

# Sculpture from the Eastern Zaïre Forest Regions

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In the southwestern part of the former Province Orientale, throughout the former Kivu Province, and into the northern rim of the former Katanga Province, we find a large number of distinctive ethnic units which, in one way or another, are all historically and culturally interrelated. We are confronted in this region with a complex cultural continuum which, from certain points of view, transcends the constricting demarcations into ethnic, so-called tribal, entities. Many of these groups are not well known in the ethnographical and artistic literature on Africa. The area offers, however, a fascinating artistic output and interesting problems of interpretation. This study attempts to synthesize some of the data.<sup>1</sup>

The total group of peoples of ultimate relevance for this analysis occupies a huge rectangle in eastern Zaïre, approximately situated between the equator and 5° south, and between 24° and 29° east. This vast region is mainly dominated by

lowland rainforest; eastward the environment changes into montane forest formations and into highland savannas; southeastward the landscape transforms into open forest savannas. In this study, I am primarily concerned with the forest-dwelling populations of this region. But, obviously, the separation between groups cannot always clearly be made on such a basis because of overlappings and historical and cultural continuities. The ethnic units, then, that fall within the immediate scope of the analysis are the following: Mbole (west of the Lomami River; zone Opala); Yela (Tshuapa River; zone Ikela); Lengola (between the Lomami and Lualaba Rivers; formerly Ponthierville); Mitoko-Leka (west of the Lualaba, on its Lilo tributary; formerly Ponthierville); Komo (a wide distribution in the Lubutu and Bafwasende zones); Pere (on the Lindi River; Lubero zone); Nyanga (Walikale zone); Songola (Kindu zone); Nyindu (Mwenga zone); and Lega (Mwenga, Shabunda, Pangi zones).<sup>2</sup> This basic nomenclature does not include the many, more or less distinctive, smaller units that are found in the area and mostly mark transitions or combinations between various cultures. These small units are very typical for the area and contribute much to the overall cultural continuum. They include, for example, the Linga and Lulu between the Mbole and Lengola; the Kwame between the Komo and Lega; the Kanu and Konjo between the Nyanga and Lega; the Tembo between the Nyanga, Hunde, and Havu; and the Asa-Tiri between the Nyanga and Komo. The ethnic delineation does not do justice to differences found within each group. For example, early unpublished sources make numerous distinctions between so-called subtribes on a regional and cultural basis. East and south of these forest-dwelling peoples, we find within this general region a variety of populations that exhibit various degrees of relationships with the forest-dwellers. They include, from north to south, the Nande, Kumbure, Hunde, Havu, Shi, Nyindu, Furiiru, Vira, Bembe, Zyoba, Kasingo, Boyo, Bangubangu, and Zimba (Southern Binja). Some of these groups must necessarily be considered in discussions on art. Needless to say, then,



ABOVE: 1. KOMO FIGURINE, 75.9cm. MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE, Tervuren. RIGHT: 2. LENGOLA STOOL AND FIGURINE. PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES, MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE, AFTER R. P. DE JAEGER (1937).

OPPOSITE PAGE: 3. ANCESTOR FIGURINE IN KASINGO STYLE, 49cm. MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES.





this is an area of great ethnic complexity; the ethnic delineation was further complicated by numerous colonial interferences with the ethnic maps.

Many outstanding artistic traditions flourish in the forest region and the larger general area that are being discussed. The focus is on sculpture, specifically on masks, figurines, and assemblages, because they have the widest distribution and offer the greatest scope for comparison. It must be noted, however, that there are other important sculptural traditions as well. For example, the Nyanga and Nande carve beautifully decorated and patinated dishes and cups (Biebuyck 1973a); the Shi have fine wooden milkpots and the Nyanga exquisite dog bells; the Lega produce in bone, ivory, and wood an astonishing variety of miniature knives, billhooks, hammers, pegs, and pins (Biebuyck 1973b). Wooden stools with spherical seat and bottom, interconnected by six, four, or three legs, or more rarely by a massive central column, are particularly well carved by the Lega, Komo, Tembo, and Nyanga. Among the Hunde there are such copper-plated stools for chiefs (Schumacher 1948, p. 186). The Pere, Bembe, and Lega make miniature stools in clay or bone and ivory, and the Lengola carve elaborate triple stools. Superb scepters, made of buffalo tail and carved ivory handles, are found among the Bembe (Biebuyck 1972), and exquisite combs among the Nyanga. Large trapezoid slit-drums and subcylindrical or funnel-shaped membranophone drums are widespread, but rarely artistically enhanced. On the other hand, some types of carvings, that are very typical in the

southern adjoining Hemba and Luba areas, such as neckrests, caryatid stools, elaborately carved ceremonial spears, axes, and adzes, are absent from the region. Objects in iron or copper, such as spears, knives, arrows, necklace rings, armlets, bracelets, and anklets are widespread, varied, and of high quality, but never reach the degree of elaboration and artistic diversity that we find in the regions west of this area, among populations such as the Tetela, Mongo, Ngombe, Ngala, etc.

The major artworks that are found among the forest-dwelling populations of this region and some of their extensions fall into the following categories:

#### *Masks and heads*

1. in wood
  - a. face masks: Mbole, Komo, Tembo, Lega, and their extension among the Bembe (Figs. 5, 12; Biebuyck 1973b)
  - b. masquettes: Lega (Biebuyck 1973b)
  - c. bell masks: Bembe (Biebuyck 1972)
  - d. plankboard masks: Bembe (Biebuyck 1972)
2. masquettes in bone and ivory: Lega, Nyindu, and Kwame (Biebuyck 1973b)
3. face masks in cloth (with beads, cowries, and feathers): Bembe (Biebuyck 1972)
4. hoods in hide (with feather adornments): Nyanga (Biebuyck 1973a)
5. hoods in bark: Nyanga and Komo (Biebuyck 1973a; Moeller 1936)
6. hoods in fibers: Nyanga, Bembe, and Lega (Biebuyck 1972, 1973a-b)

Outside the Lega, where there is a certain abundance of masks made in different materials, the number of masks

known from the other ethnic groups is very limited. In these groups there are generally only one or two types of masks with highly restricted usages. The Bembe, however, have the greatest diversity of mask types, although they occur in small numbers. Gigantic masks are unknown, except among the Lega where outside the *bwami* association there exists the very tall *kitende*-hoods in grasses. The human face constitutes the essential motif in the mask traditions; however, because of extreme stylization, the human face traits may be almost undistinguishable in some hoods and in the bell and plankboard masks of the Bembe. Animal masks are absent; however, some Bembe and Lega masks have horns, giving them a quasi-animal appearance.

#### *Zoomorphic figurines*

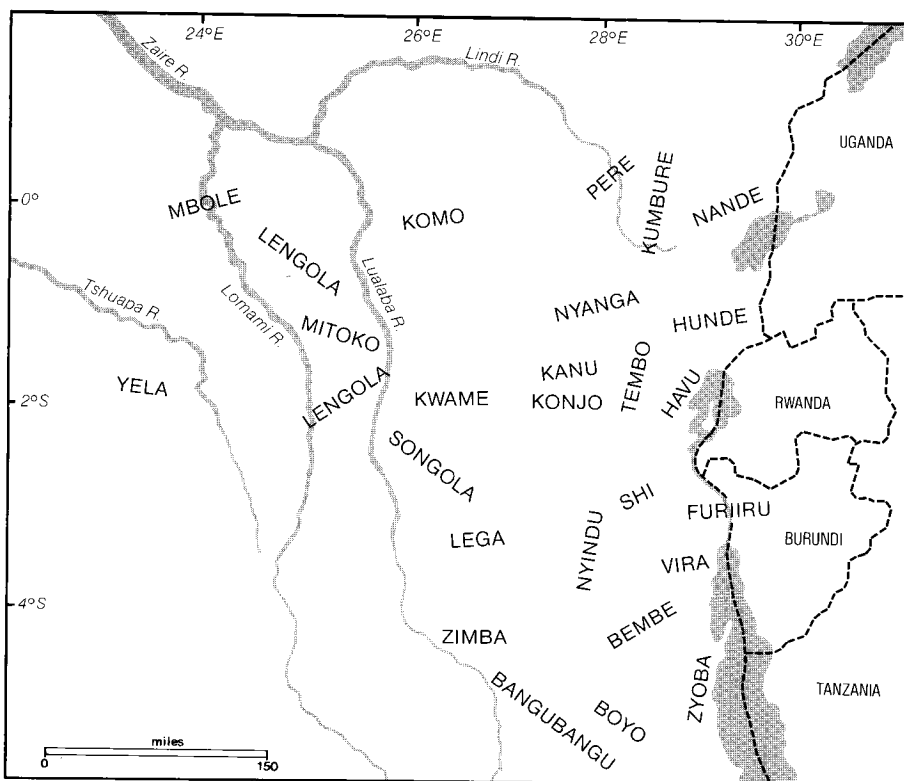
1. quadrupeds (dog-, antelope-, pangolin-, turtle-, and crocodile-like)
  - a. in wood: Pere (Fig. 11), Lega, and Bembe (Biebuyck 1972, 1973b)
  - b. in bone or ivory: Lega (Biebuyck 1973b)
  - c. in clay: Pere, Bembe, and Lega
  - d. assemblages (stuffed hides; turtle carapace and wooden head and neck; banana stipe and quills, scales, feathers, etc.): Lega, Bembe, and Komo
2. birds in wood: Lega, Pere (Fig. 9), and Komo
3. other (snakes, fish, frogs)
  - a. in wood, bone, or ivory: Lega (Biebuyck 1973b)

The animal figurines are abundant and varied among the Lega, but rare in the other areas. Many are highly stylized while others are more "realistic" miniatures; the realism is sometimes enhanced by the addition of select exuviae, such as scales or beaks.

#### *Anthropomorphic figurines:*

1. in wood: Mbole (Figs. 4, 7), Yela (Fig. 10), Lengola, Mitoko (Fig. 8), Bembe, Pere (Fig. 6), Komo (Fig. 1), Songola, Lega, Kwame, and other extensions among the Zyoba, Kasingo (Fig. 3), Boyo, Bangubangu, and Zimba
2. in bone or ivory: Lega (Fig. 13), Komo, Nyanga, Kwame, Nyindu, Songola, Bembe, and other extensions among the Hunde, Zimba, and Bangubangu (Biebuyck 1972 and 1973b; Moeller 1936)
3. in stone: Lega
4. in clay: Pere, Lega, and Bembe
5. in resin and other materials: Lega
6. assemblages (banana stipes adorned with hats, belts, dress, sticks, and other adornment): Lega, Bembe, and Komo (Biebuyck 1973b; Moeller 1936)

There is a great diversity of form, size, and volume of anthropomorphic figurines. Miniature figurines from two or ten inches high in wood, bone, or ivory, are highly developed among the Lega, Bembe, and other groups that seem to





4. MBOLE FIGURINE, 41cm.  
MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE.

derive some of their art forms from them (Nyanga, Kwame, Hunde, Longola). Large figurines in wood are known among the Mbole, Lengola, Mitoko, Komo, and Kasingo, Zyoba, and Boyo. There is much work in wood of intermediate size among the Yela, Pere, Lega, and Bembe. The Mitoko carve tall notched poles adorned with a head or face. Among the taller figurines, there is a preference for slender figures among the Mbole, Lengola, and Komo, and for the heavier, more stocky ones among the Kasingo and Boyo; but groups like the Mitoko have both types.

There is a distinct preference for full, standing figurines and for half-figurines (more than a bust). Sitting figurines are very rare; squatting ones are absent. There are many full figurines without arms, with one arm, or with only short stumps for arms. Half-figures ending in a peg or fixed onto an iron staff occur frequently among the Lega, Komo, Mitoko, and Lengola. This is also the region where double-faced, double-headed, and fully double figurines are abundant. The faces, heads, and bodies are placed in opposition, linked together, or separated from each other; however, heads and faces may also be placed in superposition, and some artworks may consist of several superposed and opposed faces (Lega, Mitoko, Lengola). There are male, female, and sex-

less carvings; female breasts are rarely rendered, but the navel area tends to be placed into perspective. In some areas wooden figurines tend to be colored white or red, entirely or in parts, but there is also a liking among the Lengola and Komo for dotting the objects.

*Abstract figurines* (reminiscent of a bell, pole, or phallus shape)

1. in wood: Pere, Komo, Lega, Hunde
2. in bone or ivory: Lega, Komo

These objects may be much more widespread and diverse, but full documentation is lacking. The famous so-called trumpets of the Pere apparently fall into this category, although I believe that they are connected with the Nyanga zoomorphic figurines (Biebuyck 1974).

It is appropriate to indicate that many arts of this region have remained hidden from the Western museums and observers for a long time. For example, the first Pere and Yela artworks arrived in the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale (Tervuren) only about 1936 and 1938. No works were ascribed to the Kasingo and Zyoba (Goma and Ciba) before 1955 (Biebuyck collection at Tervuren); no Nyanga carvings and masks were known until my Nyanga field research (which began in 1954). Some other areas were poorly documented; few genuine objects are as yet known from certain groups, such as Mitoko, Komo, or Tembo. As far as certain other groups are concerned, we know that there are (or were) artworks; to my knowledge, however, none have been identified as such in the existing collections. Confusion has been added to the general paucity of data: Bembe works were listed as Lega; Boyo or Kasingo works were identified as Bembe; Pere as Komo; Zyoba as Bembe. The separation of individual artworks into different ethnic areas is not always easy because of overlappings, continuities, and the general paucity of precise information. Some Yela works are close to Mbole, Lengola to Mitoko, Komo to Mitoko, Lega to

Bembe; and there are the various problems of ascription between Bembe, Zyoba, Kasingo, and Boyo, which will be discussed later in this study.

It is certainly no coincidence that many of these artworks formed a "hidden" art in their own social context. Much of this art was not commonly known to all the members of the society; it was seen only at certain irregular intervals, for short periods of time, by a selection of persons. For the most part, the art objects were kept in bags, baskets, caves, in houses, shrines, or on tombs with restricted access. In other words, the bulk of the artworks is associated with some of the great mysteries of these peoples.

In the existing literature on African art, little justice has been done to this vast region. The main emphasis has been on Lega, and occasionally on some of the other groups, especially Mbole. In general, the information provided is scanty and incomplete. Early works on the art of Zaïre, by Coart and de Hauleville (1906) and Maes (1935; 1938) have practically no information on the area. Maes (1935, pl. XVI) makes a hopeless confusion, ascribing to the Bemba and the



ABOVE: 5. MBOLE MASK, 45.9cm. MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE. LEFT: 6. PERE DOUBLE FIGURINE, 21cm. MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE.









Lake Moero area some early figurines from the Bembe-Boyo-Kasingo groups. Maes (1938) reproduces a Mitoko house (and grave) with figurines. Von Sydow (1930, pp. 456-466) gives, as part of his discussion on the Urua-styles, important information on the Boyo, Bembe, Zimba, Kalanga, and Holoholo, but none on the other groups. Kjersmeier (1937, pp. 12, 32-34, 37) briefly mentions the Bembe and Zimba, and discusses the Lega. Gaffé (1945, pp. 55-56), has some information only on the Lega. In his monumental work Olbrechts (1946, pp. 82, 89, 90-93) discusses the Lega as a transition between the northern and southern styles; he places the Mitoko in his northwestern style region, and views Bembe, Boyo, and Holoholo as part of the east Luba substyle [see also "Stylistic Analysis of African Art: A Reassessment of Olbrechts' 'Belgian Method'," this issue, page 46]. For the rest, however, his data do not indicate whether there is any art between the Lega, on the one hand, and the Bwa, Mangbetu, and Zande, on the other hand. Maesen (1959) is the first to complete some of the gaps, placing the Bembe and Lega as a transitional group in his stylistic region 6, and recognizing the Mbole and Komo in his stylistic region 7. In *Umbangu* (1960) Maesen provides new documentation on the Lega, Bembe, Lengola, Pere, and Mbole. In his 1950 study he had already noted that Komo, Mbole, and Mitoko art was influenced by the Lega. In subsequent works by Fagg (1965, 1970), Himmelheber (1960), and Leuzinger (1960, 1971), very few new data

were added. Maesen (1976) discusses some new details about the Bembe, Lega, and Mbole, but does not attempt further classification. Delange (1967, pp. 170-173) places the arts of the Mbole, Mitoko, Lengola, Pere, Bembe, Boyo, and Lega together with other northern arts in the eastern Congo artistic zone. Cornet (1971, pp. 227-234) furnishes the as yet most complete picture of the area. In his southeastern stylistic group, he distinguishes among others the Luba region, which includes the Boyo and Bembe, and the Lega region, which encompasses the Lega, Lengola, Mbole, and Yela. Under the denomination Lengola, he subsumes such other groups as Komo and Mitoko, and concludes that between the arts of the Lega group there is a strong Lega-influenced bond. Bascom (1973, p. 1974) groups the Lega, Bembe, Mbole, Mitoko, "and perhaps others" together as a distinctive southern portion of his bipartite "northeastern Congo" stylistic region. In *Art from Zaïre*, Cornet (1975, pp. 124-

128) adds new examples from the Lengola and Komo, but does not draw any new conclusions.

Thus, the arts of the eastern Zaïre forest region, and some of their extensions, have slowly and modestly emerged from oblivion. As the knowledge of the area has increased, the tendency has been to place these arts together in a distinctive, but inadequately characterized, stylistic region. The southeastern limit of this region continues to cause problems, partly because of the non-recognition of the many discrete, yet interlinked, stylistic traditions that exist among the Bembe properly speaking; the submerged and transitional groups among them (Kasingo; Goma; Ciba); and the political divisions of the Boyo (such as Hucwe, Beniabemba, and Sumba).

All peoples in this area speak Bantu languages. Linguistically, however, they represent various subdivisions within the Bantu languages. According to Guthrie (1967, 1970), who has synthesized a great

◀ OPPOSITE PAGE: 7. MBOLE FIGURINE USED BY LILWA SOCIETY TO REPRESENT AN OFFENDER AGAINST SOCIETY. 60cm. WELLCOME COLLECTION, UCLA MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY



ABOVE: 8. MITOKO FIGURINES NEAR A HANGAR. PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES, MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE, AFTER R. P. DE JAEGER (1937). LEFT: 9. PERE BIRD FIGURINE, 10.2cm. MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE.



10. YELA FIGURINE, 40cm.  
MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE

many sources, most of these populations belong to his Zone D. This zone comprises the following constituent entities: the Mbole-Ena group, including the Mbole, Lengola, and Mitoko; the Lega-Kalanga group, including the Lega, Komo, Songola, Zimba, Bangubangu, and Holoholo (or Kalanga); the Bira-Huku group, including the Pere; the Konjo group, including the Nyanga and Nande; the Bembe-Kabwari group, including the Bembe, Boyo, Shi, Havu, and Hunde. The Yela, on the other hand, belong to the Tetela group which is part of his Zone C. This classification is far from being definitive. Guthrie (1948) observed, "There are reasons for not placing any of these groups in the neighboring zones, but few, apart from geographical contiguity, for making a zone out of them." Over the years various linguists have classified these groups in different ways, without attempting to make a larger synthesis. For example, the Pere are sometimes grouped among the Komo (Burssens 1954, De Rop 1960); the Bembe and Nyanga with the Lega (De Rop 1960); the Bembe, Boyo, the northern and southern Binja (i.e., Songola and Bazimba), the Lengola, Mitoko, and Holoholo with the Lega (Meeussen 1953 Burssens 1954); the Mbole with the Mongo. Whichever form



11. PERE ANIMAL FIGURINE, 13.5cm. MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE

they take and problems they raise, the linguistic classifications indicate sweeping relationships and interconnections between the peoples of the area, across the forest, and into the savanna. This is not contradicted by the historical traditions. Some groups claim remote or closer common origins, and these relationships do not always relate to whole ethnic units, but to sections of them. The Lega have close connections with the Bembe and remote ones with the Mitoko, Komo, Songola, Bangubangu, and Zimba (Biebuyck 1973, pp. 8-10); the Lengola trace them with some Komo and Mitoko; the Pere with some Komo, Nande, and Nyanga; the Nyanga with the Hunde and Kumbure; the Tembo with the Hunde, etc.

There is also a long history of contact and mutual cultural influence. For example, in vast areas now inhabited by the Nyanga, Hunde, Tembo, Havu, and Shi, earlier Lega migrations had left many traces; the Komo expanded into the Lengola and Nyanga territories; the Lengola into the Mitoko; the Bembe into the Boyo and Zyoba; the Lega into Mongo- and Luba-derived segments of populations. In this process, the earlier mentioned small transitional groups also developed, which are now welded between the main ethnic units. Pygmy influences were profound throughout this region. Small groups of them still exist in various places under such names as Batwa and Bambote, but everywhere their memory is vivid and their influence prominent in the ritual and artistic spheres. For example, the founding ancestor of the Lega is said to have married a Pygmy wife, which is one way to emphasize the close early connections between Lega and Pygmies. Groups like the Nyanga and Hunde inseparably link Pygmies with their early migrations. Among the Nyanga, Hunde, Havu, and Shi, the enthronement rites of chiefs require participation of Pygmies, to whom vital ritual roles are attributed. The

religious systems of these peoples include divinities explicitly said to be of Pygmy origin. Among the Bembe there is a special cult for a kind of nature spirits identified with the Pygmies. The impact of the Pygmies on the hunting culture, on certain aspects of the technology and material culture, and on the artistic culture (most directly on oral literature, music, and dance) is profound.

The peoples of this region are at the convergence of different population movements and population strata. We witness in this part of Zaïre the encounter of Pygmies; ancient pre-established groups of unknown origin, attested everywhere under many different names and mostly submerged among the later arrivals; representatives of the Lega, Komo, Nyoro (Nyanga, Kumbure, Hunde) and Rwanda migrations; easternmost offshoots of the Mongo and northernmost offshoots of the Luba and Bemba (Lunda) expansion. In the subsequent process of contact between them, a great many cultural traditions were transmitted from group to group as the result of overlapping, expansion, and conscious borrowing. Regardless of the differences, there is among the forest-dwelling peoples of this region a strong underlying uniformity in culture which manifests itself in certain vital institutions, some of which are particularly relevant to the study of art. Some of these vital institutions extend into related savanna-dwelling groups, such as Hunde or Bembe. In order to understand the social framework within which the art of this region functions, I must draw attention to some of these common institutions. Patrilineal ideology underlies the descent, succession, and inheritance system. The basic units of social organization—partially dispersed clans and localized lineages of various size and span—are based on this patrilineal principle. However, the social and ritual role of mother's people (and in some areas, those assimilated to them, such as father's

mother's or mother's mother's people) is extremely important; it counterbalances the patrilineal system and exercises a profound influence on the structure of residential groups, on intergroup relationships, and ritual procedures. With the exception of the Nyanga, who like the Hunde have maintained their Nyoro centralized political traditions, all other groups are constituted as stateless societies. Some are organized into complex, segmentary lineage systems, others in networks of autonomous village communities. Certain concepts associated with the divine kingship institutions of the Nyanga and Hunde have variously influenced some of the other forest-dwellers, such as Kongo and Pere. These lineage and village organizations are strangely complicated by the widespread voluntary associations. Membership in these hierarchically structured associations is wide-ranging, including males and sometimes females of various age and degree of social maturity; it is conditioned by many criteria (kinship; character; fees, and exchanges) and by a system of multiple prolonged and secret initiations. In most of these societies there is one dominating association, such as *lilwa* among the Mbole and Yela; *bukota* among the Lengola and Mitoko; *nsindi* among the Pere; *bwami* among the Lega, Bembe, Kwame, Nyindu, and sections of other populations such as Songola, Zimba, and Bangubangu; *mpunju* (or *mbuntsu*) among the Nyanga, Komo, and Kwame. Such associations play integrative roles in these societies and dis-

charge many political, social, educational, ritual, and artistic functions. They are the main patrons and users of the sculptural art in this region. There are close similarities in structure, organization, function, and ideology between these associations. In one way or another they are historically related, but in the absence of in-depth documentation this cannot easily be shown. However, the common origin of *bwami*, *mpunju*, and *bukota* seems to be a certainty.

Boys' initiation rituals are of central significance in the region. They occur under various names among the Komo, Pere, Nyanga, Lengola, Mitoko, Lega, Kwame, Kanu, Songola, Nyindu, Bembe, and Bangubangu. This is a sharp break with most of the savanna-dwellers, such as Hunde, Havu, Shi, and Boyo, where these initiation rituals are absent. Again, there is an underlying unity to these initiations and possibly a common origin, which is placed by some groups among the Komo. These initiations, practiced for mature boys, are organized at intervals and cyclically by persons who occupy specified positions within the voluntary associations or by persons who are constituted as corporations. The boys' initiations involve prolonged seclusion and systematic learning. Highly secret musical instruments (bull roarers, mirlitons, bamboo tubes, talking sticks) and artworks, placed under the ultimate control of the members of the voluntary associations, are essential in these initiations.

Specialized, fully constituted corporations of healers (male and female) do exist in most of the region. Membership in these corporations implies initiation; healing practices sometimes involve artworks. Ancestral cult, of different forms and with various degrees of intensity and complexity, is practiced throughout the region.

However, it is not directly linked with sculpture, except when we reach outside the forest, the critical area of the Bembe and Boyo.

There are numerous other common cultural features in this region, which are not of direct relevance for this study. Their combination with the above-mentioned features adds greatly to the unity and uniqueness of the region. We can mention only a few of them: bark cloth as clothing; the weaving of raffia; trapezoid, wooden slit-drums and subcylindrical and funnel-shaped drums; the absence of xylophones; shell money; backrests of aerial roots besides stools; rectangular houses; hunting ideology; significance of banana growing; distribution of the great oral epics (Boone 1936, 1951; Laurenty 1968, 1974; Loir 1935; Maes 1929, 1930; for other general characteristics of the area see also Vansina 1966, *passim*).

Against this background, we can now make a more detailed analysis of the art and its social context. The second installment of this study will appear in the April 1976 issue. □

Notes, page 79



12. KOMO MASK, 33.2cm.  
MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE



ABOVE: 13. LEGA FIGURINE IN IVORY, 14cm. COLLECTED BEFORE 1934. MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE.  
LEFT: 14. PERE MINIATURE STOOL IN CLAY, 7.8cm. MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE.



not now have in its collections any major examples from these cultures—nor is it likely to find many in the future. Unfortunately, IMNZ officials say, the rapidly expanding world market for the traditional art of Africa has led to the virtual disappearance of important works from these and other cultures, even from the most remote villages. What has been left for IMNZ collecting missions, though useful for study and research, is simply not suitable for display. Nevertheless, the 100 superb examples of the art of Zaïre the Government is lending for this exhibition demonstrates how much IMNZ has accomplished in the first five years of its existence, and clearly indicates to other African nations anxious to preserve their cultural heritage that, where the will exists, it is still possible to do so.

Irwin Hersey  
New York City

## MORE "SO"

The following letter continues the extensive correspondence engendered by "New Cattle Sculpture of Uganda" (VII, 1).

It is tedious to continue this debate as we all get further from the intent of the original article and bog down in details. We will however stand by the expertise of our informants to whom we went for information on the So, or Tepes.

In the original article we gave Mr. Wilson credit, and rightly, for the original encouraging and marketing of the carvings. His description of the current production illustrates the point we made, again in the original article, that in order to continue as a viable art, the artists needed to be supported in such a way as to make them immune to the vagaries of the tourist market. But clearly survival is more important than art, and again Mr. Wilson is to be complimented for staying on during extremely difficult and even dangerous political times, and helping in this act of survival.

A last point. The adjective "dilettante" seemed hard, but I went to my *Concise Oxford* (4th Edition) and found the first definition to be, "Lover of the Fine Arts." Fair enough.

Ross Coates  
Bella T. Feldman

## A SHORT ARTICLE FOR THE WINTER ISSUE "The Price of Popularity": Posnansky makes an offer!

Mr. Merrick Posnansky raised very important and interesting points on the sale of old Ghanaian art objects in general and Ghanaian terracottas in particular, in the Spring 1975 issue of *African Arts*. He confessed to us after he had written his article, "The Price of Popularity," and later visited our gallery, AFUA SEM ART GALERIE, located in Accra, by saying "as a university professor my salary is inadequate to be invested in antiquities."

Afua Sem Art Galerie is an inter-

nationally known art shop and we sell our art pieces in the open market, no secrets. We hold the view that the only way artifacts that have been neglected for several years can be preserved, especially the African art objects, is to offer the grass root collector attractive prices. This in essence supports the view expressed by Mr. Posnansky. Otherwise most of the fascinating pieces will never be retrieved, but give way to flooding, decay, termite devastation and lost to posterity forever. Surprisingly, I have been told that certain Fanti chiefs have dumped their goldweights into the sea, because they could not find any use for them!

Persians and some of the oil producing country millionaires have started buying their art works back. Ghana is now prospecting for oil. Maybe one day we will also decide to purchase our lost treasury. But the most important thing is that we have to know what we possess, or in other words some people irrespective of their nationality have to be encouraged to acquire them, if the present Ghanaians themselves do not appreciate and see any value in their own antiquities now.

To Mr. Posnansky and terracotta lovers, we are offering them two very old funerary terracotta heads for sale by auction through the mail. Please submit offers to The Managing Director, Afua Sem Art Galerie, Accra, Ghana.

Keita K. Kankam  
Managing Director

## ZAÏRE SCULPTURE, Notes, from page 15.

1. Between 1949 and 1960, I did field research in various parts of this general region: Intensive field research among the riverains of Lake Tanganyika (the so-called Zyoba, or Bwari, Sanze, Goma, Ciba), the Bembe, the Lega, and the Nyanga; extensive research among the Pere, Nande, Komo, Kwame, Konjo, Tembo, Kumbure, Havu, Shi, Nyindu, Vira, Furiiru, and Boyo. The support of l'Institut pour la recherche scientifique en Afrique Centrale (IRSAC) is gratefully

acknowledged. The present study draws heavily on these field data, many of them not yet published. Some of the information is also derived from unpublished reports, written by administrators and missionaries, which I was able to consult during my field research. Other documents were also made available to me, in the course of my recent NEH-sponsored research at the Musée royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren. The generous help and advice provided by Huguette Van Geluwe, Albert Maesen, and their staff is deeply appreciated. The support of NEH for my research on Central African art is also gratefully acknowledged.

2. Some of the riverain groups of the Lualaba River, called Enya (or Genya), and the Ngengele of the Kindu zone, are also part of this forest culture. For maps indicating the distribution of some of these groups, see Biebuyck, 1974b; Boone, 1961; Maes and Boone, 1935; Vansina 1966.

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