

In an earlier essay in *African Arts*, "Is There History in Horizontal Masks? A Preliminary Response to the Dilemma of Form" (April 1991), I tried to show why horizontal masks, a sculptural form found across West Africa and into the northern savanna of Central Africa, may present an interesting and complex historical problem. My evidence was strictly visual (with some background support from known patterns of distribution), and part of my point was to suggest that even though studies of form are out of fashion, form is nevertheless a useful enough resource that serious research projects can be sparked by its consideration. According to my thinking right now, horizontal masks are those that 1) are worn horizontally or on a strong diagonal, 2) use helmets to fit on or over the dancer's head, 3) have long snouts or mouths projecting forward from the helmet, 4) have horn-like projections that sweep up and out from the back, and 5) are often created in tripartite compositions (Figs. 1-3).

In this essay I want to consider conditions, instances, and possibilities in horizontal mask research. The conditions include circumstances that will limit or otherwise govern such research, and circumstances that are requisites for demonstrating a shared history. The instances are specific examples of historical interaction that support the probability of transmission. The possibilities are elements in the available evi-

dence that lend indirect support to a horizontal mask history.

Taking stock in advance of the next research phase is helpful for two reasons. First, in spite of our long-standing interest, we have only recently begun to concern ourselves seriously with questions of history, and in a moment of irony Sidney Littlefield Kasfir suggests we may not be very well equipped for the task (1985:1). Second, my inquiry into horizontal masks is broader and more general than most historical studies of African art (e.g., Barnes & Ben-Amos 1989; Berns 1989; Kasfir 1985; Lamp 1983, 1990), and some perspective on the character of the research and its potential value is certainly in order. In effect, the question this article seeks to answer is whether the research is worth continuing.

Conditions

Several conditions help determine the nature of horizontal mask research. First there are the boundaries set by availability of information. This is the same tired old song that pushed African-art historians toward explorations of context this side of the mythic "ethnographic present." Much useful information will never be available, because records do not exist.

Many documented sightings of horizontal masks have appeared in our literature during the past several decades, and often they include enough information to allow an understanding of the

ideas and activities that inform the masks. Earlier sightings, however, can be vague and frustrating. Among the many wonderful photographs in *Visit of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales to the Gold Coast Colony* (Guggisberg 1925),¹ one on page 175 records an outrageous intersection of two cultures (Fig. 5). The prince with his retinue, bright as sunlight in starched white and pith helmet, is shown with right foot raised, left hand on dress sword, parading casually past an ominously large-headed, long-mouthed horizontal mask worn with raffia costume. Everyone is smiling, and the caption reads: "The Prince is much amused by an Akwamu tribal symbol...." The accompanying text elaborates in this way: "His Royal Highness examined with great interest many of the curiously shaped ornaments and emblems forming the regalia of the various stools, his attention being particularly aroused by the grinning model of a crocodile's head and other of the more primitive emblems" (Guggisberg 1925:175).

A photograph some fifty-three unnumbered pages into "The Secret Album of Africa," volume two of the undated and anonymous *The Secret Museum of Mankind*, is equally frustrating. Here another marvelous horizontal mask greets us, this one with wart-hog tusks emerging from the rear of the mouth and a nice collar of raffia setting off the rest of the raffia costume. Its caption reads: "Tutelary Deity of Fanti Village in Wassaw," leaving us to ponder exactly what is meant by a Fanti (Fante) village in the Wassaw (Wasaw) area. This is one of those challenging realities in the field of African art history. Such photographs offer information we must use, without overstepping the boundaries inflicted by their texts.

Old internal documents such as *The Kano Chronicle* (Palmer 1928) are very useful at one level because they suggest contacts between people. But at another level, they are generally not detailed enough to tell us if horizontal masks were being used, or where they might have originated. External documents such as the fourteenth-century travelogue of Ibn Batuta (Defremery & Sanguinetti 1922-1949) do sometimes describe art (though not horizontal masks). But here too, useful detail is rare, as are the written sources. Horizontal masks in archaeological contexts would be enormously helpful, but thus far they are not leaping out of site reports.

Horizontal masks are certainly political, but not always overtly. Thus the resources that political historians use will be helpful, but they are not enough. The development and spread of these masks would also have been strongly grounded in social history, and in that arena the resources available to

From Mande Komo to Jukun Akuma *Approaching the Difficult Question of History*

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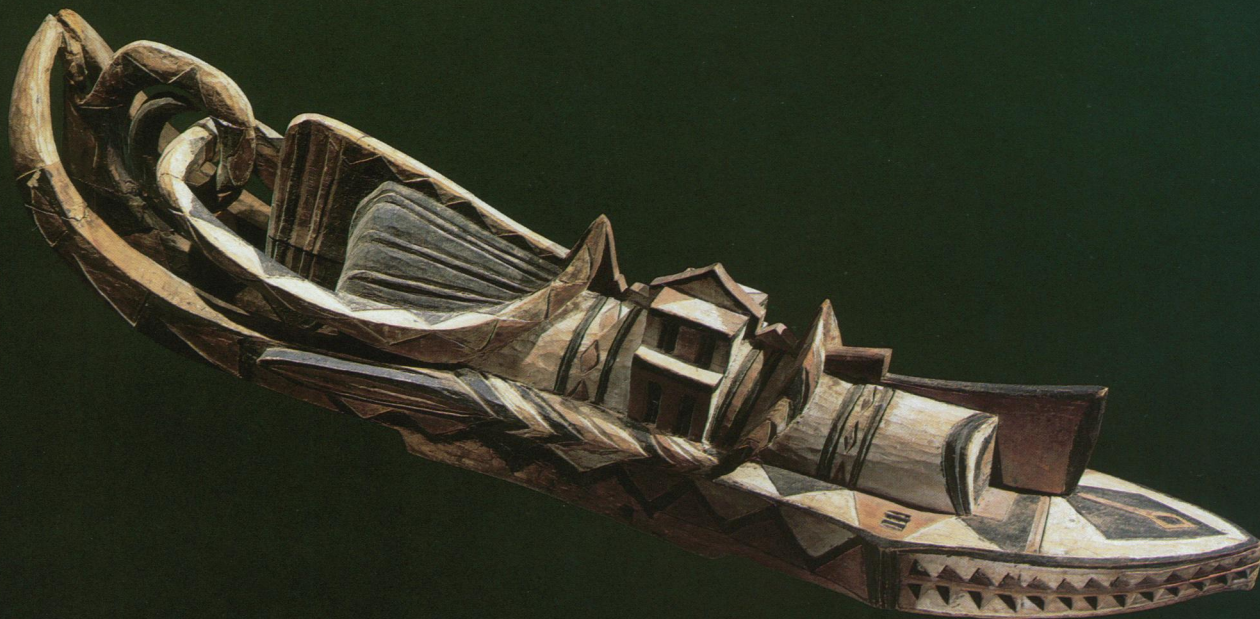


PHOTO DENIS NERVIG

1. NALU BANDA MASK, GUINEA.
WOOD, PIGMENT; 134.6cm.
COLLECTION OF JEROME L. JOSS.
THIS MASK BLENDS SHARK, CROCODILE,
AND HUMAN FEATURES.

researchers are, if anything, more tenuous and chronologically limited.

All this does not mean we cannot continue the inquiry. But if the masks, distributed across approximately 4,800 kilometers of West Africa, do share history, our reconstructions of it may be somewhat fuzzy and generalized, the more so the deeper we go in time. In fact we may never be able to demonstrate an uncontested shared history. But we may well be able to demonstrate the very strong probability of one, and that in itself would be extremely useful.

These restrictions dictate the broadest possible search for information. Travel and missionary accounts, as well as publications in history, art history, ethnography, archaeology, linguistics, folklore, and even zoology can all be examined, as can the museum records of masks themselves. Roy Sieber points out that local Islamic texts that include lists of "don'ts" (such as "Don't dance with masks") could be very useful if they can be found (pers. com., 1990). The

same is true of mask users' impressions of where the artworks originated.

It would be wonderful to spend the time talking to people all across the horizontal mask range, but since that is not feasible, I have to hope that colleagues will share information they have learned, as, in fact, many already have. Of course, long-standing debates about how to use oral histories further complicate the problems, and hard direct data will be perpetually elusive on every front. But that is true for African-art historians under the best of circumstances in most research situations.

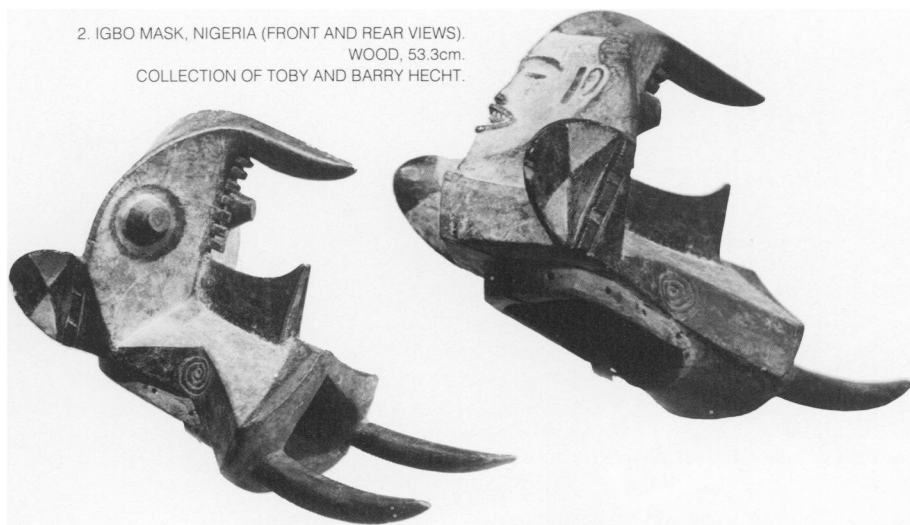
Exploring the combinations of animals in the many masks that are composite images might prove illuminating, especially if coupled with an analysis of functional contexts. Glottochronology (the analysis of words by sound shifts) can be a simplistic and misleading tool for reconstructing histories, but like formal analysis it might suggest useful avenues of additional research.² The same could prove true for the examination of other artworks and objects found to be associated, or not associated, with horizontal masking traditions. In the same way, details about social, political, spiritual, and economic structures might

help generate patterns that complement historical data. Archaeological information about trade, professional specializations, social configurations, and cultural complexion could be very helpful. Ultimately the relationships these data establish with one another will offer insights about mask history.

More thought about form will also be in order, particularly because form's role in historical reconstruction is so contestable. The most basic formal issue of what constitutes a horizontal mask remains problematic, even (or especially) from the armchair vista of formal definitions and analysis. Sieber states that the Ijo mask in Figure 6 is worn on the top of the head but should not be considered a horizontal mask. Of course he is right. By any reasonable analysis, in isolation it is shaped like a face mask, with no extensions beyond forehead or chin and no vestiges of a helmet.

Yet its elements and proportions strongly resemble the central portions of the Ijo masks in Figures 7 and 8, whose horizontal orientation and suggestion of a tripartite structure make them much stronger candidates for horizontal categorization. Have these two sorts of conceptions emerged from the artistic

2. IGBO MASK, NIGERIA (FRONT AND REAR VIEWS).
WOOD, 53.3cm.
COLLECTION OF TOBY AND BARRY HECHT.



PHOTOS: TOBY HECHT

resonance of human interaction, or are they simply two kinds of mask in similar styles? We cannot know from just the form, but at times in this kind of study there may not be much more to go on.

In addition to the conditions that govern my study, the conditions that characterize historical change also warrant some enumeration, because scholars have not thought about them that much, and I think we are inclined toward simplistic interpretations. In 1979 Henry John Drewal noted: "In the continuous interaction between African people and their art, forms undergo both subtle and dramatic change..." (1979:87). In 1989 Sandra T. Barnes and Paula Girshick Ben-Amos made the reasonable statement that "it is well understood that symbols are adapted to, and then elaborated in ways that are unique to, or consonant with, the culture of the adopting groups" (1989:39).

Both statements seem obvious truisms. But relatively few scholars of African art have addressed historical problems, and too much of their work on the meanings and contexts of art has been laden with dogma, which suggests they do not always consider how human beings actually behave. Again ten years ago Drewal noted that those in the field were too dominated by a research perspective that

implies a rigid or immutable situation; stressing uniformity, it ignores individuality and creativity; it does not consider the dynamics, or rather the internal mechanism by which change can occur and by which, at the same time, traditions can be sustained; and, finally, it lacks a historical dimension.

(Drewal 1979:88)

Drewal was referring specifically to "structural models," but his statement can easily be applied more generally to the ways so much of the literature

describes symbols, forms, and functional contexts. Therefore, I think it is important to clarify my own thinking on how people in Africa may have been making art history, even at the risk of sometimes stating the obvious. The conditions I will describe both derive from and contribute to the hypothesis of creative adoption and adaptation I suggested in my earlier essay in this journal.

The first condition is the accessibility across ethnic and cultural boundaries of institutions—their symbols, activities, and art. That accessibility is situational, but we have not yet determined to what degree and according to what sorts of restrictions. Barnes and Ben-Amos (1989:39–64) demonstrate the principle quite convincingly in their reconstruction of a complex cultural environment shared by Edo, Fon, and Yoruba peoples between A.D. 1400 and 1700 in coastal West Africa. Intense interaction across porous ethnic boundaries resulted in the sharing of what these authors call a symbolic complex uniting iron, war, and state-building around the deity Ogun to create an "ideology of progress" (Barnes & Ben-Amos 1989:42; their quotes). Each group in succession established a powerful empire—the Edo's Benin, the Yoruba's Oyo, and the Fon's Dahomey—and each institutionalized and politicized the Ogun symbolic complex (Paula Ben-Amos, pers. com., 1990).

René Bravmann provides another good example (1974:80–82). He notes that in the Bondoukou region of Côte d'Ivoire and west central Ghana, such Akan art forms as state swords, stools, and various forms of *kente* cloth and royal regalia are widely used by several ethnic groups that are not Akan in their language affiliations or political and social characteristics. Bravmann attributes this large-scale adoption to "particular historical forces and the receptivity of most peoples here to imported art types" (1974:80). Ottenberg and Knudsen (1985) state that the Leopard Society and its masquerades have been transmitted in a complex pat-

tern of historical interaction to a great many peoples of southern Nigeria and southwestern Cameroon. In short this condition is broadly recognized in our profession, and my use of it differs only in my need to apply it across a very large area.

The second condition is the fluidity of components within institutions. The possibility of adding and subtracting core visual features of artworks is a good example. In the process of historical transmission, artwork elements of primary value to one group will possess secondary, tertiary, or absolutely no value to other groups. Kasfir's findings on ancestral masquerades in southwestern and central Nigeria testify to this (1985). So do Barnes and Ben-Amos' on the imagery of Ogun (1989). I think one could build a most interesting study of this idea around the medicine-activated power sculptures used all over Zaire, from Kongo environments at the mouth of the Zaire River to Songye environments close to Lake Tanganyika. As sculptures in human or animal form that assist people in specific or general goals, they are quite similar conceptually and functionally. But the figures vary a great deal in style and attachments, and one would need to examine the herbal medicine and occult practices of each group to understand the kinds of organic ingredients and sculpted forms they used to encourage certain ends.

In its most extreme manifestations this fluidity can engender tremendously creative situations, where new institutions and art forms emerge from the flux of thought and experience that offers people opportunities to contemplate and change older traditions. This idea is richly demonstrated by Paul S. Breidenbach and Doran H. Ross' research on the Twelve Apostles Church and their Healing Gardens in Ghana (1978), and also by Susan Domowitz and Renzo Mandirola's work on cement grave monuments in Côte d'Ivoire (1984).

A third condition of historical process complements and amplifies the first two. It is the porousness of ethnicity, and it also is not new. A rapidly expanding number of researchers are finding this condition to be true.

It is not just that ethnic boundaries are easily penetrated by members of other ethnic groups. Rather, the internal structure of ethnic patrimony is also flexible and constantly shifting. Clans, which are frequently cornerstones for personal identity, are also fundamental building blocks in African social systems. As their members move, respond to events, or behave opportunistically to create events, clans realign themselves to make new configurations of people that we call ethnic groups. This is certainly the case among Bamana, Maninka, and Wasuluka Mande, who

have used clan relationships to forge all kinds of social and economic alliances, including alliances of ethnicity.

A step above clans, regional allegiances can also compete with ethnicity in importance, as the Yoruba demonstrate. And at a higher order of organization than ethnic groups, broad social affinities can be powerful coalescing entities, having many linguistic, social, and historical similarities that people perceive and use. This is also certainly true of Mande people, who use the unity in their Mandeness as an expediting vehicle and explanation for everything from personal friendships and marriages to an ideology of pride and accomplishment. The latter is powerfully manifest in the pilgrimages the far-flung members of Mande culture make from their homes in Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and elsewhere back to the Mande heartland.

We should not deduce from this that ethnicity is unimportant. Rather, it is simply one of several levels of community, all of which are important and constantly contributing to culture and history. This means that individuals have recourse to several rationales of allegiance, which gives them more choices as they evolve their identities and negotiate their lives. Artworks are often involved in those choices, a phenomenon nicely illustrated by Drewal (1979:88–98).

A fourth condition of transmission is agency. Too frequently, in our efforts to generalize or see the big picture, we forget that individuals and groups of individuals are the manipulators of culture and the creators of history. To reconstruct history, we must identify constructors. They may be migrants, invaders, or citizens who purchase cults from their neighbors. Many kinds of people can act as agents in the transmission of art, and they need not even use the art themselves. Christopher Roy has shown that single workshops of sculptors in Burkina Faso make masks for several different ethnic groups (1985: 3–7). They serve as a kind of art depot, and one can readily imagine them participating in the proliferation of mask types or even institutions.

Hunters offer interesting possibilities as potential agents of transmission.³ Mande hunters, for example, form politically powerful and socially influential institutions (*donson tonw*) that emphasize toughness, adventure, and physical and supernatural competence in the dangerous space of wilderness. In fact, like cult leaders and sorcerers,

hunters covet secret expertise and make much of their ability to acquire and use it. As individuals hunters may possess various sculpted devices that enhance that supernatural competence. Their institution, however, does not seem to possess masking traditions. Nevertheless, a very large number of Mande hunters are also members of the Mande Komo institution, which of course uses one of Africa's classic horizontal mask versions.

Institutions that employ horizontal masks generally impose strict tenets of secrecy on their members that involve most aspects of their group operations, including what the masks do and how they look. Art historians write about this mandated secrecy all the time. And yet the rugged individualism and pronounced opportunism that drive a great many Mande hunters could easily lead to their using information about the components of the Komo institution, including masks, as collateral in activities designed to expand their status and power. They would even be likely to try to establish new Komo institution branches, if that would be advantageous to themselves, their families, their clans, or their hunting groups.

Among the Mande, hunters have historically enjoyed a strong geographic instability. Authors from Charles Bird (1972:276–77) and Youssouf Cissé (1964) to Gerald Cashion (1982:81–82, 101–17) and Nehemia Levtzion (1973:56–58) have reported evidence that hunters traveled widely, as explorers, adventurers, and opportunists. Indeed, oral traditions ascribe the founding of the famous city of San and the migration of many Mande clans into the area to the imaginative wanderings of a legendary hunter named Koyate (Kalilou Tera, pers. coms., summer 1977, 1978, fall 1989).

This opportunistic wanderlust is not monopolized by Mande hunters. Sieber reports that hunters in Ghana are conceived of as leaders of migration (pers. com., 1990), in part because they are the only ones who know the forest well enough to maneuver people through it. In the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, for example, the Kwahu, an Akan group, were led by a hunter on a northeastward migration to their present location east of Kumasi. And when we remember that in many areas of Africa the mechanics of moving include the use of ritual and sorcery to help make the new location home, it is possible that hunters, perhaps in league with spiritual specialists, would find an occult mask cult quite useful.

A sleeper in this deck of potential agents is the "casual" initiate. At least for the Mande Komo, these individuals are of considerable importance. I was told by both members and leaders that Komo employs two kinds of initiation. The more formal one involves much study, preparation, and ritual. The more spontaneous one involves giving a gift and receiving quick information explaining how to identify oneself as a Komo member and pass ritualized verification quizzes. Historically these "casual" initiations were for individuals such as merchants or hunters who traveled a great deal, because to arrive in a town on a night when its Komo mask was abroad would be dangerous unless one was a member. Such initiation could be administered to a new arrival on the spot, enabling him to see the mask and witness proceedings that are strenuously proclaimed to be deep secrets.

These spontaneous initiations were of course humanitarian, saving innocents from the agonies of accidental encounters with mask and ritual. They



3. LIGBE BUFFALO MASK, CÔTE D'IVOIRE.
WOOD, BLACK PIGMENT; 48.3cm.
BEQUEST OF SAMUEL RUBIN,
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART,
WASHINGTON, D.C., 79-16-37.

PHOTO: KEN HEINEN, COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART, ELIOT ELISOFOON ARCHIVES

were also pragmatic, adding modest but useful sums to the coffers of the association. More recently, they could be used on researchers, with the goal of swearing them to silence on anything considered to be for members' senses only.

But in the Mande world, secrets of the sort that engender supernatural power are negotiable. One can acquire the power to break the tenets of secrecy, or one can use established Mande systems of occult exchange, which make such secrets commodities that can be (carefully and properly) bought and sold. Indeed, though it is dangerous, difficult, and expensive, one can acquire great stores of supernatural expertise this way (McNaughton 1982; 1988:40–72). Thus

casual initiates of Komo could have been in a position to replicate aspects of the association on new terrain many times during the course of West African history, if they were motivated to do so.

Commerce is an obvious wellspring of agency. West African peoples have built grand states and empires, incorporated Islam into their panoply of beliefs, migrated, developed new technologies and new commodities to insert themselves more beneficially into patterns of mercantilism. Those patterns have been complex and extensive since at least the middle of the first millennium A.D., involving both micro- and macrocosms, that is, local systems and much more extensive regional systems of exchange.

They have been linked to, and indeed at least in part have grown out of, what we might call subsistence-plus economies.

Subsistence-plus boils down to modest excess for export. A. G. Hopkins describes it in this way:

The majority of households undoubtedly produced the greater part of the goods they required as consumers, but the pure, subsistence economy was an exception rather than the rule. Most households regarded trade as a normal and an integral part of their activities, and planned their production strategy accordingly.

(Hopkins 1973:51)

For our purposes this market strategy could help explain many things. It facilitates and encourages, for example, divisions of labor and product specializations at the extended family, community, and even ethnic levels, which leads to active local and dynamic regional markets that attract the attention of enterprising souls from nearby cultures. We could argue that the opportunity for artists to make masks for the sacred institutions of other ethnic groups, the very situation Roy found in Burkina Faso, rests ultimately on this subsistence-plus foundation. It allows people to create for each other the time to master lucrative techniques, generate products, and establish markets for them.

That, in fact, is what work on ancient complex societies by Susan and Roderick McIntosh suggests for the Jenne region of Mali, and the work of Randi Haaland (1980) suggests for sites associated with the old Ghana Empire. The McIntoshes have documented the development of a thriving metal industry with production specialists, production centers, and a dependence on at least short-distance trade for raw materials, beginning in the first centuries A.D. (1988a:146–53; 1988b:114–19, forthcoming).

While agents for the movement of art may abound, some form of motivation would have to serve as catalyst. Motivation is yet another condition that I will need to explore.

Hunters, migrants, military groups, traveling merchants and itinerant craftspersons, technologists and spiritualists—everyone who ventures into new space would encounter specific situations that could motivate their manipulation of artworks. Consider, for example, the people who moved into Burkina Faso from the south in the late fifteenth century to meld with earlier inhabitants and create Mossi society



4. CHAMBA BUFFALO MASK, NIGERIA.
WOOD, ANIMAL HIDE; 70cm.
DONATED BY ROBERT AND NANCY NOOTER,
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART,
WASHINGTON, D.C., 81-11-17.

PHOTO: DELMAR LIPP, COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART, ELIOT ELISOFOON ARCHIVES

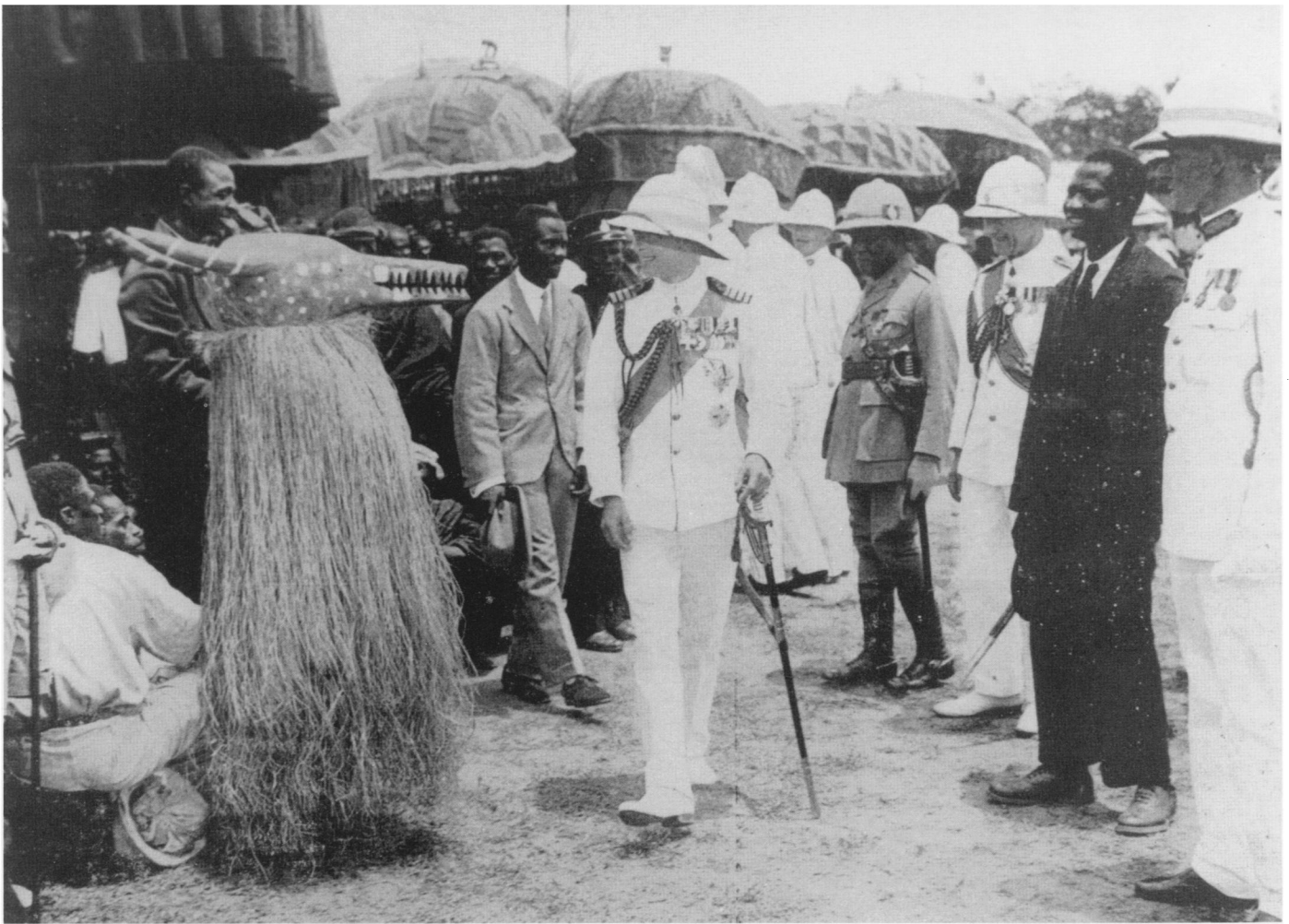


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF MANKIND, LONDON

5. PHOTOGRAPH IN VISIT OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES TO THE GOLD COAST COLONY (GUGGISBERG 1925:175).

(Roy 1979a:23; 1979b). People in this kind of motion would benefit from institutions and artworks that offer social, political, or spiritual leverage in their new environment. They could have used art they brought with them or art they found in local use. In fact, in this instance Roy has shown they invented a new form, *zazaido* animal headdresses, based on indigenous, older institutions, to help them in the processes of assertion and accommodation that constitute their long-term social acclimatization (1979b, 1980). Kathryn L. Green's research (1984, 1987) on the migrant Mande warrior group called Sonongui in Côte d'Ivoire also suggests that the operational means and ends of this group could also have involved manipulation and proliferation of masks.

While specific motivating situations would vary greatly, we can make an obvious generalization. Wayfarers and immigrants alike need instruments, a means to integrate themselves and conciliate their ambitions with the social and spiritual forces they encounter. Horizontal masks would make very useful instruments. They are fundamentally associated with extremely potent sorcery and spirits (as I noted in the first essay). Employed with care, they could

be an expeditious resource that helps empower newcomers to accomplish their goals. In the next section we will see that George Brooks suggests just this for the spread of masks in the vast areas south and west of the Mande heartland.

Instances

A loose and not very detailed collection of data suggests that horizontal masks may have been moving around much of the western half of West Africa by the middle of the present millennium. Their origins seem to be Mande, but our sketchy evidence does not allow us to assert that, and only allows an incomplete glimpse of the routes they could have taken. In this section I will present some of those data to show why I think additional research on these masks could prove useful.

When René Bravmann did his dissertation fieldwork in the Bondoukou region of eastern Côte d'Ivoire and west central Ghana in 1967–68, he encountered a dramatic tradition of horizontal masks called *Gbain*; these masks spit fire and were used by Muslims and non-Muslims in an initiation society that resembles quite closely the Komo institution of the Bamana and Maninka, some 640 kilometers to the north in Mali. Colonial sources led Bravmann to conclude that the masking tradition had

a very mobile recent history, moving into and out of towns among several ethnic groups, which included the Degha, Dyula, Hwela, Kulango, Nafana, and Numu, at least from the beginning of this century (1974:119–46). More recent research by Raymond Silverman (pers. com., 1990) confirms and expands upon this mobility.

Less than 160 kilometers to the south, near the Ghana coast, Roy Sieber⁴ and Patricia Coronel⁵ encountered equally dynamic traditions of horizontal masks among the Aowin and Fante, used in cult groups called *Do*.⁶ Some of these mask dancers apparently performed on red-hot coals, and here too there was, at least in this century, a very lively pattern of movement into and out of communities. One Aowin chief told Sieber, for example, that he had sent his people to another town to acquire the sculpture, and Sieber was also told these masks came from "the north." One Fante chief told him that he remembered when an Aowin carver named Kwado Kumani came to town to make theirs. Sieber visited many towns and talked with many people. Once he arrived in an Aowin town whose citizens were still glowing with excitement from the previous evening's horizontal mask performance. In fact, people were so enthusiastic when they learned that Sieber was interested in that very mask

tradition that they performed it for him on the spot (Roy Sieber, pers. com., 1989; pers. com., 1990).

In 1981–82 and 1984 Monica Visonà encountered horizontal masks used by Akye and Adjukuru, Akan-related groups living in the Lagoon region of Côte d'Ivoire. These masks are part of an institution (but not a secret association) also called Do. Its masks offer protection against malevolent sorcery, and they are considered particularly powerful. People told Visonà they remembered when the masks were "borrowed from the north" at the end of the nineteenth century, though she feels in some cases they could have come earlier, and some people told her the masks had been used locally "from eternity" (Visonà, forthcoming). Northern Akye people also told Visonà that another Lagoon Akan-related group, the Abe,

used horizontal masks in an institution called Do (pers. coms., 1987, May 1990), and the Ivoirian scholar Martin Kouadio Aka has noted horizontal Do masks among the Moronu Anyi (1982).

North of the Lagoons in east-central Côte d'Ivoire, Philip Ravenhill found horizontal masking traditions, again often called Do, among the Koyara ("Malinke"), Wan, Guro, Baule, and Senufo.⁷ He notes that people have moved around quite freely in this region, making the history of ethnicity complex. He also suggests that Senufo and Mande smiths could have played important art-making roles in the area (1988; pers. com., 1990). Susan Vogel has discussed the two forms of Baule horizontal masks, *Bonu Amuen* and *Goli*, and described the *Goli*'s adoption from the nearby Wan in the first decade of the twentieth century (1977:71–101, 124–51).

North again, Green provides especially interesting information about the area around Kong in northeastern Côte d'Ivoire (pers. com., 1990), noting that oral tradition suggests that two distinct horizontal mask traditions, each with different origins, operated in this region occupied by the Mande Jula-Sonongui warriors. Inhabitants told Green that before this century they possessed a Komo association, which apparently came at a very early date from Sikasso, a Mande and Senufo town in southern Mali. But by at least 1700, Hwela people had moved west into the Kong area from the collapsed, commerce-oriented city of Begho in Ghana, and people today say these Hwela brought their own horizontal mask tradition with them.

And that brings us back to Bravmann, who also considered Mande groups to be instrumental in the history of *Gbain* horizontal masks. He notes that Numu (the Mande blacksmith groups) migrated into the area in the 1400s with Mande Dyula and Ligbi groups, and he feels the evidence points irrefutably to a Mande source for the *Gbain* masks.

Mande heartland oral traditions assert that the Komo association with its potent horizontal masks was a thriving enterprise by the time of those migrations, and that in fact, a bit closer to home the association may have been used to enlist supporters to help establish and expand the Mali Empire (McNaughton 1979:17–19; 1988:130; Dieterlen & Cissé 1972:15–16). One of old Mali's greatest legendary heroes is Fakoli, a great general and military strategist of Sunjata, who was also a renowned sorcerer so closely associated with the Komo institution that in many versions of oral traditions, descriptions of his head are readily confused with the appearance of Komo masks (McNaughton 1988:109, 130, 136–37).⁸ There are tremendous holes in this patchwork of data, not the least of which is the simplistic use of oral tradition. But nevertheless the possibility of historical development emerges for horizontal masks.

The historian George Brooks has speculated on a much broader field of play (1985:16, 19–31, 43–54, 77–153; 1986; 1989). He considers it probable that Mande blacksmiths were involved in very early migrations for the exploitation of metal resources (the manufacture of iron and its insertion into trade networks), and he thinks we could build a strong case for a Mande blacksmith proliferation of secret initiation associations and horizontal masks. Let us take a step back and see why.

Brooks views western West African history as a story of uncanny entrepreneurship that typified a good many peoples' responses to a constantly changing natural, social, and political environment. He divides the region into a series of wet and dry climatic eras,

PHOTOS LEFT, ROY SIEBER, TOP, TOBY HECHT, RIGHT, KEN COHEN, COURTESY OF TOBY AND BARRY HECHT



LEFT: 6. IJO MASK, NIGERIA. WOOD, 29cm. COLLECTION OF ROY AND SOPHIE SIEBER.

ALTHOUGH IT IS WORN ON TOP OF THE HEAD AND RESEMBLES THE CENTRAL PORTIONS OF THE MASKS IN FIGURES 7 AND 8, THIS EXAMPLE SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED A HORIZONTAL MASK.

TOP: 7. IJO MASK, NIGERIA. WOOD, 70cm. COLLECTION OF TOBY AND BARRY HECHT.

THIS MASK IS WORN HORIZONTALLY ATOP THE HEAD, AND THE TRIPARTITE DIVISION CHARACTERISTIC OF HORIZONTAL MASKS IS SUGGESTED IN ITS COMPOSITION.

RIGHT: 8. IJO MASK, NIGERIA. WOOD, 30.5cm. COLLECTION OF TOBY AND BARRY HECHT.

LIKE THE MASK IN FIGURE 7, THIS EXAMPLE DISPLAYS SEVERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HORIZONTAL MASKS.

each associated with particular historical developments. In what Brooks labels a great state- and commerce-building era, tentatively dated from 700 to 1100, he sees iron as a key trade item, and he suggests that Mande smiths traveled with Mande traders, both as suppliers of important goods and technology and as entrepreneurs in their own right. By the middle of the eleventh century, for example, Brooks thinks these smiths and traders controlled production at the Bambuk gold fields on the upper Senegal River.

In Brooks's next era, a dry period dated 1100 to 1500, political realignments and trade development continued at a prodigious rate, with an emphasis on people movement (including blacksmiths) and resource exploitation to the south. Commerce in iron had become a vital mainstay, but manufacturing iron from ore demands enormous quantities of hardwoods. Candice Goucher documents this convincingly (1981), as does Nicole Echard in her film *Niger: Iron Making the Old Way* (1970), which depicts the great piles of charcoal needed for each smelting operation. As the savanna dried and wood resources diminished, smiths followed the forest line to continue their iron production.

Smiths seem to have flocked to Futa Jallon, making the area an important iron production center. The Senufo areas to the southeast around Kong and Korhogo may also have supported a smelting industry. Further east along the Black Volta, gold fields apparently attracted the Mande smiths and traders referred to by Bravmann, and Green also documents an assertive presence of Mande factors in this large area, from at least the early 1400s (Green 1986).

Nehemia Levtzion (1968:3–14) and Ivor Wilks (1961, 1962) have considered this general region extensively. Drawing from their work and that of other scholars, Mahdi Adamu notes that by the 1470s Mande merchants were effective agents in the area around the town of Begho, which may have been "a flourishing center of commerce and crafts since the twelfth century" (1978: 59–60). This, of course, is the very area where Bravmann found Gbain association masquerades.

We must now ask how all this could relate to horizontal masks. As it happens, in Mande culture it is the smiths who make all the sculpture, and they own and operate, as administrators, chief priests, and horizontal mask dancers, the powerful Komo secret initiation association (McNaughton 1979).

Mande smiths have long been known for their monopoly on metal technologies. Endogamy, secrecy, lengthy apprenticeships, and a marvelously complex ideology featuring occult pow-

ers and spirit relationships all support that monopoly, and all of these features, especially the ones that focus on spiritual power, coalesce around the Komo association and its awesome, dramatic, and extremely powerful masks (Fig. 9).

Brooks feels it is entirely possible that Mande smiths may have used their Komo masks and association to enhance their monopoly on metal technology and to gain leverage in long-distance commerce. As a powerful spiritual resource, both mask and association would have become themselves highly desirable acquisitions, and one can readily imagine opportunities for their broad proliferation. Brooks goes so far as to suggest that Mande smiths and their Komo association may have spawned the secret societies known as Poro and Simo, which enjoy very large distribution in western West Africa (1985:132–39).

Thus we have partial and tentative explanations for many of the West African horizontal mask variants, with Mande peoples as agents of transmission. If we wanted to pursue a Mande-origins hypothesis further, we might first look to the masks in use among the Voltaic-language speakers, who live in the savanna lands between the Niger and Volta River systems. Here too there are hints for possible historical links. One is especially interesting. Roy notes a prominent Mande presence in this vast area (1979b), apparently dating from well before the fifteenth century. Voltaic smiths share many traits with their Mande neighbors, suggesting definite possibilities for the shared historical development of horizontal masks.

We might also find historical veins leading to a Mande mother lode if we look to the south and west. The Senufo, for example, appear to have a complex history that includes the absorption of several Mande artist groups. Anita J. Glaze notes that

...a possible reconstruction of brasscasting history suggests a movement from northern Manding country via the medieval trade route to Kong, from where the brasscasters later split into two principal branches, one (the Kpeene) migrating west to Senufo country and the second (the Lorho) migrating to the southeast.

(Glaze 1981:37)

The Senufo Kule woodcarvers (also known as Kulebele) are a southern extension of Mande woodcarvers also known as Kule (Glaze 1981:31; McNaughton 1988:5, 18, 101). Finally, Glaze suggests that the Senufo Tyeduno blacksmiths group "are Senufo-ized *numu*, Manding blacksmiths of the Bamana area" and cites an unpublished manuscript by Dolores Richter as lending support to the idea (Glaze 1981:30).

Senufo make several horizontal mask versions. One, called *Kunugbaba*, is the blacksmiths' senior mask, "incorporating the primary symbol of the power and authority of Poro leadership; having punitive powers, it seeks out evildoers and law-breakers, including witches" (Glaze 1981:257). That description matches almost exactly my own descriptions of Mande Komo masks (McNaughton 1988:129–45).

Moving west, there are the enormous masks called *Landai* or *Dandai*, associated with Poro institutions among the Bandi, Kissi, Loma, and Mende. Although it demonstrates nothing by itself, the fact that all of these groups except the Kissi have Mande origins suggests at least the possibility of Komo influence in the masks.

Further west, the Baga-Landuman-Nalu cluster of peoples may be the most problematic in terms of exploring mask history. Van Geertruyen describes them as a diverse group of populations who moved from the interior early in the second millennium in response to Fula and Mande pressures (1976:63). Lamp adds useful detail (1986), noting that a people called Baga have been in coastal Guinea since the fourteenth century, and they probably migrated from the Futa Jallon area with Landuma, Temne, and Tyapi peoples. Beginning in the fourteenth century, they frequently were invaded by peoples that include the Nalu, Fula (Fulbe), and the Mande-speaking Djalonke, Maninka, and Susu. A process of major Baga transformation "began first with the Susu and Loko-Gbandi (Mani) invasions of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, when these groups settled the coast from Conakry to the Great Scarcies River... and subsumed the Baga linguistically and culturally" (Lamp 1986:64).

The materials presented in this section are anything but conclusive. At the same time, however, they bring a variety of data together to indicate that a shared history of horizontal masks across West Africa is plausible, and they most certainly encourage further research.

Possibilities

The gap between eastern and western horizontal mask versions is not automatically troublesome. It is, after all, an area void of most sculpture forms and an area that experienced intense Islamic influence in the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Holy Wars begun by Usman dan Fodio. In addition, it is instructive to realize that there are other gaps in the horizontal mask range that are quite large but apparently no substantial impediment to interaction between people.

If a shared history for horizontal masks were to emerge, but stopped short of joining the eastern and western

ranges, this in itself would present interesting implications for the nature of West African history and culture. Nevertheless, there is the possibility that masks and institutions (or portions of either) passed through middle West Africa, and in this section I want briefly to establish just that possibility.

By the early centuries of the second millennium, complex, commerce-oriented societies were in abundance across West Africa as part of a tradition that has its routes in the first centuries A.D., if not earlier. Ife and other Yoruba city-states certainly were involved in trade, as was the Mali Empire. So too were the peoples we now know as the Hausa. Therefore extensive networks of communication may well have been in place, which would have facilitated the movement of more than just commodities.

Some scholars think the ancient Yoruba city-state of Ife may have acquired its power and perhaps even its origins through trade up into the savanna, where east-west connections could be made (Garlake 1978:134–35; Shaw 1978:158, 164). Some scholars feel the same way about the rise of Old Oyo (Shaw 1978:164–65; Obayemi 1976:237, 260). It has even been suggested that both Ife and Oyo were connected to Mande trade networks, and it is perhaps of some significance that in remote times the Mande-speaking Bussa (or Busa) settled nearby (Garlake 1978:135–36; Greenberg 1966:164).

The Bussa have played a somewhat mysterious role in this part of Africa's history. Some sources identify them as the founders of both a former state in northwestern Nigeria and the peoples known as Ibariba (Borgawa) or Bariba (Decalo 1987:52–53, 60–61, 65, 222). But while the Bussa are generally classified as Mande-language speakers, the Ibariba are generally classified as Voltaic (or Gur) speakers. Within Bussa and Bariba society, royal and princely lineages are called Wasangari,⁹ a warrior group that Samuel Decalo calls "cavalry." Decalo also states that their name "has a slightly pejorative meaning in Bariba, signifying vagabonds or adventurers. Classically, *wasangari* were involved in warfare, pillage, and hunting, but rarely sedentary work" (1987:222).

Ade Obayemi notes that Mande peoples, specifically the Wasangari, may have exerted some influence on the founding of such Yoruba city-states as Oyo (1976:234–35, 238, 259–60). He describes Wasangari activity in north-west Nigeria and the neighboring Republic of Benin as the establishment of "a series of mega-states," and he identifies their language as Mande.

The Hausa are another interesting group to consider, particularly because they have very old traditions of exten-

sive commerce and art-making, and also because so many of them never adopted Islam. As of a 1953 census, there were 49,893 non-Muslim Hausa living in the city of Kano alone (Smith 1976:190). Called Abakwariga, the non-Muslim Hausa have been highly mobile and very active in central Nigerian history, including in the Plateau State, where so many horizontal masks are used (Unomah 1982, Rubin 1982, Isichei 1982). They have a spirit association called Bori, which the Jukun call Ashamu. It emphasizes spirit possession and employs a complex cloth masquerade. In fact, Kasfir argues that this Abakwariga Hausa masquerade may be the source for similar masquerades among "Yoruba, Igala, Anebir (Igbira) of Okene, Idoma, Gwari, Alago, Onitsha Igbo, Afo, Gade, Koro, ...and certainly others" (1985:2). We have no record of the Hausa, non-Muslim or otherwise, using horizontal masks. But at this point we are certainly in no position to say they never did.

On the other hand, even if they never did use them, we are in a position to say that non-Muslim Abakwariga sculptors did carve horizontal masks. Arnold Rubin notes that Abakwariga

have long lived among the Jukun and other peoples of the middle and lower Benue as specialist craftsmen (weavers, dyers, casters, blacksmiths, woodcarvers) and traders. Especially interesting is their role as creators and purveyors of distinctive types of masquerades....In fact, the three working mask-carvers I encountered among the Jukun of the Wukari area all claimed to be Abakwariga.

(Rubin 1985:60)

On a visit to the family workshop of one, Barde Sangari, Rubin photographed a large number of these masks in the family's "sacred enclosure" (Rubin's quotes), and he observed there all three horizontal mask types used in the Jukun Akuma cult (see also Rubin 1969:66–71). Other authors report that Abakwariga Hausa played many special roles in Jukun society, including royal drummers and praise singers (Adamu 1978:38–43; Isichei 1982:17).

Adamu notes that Hausa economy featured "an elaborate system of agriculture and manually operated industrial production geared to both local consumption and export" (1978:10). He believes that dyed cloth, woven cloth, leatherwork, and metalwork were all export-oriented artistic enterprises,

adding that Hausa social and political organizations were geared to take advantage of commerce opportunities and that many Hausa individuals were long-distance traders.

While we do not know how early this Hausa artifact and commerce strategy developed, there are hints that it may have been quite ancient. By the 1400s the Hausa city of Kano seems to have been trading regularly with Kwararafa, a major commerce center over 320 kilometers to the south below the Benue River (Adamu 1978:38–39). Hausa merchants and artists (including if not emphasizing the non-Muslim Abakwariga) may have begun settling there that early, and they were certainly present by the 1600s at the latest.

On a more international scale, Adamu states that the Hausa and Timbuctu areas have been in contact since the 1400s. According to *The Kano Chronicle*, "Wangarawa" merchants arrived in Hausa territory sometime after 1350 (Adamu 1978:59, 86; Palmer 1928, vol. 3:70, 97–132), and Adamu notes that "Wangarawa" is a Hausa name for the Wangara long-distance traders of the old Mali Empire. Lamin O. Sanneh adds a twist (1979). Using M. A. al-Hajj's study of Asl al-Wanqarayin, the seventeenth-century chronicle on early Mande in Kano, he suggests that Wangarawa might have referred to the Jakhanke, a group of clerics, educators, and healers who originated among the peoples of the old Ghana Empire (Hajj 1968:10–14; Sanneh 1979:25, 28–29),

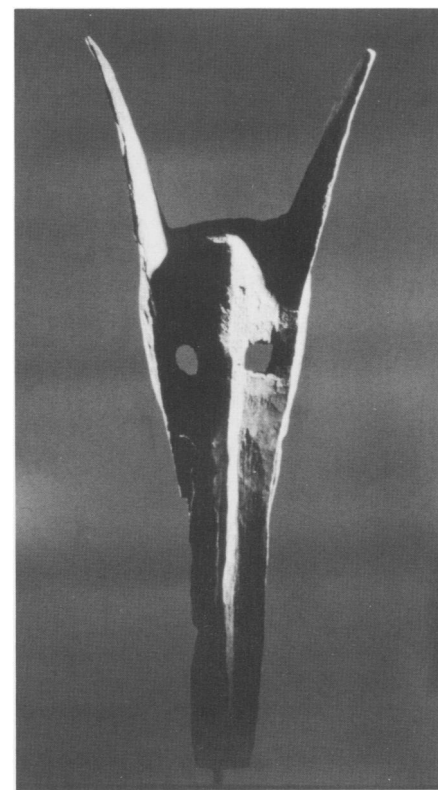


PHOTO DELMAR LIPP. COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART. ELIOT ELISON ARCHIVES

9. ELEPHANT MASK. KOMO SOCIETY, BAMANA, MALI. WOOD, FIBER, ENCRUSTATION; 114.5cm. DONATED BY ROBERT AND NANCY NOOTER, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART, WASHINGTON, D.C. 80-271-1.

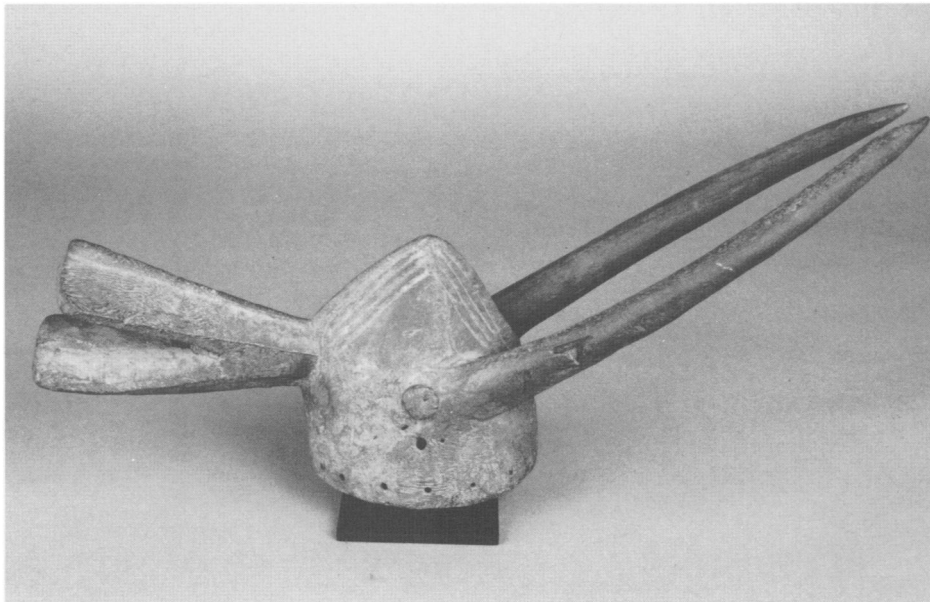


PHOTO: KEN HEINEN, COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART, ELIOT ELISOFOF ARCHIVES

10. MAMA CAP MASK, NIGERIA.
WOOD, PIGMENT, 21.4cm.
DONATED BY ROBERT AND NANCY NOOTER,
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART,
WASHINGTON, D.C., 81-11-16.

11. MUMUYE MASK, NIGERIA. WOOD, 33cm.
COLLECTION OF TOBY AND BARRY HECHT.
THIS IS A VERSION OF A MASK IDENTIFIED AS
THE "WIFE" THAT ACCOMPANIES THE MUMUYE
BUSHCOW MASKS DURING PERFORMANCES.
IT IS IN HELMET FORM AND HAS A MODEST
PROJECTION AT THE FRONT, AND SO MIGHT
BE CONSIDERED A HORIZONTAL MASK.



PHOTO: TOBY HECHT

although he places their Hausa arrival some one hundred years later.

John Hunwick identifies the Wangara as Mande Dyula who have specialized in far-flung commerce since at least the time of old Mali (1976:274–80). He states that in another important Hausa state, centered on the city of Katsina, a new dynasty took power in the second half of the fifteenth century and adopted Islam, quite possibly because of Wangara influence. We have no concrete evidence that Hausa traders entered Mande lands, but, as Adamu notes (1978:146), that just reflects the nature of our sources, and such travel may well have been practiced.

Complex patterns of political forces and people in motion typify the known history of middle Benue River Valley societies. Therefore, whatever the point of origin, be it local or from afar, once horizontal masks became associated with the area (Figs. 4, 10, 11), they undoubtedly would have spread. In fact, it is again Arnold Rubin who suggests possible patterns of interaction for several Benue groups—the Goemai, Jukun, and Mama (Rubin 1969:66–131).

We should not focus all our attention on the north, because in southern Nigeria the exchange of ideas and art forms has also very clearly been an important feature of the art historical landscape. The Ijebu-Yoruba water-spirit masks (*Agbo*) of the Ekine cult that Father Carroll illustrates (1966:157, ill. 14) resemble in several ways many of the water-spirit masks used by the Ijo (Jones 1984: ill. 68) (Fig. 8). Carroll notes the similarity and directs readers to Robin Horton's work on the Ijo Ekine cult (Horton 1960, 1963). A quarter century later, Drewal, Pemberton, and Abiodun illustrate two very different Yoruba water-spirit masks, also

from the coastal Ijebu lagoon region (1989:133,144–45, ill. 145, 146), which nevertheless still assert quite strongly the spirit of Ijo masks. These latter authors emphasize the ports of Ijebu "as entries for the exchange of goods, ideas, and arts," noting that these Yoruba adapted their mask tradition from the Ijo (1989:144).

The geography of such exchange may extend much further west. The flat surfaces and tubular eyes that typify many of these southern Nigerian masks seem echoed in the Kru (Krieger & Kutscher 1960:39, bild 16) and Grebo (Leuzinger 1971:101, no. F-6) masks we know from Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, even if the latter compositions are not worn horizontally.

G. I. Jones notes that by the mid-nineteenth century 2,000 Kru were working in the Niger Delta and Cross River Delta regions each year (1961, 1963). But data on coastal trade are slim and inconclusive. In an overview examination of West African maritime history, Jean-Pierre Chauveau documents localized regions of intense activity (1986). Studies more focused on the eastern regions emphasize obstacles and the relay nature of routes between the Niger Delta and Accra, giving little idea of how old such a trade might be or if it might have extended to points further west (Austen 1987:81–102; Hopkins 1973:124–64; Manning 1985). Nevertheless, it is the possibility of such trade that led Robert Farris Thompson and Roy Sieber to consider a "Creek International Style" that might help account for similarities such as those in the masks I have mentioned.¹⁰

Yoruba horizontal masks are not restricted to the coast. I noted in the earlier essay the findings among the northern Yoruba by Carroll, Curnow, and

Blier. The origins of these masks may be southern Yoruba. They could also involve people in the Benue River basin or people to the west.

Thus we can conclude that there are possibilities for a shared horizontal mask history between the masks' eastern and western ranges. We cannot begin to guess which directions they may have traveled, or if any one way is as likely as multiple directions and the compounding of influences over time. How much time is another difficult question, because if there is shared history, we cannot yet say if it is recent—early in the millennium—or an irregular, continuing process that unfolded over many centuries. If there is a shared history, it is these questions, and many more, that I would like to answer.

Art's propensity for conceptual associations, sensual power, and drama make it a profound vehicle through which people can change the lay of their social landscapes. Its dynamic flexibility is a cornerstone of this propensity, but it also creates many difficulties for exploring art's history. Yet, as we shed our perception of art as a passive, reflective element of culture, historical reconstruction becomes particularly important, because it offers us an excellent rough index of how instrumental art can be, and how creatively people can act. Ultimately, understanding art's instrumentality and people's creativity is as important as knowing where, when, and why works of art are made. □

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or rectangular leather charms, often worn on a leather string around the neck, upper arm, or waist. These contain Arabic writing from the Koran on paper produced by Muslim or Fulani *karimoko* or other religious persons.

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McNAUGHTON: Notes, from page 85

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1. I am most grateful to Raymond Silverman for informing me of this photograph.
2. The kind of formal analysis Vansina pioneered in his study of "The Bells of Kings" (1969) is closely related to glottochronology. Its major drawback, I think, is that it depends on the relative permanence of meanings and functions to generate dependable results. We now realize that kind of permanence is not something we can depend upon.
3. Glaze documents an instance of hunters' music transmission among the Senufo (1981:43-45).
4. Roy Sieber has shared his knowledge of horizontal masks in Ghana and Nigeria with me on numerous occasions, and I want to thank him for his generosity. He worked in Nigeria in 1958 and in Ghana in 1964.
5. Patricia Coronel is presently completing an article on Aowin horizontal masks, based on research conducted in 1972-74.
6. The name should not be confused with Dodo, the Hausa name for a cult group in northern Nigeria. The Mande translation of *do* is roughly "mystery" or "mysterious knowledge."
7. Philip Ravenhill carried out research in this area in 1978-79. He has delivered three papers on the subject, at the African Studies Association meeting in 1984, the Seventh Triennial Symposium on African Art in 1986, and the African Studies Association Meetings in 1987. I thank him for graciously providing me with copies of these papers, the third of which was part of my panel, "Exploring the Lands of *Do*," which we hope will soon be published.
8. We have no conclusive evidence yet for the origins of Komo, but I think it is quite possible that the institution could prove to have originally been Soninke, and therefore associated with the old Ghana Empire.
9. At this early date I would not even want to speculate on the possible relationship between the Bussa-Bariba Wasangari and the Mande Wangarawa or Wangara, the well-known early traders of Mande culture. I merely draw your attention to the similarities in these names.
10. Robert Farris Thompson gave a lecture at Indiana

University in February 1968, in which he discussed the possibility of a "Creek International Style." Lou Ann Lambeth, a Sieber graduate student, briefly explored that possibility in a 1968 paper that I have read and found helpful.

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