

Sculpture from the Eastern Zaire

Forest Regions: Mbole, Yela, and Pere

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For the first part of this study, see African Arts, IX, 2 (1976), 8-15, 79-80. I want to express special appreciation for the generous help and advice provided by Huguette Van Geluwe and Albert Maesen of the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren. The support of the National Endowment for Humanities for my research on Central African art is also gratefully acknowledged.

We can now synthesize the artistic information available for several of the forest-dwelling populations mentioned in the first part of this study (Biebuyck, 1976). It is fair to say that numerous, significant data are contained in the published and unpublished literature, which have not, or only partially, been used in existing treatises on African art. Almost all pertinent studies are written in French or Flemish. The published sources are scattered in a variety of publications, some of which are not readily obtainable. Concerning the unpublished sources, I was fortunate in being able to consult many of them in the archives of various administrative units ("territoires," "districts," and "provinces") during the research and surveys that I undertook between 1956 and 1960 in the former Belgian Congo as a member of the Land Tenure Commission. I also visited for longer and shorter periods most of the areas discussed here, but the purposes of my visits were not primarily related to the topics considered in this analysis, but dealt with broader problems of social structure.

The ethnographic sources pertaining to the many forest groups, located northwest of the Lega and west of the Nyanga, are uneven; and, with the possible exclusion of some recent work on the Komo, no in-depth studies have been made. The ethnic map of this part of Zaïre is very complicated, not merely because there are many smaller and widely dispersed ethnic groups, but because precise ethnic unit definition and the exact interrelationships between whole ethnic groups and component subunits within them are unknown. I cannot develop this ethnographic point, which is nonetheless relevant to ethnic art studies, but want to

mention a couple of such problems. In the few studies that they undertook in the earliest stages of colonial government, administrators repeatedly mentioned the fact that the generalized usage of ethnic labels, such as Mbole, Lengola, Metoko, and Yela, was of recent origin and dated back to the long period (the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) of Arab and Swahili occupation and administrative influence. For example, one source indicates that Mbole means "the people of downstream" in contrast to the groups who are upstream. Clearly, in this part of Africa, much of the "ethnic" nomenclature makes reference to contrasts like the following: people (meaning localized kinship units) of the water and people of the forest (or of the hinterland); downstream and upstream people; forest and grassland people; people of the lowland and of the highland; circumcised and uncircumcised people. These are, of course, very important distinctions, which may have a cultural, linguistic, and historical basis, but also involve numerous symbolic differentiations. The problem is that, in the specific cases before us, we do not know the exact scope and content of these contrasts. They are flexible and expandable categories, the exact boundaries of which cannot easily be traced. The complexity of these situations is enhanced by segmentary or highly fragmented lineage organizations (occasionally, larger territorial groupings originate with the recognition of special bonds based on common migration and on various ritual arrangements). Uncertainties about ethnic unit definitions are also reflected in the linguistic classifications. For example, Bryan (1959, p. 103) notes that according to Guthrie, the Mbole, Lengola, Metoko, and Ena (Riverains) can be tentatively placed together as the Mbole-Ena group, but that this grouping is very uncertain because all units have been placed in other linguistic groups (Mbole in Mongo; Lengola and Metoko in Bira and Lega; Ena in Lega).

This complex situation is reflected also in the ethnic ascription of individual artworks from this area. On the one hand, out of the relatively few sculptures known, there are objects that can, with some cer-



1. MBOLE FIGURINE. 92cm. MUSÉE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE, TERVUREN (M.R.A.C.)

tainty, be ascribed to the Mbole, Yela, Lengola, Metoko, or Komo because we know that they were collected among one of these groups. The carvings are sufficiently different in form and style to warrant distinctive ethnic ascriptions. Frequently, however, we cannot decide from which territorial section or subgroup they stem within these ethnic units. On the other hand, there are sculptures that are ascribed to a particular unit (because they were collected there?) but exhibit features that are distinctive of another ethnic group. For example, the separation between certain Mbole and Yela, between some Lengola and Metoko, or between some Komo and Lengola figurines, is difficult to make. The lack of definite field data does not allow a solution to the problem. However, it must be remembered that several closely interrelated institutions (*lilwa*, *bukota*, *bwami*, or circumcision rites) cut across many groups, and that frequent borrowing has occurred. Furthermore, there is some overlapping of clan linkages and some territorial mixing of segments of different ethnic groups. In the appreciation of ethnographical and artistic data, one must constantly be attentive to this cultural continuum. Within each of the major, recognized ethnic units, there is invariably local and regional diversity. Early writings distinguish, for example, between the Metoko of the forest and those (sometimes called Leka) who live along the main rivers, between the Lengola of the west bank and those of the east bank, between northern and eastern, southern and western, and extreme western Komo. Such internal variations are not merely the product of diverse influences, relative isolation, fragmented lineage organization, and different environmental adaptations, but are also consciously cultivated in the ideology of the various autonomous, ritual communities that form the framework for the initiatory processes of the closed, voluntary associations.

The lilwa association of the Mbole and Yela

The socio-ritual life of the Mbole is dominated by the *lilwa* association. *Lilwa* is also found among the Yela, where its pervading influence is not as clearly established. Related institutions occur among the Mongandu, Topoke, Lokele, as well as some Mongo. General ethnographic information on the Mbole and Yela, on the *lilwa* and on its art is provided in both published and unpublished studies by Abbeloos (1949), Anonymous (s.d.), Carington (1949a and 1949b), De Rop (1955), De Ryck (1940), Hulstaert (1931), Lauwers (1932), Marmite (1934), Mathijsen (1939), Molin (1933), Rouvroy (1927; 1929), and Vandecapelle (1915). Visual documentation on Mbole artworks is fairly abundant, although frequently the same figurines (from the



2. MBOLE FIGURINE. 44.9cm. M.R.A.C.

British Museum; the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren; the Museum of Natural History, New York; the Van der Straete collection, Brussels; the University Museum, Philadelphia; the Wielgus collection; the Museum of Cultural History, UCLA; and the Etnografische Museum, Antwerp) are illustrated. Photographs of Mbole figurines and limited information are available in Altman (1966, p. 102), Bascom (1973, p. 176), Elisofon and Fagg (1958, pl. 313), Fagg (1964, pl. 87; 1965, p. 109; 1970, pl. 92), Fagg and Plass (1964, p. 99), Fraser (1962, pl. 32), Fröhlich (1967, V), Heydrich and Fröhlich (1954, 14), Leiris and Delange (1967, pl. 419), Leuzinger (1971, pl. X-20), Maesen (1950, pl. 26; 1959, pl. 57; 1960b, pl. 43; 1967, p. 56 and fig. 28.1), Meauzé (1968, p. 130), Museum of Primitive Art (1969, pl. 443), Plass (s.d., pls. 41A and B), Robbins (1966, pl. 258), Segy (1958, pl. 113; 1969, fig. 358), Trowell and Nevermann (s.d., p. 10), Van Geluwe (1967, pl. 39), Wassing (1968, pl. 80),



3. MBOLE FIGURINE. 77.4cm. M.R.A.C.

Willett (1971, pl. 20), and Wingert (1950, pl. 68). Although some Mbole figurines came to the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale in Tervuren before 1915 and the Belgian government presented a Mbole figurine to the American Museum of Natural History in 1907, it is noteworthy that Mbole art was largely ignored until the fifties. For example, Kjersmeier (1935) does not mention the Mbole, and Olbrechts (1946) pays no attention to them. Kuhn (1923, pl. 33) places a Mbole statue in the northwestern Cameroun, and Wingert (1950, pls. 67-68) among the Fang style. The published visual evidence for the Yela is extremely scanty. De Rop (1955) repro-

duces twelve figurines; Maesen (1959, p. 73) lists a Yela figurine with the Mbole style; Cornet (1971, pl. 157) identifies a Yela figurine.

Lilwa is an initiation practiced for young men, ages 7 to 12, according to Rouvroy (1929). It occurs sometime after circumcision, which is normally performed on very young boys in this area. However, it is not unusual for older, uncircumcised boys to be circumcised by a blacksmith during the *lilwa* initiations. Many aspects of the organization, structure, procedure, and ideology of *lilwa* are unknown, but the following features are essential in the initiations. By the time the adolescents are ready for the initiations, they have already learned fishing from their mothers and agricultural activities from their fathers. They are now prepared to receive a prolonged, intensive, and broader education and training in various techniques, in customs and mores,

in legends, and in moral behavior. Most importantly, the initiation is a passage from youth to full adulthood; and endurance, manliness, fearlessness, discipline, truthfulness, respect, and awe are therefore strongly emphasized. Some sequences of the initiations take place in the forest where special hangars for the accommodation of the neophytes and supervising elders are built. The beginning of the initiations is marked by severe flagellations of the bodies and subsequent treatment with oil and ashes. It is to be noted that flagellation is a prominent feature in various post-circumcision initiations among a number of forest-dwelling populations. The boys are then returned to specially built, isolated houses on the outskirts of the village and remain there for several weeks. During the healing period, they are exposed to fasting and other mortifications, including the eating of badly prepared foods. Subsequently, they receive an intensive moral education, stressing the preservation of the secrecy of the ritual procedures; respect for elders, parents, and women; and the serious consequences resulting from thievery, adultery, and lying. They listen to legends and tales; they learn the secret language of *lilwa* of which a hundred words are documented (the vocabulary indicates that the *lilwa* language is completely different from the Mbole language). After weeks of learning in isolation, the young men are ritually bathed and purified. The ash and oil body ointments are removed and replaced by ointments of camwood, and they receive feather hats and loincloths made of bark, together with a new name.

The teachings are illustrated with dances, songs, dramatic enactments, narratives, and objects. The range of objects used on these occasions is unknown, but we do know that they include the famous Mbole figurines and also sticks, used as canes, which are adorned with white and black bands (similar sticks are used by the Nyanga during the "coming out" ceremonies of the newly circumcised men). Information is scant about these figurines. Most writings on African art are limited to vague statements indicating that the Mbole figurines represent persons who were hanged by the members of *lilwa* for transgression of rules, and that they were shown during the initiations to inculcate among the initiates "the importance of not revealing the secrets of the initiation rites" (Maesen, 1960a, pl. 181). Basically, these contentions are correct, but the primary, published and unpublished, sources (mainly Anon., s.d.; Rouvroy, 1929) allow us to add significant supplemental data. It is important to note the tremendous significance of punishment by hanging in Mbole society. Hanging was done publicly in the village with great pomp. The condemned was placed within a narrow stockade. A special status-holder of *lilwa*, called

yekama or *lokulama*, placed a liana around the victim's neck and attached it to a flexible, bent tree, which pulled the body into the air when released. This liana, painted white and red and called *onyungu*, was worn slung across the chest as an emblem of rank by *isoaya*, a high-ranking dignitary of *lilwa*. Execution by hanging was the punishment for several kinds of crimes, whether or not the *lilwa* rules and its members were involved. Such punishments were administered to a man who seduced a high-ranking woman (such as *asele*, *eyanga*, or *ofona*) who had gone through initiations complementary to those of her husband; to a highly initiated woman (*lumungu*) who committed adultery; to a woman whose child had died because, according to the oracles, she engaged in adulterous intercourse during the breast-feeding period; to a sorcerer accused of killing his victim; to someone who during a feud or violent quarrel did not withdraw after the symbolic intervention of an arbitrating *asele*-woman; to a person accused of homicide; to a person who caused a continuous violent feud between two clans; to a person transgressing certain special edicts of *lilwa* (e.g., temporary prohibition to fish in a certain river); to a woman who entered the *lilwa* house without being initiated, or who illicitly saw the figurines of *lilwa*, etc. After hanging, the body was buried under dense undergrowth in an unknown place in the forest. (People who died in another manner were buried sitting on a stool, fully dressed with their belongings, in a shallow grave outside the village on which knives, pots, bracelets, and large quantities of bananas were placed; the corpse of the high-ranking *isoaya* initiate was buried secretly.)

The ethnographic sources reveal that Mbole sculptors (present in all clans) carved the images of people killed by hanging, and that they only carved the images of those condemned to death by *lilwa*. Since the penal code of *lilwa* predominated and all executions by hanging were their privilege, it is uncertain whether images were made of all persons hanged, or rather of a select few. The colonial administrators, who described these customs, were unable to observe the actual cases because they were hidden from them and because new types of "native tribunals" reacted severely against these customs.

The well-known Mbole figurines (Figs. 1, 2, 3, ; Biebuyck, 1976, pl. 7) are not individual portraits of hanged persons. Although there is considerable variation in detail and craftsmanship, they correspond to a fairly rigid prototype. Some figurines are male; others are female. There are wide differences in height (illustrated examples measure from 20 cm. to 1.20 m., with a larger number in the 50- to 80-cm. range), although some of the smaller figures may belong to the related Yela, to the Lokele, or to groups tran-



4. FIGURINE ASCRIBED TO THE MBOLE.
41cm. M.R.A.C.

sitional between Mbole and Yela (Fig. 6). All known examples are full standing figures, although as Fagg (1970, p. 92) has correctly observed, in the best figurines the artists have carved the essence of hanging rather than of standing. The carefully carved head is large; it has a high, full forehead, which is enhanced with a halo-like or crest-like hairdo (which reflects certain traditional types of high coiffures). The relatively small face is more or less heart-shaped, the arched eyebrows forming a single unit with a triangular nose; this heart-shaped face is, as Fagg correctly states, scooped from a somewhat egg-shaped head, which at times is rather flat. Eyes and mouth are indicated by narrow slits. The distinctiveness of the face is strongly marked by white color that contrasts with the dark color of the hairdo and most of the body. The body is generally narrow and elongated (although there are examples of more compact volumes) and connected to the head by a very short neck from which the shoulders and the arms fall, inert and loose from the body, touching the hips, the upper thighs, or the pubic area. Particularly striking in some figurines are the dangling, forward-thrusted shoulders and upper arms, which parallel the articulation of the bent legs. Hands and feet are fully carved; the fingers and toes are indicated by shallow, parallel slits. The navel is generally marked in slight relief; the genitalia are fully carved. The figurines have transversal holes at the shoulders and the buttocks. The greater part of the figurine is blackened; however, the faces are white, and there are ochre and red pigments on the chest, the forehead, and other parts of the body. As far as we are able to understand it, the facial expression is, as Cornet (1971, 273 and 285) has observed, not fearful or fear-inspiring, but one of resigned sadness.

Rouvroy (1929, pp. 790-792, pls. 1-5) is, to my knowledge, the only person who has made field observations about the figurines, although out of context. Together with interesting photographs, he has given some significant details about the use and meaning of the figurines. Here, I synthesize his data and complete it with information gleaned from the other sources. In 1928, he saw near the administrative center of Opala the "coming out" of four figurines and received further information about a fifth female figure, which was absent at that time. The figurines, which are carved in prescribed latex woods (*okaoka* or *wembe*), are ordinarily kept in unknown places, in a house either in the forest or in the village, for non-initiates are absolutely forbidden to see them. They are guarded, painted and repainted, and completely prepared for the "coming out" ceremony exclusively by a high-ranking initiate called *isoya* (who is also the supreme judge in criminal cases that require execution by hanging). For the "coming out" ceremony, the figurines



5. YELA FIGURINE. 30.5cm. M.R.A.C.

are fixed, lying on their backs on small litters, by means of straps traversing the holes made in the carvings; the litters are adorned with fibers (a procedure somewhat reminiscent of Mbole burial customs in which the dressed corpse, after two days of exposure in the village, was carried for burial into a forest cemetery, lying on one side on a litter). The figurines that Rouvroy saw had the faces painted in yellow ochre; there was red color in the hairdo and from the knees to the feet, and white on the thighs and knees. The figurines have names, derived from persons hanged whose memories they perpetuate. In this case they were respectively called Liloka, Yalingo, Akongaamata, and Osumaga; the absent female figurine was named Yaliyoya. They belonged to two different political units. Osumaga had been hanged shortly before 1912. He had been a chief executioner (*yekama*) who supposedly took pleasure in killing people with poison, thereby creating constant strife between his clan and the Yandoka clan. In order to settle this lingering enmity between groups, the initiates of Osumaga's clan had called the



6. FIGURINE ASCRIBED TO THE MBOLE OR THE LOKELE. 37.5cm. M.R.A.C.

Yandoka clan for a big council, during which Osumaga was seized and hanged. Yaliyoya was a woman who constantly deserted her husband to make love with other men. Her husband, tired of chasing her, killed a person of the village his wife frequently visited. The two villages confronted each other in internecine warfare. Therefore, before 1912, the initiates of her husband's group condemned her to hang. Liloka, Yalingo, and Akongaamata were all men of the Linkundu clan, who were fighters and quarrelsome characters and had therefore been hanged to reestablish peace with other clans against which they had committed crimes.

Rouvroy did not observe these figurines in the context of the initiations. However, we know from another source (Anon., s.d.) and from Rouvroy that in the beginning of the initiation the young

men proceed through a narrow corridor bordered by initiates who severely flagellate them. At the end of this corridor, they meet with the *isoya*-dignitary who directs them to be silent and secretive about what they witness. On this occasion the young men view the figurines as examples of the fate of persons who infringed upon the moral and legal code of *lilwa*. On other occasions, when they are healing and receive the teachings in the secluded houses on the rim of the village, the young men see the figurines again to learn the stories of the people represented by them, to learn the names of the judges and executioners, and in general to remain vividly conscious of the awe, secrecy, respect, and truthfulness that must guide their lives. While secluded, the young men are frequently invited to visit the village; they lean on their sticks marked with white and black bands without looking at the houses of the people, without asking for food, help, or mercy. If someone

transgresses the principles of restraint and humility, he is shown the images as a warning. On various appropriate occasions during the initiations, the young men must touch the body of the figurines; in later life, whenever their behavior is questionable, the initiates must swear on the images.

Nothing is known about other usages, about the deeper meanings of the figurines, or about the symbolism of form and color. One may hypothesize that the images help to neutralize, so to speak, the souls of criminals. The Mbole generally believe that the souls of the dead are reborn with their previous characteristics in the woman's womb. In order to avoid the rebirth of the soul of a person accused of witchcraft, the organ supposedly containing the lethal force is removed and secretly buried. The images may serve to attract and house the souls of criminals in order to prevent their rebirth. The meaning of the white, yellow, and red colors is unknown, but the general blackness of the figurines is certainly related to fictive practices surrounding the burial of hanged persons. I have indicated that they are summarily and secretly buried. Soon after the burial, a large pyre is lit in the vil-

lage on the pretense that the body is being burned. Among the Lalia, who are related to the Mbole, the *lilwa* initiates cover their faces, their bodies up to the hips, and their arms up to the elbows with a black substance consisting of a mixture of palm oil and the ashes of certain leaves when they perform their dances (De Ryck, 1940).

As previously noted, women are not allowed to see the figurines or to touch the sacred wood (*okaoka* or *wembe*) of which the figurines and the litters are made. However, there is an initiation through which some wives of high initiates achieve the status of *lumungu*. During their initiation, these women are brought blindfolded into the *lilwa*-house (*ituho*), where the figurines are guarded. In the presence of other high-ranking men, the women are inseparably bound to their husbands and enjoined never to commit adultery (if they do, they are hanged).

We have only the scantiest information about other art objects that are used in the *lilwa* of the Mbole. There is a rare and rather recent polychrome mask in the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, which is ascribed to the Mbole (Leuzinger, 1971, pl. X-1), but no such masks are mentioned in the primary sources. On the other hand, these sources refer to the *lilwa* sticks (reproduced in Rouvroy, 1929, pls. 3, 4) which are one meter high, made of parasol blackened with fire and then peeled at intervals of 10 centimeters to form black-white rings. The sticks belong to the *asele* woman (elsewhere called *lomongo*), who has the title of mother of *lilwa*. There are a few such women among the Mbole, who are initiated at the request of their high-ranking husbands (*asele* is the wife of a blacksmith or of the *isoya* elder) because of outstanding qualities as judge and arbiter. The *asele* woman has a most prominent social and ritual status. Her major contacts are not with other women but with the male members of *lilwa*; no women may participate in her burial. In the event of serious feuding, her appearance with the *lilwa* cane is a sign to cease all feuding immediately (persons who do not respect the symbolic peace which she brings are hanged).

There is also a zoomorphic figurine, called crocodile of *lilwa* (*ngonde yalilwa*), which is said to punish those who commit indiscretions during the *lilwa* ceremonies.

It is evident that the entire initiation system of the Mbole is much more involved than the sources allow us to determine. As indicated already, there exists, in addition to the ordinary membership of *lilwa*, a hierarchy of ranking members who fulfill many functions in conjunction with circumcision and *lilwa* rites, the rendering of justice, burial rituals, etc. These offices are considered to be hereditary, but that is not completely certain, nor does it exclude specialized initiations. Beyond *lilwa*, there is a higher and more important system, called *ekanga*, about



7. YELA FIGURINE. 27.5cm. M.R.A.C.



8. YELA FIGURINE. 21cm. M.R.A.C.



9. YELA FIGURINE. 18cm. M.R.A.C.

which practically nothing is known. The initiations are accessible only to men who have already completed *lilwa*. Lasting ten days or more, they are held in a large, closed initiation house constructed in the village and require important payments. The part the abovementioned artworks play in these initiations is unknown.

Apparently, circumcision among the Mbole is practiced on young children (Anon., s.d., says that boys are sometimes circumcised while they are still breast-fed), but Rouvroy (1929) indicates that adolescents are sometimes circumcised by a blacksmith during the *lilwa* initiations. As is the case among the Mongo (Hulstaert, 1961, p. 61), the circumcision rites do not involve any elaborate ceremonies; the role that masks (Biebuyck, 1976, pl. 5) and figurines might eventually play in them is undocumented.

The *lilwa* and *lilwa*-like initiations also occur among some adjoining groups. The Lokele, located to the north of the Mbole,

organize *lilwa* initiations every eight to ten years, and independently from the circumcision rites (Tervuren, dossier 522). At least one figurine in the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale is identified as Mbole-Lokele (Fig. 4). Among the same Lokele, *libele* initiations for boys are held around the time of puberty. They include many of the features already discussed for *lilwa*. Millman (1927) has noted that when the young men are healed of the wounds inflicted through flagellation, they proceed through a tunnel at the end of which a dead man's head, or a whitewashed image adorned with black spots, was placed. The young men must display no fear but move the object aside and pursue the journey, subsequently rendering the oath of secrecy.

Significant ethnographic information is provided on the Yela by De Rop (1955) and Molin (1933). Visual documentation is severely limited to Cornet (1971, pl. 157) and De Rop (1955). The Yela are linguistically part of the vast Mongo group that extends westward through the forest. According to De Rop (p. 116), *lilwa* originated among the Mbole and was introduced from there among the Yela. The Yela use wooden images in these initiations (Biebuyck, 1976, pl. 10; Figs. 5, 7-9); they are small (18.5 cm. to 39.5 cm., with many around 20 cm.; they are less carefully executed, more stockily built, and have rougher surfaces (Burssens, 1960, p. 784). In 1945-1946, the association was officially dissolved by the colonial administration, and a number of figurines were collected. De Rop (1955) briefly discusses twenty-four that were made available to him. There is no contextual information, but analogous to the Mbole case the figurines represent persons hanged for the transgression of *lilwa* rules. There are male and female figurines, some carved in black or red wood, and others in light white wood. They have traces of white and red coloring. Compared to the Mbole figurines, they are extremely rudimentary, although some do have several of the features already described for the Mbole: heart-shaped concave faces; hands touching the upper thighs. Most have a high forehead and a crest-like or cap-like hairdo. There is more variety in the poses and attitudes of the personages represented. Whereas several are standing with typically bent knees and somewhat spread-out legs, there are others that give the impression of sitting, squatting, or dancing (Figs. 5, 8). The eyes and mouths are generally rendered as small, narrow slits. However, in several cases the mouth is not indicated, and the eyes are marked with small, protuberant copper spheres (nailheads in Fig. 9). Most of them have holes at the height of the shoulders and chest for the purpose of attaching them to a litter. Two of them are carved lying on a short litter. Others have a hole in the head, which is stuffed with white clay; one has such a stuffed hole in the belly.

THE PERE

The small and unknown population called Pere inhabits the southwestern part of the Lubero zone, near the Lindi River. Very scanty information can be gleaned from Maes (1938; 1939), Moeller (1936), Van Geluwe (1956) and particularly from an unpublished study by Hoffmann (n.d.). Visual documentation is provided, for the most part, on the famed anthropomorphic wood trumpet of the Etnografische Museum in Antwerp (Biebuyck, 1974, pl. 4; Claerhout, 1971, pl. 50; Fagg, 1970, No. 105; Leiris-Delange, 1971, pl. 421; Leuzinger, 1971, pl. X-3; Wassing, 1968, pl. 45); two other figurines are illustrated (Maesen, 1960b, pls. 44a and b; 1974, p. 91; see also Biebuyck, 1976, pls. 6, 9, 11 and 14). Within the area occupied by the Pere, there are also the closely related Pakombe and Komo (Tike), and Pygmies. Most Pere trace historical relationships with the Komo, but their culture further indicates strong common elements with the Nande (Konjo) and Nyanga. The political system, for example, is closely related to that of the Nyanga (Biebuyck, 1955, 1956). The Pere are politically organized into miniature kingdoms, placed under the politico-ritual authority of a divine king (*mwami*), who is the son of the chief's ritual wife (*mumbo*). Circumcision rites, certain hunting rituals, and initiation rites connected with the vocation of healers are extremely important.

It is uncertain what type of artworks are used in conjunction with the circumcision ceremonies, which are organized by special status-holders, forming a somewhat loosely organized corporation. Moeller (1936, p. 321), on the basis of information provided by colonial administrators, briefly mentions the usage of hoods made of animal hide. I believe that these hoods are similar to those used among the Nyanga (Biebuyck, 1973b, pls. 5-13) and Komo. At the beginning of the ceremonies, the first-to-be-circumcised boy (*aluta*) is ambushed by a masked dignitary, called *mukidi* or *kitumbu* (a term also known to the Nyanga). *Mukidi* carries the boy to a location near a river where the circumcisor is waiting; having revealed his identity by removing the mask, he participates in the actual operation. These hoods are also worn by the circumcisors (*mupite*) and by those who exercise ritual control over the complete organization of the rites, the medicines, and the sacred musical instruments (*menegandja*) on another occasion. When the abovementioned boy has been circumcised and after a couple of weeks has recovered from his wounds, the large-scale circumcision rites begin for the other youths. The preliminary dances to these rites last four days and nights, involving participation of hooded and painted officials.

According to Hoffmann (1932; see also Van Geluwe, 1956, p. 59), the Pere manipulate figurines in conjunction with the highly secret preparation of elephant traps (these traps, consisting of a network of lianas connected with suspended logs in which a large spearhead is lodged, occur widely among forest-dwelling populations such as Nyanga, Komo, Lega, and involve some of the most esoteric rituals I have encountered). The seated figurine (*baili*) is an assemblage, constructed out of pieces of banana stipe dressed with bark-cloth; feet and hands are signified by tufts of white feathers. Near this assemblage, there is an animal figurine in clay, representing an iguana (or crocodile?), whose back is decorated with pumpkin seeds. This set, called *ekele*, must help to magically guide the elephants toward the traps. However, as is frequently the case in these areas, the configuration may also be viewed by non-members of the hunters' corporation who are willing to pay the fees required for admittance to the secret.

The exact use and meaning of the famous Pere trumpets are unknown. I believe that they are related to the anthropozoomorphic musical instruments, called *mumbira*, of the Nyanga (Biebuyck, 1974). These musical instruments, which are also found among the Tangi subgroup of the Nande (under the names *mulimu*, *kanyamakende* and *kazoni*; see Biebuyck, 1974, pl. 3) are certainly connected with the Pygmy *molimo*-initiations. According to Hoffmann (1934), the Pere trumpets are generically called *mulimu* and have specific names derived from the place and the manner in which they are carved. During the initiation, the structure of the trumpet and the meaning of the sounds it produces are explained and interpreted. Those initiated to its secret receive special scarifications on the belly or upper arm, which are assumed to be the marks of *mulimu*. The incised designs on the trumpets themselves resemble the tattoos. The trumpets are associated with Elimu, the "father of Pere gods" who rules over the forest and who receives offerings in order to assure the success of the hunt.

According to Hoffmann (1932), the Bapakombe group among the Pere carves a rudimentary sculpture for Nyamunga, the creator god. Each family head has a small altar in his house (opposite the entrance) where Nyamunga is represented by a wooden staff, dressed with raffia fibers and surmounted by a red-painted cylindrical head. His son Lusenge is also depicted (but no description is given); Lusenge's sisters are designated by sticks and some of his brothers by pebbles. Food is offered in a pot to Lusenge, who serves as intermediary with Nyamunga.

Maes (1938), who follows information provided by Father Westelinck, relates that the Pere kept a figurine, called Ekoto of Isumba, hidden in the forest, in whose

name one of the twins was strangled. On special, unspecified occasions, the figurine was carried through the village. Every village possessed this figurine.

Like the Komo, the Pere have a most important set of secret initiations, collectively called *isumba* — a term that is also applied to the objects seen only by the non-initiates and whose usage is at the center of the initiations. According to Hoffmann (1932), the Pere distinguish between two categories of *isumba*: those producing sounds and movement (Mbuhu, Ekulu, Soli, Ajanda, Ngeya) and those that are silent and do not move (Nsindi and Mboho). To the first group belong sacred musical instruments, such as the mirliton, a special rattle, and a hollow bamboo blown in a pot. The second group includes pieces of iron, beads, and figurines. All adult, circumcised males can be initiated to these secrets on condition that the necessary payments be made. The initiations are structured around the revelation and explanation of the objects, the learning of their uses, festivities and exchanges of goods, and imprints of distinctive tattoos on the body.

In 1934, Hoffmann (Tervuren, dossier 805) collected a unique set of figurines, most of them belonging to the *nsindi* initiations. To my knowledge, this is the only group of Pere figurines known. The complete meaning and usage of these figurines are not documented, but apparently the initiation entails viewing the figurines, as well as learning their names, their meanings, and the manner of displaying them. The explanations are presented in the form of riddles. The *nsindi*-collection of Hoffmann forms a single entity of fourteen figurines. One of the objects is a miniature stool in clay (7.8 cm; see Biebuyck, 1976, pl. 14). It is molded in the form of a spherical seat and bottom, which are interconnected by two massive, oval-shaped legs, with a wide opening in the middle. It is engraved with rows of cowrie shapes and with a patchwork of lozenges, which are rounded on the lateral edges. Another object in clay (10.5 cm.) is fashioned like a handle suggesting a highly abstract human body. Both objects are considered to be the embodiment of *nsindi* itself; there is no further explanation. Miniature stools in bone and ivory are part of the *bwami*-initiations of the Lega and Bembe and related to the special statuses some initiates occupy in conjunction with organizing the circumcision rites. It is possible that they possess a similar meaning for the Pere, because they also have initiated officials in charge of the circumcisions. When the operations are performed, part of the blood must flow over the stools owned by such officials. One figurine consists of a stick glued with much resin into a piece of quartz. It is called *mbande* and has no other description. Quartz-stones, designated as *mbande* or *mpande*, occur in Lega and Nyanga initiations and are also



10. PERE FIGURINE REPRESENTING THE RITUAL FATHER OF THE CHIEF. 25.5cm. M.R.A.C.

found as part of the royal treasure among the Hunde. They are believed to have been brought along during the migrations from the Mount Ruwenzori area in the north-eastern Zaïre. All other objects are wooden. Two represent birds (Biebuyck, 1976, pl. 9; Maesen, 1960a, pl. 446); one is a quadruped; six are standing personages (14.3 cm., 15.2 cm., 18.5 cm., 21 cm., 25.5 cm., 37.8 cm.; Figs. 10-12); one figurine is seated on a stool (17.3 cm.); and one is a highly abstract pole, shaped like two cylinders of different size, progressively narrowing and ending in a cone (20.3 cm.).

The rudimentary human figurines collected by Hoffmann, each covered with white and red color, suggest a unique style, although I have viewed some rare, somewhat similar figurines in certain Lega initiations. All exhibit very typical poses, attitudes, and gestures. Six of the figurines have short, stump-like arms stretched forward with huge hands — as if to signify an embrace or a welcome given someone; only one figurine has long, bent arms touching the hips; and one has no arms. The feet also are massive and large; the legs are straight without knees and are spread. The heads are small; the faces are usually prognathic, somewhat animal-like, with most facial features only barely suggested. One of the statues is a fully double figurine (a male and a female standing back to back; Biebuyck, 1976, pl. 6). The greater part of these figurines

symbolize specific status-holders of the politico-ritual system of the Pere. These are: the chief (*mwami*); the ritual father of the chief (*isemwami*); three ranking wives of the chief (*mukali mukulu*, senior wife; *musanduli*; *muole*, or first wife, whose son chooses his father's successor among the sons of the ritual wife); the subject (*muombe*). Aside from the figurine depicting the chief, which is distinguished by a cowrie on the head (remindful of the chief's ceremonial hat), there are no adornments or other traits that would allow a quick association with the ascribed meanings.

In addition to these personages, Hoffmann's collection contains one quadruped figure with rolled up tail, called *kakoko*, which symbolizes the goat that is offered to a chief upon entering the village. An elementary bird figure typifies the chicken presented to the chief at his arrival in the village. Another more elaborate bird-like figure, with neck, head, and beak stretched upward, is symbolic of the evil-inspired person who always intends harm even for those who

treat him fairly. This example of a human character, represented by a non-human form, leads us again to the center of Lega symbolism.

The three other pieces in the Hoffmann collection may belong to the *nsindi* series or to similar initiations known as *kima* and *mbande*. The pole-shaped, cone-covered, abstract sculpture (20.3 cm.) is, together with the red-colored molars of an elephant, the primary symbol of the *kima*-initiations. It is said to symbolize the ritual father of the chief and therefore is seemingly connected with the previously mentioned series. The double figure (21 cm.), previously mentioned alludes to a story of a domestic quarrel. A taller, slender figurine (37.8 cm.), with one arm apparently holding something resembling a rifle, which is carried horizontally on the right shoulder, might, according to Hoffmann, portray a soldier, but the figurine could be a hunter as well.

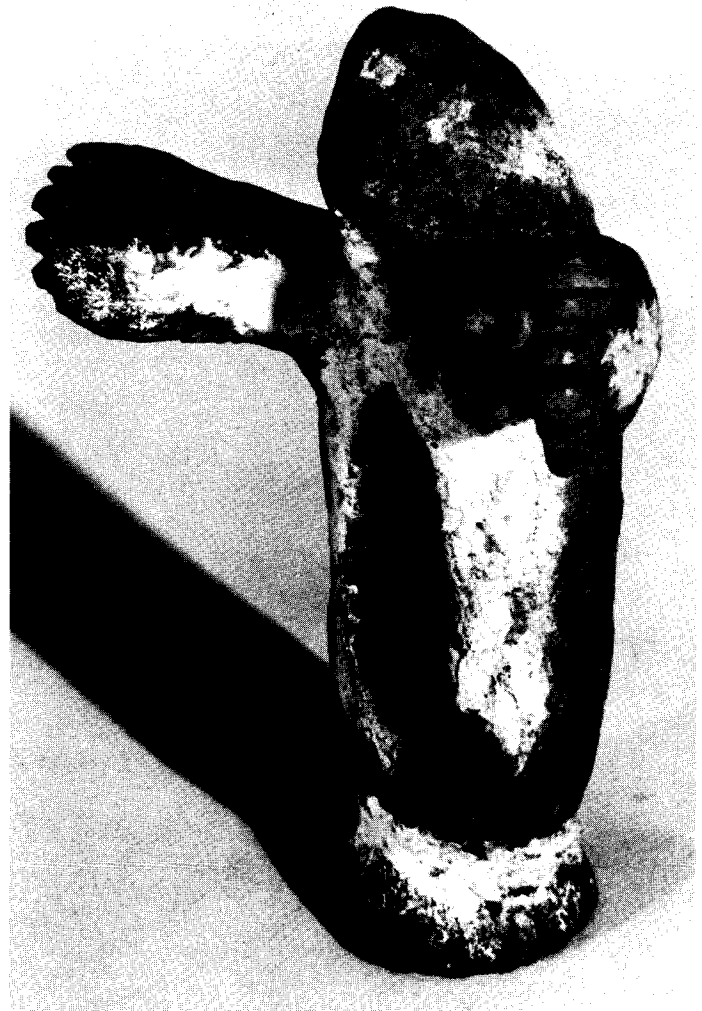
If the ascriptions of objects in the first group are correct — and there is no reason to doubt their accuracy — at least part of the *nsindi*-initiations would be

based on a systematic learning of certain socio-legal principles pertaining to key persons in the political structure. The origin, enthronement, and death of the divine king (*mwami*) are extremely secret; and possibly some of the secrets are divulged during the *nsindi*-initiations. The chief has various wives with special status. The son of his *muole* (or *ngole*) wife is called *mukama*; he exercises very special duties in the selection and enthronement of the divine chief. A son of the chief's ritual wife (*mumbo*, occasionally called *mukali mukulu*, "great wife") is chosen as successor. The chief also has a ritual father (*shamwami*), who is a guardian of the ritual wife. There are numerous other officials with politico-ritual functions; however, they are not depicted among the figurines collected by Hoffmann. It is, therefore, possible that there existed a much larger set of objects (sculptures and other items), which were a vital part of the *nsindi*-initiations and functioned as iconic devices in an elaborate system of teachings about the divine king. □

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11. PERE FIGURINE REPRESENTING THE CHIEF. 21cm. M.R.A.C.



12. PERE FIGURINE REPRESENTING THE MUSANDULI WIFE OF THE CHIEF. 15.2cm. M.R.A.C.

in any case, it is not the Mbulo referred to herein.

12. A final bit of evidence is contained in the universally-applied name for West Africa's second largest river. The name "Benue" derives from the Bata, *Gbin'we*, "Mighty Death." It is *Binuwe* in Sama.

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MARIDADI FABRICS, Notes, from page 44

1. For more information about the social history of Maridadi Fabrics, see Elsbeth Court, "Maridadi Fabrics," *Kenya Past and Present* II, 2, 1973, pp. 36-39, Kenya National Museum, Nairobi.
2. p. 34, Margaret Trowell, *African Design*, Faber & Faber Ltd., London 1960.
3. *Khanga* is the characteristic large cloth rectangle worn by women. The typical designs are very enlarged Arab motifs with a complementary border panel including a Swahili proverb. It would be interesting to trace the origins of *khanga* designs to their Arab sources and to relate *khanga*s to Java prints, called *kiteenge* in East Africa.
4. For a list of Maridadi Fabrics designs transferred from Kenya National Museum artifacts, see p. 39, Court, *op. cit.*
5. For an explanation of the Kenyan attempts at art workshops, see Judith van d. Miller, *Art in East Africa*, Frederick Muller, London, 1975.
6. For a very good discussion concerning the direction and identity of East African artists, see Part I, pp. 13-21, J. van d. Miller, *ibid.* Unfortunately, the section on Maridadi Fabrics, pp. 59-60, contains factual errors.

PEABODY MUSEUM, Bibliography, from page 47

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YORUBA ARCHITECTURE, Notes, from page 53

1. The research upon which this article is based was funded by two grants. I was awarded a Cross-Cultural Fellowship by the Office of Research and Advanced Studies of Indiana University and an NDFL (Title VI) grant. In a year of fieldwork, which took me through the American south and Haiti as well as West Africa, four months were spent in Nigeria.
2. A cultural perspective on African architecture is defended by Labelle Prussin in her *Architecture in Northern Ghana* (Berkeley: University of California, 1969) and in a more recent article, "An Introduction to Indigenous African Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 23 (1974), 183-200.
3. Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969), p. 46 et passim. See also Fred B. Kniffen, "To Know a Land and Its People," *Landscapes* 9, No. 3 (1960), p. 23, for a methodological statement of this principle.
4. *The Silent Language* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1959), p. 146.
5. My notions on the dual nature of house form have been shaped by many instructive conversations with Henry Glassie, who pushed me beyond functional considerations into the realm of ideational questions.
6. *House Form and Culture*, p. 47.
7. *The Affecting Presence: An Essay in Humanistic Anthropology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. xvii.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

9. Robert Farris Thompson, *Black Gods and Kings: Yoruba Art at UCLA* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), Chapt. 3, p. 2.
10. William R. Bascom, "Urbanization Among the Yoruba," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 60 (1955): 446-454. G.J. Afolabi Ojo, *Yoruba Culture: A Geographical Analysis* (Ibadan: University of Ife Press, 1966), p. 105.
11. G. J. Afolabi Ojo, *Yoruba Palaces: A Study of the Afins of Yorubaland* (London: University of London Press, 1966), pp. 100-105 gives the uses for the courtyards of the palaces in Oyo and Akure.
12. Douglas Fraser, *Village Planning in the Primitive World* (New York: George Braziller, 1968), pp. 44-45.
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14. N. A. Fadipe *The Sociology of the Yoruba* (Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1970), p. 96; Eva Krapf-Askari, *Yoruba Towns and Cities* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 56.
15. A. L. Mabogunje, *Yoruba Towns* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1962), p. 6.
16. Leo Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, 1913 (rpt. New York, Benjamin Blom, 1968), p. 328.
17. "A Sample Survey of Yoruba Rural Building," *Odu: University of Ife Journal of African Studies* 2 (1966), 62.
18. See *ibid.*, p. 69 for an illustration of single houses. C. R. Barber, *Igbo-Ora: A Town in Transition* (Ibadan, Oxford University Press, 1966) p. 14 gives an example of a three-sided arrangement. I have seen the L arrangement myself in Oyo, April 1974.
19. Frank Willett, *African Art: An Introduction* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p. 127.

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