AFRICAN SCULPTURE
FROM THE COLLECTION
OF THE SOCIETY OF AFRICAN MISSIONS
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FRONT COVER: Figure of the Virgin Mary standing on the serpent, a Christian theme based upon an interpretation of a passage from Genesis. Wood and polychrome, carved ca. 1950 by the Yoruba artist Bandele.

FRONTISPIECE: Crib set, Yoruba, Nigeria, by Joseph Imale.
PHOTOGRAPHY:

James Mathews: Color photography and all other photos except those listed below.
Robert Cress: Pages 16, 18, 33, 45, 46, 47.
Eeva-Inkeri: Page 17.
At first thought Museums and Missionaries seem an unlikely combination. The latter's other activities and divergent interests would seem to leave them little time either to appreciate or collect the art objects of other cultures.

It must be admitted that until the end of the 19th century and even into this century many Christian missionaries regarded the peoples and cultures among whom they worked as inferior to those of the West. The artifacts of these peoples were often judged ugly and those having any connection with so-called pagan religious practices were often collected and burnt.

It is to the credit of the Society of African Missions (founded at Lyons, France, in 1856) that it has remained true to the openness and vision of its Founder, Bishop Marion de Bresillac. Efforts were made early on in the history of the Society to collect and preserve artifacts from West Africa. Thanks to the untiring efforts of some of those early missionaries, many fine pieces in wood, ivory, brass, bronze and other metals were preserved and displayed at the S.M.A. center at Lyons. Later on another fine collection was assembled by S.M.A. Fathers in Holland.

Bishop de Bresillac was very sensitive to the unique beauty and character of each culture and attempted to imbue his priests with an appreciation of cultures other than their own. He told his men that they could "remain French only insofar as it does not prevent us from being perfect missionaries." He urged them to study the local languages and to make every effort to appreciate the customs of the people wherever these were not in clear contradiction to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He warned against European pride and a superiority complex.

Among the spiritual sons of Bishop de Bresillac, who heeded his admonitions concerning adaptation to and appreciation of the local African cultures, was Father Francis Aupiais (1877-1945). Throughout his life he exhibited a lively interest in and study of two forms of African popular culture: literature and the plastic arts. In fact, his biographer characterized the French missionary as "the man of Black Art." He appreciated African art not only for itself but also as a mirror of the souls of the men who conceived it and gave it life. Father Aupiais was personally responsible for expositions of Benin art in France during the 1920's. He condemned both extremes: European contempt and exaggerated and uncritical praise for the so-called "primitive" art of Africa. He was quick to point out the high level of artistry so often evident in the metal and wooden artifacts produced by the Africans with whom he worked.

In Nigeria the Church became an active patron of the arts through the interest and efforts of such men as S.M.A. Fathers Patrick Kelly, Kevin Carroll and Sean O'Mahony. Father Carroll is justly renowned for his long-term (35 years) abiding interest, encouragement and stimulation offered to artisans among the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria. He has published a book and numerous articles on African art. In addition, all these priests have interested African artists in producing Christian art making use of local materials and traditional art forms.

From what has been said, then, it is clear that the Society of African Missions in the United States is following a long-standing S.M.A. tradition in its efforts to acquaint Americans with the beauty and richness of African art and culture. To appreciate the art of a people is to have a deeper understanding of that people.

With its origins in Europe and North America and its focus in Africa, S.M.A. seeks to be a bridge between cultures and peoples, to build international understanding and appreciation. It is our hope that in some small way our Museum may prove a means of strengthening American understanding of Africa and help to forge bonds of world familyhood and peace.

Rev. Thomas E. Hayden, S.M.A.
 Provincial Superior, American Province
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African sculpture is new and unfamiliar to most Americans and yet it is the product of ancient civilizations and many centuries of artistic tradition. Initially the masks and figures may seem strange or even grotesque, but when viewed in terms of their own cultures the sculptures of Africa can be seen to be sophisticated, powerful and dynamic.

Unlike the art of Western societies, traditional African art was a functional and necessary part of everyday life and it would be impossible to understand African cultures without an understanding of their art. Religion, government, education, work and entertainment were all closely inter-related in traditional African societies. All of the arts, whether musical, oral or sculptural, were deeply woven into the very fabric of social life and played a central role in binding together all members of the community through corporate activity.

Sculpture figured prominently in the religious rituals which were a central force in African life giving social cohesion through common belief and participation in ceremonial life. The masks and figures used in such rites were not worshipped, however. Rather it was believed that the world was inhabited by many unseen spirits, each with its own powers and personality. These spirits involved themselves in the lives of human beings in a great many ways for both good and evil. The figures or masks were the vehicles through which these spirits made themselves seen and their presence known in the world of men. The objects themselves, however, did not embody or contain the spirit and hence, though respected and honored, they were not worshipped.

Masks representing spirit forces were particularly important at ceremonies marking the major changes in the lives of individuals or community events such as initiations into adulthood or funeral ceremonies. At the initiation ceremonies the masks frequently led the boys into the "bush schools" where initiations took place. At the funerals the masks not only paid final respect to the deceased but also guaranteed safe passage into the world beyond.

Sculpture also served to symbolize authority and played important roles in maintaining social control. Figurative staffs were sometimes carried by representatives of chiefs and kings, symbolizing their power and authority. Often they spoke for him and represented him through visual proverbs as having the power, strength and courage of such creatures as a leopard, water buffalo or elephant.

Sometimes it was deemed advisable to call upon the spirits to settle disputes too intractable to be settled by normal temporal authorities. In such cases the spirits were thought to make themselves known through the masks, and the decisions announced by the masks were accepted as having the weight of spiritual authority.

Masks also maintained social control in more subtle ways. Often masks served as teaching aids, augmenting the authority of the teacher himself and by symbolizing the ideas or values he wished to teach. While masks were always treated seriously, their appearance itself might be accompanied by great merriment, and humor was often built into their teaching roles. Thus, chiefs and elders might be criticized for pompousness or abuse of authority through seemingly comic ridicule and caricature by a mask. In a similar vein a mask might deliberately act in ways not normally tolerated in the society in order to teach by negative example. In this sense even what might appear to be pure entertainment often had a more serious purpose.

Utilitarian objects such as weaving pulleys, bowls, stools, chairs and textiles were also made with great care to beautify daily life as well as to enhance the status of chiefs and prominent persons. In each case the particular culture created its own set of symbols and artistic style which were understood in the community. Though the symbols varied widely between one community and the next, there was generally within a given community a considerable degree of consistency and thus developed a large number of reasonably discreet styles.

Though the artists did not follow stylistic guidelines blindly and each added his own creativity and individuality to the objects he made, the artists generally worked within defined parameters of acceptability within the culture. The artist was thereby able to reinforce the traditional beliefs and values of the CLTs, men's societies and political leaders who were his patrons.

Perhaps because African masks were carved to be worn in performance and most figurative sculpture is also designed for ritual use, African art is principally symbolic rather than representational. It is more concerned with visualizing concepts rather than with accurately representing nature. Sculpture is often highly stylized with conventional female beauty shown
to convey ideas of serenity or fertility; bold powerful shapes, such as the horns of animals to symbolize strength and virility; and frightening, expressionistic visages to inspire awe and fear for the enforcement of social custom.

Similarly the artist often deliberately distorted proportions in order to emphasize those elements he wished to show as important. In most African sculpture, for example, the head, seat of wisdom and personality, is usually enlarged so that it accounts for about one-fourth to one-third of the total height of a human figure instead of the one to seven ratio that it is in nature. In contrast, the hands and feet are generally regarded as unimportant and hence show little detail or attention. Decorative scarification, hair styles, etc. are often highly personal. Portraits pay great attention to accurately capturing these features so that figures may immediately be identified with the person they represent. People are also invariably represented in the prime of life, full of vigor, for to show an individual young and dependent or old and infirm would be insulting.

The material most frequently used by the African sculptor was wood. Climate and insects, however, have taken their toll. As a result few objects of any real antiquity have been preserved. Most existing African wooden sculpture dates from this century. Occasionally, wooden sculptures do survive and some have been found among the Dogon of Mali where the dry climate has preserved them for up to four centuries.

Stone was used much less frequently than wood, probably because much of the stone found south of the Sahara is volcanic and crumbles easily. Nevertheless, some of the oldest existing pieces of African sculpture are in stone. Among them the stone figures of the Sherbro or Bullom of Sierra Leone date from before 1500 and those of Akwanshi and Esie in Nigeria may date from the fourteenth and twelfth centuries respectively.

Ivory was used extensively in the manufacture of jewelry and side-blown trumpets, many with elaborate geometric detail. Figurative sculpture in ivory was never common traditionally, however. The one exception was at the court of the Kingdom of Benin where the altars of the kings used ivory extensively. Only since the end of the 19th century has figurative carving in ivory been common elsewhere, and then primarily to meet the demand of the tourist trade.

The oldest art objects found anywhere south of the Sahara are the terra cotta figures discovered at Nok in Nigeria, many of which date from five centuries before the birth of Christ. These figures and heads are exceptional not only in terms of age and beauty but in size as well. As a general rule, clay was seldom used for figurative sculpture, probably because of the difficulties of firing large pieces.

Brass casting also has a long history in Africa. All brass and bronze and most casting in gold was done by a very sophisticated technique known as the "lost wax" process. The artist first fashions a model in beeswax and then forms a mold of moist potter's clay around it. After the clay has hardened, the wax is melted away and molten metal is poured into the mold through vents left for that purpose. Once the metal has cooled the clay is broken away to reveal the finished casting. Thus each casting is unique, the mold having been destroyed in the process.

Though the forms of art and the style of the artists differ from the use we are familiar with in the West, a closer look will show that they have a remarkable degree of aesthetic skill and technique. Moreover, as we learn more about the role that sculpture played in the social life of the community, we see more clearly that the art met in particular ways the social as well as the creative needs of those communities which produced it.

One final note must be made on this collection. The sculpture-producing regions of Africa are confined for the most part to Western and West Central Africa. The objects in this collection and shown here in this catalogue are all from West Africa, with the exception of the Coptic Christian Art of Ethiopia. The weight of the traditional art shown here is from those areas in which the S.M.A. fathers have worked. Though not truly representative of all areas which produce sculpture, this catalog and exhibition are designed to show something of the range of forms and the purposes to which art was put in sub-Saharan Africa. Hopefully, those who see this art will gain a deeper understanding of the richness and vitality of African art and the cultural heritage and creativity of the African people.
WEST AFRICAN STYLE REGIONS
BAGA, Guinea
Elek Figure
H. 10½" (26.5 cm)

The Baga live near the Atlantic Coast of Guinea. Much of their art is used in association with the Simo society to which all men in the community belong. Elek figures combine the features of birds, crocodiles, and the human face. Their primary purpose is said to be to protect a community from witchcraft. They do this by acting as instruments for the conduction of power from the spirits of deceased ancestors who are said to watch over the welfare of their living descendants. The figure is brought out during the initiation rites and at funeral ceremonies for members of the Simo as well as at ceremonies marking the onset of the harvest season. At such times it is danced about, borne on the top of the head of one of the members.
BAMANA, Mali
Marionette
H. 39½” (100 cm)

The Bamana, or Bambara, live on the Upper Niger River in Mali, Guinea and Senegal. They founded two separate empires which controlled large areas in the Western Sudan from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. They developed a system with strong political, military and religious leaders. As in many cultures it was often “safer” to criticize persons in authority and point out their foibles through satire. The Bamara performed ceremonial plays using marionettes, such as this one in the form of a female figure, which were permitted to mock and ridicule even the most sacred subjects, often in erotic pantomime.
One of the most well known genres of African art is the antelope crest of the Bamana called the chi wara kun or segoni kun. The figure is worn attached to a basketry cap and worn on top of the head. The chi wara kun appear in pairs, one representing a male antelope and the other a female. Both are worn by male dancers who leap about and make high-pitched cries in imitation of the antelope who, according to myth, taught mankind to cultivate the land with digging sticks. According to legend chi wara became disheartened when mankind began to waste the bounty produced from tilling the earth. Chi wara disappeared into the ground and the Bamana carved wooden crests in his image to evoke his memory and to teach the virtue of hard work and frugality which he had instilled in them.
Bamana men were initiated into a number of associations, or jaw, which were more or less specialized and maintained an aura of secrecy about them. Most of these societies used one or more types of wooden masks or headdresses. The kare society is one of the most senior of the jaw. Four types of masks are used by the kare including this type said to represent a hyena. The hyena is thought of as a cruel, stupid and gluttonous animal and symbolizes imperfect knowledge and folly. The wearer reminds people of the virtue of overcoming avarice, greed and passions.
Another of the Bamana men's associations is the *kono* society, membership in which appears to be limited to the bards, or poet-historians. Because of their size, large ears and long snouts, the masks of the *kono* are often referred to as elephant masks. Such direct associations with a particular animal seem unlikely, however, and an explanation often given is that the eyes of the mask are large so the spirit it embodies may see all and uncover everything. The nose is large so that he may smell the good and evil of all things, and the ears are enormous so that he may hear all things, even those things each person may say secretly in his heart. These masks also symbolically combine elements of earth, sky, water and life by incorporating in the thick crust covering the surface of the wooden mask a combination of black clay, plant and mineral materials, feathers, eggs and sacrificial blood.
Staffs forged of iron and surmounted by figures of women or equestrian males are made by Bamana blacksmiths for use in the shrine of various religious associations which provide spiritual and physical protection for the communities in which they are found (McNaughton 1975: 10). The staffs received libations of millet and traditionally brewed beer and were brought out and danced before funerals and in ceremonies honoring the heads of these associations.

The staff shown here probably belonged to one such association known as Gwandusuo, named after a legendary ancestor who is considered to be the spiritual guardian (patron) of the association. Gwandusu was a woman of tremendous spiritual and physical power and is represented here riding a horse and carrying a sword, roles normally associated with men.
DOGON, Mali
Hornbill Mask
H. 32" (81 cm)

Dogon masks are used by members of the Awa society at ceremonies on the morning of the third day after a man's death, since it is at that time that the spirit of the deceased is said to leave its mortal remains. The ceremony of the masks is meant to ensure that the dead man's spirit is removed from the village to the realm of the ancestors. This is critical, for if a man's soul remains in the village it is believed to haunt his descendants and it is only in the realm of the ancestors that the spirit can become a useful supernatural agent.

The masks are in most cases totemic, representing animals having special associations with the deceased ancestors. The masks are for the most part carved by those who will wear them in ritual performance and not surprisingly, there is a great variation in both the quality of carvings and in the types of masks. Imperato (1979:15) indicates that there are approximately seventy-eight standard types of masks used in the dances of the Awa society. This mask is known as dyodyomini (the gleaner) and represents the hornbill, a bird which figures prominently not only in Dogon mythology, but also in the myths of many other West African peoples as well.

The mask is surmounted by a female figure typical of the hornbill masks. The "bill" of the bird was carved separately and joined to the mask, with raffia cords, most probably because there are few trees in Dogon country large enough to have allowed the mask to be made in a single piece.

The face is divided by two long, parallel sections which have been hollowed out on the inside with the rectangular eye holes at the back, thus creating a sense of depth. When such masks are danced, they are supported by means of a stick connecting the two sides and held in the teeth. Thin cords are attached to the upper rear edge of the mask and joined to a belt-like arrangement about the dancer's waist. Also attached to the mask would be a matted fiber neck-flap dyed red and yellow. The dancer's costume is completed by fiber skirts which are also dyed red and yellow.
SEN UFO, Ivory Coast 
Cultivator's Staff 
H. Full staff 47½' 
Figure, 8" (20 em) 

The Senufo live in the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta and Mali. They have a complex system of age grades forming part of a comprehensive men's initiation society. Junior initiates in the society in their late teens and early twenties learn the virtues of hard work and farm management through competitions for honors in hoeing contests. Champion cultivators are rewarded with a staff called a tefalipitya, or hoe-work-girl. (Glaze 1976:264). The staff, surmounted by the figure of a beautiful woman, symbolizes that hard work will attract women and wealth. It is kept by the winner until the following year's contest when it is passed on to the new champion.
Kponyungo, or "funeral head", masks are the property of the senior age grade of the Pondo society and are used in commemorative ceremonies for deceased members of the society. They combine the most impressive and fearsome aspects of a variety of animals. According to Glaze (1976:324) the mask is basically seen as an antelope head that is given select additional features for both symbolic and decorative purposes. The addition of wild boar tusks emerging from the corners of the jaws of a hyena add a particularly threatening dimension. The costume of the kponyungo masks normally consists of a one-piece jumpsuit with a drawstring neck and straight-cut legs and sleeves with hands and feet showing. The suit is painted with geometric and figurative patterns. The masks are worn horizontally over the head so that the wearer looks out through a hole between the jaws.
These figures on heavy wooden bases are called *deble* and are used during the funeral ceremonies of members of the Senufo men's society, the *Pondo*. They may also be used in conjunction with agricultural ceremonies. In both cases the members hold them by the arms and pound the earth while moving slowly in single file to the sound of a rhythmic droning. The Senufo claim that the pounding enjoins the ancestors to take part in the rites, thereby ensuring their success, and also serves as a means of ridding the earth of its impurities and thus ensuring its fertility.
DAN, Liberia
Social Control Mask
H.8" (20 cm)

The Dan and their neighbors in Eastern Liberia and the Western Ivory Coast did not develop large states or powerful political hierarchies. Instead they maintained social order through secret men’s associations and through a complex system of masks. The functions of the masks are as varied as their forms. Some were designed to teach moral lessons and might even appear in humorous form. Others were designed to convey serenity and harmony, and still others to instill awe, respect and fear. The masks are part of a total costume which conceals the wearer’s identity and depersonalizes his actions much as do the wigs and robes of western judges. They thus establish the idea that no mere man has the right to judge others. Thus all authority is believed to be held and all judgement given in the name and place of the spirits.
GUERZE, Guinea
Social Control Mask
H.24" (61 cm)

The prognathic movable jaw of this mask is covered with colubus monkey fur and the eyes are outlined with copper. The costume consists of "country cloth," or narrow band strip weave made of locally spun cotton. The mask is surmounted by an elaborate headdress with applique designs of red cloth, cowrie shells, leather and fur. Similar mask types are found among a number of related peoples in Liberia, Guinea and the Ivory Coast. The mask appears at the beginning of the "bush schools" which mark the initiation of boys into manhood. It enters the town to announce the symbolic death of the initiated as well as their re-birth to the world of men. The mask may also enter the town to carry off persons convicted of capital offenses and sentenced to death.
The exact functions of specific Wee masks are impossible to ascertain once the mask has been removed from its context. Like the masks of the Dan, Wee masks are said to represent specific spirits which reveal themselves to men, usually through dreams. They seek to involve themselves in human affairs but since they have no bodies they must be made manifest in the world by operating through human agents. The wearer of the mask therefore becomes the agent of the spirit and acts in its place, receiving his power and direction from the spirit. The spirits, acting through the masks, perform a number of roles in the community, often acting to expose wrong-doing, including the abuse of authority in the secular sphere. They might also be called upon to settle disputes. In a sense, however, all of the masks were teachers of the values of tradition and law and the need to preserve those values for the well-being of the total community.
The Dan and Wee of Liberia and the Ivory Coast developed brass casting to a particularly high level. Elaborate brass jewelry and occasionally figures of animals and people were cast using the lost wax process. The desired object was first modeled in wax and then narrow rods of beeswax were attached to the model. This was encased in several thin layers of clay applied one at a time. Only the ends of the beeswax rods were not enclosed since they would serve as spews and vents. The mold was baked in a fire, the wax melted out and the molten metal poured in to replace it. After cooling the mold was broken off and the spews removed. Complex groups of figures such as this piece showing a chief carried in a hammock, were exceptionally difficult to cast and are particularly rare. The tradition of casting figures in brass seems to be relatively recent among the Dan and Wee, possibly beginning near the turn of this century. The figures were not used in a ritual context but were essentially prestige objects for their owners as well as serving to show the skill of the artist who produced them.

WE E, Liberia
brass figures
H. 7½” (19cm)
GURO, Ivory Coast

Goli mask
L. 34" (86 cm)

This unusual mask, attributed to the Gura, appears to be related to the Goli gulin and glin masks of the Baule and Wan, two neighboring groups of the Gura. Like the goli gulin or glin masks, this horizontally worn mask combines the horns of an antelope with the jaws of a crocodile. The bridge-like structure is an additional characteristic feature of all three masks. The goli gulin and glin masks represent the senior male masks of the goli masquerade which originated among the Wan and then spread to the Baule (Vogel 1978:124). The original dance was associated with the funeral ceremonies of the Wan and was regarded as very sacred. In the Baule version of the dance, however, the masks have been secularized into a day-long performance of four pairs of masks accompanied by music played on special instruments amid a considerable amount of revelry which helps to bring about unity in a village through a common sense of participation and spectacle.
Helmet masks representing horned animals with large open jaws and prominent teeth are called *bonu amuen* by the Baule (Vogel 1978:71). These fearsome masks are danced to protect the village against various threats, to discipline women and at funeral ceremonies. Women are forbidden to see them perform. This mask appears to be of a type known as *dye yasua* or *Nyangondin*, the rainbow, noted for its ability to grow suddenly taller and then shrink back to a smaller size again. (Vogel 1978, 79-80). Since these masks are "things of the forest", their costumes consist entirely of raffia in contrast to the cloth costumes of the *ngbô* masks representing human beings in a village context.
BAULE, Ivory Coast
*Ngblo* Mask
H. 17" (43 cm)

*Ngblo* masks are stylistically similar to Baule figurative carving, exhibiting a modified naturalism and great attention to details. In contrast to the fearsome helmet masks, or *bonu amuen* which may be seen only by men, the *ngblo* masks always appear in what are called "women’s" dances because women may watch them and because the dance movements are considered feminine even though the mask is always worn by a man (Vogel 1978:102). These masks are worn mainly to entertain. The masks appear in a series of dances which often portray humorous scenes from daily life and draw moral lessons from them. In this context they represent not spirits but real people known in the community.
BAULE, Ivory Coast
Shrine Figure
L. 20" (51 cm)

This figure probably represents a leopard with a sheep in its mouth. It may have been used in a shrine context, though its exact significance is unknown. It is heavily encrusted with a thick patination of sacrificial materials including eggs, blood and feathers.
The Baule believe that before being born into this world each person had a spirit spouse and children who remain behind in the other world when an individual is born into this world. These spirit spouses are sometimes jealous of earthly lovers and may interfere maliciously. On the recommendation of a diviner, a figure is carved for the spirit to inhabit in order for it to be contacted and appeased. Such figures are offered food in a dish like real people and are fondled and wiped, eventually acquiring a smooth, lustrous surface.
ASHANTI, Ghana
Akua ba
H. 12½' (32 cm)

The best known and most numerous Ashanti carvings are the *akua ba*. These so-called fertility dolls are carved for women who are having difficulty conceiving children. A woman takes such a carving to a priest who consecrates it and invokes the influence of a deity to induce pregnancy. The woman then carries the figure for a stated period of time tucked into the back of the waist-cloth. The figures are fondled, dressed and adorned with earrings and waist beads just as a real child would be (Cole 1977:103). The *akua ba* embody the Ashanti ideal of beauty with a disc-shaped head and rings of fat around the neck indicating a prosperous and healthy condition. Ashanti mothers seek to induce the desired head shape in their infants by gently massaging the soft cranial bones of the newborns.
ASHANTI, Ghana  
Goldweights  
L. 3½" (8cm) (crocodile)

Behind the rise and expansion of the Kingdom of the Ashanti in Ghana and several other Akan states in the region lay the exploitation of massive gold resources. Among the Ashanti all gold belonged to the king, representing the nation, though commoners could hold it in trust and use it in trade. Miniature figurative and geometric weights cast in brass were used as counter-balances on the scales used to measure gold dust in business transactions. All of the weights were cast using the lost wax methods. Human figures were cast in poses from daily life as well as in contexts representing proverbs. Items of royal regalia are common as are fish, animals and birds. The geometric weights also carry motifs with symbolic meaning: the double spiral is the symbol of creation by the supreme being; a wavy line is the symbol of water; a square represents day; a spiral means conception; a cross symbolizes the sky god; and a bisected crescent stands for a mother with a child in the womb.
FON, Republic of Benin
Shrine figure
H. 10½’ (27 cm)

Though the Fon live between two of West Africa's richest art producing areas, those of the Akan and Yoruba peoples, there is relatively little sculpture in the region. That sculpture which does exist is largely associated with what is often called "Voodoo" but which might be better understood as "the Science of Prevention."

Like many African societies, the Fon believe the world to be permeated with a powerful vital force. Though found in stones, metal and other material objects or vegetable matter, it is stronger in animals and still more powerful in man. This force can be trapped and used, for good or evil. What we might call "magic" is seen as a science, and one not easily scorned. Traditional medical practitioners know many medicines, but even their "charms" are not ineffective. At the very least they offer a much needed sense of security.

This particular figure is a bochio, or shrine object, of the cult of Dangbe, an agricultural divinity associated with fertility of the fields and seen in a visible form as the Rock Python snake. Bound to the figure are two small terra cotta pots called gazon in which are placed two iron spears which are said to represent Dangbe. The pots are filled with leaves which are associated with this particular Voodoun or deity. The figure was collected in Adjara, near Porto-Novo, in the Peoples Republic of Benin.
The Fon deified their ancestors, whose cult was almost as important as those of the great gods. Believed to be vitally involved with the immediate affairs of men and a great spiritual influence upon them, paired figures were carved to represent the ancestors. They would have been placed at the sides of a door of a hut (the male to the right, the female to the left) to prevent thefts or the interference of malevolent human agents in the affairs of their kin.
This pair of figures was collected in Lama-Kara, northern Togo among the Cabrai. Stylistically they resemble the work of Ewe, Fon and Yoruba carvers to the south and east. These figures are believed to represent twins who died in infancy. Among many peoples in West Africa there is a belief that twins possess special powers and the birth of twins may portend double fortunes or double trouble. Twins have their own protective deity and require special attention in the form of ritual obligations to ensure their favor. If one of the twins dies the parents may have a memorial figure carved for the deceased twin. The figure is cared for in the same way as the surviving twin being bathed, dressed, caressed, fed and rubbed with oil in order to placate the spirit of the departed twin so that it will allow its partner to remain among the living. If both twins die, the mother may have two figures carved and care for them both in order to prevent a reoccurrence in the future.
Wooden figures known among the Yoruba as *ere ibeji*, "image of twins", are carved upon the death of one or both of a pair of twins. The figure is cared for in the same manner as a living child being washed, handled, dressed and fed the favorite foods of twins: beans and palm oil. The body is also rubbed with camwood powder mixed with oil and the hair darkened with indigo dye. This pair of twin figures, one male, one female, both wear brass bracelets and strands of cowrie shells usually associated with the thunder god *Shango*, the giver of twins. In addition, they wear colorful beaded cloaks, another item usually associated with *Shango* as well as being a prerogative of royalty indicating that these figures came from a royal lineage.
The Yoruba carved many different types of boxes and containers to hold jewelry, cosmetics, snuff or medicine as well as to serve as vessels to hold gifts such as cola nuts for presentation. This figure of a woman kneels in a traditional stance of supplication holding in her hands the bowl in the shape of a chicken, one of the principal objects of sacrifice and a token of honor. The Yoruba call such figures olumeye meaning "the one knowing honor." The child on the woman's back holds in its hands the oshe, or double headed axe and the goard rattle, or shere, of the Shango cult suggesting that this may have been an object used in veneration of Shango. According to Kevin Carroll, S.M.A.(1967:159), figures of this type were carried during festival processions by women devotees. At such times the bowls would have contained bean cakes or cola nuts for use in the ceremonies. At other times the figures were kept in the shrines and were occasionally used to hold the stone axe-heads that the devotees of Shango, the god of thunder, consider to be thunder bolts thrown by the god. This figure was collected about the turn of the century among the Egbado Yoruba in southwestern Nigeria by Fr. Ignace Lässner, S.M.A. It is characteristic of the style of the town of Abeokuta and is by the master carver Oniyide Adugbologe. (Fl. c 1890-1940).
The Yoruba believe that Olorum, the supreme deity, is a distant god who makes his wishes known to mankind and accepts offerings only through a pantheon of lesser gods, or orisha. Among the most important orisha is Eshu, the messenger and mediator deity, who rewards or punishes people, depending on whether they please or displease the gods, himself included.

In order to learn the will of the gods the Yoruba consult them through a complex system of divination known as Ifa. The diviner or priest of Ifa is called Babalawo, or "my father who knows my secrets." The babalawo casts sixteen palm nuts or cowry shells twelve times, the number of seeds landing face-up being marked on a carved wooden tray covered with fine sand, flour or wood dust. The combinations are then referred to one of 256 proverbs which in turn must be interpreted for the client.

The face at the top of the tray is that of Eshu while the remainder of the rim is lined with symbols associated with certain odu, or major sections of the corpus of Ifa verses.
According to Yoruba belief, the devotion of an individual to one of the gods affords that individual the beneficence and protection of that deity. One of the most prominent Yoruba cults is that of Shango, an early and powerful king of Oyo whose historical personality is equated in Yoruba cosmology with the god of thunder. His symbols include the double-headed axe. Many different types of objects are associated with the Shango cult including wands such as this which are carried by devotees when they dance during annual festivals in Shango's honor.
YORUBA, Nigeria
Egungun Mask
H. 17" (43 cm)

This mask, painted with green, white and rust colored pigments, is surmounted by carved representations of the dun-dun or "talking" drums. The full costume of an Egungun dancer often consists of many layers of colorful, often appliqued, cloth which conceals the wearer and transforms his features. The mask itself is worn atop the head and the wearer sees through a cloth which veils his face. The masquerader is regarded as a spiritual being from the realm of the ancestors and as such does not have any physical contact with the audience.

The Egungun association is devoted to the spirits of the ancestors and to those recently deceased. It pays a tribute to the dead by imitating and reincarnating their traits and virtues. By thus honoring the ancestors the masks invoke their aid in protecting the community from witchcraft and harm.
The Gelede society is confined to the southwestern Yoruba. The functions of the society are generally said to be "the appeasement of witches." The concept of witchcraft is much more complex than the simple European association with evil, however. In part the concept should be understood in terms of immense supernatural powers, and in the Gelede society the mysterious powers of the procreative role of women and the reflection of the cycles of nature in her body are honored. Thus the Gelede masquerades honor the spiritual powers of women collectively called "our mothers." These powers can be used for good or for evil and in the performances the irrational, vengeful and socially disruptive capabilities of women are acknowledged.

Gelede masks are worn by men but may portray a wide range of male and female characters. The masks are normally danced in identical pairs and are adorned with elaborate, colorful costumes composed of numerous layers of expensive imported, as well as locally made, cloth. The mask is worn tilted forward over the forehead, allowing the dancer to see out beneath the rim through an attached veil of thin cloth.

The superstructures of these masks are often complex. Sheathed knives are a common element on gelede masks and are reportedly associated with both blacksmiths who carve the masks and with warriors who wear them. Birds are also frequently depicted since they are often associated with witches flying between earth and the heavens. The ram is a frequent symbol of power as well as an object of sacrifice.
The northern Yoruba carve large helmet masks called *epa* which are surmounted by tall, elaborate superstructures. These masks perform each year to mark the first harvest of the new yam crops. The masks are heavy, weighing between thirty and sixty pounds, and are worn atop the head by young men who perform rigorous dances. The performer must leap without faltering onto a high earthen mound in which the yams are planted (Thompson 1974:195). If the leap is successful it portends good fate for the community during the coming year, but if the wearer stumbles the community must make sacrifices to ward off bad fortune. There are a number of different *epa* mask types. The one illustrated here depicts a mounted king with a large retinue and is known as *orangun* (Carroll 1956:8). The helmet portion of this mask is Janus-faced and the wearer sees through the rectangular holes which form one of the mouths. The group of figures resting on the round platform includes the mounted king wearing a beaded crown with a fringe. On top of the crown sits *Okin*, the king of the birds. The figure is surrounded by his wives and household staff. This particular mask was carved in 1977 by Joseph Imale, after a prototype carved in 1910 by the noted artist Areogun. The mask is carved of a single piece of wood.
Joseph Imale, son of Roti, the Agbana (king) of Osogbo, was commissioned in 1974 to make a number of objects for this museum including the large Epa mask (previous page) and the creche set on the inside front cover. Three of the figures from that set are illustrated here. They represent the three Magi and are portrayed here as Yoruba kings. They carry in their hands traditional gifts such as the lidded bowl in the shape of a chicken which traditionally was used to hold cola nuts and cakes presented as a sign of honor. The kings ride horses, a sign of wealth and prestige, and wear the traditional beaded crowns of Yoruba royalty. The crowns were made by James Adetoyi of Owo. The other figures in the set include shepherds wearing the cloths of Fulani herdsmen from northern Nigeria and bringing traditional gifts including a live chicken and a calabash of milk. Joseph's cap is hand embroidered in the style of the Moslem Hausa of northern Nigeria and Mary's dress is made of indigo tie-dye cloth made and worn by Yoruba women. Her necklace is of handmade glass beads made in the town of Bida.
Illustrated here is one of the four large wood panels which flank the two entrances to the museum area. They were carved in 1964 by Bandele of Osilborin. Bandele is the son of Areogun who was known as one of the greatest of Yoruba traditional carvers. Bandele was himself a traditional carver before beginning around 1948 to carve Christian subjects on commission from Fr. Kevin Carroll, S.M.A. The top frieze of this panel portrays the annunciation with Mary engaged in the daily routine of pounding yams in a mortar. The middle scene represents the flight into Egypt. On the bottom Christ is flanked by two Yoruba cult-priests. The Oshanyin herbalist on the left holds a wrought-iron staff surmounted with birds in one hand and a horn to hold the medicine he makes against insanity and witchcraft in the other. On the right is a priest of Shango with his oshe, or double-headed axe, and his shere, or rattle.
This single figure from a nativity set and the crucifix on the opposite page are examples of Bandele's early Christian carvings. The crucifix was done in 1950 while the Figure of the king was done about 1954. The king is represented here as wearing the embroidered gowns and hats favored by the Islamic Hausa to the north of the Yoruba. As in the work of Joseph Imale (one of Bandele's apprentices) seen on page 38, the king holds a lidded container to carry his gift to the Christ child.
YORUBA, Nigeria
Crucifix
H. 22¼" (57 cm)

This crucifix by Bandele is unusual not only in its Christian motif but also in that the artist has made the corpus in three pieces and separate from the cross. Normally African sculptures are carved as a single piece and this suggests that the technique of this carving as well as the motif shows European influence.
According to Ibo belief, the gods cannot be seen but reside under piles of chalk in shrines (Cole 1969: 39). The gods and the cults associated with them, however, are represented by standing wooden figures, both male and female which take an idealized human form. Their priests regularly wash them and embellish them with hats, cloths, beads, camwood powder, etc. They are paraded through the town annually in renewal ceremonies and displayed before the public to serve as a focus for offerings and prayers.

The heavy metal anklets and the scarifications on the forehead denote high status while those on the chest and abdomen are marks of beauty. These figures normally stand with palms up-turned in a posture said to indicate several layers of meaning: demand for offerings of honor; recognition and devotion; generosity and open handedness toward worshippers; and honesty.
ANANG, Nigeria

*mfon ekpo* mask

H. 12\(\frac{1}{4}\)" (32 cm)

The Anang are a western subdivision of the Ibibio peoples who live in the delta of the Cross and Calabar Rivers. The area has long been noted as a major center of trade and has long had contact with other parts of the west African coast.

They have developed a distinctive carving style noted for its simple and naturalistic portrayal of the human face. The style, named after the major northern Anang town of Ikot Ekpene, has been widely traded. Anang masks are used in many parts of Southeastern Nigeria and occasionally have found their way as far as Sierra Leone. According to Messenger (1973) the Anang carve masks with grotesque, deformed and ugly faces to represent persons who have stolen sacrificial objects, persons executed for crimes and people who have died without kinsmen to bury them. These spirits are condemned to wander forever aimlessly through the night. The souls of those who have died in socially acceptable ways are represented, in contrast, by beautiful masks with a serene expression, such as the example shown here. The good souls themselves, *mfon ekpo*, are said to have returned to the village of souls.
The masks of the Cameroon grasslands may belong either to royalty or to a number of regulatory societies composed of the male elders of the various lineages found in a village. These societies provide a series of counterbalances to the power of the kings and chiefs. Each society owns a number of different masks representing both animals and human beings, both men and women. All such masks are worn on top of the head at a slight angle. The wearer sees out under the mask through a cloth veil. This particular mask from the Kingdom of Kom probably represents a lineage ancestor and would have appeared chiefly at the funeral ceremonies of prominent male members of the community.
Christianity was introduced to Ethiopia in about 330 A.D. by Frumentius, a shipwrecked Greek sailor from Syria. Isolated by the 7th-century sweep of Islam through North and East Africa, Ethiopian Coptic Christianity retained its ancient form resembling Orthodoxy in matters ranging from dogma to architecture and placing great emphasis on the use of crosses, paintings and icons of wood and stone in religious ceremonies and worship. This small, personal, double triptych carved in stone opens on both front and back sides. The side shown portrays the Madonna and Child on the right center panel flanked by the Archangels Gabriel and Michael on the outer panels. The figure in the left center panel wears the hood and belt of Ethiopian monks and probably represents one of many local Coptic saints.
The symbol of the cross has played a central role in the Ethiopian church from the earliest days of Christianity in Ethiopia. Nowhere else has the symbol been proliferated into such a range of forms. There are three basic types of crosses from a functional perspective: processional, hand and pendant crosses worn about the neck. Most, including this elaborate brass hand cross, were cast using the lost wax method in which the design of the finished object was first molded in wax and then encased in clay. The wax was then melted out leaving a hollow form which was filled with molten metal. Once cooled, the form was broken away leaving the casting. Hand crosses are continually carried by priests. In order to be constantly available they are often worn suspended about the neck or carried in a leather holster. Upon meeting a layman the priest presents his cross to the individual who touches it to his forehead and then kisses it as a sign of piety.
COPTIC CHRISTIAN, Ethiopia
Silver pendant crosses

The ten silver pendant crosses here give only a small sample of the thousands of patterns known in this art form. The Emperor Iara Ya'eqob decreed in the 15th century that every Christian should wear a neck cross and since that date there has been a wide range of types executed in wood, copper and gold in addition to silver, the most common medium for neck crosses. These crosses have been fashioned in several different ways including casting with the lost wax method, engraving and using the "filigree" and "applique" techniques in which tiny silver beads or disks and twisted beaded or plain wire are welded to the cross. The silver for these crosses comes from melted Maria Theresa dollars which have been imported from Austria since the early nineteenth century for use as currency.
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Opposite: Gelede mask; wood and polychrome; Yoruba, Nigeria.
Back Cover: Lidded container; wood and polychrome; Yoruba, Nigeria.