyn Houlberg, 1970.

clothing, and the photograph is placed in the shrine. If the deceased twin was a boy and the living twin a girl, she is photographed dressed as a boy, and vice versa. By manipulating the negatives, the twins can be made to appear as if they were sitting together. Offerings and sacrifices are made to the photographs as to the earlier carved figures, but photographs are particularly well suited to Christian and Muslim observants who want to distinguish their devotions from traditional Yoruba practice.

There are many other instances of the imaginative use of imported items as replacements for traditional artworks. By the 1950s, unable to replace the old ivory sculptures used in their Bwame initiation society, the Lega of Zaire were occasionally using Madonna figurines in place of their ivory ones, aluminum and china dishes instead of their carved masks, and light bulbs instead of the smooth ivory heads that had been used in the instruction of initiates. With clear irony, the light bulb was meant to allude to the many undesirable changes that had come with the Europeans.¹³

Style and Workmanship

Throughout the twentieth century there has been a general drift toward naturalism and meticulous detail, and a growing reliance on color. As described above, and discussed in the Introduction, complication and multiplication of forms have also been noticeable. Lettering too makes its appearance as a significant Westernism in many contexts. These trends are driven by the rise in individualism, by a new interest in material objects and the visible world, and, on a

Fig. 18. The main stadium in Kumasi, Ghana, the site of ceremonies connected with the inauguration of the new Asantehene, the Asante king, in the early 1970s. Chiefs borne in palanquins, surrounded by bearers of stools, drums, and gold-handled swords, and attended by entourages carrying the large state silk umbrellas, have entered the stadium to pay homage to the new king. The modern stadium was chosen as a setting for this traditional event in order to allow a large, mostly African audience to attend. Photo: Susan Vogel.

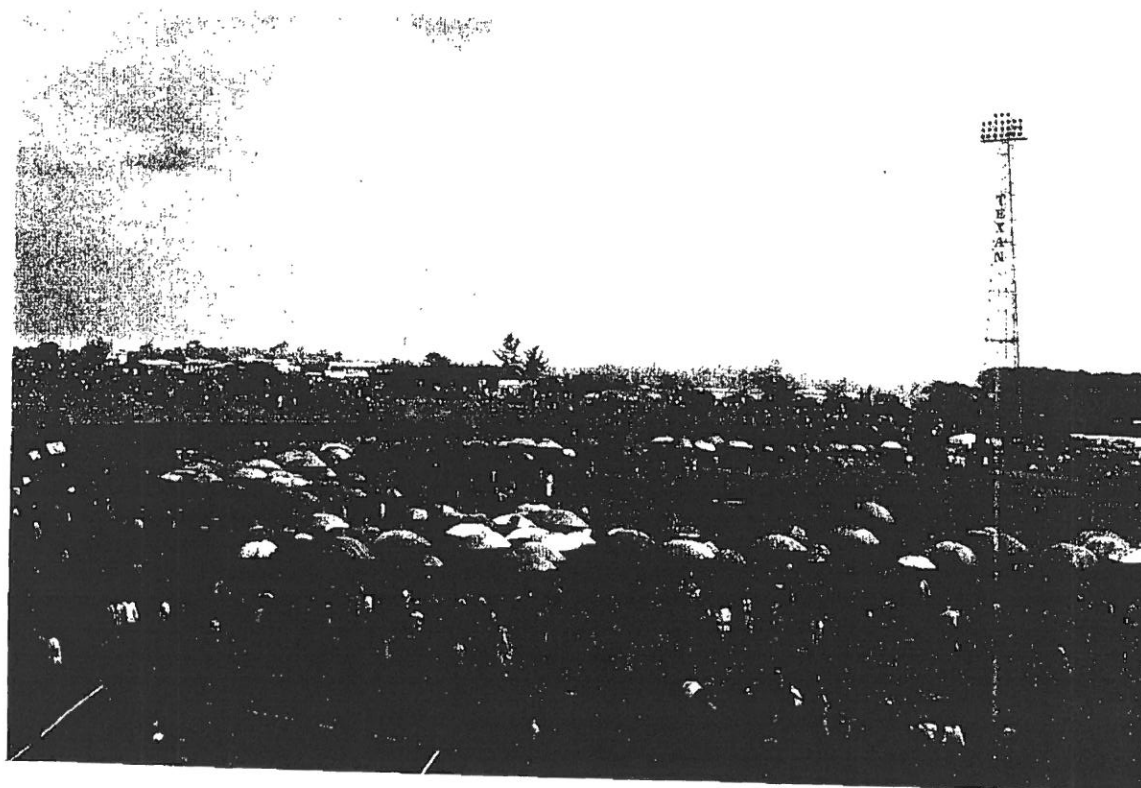




Fig. 19. Robot mask for the Hunting Society of Freetown, Sierra Leone, 1979. Inspired by a science fiction film, this extraordinary creation, invented by costume artist John Goba (on the left), has a large gourd-like head made of foam rubber and seeds, with mirror eyes and radiating antennae made of porcupine quills; in common with costumes of a much more routine style, it also has a raffia skirt and cape. Photo: Hans Schaal.

technical level, by the increase in sculpture for the external market.

Senufo artists supply one of the largest-volume productions of decorative carvings for external markets in all Africa. In the past, even master carvers spent most of their time farming, and carved only an occasional *poro* or prestige object; today there are hundreds of full-time Senufo artists. Although today's less discriminating market supports some men of limited talent who formerly could not have succeeded as carvers, Senufo artists as a group are more expert with their tools than in the past (Richter 1980: 125-126); work for the tourist trade has resulted in refinements in the detail of objects made for traditional use. In the opinion of most critics and art historians, however, the artists' greater technical proficiency has not resulted in more successful works of art. The recent works are more repetitious than the older ones, and often seem overworked and exaggeratedly refined or virtuosic—perhaps because of the emphasis on technique over conviction.

The increased desire of individual patrons and artists to record their own personalities and histories is an important impulse in all strains of twentieth-century African art (discussed in the Introduction). In the past, most artworks that portrayed or stood for individuals were generic, stressing the role rather than the idiosyncratic person. A piece commissioned in 1976 by a newly installed Mossi chief is typical (fig. 20): whereas the figures that belonged to the chief's father and grandfather are relatively stylized, his is a naturalistic depiction of a soccer player in action, and in full-color uniform

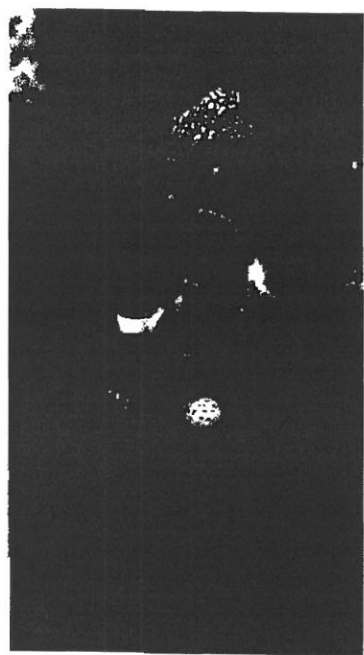


Fig. 20. Figures representing three generations of Mossi chiefs. The present chief is Naba Kom. His grandfather's figure is small, stylized, colored black, and represents a hermaphrodite. The standing female figure belonged to his father. For his own inauguration, in 1976, he had the figure of a soccer player carved. Westernisms such as the unconventional subject and posture signal his difference from his ancestors, alluding to his love of soccer, his education, and his familiarity with the national government, in which he served as a middle-level administrator. Loungo neighborhood, Burkina Faso, 1977. Photo: Christopher Roy.

(Roy 1982:58). The piece was made to be associated with him and to be displayed, with others he had inherited, during an annual festival in which clan heads reaffirmed their allegiance to him. What is significant in this example is its fundamental departure from the intentions of earlier generations; it goes beyond a mere updating of the imagery to make a statement through the conspicuous use of Westernisms. Other instances, however, show tradition modernized without altering the custom of representing individuals generically. The latest commemorations of Shona ancestors who died in guerrilla warfare (Dewey 1986:65, 67) are not the miniature wooden hunters' and warriors' knives of the past but miniature wooden automatic rifles (fig. 14).

Only rarely is an entirely new style of artwork invented to fill an older function. John Nunley has recorded a 1970s mask inspired by a robot in a science fiction film, made for the Hunting Society masquerade, which was brought to Freetown, Sierra Leone, by Egba Yoruba in the early nineteenth century (fig. 19). Despite the mask's bizarre futuristic look, he notes, "One quickly realizes that the robot pieces have been assembled in the traditional structure of the Yoruba hunting garment: undergarment (*asho*), vest (*hampa*), and headpiece (*eri*)" (Nunley 1982:46). The mask must be considered traditional art, depicting, like masquerades of the past, a contemporary hero or mythic figure.

The Artist as Entrepreneur and the Work as a Collaboration

In recent times, new art forms have been invented by individual artists with an entrepreneurial spirit (see chapters II and III); in the past, traditional artists were also often entrepreneurs.¹⁴ It is highly romantic to assume that they did not work for personal gain, material or otherwise.¹⁵ In my own experience among the Baule, I observed that a disproportionately high number of artists and diviners were physically handicapped men, unable to support their families by farming. Practical considerations surely affected their choice of a calling. In the past, African smiths, carvers, and potters were all paid for their goods, although not more than other craftspersons, and less than successful healers; they actively advertised their skills and traveled in search of work. Philip Peek describes a special wooden "hat" with figures on it carved by the artist Ovia Idah "to be worn at local festivals to advertise his abilities as a carver" (Peek 1985:58). Like their latter-day counterparts in African cities, traditional artists were entrepreneurs motivated to invent popular new art forms or to create interesting variations on old ones by the desire to attract attention and commissions. This was surely one of the mechanisms for change in the unrecorded past.

Most nontraditional art produced in Africa today is market driven (see chapters III and IV). Contemporary urban artists' willingness to create what is demanded of them has wrongly been regarded as a sign of their loss of purpose, of their corruption and prostration to the market. But a reexamination of traditional practice makes it clear that they are merely reenacting a long-standing traditional relationship

between client and artist. Though it has not usually been described this way, the art of traditional villages can now be seen as similarly "client driven." The conventional Western ideal posits the artist as fiercely independent, but the African presumption was always that the work would meet the requirements and express the ideas of the client, not the artist. In this regard, traditional African artists resemble traditional craftspersons in the West.

Traditional art commissioned by individuals was and is often made on the recommendation of a diviner, in response to a communication from spirits, or because a situation such as a death required it. Art made for groups was usually commissioned after consultation with all the members, and also, often, with a diviner. Cult requirements or divination might dictate such features as the type of wood, the place where the tree should be found, or the procedures to be followed during the carving (particularly sexual abstinence and food prohibitions). In every case, the clients came to the sculptor with firm ideas about the subject and the attributes to be shown in the work, often down to fairly minor details, though a frequent requirement was an open-ended request that the piece be different from other known ones. Most traditional artists fully accepted and complied with the demands of their clients.

To a far greater extent than we have acknowledged, then, the traditional work of art was the result of a collaboration between artist and client, and occasionally diviner. The artist was often a relatively unimportant person who produced important, highly regarded things for people of higher status than he. Once the work was finished, it usually came to be identified with the owner. The role of the maker was largely ignored. Roy Sieber has nicely summarized this paradoxical situation: "The artist is often depicted as 'different' . . . of a low class . . . or as very nearly the antithesis of the 'ideal' member of society . . . ; yet he produces objects or performs acts which are not only welcome in the society but which often, perhaps usually, reinforce the norms of that society" (Sieber 1973:431).

Other Western art historians have tended to minimize this aspect of African art production because works created in this way do not fit Western categories of fine art, and because the collaborative process has seemed to diminish the importance of the works.

Why the Artist Was "Anonymous"

The nature of the collaboration may be one reason for the frequent "anonymity" of the traditional artist—an anonymity in which the sculptor is known but little acknowledged. Simon Ottenberg states, "Sometimes the client was considered the maker of the object, the artist only the mechanism of its production."¹⁶ The owner of a work of art, whether an individual or a corporate group, almost invariably has more prestige, power, wealth, and visibility in the community than the artist. It is interesting to compare the African situation with the ancient Roman one:

It is a remarkable fact that creative Roman art and architecture, with vague or trivial exceptions, are anonymous. . . . The truth probably is that



Fig. 21. "Miss" mask in a Baule entertainment dance, Koumle village, Côte d'Ivoire, 1990. A recent addition to the cast of human and animal characters in the oldest Baule entertainment dance is this beautiful female named after beauty contestants, who are called "Miss" (pronounced "meese") in Côte d'Ivoire. The skit structure of the performance and the morphology of masks and costumes show no break with the past. Photo: Robert Soppelsa.

the cult of the individual had here over-reached itself: that the Roman patron was now the man who counted: that even a Column and a Pantheon were so closely integrated with the personality of a Trajan and a Hadrian that the artist and architect mattered not at all. They were employees (Wheeler 1964:9).

Craftsmen and performers [among the Gola] were persons of low status who provided services for those who could afford them. The finest work from such persons became the property of wealthy patrons who used them to enhance their own prestige. When one admired the work of a singer, a musician, or a woodcarver, one was usually informed of the name of the patron as though the identity of the actual producer was insignificant (d'Azevedo 1973:332).

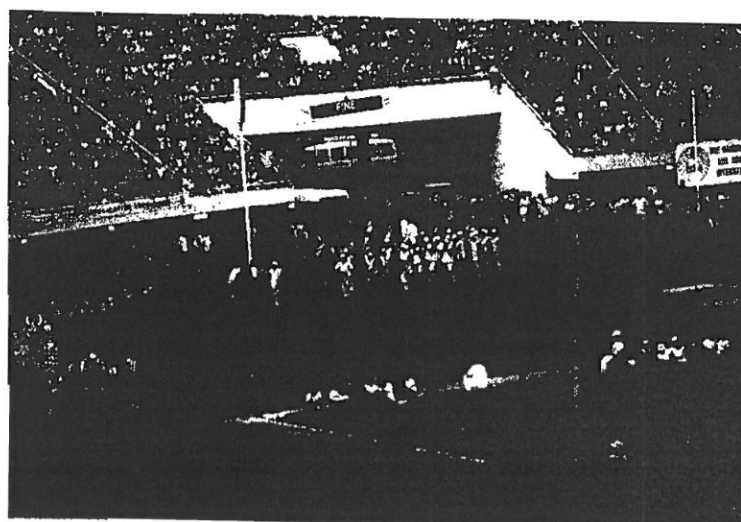
In traditional communities, almost everyone knows who owns a work of art; few can recall who actually made it. Daniel Biebuyck comments of the Lega, "It is most noteworthy that the living owners of the artworks, in tracing the history of individual pieces, invariably provide the names of successive owners of the object, then invariably wind up with the first owner of the piece, ignoring or simply not knowing its maker" (Biebuyck 1976:141).

When pressed by a researcher, informants can often remember the name of the maker of a work, but this information is rarely volunteered, and is not as important to them as the personal name of the object. The prestige of a communally owned cult object would be diminished by public recognition of its mundane origins or by strong identification with its inventor. Only after Lamp had completed extensive research on the origins of the al-Barak masquerade cult described above did informants mention that it had been invented as recently as 1955, and that the man responsible was an otherwise unremarkable person right at hand. Certainly, as with medicine-making, mystification is more effective at a distance: everyone agrees that the most powerful healers live far away.

Particularly in the case of sculptures that are seen as manifestations of larger powers, communities may deliberately suppress the widely known fact that they were made by a particular person. (The common taboo against naming the wearer of a mask is a similar suppression, probably for a similar reason.) The more important the work, the more likely it is to be carved in seclusion, and the less likely it is to be credited to a particular artist. Of an exceptionally large and venerable Cameroon sculpture, Pierre Harter tells us, "This masterpiece was executed early in the second half of the nineteenth century by an anonymous sculptor, whose name was either forgotten or a carefully guarded secret" (Harter 1978:124). The phenomenon of the "anonymous" (but known) artist seems to express a cultural value in a well-organized recording system.

African folktales, although much embellished by tellers and performers, invariably begin with a formula stating that the teller is merely the transmitter, not the maker, of something that comes from long ago or far away.¹⁷ The image of the artist as the transmitter of forms received from distant (authoritative) sources may be the most accurate rendering of the African view. Certainly all artists have a

Fig. 22. Bobo masks enter the stadium in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to celebrate the opening of the Pan-African Film Festival in the presence of the chief of state, 1989. These masks were one of many groups that appeared, region by region, in a parade of traditional musicians and costumed masqueraders that lasted over an hour. The audience was predominantly African. This is an example of a new function acquired by a traditional art form. Photo: Boureima Tiekoroni Diamitani.



distinct personality and transmit received forms in their own style, which can be identified and studied, but we must recognize that this aspect of the creative process is of interest mainly to the Western art historian. Perhaps a desire to validate African objects as art has pushed art historians to place too much emphasis on the artist in African societies, a distorting focus that may take us farther from understanding art as it was perceived in the original culture. The artist as unique creator is, of course, a Western culture hero, not a traditional African one.

The Invention of the Canon

An awareness of traditional art as dynamic leads to a recognition that what the West considers "traditional African art" is only the art that Africans happened to be making and using when Westerners constructed this category, sometime between about 1880 and 1920. Traditional arts from the early nineteenth century and before were probably different from what has long been accepted as the canon. The small number of works collected in Africa before the mid nineteenth century are the only reference, but a sizable proportion of them are in styles that are unidentifiable today—seemingly because they were extinct or had been radically altered by the late nineteenth century.

The canon of traditional art itself seems problematic. Closely examined, it appears as no more than a customary list, a mere convention of Western collections, lacking even a rational set of criteria for inclusion. In principle, "traditional art" (often considered synonymous with "authentic art") includes all art made by Africans for their own use. In fact, the accepted inventory of art forms does not even consistently include all the art made and used by African villagers at the end of the nineteenth century. Figural cloth banners, for example, have been made in Ghana exclusively for local use since before 1693 (Ross 1980:310), but are not normally included in the canon, probably because they are seen as acculturated (cat.19-21).

Since at least the mid nineteenth century they have been made by Fante artists for uses fully integrated into the life of the community, employing a symbolism that alludes to Fante proverbs. In contrast, Chokwe chairs are an unquestioned part of the canon, though they are a nineteenth-century invention based on a European model and frequently include European-made furniture tacks. They are probably included because they are in the expected medium—carved wood—and because most show lustrous signs of apparent age. Fante flags are suspect because they are two-dimensional pictorial works, are executed in an unusual medium, and when they look old, look tatty.

It is revealing to consider two types of art that have been unhesitatingly accepted as part of the traditional canon, even though their recent invention for the Western market is a matter of record. They reveal how limited the canonical parameters are, and how stereotyped. Working at the Kanda Kanda trading post in Shaba, Zaire, at the end of the nineteenth century, an unnamed artist who was not from the region (he may have been Chokwe) developed a naturalistic style of figure sculpture under the influence of his European clientele (Cornet 1975:55). His oddly gestural works were soon imitated by other carvers and potters, and passed into the canon under the name "Kanyoka."¹⁸ The Kanyoka apparently make no figure sculptures anything like these; their art is described as abstract and schematic. Cornet refers to this as "a case in which, in one way or another, fakes have become authentic." So-called Kanyoka sculptures became part of the canon because they could be documented to the nineteenth century, and because they conformed to the stereotype of small, shiny, human figures.

Most Mangbetu figurative sculpture has recently been shown to have come into being after 1900 in response to the presence of foreigners. Created by artists from several ethnic groups in northern Zaire, and based both on original invention and on preexisting art forms, figurative Mangbetu art was used primarily as "a currency in their relationships with Europeans" (Schildkrout and Keim 1990:257). After producing a remarkable body of figurative artworks in a couple of decades, the Mangbetu dropped human figurative art from their repertoire (ibid. :253-254). Conventional definitions of what is traditional or "authentic" are stretched by this example, which, like tourist art, is directed mainly toward outsiders, yet functions, like much traditional art, to construct ethnic identity, and to reinforce the status and prestige of rulers.

Conclusion

A historical examination of traditional art, a recognition that it is more dynamic than we formerly thought, and a close look at the changes of recent decades lead us to recast our image of traditional art in a less romantic and idealized light, and to see it as perhaps more profoundly different from recent art of the West than we have thus far recognized. Viewing the traditional arts of Africa in historical perspective throws into relief certain qualities that are not usually emphasized. Insofar as one can generalize about so vast a field, a

consistent and important feature seems to be the desire for novelty. The audiences and commissioners of artworks seem always to have appreciated and rewarded unusual new interpretations of their inherited art forms, whether on the level of relatively minor innovations in form and iconography or, occasionally, in the wholesale importation of new art forms from neighboring peoples, often substantially adapted. It now appears that many entertainment masquerades—the characters, names, songs, and dances—were invented by young men to comment upon current events. They remained in use as long as their generation performed them and then were replaced by the next generation's inventions in a similar mode. When successor generations decline to produce a new version, the genre becomes extinct.

We have demonstrated that traditional art continues to be created thanks to its capacity to change, and to absorb new ideas and situations. The flexibility apparent in traditional art today sheds new light on the traditional artist of the past. We propose that traditional arts past and present be defined as those in which the community views the artists essentially as transmitters of received forms; and that though those artists are and were rarely anonymous in the true sense, their identity is and was usually of little interest. Their personal contribution to the creation of a work of art was seen as subordinate to the role played by the commissioner of the work or by subsequent owners. Traditional artists often collaborate with clients and others (including other artists) in the production of artworks.

Traditional African art today cannot be seen as corrupted, for it was never pure, never homogeneous, and never isolated. Rather, in Africa as elsewhere in times of change, individuals and societies have taken charge of their artistic expressions. They have selected artistic forms and ideas from the multitude available to them, and have changed their artistic repertoire. As the twentieth century reaches a close, African artists, like their forebears before them, have chosen to renew useful old forms, to take on new ones, and to cast off others in an ongoing process of organic decay and renewal.

NOTES

1. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged*, 1986, defines "tradition" as "cultural attitudes, beliefs, conventions, and institutions rooted in the experience of the past and exerting an orienting and normative influence on the present."

2. Eric Hobsbawm's and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*, 1983, has had a tremendous influence on Africanist anthropology, leading many to try to abandon entirely the use of the contested word "traditional." The absence of any suitable substitute term, the use of the word and the concept by informants, and evidence for a certain kind of cultural continuity have led many writers to use it despite themselves. Those dealing with African art have tended to overlook the important distinction the book makes between "invented traditions" and "genuine traditions," which are not Hobsbawm's and Ranger's subject (pp. 1-10).

3. Personal communication from Moussa Traoré's great-grandson, Mamadou Traoré, December 1990.

4. Writing may have been rejected precisely because it tended to fix facts, inhibiting the flexibility at the core of many African traditions, historical memories, and legal systems. It remains to be seen whether books on African art—one imagines mask dancers using dissertations as guides to rituals—will become an authority, freezing

traditions. The wheel was only useful after large-scale road-building had been undertaken by the colonial powers. It is interesting that many parts of Africa are still less accessible by road than by air.

5. It is interesting that Kolawole Ositola, a practicing Yoruba Ifa priest and diviner, not only uses the ethnographic present but updates "ancient times" to resemble the present. He writes that Orunmila, a Yoruba god, once failed to guide his children properly. As a consequence, "Instead of being a management consultant, one became a lawyer. And this disturbed the whole family" (Ositola 1988:34).

6. By this definition, of course, much European religious and other art is traditional.

7. Personal communication, August 1990.

8. I am grateful to Ivan Karp for stressing the importance of this characteristic of the arts that have endured (Karp 1988 and personal communication, October 1990).

9. G. I. Jones provides an extended analysis of this phenomenon, distinguishing between cults devoted to the supreme being, the earth, tutelary deities, and the ancestors—all of them immune from doubts and disbelief—and local tutelary, fertility, and oracular cults that could be discredited (Jones 1984:49-51).

10. This discussion concerns the southern Makonde, whose homeland was in Mozambique, south of the Ruvuma River, and whose traditional mask style consisted of helmets. (The northern Makonde, who live north of the river, in Tanzania, make more geometricized face masks and torso masks.) The southern Makonde are the originators of the well-known Makonde *shetani* style of tourist carving. J. A. R. Wembah-Rashid argues eloquently that they have survived financially by selling tourist art and spiritually by preserving their own initiation masks (Paris n.d. [1990]:42).

11. It is interesting to note that shiny enamel paint covers one of the earliest Gelede masks, recorded in the Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich, by 1888 (Kecskési 1987:120). The old masks, however, are mainly colored with locally produced, water-based paints, though Nigerian sculptors early on began to use imported laundry bluing, ink, and later the ink from ball-point pens and boiled carbon paper in place of indigo.

12. He continues, "the situation is different in the case of certain types of art which in external appearance scarcely change at all but which are embedded in a new economic pattern," i. e., when production becomes oriented toward an external market (Faber 1988:13).

13. Lega villages were not electrified at the time, and the light bulb made a typically indirect reference. Its display to initiates was accompanied by the aphorism, "He who seduces the wife of a great one eats an egg with rotten odor." According to Daniel Biebuyck, this "indicated that with the advent of the whites everything had changed, for the severe sanctions that were traditionally exercised against those who seduced a high ranking initiated woman were not recognized by the colonial courts" (Biebuyck 1976:345).

14. Those who commissioned works of art could also be entrepreneurs, and spectacular sculptures could help "advertise" their cults. Writing of Eastern Nigeria in the 1930s, G. I. Jones reports, "People did not have to seek out these cults, they were brought to their doors by 'travelling salesmen.' The establishment of private shrines for a deity was a lucrative business for the priests in the village where its principal shrine was located and who could be said to own the Jaju. Many of them travelled about the country in the same manner as doctors and diviners and similar specialists in magic and the supernatural" (Jones 1984:48).

15. Dolores Richter provides a good review of the literature substantiating this point. Her examples span the continent and go back to the eighteenth century. She makes the further point that mass-production of craft items in anticipation of sales was well established in precolonial Africa (Richter 1980:1-4).

16. Personal communication, August 1990.

17. I am grateful to Philip Peek for pointing this out. The subject is treated in detail in Peek 1981:30.

18. Kanyoka figures were classified by Frans Olbrechts as a Luba substyle in the 1930s (Olbrechts 1959:78-79).