

Lega Dress as Cultural Artifact

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In his Curl lecture "Penis Sheaths: A Comparative Study" (1969), P. Ucko criticizes British social anthropologists for failing "in the task of analyzing cultures as integrated economic, technological, social and political systems" and claims recognition of "the rightful place of studies of material culture within anthropology." The term material culture, of course, is a misnomer since the tangible objects we study are impregnated with social and ideational dimensions and are not mere expressions of form, material, and technique. In addition, so-called material culture has a rightful place not just in anthropology but also in art history and aesthetics, where it has been neglected even more seriously.

Whenever social anthropologists were involved with material culture and technology, the topic frequently was treated as auxiliary to understanding cultural history, cultural contact, diffusion, innovation, adaptation, and techniques of manufacturing.¹ Most anthropologically oriented museum specialists left with huge undocumented collections simply tried to order and to classify the objects from a morphological, a typological, and technical rather than a historical, a sociological, or an ideational viewpoint.

The study of material culture obviously offers a broad range of topics of interest. Failure to cover these topics through adequate field research has led to sketchy and erroneous interpretations of many aspects of culture. Those of us who study African sculpture, for example, know very well that meaningful stylistic classifications depend on better documentation about the types of adornments (their forms, functions, and meanings) prevalent in the ethnic groups and subgroups that produce sculpture. (Similar information about materials, gestures, and poses is also vital.) We also are aware that we should be more informed about the so-called material accessories (costumes, body paintings, hats, coiffures, things carried around and objects that are paired and opposed) used in conjunction with particular sculptures to understand the full range of their actual usages and meanings. In eastern Zaire areas there are many unsolved problems of stylistic classification—and *a fortiori* of cultural interpretation—pertaining to artworks produced by Bembe, Boyo, Basikasingo, Bujwe, Guha-Holoholo, Tumbwe, Tabwa, Hombo, Kalanga, Hemba, Kusu, Binja, and Bangubangu. The problems would be much simpler if we actually knew more about matters such as types of hats, coiffures, and body decorations in their ethnohistorical and cultural frameworks. Cameron, Hore, Livingstone, Burton, von Wissman, Burdo, Storms, Cordella, and other early travelers in these regions all evoke, although in a confused way, the regional and local diversities of body adornment (mainly coiffures and hats) encountered in these areas and indicate clearcut ethnic and sub-ethnic concentrations and boundaries. Because of past scholarly neglect of and historical changes in the sphere of body adornment, many of the classifications now are doomed to remain sheer speculations.

The study of dress that is before us represents a formidable undertaking, one that in many instances can no longer be realized in all its aspects. "Dress," which basically refers to "utilitarian or ornamental covering for the human body" (Webster), includes an array of devices that somehow enhance the body (whether or not they cover parts of the body or are simply carried by a person).

Leaving aside the problems raised by concepts about nakedness and nudity, several interrelated types of coverings can be distinguished:² (1) *ephemeral*: e.g., coloring and painting the body (some coloring is done so constantly that it becomes a quasi-permanent covering); various material devices worn temporarily but afterwards destroyed probably also belong here. Some carvings made of leaves and other perishable and brittle materials are so easily renewed that they would fit into this category; (2) *semipermanent*: e.g., hairdos, beards, and moustaches; (3) *permanent*: (a) indelible: e.g., body deformations (ablation, elongation, perforation), scarifications, and tattoos; (b) removable (some received at a certain age or status are permanently worn until death). The majority of body adornments fall into this category. It is useful to include not only things that are *worn* (aprons, belts, rings, necklaces, hats, etc.) on the body but also some that are *carried* by the person himself (e.g., mats, drums, stools, axes, staffs, wands, canes, spears, knives) or for him by someone else. These so-called accessories are frequently an integral part of a person's "total appearance." This is in line with Mauss's distinction between "*décoration directe et décoration surajoutée du corps*" (1947:78).

Cutting across these categories are other subjects for study: (1) social distinctions based on ethnicity, sex, age, life-cycle experience, socio-political and ritual status, occupation, role (e.g., diviner and patient); (2) situational contexts: daily or ceremonial occasions, public or secret events, group or private affairs, permanent or transitory stages; (3) regional and local specialization, and personal coquetry allowed by flexible rules; (4) recurring and nonrecurring events: e.g., a normal or an abnormal birth, an enthronement rite or an annual renewal rite, an actual initiation or sheer participation in one; (5) distinctions between the living, the "mystically dead" (e.g., initiates), and the dead body.

In all these instances, the descriptions of items, forms, and materials as well as techniques for producing, acquiring, and using them are essential preliminaries to many other complex interrelated issues such as: (1) semantics and linguistic classifications pertaining to the items, forms, and materials; (2) concepts about the body and the person, and about what Blacking calls "the cultural processes and products that are externalizations and extensions of the body in various contexts of social interaction" (1977:2); (3) ideas about the beautiful, the attractive, the ugly, the decrepit, the filthy; (4) concepts about the profane and the sacred, the public and the secret; (5) ethnobotanical and ethnozoological classifications in reference to the

particular types of materials selected for making the objects; (6) interrelationships between coverings worn and accessories carried by single persons and groups of persons; (7) actual usages: how the objects are used and worn; how and where they are kept (and by whom) when they are not worn; whether or not there are dressers or cosmeticians; (8) functions and meanings ascribed to the objects and to the materials from which they are made, as viewed in different contexts. For many adornments, there obviously are within a given social group levels of interpretation and meaning that certainly may differ considerably from society to society, and from social group to social group within the society. Since many paraphernalia are obtained when there is a change of status, the specific dramatic context in which they are transferred is of great significance. Orally transmitted texts accompanying the making, the transferring, and the actual using of objects constitute an inexhaustible source of information.

The value of studying body coverings from as many vantage points as possible can now be illustrated by a single example. The complexities of the issues involved in an integrated approach are apparent at once, as are also the considerable advantages the study entails for a better understanding of the significance of dress. Among the Lega, the wearing of various types of hats is the exclusive privilege of the male members of the *bwami* association.³ They like to ridicule Big-Bald-Head

(Kitwe Mugumbu, the noninitiate who in Lega custom has a shaved head and no hat) and to entice him to follow the path traveled by his kinsmen (Fig. 1). The hats in hide and raffia discussed here are sharply contrasted with the *idumbi* tufts made of chicken feathers with or without a core of red parrot tail feathers. These feather hats used in various circumstances during initiation rites (also by women and on objects) in one situational context are symbolic of the ignorance and moral void of the noninitiate, contrasted with the wisdom and sense of fulfillment (represented by a skullcap) characteristic of the initiate. The noninitiate has "a heart of feathers" while the heart of the initiate "is an anteater: in the early morning it curls up, in the evening it unrolls" (to say that he is neither callous nor pusillanimous).

The hats are part of a large group of paraphernalia that are worn either every day or only occasionally by the initiates (Fig. 2). Among the men's regular paraphernalia are skullcaps, hats, necklaces, belts, aprons, pagnes, armlets, and anklets; in dance contexts, bunches of feathers and hides may be added. Initiated women wear diadems, necklaces, belts, aprons, armlets, and anklets. All these objects are made in prescribed forms and materials and are worn in particular configurations, all dependent on a person's rank in the association. No irreversible markings are made on the bodies as expressions of membership and rank in the association. Apart from ointments composed of a mixture of castor oil and red powder, body painting is not important. Depending on rank, certain objects are typically carried by the initiates going to or participating in a ceremony: shoulderbags, stools, polished walking sticks, broomlike wands, and wickerwork rattles. Hats form a fairly diversified category of dress and are differentiated more subtly than, for example, belts, aprons, or necklaces.

The *bwami* skullcap will not be discussed here in detail (Fig. 4). This low cap made of raffia imbued with oil and red powder is attached to a central tuft of hair and worn under the hat. Called *bwami* like the association, it is the single most important initiation object according to the Lega initiates. Following an elaborate rite during which its symbolic connotations are suggested, the cap is acquired at the lowest grade, permanently worn until death, and not permitted to be seen publicly. The skullcap dominates the body as Ikangamina, the powerful leader, dominates the village and the *bwami* association dominates Lega society. In the context of the initiation, the skullcap is referred to as the beginning and the source of everything, as the infrastructure on which greater things are built. For the group it signifies that wisdom is not dead but is passed on to the younger generation. For the new initiate it means that he now stands on his own, firm and strong like the *isingu* tree. He is a caretaker now and provides the cohesion and the continuity of the group. At the same time he is bound by the power of *bwami* and may not lose track of its precepts.

The hats, however, are no more or less significant than the other paraphernalia; as essential components of the system of adornment, they have their own functions and meanings. The hats are basically cone-shaped with somewhat rounded and flattened tops. They stand high, leaving bare the front part of the skull, and are kept in place by a strap fixed to the sides of the hat and passed under the chin. This general type of hat (called *mukuba* and *kekumbu*) is universally used by initiated Lega men. It is different from the low domed hats worn by the related Bembe to the east and southeast (Fig. 3).

The diversity of the hats results from the materials used in their manufacture and the objects eventually attached to them.



1. A TUTOR (LEFT) AND HIS PROTEGE WAITING NEAR THE INITIATION HOUSE FOR THE ARRIVAL OF THE INVITED *BWAMI* INITIATES. THE MAN WITH THE CLEANSHAVEN SKULL IS A CANDIDATE (*MUTENDE*) FOR THE *YANANIO* (SECOND HIGHEST) GRADE. AS AN EXPRESSION OF HUMILITY HE IS DRESSED IN THE SIMPLEST POSSIBLE FASHION WITH NO ADORNMENTS.



2. A GROUP OF *KINDI* OF THE HIGHEST LEVEL DRESSED IN FULL REGALIA: A CONICAL HAT STUDDED WITH BEADS, BUTTONS, (SOMETIMES ALSO COWRIES OR NUTSHELLS) AND SURMOUNTED WITH AN ELEPHANT TAIL; A NECKLACE OF OBLONG BEADS WITH

LEOPARD TEETH; A BROAD BELT OF THE BONGO ANTELOPE; A LOINCLOTH OF BARK OR RAFFIA; AN APRON OF GENET OR WILDCAT HIDE; AND BUNCHES OF CHICKEN FEATHERS AT THE HIPS.

One set of hats is made from hide. Depending on regional specializations, the types of hides may differ; for example, leopard, giant otter, monkey, or sheep hide may be used, but the essential material among all western Lega regions is a black goat's hide (particularly that part which includes the manes, *kazembu*; the hat is called *lukumbu lwa kabwitu*; Fig. 5). Since high initiates usually possess several hats, some individual preferences and fantasies are tolerated. Some hats thus are made in the hide of the colobus monkey, the iguana, and the throat piece of a forest crocodile; the hide and scales of the arboreal pangolin (*Manis tricuspis*); or an elephant's ear. They were always owned in addition to the required hat in black goat's hide.

A second set of hats is plaited in raffia, according to two types. One rare variety, *sawamazembe*, is made entirely in raffia and blackened with the sap of a vine (Fig. 7). It imitates the *mazembe* coiffure of initiated Lega women (consisting of a central flat haircap with plaited strands of hair falling all around). The other, more common, conically shaped type may be covered entirely, partly, or not at all with nutshells (*mukuba wa maseza*), cowries (*wa nsembe*), small multicolored beads (*wa ntumuntungwa*), and buttons (*wa bifungo*; Fig. 6).

The *bwami* association is structured into a hierarchy of grades, and within grades there are levels and steps. The number of grades and the elaboration of levels differ regionally. To a certain extent the choice of materials is determined by this hierarchy. Individuals of lower grades wear hats

made of black goat's hide; those of the various levels in the highest grade (*kindi*) own the plaited hats (and in addition some of the "fantasy" hats). In eastern Lega areas where this top grade does not exist, the highest-ranking initiates wear the hats of leopard hide.

At this point, it may be concluded that the hats are marks of Lega ethnic identity, of *bwami* affiliation, of male initiate privilege, and of general rank within *bwami*. The person to be initiated must enter the rites in humility, wearing "nothing else but a small raffia belt and a *kinsembe*" (barkcloth *pagne*, also worn by hunters). The initiated woman has her own paraphernalia, the *mamenia* diadem being an equivalent of the male hat. At all lower levels, the hide hat (preferably in black goat's hide) is the favored and most commonly worn hat. At the highest level, however, there are no socio-ritual distinctions made among those raffia hats studded with nutshells, cowries, beads, or buttons (which are expressions of historical contacts), but the absence or sporadic occurrence of these coverings is a social indicator. The *sawamazembe* hat, which imitates women's coiffures, belongs strictly to members of the highest level in the topmost grade, more particularly to the preceptors-ritual experts (*nsingia*) who lead all the dances and initiatory procedures. There are two points about these hats that deserve special mentioning. First, the hat is generally adorned in front with one or more polished mussel shell valves (*lubumba*; privileged possessions of the two highest grades). Symbolism of the shell is related to femininity and the

waxing of the moon (growth, fertility); it thus enhances the feminine symbolism of the hat. (At the two highest grades there occurs a ritual fusion of maleness and femaleness.) Second, *sawamazembe* covers the ears, which is different from all other hats. In one context the character Sawamazembe stands for a person who does not hear well (who "dwells like Yili Crab too close to the waterfall to hear anything"), that is, who does not listen to advice. The preceptor of *kindi*, the highest grade, has reached this outstanding position because he had no deaf ears; he has shown himself to be "a mas-

ter of listening" who now has all precepts "in his heart." His transcendence beyond the normal is symbolized through the hat inversion.

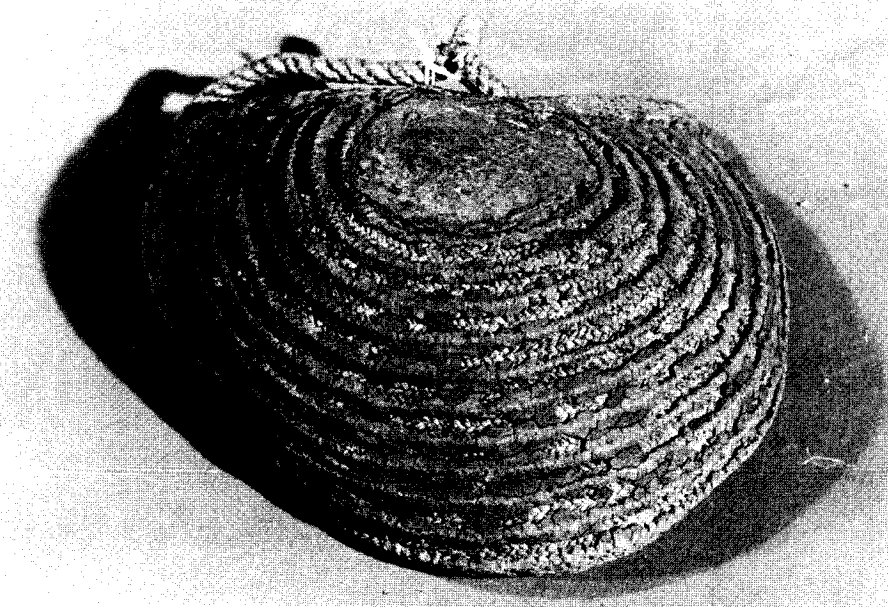
The additional objects affixed to the hats largely reflect grade and level statuses. It is impossible to analyze the topic in all its details, so a few examples must clarify this point. If an initiate wears a studded raffia hat surmounted by part of the elephant's tail, it is certain that he has achieved *lutumbo lwa kindi*, the summit of initiatory experience. If he displays the studded hat without the tail, he is at an intermediate level in the high-

est grade; if he shows the plaited hat with only a few strands of cowries or beads (or other things), then he is at a beginning level of the highest grade. If the initiate, however, has a hat of black goat's hide (preferably with long hair) with a polished mussel shell valve and/or dendrohyrax teeth fixed in front of the hat and a decorated rim, he has reached the highest level of the second grade; if he is at a lower level in that grade he wears the polished mussel shell from the belt. At the lower grades where unadorned hats in goat's hide are worn, the status distinctions are not visible from the hats (except in eastern Legaland where some attachments mark status differences). So then it is only at levels of the two highest grades that the hats are the main public (visible) status differentiators.

Such body adornments have more than one function and meaning and are not merely objects of ethnic and social identity and status differences. As part of the totality of paraphernalia, the hats are keenly considered as elements of embellishment, attraction, and group display. The male initiates pay great attention to the care of their bodies, which they oil, rub with red powder, and perfume. They like to speak about themselves as "children of oil" (the anointed ones) and to compare themselves with the beauty of the light brown, white-striped bongo antelope that stands out in the darkness of the deepest forest. One of the very first aphorisms sung at the beginning of even the lowest initiations is "The beauty of the clan is sought to appear." Excluding the dance paraphernalia (which constitute the special category of *bingonze*, "things of play"), all insignia (hats, belts, aprons, necklaces, rings, canes, wickerwork rattles, and reed swatters) are classified together as *bilondo*, "things that are pursued, searched, coveted." The fully dressed initiate calls himself *kakenia*, one who draws attention because of display. Gathered in groups for ritual performances, the initiates enjoy evoking the alluring quasi-hypnotic appeal that the paraphernalia exercise upon those who are not part of their groups. ("Spots of the leopard! Goats said while browsing: what kills us is beautiful!") The adornments are *bisonga byeidungu*, "beautiful things that are far away making one die of staring" (of envy to possess them). Sound accompanying the wearing of the paraphernalia also draws the attention of the onlookers (see Sieber 1972: 12, 16). However cumbersome the hats may be



3. A DOME-SHAPED HAT WORN BY BWAMI INITIATES AMONG THE SOUTHWESTERN BEMBE. REED, FIBERS, IGUANA HIDE. MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE, Tervuren.



4. A SKULL CAP (CALLED BWAMI) WORN UNDER THE LARGE HAT BY INITIATES OF ALL GRADES. FIBERS OF NKUSA IMBUED WITH RED CLAY. MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE, Tervuren.



5. AN INITIATE OF LUTUMBO LWA KINDI GRADE WEARING A HAT OF BLACK GOAT'S MANE. THE HAT IS ADORNED WITH A POLISHED MUSSEL SHELL AND TWO SETS OF OUTER DENDROHYRAX TEETH.

in the hot climate of the tropical rain forest, the initiates always wear them for the public dances (and even for initiation-related work) as an alluring element of beauty and wealth. (Paraphernalia are often compared to the clapping of elephant ears that catch flies.)

The hats and other paraphernalia produce a sense of awe in the onlookers. Like all other items exclusively owned, used, and interpreted by the initiates, the hats are *isengo*. A difficult term to translate, *isengo* designates a heavy, sacred, dangerous, unfathomable yet alluring thing that cannot be manipulated or understood by a profane person and cannot be destroyed in warfare or abandoned in the old village. ("I came from the abandoned village site, I am carrying *isengo* and my old mother.") The initiates, particularly of the two highest grades, are the leaders, the judges, and the intercessors with the supernatural; their awe-inspiring powers are visibly enhanced by the objects they wear.

It has been pointed out that the selection of particular materials is very important. Members of *bwami* have exclusive rights in the distribution of certain animals (willfully or inadvertently killed) and in the possession of some exuviae. Except for leopard hides, dendrohyrax



6. AN INITIATE OF LUTUMBO LWA KINDI GRADE WEARING A CONICAL HAT STUDDED WITH BUTTONS.

teeth, and elephant tails, materials used for the hats are not derived from these animals (although many other initiation objects are). The animals rather are selected because of the symbolic associations the initiates perceive in their behavior and their role. The goat's hide, for example, establishes the initiates in their judicial roles as makers of peace and harmony. In Lega thought, the goat is *lukaba milondo*, "the cutter of affairs," or the means by which all disputes can be settled peacefully. The lower initiate is constantly compared with *Kankutungwa*, the young billy goat with small horns, trying to grow the large horns of Kilimba (old billy goat with large horns).

Members of the second highest grade often refer to themselves as *Bamibinga*, the dendrohyrax folk; and those of the highest grade as *Bakinsamba*, the elephant tail folk. The dendrohyrax, known as *dassie* and *Baumschliefer*, and to the Lega as *mubinga*, represents one genus divided into species within the family *Procaviidae*, order of *Hyracoidea* (for this and following, see Schouteden 1947: 253-59; *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1978; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1971; *Collier's Encyclopedia*, 1979). The *dendrohyrax dorsalis* is a very special animal that lives in the rain forest. It is necessary to look at some of its characteristics because the Lega are perceptive naturalists as well as great hunters and trappers. The *dendrohyrax dorsalis* is the only true arboreal hoofed animal. Its blunt, hooflike nails



7. AN INITIATE OF LUTUMBO LWA KINDI GRADE WEARING THE SAWAMAZEMBE HAT.

resemble those of an elephant, and most experts agree that although unique the animal is most closely related to the elephant, even though it has a teeth pattern like that of a rhinoceros. The animal superficially looks like a rodent with its thick plump body, large head, short neck, and tail, and sepia brown to hoary grey fur, and for a long time it was considered a member of the rodent family. Very special are the two downward bent long incisors, which appear as dagger-like "slashing weapons." The animal likes to feed in the tallest trees; it lives in the tree holes or in the inextricable epiphytic growth of these trees. It is a remarkable climber and moves easily along trunks and branches by means of the leathery, always moist soles of its feet that it can retract like suction cups. The Lega say that it also uses the bent incisors in climbing. This arboreal animal is strictly nocturnal: after sunset it leaves the roost to feed on the tender leaves of the topmost branches and also on insects. Soon after it is dark, the males begin calling one another. The calls start as a series of groans and develop into long, drawn cries and wailing screams that last through most of the night. One source describes them as "the most atrociously aggressive of beasts when

molested" (Sanderson n.d.). In the high world where they live (30 meters and higher), they have enemies such as eagles and hawks.

For the Lega, who are well aware of all these details, the dendrohyrax is not a sacred animal (e.g., like the pangolin, which may not be hunted). They trap it, but the animal is *kitokolo*; that is, the consumption of the meat and the possession of the bent upper incisors are the exclusive privilege of high-level *bwami* initiates. Much ritual and symbolic importance is generally given by the Lega to animals such as pangolins, aardvarks, bongo antelopes, genets, hornbills, duiker antelopes, and others that present striking anatomical and behavioral features (also observed by scientists).

Paraphernalia, like figurines and masks, are all transferred to their legal owners in an initiation setting. Initiation is learning; an item whose symbolic associations have not been learned seems useless: "He who sees the large *lusembe*-cowrie bare [i.e., for the first time], indeed! he finds it useless." All items are explained in aphorisms and dramatic context in reference to the *bwami* values and ethical, legal, social, and philosophical principles; attitudes, sentiments, and action patterns expected from initiates; and the social, moral, and legal position of the initiate and the association of which he is a member. Many fundamental principles of the code of conduct are stressed endlessly, always in a new and original way through the communication and interpretation of the symbolic associations perceived in objects (and their sources) and action patterns.

There are always limitations in the range of symbolic associations found in (and tolerated for) a particular item. In other words, what is retained as significant is culturally defined. What strike the Lega imagination in the dendrohyrax are its calling and climbing habits (not other behavioral aspects, such as nesting, feeding, breeding) and to some extent the anatomical particularity of its feet. The restless, capable climbing of the animal symbolizes the process of ascent in the *bwami* initiation. Everybody aspires not merely to become a member but also to move up in grade level. The possibility for social ascent is never exhausted because of the potential of accumulating statuses, positions, and roles that is built into the structure of the association. The *yananio* wearing the dendrohyrax teeth shows his society that he is a successful climber, ready to reach out for the top-most honors.

The combined calls of the dendrohyraxes evoke various symbolic associations. *Bwami* is like these joint calls (*mbila*): the initiates act in concert (like the dendrohyraxes, initiates speak in one voice; one refuses, all refuse); no initiate can perform an initiation by himself. The visual sign on the hat is an expression of this solidarity. An aphorism also states: "[when] Mubinga sees Kasuku, it does not speak [call] any longer"; *kasuku* is the resin torch that Lega use in their houses and at night in the forest. From the point of view of the dendrohyrax, the torch (i.e., light) is an enemy. Metaphorically, Mubinga is the initiate and Kasuku is the person giving bad council; when Mubinga hears Kasuku he no longer listens and certainly does not elaborate on it. The sign of the dendrohyrax thus situates the high initiate as a model of circumspection and verbal restraint. This is an endlessly repeated moral principle that is also stated negatively in the aphorisms "Mr. Large-Cowrie-Shell died [like] Mubinga died on account of its teeth" (dendrohyraxes are hunted and die because of the value attached to their upper teeth; a great initiate "dies" because of problems and violence elicited by an unrestrained child); and "Big-Old-Mubinga calls [against itself] its call in the day time" (the unrestrained person causing problems that bring about his own defeat). It is furthermore not accidental that the members of the highest grade wear the elephant tail (in addition to being allowed to possess the dendrohyrax teeth) and therefore are called Bakinsamba (elephant tail folk) in contrast to those of the second highest grade who are Bamibinga (dendrohyrax folk). Like zoologists, the Lega know that there is an anatomical connection between elephants and dendrohyraxes. Initiates constantly like to draw parallels and contrasts between different grades. *Yananio* initiates are, vis-à-vis the *kindi*, like miniature elephants "coveting the beautiful things that are far away" (and which they do not have).

The intrinsic meanings of the attachments are so well defined that some of them occasionally seen on hats in collections must be considered as modifications and manipulations of objects that do not fit into the Lega code. In some collections there are raffia hats surmounted with a warthog tusk or a hornbill beak instead of an elephant tail. The warthog tusk is used as a distinct initiatory device in some rites to symbolize the ugliness of Kisibula (the destroyer, the sorcerer) or of a village headman with a big mouth

who causes the dispersal of the village. In similar contexts, the hornbill beak represents the pride and ambition of a bad wife or an initiate. Both objects are negative signs and differ from emblems placed on hats to illustrate the virtue of the initiate.

If other paraphernalia associated with *bwami* status were examined, many more meanings would be found. The earlier mentioned polished mussel shell valve (*lubumba*) symbolizes more than the crescent of the moon (universality of death but also rebirth through *bwami*) and femininity. Fixed on the hat of the initiate, it signifies that nothing is hidden from him, that "the things of Musongelwa [symbol for penis] and of Nganga [the sorcerer; symbol for vulva] are unfolded" to him. Its polished shine and whiteness are thought to be of unsurpassed beauty and exercise the strongest appeal on those who have not acquired the privilege of owning it. The simple barkcloth apron worn by the initiated *kanyamwa* women is called *mikele za lute* (thorns of the *lute* vine) to mark the inviolability of those women. The broad belts in bongo antelope hide are thought to be expressions of beauty since the bongo antelope is considered to be the most handsome animal of the "hunting grounds." The wearing of the rigid belt around the bare waist, however, also causes pain that must not be shown. The belt thus is a sign not only of beauty and status but also of manliness and equanimity. The genet hides symbolize the deadly power of the high initiates and the need to respect elders. The polished walking cane (*mukulu wibondo*), in contrast to the spear, situates the initiate as a peacemaker and a mediator.

For a full understanding of the meaning of the hats and their attachments, it is necessary to examine some of the historical contexts in which different forms of *bwami* and associated paraphernalia evolved. In the large cultural region that includes Lega, Bembe, Nyindu, Vira, Furiiru, Shi, Havu, and Lake Tanganyika riverain populations, there exists the tradition of the Nalwindi kingdom (located in the Itombwe Mountains in the heart of this region). Many groups of various sizes with centralized political institutions claim their origins in this kingdom. Here would have originated the *bwami bwa ishungwe* tradition, a type of political leadership characterized by the possession of the *ishungwe* diadem. The form of this diadem varies, but its most essential components are a large *Cypraea tigris* shell fixed onto a little bundle containing medicines and exuviae derived

from the bodies of the dead chiefs. The diadems are power objects that also express sexual symbolism: the chief merges in his person the patrilineal and the matrilineal lines of successorial contention. The eastern Lega were exposed to this tradition and consciously adopted some components of this diadem as additions to their hats. Although the western Lega do not directly recall this in their oral traditions, they have accepted some of these elements. Some *kindi* initiates have a type of *Cypraea tigris* or large cowrie shell fixed to their hats. They treat it as a replacement for the polished mussel shell valve, which they and the *yananio* have a right to wear on their hats. Both the mussel shell and the cowrielike shell in some ritual contexts refer to female sexual symbolism. At the highest levels of initiation, *bwami* philosophy and social practice foster a striking assimilation and fusion of the sexes: a male cannot achieve the highest grades unless one of his wives is coinitiated; the highly initiated husband and wife are bound by indissoluble marriage; the highly initiated wife has male social status. The highly initiated husband and wife participate in each others' sexual attributes: men wear the female shell; women use the phalluslike *mizombolo* head adornment; men have hats that resemble female coiffures; women in a special rite are allowed to wear the men's hats; women hang the phallic ivory sculptures from their belts.

The Lega paraphernalia are also historical documents from other perspectives. Included are items that the Lega share with both the great hunters and the cultivators of eastern Zaire, thus situating the Lega at a point of cultural convergence of both systems. The entire eastern Zaire region was profoundly influenced by Pygmies and other early hunting cultures, even in areas where Pygmies have disappeared as distinctive groups. The Lega remain strongly aware of this fact and consider themselves to be the descendants of Lega (an immigrant) and his Pygmy wife. They attribute the emergence of certain subdivisions among them to encounters with other hunters. Pygmy dress (worn daily or on ceremonial and dance occasions, and depending on regional differences and personal status) consists of items such as loincloths in beaten bark; simple belts of vines, plaited fibers, or bongo antelope hide; wild cat and genet aprons; bonnets in fur; necklaces of nutshells and of teeth (particularly of the leopard); and feather and fiber bunches attached to arms or legs (Schebesta 1952:171-202 *passim*).

Similar items of dress and adornment made in identical materials are found among the Lega initiates. The use (for analogous purposes) of other objects derived from the immediate natural environment (e.g., nutshells and pods, mussel shells, elephant tails, and animal teeth) is shared by the Lega and many submerged non-Pygmy hunting groups. The selection of certain preferred types of natural items, such as dendrohyrax teeth, seems to be a distinctive Lega addition. It is noteworthy that such specifically Lega materials are the subject of more elaborate initiatory exegesis than the items shared with Pygmies and other hunters. The world of the sedentary cultivators (centering also on the domestication of animals and trading) is revealed mainly in the hats made in raffia and goat's hide, and the use of cowries and a special type of oblong beads. Metal bracelets, armlets, and anklets are worn by the initiates, but metals are not significant in the initiatory context. Although incorporating elements from the sedentary cultivators and to a limited extent from foreign contacts (small multicolored beads and buttons), the *bwami* universe essentially reflects the culture of sophisticated hunters.

None of the objects worn on the hats (or on any other part of the body) is filled with medicinal (magical) ingredients (a practice found among neighboring groups). This is in accordance with one of the first principles taught the beginning initiate: *bwami ta bukanga*, *bwami* is not witchcraft. It is rather *bwenge bwatinga*, surpassing knowledge that turns around (i.e., the materials that stand as symbols for values, virtues, and general philosophical principles from a closed endless circle and hence the great attention drawn to the head through the hats; the initiate is *Ikilingania*, a person of surpassing intelligence).

In conjunction with other paraphernalia, the hats are felt to be embellishments and devices of display with a seductive power both by initiates and noninitiates. After all, the initiate is a *kimini* (expert dancer) and a *kinkutu* (one who draws people together), and the noninitiate, a *Sabulumbu* (Mr. Obscurity) who strives for the light. As privileged possessions, the paraphernalia are expressions of status, wealth, and achievement (in brief, the initiate is not a *wabulema*, a destitute person). Since the hats are similar for large categories of people (whose identities cut across kinship and political ties), they manifest the sentiments of oneness, solidarity, and wide-ranging egalitarianism (e.g., no

yananio is inferior to another one). As inheritable objects "that have durability" (*bukumbi*), they signify for all members of Lega society the continuity and the eternity of *bwami*. ("The things with which we are [which we have] since early times lo! that is the initiation.") For noninitiates the appearance of a group of initiates is an awesome experience: everything witnessed is an indication of the uniqueness, exclusiveness, prestige, and power of the association. The initiates themselves like to identify their movements as *miandukila zangozi* (the swift, sudden, lethal leaps of leopards) and as *kisindi kya nzogu* (the stampeding of elephants). Noninitiates know that the initiates *de facto* control all sociopolitical, legal, and ritual affairs. Noninitiates can identify the visible objects (they know, for example, which animals the paraphernalia are derived from), but since they did not learn about them through initiation, they do not know their precise meaning. For the initiates who have been taught the symbolic associations, the paraphernalia are not merely statements about their relative statuses and individual achievements but also a code of the virtues they represent. The code is formulated through the metaphors combined in types of materials, modes of manufacturing and wearing, and combinations of objects.

By conveying the messages contained in this code, the paraphernalia are as important a medium of information as are the sculptures, the oral texts, the dramatic performances, and other actions that constitute a ritual. Since forms, functions, and meanings of African dress are still so inadequately explored and understood, comprehensive descriptions of single items and groups of connected objects remain essential preliminaries to further comparative study. Of particular interest is the study of the *complementary* role dress plays with regard to dance and sculpture. Dress in its broadest definition and sculpture are interrelated in multiple ways: there are special costumes prescribed for different masks and particular body markings appropriate for the manipulation of artworks; there are *complementary* ritual associations between sculptures and paraphernalia; there are specific body coverings carved into or added to the sculptures. The study of dress and adornment thus vitally contributes to the description and differentiation of styles as well as to the analysis of themes and motifs expressed in sculptural forms. □

Notes, page 92

1. The date of the founding of the Mossi states has been the subject of some controversy. Based on mention of the Mossi in the 14th century in the *Tarikh es-Sudan* and the *Tarikh el-Fettach*, the establishment of the first state of Ouagadougou has been dated traditionally to about A.D. 1050-1250. More recent research by J.D. Fage, supported by Izard in *Introduction à l'histoire des royaumes mossi*, suggests a much later date, circa 1490-1500.

2. The Mossi are an amalgamation of a number of groups of very diverse origins. Mossi society may be broken down into two major segments. The Nakomsé hold all political power and are descended from the invading horsemen from Dagomba who established the Mossi states in 1490-1500. This group also includes disenfranchised younger sons of chiefs, the Talsé, and all of the groups of foreign origin who enjoy the protection of Mossi political hierarchy—the Silmisi (Fulani), and the Yarsé weavers. The second major Mossi subgroup is the Tengabisi, the descendants of the groups that were already in place when the Nakomsé arrived from the south. The Tengabisi include descendants of the original farmers in the basin of the White Volta, some of whom were Gurunsi, Dogon, Kurumba, and Gurmantché. Also numbered among the Tengabisi are the Saka (smiths) and the Sukwaba, who use wooden masks in the southwestern areas of Mossi country.

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BOURGEOIS, Notes, from page 35

1. Fieldwork was carried out under the auspices of the Institut des Musées Nationaux, Kinshasa, and partially funded by the following grants: Samuel H. Kress Foundation, NDEA Title VI, Indiana University Graduate School Grant-in-aid. Research was conducted along the Inzia and Kwango rivers—Masi-Manimba, Kenge, and Popokabaka zones.
2. British Museum: 1907.5-28.137; 1907.5-28.138. Kongo-Kwango Museum, Louvain: nos. 233, 226, 1239, 1246, 1247, 1479, 1480, 1481. Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren: 61.18.9. A. Ryckman collection: no. 71.
3. There is a curious similarity between Yaka and Suku brimmed and crested *bweni* and the European metal morion helmet worn in the 16th century by musketeers and pikemen. The morion helmet, developed in Germany during the first decade of the 16th century, was used by all European nationalities until about 1530. The helmet was often fitted with a fabric cover for parade, and some examples feature two or even three keel-like crests after 1520 (Blair 1958:130).
4. Rijksmuseum Voor Volkenkunde, Leiden: no. 1370-36.

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31, 33 Photographs: Arthur P. Bourgeois
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80 (left) Photograph: Roger Asselberghs
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SMITH, Notes, from page 42

Research for this article was made possible by a Fulbright-Hays fellowship.
1. For additional information on the Frafra, see Smith 1978a.
2. For additional information, see Smith, 1978a.
3. An article on Frafra dress and funerary ritual is in preparation by the author.

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BIEBUYCK, Notes, from page 65

1. Since the earliest beginnings of social anthropology, obviously there were exceptions. Radcliffe-Brown (1922: 407-94, based on fieldwork of 1906-1908) promptly abandoned the study of Andaman "technical culture" as a tool for "a hypothetical reconstruction of the history of the Andamans" (p. vii) and instead studied rites, symbolic objects, and myths as "expressive signs within a system of ideas, sentiments and mental attitudes" (p. viii). Blackwood (1935, based on 1920-1930 field research) discussed the role of hoods in in-law avoidance relationships among the northwest Solomon Islanders. Bateson (1936:12-22) analyzed patterns of ceremonial dressing and inversion among the Iatmul of New Guinea.
2. Leuzinger (1950:42-76) distinguishes between "Fester Körperschmuck" and "Beweglicher Schmuck" and in the first category includes body deformations, painting and tattooing, and hairdos. Paulme (1973) not only stresses the significance of dress as identification of origin, social status, and sex, and as an element of prestige, but also emphasizes other important aspects: the symbolism of potency, the link with the remote past, the protection against invisible dangers, the differentiation between man and beast, the focus on a part of the body, etc.
3. Field research among the Lega was sponsored by l'Institut pour la recherche scientifique en Afrique centrale (Brussels). In recent years my continuing research on the Central African arts was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Samuel H. Kress Found-

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BLACKMUN, Notes, from page 21

1. Paula Ben-Amos, "Men and Animals in Benin Art," *Man n.s.*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1976, pp. 243-52; "Owina n'Ido: Royal Weavers of Benin," *African Arts*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1978, pp. 49-53; "Symbolism in Olokun Mud Art," *African Arts*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1973, pp. 28-31, 95; "Professionals and Amateurs in Benin Court Carving," in Daniel McCall and Edna G. Bay, *African Images: Essays in African Iconology*, Africana Publishing Co., New York, 1975, pp. 170-89; Paula Ben-Amos and Osa Omoregie, "Ekpo Ritual in Avbiama Village," *African Arts*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1969, pp. 8-13, 79.
2. Frank Willett, "The Benin Museum Collection," *African Arts*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1973, pp. 16, 17.
3. Willett, "The Benin Museum Collection," pp. 16, 17.