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MASKS AND FIGURE SCULPTURE OF
THE SONGYE OF EASTERN KASAI

Volume I

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Doctor of Philosophy
to the School of Oriental and African Studies,
University of London
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TO MY DEAR PARENTS

ABSTRACT

This thesis, on the masks and magical statuary of the Songye, is based on field work conducted in Eastern Kasai, Zaire, in 1977/78 among the Kalebwe, Cofwe and Eastern Songye chiefdoms.

In its concern with the function of the two types of sculpture, the thesis examines relevant aspects of the social, political and cosmological contexts. It is thereby revealed how the masks, or bifwebe, serve the ruling elite as a means of social control by exercising practices of malevolent magic, that is, sorcery and witchcraft. By contrast, the popular use of figure sculpture is seen as a socially benign magical practice which alleviates communal and individual tensions. However, in examining the making, manipulation and especially the symbolic framework of masks and figures the interrelationships of a holistic concept of Songye magic are exposed.

On the basis of the masks and statuary seen mainly among the Eastern Songye, collections studied at the Museum of Mankind (London), the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale (Tervuren), the Institut des Musées Nationaux du Zaire (Kinshasa and Lubumbashi) and a few private collections in Belgium, a formal classification of the two sculptural forms is established. With the masks three different functional categories are identified - male youth, male elder, female - and the stylistic development of two regional tendencies is pointed to, the Kalebwe/Cofwe and the Eastern Songye. In the case of statuary the characteristics of three main genres are outlined, community, personal and white-faced figures. Stylistically the absence of regional distinctness is noted among figures; however, the impact of the Kalebwe sculptural tradition is observed throughout the central Songye territory and its influence on the kifwebe style is also examined.

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I am deeply grateful to all those Songye people without whose kind co-operation this thesis would not have taken shape. Their names appear at the end of the acknowledgements due to their number. However, in view of the esoteric nature of much of the research material, the status, village or sub-tribe of these informants is not revealed although in the text and the illustrations volume a few exceptions have been made with the consent of the individuals involved. Among those who contributed to the field data I am equally indebted to the many interpreters who assisted me with unfailing patience, especially my friends Kasongo Kapwekela and Anne-Marie Kouzeleas-Nyembo.

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Informants

Milumbu Ambela, Mudimbi Angongo, Kitenge Balaki, Kahenga Bembele, Ngongo Buhenka, Ngoy Cangamuka, Fwamba Cungu, Ngoy Ebondo, Njibu Ebondo, Pyanyi Eshiba, Kabenga Ilunga, Lubobo Ilunga, Ebondo Kabula, Ngongo Kabula, Kalele Kabunji, Kongolo Kahalayi, Manjanja Kahambwe, Kyomba Kahenga, Katamba Kalonda, Mutumbe Kalonda, Nkole Kaluila, Eshiba Kambwa, Ngoy Kamwanga, Hubert Kangulu, Ntambwe Kasembe, Fwamba Kashama, Kabula Kasongo, Kaloko Kasongo, Kayomba Kasongo, Lumpungu Kasongo, Mibanga Kasongo, Ngongo Kasongo, Kasongo Kazadi, Nyembo Kikumbi, Lumami Kikuto, Kinkumba Kilolo, Lubaci Kilolo, Mulimbi Kisangani, Musangye Kisebwe (f), Kayembe Kitambala, Lukanga Kitenge, Tambwe Kitenge, Kabangi Lombe, Cungu Luanyi, Dominique Lubamba, Pampi Lukenge, Eshiba Lukinda, Mutamba Lumpungu, Mwembo Lumpungu, Njibu Lupanda, Ngoy Mabwisha, Kazadi Makonga, Mudimbi Makonga, Cite Malela, Pyanyi Mamba, Ngoy Mashimango, Ngyesu Mbo, Kape Mpako, Kahambwe Mudimbi, Ngoy Mumba, Kilolo Mutamba Mundadi, Konga Mayele, Musaka Mudyanga, Kiho Mufumbi, Kalombo Mukanda, Ngongo Mulenda, Mwembo Mutombo, Lumpungu Mvula, Kitenge Mwaka, Bilonda Mwakana, Kiloba Mwehu, Cite Ngoy, Kasongo Ngoy, Kilula Ngoy, Kitumbika Ngoy, Kunda Ngoy, Ntambwe Ngoy, Kalomonyi Ngyele,

Ngongo Njibu, Mwenyi Nkusu, Kilolo Ntambwe, Mwehu Ntanda, Ngombe
Nyama, Cibangu Mwepu Nyindo, Bikumbo Pangi, Ngongo Panya,
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Kitambala Somwe, Kyobola Sulubika, Poshi Sungumalayi, Ngoy Wangongo,
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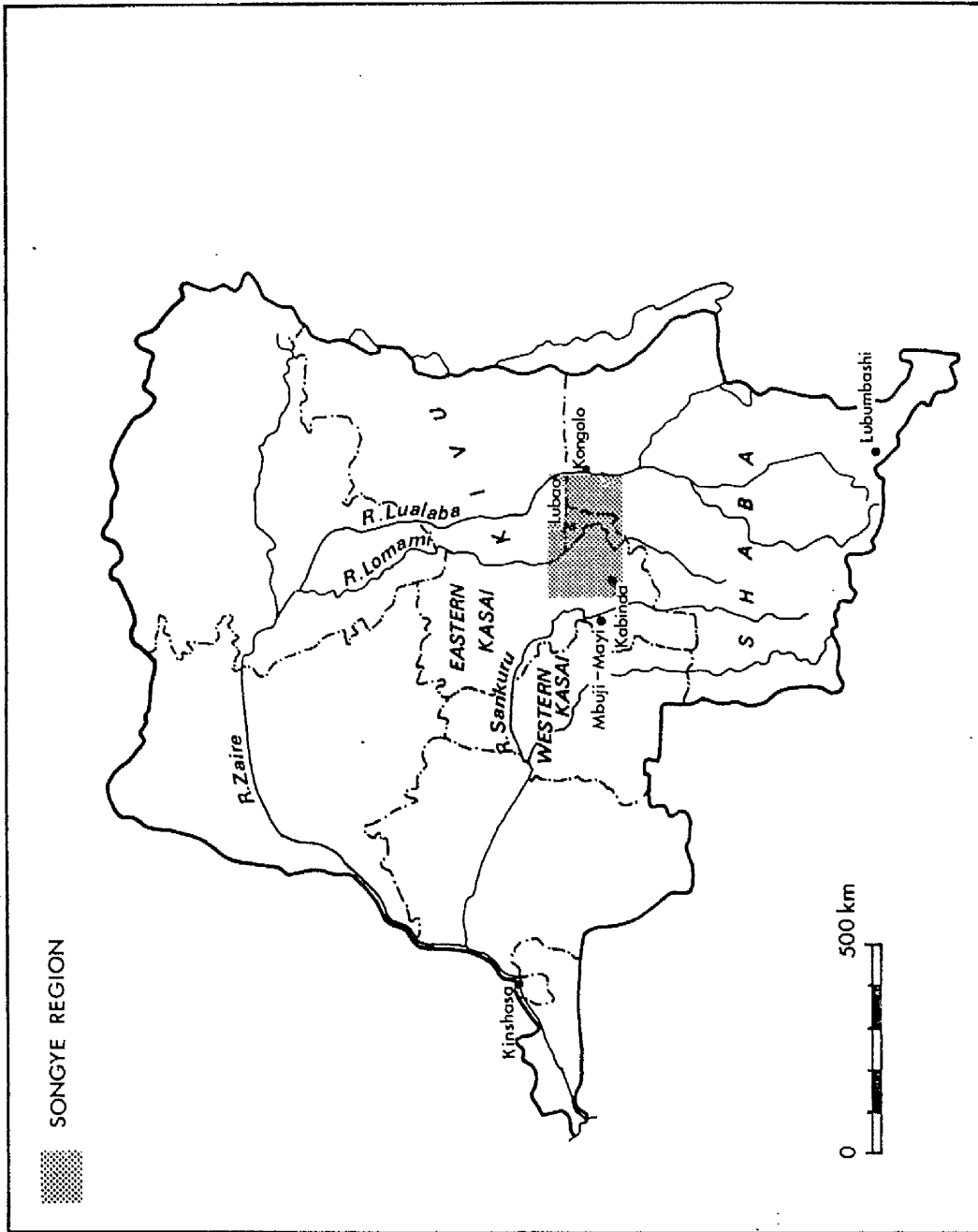
INTRODUCTION

a) Region of Investigation

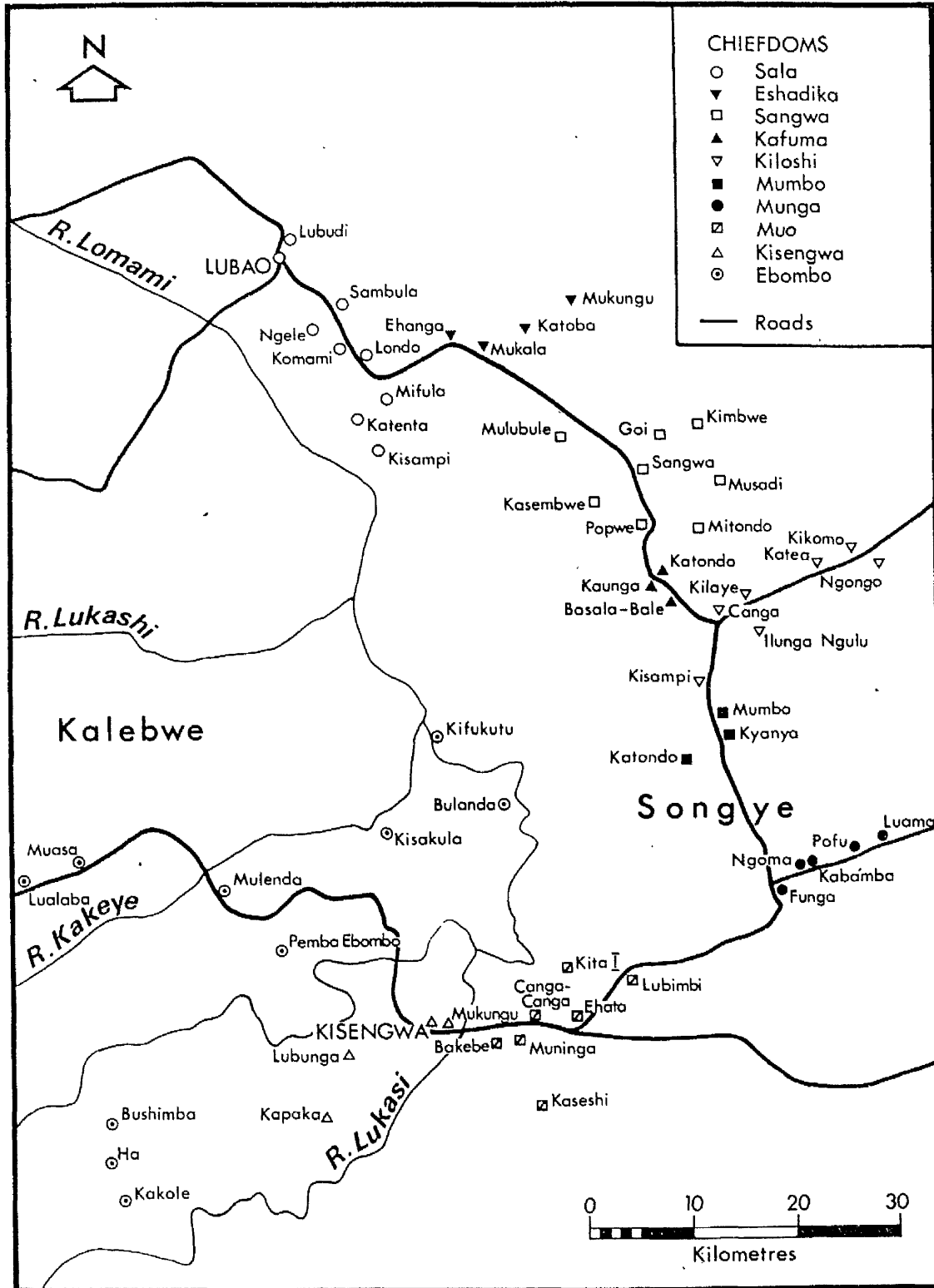
The present-day Songye people inhabit a vast area of Zaire concentrated in the province of Eastern Kasai and stretching into parts of Shaba and Kivu (map 1). They are neighbours of the Tetela and the Kusu in the north, the Hamba in the east, the Luba-Shaba in the south and the Luba-Kasai in the west (map 2).

Estimates of the total Songye population range between 150,000 and 217,000 of which the largest sub-tribes include the Kalebwe, Eastern Songye, Eki, Ilande, Bala, Cibenji, Lembwe, Sanga, Cofwe and the Budia.¹ Research for this thesis on masks and magical figures was conducted in 1977/78 in the central part of Songye territory mainly among the Kalebwe, the Cofwe and the Eastern Songye (maps 2 and 3).

Physically, the region as a whole is marked by variations in landscape, vegetation and even climatic patterns. For the large part hilly landscape predominates with plateaux rising between 500 and 1,100 metres in altitude, yet there are also vast expanses of flat plains as in the midst of Kalebwe country.² Similarly the nature of the savanna vegetation is mixed, ranging from grassland to woodland communities, to densely forested river galleries. Although the temperature differences are not significant between the dry and rainy seasons, the two periods are not clearly defined. The month of June is generally the only dry spell and the period of heavy rainfalls occurs at two intervals; in November and December, and then in March and April.³



MAP 1. Location of the Songye Region in Zaire.



MAP 3. Eastern Songye Chiefdoms: the region of current masking practices.

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The Songye are essentially agriculturalists although they have diversified their activities to include animal husbandry, gathering of fruits and palm products, hunting, fishing and some commerce. Land is communal property - traditionally distributed and supervised by chiefs and ministers - but individuals profit from its resources.⁴ In cultivation women were formerly responsible for the daily work and the trading of goods, and men only cleared the land.⁵ Today, perhaps due to a reduction in the size of polygamous marriages, both sexes are obliged to participate in the tilling of the fields.

Although there is a great deal of erosion on the steep slopes of the Kabinda area, the soil conditions, at least throughout the central Songye region, are generally favourable.⁶ The crops noted by the earliest explorers, colonial administrators and researchers are still grown; yet production is low and there is little left to trade.⁷ Most of the concentration has been given to manioc and maize, the staple food crops, and also to peanuts, whereas millet, rice, beans, sugar cane and tobacco are only grown in very small quantities. Cotton, introduced by the Belgians in 1919, was the major cash crop until the sixties' slump in production when it was overtaken by peanuts.⁸ In recent years government control has seen to a substantial increase in cotton cultivation, despite the strained transport problems in the region.

Domesticated animals, in particular goats, pigs and chickens are kept mainly as investment property for dowries and for celebrations and ritual feasts such as funerals. Nowadays, due to

the scarcity of food, the animals are not fenced in or kept in huts but left to roam freely through the village and its surroundings even at the expense of causing serious damage to nearby plots of vegetables.⁹

Fishing and hunting rights are generally unrestricted.¹⁰ Despite the dense network of rivers and streams in the central Songye region, fishing is minimal perhaps because natural waters are associated with the domain of the sacred. However, hunting, one of the ancestral professions of the first culture hero, has remained by far the more significant individual and collective activity. According to tradition, chiefs still organize communal hunts at the beginning of the dry season and receive offerings of animals reserved for them: leopards, buffalo, hippopotami and certain antelopes for which the Songye region is reputed.¹¹ Most of these animals and a great many others including some reptiles, birds and insects play a part in the symbolic composition of masks and magical statuary.

Some of the traditional industries of the Songye are slowly diminishing with the importation of consumer goods. Smelting and forging was another of the highly ranked men's occupations associated with the culture hero and chieftainship, although women are said to have assisted in the collecting and transport of minerals.¹² Many tools of domestic fabrication are still used in cultivation and wood carving but the production of new ones is very low. Songye living in larger villages are able to purchase some western made axes, knives, saws, hammers and nails from Zairian traders and sometimes from the missionaries. However, the elaborate ritual axes of chiefs

and notables are no longer made and the production of hoe blades, used at one time as currency, is obsolete (one blade, kabengele = 10 chickens).¹³

Similarly, weaving, reported to have been a men's occupation, is done on a small scale.¹⁴ In days before the introduction of industrial fabrics the Songye produced very fine cloth similar in quality and technique to that of the Bushong.¹⁵ The Kalebwe chiefdom was especially known for its madiba, patterned handkerchief size weavings, which served as another unit of exchange.¹⁶ Today essential household items such as mats are made but they are very basic in workmanship.

The two crafts which are still visibly in demand are those of basketry and pottery. Raffia baskets serving diverse domestic needs are coarse and rather simple although some refined polychrome design work, which seems to be done by both men and women for western markets, is sold along the main routes of Kalebwe and nearby Eki country where occasional vehicles pass.¹⁷ In the case of pottery, the traditional woman's activity, pieces are made exclusively for local use and some of these are very elaborate.¹⁸ The large water coolers found in every household are among the finest examples, elegant in shape and embellished with geometric designs in relief.

The wood carver's activities, which are of principal concern to this thesis, are socially ranked with the craft specializations even though the more lucrative objects produced are not only those

of profane usage such as mortars, pestles and ladles. They are rather masks and magical figures, objects relating to cosmological beliefs. Some of these ritual carvings are also being made today for the international art market. But regardless of the function of Songye sculpture, traditional or contemporary, the carver's trade tends to be a secret practice although it may be one of the most profitable.

Although the Songye depend in part on cash income to pay taxes, school fees and items of clothing, since independence their economy has reverted significantly towards a subsistence level. The withdrawal of Europeans led to a new phase of isolation and vulnerability. The main roads leading to and through Songye territory fell to ruin and some of the bridges collapsed. As a result commerce and trade with the area was reduced and cash income became more difficult to come by.

Exposure to westernization during the colonial period had brought an end to the widespread traditional market network. The Songye were active traders involved in exchanging goods especially with the Luba of Kasai and Shaba. They instituted the 'marché périodique' and participated at the important Sunday market in Lusambo where they came in contact with many other ethnic groups.¹⁹ Today trade is conducted mainly at the village level although the larger centres of population such as Kabinda, Cofwa, Lubao and Kisengwa do tend to attract people from the periphery.

Yet within the central Songye region the uneven distribution

of missionary posts as well as the location of the cotton compounds has clearly contributed to regional distinctness between the western and eastern Lomami areas. Most of the missions are located among the Kalebwe and Cofwe where vestiges of an infrastructure exists and with it the implications of westernization. Kabinda, being the provincial administrative capital and the centre of the diocese with its various Catholic orders, is, practically speaking, the port of entry to the Songye and so the most thriving commercial centre. From there, given that the rains permit, the only penetrable routes lead to the other missions in Cofa, Lubao, Cungu and the one protestant community in Kipushya.

The area of the Eastern Songye seems cut off from the activities of the west. Access to the area from the north through Lubao or from the south has been extremely difficult. Now with the renewed expansion of cotton cultivation trucks are penetrating the southern sector and company workers are levelling out the pot holes en route and clearing away dense vegetation and trees. The presence of the church is negligible - there is one priest in the entire area. Compared to the Kalebwe/Cofwe chiefdoms, among the Eastern Songye traditional patterns of life are much more evident.

So it is not surprising that the eastern region is the most feared, or at least talked about, by surrounding peoples for its practices of magic. However, interestingly enough the second area of great repute is that of Kipushya, west of the Lomami, where the rigid pentecostal doctrine has only superficially rooted out old customs and beliefs.

b) Research Topic and Approach

The size and remoteness of the Songye region may in part explain why very few recent field studies have been dedicated to these people. My interest in working on the Songye in the first place was aroused specifically by the dramatic quality of their striated masks. These pieces, highly esteemed in many public and private collections, seemed to afford great scope for research since virtually nothing was known about them. At the time, the topic of Songye figure sculpture was secondary to me since their characteristics and the documentation indicated many similarities in usage to a great deal of Central African magical statuary. By comparison the story of the masks was an enigma which therefore became the focus of my research.

After studying the literature on the Songye and the documentation of the collections in London at the Museum of Mankind and in Tervuren (Belgium) at the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale I felt totally confused about the function of the masks. Fragments of information were found, some of which I can now place in perspective although at the time they seemed mere speculations, unconnected and unexplained, yet repeated in various catalogues and general texts on African art. The earliest and most frequently quoted reports, laid down by R.P. Colle, J. Maes, E. Vatter and E. von Sydow, noted the appearance of these kifwebe masks in dances honouring guardian spirits, at funeral rites and investitures of chiefs and nobles and also in connection with death cults and curing rites.²⁰ Apart from the fact that Maes's work (and even more so that of Colle) focuses on the similar kifwebe masks of the Luba

rather than those of the Songye, the scanty collection of ideas from these authors, although not altogether incorrect, seemed merely to touch upon a range of possibilities without giving any insight into the overall meaning and social context of the masks.

The difficulty in trying to make sense of these findings was not only that they were obscure in themselves but also the general literature on the Songye did not provide any supporting evidence. Given the fairly sizeable bibliographic listings on the Songye, there are very few publications which merit special attention. Some of the ethnographic writings on the Luba such as those by Colle, E. Verhulpen and W.F.P. Burton have contributed comparatively more to our understanding of Songye society and culture than the numerous specific articles written by colonial administrators on the Songye region.²¹

Of all the early sources the two which are probably the most valuable as general references are those by Cyr. Van Overbergh and E. Torday & T.A. Joyce.²² Van Overbergh's voluminous monograph, although diffuse and somewhat pedestrian, is at least a thorough subject classification of early data collected by missionaries, travellers and administrators. The subsequent survey by Torday and Joyce, brief and vastly general, outlines some of the social and in particular the economic activities of the Songye. Unfortunately neither of the two publications provides an overall or in-depth view of the complex and diversified socio-political structure of the Songye chiefdoms. Moreover, the beliefs and practices relating to religion and magic are discussed superficially and so there is

very little scope for thought especially about carvings such as the bifwebe.

Of the specialized and scholarly field studies there are only a few which have been conducted in parts of Songye country. Among these should be included G. Wauters's 1949 publication on the bukishi society, an Eki institution of political and religious importance. Although Wauters's analysis suffers somewhat from obscure verbiage, his transcriptions of the myths contain a wealth of data on the signs and symbols of the cosmogonic world. This material, in particular, has not been developed by subsequent researchers despite its relevance to the Songye region as a whole.

In the sixties and seventies the work of the ethnomusicologist A.P. Merriam among the Bala sub-group resulted in the most prolific contribution, first with his ethnography on the village Lupupa Nyge and subsequent articles on music, basketry, the visual arts and social change.²³ Within his wide scope of investigation, Merriam is until now the only researcher who has published some new data on magical statuary and masks. Yet, in his somewhat weak interpretation of the exegesis, he failed to see the connection of ideas especially on the masking tradition even though some of his material is most revealing. In 1978, upon my return from field work, he published two additional articles which, much to my surprise, dealt mainly with the kifwebe society of the Songye.²⁴ However, these articles proved to be merely a thorough survey of pre-existing reports and hypotheses consolidated with Merriam's original fragments of data. They bring to evidence, very clearly, how little has been

known about the kifwebe tradition, its purpose, structure and symbolic meanings, while confirming the esoteric nature of these practices and the strength with which they have been guarded.

The shortcomings of Merriam's ethnographic work are partly due to the fact that his research was limited to a very small area of Songye country. Having tackled the topic of the masks he might have gained access to more satisfying results had he ventured beyond the Bala sub-tribe, beyond his familiar milieu of informants at Lupupa Ngye. As it happened at the time of his investigation a Belgian engineer/agronomist, K. Plasmans, working for the cotton company (COTONCO) in Eastern Kasai, was conducting extensive research on the oral history and ethnography of the Songye. Plasmans was particularly interested in the carvings of these people and so, while travelling on business throughout a large part of the central Songye region from 1955 to 1972 and the Kongolo area of Shaba from 1972 to 1974, he collected some two thousand figures and masks accompanied by the most comprehensive documentation on magical practices pertaining to these objects. His compilation of data consists of taped interviews in Songye and transcripts of interviews and myths translated into French, field photographs and studio shots of the collected carvings and catalogue notes on these pieces. The seriousness with which Plasmans undertook this study is seen in the consistency of his questionnaires and the attention given to transcribing literally his informants' answers. Although his field notes do not define the social context and tensions which gave rise to the bifwebe, they contain some outstanding data on masquerading practices. Plasmans did not publish any of his findings. Due

to personal circumstances he lost not only access to his own field material but he also lost the largest collection of Songye sculpture in Europe.²⁵

As I first learned of Plasmans and his activities from the Songye people, my preparation for field work was based only on the available published sources. I left for Zaire in June 1977 with hardly any guidelines to my topic, yet with a very clear purpose: that of uncovering and documenting the function of the bifwebe. In Kinshasa I spent six weeks photographing some statuary and the large collection of masks but this only intensified my goal without providing any answers. I did at this time obtain the thesis by M. Wenga-Mulayi on the similar white masks of the Luba which became particularly useful in tracing the structure and origin of the tradition, but only after I arrived at some conclusions of my own.²⁶

Once in the field the data which I was collecting dictated the scope of my investigation. In view of the paucity of literature on the Songye it was clearly necessary to begin a general investigation on myths of origin, social and political organization, religion and magic. In so doing, but without realizing it initially, I was embracing the essential aspects of Songye life all of which define the social context and the function of the bifwebe. I had gathered from the outset a great deal of documentation on figure sculpture and it soon became apparent that my topic on masks had to include statuary, since the two categories are related not only in certain stylistic aspects but also in the beliefs and practices of magic which arise from a specific social framework.

My investigation had begun in Kabinda, probably the most difficult point of departure not only because this village is a conglomerate of missionary orders and contemporary political officials but also because it is an admixture of peoples from different Songye sub-groups. However, as the seat of the renowned chief Lumpungu, it seemed to be a primary point of interest.²⁷

But in addition to this factor there was also a practical consideration. As indicated in the previous section, approaching the Songye region from the west, that is from Kinshasa via Mbuji Mayi was simply more feasible. In fact, despite initial research problems, Kabinda did prove to be a useful point of orientation for subsequent inland travel. Since I had no means of transport of my own I was obliged to rely on the help of the missionaries and the cotton company (ONAFITEX) which meant travelling first to their centres of activity and then setting out on foot as far as I could to surrounding villages. In some respects this unfortunate dependence did limit my area of investigation, although even if I had obtained a vehicle it still would have been impossible, given the time, the expanse of the Songye territory and its road network, to cover the region thoroughly.

I decided to concentrate on the Kalebwe and Cofwe areas since a number of the older Tervuren acquisitions and their documentation attribute the masks to these chiefdoms.²⁸ About half way through my field work, still groping with the essential questions on the subject, some informants encouraged me to direct my attention to the Eastern Songye. Thanks to them and the two Rev. Fathers at Lubao who made this tour possible by providing me with their Land Rover

and escort exclusively for this purpose, I entered a region of active masquerading practices and was finally able to see the bifwebe in performance and to interview members of its societies throughout many eastern chiefdoms (map 3). Also the topic of magical figures was more easily dealt with in this region, though relatively few pieces were seen in use on either side of the Lomami.

As far as the research itself was concerned, the ongoing problem was that of explaining the purpose of my inquiry. Initially mentioning the topic of the bifwebe seemed to be a sure way of losing informants after the first meeting. The most acceptable explanation to most people was that I had come to document the history of the Songye. However, this pretence was short-lived. On the basis of the social role of the people I sought out for interviews, the apparent secrecy of the meetings, and my eastward movements, all seemed to reveal my interest in masks and magic. As word spread to distant localities the interpretations multiplied, particularly those based on suspicions that I had come to seek magical power.

Explaining my position to informants involved in the masking societies was undoubtedly my most difficult task. From the outset I was locked in an inextricable paradox. On the one hand I assured them that I acknowledged and respected the secrecy of the bifwebe tradition, while on the other I was clearly attempting to pry into these matters. Their sternest argument of rejection was directed at my sex: women are prohibited from any knowledge or participation in these masking societies. I tackled this problem by trying to convince them in every way possible that such laws

could not apply to me as I was an alien, only visiting, and neither a woman of their society nor one recognized socially or even physically as such by many Songye. My appearance and seemingly 'male' clothing did on occasion raise doubts and it was not infrequently that people addressed me as Rev. Father. More important though, the nature of my research topic necessitated contacts with men, and although this did unfortunately alienate me from women in general, it contributed to my male role or identity, a fact which was recognized by society members.

In conducting the interviews I did not follow a set questionnaire but tried to keep the discussions fairly open while repeating the same material and building upon it. Due to technical problems and the short life span of batteries the tape recorder proved to be more of a nuisance than an aid. Working without it I felt less restrained and perhaps more attentive to the clarity and transcription of the data. Generally I preferred to conduct one-man interviews since group sessions tended to evolve into discussions between elders making it difficult for my translator to follow or intervene. However, often I had no choice in the matter although I tried to keep the number of participants down to four or five. It was my impression that most chiefs, ministers and members of the masking societies, insisted on group sessions not only because of certain rules of protocol but also because they could keep each other in check while also being safeguarded from suspicions by the presence of witnesses.

My biggest handicap with the field work was not knowing the

language. Uncertain about the political situation in Zaire following the first invasion of Shaba (Spring 1977) I felt I had to begin my work immediately upon arriving in Songye country. I did obtain some elementary lessons in Songye while still in London, but this preparation was inadequate without further in-depth study of the language. The weakness of this introductory attempt was due to the lack of published material on Songye. Apart from A. Samain's very simplified grammar and vocabulary which omits tone markings, the only other work is that of L. Stappers, a highly complex linguistic analysis written in Dutch.²⁹ Stappers does not include a classified word list in this work, but I was fortunate in obtaining from the Linguistics Department at the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale a card catalogue glossary with French definitions which Stappers compiled with his informant B. Lubanda.³⁰ With the assistance of the late Dr. Meeussen, director of the department, this material was indexed phonologically. Although somewhat limited in coverage, it still became one of my most useful sources.

In seeking interpreters I always managed to find someone who spoke French. Several of these people were exceptional in their comprehension of the research topic, its psychological problems and the importance of literal translation. Inasmuch as I would have preferred to work throughout my travels with these few individuals, had it been practically possible for them, it was necessary to choose local residents, often at the suggestion of the chief, since informants did not like the presence of outsiders at these discussions. For the large part the interpreters were secondary school boys or young teachers who were sometimes uncertain of the

esoteric and key terms relating to the subject of investigation. But as time went on I quickly acquired a specialized vocabulary and so was able to detect certain errors in translation. Many informants were puzzled if not suspicious about this, since I claimed not to speak their language and yet I seemed to recognize and react to the crucial points.

Apart from the language barrier and basic travelling difficulties I did not encounter any major obstacles. My reasons for leaving Songye country in April 1978 were simply due to a combination of physical exhaustion and saturation with the material. I realized the need to examine and study my data carefully and to write it up before new and significant questions could be formulated. I had discovered the purpose and function of the masks together with a great deal of material on statuary. I could see the interrelationship of these two sculptural forms within the social framework of magical control and manipulation. On the basis of this understanding, the carvings seen in the field and museum pieces discussed with informants using photographs, I now felt that a more meaningful examination could be undertaken of the different visual genres and styles in the central Songye region.

I would have wished to advance further with the botanical and zoological identification of species which are symbolically important to the different sculptural genres.³¹ Although I have compiled sufficient data to formulate the groundwork for further investigation, a great deal more time and expertise would have been required for the collection and preparation of specimens. I was

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fortunate in obtaining some samples of woods and leaves; however, it was simply not feasible to collect all the necessary parts of the various trees (including roots and flowers) or for that matter, the skins and skulls of animals which are needed for a scientific analysis. What is more, the gathering of botanical material in general was viewed by some as evidence of my desire to become a practitioner of magic.

I should also point out that given the geographic delimitations of my research, comparative questions between Songye and Luba masking traditions in particular could not be elaborated upon at this stage. Further fieldwork is not only necessary in the region of the Luba-Shaba, but also in a large part of Songye country which I have not covered.

My contribution to the study of Songye art has been to show how masks and statuary are used in magical operations to control political, social and personal tensions. Using new data on the origin of state formation it has been possible to provide evidence of succession problems and political rivalry which gave rise to the Songye masking tradition. The thesis examines the organization and membership of kifwebe societies and their effective exploitation of the beliefs and practices of 'evil magic'. The hierarchic role of the mask types is established and the signs and symbols of the entire kifwebe disguise are analyzed. Stylistically a distinction is drawn between two regional tendencies in the central Songye territory.

Contrary to the malign magic of the bifwebe, the magical function of figure sculpture ^(mankishi) is socially regarded as a benevolent means of ameliorating communal and individual ills. However, the making, usage and manipulation of statuary shows some important correlations between magical practices and symbolic expressions of masks and figures. While this work concentrates on defining the two main genres of statuary (personal and communal carvings) and their stylistic development in the central Songye chiefdoms, it also points to certain formal similarities between figures and masks which help to trace the origins of the kifwebe style.

Footnotes

- 1 K. Plasmans, Unpublished TS of demographic figures on the Songye region, Belgium, n.d., probably compiled between 1955 and 1974; O. Boone, Carte Ethnique du Congo, Quart Sud-Est (Tervuren: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, 1961), pp. 37, 38, 53, 55, 184, 217; A.P. Merriam, An African World, The Basongye Village of Lupupa Ngye (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1974), p. xiii.
- 2 G. Heenen, "Notes sur le District du Lomami", Bulletin de la Société Belge d'Études Coloniales, 30 (1923), p. 5.
- 3 Ibid., p. 6.
- 4 E. Torday and T.A. Joyce, "Notes Ethnographiques sur des Populations Habitant les Bassins du Kasai et du Kwango Oriental", 2, No. 2 (Bruxelles: Annales du Musée du Congo Belge, 1922), 15; L. Bours, "La Propriété Foncière Chez les Bekalebwe", Bulletin des Jurisdictions Indigènes et du Droit Coutumier Congolais, 9 (1936), p. 198.
- 5 Although my findings agree with those of Torday and Joyce in "Notes Ethnographiques ...", p. 34, about the division of labour in agricultural activities, according to Wissman's report (1888) in Cyr. Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, Collection de Monographies Ethnographiques, III (Bruxelles: Albert de Wit, 1908), p. 212, men were the daily cultivators.
- 6 Discussions with J. Schamper, economist for U.S. AID, working with Zairian department of agriculture, Kinshasa. Meeting took place in Kabinda, September 1977, while Dr. Schamper was surveying the Songye region for possibilities of an integrated agricultural programme.
- 7 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, pp. 211-214; Torday and Joyce, "Notes Ethnographiques ...", p. 34.
- 8 Heenen, "Notes sur le District du Lomami", p. 15; A.P. Merriam, "Social and Cultural Change in a Rural Zairian Village", African Studies Review, (1974), p. 347.
- 9 Torday and Joyce, "Notes Ethnographiques ...", pp. 33, 34.
- 10 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 421 (report by Schmitz).
- 11 Ibid., p. 33.
- 12 Bours, "La Propriété Foncière ...", p. 195.
- 13 Torday and Joyce, "Notes Ethnographiques ...", p. 17.
- 14 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 218 (report by Schmitz).

- 15 Torday and Joyce, "Notes Ethnographiques ...", p. 37.
- 16 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, pp. 217, 218.
- 17 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, pp. 219, 220 (reports by Schmitz and P. Le Marinel); According to A.P. Merriam's article, "Art and Economics in Basongye Raffia Basketry", African Arts 2 (1968), p. 16, today raffia basketry among the Bala is exclusively the work of young men.
- 18 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 221 (Ann. Musée Congo Ethn. et Anthrop. and report by Schmitz).
- 19 Torday and Joyce, "Notes Ethnographiques ...", p. 16; Torday, E., "Land and Peoples of the Kasai Basin", Geographical Journal, 36 (1910), p. 31.
- 20 Les Baluba, Collection de Monographies Ethnographiques, XI (Bruxelles: Institut International de Bibliographie, 1913), pp. 676, 677; Aniota-Kifwebe (Anvers: de Sikkel, 1924), pp. 36, 36; Religiöse Plastik der Naturvölker (Frankfurt: Verlags-Anstalt A.G., 1926), pp. 107, 108; Kunst und Religion der Naturvölker (Oldenburg I.O.: Gerhard Stalling Verlag, 1927), pp. 107, 108.
- 21 Les Baluba; Baluba et Balubaïsés du Katanga (Anvers: Edit. l'Avenir Belge, 1936); Luba Religion and Magic in Custom and Belief (Tervuren: Annales du Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, 1961).
- 22 Les Basonge; "Notes Ethographiques ...".
- 23 An African World, The Basongye Village of Lupupa Ngye; see bibliography for other articles.
- 24 "Kifwebe and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies Among the Basonge", Africa - Tervuren, 24, Nos. 3 and 4 (1978).
- 25 The collection of sculpture as well as the voluminous notes were sequestered as part of a divorce settlement. It was only after my return from Zaire that I was able to meet Mr. Plasmans and to compare impressions with him. With his assistance I contacted the notary public who had the notes and obtained permission to study the documentation and to reprint the negatives of the sculptures. The actual carvings were totally inaccessible. All of Plasmans' documentation cited in this thesis (typescripts and catalogue notes) is found in Belgium; however, the exact location of the material is confidential.

A different problem faced me over tracing the fieldwork done by N. Fairly, an American anthropology student who had resided for over a year in Bashimike, studying the political history of the Eki. I did not succeed in meeting Ms. Fairly, but her dissertation ("Political History of the Ben Ekie", State University of New York 1978) confirms my own view that among the

Eki the bukishi society minimized the need and importance of bifwebe masquerading.

- 26 "Etude Socio-Morphologique des Masques Blancs Luba au 'Bifwebe'", Diss. Université Nationale du Zaïre, Lubumbashi 1974.
- 27 J. Vansina, Introduction à l'Ethnographie du Congo (Bruxelles: Editions Universitaires du Congo, n.d.), p. 162.
- 28 Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, masks 30618, 30619, 30620, 30621, 51.35.4, 54.77.11; Dossier no. 473.
- 29 La Langue Kisonge (Bruxelles: Goemaere, 1923); Morphologie van het Songye (Tervuren: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, 1964).
- 30 Unpublished Songye vocabulary compiled between 1964 and 1968, Tervuren.
- 31 My interest and initial work on the identification of wood species used in African sculpture began with my master's thesis: "Wood as Material of African Artefacts, its Aesthetic, Symbolic, and Botanical Properties: A Case Study of the Wightman Collection in the R.O.M." (York University, Toronto, 1976).

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CHAPTER I

Introduction to the Origin and Structure of Songye Chiefdoms

a) Oral History: Origin of the Kalebwe Chiefdom

Linguistically and culturally the Songye are closely related to the Luba peoples. According to M. Guthrie's linguistic classification, Luba(ki), which is very similar to Songye, most resembles Proto-Bantu, the language of the earliest Central African iron age agriculturalists. His analysis places the pre-expansion nucleus of these inhabitants in the Kasai province, northwest of the present-day Luba-Shaba at 5° to 7° south latitude and 20° to 25° east longitude, an area encompassing a large part of the Songye region claimed by oral tradition to be the centre of the first elaboration of state structure.¹ The origin of their states, according to both Songye and Luba, is however the Lualaba Lakes District. This is supported by archaeological evidence, the earliest so far from the Lake Kisale sites where material dating from the 8th and 9th centuries was excavated.² With the reconstruction of Bantu protohistory still at the initial stages of research little can be said with certainty about early migrations and expansion of either of these two peoples. In the case of the Luba there is at least a significant source of oral tradition which comes into focus around 1500 with the arrival of an immigrant named Kongolo who founded their first empire. Where he came from, whether it was the north-east or north-west, remains enigmatic although a Songye origin is favoured.³ From historical perspective much of Luba cultural development is vague conjecture but, in comparison, that of the Songye, a group which seems of capital importance to the study of Bantu expansion in general, is more than

dismal. Not only is there a lack of archaeological and linguistic data but even oral tradition relies in many cases on interpretations from Luba sources.

In the following pages I present a Kalebwe account of state origin which begins with migrations from the Lualaba Lakes. The purpose in this is not only to give a Songye version of their oral history and relations to the Luba, and specifically the Hemba, but also to elucidate with new material some of the traditional aspects of their social and political structure. The latter is important to this thesis in that it provides evidence of tension within the polity which, in my view, gave rise to the Songye masking tradition. This unpublished account compiled and written in Songye by Kitumbika Ngoy is by far the richest, in comparison to material obtained from informants, and important in that the Kalebwe seem to have been the nuclear socio-political group of the Songye (ill. 1).⁴ It should be added that although I here use my translation of Kitumbika's manuscript which I was able to discuss with him, the very same account was also collected by Plasmans about ten years earlier, thus providing a valuable comparison for content and translation.⁵

The history of Kalebwe chiefs (chiefdoms) begins with the ancestor Kiobobo from Nyanza Nyasa.⁶ Kiobobo had three sons: the first Mutombo, then Ndala and finally Kalombo (fig. 1). When they grew up Kiobobo, who was a hunter, smith and nganga (magical practitioner), gave them the choice of one of these specializations. Mutombo chose to be a smith, Ndala a hunter and Kalombo a nganga.

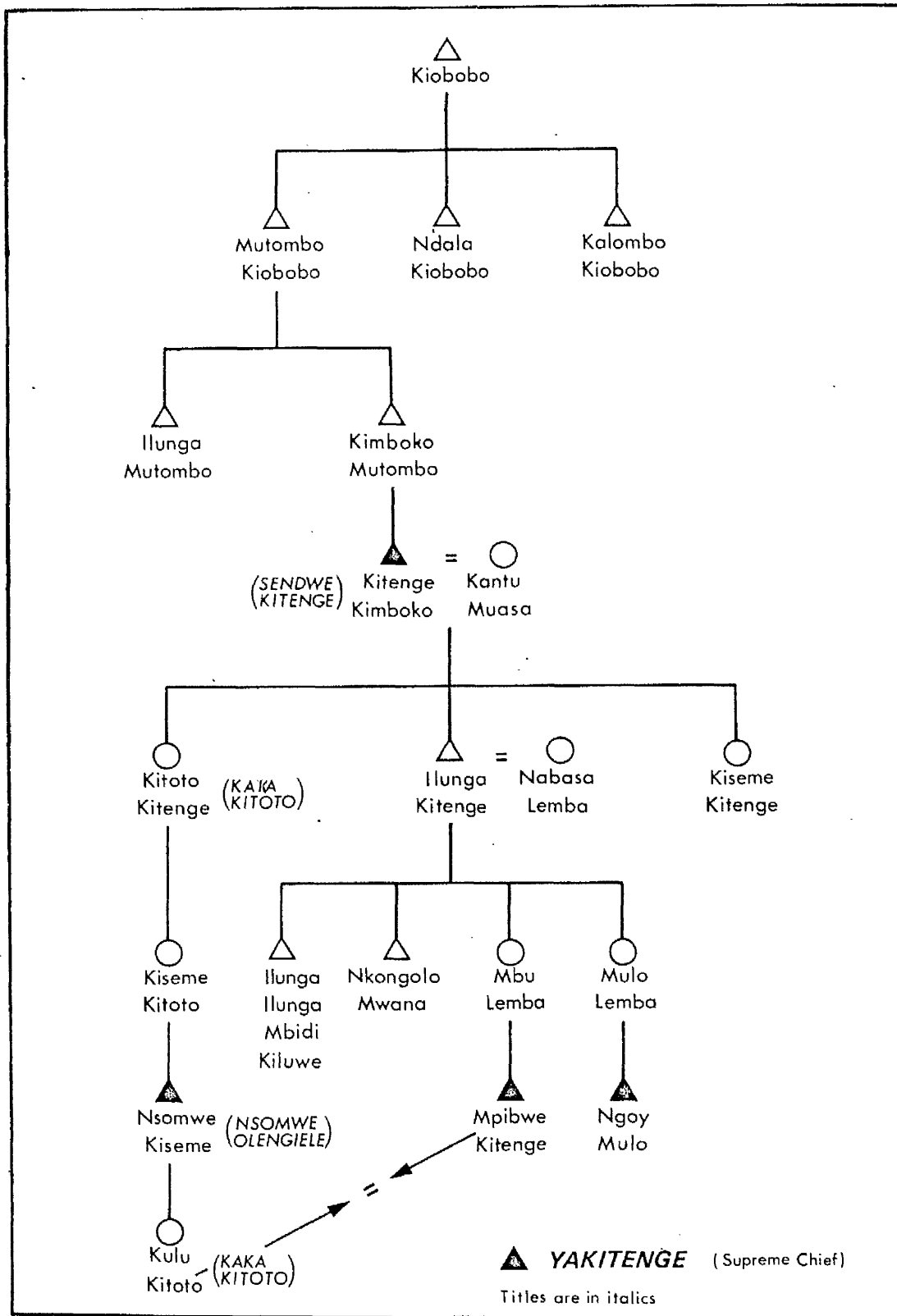


FIGURE 1. Ruling lineage of Kalebwe.

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Mutombo Kiobobo, who had two sons Ilunga and Kimboko, left in search of new land and settled at Lake Muero. When the time came for the choosing of professions Ilunga decided to collect bilase (helix-shaped white shells) and mambele (cowry shells) [... "chasseur d'eau qui ramasse ce que l'eau vomit"⁷] and Kimboko chose the forge. One day while bathing Kimboko found a kilase which his father told him to safeguard as it was a thing proper to chiefs. His brother Ilunga demanded the object from him, claiming property rights of his profession. Unhappy and enraged, Ilunga followed the Lomami river to Samba. As his wife bore him no children, prior to his death Ilunga entrusted the care of his people and goods to Kitumba, one of his followers. He told him that if someone were to come from the direction of their homeland attesting to be the child of Kimboko he was to give him all the goods.

Ilunga's brother Kimboko had a son called Kitengie who had also left Lake Muero to settle at Kuibwe dia Kitengie⁸ (Luanyo near the Lutobo River⁹). Two people of the Bena Kantu a Muasa were already inhabiting this land: Muilombe Makulo and Kaswa Makulo. They cultivated bipama (yam¹⁰), ndjiya and mutuwa (other species of yam), lundo (malundo: type of palm) and tu-umpu.¹¹ As they did not have iron tools Kitengie forged for them hoes, adzes, lances and arrows and also gave them the following seeds to plant: pondo, pondo a nkolua, pondo aluku, nyimu (peanuts),

nkunde (beans) and mabungi. Plasmans lists millet, beans, peanuts and pistachios; vernacular names not provided.¹² With their newly acquired weapons the Bena Kantu a Muasa went hunting and returned with an antelope (mbudi) offering it to Sendwe (smith) Kitengie. He took a small part but as he did not have a wife¹³ he gave it, together with some flour, to Muilombe for Kantu a Muasa to prepare. The rest of the meat he offered to the hunters. He then left for the forest where he cut down some palms, extracted wine from them, and brought it to the villagers. They drank and became intoxicated. One night, Kitengie went to Muilombe to tell him that he was hungry. Muilombe ordered his wife to prepare some food. When she brought it to Kitengie he began to speak to her of marriage. Muilombe had gone to discuss this incident with Kasua. Both men felt shame toward Kitengie as he had given them food and tools and shown them how to live. So, Muilombe decided to give him his first wife Kantu a Muasa, the daughter of Muasa a Kamina. Their parents had been against the marriage in the first place since they were of the same family. This reason prompted them to leave their homeland.¹⁴ The union of Kitengie and Kantu resulted in three children: first Kitoto (F), then Ilunga and the third Kiseme (F).

Kitengie told his men that he wanted to form an epata (residence of supreme chief; central governing body) and that it would be at ebwe (rock). Sendwe Kitengie then

became Yakitengie Kuibwe.¹⁵ For his investiture he ordered the sacrifice and preparation of a lamb. Mubwangie Mwadi refused to eat insisting on knowing first where Kitengie came from. Since Kitengie had already been with them for some time, Kasua, who had been sent to interrogate the chief, decided he could not ask him so he reported that Kitengie was a Muluba since these people were dispersed wanderers. Everyone was satisfied.¹⁶ For the wife given to him, Kitengie gave Muilombe the name Kimungu Sambu. Kimungu = title of cite¹⁷ so that all men knew that if they wished to become bubikale (also ba plural: ministers) they had to follow Muilombe's example. Hence Kasua gave Kitengie a male slave and the latter also changed his name to Kiana kia Ngombe. Kiana Ngombe = title of dipumba¹⁸. At epata Kitengie's eyaso (forge) was built so that he could make tools and weapons. When he finished a lance it was placed on top of ebwe; when he completed another it was placed underneath it. Then Kitengie planted the tree nkabokobo on the bed of eyaso and with it buried alive his daughter Kiseme to guard her father's dignity¹⁹.

Ilunga was angered at the fate of his sister and was subsequently banished by his father. He arrived at Kilushi where he found the people of chief Luengiela at war with the Buki bua Musongo Ndala. Ilunga helped them by teaching them how to forge and to fight with lances and bows and arrows. Since the people of Kilushi

defeated Buki, Ilunga took over their village and changed its name from Kinsakania to Ilunga Mpumpi. Then Ilunga organized them for battle against the Bahemba. They conquered them and settled on their land. There Ilunga married a woman called Nabasalemba and had four children: Ilunga a Ilunga Mbidi Kiluwe, Nkongolo Muana, Mbulemba (F) and Mulolemba (F) [sic].

When Ilunga died his eldest son Ilunga a Ilunga succeeded as chief but the Bahemba inhabitants told him to leave for the place of his father's origin on the other side of the Lualaba. Ilunga Ilunga left his brothers and sisters to guard their people and goods and departed with Kinyema, one of the elders. Following the Lualaba he bypassed the route for Kilushi and turned off above the Lomami at Samba a Kumusengie (Baluba Kosongo Niembo). There he found Kitumba. When Kitumba discovered that this man's ancestors were children of Ilunga a Kitenge a Kimboko a Mutombo Kiobobo he cried (wept for joy) and called all the men to greet their chief. He told Ilunga Ilunga that all the people and the land of Samba belonged to him as it had been left by his grandfather Ilunga a Mutombo Kiobobo.

One day Nkongolo Muana set out to look for his brother Ilunga Ilunga. Upon arrival close to Samba he hid near the water. Ilunga Ilunga's wives saw him as they went to fetch water and brought about the reunion between the two brothers. Ilunga Ilunga explained to Nkongolo how

it came about that he inherited the land of Samba and instructed him to continue the search for Kuibwe dia Kitengie. In the event of finding their grandfather Kitengie a Kimboko still alive Ilunga told him to return to get their sisters Mbulemba, with her son Mpibwe Kitengie, and Mulolemba, with her son Ngoie Mulo. But if he were to find him dead he was to remain there as chief. Arriving at Kuibwe Yakitengie, Nkongolo learned that their grandfather had already died and in his place ruled Nsomwe Kiseme, their nephew, the child of Kiseme Kitoto a Kitengie a Kimboko. Kaka Kitoto (title of Kitoto Kitengie), his grandmother, had made him Yakitengie of epata. She then left for Ekungu where she became a chieftainess. Nkongolo told Nsomwe that he had no right to rule as he was the child of a woman, of his sister Kiseme, and ordered him to leave. Nsomwe refused, reminding Nkongolo that he was the son of Ilunga Kitengie who had been banished by his father Kitenge a Kimboko. Hence Nsomwe proposed an ordeal. He suggested they throw lances to see whose would sink deeper into the ground and who would consequently win the land. During the night Nsomwe called his men to dig a hole and to place his lance in it. Task completed, they covered the hole with a mat on top of which they threw some soil. Fortunately it rained later and all their traces were erased. The next day Nsomwe Kiseme took a small calabash (kasupa kamungu²⁰) decorated with copper studs (bingala) and fastened it onto his genitals. Nkongolo Muana threw his lance first but

unsuccessfully. Then Nsomwe took a running start lifting high his knees. When the people saw the calabash attached between his legs they began to howl as they found this extraordinary. His singer sang to him "tala potadila, tala potadila" (look where you were looking), thus Nsomwe approached the hidden hole and sank his lance entirely into it. Nsomwe Kiseme was victorious. As a result of the miracle he was given the name Nsomwe Olengiele. His people were happy but then a battle arose between his men and those of Nkongolo during which the villages of Mukombo and Mukuku were destroyed. Defeated, Nkongolo and his people returned to Ilunga at Samba. Ilunga was angry and told his brother to return to the Bahemba. En route Nkongolo died and was buried at the village Kuyilunga near the Lualaba River.

At the news of Nkongolo's death Mpibwe Kitengie, son of Mbulemba, became his successor. Mpibwe Kitengie set out with his cousin Ngoie Mulo in search of the place of their grandfather Ilunga Kitengie. They reached Kilushi and were well received among all the Songye villages, for the people said, "here is the child of our chief who liberated us from the slavery of Buki". Mpibwe Kitengie replaced the old Songye chiefs who had been with Buki with his own men who knew him better. He then crossed the Lomami and the confluence of the Lukashi and formed a musumba (mùsùmbá - demeure provisoire²¹; Luba(ki), musùmbà - campement de chasseurs, de guerriers en pleine brousse²²)

at Kakonde ku Buila. There he decided to remain in hiding before discovering a place to settle for fear of encountering the same fate as Nkongolo Muana did with Nsomwe Olengiele. One day when his men went out hunting one of them found palm wine in the forest. They all drank and then the eldest instructed them to tie a piece of meat of the ntengu they had killed to the fallen tree trunk. These palms belonged to Kaka Kitoto kia Nsomwe (title; proper name Kulu: daughter of Nsomwe Kiseme). Kema (title) had the task of extracting wine from them and it was he who discovered what had happened and who was responsible for it. Upon reporting this to Kaka she invited the Baluba and offered chief Mpibwe four sheep. The men ate and were treated to palm wine. Kaka then ordered ntshikala (attaché de la distribution²³) to show the men to the houses where they could sleep, except for Mpibwe whom she decided to detain with her. According to further orders her lamine (guardian of chief's belongings) went to place the kipo (bracelet of blue beads; also means necklace) on the left hand of Mpibwe thereby announcing their marriage. Mpibwe accepted and sent a message to Ngoie Mulo. The latter was pleased since a means of acquiring land had presented itself. After Kaka and Mpibwe had their children, Mueni Kitengie and Ngoie Kitengie, Kaka invited her grandfather Nsomwe Olengiele to come and greet her husband. Nsomwe was insulted to be called upon by a younger man and refused.²⁴ On account of this Kaka persuaded Mpibwe to 'eliminate' him. War

was declared between the two sides after lukunga and kipasula (messengers) returned with the announcement of Nsomwe's refusal to leave muipata (v. act of ruling from epata). Mpibwe Kitengie was victorious. He killed Nsomwe Olengiele, decapitated him and buried his head at Mpuluila. This war [called Kibakungwila Muiyanda (le ronflement provenant du bosquet)²⁵] dispersed the Bekalebwe. As a result of their victory Kaka Kitoto gave Mpibwe a lupuna sulu (chief's stool) to sit upon and she pronounced him Yakitengie Kuibwe.

Kalunguisha ka Mulopwe from Musengie announced to Ilunga Ilunga a Mbidi Kiluwe that Mpibwe had married his grandmother (classificatory grandmother). Ilunga Ilunga thus swore that until his death he would never venture to see him. That is the reason why Yakitengie Kuibwe and Mulopwe of Musengie can never meet.²⁶ Kaka Kitoto and Mpibwe Kitengie did not get on any longer since she began to hear the people's mockery of their marriage. One day she questioned her husband about his origin. Mpibwe replied that he did not know his family very well as he grew up with his uncles and upon becoming a hunter (mpibwe) never returned to his parental home.²⁷ Kaka felt deceived by him and proclaimed that none of their children would ever become chiefs, instead the children of Ngoie Mulo would succeed. She then left Mpibwe and settled at Ekungu as chieftainess.²⁸ Mpibwe Kitengie remained muipata but upon his death the Bekalebwe called

upon Kaka Kitoto who invested Ngoie Mulo as Yakitengie
Kwibwe.²⁹

The string of events comprising the story line of this account suggests a historic process by virtue of its correspondence to a rather lengthy genealogy. Indeed certain aspects, if applied in comparative measure to the material already exposed on neighbouring areas, may serve historians to further the chronological reconstruction of migrations and conquests of the Luba-Lunda complex. However, the correlation of the list of events and heroes does not necessarily depict the reality of the past. For instance, some of my informants named the present chief Mutamba Lumpungu at Kabinda as the founder hero of the first Kalebwe chiefdom and conversely others, when referring to Lumpungu, used the names Sendwe Kitenge and Mpibwe Kitenge. Ideologically this is acceptable as Lumpungu may be acknowledged as the embodiment of Kalebwe dynastic rule, yet historically it is not only disputable but also distorted in time and space. On the other hand, this example does point to the significance and use of the story line as a "mythical charter" which gives reason to an existing socio-political and ritual order.³⁰

From the point of view of myth it shares certain common features with those of the Luba in its themes of migration, family conflicts, battles, conquest and incestuous relations, although it should be added that none of these deal with the supernatural. What makes it perhaps more intelligible, ideologically, is its resemblance in overall development to a creation myth as will be seen in chapter II. The first part up to Sendwe Kitenge's establishment of epata describes the progression to a desirable political and social order;

while the events following, beginning with Ilunga's departure from Lutobo, show the disintegration of this order and its re-evaluation. This process culminates with Mpibwe Kitenge and thereafter the political and social order is supposedly normalized. Seemingly a patterning of order/chaos/order prevails; however, the outcome, as in reference to succession, does appear to incorporate a historically based readjustment, probably resulting from lineage growth and its efforts to retain political control.³¹

Let us examine the myth's themes more closely. Kiobobo, the first ancestor, the forebear of epata rule is the source of cultural and mystical knowledge, transmitted through professions of the hunter, smith and nganga. What is important here is the associational link of these three specializations with the power of chieftainship and furthermore with ancestral sanctions. This is specifically pronounced in the case of the migrants to Lake Mueero, Ilunga and Kimboko. Ilunga is a "chasseur d'eau", a hunter who stakes claims on the products of his aquatic terrain, namely the shells of the lake which prove to be symbols of chieftainship reaped from an ancestral source. The dispute between the two brothers is the first hint of forthcoming struggles over succession rights between possible lineage candidates. It is perhaps significant that Ilunga's own weakness, which impels him to abandon his homeland, results in a fruitless marriage and the inheritance of his Samba chiefdom by his brother Kimboko's descendants.

Kitenge Kimboko, also referred to as Sendwe Kitenge, the smith, is the alien yet unchallenged culture hero of the Kalebwe noted for

the introduction of diversified and more efficient agricultural and hunting methods through the advancement of iron tools and weapons. Equally important, his marriage to Kantu a Muasa marks the breakdown of previous incestuous relations and asserts the restoration of exogamy. With his establishment of epata, that is chiefdom rule, the continuity of this union is sanctified. Symbolically this is alluded to in Plasmans' version of the myth where emphasis is placed on the wife's role as provider of water and fire, the cosmogonic elements which deliver and sustain life.³² Thus, although not stated in the myth, the central feature of epata is the sacred fire which burns perpetually, reaffirming the ancestral stronghold of the founders of Kalebwe rule, Kitenge and Kantu. The joint force of their union is also symbolized by the use of the rock. The myth states that when Kitenge makes lances on this rock, he places one on top of it and the next beneath, most probably representing the two migrant groups that settled (Luba(ki) ikala: to be, to dwell; starred form in Common Bantu: *-kàd-) at the ebwe (Common Bantu: *-bùè- stone), hence the name Kalebwe/Bekalebwe (bena/ba - ikala - ebwe) or 'the people who dwell at the rock'.³³ According to P. Pierrot, ku-nundu, which means 'high' refers approximately to the south, in orientation to the river flow, and therefore quite possibly to Kitenge's group which came from Lake Muero.³⁴ Then ku-shi meaning 'low', which is roughly the north, would designate the origin of the Bena Kantu a Mwasu. In effect Kitumbika explained, though somewhat vaguely, that these first 'Songye' settlers at Lutobo came from Maniema. They crossed the Lualaba and followed the Lomami upstream to Gandu. There they subdivided, one group pushed toward the Sankuru and the other remained at Gandu with Mwebele.

His descendants who moved up the Lomami to Nantwa were Kantu a Mwasa and Mwilombe a Makolo, the exiled incestuous couple that saw the arrival of Kitenga a Kimboko at Lutobo.

Ilunga's non-acceptance of the ritual sacrifice of Kiseme seems to be a turning point in the myth bringing into question Kitenge's pre-established order. The expansion which follows is but a series of conflicts and disjointed short-lived victories. Ilunga's triumph over Buki wins him the land of Kilushi and subsequently that of the Hemba, but the succession of his son is arrested.³⁵ Ilunga Ilunga is forced to leave by the Hemba, thus embarking on a prolonged search and an eventual return to the birth-place of Kitenge's epata. Even though he lawfully inherits the chiefdom of Samba his search for Kuibwe not only fails but terminates in ruptured relations between the two chiefdoms.³⁶ Nkongolo Mwana equally fails in realizing his brother's claims on Kuibwe and moreover proves to be a true anti-hero. In achievement and characterization he has little in common with the Luba divine rulers except in a generalized opposition to the desired attributes of a supreme chief. Nkongolo described by the Luba, the founder of their first empire, is a cruel, incestuous drunkard and a bad uncle, opposed and toppled by the refined royalty of Mbidi Kiluwe.³⁷ According to the Songye myth Nkongolo is alienated by the Hemba, unable to assert his patrilineal inheritance rights among the Kalebwe and is consequently rejected by his brother Ilunga at Samba. As a prospective leader he fails the test of strength and wits against Nsomwe Kiseme. Nkongolo does not even complete the full circle back to Hemba but dies en route and is buried near the Lualaba,

symbolically somewhere half-way, in no-man's land.

Nkongolo's failure to depose Nsomwe (Nkongolo's father's sister's daughter's son) brings about an important shift in the descent system from the patriline to the matriline. The curious incident of the genital calabash devised by Nsomwe during his dance of victory may allude symbolically to the assertion of the female line. From the genealogical data in the myth this is due to the lack of male descendants. Ideologically the phenomenon corresponds to the myth's pattern and would seem to relate in part to L. de Heusch's discussion of a Luba myth in which the descent rule is validated through crisis and change, although here the outcome is not proportionally equivalent to the set variable.³⁸ Using his schema, with modification, the pattern would appear as follows:

patrilineality - Kitenge Kimboko
crisis of patrilineality - Nkongolo Mwana
matrilineality - Nsomwe Kiseme
crisis of matrilineality - Mpibwe Kitenge

patrilineality + matrilineality - Ngoy Mulo

Let us reassess this. Kaka Kitoto made chieftainess of Ekungu and guardian of her father Kitenge's terrestrial inheritance invests Nsomwe Kiseme, the son of her daughter, and is therefore instrumental in bringing about the shift to matrilineality. The crisis arises with Mpibwe Kitenge who becomes husband of Kulu Kitoto, entitled Kaka and assumes thereby the role of supreme chief by means of concealed identity. He stakes claims on Kulu's land represented by the tying of meat to the palm trees, like one who possesses rights of chieftainship. Matrilineality is sustained but only in latent form since Kaka, descendant of his mother's father's sister, is

unaware of their kin relations and it is further strained at the exposure of the incestuous union, an element recalling the beginning of the myth (Mwilombe Makulo and Kantu a Mwasa). Succession problems are supposedly stabilized upon the nomination of Ngoy Mulo, Mpibwe's matrilineal parallel cousin, but in contrast to the anticipated pattern of the myth, as in de Heusch's Luba scheme, the choice of this candidate imprints a changing rule of succession. By investing Ngoy, Kulu Kitoto, like Kitoto Kitenge, does promote the maternal kin but primarily with the purpose of dissolving incest. She is thereby ritually identified with Sendwe Kitenge preserving the heritage of the founder-hero.

The incest taboo, redefined to include the distant kinship ties between Mpibwe and Kantu, suggests that the rule of exogamy applies to consanguine relations between any two people who can trace descent from Kiobobo either through the paternal or maternal line. The fact that this type of incest rule is introduced together with matrilineal reign upon an already existing patrilocal residence practice seems to be indicative, in this case, of a partly represented, hence changing, succession pattern which underwent an actual crisis, perhaps simply due to a lack of male descendants, and was therefore expanded to accommodate a bilateral system. The myth does not clarify this point altogether since matrilineality, incorporated with the Kalebwe-Hemba merging remains represented by the last supreme chief Ngoy Mulo. While the writings of Torday and Joyce³⁹, Verhulpen⁴⁰ and Vansina⁴¹ suggest patrilineal descent for the Songye, Merriam⁴² does note its bilateral aspect at least with the Bala sub-group. Plasmans, in his documentation of this same

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Kalebwe myth, includes an extensive genealogy continuing from Ngoy Mulo to the present informant chief Kitumbika, providing conclusive evidence of a bilateral pattern.⁴³ Although this may not be the case among all Songye sub-groups it seems to apply to the Cofwe and Eastern Songye as well, all of whom face the major problem of dealing with numerous potential successors and their supporters.

b) Ritual: Investiture of a Supreme Chief

The symbolic gestures of Yakitengie's investiture are a live performance based in part on the component elements of the recounted myth which strives at ritual identification with ruling lineage ancestors. It stands to reason, therefore, that one of the main conditions to be fulfilled by a prospective candidate was the ability to trace descent from Sendwe Kitenge. Whether through maternal or paternal kin the candidate had to possess sacred ancestral blood ties, extensive in depth in the case of the Kalebwe lineage and probably prone to much rivalry among contenders. Two other factors, age and wealth, which contributed to some tension, had to be accounted for. The eldest candidate had priority, but without a sizeable backing of lucrative resources for investiture payments, possibilities of his succession were minimized.

The nomination of a candidate first required approval from the living guardian of ancestral inheritance, the chieftainess entitled Kaka Kitoto whose ritual role was confirmed with the investiture of Ngoie Mulo. The request was presented to her through the gift-giving of a sheep. The bubikale or ministers of epata, descendant

recipients of titles issued by Sendwe Kitenge (i.e. cite, dipumba, lukunga, kipasula), were next notified. It is cite who summoned them, the supreme chief's most important advisor represented in the myth by Mwilombe, leader of the Bena Kantu a Mwasu. Upon their approval and acceptance of the chief's gifts, regional dignitaries were informed and also paid by the candidate. They in turn announced to the people the choice of the nominee after which the chief set out on his ritual passage to epata. First he was secluded at a place called kitumba (Luba(ki): accord secret, convention secrète, complot, conspiracy⁴⁴), corresponding to the name of Ilunga Mutombo's guardian entrusted with the pre-epata rule at Samba. In exegetical⁴⁵ meaning kitumba refers to the period prior to an infant's birth beginning with the rupture of the foetal membranes and the discharge of amniotic fluids. As a woman is ready to give birth so the Kalebwe are ready to receive their new Yakitenge. Yakitenge, like the infant, is ready to be born emerging out of water, that is, out of the ancestral domain. The residence period at kitumba, which varied in length according to the chief's ability to gather more goods, was the phase of liminality of the investiture rite, meaning, the intermediary stage between the separation from the secular village life and the incorporation of the chief into the sacred residence at epata.⁴⁶ His displacement from kitumba to epata took place during the dry season following the bush fires by association when the hunt is at its peak and just prior to the emergence of new plant life. This passage was scheduled at night in secrecy. The chief could not touch the ground during this mystical delivery into a new sphere of life and was carried in a palanquin through the bush rather than along the regular paths.

Once at epata he was transported directly to its heart, that is, to the ebwe where the sacred fire was rekindled and where he remained seated and awake until noon the following day. The food, consisting of kinkanka (boiled and mashed plantain bananas), byashi (manioc meal) and a red rooster (in this context the colour red is symbolic of strength and courage), was prepared by a dwarf, and, at the outset, administered by a mother of twins (pamba), twice from each dish, with a spatula (mutengwa) symbolizing her status.⁴⁷ While so doing the pamba hurled a series of insults at the chief, testing the strength he would have to endure during his reign. Physical anomalies such as dwarfs, including twins as well as their parents, are considered to be charged with a particular mystical, yet also ambivalent power, analogous to that possessed by the chief. With respect to this point my version of Kitumbika's myth omits the significance of twins which recurs during the investiture ceremony in association with Kaka Kitoto's successor, a seemingly important ancestor who was the first pamba. Following the feeding, the chief ate the remainder of the food privately - traditionally he was covered by raffia cloth - an act corresponding to Luba restrictions imposed on divine kings. At the same time a smith tapped on a piece of iron (nyindo) sonorously expressing the relationship of chief and smith.

The following morning the chief dressed in ceremonial apparel comprising a gathered floor-length raffia skirt (kilamba) generally with a geometric design at the fringes, a blue beaded necklace with leopard's teeth (kipo), a leopard's skin tied from the waist, a walking cane some seven feet in height and bulbous at the bottom end (elanga), and a head-dress (kituto). The latter was described as

made of raffia with leaves of the tree mudiantundu and blue feathers of a mulubwalubwa bird arranged on top. This may be open to some doubt as I have not seen the head-dress of Yakitenge or any other one arranged quite in the same fashion. The supreme chief at Sangwa did wear an arrangement of feathers but brown in colour, from a hawk (mumba) (ills. 2-4). Yanjibu of the Cofwe and many other regional chiefs visited wore a cap made of raffia fibre dyed black and covered with bilase shells like those in the myth discovered by Kimboko to be symbols of chieftainship (ills. 5, 6). In general it should be noted that there is variation in the ceremonial dress of Songye chiefs just as there is variation in their political institutions (ills. 7-9).

In his apparel the chief together with his first wife, myandaku, dalamumba (title of sister) and other dignitaries moved to a place called pamba kitoto, a sacred burial ground designated by a mpafu tree. Here white kaolin (ntoshi) was sprinkled into his face as a sign of purification before invoking the ancestors and honouring them with a cup of palm wine and sacrificial blood from a red chicken. He then tested his worth with the ancestors by walking on a log across the Lutobo River. In the midst of the crossing he threw a kipo bracelet into the water returning the emblem that Kaka Kitoto bestowed mistakenly on Mpibwe Kitenge back to the ancestral mainstream. Should he, however, have fallen into the river he would have been rebuked as the Yakitenge. Returning to epata the chief was led to kashibo kamiko (straw hut⁴⁸) where he was to commit incest with dalamumba, his sister, after which they parted through opposing doors ritually ridding themselves of previous incestuous offences of

Muilombe and Kantu, and Kaka and Mpibwe. The following morning the chief was dressed once again in full apparel, blindfolded and set on a path leading to the nkabokabo tree in the centre of the village.⁴⁹

A musician directed him by beating out a coded message on the lubembu (double metal gong) as executed for Nsomwe Olengiele during the throwing of lances. He was told to walk like a chief, thus seeking the origin of Sendwe Kitenge as his predecessors did. The nkabokabo recalls the sacrifice of Kiseme and symbolizes the protection of the first ancestral spirit of epata rule. Arriving at the tree the chief embraced it and proclaimed self-praise (kwisamuna) for strength shown in reaching objectives, thereby calling on the ancestors for recognition. The final return to epata was commemorated by the chief's performance of the dance called kutomboka musanga which resembled the gestures executed by Nsomwe Olengiele.⁵⁰

In the case of the Luba, Burton explains that it provided "evidence that the final choice of a chief [had] been ratified by the dead".⁵¹

This is certainly applicable to the Songye, however it would seem that the specific reference to Nsomwe arouses deeper implications. In his defeat of Mpibwe, Nsomwe demonstrated supposedly superior physical strength and skill. In reality though, his victory was gained through shrewdness. The idea of preparing a hole for his lance to sink into was only part of the trick, the essential aspect being the diversion of the crowd's attention to his embellished, unusual genitals. He bewildered the spectators by what they comprehended as an element of the miraculous, the supernatural, conjuring up an association to magical practices of the nganga and, by association, those of malevolent practitioners - witches and sorcerers. As revealed at the beginning of Kitumbika's myth, the

specialization of the nganga, initiated by Kiobobo, is linked to the chief and therefore socially approved, hence references to malevolent magical practices must be obscured. In Luba Van Avermaet defines kutomboka as a dance executed during investiture, as well as a dance of warriors setting off into battle, both occasions associated, in different measures, with the shedding of blood.⁵² During Luba investiture the mulopwe was fortified like a victor at war and his supernatural power consecrated by the drinking of sacrificial human blood from a decapitated victim or, as Burton described, from the ritual massacre of an entire tributary village.⁵³ Human sacrifice may well have existed in Songye investiture for the myth makes known that Nsomwe's victory over Nkongolo, hence his supremacy of Kuibwe, resulted in the annihilation of two villages, Mukombo and Mukuku. Later Nsomwe himself was decapitated in recognition of Mpibwe's succession. Thus, symbolically, the shedding of blood associated with Nsomwe's dance connotes strength and courage as positive attributes of a warrior and chief yet, in reference to the nganga, it reveals the ambivalent nature of mystical powers.

Having gained approval from the living and the dead for his superior human qualities, Yakitenge was seated on a lupuna sulu (chief's stool) with a raffia mat set underneath it and a leopard's skin on top (ills. 10-12). Thereupon it was proclaimed that the stone belongs to Yakitenge, that all the people and all muipata land belongs to him who is paramount. Like Luba divine kings endowed with sacred and supernatural powers Yakitenge began his reign complying with taboos distinguishing his behaviour and physical being from the norm. This meant that he could not be seen leaving epata,

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eating or drinking publicly, showing grief, shaking hands with men,
and having sexual relations with myandaku during the day.⁵⁴

c) Character of Kalebwe, Cofwe and Eastern Songye Chiefdoms

Traditionally the Kalebwe comprised the most extensive centralized political and social unit among the Songye. Their area of control populated with vast villages stretched from Kabinda to the Lomami River, from Cofa (Tshofa) to Kamana. Today the same savanna appears practically empty and the traditional political system exists only in the memory of chiefs such as Kitumbika. The crumbling of this empire began in the 1870s with Tipo-Tipo's Arab razzias, the arrival of Belgian colonists, wars with neighbouring sub-groups and consequent internal conflict over succession.⁵⁵ It appears that Lumpungu Kaumbu, the acclaimed chief at Kabinda, contributed to the disintegration of the system. Dealing first with the Arab profiteers and then with the Belgian administration, he succeeded in being inducted by the colonists as supreme chief of the Kalebwe. Those who sought the benefits of his protection subjugated themselves and paid tribute to him while the northern Kalebwe (Yangongo) remained silent supporters of the Batoto lineage (Sendwe Kitenge's descendants). Lumpungu was an alien of Eki origin, recognized only as kimankinda, a warrior hero but never invested as Yakitenge. According to Plasmans' notes, epata was closed in 1916 with the last chief Ngoie Muiyaso.⁵⁶

The pyramidal political network of the Kalebwe was for one thing too centralized to retain control throughout a prolonged period

of upheaval. With internal opposition to the ruling elite and the establishment of the colonial government, the hierarchic structure fell prey to their decentralizing process which sought to cope administratively with the large geographic area. Similarly organized smaller political units such as the Cofwe were equally battered by this course of events but, although greatly weakened, managed to sustain a fragmentary rule of Yanjibu, their paramount chief. The Bala, studied by Merriam, were left with mere vestiges of traditional organization.⁵⁷ But, distant from the main trading and administrative centre of Kabinda, the multiple chiefdoms of the Eastern Songye comprising the Bena (people) Sala, Sangwa, Kafuma, Kiloshi, Mumbo, Munga, Muo, Kisengwa, and the dissentient Kalebwe group, the Ebombo, still exercise traditional authority alongside representatives of the contemporary regime and even surviving colonial appointees (map 3). To begin with, control and unity in these smaller-sized chiefdoms was more feasible. Rivalry over succession did not result in disruptive effects as among the Kalebwe even though these chiefdoms possessed several ruling lines which, like the Kalebwe, traced descent bilaterally. Conflict was partly reduced since lineages were not extensive in depth, and legitimacy of contenders was more certain. However, the main feature rested in the controlled distribution of power within the political mechanism, possibly instituted in reaction to the dominance of the Kalebwe and similarly organized Luba rulers.

In comparison to the former absolute rule of the Kalebwe supreme chief, those of the existing eastern chiefdoms are elected into power from lineage leaders and only for a limited term ranging

from three to five years. During their period of tenure these chiefs, including most of their dignitaries, can as well be deposed or occasionally re-elected depending upon the consensus of the populace.

Among the Kalebwe the central governing body of epata consisted of the bana bua, members of Yakitenge's family, and the bubikale or ministers chosen by the chief himself among regional titleholders. The bana bua were guardians of the chief's personal property, his weapons, magical statuary and offerings received, with the exception of cikala who acted as his immediate delegate. The council of ministers headed by the cite provided the liaison between the chief and the regional echelons and dealt with matters such as the collection of tribute, judicial affairs, war and the maintenance of epata. The largest regional unit under supervision of Yakitenge consisted of several villages ruled for a five year term by a sub-chief, kitunga fumu, and individual villages in turn were sectionally administered in three year terms by the fwa tusulo. Both of these chiefs who were probably lineage landholders were also assisted by councils of ministers representing the village elders, the bakulu. As these titleholding elders could rise up the hierarchy from the village level to epata they seem to have formed a network of power and control exceeding that of the lineage representatives. The alliance of Yakitenge and bakulu provided reciprocal advantages. The bakulu attained political status and Yakitenge maintained a stronghold of supporters.

The Cofwe probably had a similar hierarchic model, perhaps less

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intricate in view of their smaller size although that is difficult to assess observing only a fragmentary structure. From the limited data obtained it appears that the bana bua, members of three ruling lineages, the Sanca, Bala and Lomami, shared greater governing power than among the Kalebwe constituting the chief's central decision-making corpus. Today they alone serve Yanjibu as his ministers. Regional chiefs like those of the Kalebwe, are short term lineage representatives nominated by Yanjibu for a period of four or five years, and although their function is ill-defined they seem to have been controlled by an entourage of other bana bua and supporting bakulu.

In contrast to the Kalebwe and Cofwe, among the eastern chiefdoms the political system is still today characterized by lineage identity. Although there is some variation among the chiefdoms, lineage heads function as sub-chiefs (bamfumu) generally in hereditary life-long succession exceeding the supreme chief's term of office. In most cases the ministers, here called tuhumba, rise from the rank of these sub-chiefs and remain in office for the term of one muhata or more according to their efficiency. The supreme chief, bearing the name of the founding hero of that ehata, also appoints members of his family to a cabinet which supervises land use and distribution. By far the most important dignitary at ehata is cite, chief of the ministers from a specific lineage, whose extended reign ranging from nine to twenty years or more seems to have provided continuity and control amidst the changing faces of the governing body (ills. 13-16). The bakulu do not distinguish themselves as a specific group among these chiefdoms, yet being recognized and consulted by the bamfumu they probably made their presence felt within the entire political hierarchy.

Footnotes

- 1 M. Guthrie, Comparative Bantu (Farnborough: Gregg International Publishers Ltd., 1971), II, 10, 11.
- 2 J. Vansina, Kingdoms of the Savanna (Madison, Milwaukee, London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p. 35; T.Q. Reefe, "A History of the Luba Empire to c. 1885", Vol. I., Diss., Berkeley, University of California, 1975, p. 150; J. Nenquin, "Notes on Some Early Pottery Cultures in Northern Katanga", in Papers in African Prehistory, ed. T.D. Fage and R.A. Oliver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 237.
- 3 Vansina, Kingdoms of the Savanna, p. 71.
- 4 "All the Problems of Our Ancestors, the Bena Kantu a Muasa and the Bena Yakitengie", (Balunga: 1956), n. pag. The Songye manuscript was translated into French and then English in October 1977 in Lubao with the help of A-M. Kouzeleas-Nyembo, born Lubao 1950, university training, Louvain, Belgium. Kitumbika Ngoy, born 1888 in the village Kashishi, Kalebwe chiefdom, claims to have been invested as the Yakitenge Kwibwe (title of Kalebwe supreme chief).
- 5 "Histoire des Bekalebwe", unpublished TS, Belgium, passages numbered; From interviews with Kitumbika Ngoie, conducted with the assistance of Kiofwe M. Potien. French translation by Nkongolo-Buana Floribert, teacher at the École Normale in Kabinda, 1964-65. All direct citations or my English translation of citations from this typescript are enclosed in square brackets.
- 6 Plasmans, "Histoire des Bekalebwe", Ch. II, no. 1.
- 7 Ibid., Ch. II, no. 7.
- 8 Descriptive name meaning "the rock of Kitengie". Throughout the manuscript there are discrepancies in the orthography of names (i.e. Kitengie, Kitenge; Muasa, Mwasa); forms which appear most frequently are used in the presentation of the myth. In further discussion I use the more common linguistic transcription (i.e. Kitenge, Mwasa, Kalebwe, Ngoy).
- 9 Plasmans, "Histoire des Bekalebwe", Ch. II, no. 16.
- 10 Stappers, unpublished Songye vocabulary.
- 11 Plasmans, "Histoire des Bekalebwe", Ch. II, no. 18.
- 12 Ibid., Ch. II, no. 20.
- 13 Ibid., Ch. II, no. 24.
- 14 Kitumbika explained that they were exiled from Nantwa by their grandfather Bwange Namwadi.

- 15 Title of Kalebwe supreme chiefs meaning 'Kitengie of the rock'; the honorific prefix ya derives from yaya which means 'father'.
- 16 Plasmans, "Histoire des Bekalebwe", Ch. III, nos. 12-17.
- 17 Ibid., Ch. III, no. 4.
- 18 Ibid., Ch. III, no. 4.
- 19 Ibid., Ch. III, no. 18.
- 20 nsupa: calabash (Stappers, Songye vocabulary).
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 E. Van Avermaet (in collaboration with informant B. Mbuya), Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, Annales du Musée Royal du Congo Belge, Ser. in -8^o, Linguistique, Vol. 7 (Tervuren: Commission de Linguistique Africaine, 1954), p. 646.
- 23 Plasmans, "Histoire des Bekalebwe", suite Ch. V, no. 44.
- 24 Plasmans' version states that Nsomwe refused to see Mpibwe because he was told that he was a Muluba (suite Ch. V, no. 51).
- 25 Plasmans, "Histoire des Bekalebwe", suite Ch. V, no. 61.
- 26 Ibid., suite Ch. V, no. 64.
- 27 Clarified by Plasmans' translation (Ch. VI, no. 7).
- 28 Plasmans, "Histoire des Bekalebwe", Ch. VI, no. 11.
- 29 Ibid., Ch. VI, no. 14.
- 30 T.Q. Reefs, "Traditions of Genesis and the Luba Diaspora", History in Africa, 4 (1977) 186.
- 31 M.P. Carroll, "Levi-Strauss on the Oedipus Myth: A Reconsideration", American Anthropologist, 80 (1978), 813.
- 32 Wauters, L'Esotérie ..., pp. 233, 234, 236.
- 33 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 184; M. Guthrie, Comparative Bantu, II, 120, 129. From personal communication with H. Carter and J. Knappert, Linguists at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, ba - ikala - ebwe becomes "Bekalebwe" probably by the coalescence and elision of the first and second set of vowels respectively (a + i = e, ꞑ + e). During my field work the appellation "Bena Kalebwe", bena meaning people, was occasionally also used, most often by the Eastern Songye.

- 34 Unpublished TS on the origin and organization of Songye political structure, in Plasmans' documentation, Belgium, pp. 2, 3. P. Pierrot was a colonial administrator among the Kalebwe, Eastern Kasai.
- 35 Sect. Buki-Kiloshi see O. Boone, Carte Ethnique du Congo, Quart Sud-Est (Tervuren: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, 1961), p. 44, map p. 46.
- 36 Ibid., map p. 134 for chiefdom of Samba.
- 37 L. de Heusch, Le Roi Ivre ou l'Origine de l'Etat (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p. 31.
- 38 Ibid., pp. 102, 103.
- 39 "Notes Ethnographiques ...", p. 13.
- 40 Baluba et Balubaïsés ..., pp. 184, 185.
- 41 Introduction à l'Ethnographie du Congo, p. 164.
- 42 "The Bala Musician", in The Traditional Artist in African Societies, ed. W.L. d'Azevedo (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 251. See also 'descent' and 'incest' in An African World ..., pp. 184, 141, by Merriam.
- 43 "Histoire des Bekalebwe", Ch. VII.
- 44 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 748.
- 45 V. Turner, "Planes of Classification in a Ritual of Life and Death", in Reader in Comparative Religion, ed. W.A. Lessa and E.Z. Vogt (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 154.
- 46 A. van Gennep, The Rites of Passage (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 21.
- 47 Merriam, An African World ..., p. 212.
- 48 In Pierrot's typescript on the origin and organization of Songye political structure, p. 20, this hut is called nshibo ya mambo. Kitumbika referred to another straw hut, kashibo kamambo, which was used as the chief's temporary residence at epata during his investiture.
- 49 I am not certain about the location of this tree; it is also possibly found at epata.
- 50 Burton in Luba Religion and Magic ..., p. 22, calls this dance kumutombola.

- 51 Ibid., p. 22.
- 52 Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, pp. 709, 710.
- 53 Luba Religion and Magic ..., pp. 23, 24.
- 54 Data on Yakitenge's investiture were obtained from interviews with Kitumbika Ngoy in Lubao, October/November 1977.
- 55 Merriam, An African World ..., pp. 7, 8.
- 56 Unpublished TS "Histoire de la Famille Yakitenge Kwibwe", Belgium, p. 6.
- 57 An African World ..., pp. 264, 265.

CHAPTER II

Cosmology

a) The Divine Creator and the Cosmos

The Songye speak of a single god, Efile Mukulu, a god acknowledged as a supreme being, a divine entity, a progenitor of cosmic bodies and elements and creator of man. The contextual meaning of these generalized, familiar notions is best exposed through the dimensions of an Eki creation myth collected by Wauters in the late forties.¹ His data derives from bukishi initiations, rituals concerned with the transmission of socio-religious teachings, which by the time of my field work in 1977/78 had practically died out, at least among the central Songye sub-groups. What I was able to obtain were fragmentary explanations of religious beliefs, that is, those upheld in daily orientation to a spiritual hierarchy. To elucidate and add to the scope of these beliefs, which are essential for subsequent discussions of magical practices and symbolic associations relating to masks and figure sculpture, I propose first to review very briefly Wauters's cosmogonic findings.

Chronologically genesis unravels as follows. Efile Mukulu, the eldest and first, embodiment of both sexes, brings into existence eight children. These are: nguba - the sun, mwenji - the moon, lukenene - the star, mema - water, kapia - fire, lupapi - the wind, nkongolo - the rainbow and finally kabea ka musongo - the earth. There is no apparent order or even purpose to this initial creation which gives rise to chaos expressed as a dispute between the sun and the moon over rights of seniority. Efile intervenes to mediate

the affair, marking the beginning of the second phase of cosmic development. He resolves the conflict by redistributing his line of children according to specific duties, thereby setting the evolutionary forces into motion. The sun, Efile's male child, his perfect reflection, is credited with seniority, set away in its own realm and told to observe man and be his provider. Fire chooses on its own initiative to reside next to the sun, to become its extension on earth ensuring that no man consumes anything raw. The moon, consenting to self-sacrifice for man, is divided into two parts embodying the generative power of Efile: Mbuu Mukulu Mukungu, the male, and Mbula Mukulu Mukungu, the female represented by Venus. Mbuu, the phallus, is to separate men on one side and women on the other while Mbula, the womb, is to distribute these children. The moon thereby becomes the shadow and conscience of Efile the creator. As the ordering of tasks continues closer preparation for the terrestrial domain becomes apparent. Water, a female element, is to deliver man into physical life already endowed with an individualized mental force emitted from a star represented by Aldebaran. The wind is to assume the role of collector and distributor of bikudi or human consciousness, working together with the rainbow its messenger and agent of interaction between the elements. The rainbow, also called Nkongolo-Bea (l'arc-en-ciel parfait), and Nkongolo-Nyoka (l'arc-en-ciel serpent) is associated with terrestrial waters because he stops the rain and ties the source upstream ("... l'arc-en-ciel qui lie [barre] la pluie, qui lie la source à l'amont"). The earth is to become the matrix of the human realm. Its purpose comes into being in the next stage of creation following a second conflict between the sun and the moon. This dispute arises upon the

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sun's indifference at the temporary death (or passage) of the moon. Efile decides to separate them, sending the moon and other children into ("the storm") their own space. There, first the earth appears flooded by rain, then the wind and rainbow arrive to collect all water in sources. After another four days of rain the body of the earth blossoms with plants and trees. During this last stage of development Efile creates kafukufuku, a bat, symbolized by another star, who transforms the forces of cosmic elements into the final form of physical life on earth. He is the ancestor of animals and man as well as the first agent of death who expedites the recycling of bikudi from the womb of the earth back to the original realm of the sun.²

According to this myth Efile Mukulu is the personification of a divine force called Mukungu. He is therefore also the first and the eldest ancestor as well as the entity of cosmic bodies and elements. Creation, or the evolution from cosmos to man, is the expansion of the power of Mukungu growing in complexity and being readjusted in motion by its own inherent aspect of Efile. As we perceive this development, punctuated by Efile's periodic intervention, we descend through temporal and spatial layers down to earth. The appearance of man seemingly brings to rest evolution and initiates a cyclical dynamic pattern upon the upward movement of bikudi. These human elements are said to return to Efile through the inverse process, then, after a lapse of time, they gravitate back to earth according to cosmic laws of creation. The life cycle becomes self-perpetuating with Efile diametrically opposed to and temporally distant from man. But, deviation from this pattern is possible, for man, by virtue of

his life on earth, does determine the path of his kikudi. Further on, the Eki myth provides the explanation that dominant primal instincts deprive the kikudi of reincarnation, the spirit (mukishi a balemine) being condemned to eternal wandering.³

This movement of bikudi and displaced spirits, of closest concern to the living, exposes different dimensions of the cosmogonic process when conceptualized through earth-bound spacio-temporal values. Cosmic levels are hierarchically ordered in relation to degrees of interaction with the physical realm. From my field findings one such schema described by the Kalebwe chief, Kitumbika Ngoy, serves to exemplify this order.⁴

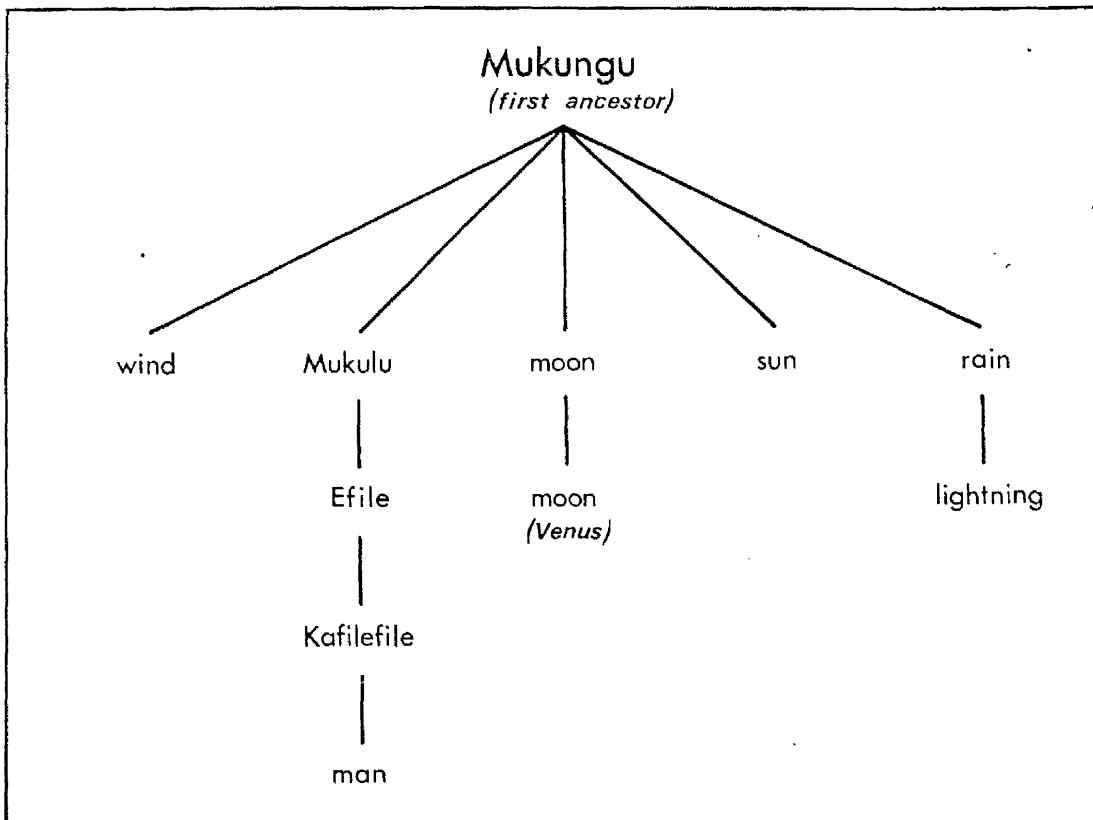


FIGURE 2. Cosmic hierarchy.

In comparison to the chronology of the Eki myth it is the "resonating or resounding"⁵ divine force, referred to as Mukungu, which is here personified at the apex as the first ancestor and creator but of only a select number of essential agents: sun and moon, rain and wind and Mukulu an "eldest" son. Mukulu's identity and purpose for being among this generation of cosmic bodies and elements was vaguely defined. To the Songye it is self-evident to say that he is the son of Mukungu and the father of Efile. The implication is one of a multi-local entity existing in the triad Mukungu, Mukulu, Efile (or Efile Mukulu √Mukulu - proper name of god) which permeates and characterizes the three uppermost levels. Following the schema, within the realm of Efile, an extension of the moon appears which is associated with Venus. This concept coincides with the procreative lunar duality explained in the Eki myth and similarly upheld in Luba cosmogony, yet it is equally reminiscent of the conflict and separation between the moon and the sun referred to by both the Songye and the Luba.⁶ God had said he would send the moon and other elements away from the sun into the storm. The parallel presence of lightning, descended from the rain, seems to allude to the storm, to that outburst of 'celestial waters' which set off the formation of the world, later to be stabilized by the wind and the rainbow. Among the Songye and clearly among the Luba the moon is associated with the waters of above, thus to the rain and inauspiciously to the storm, just as nkongolo, the rainbow, is to terrestrial waters.⁷ Although somewhat unclear in Kitumbika's diagram, Efile does create man following this reference to the storm. One of his sons, Kafilefile (pejorative name for god), projects hatred and envy toward other men and is consequently expelled by Efile

from life on earth. Kafilefile remains the antagonist trapped between man and Efile.

Re-examining the Kalebwe configuration, man looks upward at two distinct spheres of reference: all that is in rank with and above Efile represents the creative and indestructible elements of the universe; all that is below him is subject to change and uncertainty. Efile is the intermediary, the embodiment of universal vitality, and, as man's creator, his closest reference to divinity. Spirits of the deceased are said to seek the path to Efile, yet it is not this god who is venerated, rather those spirits who have proven their benevolence by reaching or interacting with his domain and who are believed to be the direct providers of good fortune. Hierarchically, spirits of the highest order remain with Efile, those of secondary importance are reborn, while the malevolent types remain confined to the domain of Kafilefile. The ascending and descending movement of benevolent spirits ensures a dynamic continuity of life. It follows then that the physical and mystical, the profane and sacred, form one interlinked reality depicted by the lower half of Kitumbika's diagram. The upper half represents the superlative creative powers whose elements are unattainable but symbolically re-enacted through ritual.

b) The Realm of Spirits

The term kikudi made known in Wauters's myth needs first to be clarified as it is essential to the understanding of spirits. Torday and Joyce speak of the "kikuli" as the human 'soul' whereas Merriam, in his study of the Bala, refers to it as the 'spirit' which together

with the shadow (mweshieshi) comprises one entity endowed with consciousness.⁸ From the context of the Eki myth Wauters defines it perhaps most discerningly as "personality" and also as "the center of individualized cosmic forces".⁹ The latter two concepts originate from what P. Tempels called "vital force" which is not to be taken, as he suggests, to be the essence in all animate and inanimate matter.¹⁰ In reference to humans though, the concept seems to be valid. Tempels asserted that man, even after death, possesses a mntu (literally meaning "man" in Songye, Luba(ki) and most Bantu languages) which he interpreted as the internal "person", his individual "vital force endowed with intelligence and will".¹¹ If kikudi is equated with mntu one perceives perhaps more easily that all the variants of personality and mental force of the living are also possible manifestations of invisible spirit form. Hence this further reveals that bikudi effect an interconnection and continuation of individualised force between living being and spirit. They are the indestructible, but variable packets of innate human energy animating and characterizing the physical and mystical world.

Spirits are simpler to discuss since their existence and nature is socially ascribed according to real or supposed manifestations. This is particularly evident in the case of the living where spirit possession is defined and attributed to people who are anti-social, or merely asocial, and considered threatening to the community. It is said that their innate malevolent force of kikudi, when expressed through actions of envy or vengeance, is that of a spirit called ndoshi. With certain important members of society such as chiefs, this same spirit of ndoshi is defined ambivalently since it is

regarded as an indispensable mystical force. These spirits are to be elaborated upon in chapter III under the topic of witches.

Spirits of the dead, reflecting the nature of man on earth are correspondingly subdivided into benevolent and malevolent types, and according to my informants all are referred to generically as mikishi. Fertility of women and fields, success in hunting and good health are the fruits of protective and good spirits, whereas sterility, poor crops, lack of game and sickness are the exploits of evil ones. Interestingly enough, all these spirits of the dead are affiliated with the transitory domain ascribed to Kafilefile. The major difference between them is that bikudi of benevolent mikishi are reborn on earth whereas the malevolent ones remain eternal wanderers as mentioned. There is, however, one exceptional category of benevolent spirits, those generally known as ancestral, who do not undergo rebirth although they are instrumental in precipitating its efficiency, but instead rise to the ranks of Efile. These are spirits of superior force and knowledge of mythical clan or lineage founders, heroic figures, and important chiefs and dignitaries. They provide a generalized protection and are venerated as guardians of the lineage.

With respect to the distinction in hierarchic position and movement of ancestral spirits and the familiar or common ones of the dead, it is apparent that the Songye relate to them on two different levels. Ancestral spirits, more closely associated with the divine will be dealt with at this point in greater detail than the familiar mikishi which are important in magical practices and will be

considered in the following chapters.

Being the furthest away in Efile's space and time, ancestral mikishi do not enter into direct contact with man. Their existence is however recognized through aspects of the environment, seen in certain species of trees and particularly natural waters. These elements are not to be confused with spirit residences. Rather, they are bridges connecting the terrestrial and ancestral realm. Pierrot furnished data on the Kalebwe's concept of the physical world which helps to illustrate the latter point.¹² He writes that the earth is envisioned as a flat disc floating on a body of water which extends from a vast lake in the west associated with Efile. All rivers originate in the south-east, the highest point of elevation, and descend into this large lake, most by way of a northerly turn, except for the Lubilash. This river plus the Lomami and Lualaba serve as the principal lines of orientation leading to the sacred and ancestral domain which is represented in symbolic inversion by a lowland. (In a similar Luba topographic version the Lualaba is the dividing frontier between east and west, the terrestrial and the divine respectively.¹³) Traditionally Songye chiefs were buried in river beds so ensuring the passage of their bikudi towards the uppermost ranks.

The Eastern Songye at the village of Saka (part of Kisengwa) also mentioned the ancestral association with a series of waterfalls on the Lomami River. They named Lubwebwe (near Saka itself), Katoka (at the village of Lubunga), Namikoko and Kashingo Kete (both near the village of Kapaka) and Kabwe Obo (near Kyanda). Visually

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a waterfall appears as a break in the river-bed reminiscent of what was explained as the temporary blocking or, more likely, as among the Luba, the diverting of the current during the chief's funerary proceedings.¹⁴ Homage is paid to these ancient tombs and at the time of each new lunar appearance, or when advised by the elders, the Bena Kisengwa sacrifice a white chicken or goat, spill its blood into the river and then prepare the meat with byashi (cassava and maize meal) for a ritual feast.

Near Cungu the villagers similarly bring offerings seeking protection and a prolific livelihood from Yashiko, a lake believed to be possessed of ancestral powers. Its natural properties surpass all normal expectations. It is an unusually bright blue colour and even though its surface dimensions are said to be relatively small it is impossible to throw a rock across it. Leaves of the surrounding trees never fall on its surface and death never occurs in its vicinity. The villagers maintained that many attempts were made to fetch water from it in the hope of obtaining a supposed magical power but no matter how deep the vessels were lowered they always remained empty and dry. These tales preserve the conviction that the waters of the lake rise from a bottomless source of power far off and supreme in the spiritual hierarchy. With reference to Pierrot's data it could well be that the villagers imagine Yashiko Mumba as a hole in the earth filled by the underlying waters which rejoin Efile's lake.

Many trees associated with spirits stretch their leaves into the sky and sink their roots deeply into the ground as if also reaching that divine body of ancestral waters. The particular properties of these species correspond symbolically to the needs of the ritual

context although the focus of the selection process varies throughout the Songye region. For example, at the investiture of a Kalebwe supreme chief identification with ancestral strength of rule took place at a mpafu tree (Canarium schweinfurthii¹⁵ or Commiphora sp.¹⁶), significantly located near the Lutobo River. The transparent sap under the bark of this tree is viscous, a property associated with Efile and divine power according to Plasmans' findings, while the white colour of the wood is symbolic, in a generalized sense, of benevolence, commencement, and purification, to name but a few.¹⁷ By comparison, among most eastern Songye groups a mumbu tree (Lannea welwitshii¹⁸), standing in the centre of ehata, the residence of supreme chiefs, is the focal point of investiture. The mumbu similarly has a sap underlying its bark, in this case distinctly white but changing to red when dry. Combined with the already mentioned significance of white, the latter colour is associated with strength, courage, knowledge, but ambivalently also with blood - sacrificial animal blood strengthens ancestral bonds; human blood enhances the power of the sorcerer. During the ritual described by the Béna Kiloshi at Katea the prospective chief leaps up, grabs one of the branches of the mumbu and bites into it, so confirming his strength of succession with the ancestors.

Informants at Popwe also revealed that certain species, namely mulela (Ricinodendron rautanenii¹⁹), mufula, kimantanda and moko (Sterculia quinqueloba²⁰) are planted around the place outside of the village designated as ehata. The reason given was that these large trees take root quickly and provide much shade which eliminates the growth of dense underbrush, hence the threat of fire. Although

ethnographic documentation is lacking on the individual species, we do know that one of these, moko, literally means "umbilical cord" and symbolizes ancestral life-giving and continuity.²¹ It follows then that all of the species must be equally significant, though it remains uncertain which of their particular properties give rise to the ancestral link. A further point to note, however, is the emphasis on shade or shadows which are believed to be the reflecting essence of a thing or person in visual delineation. The aligned shadows of all these trees signal the presence of ehata and in combination assure the physical and hence the mystical protection of ancestral descendants. Thus there is perhaps an entire symbolic code assembled by the individual nature, and maybe also the particular ecological setting, of all the ehata species.

The same Popwe informants alluded further to this idea by naming a different series of trees in this case venerated by the entire community but only when found growing naturally in combination. These are:

mungangese

kifumbe (Pliostigma thoningii²²)

kifulamakoba

kapwamuange

kashimangesu

mongo

mufuta (Vitex sp.²³)

kicipicipi (Erythrina abyssinica²⁴)

"When we see their shade we approach" they explained. The idea of collective, merging shadows defines the sacred ground. Here the

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villagers sacrifice goats to seek escape and protection from such maledictions as sterility, illness or famine.

Of the trees associated with ancestral spirits some are used as well in different contexts. The wood of mumbu, kicipicipi, and especially mulela is generally selected for the making of masks. Mufula wood is preferred for magical statuary. Its bark is employed medicinally like that of kicipicipi, the former for women unable to conceive and the latter for patients with a cough. The ancestors may favour these trees, as the villagers say, but in their natural state perhaps only under specific ecological conditions. Their symbolic value, like their properties and products, is subject to different contextual dimensions and possesses that which Turner calls a "multivocality".²⁵

Apart from the ancestral spirits the familiar spirits of the dead have a wandering nature and are in direct contact with man. Their proximity to the living is alluded to in the belief that they speak in different languages and, as one informant stated, come from a place where there is a two hour time difference, that is, a region on or close to earth. Unlike the collective continuity provided by ancestral spirits these mikishi are dynamic participants in individual daily affairs, manipulated during auspicious practices of magic and also during malign techniques of sorcery.

Those mikishi believed to be auspicious are generally associated with the village setting and are invoked through materials extracted from nature and reassembled by man as bwanga, concoctions of magical

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medicines, or in specific form mankishi, magical statuary. Once invoked great caution is taken to observe prescribed prohibitions and to appease these spirits for there is an underlying fear of being abandoned by them. The consequences could be costly. This does not mean that the same protective spirits would necessarily turn hostile but certainly suspicion would be focused on the potential evil will of their counterparts. But what may appear as an opposition between good and evil spirits is in fact an interplay of power between men. A well known Songye proverb states:

(Mukishi) + (kekvacila) + (muntu) + (bamutume).
(spirit + (attacks) + (person) + (unless sent)).

= A spirit does not attack anyone unless sent by someone.

This corresponds with Tempels' explanation that all spirits, so as to sustain their vital force, continually seek interaction with those on earth.²⁶ It thus becomes apparent that man not only controls but also dictates the nature and expanse of the spirit world.

c) Specialists of Mystical Power

Not all men possess equal knowledge and experience to deal with spirits. Specialists known as banganga (sing. nganga) receive the highest esteem for socially approved magical practices. Their mystical knowledge is not only the result of a process of training but also of a superior innate power. This they put to benevolent use in the fabrication of manga, medicines composed of diverse natural substances whose catalytic reaction with the spirit world ensures protection. Separate from the banganga, however, society feels plagued by an abundance of malevolent practitioners of sorcery called basha masende (sing. sha masende). Bandoshi, already

mentioned, are omitted here since they are considered to be visible spirits, hence supposed rather than real practitioners of magic. Anyone with aspirations of supernatural power can learn and be initiated into sorcery. Like the nganga the sorcerer deals with visible substances and spirit invocation but his methods are believed to engender a different magical response. According to the Kalebwe and Cofwe the explanation is couched in mythical events of creation. It is said that when Efile realized the greed of his son Kafilefile he expelled him from heaven and earth and confined him to a transitory realm. In order to gain power on earth Kafilefile retaliated by devising sorcery and by making it accessible to all men through the intervention of malevolent mikishi. That is why, when Efile saw mikishi inflicting death and illness on men, he created the banganga. The implication that nganga is endowed with a kind of sacred enlightenment suggests not only the extent of his mystical power but also the activating effect of this power. Such is not the case with the sorcerer who is dependent on power from above, from the evil mikishi, and who only masters how to invoke and direct it. The sorcerer's magical substances serve as a personal means of communication and identification with spirits at specific times when actions are willed. By comparison those of the nganga are animated with purpose in mind, preserved materially, and set into a ritual life span according to the protective needs of the client. The nganga therefore creates an independently functioning magical mechanism, such as the nkishi, which affords the user spirit fortification.

Although the nganga and the sha masende deal with magical

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techniques which are morally at cross purposes, their practices are not diametrically opposed. Theoretically, the sha masende may well attempt to eliminate even the nganga, however the latter would respond with a neutralizing, and thus protective effect. In so doing it becomes evident that there is some common ground between the two. The diversified magical practices of the nganga would seem to require an understanding of sorcery. This ambivalent nature of its actual exploitation is meaningful yet socially branded as secrecy.

Footnotes

- 1 L'Esotérie ..., myth 'version supérieure', pp. 231-246.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 111-122, 231-246; see also glossary pp. 377-383.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 102, 244.
- 4 Interview conducted in Lubao on 12 October 1977.
- 5 L'Esotérie ..., p. 112.
- 6 de Heusch, Le Roi Ivre ..., pp. 67, 68.
- 7 Ibid., pp. 67, 80; In An African World ..., p. 104 Merriam states that some Bala believe the moon to be made of water.
- 8 "Notes Ethnographiques ...", p. 26; An African World ..., pp. 111, 114.
- 9 L'Esotérie ..., pp. 149, 380.
- 10 Bantu Philosophy (Paris: Présence Africaine [1946] 1969), p. 44.
- 11 Ibid., p. 55.
- 12 TS on the origin and organization of Songye political structure, p. 4.
- 13 de Heusch, Le Roi Ivre ..., p. 53.
- 14 Burton, Luba Religion and Magic ..., p. 11.
- 15 Identification of vernacular name by F. Malaisse, Professor of Botany, Université Nationale du Zaïre, Lubumbashi, April 1978; see also Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 487.
- 16 Identification of my wood specimen by R. Dechamps, botanist, Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgium, 21 November 1978.
- 17 Personal interview, Brussels, 21 November 1978.
- 18 Identification of vernacular name by Dechamps, 21 November 1978.
- 19 Identification of wood specimen by Dechamps, 21 November 1978.
- 20 Identification of vernacular name by Dechamps, 21 November 1978.

- 21 L'Esotérie ..., p. 141. In Dictionnaire Tshiluba-Français
(Leopoldville: Société Missionnaire de St. Paul, 1960), p. 175,
Mgr. Aug. de Clercq and P. Em. Willems record the same meaning.
- 22 Identification of vernacular name by Malaisse, April 1978.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Identification of wood specimen by Dechamps, 21 November 1978.
- 25 "Planes of Classification in a Ritual of Life and Death", p. 166.
- 26 Bantu Philosophy, p. 65.

CHAPTER III

Witchcraft and Sorcery

Evil magic is a topic of much concern and discussion among the Songye. Inasmuch as it is the greatest source of fear throughout the region, paradoxically the Songye almost pride themselves on the repute and power of their magical experts. However, to penetrate into this domain as an alien requires time, patience, and a certain degree of psychological manipulation. My initial work in Kabinda led to nothing but confusion on the topic. It was only when I returned from a brief and first visit to Lubao that I suddenly sensed a breakthrough. The villagers stopped me on the road to inquire about my trip, asking what I had discovered and if anything unusual had happened to me. One man frankly admitted that he was surprised to see me still well and alive. It was assumed that I had gone to that 'centre of black magic', which is generally any other village but one's own, for no other reason, of course, than to seek the power of masende and to explore buci. This is not to say that all secrets were divulged, in fact far from it, but at least the period of total negation had been overcome. It was most significant that at about this same time the topic of masks, which my informants had been cleverly dodging and dismissing as mere entertainment, became at last approachable, thereby indicating a relationship between malevolent magic and masks. In his 1923 Songye vocabulary Samain noted the association between sorcery and masks; however, with the lack of field studies among these people, the contextual importance of his brief reference remained obscure until now.¹

a) Defining Buci and Masende

Buci and in particular masende are the two general designations for malevolent magical practices prevalent throughout the region under investigation, but undoubtedly of greatest impact today among the Eastern Songye. These can be further broken down into categories as Merriam noted in reference to the Bala sub-group.² However, they are varied and local distinctions not emphasized and adhered to during discussions with my informants. Employing, although broadly, E.E. Evans-Pritchard's classification, ndoshi has already been referred to in the previous chapter as witch, and sha masende as sorcerer.³ The correlating names of their practices accentuate their different nature; thus, masende is the practice of the sha masende, whereas buci is the practice of those who possess something separately termed, namely the spirit ndoshi. Based on this idea the two types of magic are said to be differently housed and controlled by the body. Buci or witchcraft, as an internal force, is believed to be in the heart or the stomach, while masende or sorcery is external and rests in the eyes. Considered as being quite distinct, it is possible and in fact common for witches to acquire the additional power of sorcery, although conversely this does not hold true. There is however no separate term of reference for this category of witches, a fact which corresponds to the idea that the effect of the two types of magic does not arise from a single, combined source. In other words, buci is an inherent and furthermore inherited mystical power, whereas masende is a learned operation, theoretically accessible to anyone. As such, buci is bound up with the descent system, and therefore with ascribed rank, whereas masende is rather linked with acquired rank. But in order to clarify the

contextual dimensions of these two forms of magic it is necessary first to establish the ideological beliefs concerning buci and masende.⁴

b) Buci: Ideological Manifestations

Buci is said to have been created by Efile Mukulu, who gave it only to certain families. It is the female, the mother, who passes it on to her male or female children through her milk. Particularly significant though is the belief that the milk of only one of her breasts contains the magical substance of buci. Thus, this trait is inherited not only through a biological process but through one also involving the mother's conscious choice.

As an inherited, constitutional aspect of a witch's being the manipulation of his or her magical power can be both unconscious, transmitted merely by thought, and it can as well be consciously contrived. Admittedly, this idea is ambiguous suggesting that the act of bewitching can occur mystically, simply projected as the malevolent will of the ndoshi, but that it may simultaneously involve an operation using, for example, some form of material substance. What this means then is that witchcraft accusations are based on both real and supposed or imagined actions. In actuality though, fantasy predominates. Since witches are said to be primarily motivated by envy and revenge, those who feel victimized by ill-fate find all too easily someone to project the blame on. Furthermore witchcraft is believed to be an addiction which must be continuously appeased so as to sustain itself, thereby augmenting in strength. Hence it is almost synonymous with a wide range of misfortune, including illness,

barrenness in women, and other impoverishing effects on life in general. Most informants explain that buci leads to life-long suffering and is therefore considered far worse than the inevitable fate of death caused by the curse of masende. However, in reality, this repeated statement did strike me as being questionable, since greater anxiety was expressed over masende.

Existing or impending misfortune is diagnosed as buci practically always on the interpretation of dreams and nocturnal menacing. It had become almost symptomatic for my translators to experience such warning signs, since they felt implicated in a dangerous inquiry destined toward grave consequences. A classical nocturnal visitation was described as a feeling of strangulation or a temporary paralysis and speechlessness caused by a pressing weight on one's body which is said to be the ndoshi testing the strength of his victim. Of course sometimes the pounding sound of a goat trying to enter a hut, or the fluttering of bats in the rafters of the roof, is sufficient to intensify one's anxiety and suspicions.

Buci is generally attributed to the practice of individuals, but there is one form of witchcraft known as kiswenene whose practitioners are said to form an association, and by virtue of an obscure group identity, become the cause of misfortune which does not, or cannot, culminate in the accusation of an individual. This supposed group is especially pronounced in larger centres such as Kabinda and Lubao where missionary presence inhibits witchcraft dealings, although by no means all forms of malevolent magical practices.

The kiswenene group is thought to be constituted exclusively of old female members. They enhance their vitality by eating the leaves of the kidibudibu tree and, according to one informant, also possess magical paraphernalia of which the most essential is a red cloth. During their nightly rituals they undress, swallow their bits of cloth, upon which fire jets out from their anus and they begin to fly like bush birds visiting and consulting members of other localities or seeking revenge by menacing their victims with strangulation attempts.⁵ Villagers regularly report sightings of kiswenene identified consistently as streams of moving light accompanied by shrill whistling sounds.

Although it is said that the identity of those who practice witchcraft is only known to other practitioners of kiswenene or buci, in the case of the latter some informants and chiefs who were secretly pointed out to me by the villagers as being suspects actually made affirmative claims. It seemed as though they prided themselves, although not overtly, on being in possession of mystical power which yields superior social control and which, in the case of particular individuals, is regarded as natural and almost essential.

c) Masende: Ideology and Practice

Practitioners of masende form a secret society which recruits members through initiation and indoctrination into techniques of sorcery. In the past knowledge of sorcery was handed down from father to son but today masende has expanded beyond descent boundaries, although still involving primarily males, of varying ages, with chiefs and elders holding leadership. There are certain

individuals, such as the physically deformed, alcoholics, or those who demonstrate asocial behaviour, who are believed to be practitioners of sorcery. For the large part though, the masende group is real, as are many of its operations of malevolent magic. Like the bandoshi, the basha masende are motivated by envy, their interests being more specifically rooted in desire for social status and material gains linked with traditional political control.

The power of these sorcerers is believed to derive from spirits of the dead whom they invoke and enslave into service through material magical formulae. These mikishi then become agents of death for the basha masende, frightening and forewarning chosen victims by performing supernatural feats. It was repeatedly explained that victims find themselves trapped by sorcery when drinking or smoking unknowingly in the company of the basha masende. The non-initiate would notice that no matter how much he consumed his glass would remain full or the cigarette would continue burning. Then at night the spirit slaves who performed the supernatural would arrive at the house of the person in question seeking payment through sacrifice of members of his family or alternatively the loss of the victim's own life. This type of masende operation called kumwasha (to show) is a means of imposing involuntary initiation so as to subjugate individuals whose affluence or prestige is threatening to the social control sought by the masende group. By binding these initiates to the sacrifice of a certain number of their own family members, referred to by the code myanda ibidi (eight x two; number of deaths) they become accomplices of the basha masende whose kin relations and hopes of prosperity are severed. Any murder performed, including payment for initiation by involuntary members and also those who enter

voluntarily, is known as kwata kwa masende (ata: seize, hold, surprise). The basha masende say that the act of killing one's own relations toughens the heart of the sorcerer who subsequently becomes fearless in the face of death and bloodshed. Thereafter he kills without hesitation, his power being dependent on the number of mikishi bound to his service.

These mikishi, whether potentially benevolent or malevolent, are controlled and manipulated by the basha masende with repositories of substances from the corpses of their dead victims. The sorcerer procures these during the burial or immediately thereafter, at which time he also performs a rite making himself invisible to his spirit slave. As one might expect, little specific information was obtained on actual techniques and formulae of masende. It became apparent however that hallucinogens and possibly hypnotism are employed in luring victims into submission in the operation of kumwasha. Poisons are undoubtedly also used to eliminate individuals, although accidental or impending death from illness is as well attributed advantageously to masende plotting when required. The basha masende themselves consume a so-called magical concoction referred to as mungwa wa busungu which is described as entering the blood, changing the head, and making spirits visible and communication with them possible. This hallucinogenic concoction consists of leaves from the mpungulufile, kishitu, and kipungulu trees mixed with palm oil and salt, and prepared and eaten with a special knife called kapete ka bipikwa.

Most informants, when discussing the power of masende, accentuate

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its extrasensory quality, related in particular to vision and hearing. Sorcerers are said to have four eyes, hence they see all the workings of magic nearby or distant, actual or anticipated. They also possess a special means of long-distance communication whereby they remain in continuous contact and conspiracy with one another. When called to action by fellow members the sha masende receives a physical sensation which may, for instance, manifest itself as an acceleration of the heartbeat. These references to sensory acuteness seem to foster associations between the nature of sorcerers and that of animals. Many informants do support this idea with beliefs that the basha masende can decipher communication between diverse animals, that they can fly, and even transform themselves into wild beasts such as lions or leopards. But in contrast to the nocturnal, lunar menacing of buci, these masende activities and attributes are generally associated with the daytime and so seemingly conceived of in opposition to the life-giving force of the sun.

d) Buci and Masende: Social Context

Both forms of magic, buci and masende, serve as potential power tools which take on different and also ambivalent definition in relation to the social role of the user in question. For example, in a polygamous household, if one wife menaces another she would be made suspect openly, tried and probably accused as a witch, yet if an heir of a ruling lineage or a chief turns against his brother the incident could not be handled and dismissed quite so easily. A chief may possess buci and also masende but his manipulation of mystical powers is socially unchallenged and moreover sanctioned.

As the embodiment of ancestral rule the chief is a sacred and benign figure, and, in view of these attributes, endowed with the most supreme mystical power. This is recognized in his identity as nganga of the highest order who deals with protective magic, and of necessity, supposedly, only observes malign forces at work. At the same time implication in witchcraft and sorcery is alluded to through his role as the chief hunter who sheds the blood of wild animals and also, in a metaphorical sense, devours and sustains himself on offerings of meat received from his subjects. Furthermore he is expected to be strong like a warrior achieving victory by being bathed in blood, hence establishing his credibility as a feared and respected leader.

This ambivalent, dualistic notion of the chief's role exposes but one contextual example for sorcery and witchcraft. As one descends the hierarchic ladder of authority the malevolent aspects of these forms of magic become more explicitly defined. Thus, sorcery and witchcraft are seen as forms of manipulation which need not culminate in accusations, particularly when operating in relation to and within the echelons of the political system. This also means that there must be some purposeful and attainable end defining the dialectic action between the practitioner and the victim, and one which is symptomatic of tension within the socio-political framework.

In the traditional political systems outlined, different aspects of tension existed west and east of the Lomami, particularly complicated with the incorporation of bilateral succession. Among the Kalebwe and Cofwe the supreme chief and his entourage of

supporters (ministers and elders) formed an autonomous unchanging group which thrived on suppressing and weakening bonds of kinship. As long as the supreme chief remained at epata the offices of these titleholding ministers were relatively secure. However, as the ruling lineage grew and descent from Sendwe Kitenge became more obscure, the number of contenders claiming rights to epata multiplied. The weaponry of witchcraft, namely buci, must have been indispensable, and even protective, for rivals competing for the rank of Yakitenge.

According to Kalebwe oral tradition (chapter I), buci is inherited from the mother, thus it would have been clearly in the interest of consanguineal females to sustain the matriline of Kaka Kitoto by fortifying their sons as well as their daughters. Affinal females, on the other hand, if in possession of buci, would have been drawn in support of the traditionally stronger patriline of Sendwe Kitenge, hence favouring their sons with buci in order to promote equally rightful heirs. Such manipulation of witchcraft could only have increased the already existing tension over succession, producing conflict between several types of relations (siblings, cousins, females, etc.) within the ruling lineage.

It is equally probable that witchcraft accusations were inflicted by titleholding village and regional elders on lineage chiefs. Theoretically the elders (bakulu), representatives of the people, were subservient consultants of lineage chiefs whom they could however override by rising up the authority ladder, and, most importantly, by maintaining solidarity with all ranks of members (ministers, bana bua and Yakitenge). But more effectively this

group, whose inter-connections were kept as secret as possible, resorted as well to methods of sorcery in controlling the people and especially the lineage chiefs, so as to keep their Yakitenge and consequently themselves in power. Masende practices were particularly suited for their purpose since rivals could be subjugated by involuntary initiation into the society. Most informants actually attribute the origin of masende to the ruling elite claiming that it has only become a widespread, 'popular' practice in recent times.

There is a parallel in the organization of the masende and bakulu groups making the inter-relationship clearer. First, both the bakulu and the basha masende acquired membership through payment, thus neither title was an ascribed rank nor descent bound. Secondly, as there was a hierarchy of bakulu ascending from the village level to the ministers of the central governing body, so masende members were, and still are today, ranked by degree of achievement said to correspond with the number of spirit slaves recruited. This would mean that the bubikale, elders forming the ministry of the supreme chief, were the most experienced and powerful league of sorcerers with only Yakitenge, as representative of the highest order of mystical knowledge, surpassing their rank.

In the Eastern Songye chiefdoms where still today traditional political power is distributed among the lineages, thereby suppressing the rise of autocratic leaders, the system must have undergone crises through continuous change of rule and inevitable competition between the lineages. Although information about magical practices within the polity is well guarded by informants, it is most probable

that as among the Kalebwe and Cofwe witchcraft accusations, which were intensified because of bilateral succession, still occur between individuals, such as lineage heirs competing for the rank of mfumu. In the case of the hierarchic organization of masende, the network of operation is far more complex due to the change and short term of offices. Since rivalry for lineage strength is the primary concern among all these eastern chiefdoms, it seems apparent, first of all, that the basha masende could not have formed a unified group within the polity. Rather, each lineage possessed its own independent and secret organization headed by the mfumu and his advisory bakulu and all of these groups equally sought control of ehata. This would mean that internal rivalry and dissent could have been dealt with, in many cases, by imposed masende membership, but in external relations, that is, between lineages where this practice was not applicable, heightened masende aggression must have existed. The fact that the supreme chief's term of office came to be reduced to a short three to five year term is indicative of one attempt to relieve excessive tension between lineages, disruptive to chiefdom unity.

e) Political Control through Magic and Masks

Within the diversified and complex domain of malevolent magic, of which only the political context has been emphasized, the masende group organization stands out as a particularly significant phenomenon. While masende practices existed among commoners, as in the case of involuntary members, their impact on society at large came from the decision-making core of the group comprising the uppermost figures of political authority. Thus, both east and west of the Lomami, in

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spite of differences in the structure of government, chiefs and dignitaries used techniques of sorcery to control and bolster the strength of their rule. Asserting jurisdiction by such means of manipulation was of course a delicate matter to be executed with the utmost secrecy. The loyalty of subjects to their ruler hinged on the preservation of the chief's image as the benevolent ancestral representative, though underlying beliefs accommodated ambivalent concepts. So, to retain their anonymity while enforcing obedience to the ruler using pressure of sorcery, the basha masende operated through the masking society called bwadi bwa kifwebe. Today this society still exists among the Eastern Songye, paralleling the survival of the traditional political system which has even taken on new force after independence, largely due to a progressive isolation of the region. On the other hand, among the Kalebwe and Cofwe the masking tradition has been totally eradicated with the disintegration of traditional authority, yet elders, remaining chiefs, and some self-imposed rulers continue to resist westernization and the influence of missionaries by more furtive but ongoing masende tyranny.

In view of the contextual usage of Songye masks, it is no wonder that the 'bifwebe' have remained an enigma in the study of African art, as confirmed by Merriam's recent publication on the subject.⁶ According to my field experience, Merriam's results typify the seemingly impenetrable initial defence of informants who argue convincingly that the masks were devised purely as a source of entertainment. Even months later, when my inquiry had progressed, fear of discussing the subject led to endless plotting and dodging of interviews, revealing even more overtly the domination commanded

by the bifwebe. To divulge secrets of the bwadi bwa kifwebe meant an incrimination of the most highly esteemed members of society, an offence regarded by most informants, commoners and chiefs, as a death wish. In essence though, the bifwebe created but a thin veil between the populace and the polity making the activities of the chief and his ministers appear distant and non-associative. But, the mere fact that the law of the bwadi thrived unchallenged does suggest paradoxically that the populace must have recognized the group identity and the hierarchic power of the sorcerers behind the masks. However, since the masquerader's disguise preserved the anonymity of specific individuals, socially suspicion of sorcery, which could not be channelled at particular persons of rank, was absorbed by the conceptualization of the kifwebe creature.

Ideologically the masqueraders are perceived as supernatural creatures, as socially alien beings of the wilderness and mountains exacting demands in their own right. The ferocity and magic of the kifwebe is proportional to the empirical and innate mystical power of the wearer. Thus, although founded on the basis of the masende association, the bifwebe are agents not only of sorcery but also of witchcraft. Their physical presence and attributes reinforce beliefs encompassing the two types of magic. Correspondingly two categories of masks exist: the male masks (bifwebe balume) associated with malevolent and aggressive action of masende and possibly also buci or both, and the female masks (bifwebe bakashi) which exercise powers of buci but only passively to 'detect the hidden'.⁷ Within each society of the existing Eastern Songye tradition the male masks, unlimited in number, are represented broadly

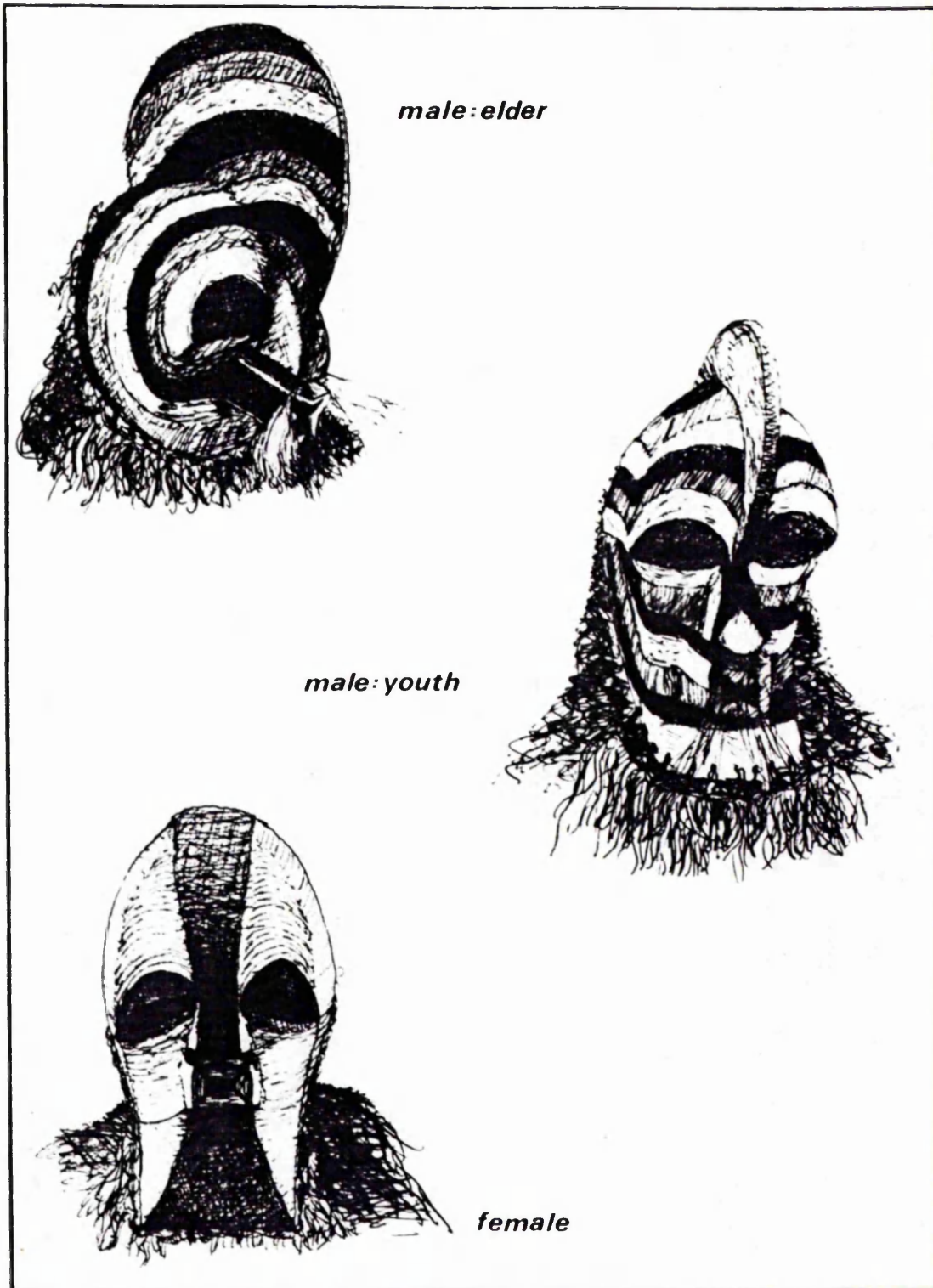


FIGURE 3. Categories of masks (Eastern Songye examples).

by two grades of achievement which I will designate as that of the youth and the elder (fig. 3). The latter grade is superior in magical expertise and it would seem, at least from observations among the Eastern Songye, that one of these is paramount and counter-balances the single female mask of each society.

The male bifwebe perform fear-inducing spectacular and supposedly miraculous feats corresponding to the nature of masende practices. They can breathe fire from their mouths, or spew out bees or snakes. They can cut themselves in half and they can fly, demonstrating the unrestrained, savage behaviour of beasts. By comparison the female mask is restricted to supernatural feats of an amusing nature executed within the choreography of dance. Its movements are therefore limited, confined to a village stage, hence setting the contrast of that cultural milieu to the male domain of the wilderness.

According to Plasmans it is also believed that the female kifwebe animates life forces through dance, calling the benevolent spirits from the forest and beyond to bring descendants to the villagers.⁸ This idea, based on the procreative role of the female, highlights the ambivalence of witchcraft previously referred to, and brings into play complementary opposition in reference to the malevolent action of sorcery. Woman, as the bearer of children and therefore good fortune, perpetuates the lineage and simultaneously also the magical essence of buci. Thereby she generates potentially malevolent spirits through the newborn. Her manipulation of buci is used to fortify and protect the individual

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aspirations of her offspring, yet its means are opposed to the socially benevolent function of the female as the guardian of the community's ancestral heritage. Thus the female, representing the continuity of life and cultural tradition, equally holds power instrumental in the process of change and innovation more closely associated with masende.

This duality of female masks is also evoked through their more common use and association with the night and the moon. On the one hand the night is the time when witches roam and light the sky like the moon. Yet the moon itself is auspicious and symbolic of fertility of fields and women. It is however also significant that this aspect of its procreativity, interdependent on other cosmic elements, is linked to a male and female duality. Similarly, the presence of the passive female mask within the composition of the bwadi society accentuates and completes the dialectic opposition of the active force of male masks. Since informants are unanimously in agreement that male masks are used during the daytime, their mystical power would seem to bear a relationship to the sun. This particular cosmological association is, however, not made as explicitly as is the case of the female bifwebe and the moon, perhaps because the sun is held to be of a higher order in the cosmic hierarchy effecting the well-being of terrestrial life in a general, constant, and unchanging manner. As the moon impregnates bikudi into the newborn, its role is directly proportional to the specific nature of life on earth, whereas the sun merely recycles human energy within the spirit order of the universe. However, according to Merriam's investigation among the Bala, the sun, which is masculine, seems to be perceived

ambivalently. It is good because it sustains growing things on earth, yet it is also upheld by some that it is malign because it circulates invisibly during the night killing. Hence, every day that the sun reappears, someone in some village is found dead.⁹

In that sense a parallel exists on the one hand between the moon, spirits of the living, and female masks, and on the other between the sun, wandering spirits of the dead, and male masks. Male masks, being primarily linked with masende practices, both inflict death and draw power from its spirit realm. Male masks in possession of buci alone would seem to be in contradiction with this scheme; however, as pointed out earlier, their practices are distinguished from those of the female masks in that their bewitching is an active malign force implicated in masende affairs. Thus it is believed, for example, that contact with the shadow of any male bifwebe expedites the approach of death. Death is made known and realized during the day when man is active and at full strength. The appearance of the bifwebe at this time evokes a dramatic contrast to the sustaining and perhaps ambivalent life force of the sun, recalling man's inevitable mortality. Female bifwebe reaffirm not only the rebirth process but also represent, in union with the males, the ambivalence and the different nature of mystical powers issued from an all-engulfing realm of Efile Mukulu and Kafilefile.

Footnotes

- 1 La Langue Kisonge, pp. 95, 129. Samain explained that the fear-inducing mask which possesses manga (medicines) is called kifwebe kia ndoji /sic/, and ndoshi he defines as "sorcerer" ("Sorcellerie: bundoshi, butshi, masende, kiswenenu; sorcier: sha butshi, sha mazende, ndoshi"). It is to be noted that the scope of his definitions may have been limited by the fact that there is no separate term for witchcraft in French.
- 2 An African World ..., p. 134.
- 3 Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), p. 387; also discussed in "Introduction", p. 2, of Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), by editors J. Middleton and E.H. Winter.
- 4 In Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 310; R. Schmitz noted the term "na mboloshi (jeteur de sorts)"; Torday and Joyce in their "Notes Ethnographiques ...", p. 28, write: "... le mauvais principe qui cause la mort par maladie est appelé Moloki ..." In Les Baluba, pp. 422-424, Colle defined ndozi as "Les esprits des hommes vivants, qui, dans certaines conditions, peuvent se séparer du corps ..." This he explains as follows: "Un noir se rend chez un sorcier, un sorcier de qualité s'entend, et lui demande l'amulette magique qui donnera le pouvoir de se rendre invisible et de quitter momentanément son corps pour opérer au loin, d'après son vouloir, ... l'acquéreur peut opérer en ndozi quand bon lui semble a l'état de veille comme pendant son sommeil, sciemment, et même quelquefois d'une manière inconsciente". Burton in his Luba Religion and Magic ..., p. 109, spoke of majende. He writes: "Technically, 'majende' consists in secretly giving to some animal or object the name of a person whom it is wished to punish or destroy. Then it is believed that whatever is done to the object will happen also to the person after whom it is named. Inversely 'majende' may be the transference of his own personality, by a malevolent man, into some animal or object, that he may do harm to another".
- 5 Burton in Luba Religion and Magic ..., pp. 120, 121, discusses the kiswenene bwanga as a "charm" used predominantly by women in malevolent practices. Ingredients are boiled in a pot which is then left standing unobtrusively somewhere in the village /vague explanation/. Whoever removes this pot is robbed thereafter of his spirit and becomes enslaved into the service of the kiswenene owner.
- 6 "Kifwebe and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies ...", Nos. 3 and 4.
- 7 Samain in his La Langue Kisonge, p. 95, noted the existence of two types of bifwebe, but the male/female categories and their respective magical practices were not clearly pointed out. He states: "... kifwebe kia bakaji ... est inoffensif; mais il y a

aussi le kifwebe kia ndoji qui est craint parce qu'il y a question de manga". However, in the earliest writings on the Luba, Colle in Les Baluba, p. 440, spoke specifically of these two types of bifwebe: male and female.

8 "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, interview with Yamulenda Ebombo at Butu, 1967-68, n. pag.

9 An African World ..., p. 104.

CHAPTER IV

The Bwadi bwa Kifwebe Society

According to Merriam's study of Songye masks, the name kifwebe refers specifically to the wooden mask-type with 'grooved' striations, as opposed to other lesser known existing forms such as the lumaceca, which is made from a gourd, or the raffia-constructed kalengula (ills. 17a, 17b).¹ My informants insisted that kifwebe means mask generically, as recorded by Colle (Luba, 1913)², and defined by Samain (Songye, 1923).³ Yet, it is also true that the appellation is used mainly in association with the mask, the masquerader, and the society of the striated creature and its white female counterpart. Whenever reference was made to the two other mask-types, they were always specified as being 'just a kalengula' or a lumaceca. Briefly, on the basis of my findings, the traditional social and political impact of the kifwebe is distinguished as a singular phenomenon which does not parallel the other two masking practices, at least not in the central Songye region. The bwadi bwa kifwebe is an integral aspect of magico-religious beliefs whereas kalengula and lumaceca were manifested as a profane indulgence of children, youths, and possibly women, which seems to have developed in the twentieth century.

a) Origin and Purpose

Most informants when questioned on the origin of the bwadi bwa kifwebe society clearly attest to it being an importation into their locality, but many disagree on its provenance and attribution. Often

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the Eastern Songye, particularly in the chiefdoms of Muo and Bwabwe, were quoted as being the innovators of this masking tradition, and just as frequently, a Luba origin was favoured.

It is possible that the competition and pressure of continually changing governments in the Eastern Songye chiefdoms could have given rise to the bwadi society as a controlling and even stabilizing mechanism of the ruling elite. Admittedly, the same sort of speculation is applicable to other Songye regions such as that of the Kalebwe, whose centralized polity sought to sustain domination over an expansive territory.⁴ The question of a Luba origin has been raised, as Merriam outlines, by such scholars as F.H. Olbrechts, C. Kjersmeier, A. Maesen and W. Fagg.⁵ Their observations were based on the morphological similarity of Songye masks to those, equally numerous in museum collections, of the Luba. In view of the relationship between these two peoples: their claims of a common origin of state, contacts through political conflicts and regional trade patterns of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is conceivable that the idea of the bifwebe could have been adopted by the Songye from the Luba.⁶ Still, according to the field work of Wenga-Mulayi among the Luba-Shaba at Ankoro, the contrary is asserted.⁷ Part of his argument draws attention to the closer morphological relationship between the kifwebe and figure sculpture of the Songye rather than that of the Luba. Furthermore, he notes that the Luba masqueraders speak "Kiyembe" (a Luba name for the Songye language). To this point I should add that some of my informants and the masqueraders I witnessed revealed the use of Luba(ki), which would only seem to suggest a similar ideological view of the bifwebe, that

is, that they are alien beings who therefore speak in different tongues, significantly like the wandering spirits of the dead who serve the basha masende. However, of particular interest in the solution of this problem, Wenga-Mulayi furnishes a Luba myth which refers to the village of Ngyende-Majaja as the place of origin of the bifwebe.⁸ This is a Songye village among the Bena Gende, located south of Kisengwa in the northern sector of Shaba and in a heterogeneous Songye/Luba area (map 2).⁹

Although much further investigation is necessary on the origin attribution, the twofold nature of my informants' answers becomes significant in relation to an area of admixture. Certainly as far as the provenance of the masks is concerned, Wenga-Mulayi's findings and mine point roughly to the same nucleus of Luba/Songye convergence, close to the fringe of the south-eastern Songye chiefdoms.

In discussing the rise of the bwadi society and its traditional function, the Songye emphasize a process of development which should first be noted. They point out that masende practices and manifestations of the bwadi society became interrelated; however, their origins and later permutations, which came into being at the turn of the twentieth century, are viewed as separate. Masende, said to have been devised by Kafilefile, is accounted for cosmogonically. On the other hand, the bwadi masking society is spoken of as a movement linked with the state organization in their present-day territory. This explanation, although simplified, is relevant to the understanding of developments in the twentieth century, which may account for the lack of published data on the masking tradition.

After the imposition of the colonial administration and the settlement of missions, the bwadi society would have had to become less visible. One informant explained that this coincided with the Belgian prohibition of the poison ordeal (1924¹⁰) which may or may not have been employed by the masking society. Since the bifwebe were the most visible agents of 'savagery' and 'injustice' they would have been the first to fall under the eye of the administration. Thus, as use of the bifwebe began to subside, masende practices intensified and became more widely and popularly distributed, while also serving as a secret form of jurisdiction. Later appearances of the masqueraders were presented officially as folklore, dance, and simply amusement, although their true function was not altogether suppressed among the Eastern Songye.

Originally the bifwebe are said to have been conceived as a kind of police force of the ruling elite whose main goal, as discussed, was the preservation of the traditional powers of its leaders and the lucrative exploitation of the populace. By luring men into masende membership and acting out judicial decisions, that is, inflicting punitive ills and absolving them through payment, they enforced obedience while also profiting through the collection of initiation dues and fines.¹¹ These were payable in agricultural produce, palm oil, goats, chickens, raffia cloth and any other goods exacted by the basha masende leaders. Burton's documentation of pieces collected for the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale in 1928 includes a report of such activities. He writes:

... [the] masks are used among the Bekalebwe for purposes of extortion and play. Often when a man is not liked,

they will come to his house dressed in masks and regalia demanding money, food and the use of his wives, threatening to bewitch him if he refuses. The actual bewitching would probably take the form of poisoned thorns put in his path, that he and his family might tread upon them and die ... 12

During his field work in 1959-60, Merriam obtained similar information among the Bala, but unfortunately he failed to see its pertinence to the social function of the masking society. The following excerpts are given:

... /W/hen the mask emerged from its special house, it made a quick round of the village, announcing its presence both by sound and by physical exposure. It then returned to every house individually, demanding payment ... It is stressed by all Lupupans that such payment was "demanded", that it was always forthcoming "because people were afraid to refuse", and that it could always be taken "by force" from anyone foolish enough to show recalcitrance or defiance ...

A person hurt during the occasion, as might occur when the masker flailed about him with his stick, had no legal recourse and could bring no kind of complaint against kifwebe. A person who spoke aloud the name of the man wearing the mask was subject to a fine, despite the general feeling that everyone knew who he was. A person who laughed or "giggled" at the sight of the kifwebe could never stop giggling for the remainder of his life. The consequences of not giving ground to the mask, or striking it, or of offending it in other ways, were considered by some to be instant death. 13

My investigation revealed further the participation of the bifwebe in warfare between Songye villages or chiefdoms, or against neighbouring Luba groups who were known to recognize the power of the kifwebe. I suspect that the masqueraders were not only effective in confrontations with opponents but also in rousing the village's own warriors into battle, partly through unconditional commands, and partly by heartening their aggression with the reassurance that mystical forces were operating in their favour. Another function

of the bifwebe, presented as an asset to the community, although motivated by political competition and the assurance of prosperity for the bwadi, was the enforced maintenance of roads and fields. At Mumbo one informant revealed that this was the last practice of the bifwebe to be tampered with by the Belgian administration even though it too appears to have been short-lived.

Some informants claim that appearances of the bifwebe were linked with rituals such as the death and investiture of a chief, new moon rites, initiation of new members into the bukishi society, and circumcision proceedings. However, their importance in this capacity was neither emphasized nor recognized unanimously throughout the region under investigation. One general distinction was made with reference to the function of male and female masks. Male masks participated during rites of passage for security reasons, policing the bukishi camp ground and place of circumcision to ward off women and the non-initiated. On the other hand, female masks, which appeared on the occasion of a chief's death or investiture and during lunar rites, played an integral role in the symbolic composition of the rituals by animating benevolent spirit forces through dance.

I stress once again that these contextual uses of the bifwebe cannot be generalized for the Songye territory. The bukishi, for one, which is indigenous to the Eki seems to have been adopted peripherally by the Kalebwe, but its diffusion east of the Lomami River gained no affirmation. Circumcision proceedings which are of capital importance elsewhere in Central Africa, such as among the Yaka, Pende, Cokwe and others, were not of equal ritual proportion among the Songye.¹⁴ In fact, prescribed rites were not fostered

but minimized to practices which varied from one locality to the next. With this, it is essential to bear in mind that the bifwebe were a part of an organized society with specific magical practices and socio-political goals. Thus, their participation in diverse ritual and profane contexts can be viewed as symptomatic of the diffusion of the bwadi tradition and its intervention in a wide range of social activities.

b) Organization of the Society

i) Members

All members of the bwadi bwa kifwebe are named according to their specific functions in the society. On the basis of my inquiry the size, composition, and nomenclature of participants in each independent group varies somewhat. Generally, though, each society consists of adult male members including some younger boys (optionally), one or more older females, masqueraders, governing and judiciary members, musicians, and craftsmen. Only a certain ensemble of these members appears publicly in orientation to the bifwebe (ills. 18-20). The entire group is however perceived at three levels of social exposure or awareness which can be defined as follows:

- a) those who are seen and identified publicly
- b) those who are seen but anonymous: the bifwebe
- c) those whose identity and participation remain secret, supposedly

The subsequent list is a compilation of the vernacular names, their variants and the respective functions of these members.

General Terms:

muadi (pl. badi) general name for any initiated member of the bwadi bwa kifwebe society.¹⁵

mushinte, mushindwe uninitiated, one who is afraid or, as in Luba, impure (muzinde).¹⁶

mukulu elder; this term is used interchangeably with the following, nganga, for the society's leaders.

nganga (pl. banganga) magical practitioner; sorcerer in the context of the bwadi society. The usage of this term appears ambiguous, if not paradoxical, since it is the common designation for benevolent and socially accepted specialists of magic. However, in this particular case, it must be stressed that only initiated members use this appellation amongst themselves for sorcerers of the bwadi. The villagers, that is, the non-initiated would supposedly neither know of the contextual borrowing of this term nor would they recognize or acknowledge publicly the hierarchic rank of these members.¹⁷

mumbe boys and young male members 6 - 15 years old; singers among the Bena Kafuma (ill. 20).

Public Performers: masked and unmasked

ngulungu antelope, bushbuck (Tragelaphus scriptus¹⁸); also, according to Schmitz, the name of a highly venomous snake with two horns.¹⁹ Songye term designating those who wear the bifwebe; among the Luba refers to the non-initiated.²⁰

tukila (sing. ka) unmasked performers among the Kalebwe, the chorus; in Luba mukila means the tail of a quadruped, a termination, or ending.²¹ Thus, tukila are possibly meant to be those who trail the bifwebe.

lubondo sorcerer and/or witch who dances with the bifwebe, also substitute mask-wearer. Among the Bena Ebombo (Kalebwe) lubondo sweeps the traces of the masqueraders as they dance. According to the Bala, the name applies to the kifwebe insignia, a rectangular piece of raffia cloth dyed red and white. The bearer of this flag circulates through the village announcing the arrival of the masqueraders and then accompanies them.²² From my findings the latter definition corresponds to the function of musenge.

musenge, musengi guide of masqueraders, messenger, exponent; usually carries a bell (luele), or, as stated

among the Bena Ebombo, a whistle (kipudi) announcing the arrival and movements of the bifwebe (ills. 21-23). Among the Bala, musengye is responsible for keeping the kifwebe house in repair.²³ Wenga-Mulayi²⁴ reports the same function of a guide for the Luba; however, according to the earlier writings of Burton²⁵, musenge is the second in command, a foreman who appoints work to members of the bambudye society, whereas for Van Avermaet²⁶ he is the chief, both male and female counterpart, of the same Luba society.

katonko, katonkwe,
also kisambila

singer, first voice (ills. 24, 25). Amongst the Bala four singers, tutonkwe, form an important part of the retinue.²⁷

ngomba, lomba

drummer; same definition recorded by Van Avermaet in Luba.²⁸ There are normally three drummers in each bwadi society who play the musanga, or slit gong, one of which is larger and the other two are similar in size (ills. 26, 27). Merriam states that the ngomba is a professional musician of the highest rank trained on all instruments but most highly skilled on the lunkufi, a synonym for the musanga.²⁹

Among the Eastern Songye the term nkonga (konga: to assemble, unite³⁰) was frequently

cited in reference to the drummers, which corresponds to Wenga-Mulayi's documentation on the Luba masking tradition (makongwa).³¹

Anonymous Members:

mankimba

chief and representative of bifwebe; informants at Basala Bale (Kafuma chiefdom) stated that he was also the guardian of the masks. In the case of the Luba, Wenga-Mulayi reports that mankimba is the vice-president of the masking society responsible for magical objects ('fetishes') of the masks, in particular those of the female bifwebe. Also, in the absence of the society's chief this official acts as his substitute.³² By comparison, the Luba term nkimba, recorded by Van Avermaet, refers to the political figure responsible for the personal security of a chief.³³

kashila

literally a type of squirrel (Galagoides demidofii medius) in Luba³⁴ and Songye.³⁵ The term designates the chief of the bwadi society; chief of protocol, who receives visiting bifwebe from other localities. The role of this official does vary considerably throughout the central Songye region. Thus, although he was traditionally superior to

mankimba, today the latter's position is held to be of greater importance. In the Luba masking tradition 'kasila' deals with the society's internal problems, quarrels, the acquisition and distribution of funds, and he is also the guardian of amulets used by male bifwebe.³⁶

kipanga - Songye³⁷/Luba³⁸, panga: to create)
 Wenga-Mulayi reports that among the) judge
 Luba kihanga is the chief who holds) and
 all the magical power of the bifwebe) possibly
 which is based on majende) carver
 (distinguishes it from sorcery), and) of
 he may also be the sculptor.³⁹) masks
kanyingisha - Luba, nyinga: to be morally and physically)
 strong.⁴⁰)

nantunga - Luba, tunga: to pursue, to endorse an idea or direction, to decide, to assign or to impose by force.⁴¹
 This dignitary announces the judge's decision to the accused.

katambula - Luba, tambula: to receive, obtain, accept.⁴²
 An unmasked official who collects payment from the villagers (i.e. chickens, goats, and today also currency) for infractions against the bifwebe and for the healing and restoration of ills. In the case of the

Luba, katambula is a small boy who leads the masqueraders during public appearances to collect money thrown to them by the spectators, and who observes that the costumes of the bifwebe remain properly assembled.⁴³

cibelo - Luba, kibelo: open doorway, access.⁴⁴

Among the Songye this masquerader stood in the doorway of the society's secret house collecting payment from initiates; he also levied fines on the uninitiated who entered the camp of the bwadi and on members who broke the society's rules. For the Luba both Burton⁴⁵ and Van Avermaet⁴⁶ note that kibelo was the name of the door-keeper in the bambudye society.

lumuna - Luba, kimuna or lumuna: newly grown underbrush.⁴⁷

In a Luba society this member cares for chickens and goats acquired by the society, collects peanuts and manioc, and is responsible for the preparation of food at the camp.⁴⁸

The above definition of the word suggests that he may also have been responsible for the maintenance and clearing of the camp.

Among the Songye lumuna is the guardian of the masks; also referred to as kidimba or according to Plasmans' notes kashiba.⁴⁹

kakuta⁵⁰ - Luba, kuta: to tie, attach, wrap.⁵¹

Those who dress the masqueraders.

kisanya⁵² - Songye, anya: to tie.⁵³

According to Plasmans, name given to boys who tie the shoes of the bifwebe. This is somewhat unclear since the masqueraders do not use separate footwear but instead long raffia woven stockings with leather soles. It is probable that the soles are repeatedly tightened or replaced.

luteka - Luba, teka: fire, to cook.⁵⁴

Woman, usually past menopause, who prepares food for the bwadi at their camp. She is chosen for her noted powers of buci, her fearlessness, and her ability to guard secrets. Sometimes she is also called kiteshi or nyina (mother) bwadi.

lukomba - Songye, komba: to sweep.⁵⁵ Woman who cleans and gathers wood for the camp.

lutaha mema - Luba, tapa: absorbing, heavy work;⁵⁶ mema: water (ch. II, Wauters). Female who fetches water for the bwadi camp.

kilongo - Songye⁵⁷/Luba⁵⁸, mulongo: line, stripe, series.

Sculptor of masks who also applies colours

(see earlier definition of kipanga); despite his affiliation to the bwadi society he may also carve magical statuary for the village community at large. A similar designation and meaning exists among the Luba Shaba (kilenge).⁵⁹

lushingie - Songye, lushingi;⁶⁰ Luba, lushinge⁶¹: needle.

Craftsman who weaves raffia costumes of the bifwebe.

subile

bwadi member designated by a few informants as being the maker of costumes, but more commonly as responsible for their repair and for the repainting of masks.

The definition of these names, which link Songye and Luba masking traditions, bring to light some important points. First we find that the very same name of officials among the Songye and the Luba designates different functions. The Songye reference to the masquerader as ngulungu, antelope, is of particular significance since the identified species Tragelaphus scriptus possesses features seen in the morphology of the striated kifwebe. This antelope, commonly called the bushbuck, is described as being dark brown to bright chestnut in colour and marked conspicuously with transverse and vertical white stripes. A dark vertical band extends between its eyes and muzzle, reminiscent of the prominent nose-crest axis of the male bifwebe. Although the bushbuck is a relatively small

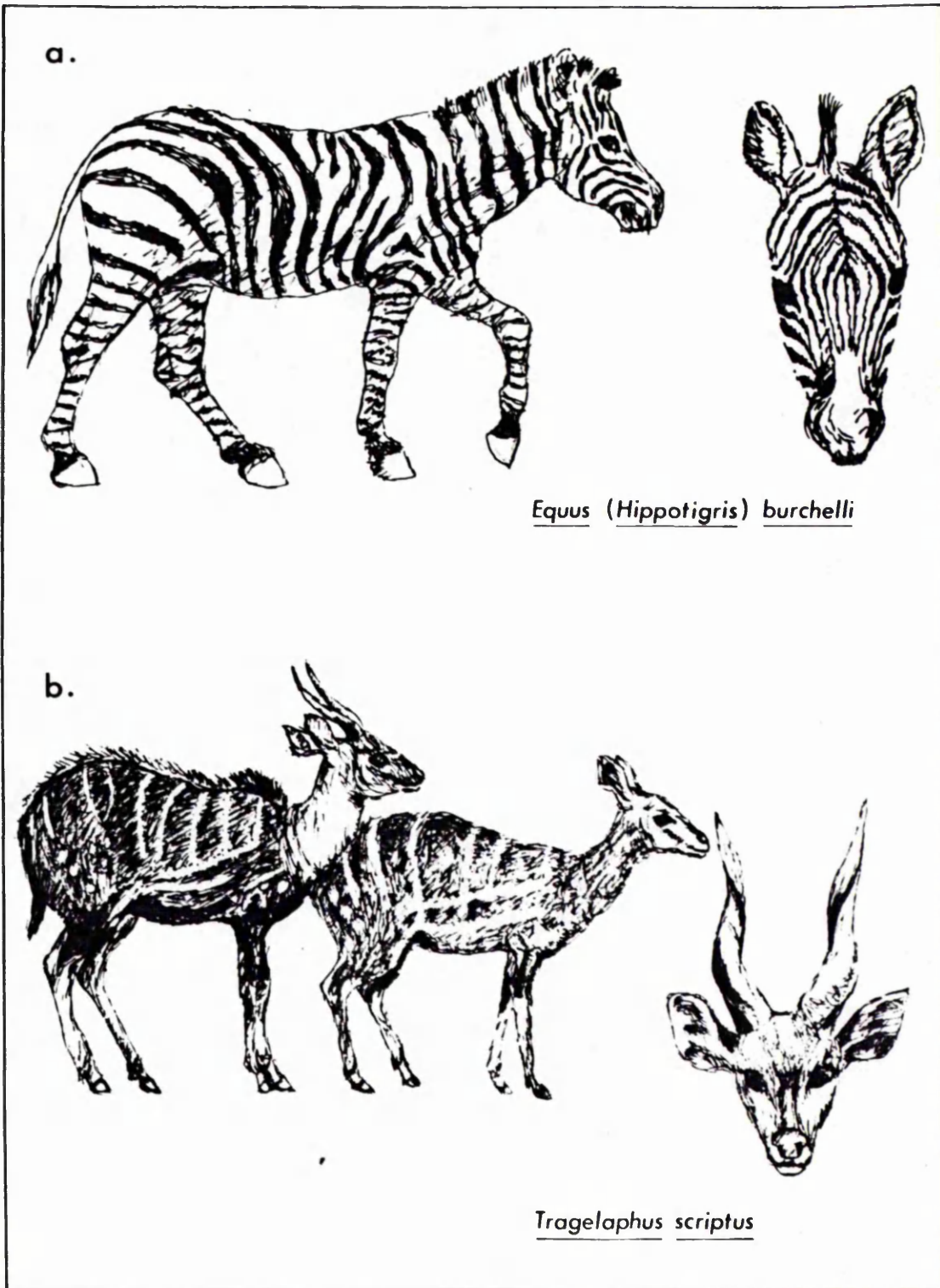


FIGURE 4. Burchell's zebra (a) and the bushbuck antelope(b).

antelope it is robustly built and known to be pugnacious and even dangerous, thus characteristically similar to the male bifwebe (fig. 4).⁶² The Tragelaphus scriptus is a species widely distributed throughout sub-Saharan Africa, and according to Plasmans it is most common in the Songye region around Kisengwa.⁶³ These findings are not only relevant to the morphological and symbolic decoding of the kifwebe but they also substantiate Wenga-Mulayi's and my hypothesis that the kifwebe tradition originated in the region of convergence between the Eastern Songye chiefdoms and the Luba-Shaba. The fact that the Luba application of the term ngulungu, to the non-initiated is a contextually opposing connotation does not necessarily repudiate this provenance. Rather it reveals that the diffusion of the masking society among the two peoples took on different symbolic dimensions.

However, apart from this example, in many cases the Luba name of bwadi members corresponds more precisely to the derivative meaning of the appellation. For instance, several names correlate to those of members of the bambudye society of the Luba. Data furnished by Burton on this society reveals, in my view, a comparative affinity between the objectives and practices of the bwadi and the bambudye.⁶⁴ The members of the latter group, noted as professional dancers, performers and musicians like the badi, exploited the populace according to their own demands and they were equally affiliated to the political establishment. However, this society is not mentioned in Wenga-Mulayi's documentation of Luba masking practices, rather he explains that the kifwebe were incorporated in the bukasanji and kyeusi cults.⁶⁵ Contrary to the practices of the Songye, these groups dealt with the expulsion of malign spirits and sorcerers. However, to what extent their magical operations differed from those

of the basha masende appears ambiguous. Still, Wenga-Mulayi's assertion is that the Luba masks are sacred, that they relate to an ancestral representation and, in the case of the round masks, to the moon.⁶⁶ This definition which echoes the writings of Colle⁶⁷ and Maes⁶⁸ seems to be aligned, in particular, to their magico-religious usage at the death and investiture of a chief. Yet, they are also used in a wider range of social, profane and judicial functions, some of which correspond to those reported among the Songye (e.g. circumcision rites, performances for visiting dignitaries or important persons). Clearly the borrowing of Songye and Luba elements in the formation of the kifwebe masking tradition is an important topic in need of comparative field-work.

ii) Place of Meeting and of Magic

All meetings of the badi; initiation of new members, and the manipulation of magical devices, take place within the radius of a secret clearing called kyanda or eyanda (also kukyanda). This place is usually located in a forested area of the bush, "east of the village" which is symbolically associated with the mountains and the origin of the bifwebe.⁶⁹ Here a hut known as kyobo stands where masks, costumes and the magical paraphernalia are stored and where the masqueraders dress for public appearances (ills. 28, 29). Today in some of the eastern chiefdoms where the bwadi society still operates, the masks in particular, rated highly as objects of sale or theft, are stored in temporary palm leaf shelters (ill. 30), or else they are guarded by mankimba or kashila at their village residences.

Of the existing kyobo seen, the only one, or rather its vestiges, which I was permitted to approach and inspect closely was

at Basala Bale (ill. 31). It had consisted of two almost square rooms with a front door and an aligning inner one but no windows. The front room, called kiyoyelo, served as a resting place while the back room, shibo ya bifwebe, housed the masks and other magical paraphernalia. Still untouched, a disintegrating inverted mortar (kinui) stood in the front room, having been used as a seat by the masqueraders. My badi informants stated that the bifwebe cannot sit on stools, chairs, or even on the ground as humans do. The kinui, they added, was left to us by the ancestors; one who sits on it has killed and is a sorcerer. The paradoxical reference to ancestors here is undoubtedly to the benevolent, superior spirits since the mortar, associated with food, specifically white manioc flour, women, and fertility, is a generative life-giving symbol. Also, viewed inverted, its phallic visual form relates to maleness and virility. Yet the sign of its inversion represents a possible opposing concept of emptiness, hence barrenness and death. Schmitz recounts a belief which echoes this interpretation. He writes:

Les vieux Basonge prétendent que "quelquefois, la nuit, une étoile descend sur la terre et vient manger le manioc oublié dans les mortiers. Si aucun homme ne la voit, elle remonte au ciel et alors la nuit est finie. Si un homme la rencontre, la nuit ne cesse que quand l'étoile est morte."⁷⁰

The description of the traditional kyobo is not necessarily uniform among all bwadi groups. Likewise, the topographic layout of the kyanda complex differs. The diagrams in figures 5 and 6 illustrate variations of the kyanda and its paths of access as described by informants of the Kafuma and Kiloshi chiefdoms respectively.

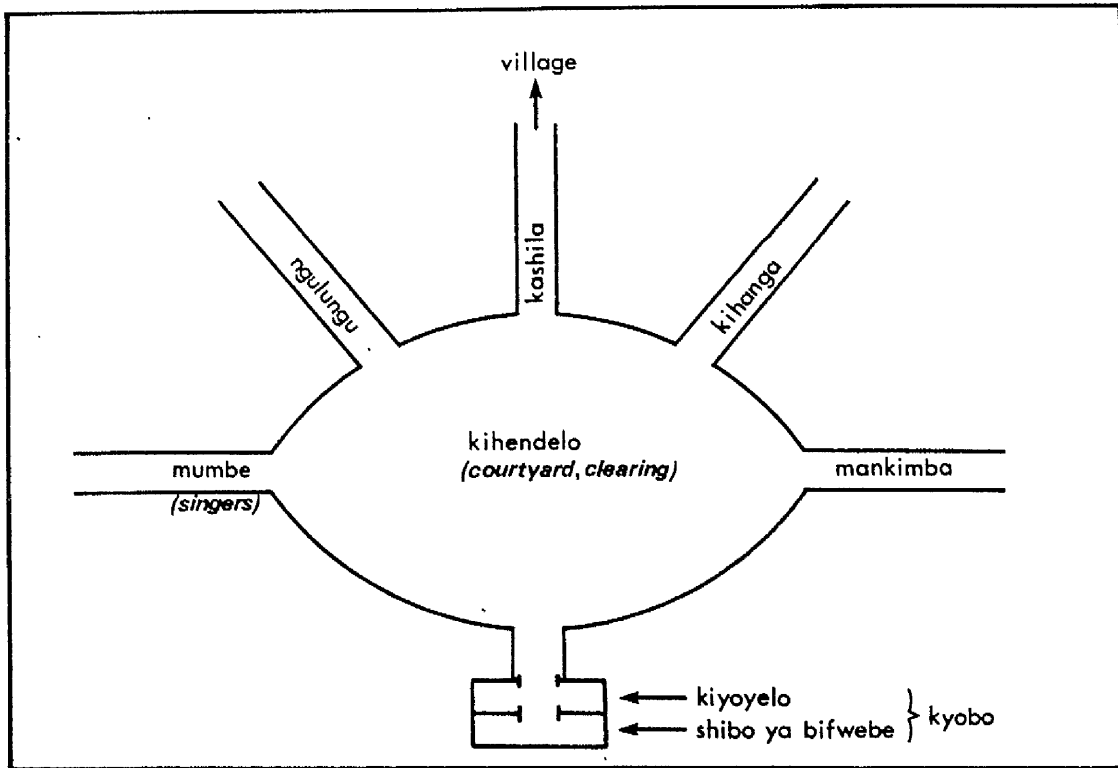


FIGURE 5. Kyanda: Basala Bale, Kafuma chiefdom.

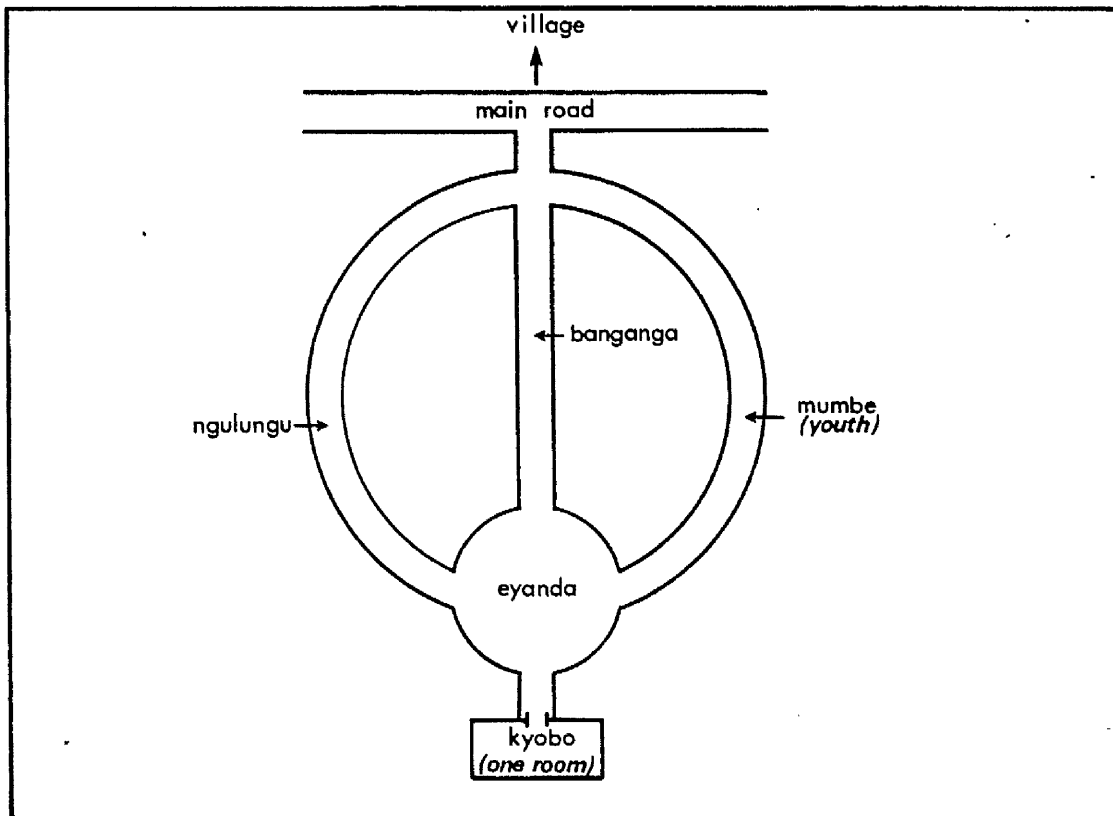


FIGURE 6. Kyanda: Katea, Kiloshi chiefdom.

To guard the secret of their locality, all badi must approach eyanda or kihendelo, as it was exceptionally referred to at Basala Bale, using specific paths assigned to them. Members who trespass on the paths of others are fined. This would mean, particularly with reference to figure 6, that all members are hierarchically ordered in rank with the three given designations, that is banganga, ngulungu, or mumbe. Different versions of these layouts therefore reflect the composition as well as the organization of members in a bwadi society.

According to Plasmans, magical objects, visible only to the initiated were set along the paths.⁷¹ These probably bore a protective, reinforcing effect like those stored at the kyobo and carried usually by the bangulungu to enhance the quality of their dance and performance, and to prevent accidental falls or damage to their costume. The latter include:

lusengwa the horn of an antelope or gazelle filled with magical substances. The masquerader carries it hidden under his costume or simply in his hand. He may also eat some of the magical concoction before leaving kyobo so as to fortify his physical strength and agility.

kahulu the fruit of the kisangu tree, filled with magical substances.

kampemba the resin of the kampemba tree worked into a ball.

mpingu small sticks about four or five centimetres in length filled with magical substances and carried either loosely in the pocket or strung on a cord.

mwanyi leaves of the kamongela bashiho tree are cooked with palm oil, salt, and several mpingu sticks. The leaves are eaten and the mpingu are then strung to be carried by the ngulungu. Mwanyi appears to be a general term for this type of herbal preparation; however, the wood species selected in this case are exclusively employed by the badi.

iii) Initiation

The data compiled on initiation rites into the bwadi bwa kifwebe society are scanty, although it appears that these practices never entailed an elaboration of ritual. Neophytes, both voluntary and involuntary, were exposed to the essential teachings and secrets of sorcery prior to the rite, but only after having paid the conditional acquittance in human deaths. Thus, those who are recognized for initiation had already achieved a rank of expertise in sorcery. On the actual day of initiation, payment in goods was required. Chickens, goats, arrows or madiba were given as demanded by the elders. Then, at the beginning of one of the selected paths leading to the bwadi's complex, a line was drawn at which point the neophyte began his approach to kyanda, on his hands and knees with his head lowered. During the course of this symbolic passage he was kicked and struck by the members in similar fashion to the vile abuse inflicted on a new Yakitenge at his investiture. Some informants say that this punishment of forewarning was only

administered upon arrival at kyobo. In the doorway of the house of magic, the initiate would be confronted by a male kifwebe under whose legs he would crawl taking several blows. Then, the elders would reveal to him the secret code consisting of a symbolic identification of parts of the kifwebe, used by members when meeting one another.⁷² Finally, as the masquerader removed his disguise, the new muadi identified the villager in question before all present, subsequently taking his vow never to divulge similar secrets. Plasmans' notes also mention that a form of the herbal concoction mwanya, probably a hallucinogenic, is administered to the new muadi so that he remains "cold-blooded".⁷³

iv) Laws of the Bwadi

1) Affairs of the badi and the identity of the masqueraders must not be disclosed to members' wives or to other non-initiates.

2) Badi must only use the paths of the kyanda complex specifically designated for them; uninitiated trespassers are subject to severe punishment.

3) When a muadi meets a kifwebe by surprise he must be able to identify the various parts of his mask and costume to confirm his membership. Those who reply incorrectly are in debt to the kifwebe. Non-initiates who undergo the same fate are fined two goats, four chickens and four bags of salt, but even after fulfilment of these demands their lives and those of their family members remain endangered.⁷⁴

4) All members accompanying the bifwebe during public appearances must do so respectfully by removing all clothing and only wearing a waist cloth. (Badi seen in performance today exposed only one bare shoulder.)

5) During performance, when a kifwebe passes, all men must rise to their feet.⁷⁵

6) Any muadi who notices that a kifwebe's costume is torn during public appearances must gesture this to him.

7) One who wears the costume of a kifwebe is forbidden to eat or drink during public appearances.

8) When food has been prepared at kyobo, the ngulungu must call upon his substitute and effect the change so that it is not perceived by the villagers.

9) A kifwebe masquerader must never enter the hut of a menstruating woman, for she would never stop bleeding, and, during the pregnancy of his wife, he must not approach her in the disguise, as she could give birth to a child resembling a kifwebe.⁷⁶

10) Singers and drummers of the society must be chosen on the basis of their musical accomplishment. The bangulungu must be skilled and agile dancers but more importantly they must demonstrate an ability in oratorical improvisation and a wide knowledge of proverbs. Among the Eastern Songye (Kiloshi chiefdom) it was explicitly stated that important officials of the bwadi society such as kashila, mankimba, and musenge are only chosen from among members

who are leaders or prospective heirs of lineages.

11) Certain men and women of Songye society at large, who are believed to possess innate mystical powers of ancestral heritage, must be exempted from the punitive action of the bifwebe. These include: twins (bankonkole), the first born after twins (always given the proper name Ngoy), the mother of twins (pamba), chiefs, the sister of a chief (dalamumba), smiths, 'banganga' and also carvers of masks.⁷⁷

v) Diffusion of the Kifwebe Society

Upon invitation, bwadi groups appeared publicly in localities where the society did not exist. Plasmans' notes confirm my own findings in stating that chiefs, but only those who achieved a high degree of mystical knowledge, meaning specifically knowledge of sorcery, could call upon the bwadi.⁷⁸ Although the purpose of these visits is ill-defined, it is conceivable, indeed probable, that they served as a preparative inurement of kifwebe practices for chiefs who aspired to form their own society. The initial preview of the masqueraders would have been essential in promoting the ideology of the bifwebe as powerful alien beings of an uncertain origin. All informants agree that the society spread through the Songye region from one locality to another by initiation and payment, but the waves of the movement remain thus far untraceable.

Upon the arrival of the badi at a new village the inauguration procedure began with the presentation of offerings such as chickens or goats which the hosting chief gave to musenge. Then, in the bush

and in secrecy a kukyanda was established where the first mask of the new society was carved. Some informants maintain that this was the mask representing the most powerful elder, whereas others argue that it was the female bifwebe, named Ngoy a Lusho, the one said to give birth to all other types. Following this induction the new group would take shape according to its own organizational procedures, a factor which probably led to the different manifestations of the bwadi society. It is revealing that the first exhibition performance of the bifwebe was scheduled at ehata, there to be officially recognized by the ruling chief.

Footnotes

- 1 "Kifwebe and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies ...", No. 3, p. 59 and No. 4, p. 89.
- 2 Les Baluba, II, 440.
- 3 La Langue Kisonge, p. 95.
- 4 Vatter in Religiöse Plastik der Naturvölker, p. 107, suggests a Kalebwe origin on the basis of L. Frobenius's documentation (1907) on a mask collected by the latter among the "Bena Mpassa". According to Plasmans' notes the "Paza" are an extended lineage of the Eki sub-group.
- 5 "Kifwebe and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies ...", No. 3, p. 69.
- 6 Reefe, "A History of the Luba Empire to c. 1885", I, p. 180.
- 7 "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", pp. 119-123.
- 8 Ibid., p. 120.
- 9 See map by Boone in Carte Ethnique du Congo. Quart Sud-Est, p. 134.
- 10 M. Douglas, "Techniques of Sorcery Control in Central Africa", in Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa, ed. Middleton and Winter, p. 126.
- 11 Frobenius, in his 1906 notebooks, wrote of the masks: " ... dass sie im Zusammenhang mit dem Totenkult stehen und bei schweren Erkrankungen und Sterbefällen in Aktion treten"; in Religiöse Plastik der Naturvölker, p. 107 by Vatter.
- 12 Departement d'Ethnologie, Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Cat. no. 30617.
- 13 "Kifwebe and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies ...", No. 4, p. 94.
- 14 Vansina, Introduction à l'Ethnographie du Congo, p. 19.
- 15 In Aniota-Kifwebe, p. 34, Maes gives the term "ruadi" and defines it as "mask" in reference to pieces of a Songye sub-group known as the Tempa.
- 16 Wenga-Mulayi, "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 153.
- 17 In An African World ..., p. 157, Merriam states that: "... munganga (s. nganga) are said to be sorcerers who work with medical knowledge (which involves good magic as well), while banganga (s. also nganga) are sorcerers who work with magic knowledge (and thus with evil)". This explanation is very doubtful. The mu prefix as in munganga is generally singular, but even though prefixes in Bantu languages can fluctuate it is not likely that this would correspond to a fundamental difference in the meaning of a word.

- 18 Identification of vernacular name by Roger Minne, zoologist,
co-ordinator of Shaba National Parks, Lubumbashi, April 1978.
- 19 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 75.
- 20 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, pp. 437, 438.
- 21 Ibid., p. 252.
- 22 Merriam, "Kifwebé and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies ...",
No. 4, p. 92.
- 23 Ibid., p. 92.
- 24 "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 50.
- 25 Luba Religion and Magic ..., p. 158.
- 26 Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 592.
- 27 Merriam, "Kifwebe and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies ...",
No. 4, p. 92.
- 28 Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 435.
- 29 "The Bala Musician", pp. 254-256.
- 30 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 282.
- 31 "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 151.
- 32 Ibid., p. 148.
- 33 Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 255.
- 34 Ibid., p. 609.
- 35 Wauters, L'Esotérie ..., p. 310.
- 36 Wenga-Mulayi, "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 148.
- 37 Stappers, unpublished Songye vocabulary.
- 38 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 496.
- 39 "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 147.
- 40 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 446.
- 41 Ibid., p. 758.
- 42 Ibid., p. 669.
- 43 Wenga-Mulayi, "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 152.
- 44 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 60.

- 45 Luba Religion and Magic ..., p. 158.
- 46 Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 60.
- 47 Ibid., p. 419.
- 48 Wenga-Mulayi, "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 152.
- 49 "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba, Bekalebwe, n.d., n. pag.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 323.
- 52 Plasmans, "Le Kifwebe", TS, Kisengwa, 13 October 1964, n. pag.
- 53 Stappers, unpublished Songye vocabulary.
- 54 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 684.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 677.
- 57 Stappers, unpublished Songye vocabulary.
- 58 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 360.
- 59 Wenga-Mulayi, "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 148.
- 60 Stappers, unpublished Songye vocabulary.
- 61 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 614.
- 62 J. Dorst and P. Dandelot, A Field Guide to the Larger Mammals of Africa (London: Collins, 1978), pp. 181, 198, 199, 223. The drawing of the bushbuck in Figure 4 is copied from this source.
- 63 Telephone interview, 30 October 1979.
- 64 Luba Religion and Magic ..., pp. 154-156.
- 65 "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", pp. 29, 30.
- 66 Ibid., pp. 29, 30, 124-142.
- 67 Les Baluba, pp. 676-677.
- 68 Aniota-Kifwebe, pp. 36, 37.
- 69 Plasmans, catalogue notes, no. 64/317-81 (village Nge, Bekalebwe).

- 70 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 371.
- 71 "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, interview with Yamulenda Ebombo, Butu.
- 72 Plasmans, "Le Kifwebe", TS, Kisengwa.
- 73 "Kifwebe-Sorcier", catalogue notes, no. 63/118 (Kisengwa).
- 74 Plasmans, "Histoire du Masque 'Kifwebe'", TS, interview with Leon Kongolo from Lualaba, n.d., n. pag.
- 75 Plasmans, "Le Kifwebe", TS, Kisengwa.
- 76 Plasmans, catalogue notes, no. 64/317, 81 (village Nge, Bekalebwe); no. 66/581 (village Mulo, Bekalebwe).
- 77 Samain in La Langue Kisonge, p. 88, gives the following different definition for twins: "mafasa, mpasa; l'^{ainé} est Mukonkole; le second ^{from mine} Ngoi. Les parents s'appellent fambo".
- 78 "Kifwebe-Sorcier", cat. no. 63/118 (Kisengwa).

CHAPTER V

The Making and Defining Process of Masks

a) Selection of Wood Species

Throughout the region under investigation the species called mulela (Ricinodendron rautanenii¹) was singled out as the wood preferred for the making of bifwebe. Dechamps' laboratory analysis of Songye masks from the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale similarly revealed the use of Ricinodendron in 69% out of forty-six examined pieces.² In each locality, though, where the selection of woods was discussed, at least two or three different species were named as alternative choices. These include:

kicipicipi (Erythrina abyssinica³)

musokoma

kamatofo, kabutofo (?) (Ongokea klaineana⁴)

musangusangu

musanguci

lupelampungu (Maesopsis eminii⁵)

mufulangoma

kifwenkese (Commiphora sp.⁶)

The first three of the above species exceed the others in importance of usage. Kicipicipi was noted among the Kalebwe, Cofwe, and the Eastern Songye; musokoma among the Cofwe and Eastern chiefdoms; and kamatofo only among the Kalebwe but throughout their vast territory. Plasmans notes another species, musangusangu, which appears to be widely favoured in the eastern chiefdoms, and, according to my inquiry, also in the western region of the Kalebwe near Kabinda.⁷

From these findings it appears that the selection of wood species for the carving of masks was relatively limited and moreover focused primarily on the wood mulela. This holds true for areas of fairly dense savanna woodland, as among the Eastern Songye, and for the grassland hills around Cungu, where the landscape is only sporadically studded with solitary trees. All of my informants, without exception, suggested that the choice of these woods is strictly a pragmatic one based on the facility of carving and wearing a mask made of such a soft, lightweight species. Mulela is favoured because it is ranked as the softest wood by far, and kifwenkese is said to be one of the hardest.

Now, only two of the named species, kifwenkese and kicipicipi, are used sculpturally throughout the Songye region for the making of protective magical statuary (mankishi). Interestingly enough both of these species are exceptional to the category, as they are also exploited by herbalists in the concoction of medicines for physical ailments. In the case of kifwenkese the bark of the tree is scraped, mixed with palm oil and sand from a termitary, and the paste is applied over the entire body of patients who were simply described as underweight (most commonly this is due to intestinal parasites). The anti-cough concoction made from the bark of kicipicipi has already been noted in chapter II, in addition to its association with ancestor veneration. Unlike the other listed species, these two woods serve a broad range of contextual uses (medicinal, magical, sacred) which brings into question their choice as traditional bifwebe woods. Elders at Cungu did explain, in fact, that kifwenkese, for one, had been used formerly for food utensils, because of its hardness

and durability, and that it has only recently become a favoured choice for the commercial fabrication of masks. Other Songye informants, although they did not specify the names of trees, agreed with this distinguishing feature of density between old, used masks and newer pieces.

Thus, if kifwenkese and kicipicipi are set apart as aberrant examples, this would mean that traditional kifwebe woods were not only few in number but that they served almost exclusively that one purpose. Their low density factor also indicates that they are all woods highly susceptible to insect attack and prone to cracking and other damage. This anatomical property of the woods is especially important since it suggests that the masks are perishable and replaceable objects. The Songye affirm this idea, pointing out that the masks in themselves contain no magical power or mystical attributes, but that it is the sorcerer or the witch who activates the piece by virtue of wearing it, thereby creating the being of the kifwebe. However, this is not to say that damaged masks or those not in use can be discarded or sold, for this would be the exposure of bwadi secrecy and the betrayal of the reality of the kifwebe creature. Neither does it mean that newly made masks and old ones which show much wear are equally regarded. Certainly the older pieces are more treasured, since they testify visually to a temporal accumulation of magical experience. In a general sense, one has the impression that the life and mortality of the masks coincides metaphorically with the changing generations of rulers and their regimes.

This notion is brought to mind in particular with the choice of mulela. In the first place, it may be significant to the selection criteria that the wood of this tree possesses a distinctly white growth ring section and a red sap-filled central core, these being the two signalling colours of female and male bifwebe respectively. The second point to note is that this species was cited as one of the series of trees planted around epata, possibly in association with the ancestors. Although the actions of the ancestors and the practices of the bifwebe are opposed, both domains are encompassed by chieftainship. Hence, if it can be postulated that the presence of mulela at epata is a specific contextual sign of the chief's ambivalent mystical powers, then the choice of this wood in the making of the masks could also be symbolically linked to the practices of the bwadi.

b) Carvers

Most badi informants referred to the carver of the bifwebe as kihanga or kilongo (chapter IV), but general terms for these craftsmen are also applicable. Sea or seshi are most frequently used, except in Cungu, where the term funci was employed. All of these designations refer to those who "work in wood" making both figure sculpture for protective magical purposes and also masks. The difference, however, seems to be that kihanga or kilongo are initiated bwadi members whereas the others are probably not. This duality of the carver's services is accepted throughout the Songye region, as among the Luba.⁸ The reason for this lies in the fact that the carver's occupation is a profane skill, and although often passed down from father to son it is learned through apprenticeship. Thus, the

carver is merely commissioned to produce an object, mask or statuette, and it is the role of other specialists to consecrate it into a ritual life-span. This does not mean that magical practitioners such as the banganga cannot also carve mankishi. Sorcerers of the bwadi society may also produce masks, but it is not likely that carvers of mankishi and bifwebe are simultaneously and directly involved in the two types of mystical practices, since these represent an opposition of social interests.

c) Preparation and Carving of Masks

The carvers interviewed did not elaborate on the making process of bifwebe, partly because these discussions implicated their personal and very specific allegiance to the bwadi, thereby endangering their position with its members and blemishing their wider social repute as sculptors.

It would appear that masks were traditionally carved during the dry season at the time of community hunts and the ritual installation of new chiefs. Among the Luba a rite preceded the felling of the tree, yet among the Songye this practice was denied.⁹ It was stressed, though, that the mental and physical condition of the chosen carver required assessment. He had to be at the height of his strength, having resolved all personal problems, before being engaged in the task. The realization of his creative ability meant that he had to transcend the dangerous intervention of evil mikishi associated with the undertaking.

Thus, on a particular day designated by the sculptor himself,

he set off alone into the bush, ensuring above all that none of the villagers traced his path. Upon reaching a reasonable distance from any inhabited area he chose carefully the specific tree of the desired species to be cut and sectioned for use. A discrepancy arises at this point about the drying period of the wood. Some informants state that the work begins immediately, whereas others claim that a ten day period is required, in which case it becomes apparent that the preparatory condition of the sculptor applies not only to the actual carving of the mask but to the entire process beginning with the cutting of the tree. Clearly, the drying factor is a technical one as Plasmans' notes reveal, varying with the species being used.¹⁰ The softest wood, mulela, would be more easily carved in its green state since drying would make it brittle and prone to cracking. Another point of disagreement or local preference concerns the place designated for the carving. According to some Songye the entire making process is completed at the tree cutting site, yet others claim that it is carried out at eyanda. The latter would only seem possible in the event that the sculptor is an initiated bwadi member authorized to enter the secret grounds.

Specifications for the carving of a kifwebe: the mask-type, dimensions and basic facial characteristics are decided upon by the badi. In preparation, one sculptor at Katea pointed out that he sketches his idea on the ground, on a calabash or on paper if available. Once the tools are set into action the carver cannot be disturbed unnecessarily even by the badi who are permitted to witness the process. All females are forbidden to approach, and if for any reason the sculptor should return to his village during this time he

must refrain from sexual relations with all women.¹¹

The essential tools used for the carving of masks as well as figure sculpture comprise the following:

nsezo or nsezu adze; several sizes may be employed but usually one larger one is used for the reduction of the sectioned tree trunk into an initial sculptural form, and then the smaller ones for the execution of desired features.

mutonkolo chisel; serves in the precise rendering of facial forms and especially angular planes.

nkolo or nkololo curved gouge; used to round concave and convex planes and to eliminate faceted chisel markings.

luhete general term for a knife; needed for the incision of angles, edges and grooved striations.

Coarse textured leaves such as those of the luhela tree, employed also by the Luba, are used to polish the surface of the carving, although today sculptors residing near major mission centres purchase imported sandpaper.¹²

The painting of the mask, which may be done by the sculptor or kilongo, a bwadi member especially assigned to this task, was witnessed and detailed by Merriam in the following passage:

... Paint brushes are made either from short (6") sticks padded at the ends with pieces of cloth tied on with raffia fibre, or from bundles of raffia fibre which are bound tightly together, cut off square, and frayed slightly at the ends. In the one mask I saw being painted, the artist began with the mouth, working paint into the cracks, depressions, and tight places with a small stick; the nose and crest were painted next, followed by the eyes. The head and forehead portions of the left side of the mask face were then painted, succeeded by the grooves along that side of the mask. The grooves were painted in order so that the artist changed brushes as he moved from one groove to the next; he did not paint all the white grooves, then all the red, then the black, for example. The workmanship was careful. The painting described above occupied an hour and forty-five minutes of concentrated working time and constituted a section; at this point the artist stopped to rest, and he painted the remainder of the mask in similar sections. 13

Some of my informants described a different method of colour application for the polychrome masks, in particular those with grooved striations. After polishing the mask, it is immersed entirely in bwisha, black mud from a river bed. Only then the thin linear striations are incised, exposing the natural light colour of the wood. Onto this monochrome effect the craftsman applies red and white pigments, using a brush made of feathers.

d) The Kifwebe Costume

The weaving of the costume is a craft specialization, far more time-consuming than the carving of the masks and equally as important. All the masqueraders seen among the Eastern Songye wore the traditional raffia fibre apparel consisting of three pieces: the head covering attached to the back of the mask, a shirt, and separate leggings. The hips were covered with goat skins fastened with a wide leather belt. All masqueraders, representing both male and female bifwebe, wear this type of costume.

The raffia fibres, made from the roots or the bark of the kisala or moko (Sterculia quingeloba) trees are dyed in bwisha. Some of the strands are then attached around the chin of the mask to form a beard, which in the case of the elder's mask may extend to below the belt. Unfortunately no data was obtained on the weaving technique. The only available description is that of Wenga-Mulayi which refers to the making of a similar costume among the Luba.

He writes:

... Les bras et les jambes sont tissés autour d'un cylindre de bois conforme à la taille du futur porteur. La fabrication de la partie du dos est faite autour d'une forme en ellipse c'est-à-dire de deux bâtons liés en courbe plane connexe fermée. On tisse d'abord au périmètre de la courbe, puis en spirale, on continue vers l'intérieur jusqu'à ce qu'on atteigne le centre. Chaque partie est tissé à part et ce n'est que par la suite que les deux parties des bras sont rattachées par des cordelettes au tissu de la poitrine. Celles des jambes restent séparées ... 14

e) Care of Masks and Costumes

After a new mask is made palm oil is applied to its inner concave surface to protect it from insect ravage. A similar principle is exemplified by the belief that the perspiration of the mask wearer, which provides a repeated coating, will also prevent the penetration of termites.

Periodically, when the colours of the masks show fading they are reapplied, creating a growing outer crust and supposedly a more solid seal. Repair of the costume is an ongoing process.

If a mask cracks beyond the possibilities of usage or repair, or it begins to show signs of infestation, it is suspended on a wall in kyobo and left there to disintegrate. This equally applies to unmendable costumes. All the damaged pieces are hung on one wall of the shibo ya bifwebe (if such is the construction of the kyobo) and those in use on the wall directly opposite, probably to minimize the spread of pestilence. Under no circumstances can masks or costumes be discarded at random. If the need should arise to remove a piece because of severe infestation it is burned secretly in the bush after a collective decision of the badi. In exceptional circumstances the same is done with a mask which has caused accidental death or evil to the badi or the community at large.

f) Signs and Symbols of the Kifwebe

i) Defining the Parts of the Mask and Costume

All parts of the kifwebe creature are termed separately and symbolically defined. The morphological features of the mask constitute only one aspect of the codification and are incomplete without consideration of the costume. In the collection of photographs of museum pieces shown to informants, the masks which provoked an immediate response were those with a beard or fragments of a costume (ills. 72, 73, 74, 78, 97). Moreover, in a number of cases these same pieces were automatically identified as masks worn by the most powerful sorcerers. Only after subsequent viewings of these photographs did the same informants focus their observations on the masks, providing a further, yet correlating, identification to previous discussions on morphology and colour.

The following compilation of Plasmans' and my own very limited data provides an initial framework for the symbolic interpretation of the kifwebe. Even though this material is incomplete, the exegetic meanings are an important indication of the diversified sources drawn upon in conveying the nature of kifwebe magic. No distinction is made in terminology between male and female mask types. The esoteric teachings relate to one generalized concept of the kifwebe creature, even though the focus is set on the morphology of the male mask with its high crest and striations (fig. 7).

Mask

eiba, also eyilu

face

"the power of the kifwebe". The right side of the face is referred to as nguba (the sun) and the left side as mweshi (the moon).¹⁵

mitoshi, miteshi

eyes

"une poignée des sorciers; les gonflements des sorciers"¹⁶

The eye slits are referred to as holes of termitaries.¹⁷

mbaso also mbuanya

nose/nostrils

"the hole (opening) of a furnace"¹⁸

mpo, also nungu¹⁹

nasal hair

Luba, nungu: porcupine, Hysterix galeato²⁰

(also Common Bantu, see appendix 1).

Generally goat's hair is used.



FIGURE 7. Kifwebe performer (Eastern Songye elder).

etondo

mouth

"the beak of a bird"

"the flame of a sorcerer"²¹

mukombo

chin

"the snout of a crocodile"²²

luhambo)

mbiko)

crest among Eastern Songye; the latter designation is also used in reference to the horn of the costume.²³

- in Kabinda the crest was named lusengwa which actually means horn.

- Plasmans' notes do not include a separate term for the crest, moreover the differentiation between the crest and the horn of the costume appears ambiguous, suggesting that the two features may be conceived of as one entity.

lushita

striations; general term for the grooved and painted linear design.

ngulu

literally means "mountain"²⁴ (also Common Bantu, see appendix 1); term for the painted striations on the forehead or the top of the head, which are also referred to as "les épics [sic] du zèbre".²⁵ The significance of the latter expression is unfortunately obscured by the misprint of the word "épics". Most logically

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it would seem to mean "the stripes of a zebra".
However, with reference to the "mountain", there
may be an extended association to its mane which,
in the case of the Burchell's zebra Equus
(Hippotigris) burchelli, is noticeably stiff and
upright (fig. 4, ch. IV).²⁶

bikoko

facial design

"ce sont des choses roulées d'une autre
manière"²⁷; possibly meaning 'something
transformed'(?)

Costume

nsuna

general term for costume

katoto

head covering attached to back of mask²⁸

mukanda: book²⁹)

horn; conical extension at back of head

mbiko)

katunga

feathers of rooster at extremity of horn³⁰

mambela

cowry shells sewn to katoto

mweifu: beard³¹)

beard of raffia fibres.

mpasu: locust)

"hair or mane les poils of a male lion"

"fibres of a palm non dattier"³²

..... neck - during the identification procedure the neck is initially referred to as "a metal" and the second time as "bees".³³

..... breasts - stars³⁴

mitengwa arms
"cette rame nous la rencontrons dans la maison et jamais sur la route".³⁵

tusadi fingers; three on each hand

subu belt

misokya (musoke:)
animal skins)³⁶)
)
makupo) goat skins covering hips.
)
bilamba: clothes) "the leaves of the kishiushiu tree".³⁷

nyoka: snake;³⁸ cords used to fasten skins.

mishi (mwishi: pestle) legs
During an interrogation by a kifwebe one leg is referred to as "a mortar" and the other as "a pestle". An additional reference is made to "roots", which also recalls Merriam's statement about a connection between a kifwebe and a tree.³⁹

ekekafeet⁴⁰

The hide soles are said to be "the feet
 [les sabots] of an elephant".⁴¹

The cords used in sewing the soles to
 the leggings are called "fleas".⁴²

The etymology and meaning of the vernacular words given remain for the large part unresolved. It should be noted that neither Stappers's Songye word list nor Van Avermaet's Kiluba dictionary includes this specialized vocabulary. Moreover it was found that the terminology given by Wenga-Mulayi for Luba masqueraders differs with two exceptions only (mutenga - horn; mpasu - beard) even though a correlation exists between Songye and Luba terms for the society's members.⁴³ Thus, it may be that this specialized vocabulary constitutes a secret language, regionally varied, such as the distorted form of Luba(ki) used by members of the bambudye society.⁴⁴

Yet, despite the esoteric nature of these bwadi teachings, it would not seem likely in view of the bifwebe's function of social control, that the populace is completely unaware of the connotations of their symbolic codification. To assert the visual impact of the kifwebe an ideology exists, one which is apprehended and conveyed at some level of definition. However, this does not mean that all information is made explicit publicly, or that it needs to be. The kifwebe is to be feared and respected and this it achieves through

malevolent magical practices. Of greater importance though, it must preserve the anonymity of those who are instrumental in this action. Its identity is therefore created through the ambivalence of multiple known, and sometimes opposing, associations with cosmology, nature, culture, with the sacred and the profane.

The kifwebe creature least resembles a man. He walks upright like a man, yet he is known to fly like a bird. He has hands like a man but only three fingers. He talks but in an odd falsetto voice. In announcing his approach he produces thunderous echoing sounds and the deep growling of a lion. Entering a village he runs wildly and frantically like a beast set loose or one on the track of its prey (ills. 32, 33). Still the kifwebe, represented especially by the female type, can demonstrate the learnt movements of dance or the stately poise of dignitaries (ills. 37-39). He carries a stick, like a man inflicting punishment by physical means, yet he can bring death to his victims mystically (ills. 34-36b).

To the uninitiated certain morphological features of the kifwebe are visually readable, whereas others are alluded to metaphorically, mainly through songs of the badi (see appendix 2). The power of the kifwebe, said to be concentrated in the face, is visually perceived in features similar to those of ferocious animals such as the crocodile, the lion, and the zebra. The crocodile is perhaps the most feared of aquatic animals. He has an "evil heart" and is spoken of as "the rumbling or roaring of the rain [storm?]" in Wauters's cosmogonic myths.⁴⁵ In a series of Luba fables published by Stappers, the power of this creature recurs paralleling that of

the leopard and the elephant.⁴⁶ The lion who plunders the village and the bush, dominates through sheer strength and brutality. On the other hand, the zebra, an animal alien to the region under investigation, is an anomaly and probably something of a mystery to the inhabitants.⁴⁷ Hence the striations of the kifwebe emphasize the supernatural, that is, a transmutation or metamorphosis, but not only in being associated with the zebra but simultaneously as well with the striped bushbuck antelope (with reference to the masquerader's name ngulungu). Significantly also the aggressiveness of the two animals matches the temperament of the kifwebe. In Wauters's myth, for example, ngolo (zebra) is spoken of as "le colérique à la ceinture de zèbre - fort parmi des animaux ...".⁴⁸ Thus, the kifwebe, having the snout of a crocodile, the mane of a lion and the stripes of a zebra and antelope is endowed with the behavioural characteristics of all these animals.

In addition to these distinguishing physiognomic features the kifwebe also has the beak of a bird, the crest of a cock, and a horn. The specific characteristics of the bird remain enigmatic since the species, of which there are many of symbolic significance, is unidentified. However, in a general sense, birds are recognized for their acute awareness of change and conflict in the natural environment which they express sonorously. The cock, a familiar bird, restricted in flight to the village, expresses that sensitivity at a different level of perception. He stands between man and the cosmic elements, between ongoing cultural activity and cyclical temporal change. He announces daybreak, but it is significant that the first cry is heard "while it is still dark (qua bofuka yonso)".⁴⁹ More dramatically, Wauters's myth makes known that if all the roosters

were to disappear, the village would die.⁵⁰

The horn of the kifwebe, which may well be conceived as part of the crest since it is crowned with the feathers of a rooster, is one feature of particular importance to the Songye. Wenga-Mulayi states that it contains magical substances which serve both protectively and aggressively as a type of radar.⁵¹ Most of my informants denied this statement categorically, although only indefinite answers were given. In the collection of Eki myths reference is made to a category of animals whose power is contained in their horns.⁵² It may be that the horn of the kifwebe, of the masquerader named ngulungu, is a visual sign of multiple species in this category: the antelope, the horned snake, and possibly also the zebra. The inclusion of the zebra in this category is conceivable, first of all, because it is closely associated with the striped antelope and, secondly, because in the identified species of Burchell's zebra the stiff, upright mane does resemble, face on, a horn-like projection (fig. 4). According to the Eki myth the specificity of horns arises from the belief that they are attributes of superior wisdom acquired with age. So it is said: " ... les oreilles viennent en premier lieu et les cornes suivent".⁵³ It follows then that the kifwebe, having no ears but only a horn, demonstrates extraordinary wisdom and experience of the elders.

A second category of symbolic associations pertaining to parts of the costume constitutes those which are metaphorically expressed through songs. To the uninitiated these are not visually discernible or specified, for this knowledge is the secret code of the badi. Two of these references, to the beard and the neck of the kifwebe, form part of a dual, if not multiple, symbolic cluster. That is, the

beard, as noted earlier, is referred to as the mane of a lion, but also as locusts. These two associations may also be symbolically interrelated; however, lacking documentation, this point cannot be pursued further. From a broader perspective, one immediate relationship appears between several designations, all of which encompass species of insects, namely locusts or grasshoppers (beard), bees (neck), and fleas (fibres for sewing on soles). Like the bifwebe, locusts, for example, are dreaded. They ravage the fields, robbing the villagers of food. Le Marinel states that the threat of locusts, next to crocodiles and "the rain" (most likely the storm; see chapter II) is the object of much protective magic among the Songye.⁵⁴ In Wauters's myths emphasis is placed on insects in general that sting and devour flesh; "... Lorsque la Mort surprend un animal, les insectes accourent et s'emparent de son corps".⁵⁵ It may also be that the association of nasal hair with the porcupine alludes to a similar stinging action of the kifwebe.

Within the scope of available data, two other aspects of the costume can be considered separately: first, the feet of the kifwebe which were identified as those of an elephant. The elephant does not possess the speed, agility or ferocity of animals classified with the lion. Neither does he have the sting of insects nor the wisdom of the horned species. He is, however, endowed with strength, but only as a result of his overwhelming size in proportion to other animals. In Wauters's myth this strength is related to virility but it is also described as being unnatural and feared. It is stated: "[l'éléphant] est trop grand, trop gros ... Son phallus était trop grand. Les femmes le craignaient à cause de cela".⁵⁶

Secondly, the association of the snake (nyoka) with the cords of the costume, which are probably not even seen by the spectators, is one of particular interest, since the snake plays an important role in the cosmogony of the Songye as well as the Luba. As specification of the species is not given, one must consider it generically in all its multiplicity of meanings. To begin with, the snake could be ngulungu, the horned, venomous type, dangerous as the magic of the kifwebe. At a level of cosmogonic interpretation the snake nkongolo is the rainbow "qui lie la pluie ... qui lie la source à l'amont".⁵⁷ Nkongolo who links the waters of above and below thus represents an interconnection between the cosmic and the terrestrial domains. In another Luba interpretation, nkongolo the rainbow also appears as the celestial union of two serpents, male and female, which emit fire, thus burning the earth and chasing away the rain.⁵⁸ On the basis of this and other Luba beliefs de Heusch draws attention to the following conclusion: "L'arc-en-ciel assume en effet une contradiction: il est à la fois mâle et femelle, il unit le feu et l'eau, il est d'en haut et d'en bas".⁵⁹ With respect to the bifwebe this analogy is particularly apt. The concept of the bifwebe embodies the duality of male and female forces both visually (male and female masks) and mystically (buci and masende). This is reinforced in symbolic references to the mask's face as the moon and the sun. Designated in bilateral symmetry, that is left and right, the allusion is made to high and low, thus to the mountains and the sources of rivers on the one hand, and to the lowland and the lake of Efile on the other. The bifwebe are said to come from the mountains and so from the east, yet simultaneously reference is made through song to the "Léopard de l'Occident" (see appendix 2).

The association of nkongolo - nyoka with fire recalls also the opposition of the sun or celestial fire and its extension on earth, that is, man-made fire. In relation to the kifwebe a parallel opposition is possible between mystical powers which are inherited and linked with kinship (buci) and those which are acquired (masende). In the facial features of the kifwebe reference is made to fire mystically contrived from the torch of sorcerers and fire which epitomizes the cultural milieu, the fire of a furnace.

At another plane of interpretation the high/low duality is suggested in likening features to a mountain and a hole. The striations of the mask are defined as the mountain, and the nose and mouth as the hole of a furnace and the hole of a termitary respectively. This can be elaborated upon in the light of two other contextual examples supplied by de Heusch. He states:

Pour les Zela, une tribu lubaïsée du Katanga, le python arc-en-ciel séjourne dans une termitière dont il ne sort que par temps pluvieux; pour échapper à son souffle dangereux on doit faire du bruit ... Une tradition voisine se retrouve chez les Luba-Hemba: "l'arc-en-ciel n'est autre que la vapeur, la fumée qui sort de la gueule d'un gros serpent rouge appelé Kongolo". La même fumée noir sort quelquefois des termitières; elle se déploie comme un nuage et exterme tout ce qu'elle rencontre ...60

Thus, from the mouth of the kifwebe which is symbolically defined as a termitary, snakes, fire and smoke issue forth. This assertion of the kifwebe's cosmic power contains also the ominous aspect, for it is reminiscent of the lightning which accompanies black smoky clouds. The Songye as well as the Luba greatly fear the appearance of these elements.⁶¹ They recall the conflict and separation of celestial bodies, hence the ambivalent duality of their effect. For one thing sorcerers, the basha masende, are said to manipulate lightning for

their own use.

The Eki myth of creation reveals another identity of nkongolo which draws upon these inauspicious attributes. It is described as sanki, the serpent of desire, who instigates a perversion of physical drive and is the cause of ill-fated wandering spirits (mikishi a balemine).⁶² The nature of these spirits parallels that of savage and voracious instincts of animals which symbolically form part of the character of the kifwebe. At the same time these wandering spirits are also the active source of power of the basha masende and, therefore, of the bifwebe.

The entire symbolic composition of the kifwebe is completed by a series of elements representing the organized aspect of culture and nature which stands in contrast to the unrestrained physical spontaneity of animals and the chaos of celestial bodies. These appear in reference to the pestle and mortar, cowry shells, metal, and the aberrant symbol of a book. Cowry shells and metal or the forge signal the status and strength of chieftainship as that embodied by the culture hero Sendwe Kitenge and his sons. The pestle and mortar, associated with male and female union and the settlement of cultivators affirms this ancestral heritage, at least with respect to Kalebwe oral tradition. This seemingly paradoxical association of the kifwebe with the ancestors appears even more overtly in referring to the masquerader's legs as roots, and to his clothes as leaves. In other words, the entire physical presence of the kifwebe is equated metaphorically with a tree such as the moko (one of the species used for the raffia fibres of the costume) which represents

the interconnection between the domain of the ancestors and that of the living.

The latter concept relating to a benevolent spirit world seems to apply specifically to the role of the female mask; however, this type of distinction cannot be made. All bifwebe wear the same type of costumes and paraphernalia, thus all symbolic references to the 'sacred' pertain to both types of masks. The mystical power and identity of the kifwebe, regardless of its hierarchic status, rests in an ambivalent notion of religion and magic. If this alien creature possesses superlative magical knowledge comparable to those of sacred heritage such as chiefs, then it too must be defined within the breadth of the spiritual hierarchy.

ii) Colours of the Bifwebe

Apart from the generic definition of the kifwebe, the traditional colours of the masks, white, red and black, represented in different facial designs, determine the specific identity of the two mask types, male and female. Female masks are pointed out as being predominantly white, whereas male masks are said to be all three colours, although it is stressed that they are male, above all, because they contain red (ills. 40-42). Other recently introduced colours such as blue, green or orange were not accounted for by informants and, although they are exemplified by pieces in the Plasmans collection, the accompanying notes do not document these either (ills. 43, 44).

The symbolism of the three colours would correspond to Turner's analysis of a tripartite mode of classification among the Ndembu,

in the sense that white appears as dominant and unitary, red as ambivalent because it denotes strength which is synonymous with courage as well as danger, while black mediates as that "shadowy third".⁶³ Since black serves as a connective and assumes an obscure or even "hidden" role in the context of the bifwebe, Turner would explain that the three-fold classification yields to one which is two-fold and in which red becomes not only the complement but almost the antithesis of white.⁶⁴ The value or effect of these colours is redistributed, as it were, but still within the definition of the triad. White and red are the active, powerful signs, whereas black is a qualifier interacting with the other two. This is not to say that the male/female distinction between masks is neatly correlated to the two active signals, red and white. Colour symbolism, as Turner states, is not consistently sex-linked, although red and white may be situationally specified to represent the opposition of the sexes.⁶⁵

The symbolic interpretation of the three colours, as seen through their contextual usage should deal first with white, since it was stated as being dominant and unitary. In a general sense white is consistently viewed as an auspicious sign which has the most extensive situational usage. White kaolin is sprinkled on Yakitenge's face during the investiture rite to show that he has a clear heart, that he is pure and in harmony with the ancestors. It is applied to the faces of twins while still at an age of close interaction and dependency on the mother, to show that they are pure but in need of protection (ill. 45). During their period of breastfeeding a white line is drawn with manioc flour around the

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compound of the infants, and the same was observed in the case of an infant born after a series of miscarriages. Practitioners of 'white magic' such as diviners and makers of diverse forms of protective medicines also apply white to their bodies when invoking benevolent spirits (ill. 46). The first stage of initiation into the bukishi society (bukishi bwa ntoshi) is a purification symbolized by white body paint. At burials the body of the deceased is wrapped in a white cloth to represent the joy of transition into the spirit world and the eventual descent of the newborn (ill. 47). Manioc flour and white chickens are offered to ancestral spirits at waterfalls, and magical statuary is smeared with flour during new moon rites. Houses are often painted decoratively or simply splattered with white because it is protective and it is 'beautiful'. Mothers often pride themselves on the beauty of their children if they have a lighter skin colour.

Much as among the Ndembu, white for the Songye symbolizes goodness, purity, health, reproductive strength, joy, peace, the attainment of wisdom, and beauty. It is associated most commonly with the moon, light, the daytime, manioc flour, the milk of lactation, sperm, and it is related, but inconspicuously so, to the domain of Efile Mukulu.

The colour red is restricted in ritual usage but its effect is more potent and situationally immediate. A red rooster, symbolic of strength and courage, is prepared for the ritual meal of Yakitenge at his investiture. Initiates of the bukishi, who have been exposed to the teachings of the society in the second phase of the ritual (bukishi bwa nkula), are confirmed with red body paint.

In juxtaposition to these symbolic uses, red is also the colour of blood, ambivalent in that it may be the blood of sacrifice, meaning that of animals offered to the ancestors, or of those presented to the chief, or still it may be metaphorically perceived as the blood of ^{human} victims of sacrifice. Red is a sign of masende but also of buci. The kiswenene swallow bits of red cloth which charges them with explosive fire. Red is dangerous, severe, and it is a sign of the effect and cause of dying. Thus, red being associated with blood, flesh, and fire is symbolic of strength, courage, knowledge, completion, achievement, and also malevolent magic, sacrifice and ritual murder.

The ritual use of black alone is unknown to me. Several informants explicitly stated that black used singly has no meaning and is simply decoration. But in association with white and red it signals 'black magic' and so malevolent, impending danger, anger and fury. Among the Eastern Songye it was specified as a sign of buci. Black is associated with clouds, smoke, and darkness. It is at the root of evil action and, in a personified sense, it is that which motivates red.

The Songye names for the three colours are associated with the physical properties of the pigments, making their application important not only visually but also in quality and in quantity. The white pigment used most commonly is called ntoshi. It is a clay (kaolin) from river beds which is dried, crushed to powder form and applied either wet or dry.⁶⁶ Also, a white clay from the forest is used, referred to by the name toka whose meaning, according to Stappers, connotes the visual and symbolic value of white (tooká:

blanc, pur, clair, être blanc, devenir jour).⁶⁷ Similarly two types of red paint exist. Nkula is the one of more common usage. According to Merriam it is made from a sandstone also found in river beds which is ground and then mixed with water and palm oil.⁶⁸ The other red pigment, darker in value, is made from the grains of the kabenga nkoto fruit (Bixa orellana⁶⁹) crushed and mixed once again with palm oil. It is called monga, a term which designates its colour quality and effect (monga: rouge foncé, môngà: rougir, devenir rouge, mûrir).⁷⁰ For black there are only two existing terms distinguishing the material properties of the colours; however, these differ in techniques of usage. Fita, the term which relates to the symbolic usage of black (fîta: être, devenir noir; se fâcher. fîtà: fumer, ce qui fume) designates a pigment consisting of burned ashes of herbs mixed with a palm oil base.⁷¹ This pigment is applied with brushes, whereas bwisha, which is a swamp mud according to Merriam, is used as a black dye to tint the raffia costumes, the beard, and in some cases the entire surface of the mask before the execution of grooved striations.⁷²

From the preceding discussion it is apparent that the material substances used for the making of pigments are also an integral part of the colour symbolism. Thus, the female mask which is predominantly white, except for the delineation of its facial features (eyes, mouth, nose, flat crest) in black combined with some red, represents first, according to a quantitative measure, all the positive attributes of whiteness. It is benevolent, endowed with a woman's beauty, and prolific like the male/female duality of the moon with which it is associated. The specific use of white clay from rivers and forests seems to activate the mask physically, linking its

symbolic representation to aspects of the environment associated with the sacred, ancestral domain. Rivers and certain species of trees in the forest are conceived of as points of interaction with the ancestors who are responsible for the descent of the new born to earth. Functionally the female bifwebe are said to call these descendant spirits from the forest to the village. Yet, the limited use of black for the female kifwebe is a sign of its underlying mystical power, generally associated with buci. The female kifwebe possesses magical knowledge and awareness of malevolent operations; it is endowed with buci but it does not manifest this power actively. Since the coals used for the making of this colour are an actual by-product of smoke and fire, the black material substance may be regarded as having an active effect, yet symbolically this pigment signals only a potential mystical force relating broadly to the magical activities of the buci. It is particularly interesting that the appearance of red on some female masks was not commented upon. Most informants seemed to classify it together with black but only in the case of these masks. Thus, red, which is principally an active sign of malevolent magic, also becomes the 'hidden' factor. It is, perhaps, therefore, limited quantitatively indicating a knowledge of sorcery but one which is passive.

In the case of the male bifwebe the colour triad is represented more or less equally, usually in linear design. The red pigment is however regarded as dominant, whether or not this is quantitatively the case. It is the active force of masende and also buci; more immediate and specific in effect than white or black. Like its polar opposite white, the red pigment most commonly used is extracted

from river beds, a factor contributing to the ambivalent symbolism of this colour. The material substance itself is therefore charged with power relating to positive aspects of strength and courage yet simultaneously to malevolent actions. The parallel usage of black signals a fundamental knowledge of ferocity, of 'black magic'; it signals the evil which motivates the male bifwebe. By comparison the white striations, contextually paradoxical, together with the other two colours, are said to be a sign to the uninitiated, warning them "not to look at the malevolent aspect of the bifwebe".

Footnotes

- 1 Identification of wood specimen by Dechamps, 21 November 1978.
- 2 "L'Identification Anatomique des Bois Utilisés Pour des Sculptures en Afrique, V - La Sculpture 'Songye'", Africa - Tervuren 21, Nos. 1/2 (1975), 28, 29.
- 3 Identification of wood specimen by Dechamps, 21 November 1978.
- 4 Identification of vernacular name by Malaisse, April 1978.
- 5 Identification of wood specimen by Dechamps, 21 November 1978.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba.
- 8 Wenga-Mulayi, "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 178.
- 9 Ibid., p. 179.
- 10 Interview with Kasendwe, Albert, village Kimabwe, Eastern Songye.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Wenga-Mulayi, "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 181.
- 13 "Kifwebe and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies ...", No. 4, p. 92.
- 14 "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 112.
- 15 "Le Kifwebe", TS, Kisengwa; "Le Kifwebe", TS, Musangie, 1965, n. pag.; Subsequent definitions of the mask and costume from Plasmans' notes are my translation. Some quotations where there is ambiguity of meaning are left as they appear in French.
- 16 "Le Kifwebe", TS, Musangie; "Le Kifwebe", TS, Kisengwa; "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba.
- 17 "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba.
- 18 "Le Kifwebe", TS, Musangie; "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 468.
- 21 "Le Kifwebe", TS, Musangie; "Histoire du Masque 'Kifwebe'", TS, interview with Léon Kongolo from Lualaba; "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba.
- 22 "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba; "Histoire du Masque Kifwebe", TS, interview with Léon Kongolo from Lualaba.

- 23 Plasmans, "Le Kifwebe", TS, Musangie; "Le Kifwebe", TS, Kisengwa.
- 24 "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba.
- 25 Ibid., Plasmans was unable to clarify the intended meaning of the word "épics".
- 26 Dorst and Dandelot, A Field Guide to the Larger Mammals of Africa, pp. 141, 162, 197. The drawing of the zebra in Figure 4 is copied from this source.
- 27 "Histoire du Masque Kifwebe", TS, interview with Leon Kongolo from Lualaba.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Stappers, unpublished Songye vocabulary.
- 30 "Le Kifwebe", TS, Kisengwa.
- 31 Stappers, unpublished Songye vocabulary.
- 32 "Le Kifwebe", TS, Musangie; "Le Kifwebe", TS, Kisengwa; "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba.
- 33 "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 "Le Kifwebe", TS, Musangie; "Le Kifwebe", TS, Kisengwa; "Le spectacle du Kifwebe dans la terre de Bena Mwasa", TS, n. pag., Muasa [sic], 27 November 1964.
- 36 Stappers, unpublished Songye vocabulary.
- 37 "Le Kifwebe", TS, Musangie; "Le Kifwebe", TS, Kisengwa; "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba; "Le spectacle du Kifwebe dans la terre de Bena Mwasa", TS, Muasa [sic]; "Le Kifwebe", TS, Kisengwa; "Kifwebe and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies ...", No. 4, p. 92.
- 40 "Le Kifwebe", TS, Musangie.
- 41 "Etude du Kifwebe", TS, Lualaba.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 113.
- 44 Burton, Luba Religion and Magic ..., pp. 164, 165.

- 45 L'Esotérie ..., pp. 315, 351.
- 46 Textes Luba, Contes d'Animaux, Fr. trans. J.L. Vincke (Tervuren: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, 1962), p. 12.
- 47 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 73.
- 48 L'Esotérie ..., pp. 351, 352.
- 49 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 383.
- 50 L'Esotérie ..., p. 334.
- 51 "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", p. 113.
- 52 Wauters, L'Esotérie ..., p. 338.
- 53 Wauters, L'Esotérie ..., p. 337; J. Tshiluila, "L'Invention du Monde Chez les Songye", Diss. Université Nationale du Zaïre, Lubumbashi, 1973, p. 58.
- 54 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 318.
- 55 L'Esotérie ..., p. 339.
- 56 Ibid., p. 332.
- 57 Ibid., p. 237.
- 58 de Heusch, Le Roi Ivre ..., p. 49.
- 59 Ibid., p. 50.
- 60 Ibid., p. 52.
- 61 Ibid., p. 80.
- 62 Wauters, L'Esotérie ..., p. 244.
- 63 "Colour Classification in Ndembu Ritual: A Problem in Primitive Classification", in The Forest of Symbols (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 68.
- 64 Ibid., pp. 80, 81.
- 65 Ibid., p. 61.
- 66 Merriam, "Kifwebe and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies ...", No. 4, pp. 91, 92.
- 67 Stappers, unpublished Songye vocabulary.
- 68 "Kifwebe and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies ...", No. 4, p. 91.

- 69 Identification of grains by Dechamps, 21 November 1978.
- 70 Stappers, unpublished Songye vocabulary.
- 71 Ibid.; Merriam, "Kifwebe and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies ...", No. 4, p. 92.
- 72 Merriam, "Kifwebe and Other Masked and Unmasked Societies ...", No. 4, p. 92.

CHAPTER VI

Classification of Songye Masks

a) Method of Analysis

Despite the paucity of data on the sculptural tradition of the Songye, the masks of these people, more than their figures, have become familiar and prestigious objects in showcases of major world museums and private collections. The unique tri-coloured striations of these masks have, no doubt, contributed to their appeal. Yet, while the distinctness of this visual sign has facilitated a generic attribution of the pieces to the Songye, at the same time it has left an impression that the masks come from a small homogeneous cultural complex. Given the expanse of the Songye territory and the multiplicity of its socio-political units, this misconception must be rectified.

This study of Songye masks, which is limited to the central Lomami region encompassing the chiefdoms of the Kalebwe, Cofwe and Eastern Songye faces the problem of setting a critical point of departure. In so doing the classification brings into focus the stylistic diversity of this sculptural tradition during the twentieth century, thus providing the basis for further in-depth synchronic and diachronic examinations.

There are many Songye masks in western collections which are deemed aesthetically important and which probably merit attention. However, the selection of carvings to be discussed here is limited to pieces seen in the field plus those of only a few museum and

private collections, most of which contain some documentation and which can be discussed in relation to my field findings. The latter category comprises pieces tested in the field using photographic material from the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale (Tervuren) and a few pieces from the Museum of Mankind (London); documented collections from the two locations of the Institut des Musées Nationaux du Zaïre (Kinshasa and Lubumbashi); and a selection of masks from the large private collection of Karel Plasmans (Belgium).¹

Although the data on all of these masks are of unequal quality, there are often useful pointers as to sub-groups and chiefdoms, and in some cases even their villages of provenance. This makes it possible to map out the synchronic diversity in the central Songye region. But, in dealing with the diachronic development of this artistic tradition greater problems exist. To begin with the masks being examined are fairly recent. The oldest pieces in Tervuren were collected by Rev. Burton in the 1920s (ills. 71, 72, 74).² Even within this short time span the precise dating of pieces poses major problems. With the museum collections most often only the date of acquisition is available. In the case of more recent acquisitions of the I.M.N.Z. in Kinshasa and the Plasmans pieces the date of collection has been recorded, thus indicating more closely the period of usage of the piece. However, even this information tells little about the life span of the object. Until a method of dating tropical wood species is devised, African art historians will be obliged to continue reconstructing relative chronologies based on field work identifications, approximations of dates, and, of course, comparative morphological analyses of objects which take into account

traces of usage and patination.³

Unfortunately my study of the Plasmans collection was severely limited. The carvings were never actually seen and examined; only their photographs (mainly in black and white) and the accompanying documentation became accessible. For this reason only a very small selection of Plasmans pieces will be discussed both here and in chapter VIII, although in its entirety the material, comprising some two thousand carvings, has been an invaluable guide in the classification process.

A different type of problem exists with the older museum pieces (Tervuren and London); they are available for examination but, lacking documentation they require testing in the field. Unfortunately the identification of photographs has its failings. Not only do informants encounter difficulty in reading two-dimensional visual imagery, but the results are also dependent on the nature of the questions posed and the recording of audience responses and gestures by the researcher. For this reason I find it imperative to reveal my perception of certain reactions and difficulties encountered specifically among the central Songye groups.

The selection of photographs used were generally 12 x 17 centimetres black and white prints of the same shots as those reproduced in my illustrations volume. Usually the number of photographs shown at a given time had to be limited to about twenty since it became evident that most elders grew quickly weary of the exercise despite an initial interest. Informants were shown these prints one by one

and asked, for example, if they could identify the mask, where, when and for what purpose it was used, plus a series of other pertinent questions, depending on the familiarity of the piece. In some instances the size of the prints appeared to be simply too small for the poor eyesight of the elders. Most often though it was the photographic uniformity and the distortion in the actual size of the piece which created false impressions. Masks of the elder and the youth appeared the same size, hence giving rise to false interpretations of their function. Also the two-dimensional representation of sculpture in the round created difficulties in the identification of the mask-type. One informant turned the print on its side, and, rubbing the glossy surface, pointed out that mask X was a female type because the crest-nose extension was flat. As discussed in chapter V, except for masks 72, 73, 74, 78 and 97, the absence of other identifying features of the kifwebe, such as the beard and the costume, evoked some hesitation.

By far the greatest problem with the prints was their lack of colour. Commonly the argument was expressed as follows: female masks are white and black as those in the prints, but they are not at the same time striated and they do not have crest extensions. In response I attempted to explain that these masks did in reality have red lines but only appeared in the print as they would during the night. This analogy was puzzled over because, as one elder pointed out, only white female masks appear at night and not the tri-coloured male types.

Apart from these specific problems it was observed in most

cases that masks which were not recognized were identified as kalengula, the type used for amusement, or else as female masks. I am still not certain with some prints whether these attributions are merely the result of misinterpretation in the reading of the photographs or whether the pieces were truly unfamiliar in the locality. With the latter examples the reaction of my informants was subdued. By comparison, the response to a piece that was recognized received clear affirmation by a spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm. Here it should also be added that familiar masks were frequently identified as ndoshi, the most powerful mask of the elder.

These field observations are not meant to negate the validity of photographic identification altogether. Negative results are also important in discovering the provenance of undocumented objects. However, we must bear in mind the limitations of this type of approach.

b) General Characteristics of the Bifwebe

The kifwebe form is a dramatic and bizarre distortion of a face conceived in terms of sharp angles, curves and projections. This is more conspicuous in the male masks than the female types since the features of males tend toward greater exaggeration in size and in prominence.

Apart from the colouring and the striations, the following features characterize most bifwebe. Lateral eye slits are hooded by crescent-shaped, semi-circular or elliptical eyelids which range

from flat slightly curved forms to saliant cubic variants typical of certain male masks (ills. 71-73, 79-82). The nose, which is generally triangular, is an extension of the crest. In fact in many pieces the two features are seen as a single continuous unit. The mouth is a box-like projection with open lips shaped in a rectangle, a square, a four-pronged star or an hourglass. It nearly always projects to exactly the same distance as the tip of the nose. In some of the finest male examples it is thrown out vigorously so as to form a counter-balancing volume to the bigger mass of the crest-nose.

The crest of the bifwebe is the most important identifying feature between the three mask types - elder, youth, female - but it is undoubtedly the most varied. In female masks it is always flat. In the male masks it takes the shape of a curved blade that juts out above the head. But depending on the mask type, youth or elder, it may be very prominent or low, extended upwards, frontwards or both, or it may be narrow, flat or rounded at the outer edge. As we do not possess examples of all mask types in their respective bwadi ensembles, the variables of the crest are sometimes difficult to attribute to the two categories. For example, the height of the crest of an elder's mask in one society may compare to that of the youth in another. There are, however, examples of a slightly different type of crest, one which forms an integral part of the cranium rather than a separate volume as in most of the masks. The top of the head in these pieces is peaked to an edge on the central axis of the face (ills. 62-68, 71-74). In the recent Eastern Songye tradition this form of crest is consistently used for the mask of the youth. Among the Kalebwe, though, this distinction may not apply

to the same category of pieces.

The most striking difference between the masks is seen in their manipulation of form through the use of painted and grooved patterns. It is this design factor which brings into view two stylistic tendencies in the central Songye region: the mask style of the Eastern Songye chiefdoms (ills. 48-68) and that of the western Lomami region encompassing the Kalebwe and Cofwe chiefdoms (ills. 71-95). With respect to the broad western grouping, I should add that my informants also did not distinguish masks of the Cofwe from those of the Kalebwe because almost all references and attributions were made to the latter.

Significantly, though, the east/west regional divergence of the kifwebe tradition is pronounced only in the striated male masks. From a morphological examination of pieces seen in the field and those collected during the past two decades in my region of investigation the masks east of the Lomami are characterized by patterns of broad flat stripes. Those west of the river exploit narrow, closely-set grooved striations. In the eastern style the bold patterns stress the overall geometric composition of the head, whereas in the western style the dense-textured pattern veils the facial frame, thus asserting the prominence of the features. The general effect of angularity in the eastern style is calm and static. In the western masks the repetitious thin lines create a busy, nervous and pulsating effect.

By contrast, all female masks tend to evoke an austere quality (ills. 96-106). The faces are uniformly coloured white, or sometimes

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left unpainted, and the features are accented in black and some red. The facial surface is most often covered by thin, grooved linear incisions as in the Kalebwe male masks. Given the small number of these masks in comparison to the male types, the morphology of the two regional styles is not easily discernible. Of the twenty masks seen in the field among the Eastern Songye only two similar ones were of the female category (ills. 96, 98). Both locations of the I.M.N.Z., the Tervuren and London museums, and the Plasmans collection also contain proportionately few, old, used female bifwebe. This scarcity, I believe, is an important reflection of the difference in function and production of this mask type as opposed to the male masks. In view of the visual similarities between female masks and their singular symbolic role, it seems that certain characteristic traits of an archetype were preserved throughout the central Songye region. For this reason all the female masks will be examined lastly in comparison to the two regional styles of striated male masks.

c) Male Bifwebe

i) Eastern Songye Tradition

Among the recent Eastern Songye masks such as those seen in performance (ills. 48-52, 54, 55, 62; map 3), pieces of the early seventies at the I.M.N.Z. in Kinshasa (ills. 53, 56-68, 64) and those collected by Plasmans in the sixties (ills. 59-61, 63, 65, 67) many examples are somewhat mediocre artistically. Also the craftsmanship varies considerably. There is a general emphasis on the overall effect of colour and form rather than on detailed precision. This qualitative factor does not seem to be affected by the choice of the

material since Eastern Songye informants maintained that traditional soft kifwebe woods were used, as in the case of the more refined, older Kalebwe pieces (ills. 71, 72, 75, 76, 78).⁴

The documented masks under examination range in height from approximately 40 to 70 centimetres.⁵ Of the bifwebe seen in performance the larger sizes commonly represent the elder. In form the variants are multiple. The most obvious difference is seen in the proportion and the prominence of the features to the facial structure. Compared to the earlier museum masks of the same provenance (ills. 65-70) these recent pieces tend to be cubic with deeper head cavities and more massive volumes. Seen frontally the facial shapes can be rectangular (ills. 50, 51), ovoid (ills. 55, 62), square (ill. 52a) or rounded (ills. 54, 58). They are usually rendered in flat planes although in a couple of pieces there is a distinct concavity (ills. 57, 64). But, depending on the degree of angularity, these shapes are subject to further variation since the face often tapers toward the bottom, the chin is normally squared off and the crown can be rounded or peaked.

In dealing with the morphology of the facial features, it is difficult to determine at this stage of research, which shapes and forms of the eyes, mouth, nose and crest are specifically eastern. The number of pieces is limited, varied disproportionately in age, and incongruous to the selection of Kalebwe/Cofwe masks. Hence only some general observations can be made.

The eyelids are essentially elliptical, and, given all the

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variants, less prominent than those of Kalebwe masks. The eye slits are therefore more exposed, permitting greater visibility to the masquerader. There is, however, one type of slanted crescent-shaped lid seen in both recent examples and the earlier museum pieces, which may be typically eastern (ills. 54, 58, 59). In the formation of the mouth and lips twelve variables exist in my selection of Eastern Songye masks. The shapes of the lips derive from the basic configuration of a four-pronged star, an hourglass, a quadrilateral with concave sides, a rectangle and in one case a circle. Apart from the oblong mouth extension common in Kalebwe masks, in a number of pieces it takes the shape of the lips (ills. 48, 49, 50, 55, 57, 59, 64). There is only one exceptional combination in which the mouth is octagonal and the lips are the shape of a horizontally-placed hourglass (ill. 62b). With the crest/nose extension the dimensional differences are multiple. Compared to Kalebwe pieces in these eastern masks the curve of the crest, which often extends frontwards, is made more emphatic by a clear indentation between the nose and the crest (ills. 48-52, 55, 57, 59). The only other detail to be noted is the frequent marking of the nose. In the three peaked masks the striped pattern extends over this feature as seen in Kalebwe pieces, but in other recent masks a single triangle, a rectangle or a chevron is painted in white on top of the nose (ills. 48, 50, 55, 54, 60). One additional elaboration of this treatment, seen in mask 55, is the V-shaped pattern of linear incisions surrounding the white triangle.

The broad striations of eastern masks tend to conform to the facial structure. From one mask to another, they are noticeably varied in width and even in the individual pieces different line

dimensions are combined. In some of the masks the width of the stripes is so exaggerated that they are perceived as colour panels which seem to compartmentalize the features of the piece (ills. 55-64).

Normally the patterns are composed of straight lines or slightly curved ones set horizontally or diagonally. Very rarely do we see an asymmetry in the design as on mask 55. On the crest the linear design is used effectively to draw attention to the prominence and shape of this important feature by complementing or contradicting its curve. In some pieces where the stripes radiate diagonally outwards the crest seems to spread open like a fan (ills. 52a, b, 57). What may be especially important in the designs, symbolically, is the juxtaposition of the three colours, red, white and black. The most common arrangement is a symmetrical repetition of the triad, but here again the combinations differ. The intensity of the white pigment appears to be used purely for aesthetic purposes to accent certain features such as the eyes and the mouth (ills. 51, 55) but even this may be ultimately of importance as part of a signalling code.

The colours range in value from vibrant reds to subtle pink tones (e.g. compare ill. 41, 42, 55). Their intensity also varies according to the thickness of the pigments and their wear or reapplication. Although the striations are flat, the colour stripes are often separated by very thin, grooved lines. The exception to this treatment is seen in mask 58 in which the surface appears faceted into colour stripes set in relief at different depths. In the

case of pieces which have been retouched the neat colour delineation can be dramatically altered. For example, in mask 54 additional layers of pigment have blurred together at the edges creating a "painterly" effect.

The finest examples in terms of craftsmanship and balance between design and the articulation of form are undoubtedly the masks seen in the village of Kikomo (ills. 48, 49). These pieces were highly esteemed and indeed feared throughout the area. Their striations are wide but not overwhelming in relation to the dimensions of the head. In the youth's mask they play upon the contrast between the rounded form of the crown and the angularity of the lower part of the face (ill. 48). The sharp edges of the wedge-shaped face enhance the outward thrust of the features capturing an expression of austere grimness. In the elder's mask the expression is restrained and calmer because the entire head and the large features are more rounded and complemented by slightly broader, curved striations (ill. 49).

By comparison, in masks where the facial planes are flatter or the designs conspicuously large, the expressions can easily become static. This is certainly felt in the rectangular and square shaped heads (ills. 50, 51, 52b, 53). Likewise in some of the broad striped Kilushi masks the contrasting colour panels tend to assert a flatness of form (ills. 56, 57, 59, 60, 61). Moreover, when the wide stripes are rectilinear and matched by large, disproportionately prominent and cubic features the dramatic appearance is lost to a rigid geometrization. Some pieces such as number 56 capture instead

a feeling of caricature.

Of all the broad striped bifwebe the elder's mask seen in the village of Luama is among the most successful of these because of its facial expression and largely because it displays a dynamic tension between form and design (ill. 55). Its broad pattern echoes the rounded facial contours, yet the straight lines seem to stand off from the curvature of the surface. In comparison to the more cubic mask forms (ills. 56, 57) here the head is elongated and balanced to a thin crest/nose extension and a narrow pouting mouth. Hence the piece achieves a solemnly stern appearance.

There are some interesting, mostly curvilinear, Eastern Songye examples in which the striations, depending on their width, encircle either the head or simply the facial features (ills. 52a left, 54, 62-64). In the peaked crest masks again the width of the colour panels gives rise to the problem of flatness in form (ills. 62, 63, 64). The features, especially in mask 62, are fitted into the colour segmentation of the head, thus the overall effect is ordered and calm. By comparison the piece seen in Luama is a more expressive example (ill. 54). For one thing the narrower stripes assert a stronger linear repetition which complements the unusually rounded head. Secondly, the features stand out since they are set on a white heart-shaped background. The Kilaye youth's mask is a unique example of this same design in that the curved stripes are superimposed on a cubic facial form (ill. 52a left).⁶ Although this mask is not of exceptional aesthetic merit it does portray more character than its counterpart (ill. 52a right) in which both form and painted

design are constrained to elements of angularity.

All the Eastern Songye masks thus far examined seem to be a fairly recent innovation of the past two or three decades. The ongoing tendency in these carvings has been one of exaggeration as seen in the pieces with the very broad flat designs and the bold geometric forms which were largely inspired by the Kilushi chiefdom (ills. 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64). Evidence of this stylistic progression has been brought to light by the few older museum pieces (ills. 66, 68-70) identified in the field as Eastern Songye and substantiated by visual comparison to a couple of Plasmans' masks (ills. 65, 66). Unfortunately the pieces are limited in number and the oldest of these only go back to the late forties and early fifties. Nonetheless they provide insight into developments within the Songye masking tradition as a whole.

These older masks tend to exploit narrower striations which are grooved, but to varying degrees. Examples 66 and 68 are the most recognizably eastern in that the striations are boldly rendered, yet, unlike any of the recent examples, they are carved in deep relief. However, mask 70 clearly typifies a Kalebwe treatment of the striations. Its surface is densely textured with very thin incisions upon which broader painted lines are superimposed. Apart from the design other Kalebwe elements can be isolated. For example, the masks are curvilinear in form. Their facial features which are very similar tend to be less protruberant than in many of the current eastern pieces. Moreover, as will be seen in Kalebwe masks, even the crest in examples 69 and 70 is low and comparable in prominence to the peaked types (ills. 65-68).

On the basis of these observations the older eastern pieces must have shared a close affinity with the Kalebwe tradition. This stylistic similarity is not surprising since Songye masquerading practices emerged from a common origin and diffused spatially through contacts between one locality and another. The regional stylistic divergence evolved through time as the bwadi societies multiplied and adapted to the specific social and political character of the eastern and western chiefdoms.

ii) Kalebwe/Cofwe Tradition

The identification and classification of western Lomami masks, the Kalebwe/Cofwe (ills. 71-95), must be viewed from a different time perspective from those of the Eastern Songye. As discussed in chapter IV, among the Kalebwe/Cofwe the traditional masquerading context gave way to folk practices and subsequently faced total dissolution. During its process of change the production of pieces for commercial purposes also flourished, perhaps so successfully because this region was infiltrated to a greater extent by westerners and because the lack of documentation on masquerading did not impede the proliferation of commercial goods. Thus, it is necessary to set down the characteristic traits of western Songye masks within this process of development beginning with the oldest museum pieces which were photographically identified in the field and which testify to the traditional activities of the bwadi society. We can then look at some recent fabrications of the transitional phase of masquerading.

Traditional Kalebwe /Cofwe masks show an exceedingly high degree

of craftsmanship as well as great sensitivity to the balance between form and design (ills. 71-78). The choice of a soft wood which is easily worked can be a contributing factor to the workmanship although, as seen with Eastern Songye pieces, this depends on the expertise of the carver. According to Dechamps' laboratory analysis we know that seven out of the eight Kalebwe masks in Tervuren are made from a Ricinodendron sp., most likely mulela, the favourite kifwebe species (ills. 71, 72, 75-78).⁷ The wood used for mask 74 was identified as Alstonia, a species not included in my field findings.⁸ However, in view of the inferior craftsmanship seen in mask 77, a piece also made from mulela, clearly the high quality of most Kalebwe masks must be credited to the work of skilled craftsmen.

Compared to the angularity developed in eastern masks these older Kalebwe pieces are curvilinear in form. Moreover, the structural aspect which is so pronounced in eastern masks is here felt to be an internal feature. The dense linear pattern creates an even tense surface effect as if the head were stretched into shape by an inner framework. This is especially evident in the peaked masks in which the crest/nose extension forms the principal vertical axis of the head (ills. 71-74).

The masks are somewhat smaller than the eastern ones (41 - 55 centimetres). The features are set into prominence with respect to the taut effect of the facial form and the design rather than by sheer extension as in some of the eastern Kilushi masks (ills. 55, 56, 59-61). Compared to eastern masks greater emphasis is given to the eyes which tend to be large in proportion to the face and bulbous,

showing mainly the upper lid. In mask 76 the entire crown of the head is articulated in the shape of two enormous lids. The mouth is conspicuous mainly because its geometric forms contrast with the curved planes and lines of the head. Most commonly the mouth extension is box-like and the lips are quadrilateral with straight or concave sides. There are two unusual formations of this feature among my examples: in mask 74 the excessive exaggeration of the mouth with the two holes replacing the lips, and in example 78 the closed-U configuration shaping both the mouth and lips. Perhaps the most significant observation pertains to the dimensions of the crest. Apart from one aberrant example which is similar to eastern masks (ill. 77), the crest, whether peaked or rectilinear, reaches roughly the same height. There are differences in width as exemplified by mask 76; however, the variations in height which are important distinguishing signals of rank do not seem as apparent as in recent Eastern Songye masks.

The narrow grooved linear treatment typifying Kalebwe masks is intrinsically more subtle than the broad striations seen in eastern masks. The colours too are more subdued. Since the patterns are closely knit and spread evenly they veil the forms and activate only their surface. The effect is dynamic, not only because of this tension between an inner structure and the surface but also because the linear repetition of the design creates directional thrusts and movement. Moreover, the closeness of the lines together with their colour contrast leads to visual blurring and pulsation. With the incision of the lines this effect is intensified through the element of texture.

Although there is a certain uniformity to these thinly striated patterns the lines do vary in width, proximity and precision. But, what is more, there are at least four different types of colour designs seen in the older masks which derive from two techniques of application. In three types of masks the entire face is blackened by immersion in bwisha dye (swamp mud). The lines are then incised and either: a) left exposing the contrasting natural colour of the wood (ills. 71, 77), b) filled in with white pigment alone (ills. 72, 73), or c) painted in with alternating white and red (ills. 74, 76). In examples where the eyes, mouth and nose have been accented in a solid red colour the initial black dye would have had to be scraped off the surface of these features since there is no indication of overpainting (ills. 71-73).

The other design type is based on a technique where the lines must have been incised first and then all three colours were applied during the same process, black being used as a pigment, painted on with a brush or feathers rather than as a dye (ills. 75, 78). Of these different examples the Tervuren piece in illustration 78 demonstrates the most typical Kalebwe design consisting of wider symmetrical striations superimposed on a densely grooved surface.

On the basis of the outlined characteristics of form, prominence and shape of the features, colour and design, the eight Kalebwe masks tested in the field were identified in general terms as male masks. Their hierarchic distinction was not clearly and unanimously agreed upon. In view of the similarity in the height of their crests it may be that the rank distinction between the youth

and elder was not formalized in the older Kalebwe tradition or else the visual signs were different. The latter case is more likely since there is one mask, the Tervuren piece 78, which received an overwhelming and specific response during my investigation. This exceptionally fine mask was collected prior to 1928 near Katombe in an area of convergence between the Eastern Songye and the Luba.⁹ Its provenance of acquisition need not correspond to its place of making and usage since commercial interests are known to lead to widespread displacement of objects. Yet, from a morphological point of view it is significant that the photograph of this piece was identified and accepted throughout the entire region under investigation. Moreover, all informants agreed that the mask was used by the most powerful sorcerer and identified it by rank as ndoshi (witch). The meaning of the appellation may be confusing with respect to the masqueraders' practices of sorcery. Probably the name was intended to emphasize the fact that the sorcerer of the kifwebe also possessed the hidden inherited power of witchcraft.

Despite the widespread recognition of this piece, in morphology and design it clearly bears Kalebwe characteristics. But, on careful examination it also displays certain elements perpetuated by the Eastern Songye tradition. The angular contours of the face, the cowry shaped eyes with the two lids and the conformity of the mouth extension to the shape of the lips are all features which have become imprinted in eastern kifwebe forms. On the basis of the mask's visual traits and my informants' unparalleled responses to it, I believe that this piece is one of the prototypical models of the bwadi masking tradition which left an impact on subsequent stylistic

developments of the bifwebe both east and west of the Lomami.

The Plasmans collection and the I.M.N.Z. in Kinshasa both contain a large number of masks made in the past three decades which were undoubtedly inspired by the aforementioned ndoshi type (e.g. ill. 79-83, 85-95). However, these masks differ in function. They testify to the non-traditional context of folk art and trade production.

The most typical and also mass produced examples are those from the Ebombo chiefdom (ills. 79-83, 85-87). Apart from some variation in the facial forms the pieces are strikingly similar. In comparison to the old Tervuren example (ill. 78) they are larger, averaging 62 centimetres, and their facial forms are elongated and much narrower, as if reduced to a skeletal frame. The excessive prominence of the features is characteristic of all the masks. The eyes jut out, the mouth is almost consistently carved as a closed or open four pronged star and the nose/crest extension projects frontwards like a vertical disc. The grooved narrow striations are imitative of the Tervuren mask. Although the three traditional colours, red, white and black are most commonly seen, others such as green and blue were also introduced (ills. 80, 85).

The Ebombo chiefdom was and still is the main centre of production of the new ndoshi mask type. Today the major workshop reproducing masks such as the one in illustration 83 is the village of Lipopo near Mulenda. Here goods for sale are displayed openly and in large stock by the side of the road. There is no doubt that

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the craftsmanship, the aesthetic sensitivity and dynamism of mask 83 is of artistic merit. Nonetheless, it is one copy modelled on formulas of the past which has become part of a mass production alienated in function from its traditional context. On the basis of this argument the authenticity of this mask and others like it could be negated. Yet, the fact remains that there are many pieces of this kind which do show traces of wear and which are seen in use in Plasmans' visual documentation (e.g. ill. 85). Thus, even within the stylistic uniformity and serial production of these masks the factor of usage distinguishes and gives validity to the new context of folk art as opposed to artefacts of commercial value destined for export.

If, in this case, the distinction between folk art and trade production seems tenuous, I believe it is mainly because the two functions evolved concurrently and because both categories of masks were conceived in the same working environment and probably by the same craftsmen. In tracing the development of these non-traditional functions J. Cornet states that the exaggerated kifwebe form, that is the new ndoshi mask, was inspired by a European trader.¹⁰ Commercial prospects then led to the establishment of a workshop and, judging by the sizeable acquisitions in Kinshasa, to the perpetuation of the ndoshi mask type.¹¹ He believes that this production began some twenty or thirty years ago.¹² I would agree that the workshop concept was introduced at that time and that it led to mass production geared to western interest. However, there is reason to believe that the innovation of the exaggerated kifwebe type and trade production originated much earlier.

At the Museum of Mankind in London there is a very large and heavy mask which bears a resemblance to the Kinshasa pieces and which is even more exaggerated in the prominence of its features (ills. 84a, b). This piece was acquired by the museum in 1954 but it must have been made at least two decades earlier since its collector, H. S. Wellcome, died in 1936.¹³ The mask is monochrome showing virtually no traces of usage, and it was rejected by most of my informants. The evidence of this mask confirms, first of all, that the innovation of the exaggerated mask form began much earlier than the dating proposed by Cornet and, secondly, that a degree of commercial production of the bifwebe existed even in the early part of the century, at least among the Kalebwe. This is consistent with my discovery that traditional Kalebwe masquerading came to an end in the twenties and was then followed by popular masking practices. Hence, the stylistic development of the new ndoshi type, emerged at the outset of a different social context but also one which was two-fold. That is, the same production of masks served either domestic use in folklore or foreign consumption. Of course with the exposure of these masks in popular dance performances they were probably made more accessible to interested buyers.

It is inevitable that the functional change of the bifwebe led to a divergence from traditional symbolic components. Hierarchic models seem to have become obsolete and former specifications of form, colour and material gave way to new aesthetic considerations. Substantially harder woods such as kifwenkese were chosen most probably because the criterion of durability became an essential factor in the eventual transport and long-term preservation of these

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objects. Also the raffia fibre costume is seen in Plasmans' documentation to have been replaced by commercially made sackcloth, thus indicating the singular emphasis on the mask as the "art object" rather than a part of the masquerader's ensemble (ills. 85, 95b).

Yet, the effect of serial production, at least during the active phase of the kifwebe folk tradition, did not inhibit this form of plastic expression entirely. The Plasmans collection confirms that multiple variables of the bifwebe evolved (ills. 88-95). Although modelled essentially on the single ndoshi mask type (ill. 78) these new explorations also incorporated certain elements from the contemporary Eastern Songye tradition.

Even among the Ebombo, alongside the stylistic uniformity brought about by the workshop, further permutations were found. For example, masks 88 and 89 are reduced in length and broader in comparison to the mass produced types (ills. 81-83, 85-87) but they are distinguished by a wider linear design seen in eastern pieces. The mouth tapers to proportionately small lips which, in the case of 89, are rectangular as in many of the eastern examples. The eyes are rather unusual. They appear exceptionally bulbous, not only because of the large size of the lids, but also because they project from the crown of the head, which is the dominant facial volume. By far the most atypical feature is the representation of the two horns in mask 89. Although these may bear a symbolic association to the species of animals defining the kifwebe (i.e. antelope, snake; see chapter V) they do not conform to the traditional visual vocabulary.

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Throughout Kalebwe country, beyond the main centre of Ebombo, innovations of the ndoshi mask were even more diversified in morphology and style. Plasman's masks such as 90a, b and 91 adhere to the two previous examples (ills. 88, 89) in the voluminous, highly placed articulation of the eyes. But, while mask 90 conforms more closely in form and surface design to the standardized Ebombo ndoshi (ill. 89), number 91 is curvilinear and reminiscent in its proportions of Eastern Songye pieces.

The three bifwebe in illustrations 92, 93 and 94 present a strikingly different stylistic treatment. Their rounded features and, in particular, the heavy bulbous eyes, create an unusually malleable plastic effect. Moreover, this quality of form is highlighted by very thin striations with the subtle use of white.

By comparison, an example such as 95, collected in the same Kalebwe region as the above three pieces appears eastern in its geometrization, although its busy design is distinctly western. The features are defined by sharp, angular edges and the volumes are structured along vertical and horizontal axes. The stark appearance of the mask is emphasized especially by the eyes which project straight out vertically bringing into view the uncommon depiction of the pupils.

Within the diversity of these few masks representing Kalebwe folk practices new forms seem to have emerged from an admixture of traditional Kalebwe and Eastern Songye elements. Thus, diachronically, this convergence of elements in the masks bridges

the time gap between the past activities of the west and the contemporary ones of the east. The influence of ongoing bwadi practices in the eastern chiefdoms must have provided a stimulus to the Kalebwe folk tradition. At the same time it is plausible that the exaggerated ndoshi form, which may date back to the early part of this century, left some impact on eastern masks. The excessive prominence of the features developed in the eastern Kilushi chiefdom in the last two decades could have been inspired by the new ndoshi folk masks.

In my view, the Ebombo played the leading role in these recent developments between east and west. This Kalebwe group identified with and maintained the social and political structure of the Eastern Songye, yet their masking tradition paralleled the process of change west of the Lomami River. Considering also their central geographical location between the two regions it is likely that the Ebombo played the role of intermediaries in the assimilation of traditional and new compositional elements.

d) Female Bifwebe

The problem in dealing with the stylistics of female masks, as already noted, is that significantly fewer examples were seen in the field and in museum collections in comparison to the male masks. This restriction is relevant in itself because it confirms the singular participation of the female bifwebe in the bwadi ensemble. Although further investigation is required, even at this stage it is apparent that the stylistic diversity of these masks is far more limited both in time and in space.

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In comparison to the striated male masks, traditional female bifwebe are characterized by contrasting fields of colour (ills. 40, 96-98). The features are coloured in black and some red while the face is most commonly grooved in a linear pattern and covered with white pigment. The features of the head are standardized to a greater extent. The crest is invariably flat, the eyes and lids are crescent shaped, and the protuberance of the features is modified proportionately to the shape and form of the head. On the whole these masks are the smallest in size averaging 40 centimetres in height.

Compare a typical example such as the mask seen in performance at Ngoma (ill. 96), said to have been made in 1976, to a much earlier Tervuren piece acquired in 1934 (ill. 97).¹⁴ Except for the slight difference in facial form and the pattern of incisions the masks are remarkably similar, morphologically and in quality of craftsmanship. Even the mask used at Ilunga Ngulu differs very little from the above two (ill. 98). The eyes are slightly larger, the colour panel on the chin has been omitted and the mouth projection, which is usually box-like in female masks, has been articulated in the form of the lips as seen more often in eastern male masks.

Although the provenance of all three pieces is the region of the Eastern Songye, it is significant that the Tervuren piece was identified throughout the region under investigation and that it received overwhelming approval comparable to the reaction evoked by the Tervuren ndoshi male mask (ill. 78). On the basis of this response, the likeness between the masks suggests that a female

archetype left an impact throughout the Songye region as in the case of the male masks. However, stylistically it exceeded the male ndoshi in importance as it was probably the sole model for all female masks. This restriction was due to the singular symbolic role and participation of the female mask in the traditional bwadi ensemble.

Departing from the conventional form there are some female masks distinguished principally by an atypical treatment of the surface (ills. 99-106). These masks differ in quality of craftsmanship and in shape but not significantly in the representation of the features. Most important though, despite their difference in provenance, age, and usage they all fall into one of two categories which stress either texture or colour.

In the first category of masks the facial surface is textured with linear incisions but, unlike the dramatic colour contrast of most female bifwebe, it is left unpainted (ills. 99-102). One of the most revealing pieces of this type is a 1956 London acquisition (ill. 99).¹⁵ Stylistically it belongs to the prototypical group and it shows an exceedingly high degree of craftsmanship. But, what makes it unusual is its fine patina, the quality of which seems to indicate the use of a denser wood than those normally selected for the bifwebe. In addition to this surface treatment, the features are painted and traces of a white residue can be seen in the grooves of the linear incisions. This deposit highlights the textured effect of the mask. It also contributes to a subtle colour contrast which imparts a serene quality to the facial

expression. By comparison pieces of this type from the early seventies at the I.M.N.Z. in Kinshasa appear lifeless (ills. 100-102). Even the features are often left bare (ills. 101, 102). Although the masks are skilfully carved, the lack of a finish and the choice of soft traditional bifwebe woods, reveals their dull and visibly porous surface effect (see captions 100 and 102).

On the basis of their facial morphology, in particular the crest, the masks of this category are clearly recognizable as female types, yet symbolically the absence of the signalling white pigment is puzzling. Two explanations are possible. Either the natural wood colour is interpreted as being white, or the surface application was worn because a powdered form of white kaolin or manioc flour had been used instead of the thick preparation containing an oil base. No doubt certain carvings found their way into collections prior to being painted and consecrated. However, judging by the patination and wear of the London piece (ill. 99) masks such as these seem to arise from a traditional context of making and usage.

The second category of masks stresses pigmentation as well as incorporating certain Luba elements in the treatment of the surface (ills. 103-106). The pieces are painted in the traditional colour code, but the facial surface is partly or entirely devoid of the incised grooves. On two of the masks linear incisions outline the forehead as in certain Luba masks (ills. 103, 105).¹⁶ The difference is that among the Luba these are used for male masks which are meant to appear austere.¹⁷ This same alien influence accounts also for the painted scarification markings in the other two examples, although

again the borrowing has been misinterpreted (ills. 104, 106). The Luba do employ facial markings on female masks so as to distinguish them from their morphologically similar male types, however, they are usually zigzag bands, crosses or triangles placed under the eyes and on the cheeks.¹⁸

Although these two categories of masks do not correspond in style to the regional and temporal developments of male masks, certain traits in the individual pieces do reflect the divergent traditions east and west of the Lomami. For example, three of the Kalebwe masks are easily recognizable because of their hourglass facial shapes (ills. 101, 102, 106). In the recent grooved pieces of the seventies (ills. 101, 102) the exaggeration of curves and in particular the facial elongation are reminiscent of Ebombo male masks (ills. 82-87). In fact they are likely^{to be} the female counterparts of the new ndoshi workshop production. Historically the two early works of the thirties and forties, which were identified by my informants as Kalebwe, are equally revealing but for different reasons (ills. 105, 106). Their crude workmanship, lack of traces of usage and holes for the attachment of the costume, suggest that they were conceived for a non-traditional purpose of folk or trade art. Considering their period of making these visual signs point to the earlier disappearance of bwadi practices in the western region. In comparison it should be noted that of all the masks, both textured and coloured, two recent masks adhere most closely to the form of the archetype, these being eastern examples of ongoing traditional practices (ills. 100, 103).

The one aberrant mask among all the female types discussed is the eastern piece in illustration 104. It is a carving from the southern chiefdom of the Muo which is strongly influenced by its neighbours, the Luba.¹⁹ This is evident in the proportion of the features to the face, in the depiction of the small pouting mouth and, as seen in some of the other female masks, in the facial markings. The unusual character of this piece brings to the surface the question of visual relationships between Luba and Songye masks which have emerged specifically in this section on female bifwebe.

The basis of this comparison between the 'white' masks of the two peoples embodies an argument of central importance to the study of bifwebe masquerading. To understand this let us clarify the comparison. First, it should be pointed out that Luba male and female masks are very similar stylistically. The visual distinction between the two types of bifwebe is not so pronounced as among the Songye. Thus, in comparing the masks of the two peoples the closest resemblance is seen specifically between Songye female masks and those of the Luba.

Typical Luba masks discussed by Wenga-Mulayi, except for the less common zoomorphic and round forms, are pieces such as 107 and 108.²⁰ The facial forms, both male and female, tend to be angular and bulkier with clearly delineated frontal and side faces. The features are proportionately small and their prominence is comparable to that of Songye female masks. This means that the crest does not vary according to the mask type and its hierarchic rank as among

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the Songye, especially those of the east. It can be classified as flat although it is often separately articulated and slightly protuberant as in the two given examples. Moreover, all Luba masks, male and female, are predominantly white with black and red used to a lesser degree. From Wenga-Mulayi's report it would appear that the symbolic code of the colour triad differs somewhat from that of the Songye in that black and red are used in reverse.²¹ For the Luba, black, instead of red, is the dominant evil sign of force which is perceived in opposition to white, the colour bearing a direct reference to spirits of the dead.²² Thus, red remains the qualifier.

All Luba masks should bear the grooved striations, at least in part, since these represent the mythical forest retreat of the bifwebe.²³ They are generally thin linear incisions arranged in geometric designs which are compartmentalized rather than spread in large planes as is so often the case in Songye masks. Flat shapes of solid red or black colour are incorporated into the patterns of the white grooved surface and, as noted earlier, in female masks specific scarification markings are added.

These visual similarities between Luba masks and Songye female types shed further light on the origin and development of the masking tradition. To begin with, the closer adherence through time and space to a prescribed model type of the female mask suggests that this genre of kifwebe may indeed have been the first to be carved in each new society during the traditions' diffusion. But, since the social and ritual manifestations of Songye and Luba societies differed, the consequent proliferation of the active male masks

adopted different and varying degrees of innovation. Female masks representing generalized concerns retained certain morphological constants or similarities, whereas male bifwebe, which performed individualized functions, were diversified and regionally distinct. In connection with this idea I also suspect that the life span of the female masks exceeded that of the males. In other words, the female kifwebe was used as long as the group retained political supremacy or as long as its natural state of preservation allowed. Male bifwebe were most likely being replaced by new ones with the promotion in rank of the masqueraders and the adoption of new members.

The fact that the difference in morphology is far more pronounced between male and female masks of the Songye than those of the Luba is a phenomenon of particular interest. Among the Songye the wide scope of this plastic development seems to have flourished in correlation with the canons of their figure sculpture. Among the Luba, where statuary is characterized by supple and rounded forms which stand in opposition to the cubic tendency of the kifwebe style, the exploration of new variants was more restricted. Greater concentration was given to surface treatment and design than to form.

As discussed in chapter IV, the origin of the kifwebe tradition probably lies in a zone of Songye/Luba admixture, but the compositional concepts inherent in the masks of both peoples embody the visual principles of Songye sculpture. But, given the eastern locality of origin there is a further point to clarify. Songye female masks compare more closely to the masks of the Kalebwe than

those of the Eastern Songye. So, if the prototypal female mask has preserved the original concepts of the kifwebe form, then the main source of inspiration for these masks must have come from the Kalebwe tradition. This is consistent with the discovery that Kalebwe elements also exist in older eastern male masks. Thus, although kifwebe masquerading may have originated in an area just south of the eastern chiefdoms, the pervading sculptural impact within the Songye region was that of the Kalebwe.

Footnotes

- 1 Subsequent references in the text to the Institut des Musées Nationaux du Zaïre will be noted by the initials I.M.N.Z.; the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale will be referred to by its location name 'Tervuren' and the Museum of Mankind will stand as 'London'.
- 2 Catalogue notes 30619, 30620, 30621.
- 3 F.M. Olbrechts in "Contribution to the Study of the Chronology of African Plastic Art", Africa, 14 (1943-44), deals with the problems and possibilities of dating carvings made of tropical woods.
- 4 The specific wood identification of each piece seen in use was not revealed.
- 5 The dimensions of masks seen in the field were unobtainable since the masqueraders could not be touched or approached too closely.
- 6 With respect to the similar curvilinear design on the Kilaye (ill. 52a left) and the Luama (ill. 54) masks, it is significant that both pieces, although belonging to the societies of two different chiefdoms, have been named nkwali, meaning partridge. On the basis of this one example it is difficult to determine whether or not there is a correspondence between the design patterns and the names of the masks. Yet, in view of the process of diffusion of the societies this may well be true.
- 7 Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, catalogue nos. 30619, 30620, 51.35.4, 54.77.11, 55.5.1., 30500.
- 8 Botanical identification by Dechamps, Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, catalogue no. 30621.
- 9 Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, catalogue no. 30500.
- 10 "African Art and Authenticity", African Arts, 9, No. 1 (October 1975), 55.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Date of collector's death obtained from J. Mack, Keeper at Museum of Mankind, London, 1979.
- 14 Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, catalogue no. 35652.
- 15 Museum of Mankind, catalogue no. 1956 Af 27 273.
- 16 Wenga-Mulayi, "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", pp. 53, 73.

- 17 Ibid., pp. 52, 53, 55, 73.
- 18 Ibid., pp. 41, 52.
- 19 Plasmans, catalogue no. 66/543-171 (village Kaseshi).
- 20 "Etude Socio-Morphologique ...", pp. 40-51, plates 1-42, figures I-III.
- 21 Ibid., pp. 69, 70.
- 22 Ibid., p. 70.
- 23 Ibid., p. 72.

CHAPTER VII

Figure Sculpture and Magic

- a) Bwanga, Bishimba, Mankishi: Defining the Manipulation of Magical Substances

Most traditional figure sculpture of the Songye is used in magical operations which are socially approved. This type of statuary, called mankishi, serves the well-being of either the community or an individual. As such the function of mankishi stands in opposition to the practices of the bwadi masking society. The bifwebe deal in sorcery and witchcraft, and so malign magic, and the mankishi serve a benign end. However, in practice the two forms of magic converge. In many cases mankishi function specifically as anti-sorcery medicine, which can be appropriated by villagers or chiefs who are directly involved in the operation of the bifwebe. Thus, the two forms of mystical practices constitute a system of interaction which defines a holistic concept of magic and religion.

The best known mankishi of the Songye are truncated, anthropomorphic figures, conceived in massive, geometric volumes (ills. 135-146). They are generally carved together with a pedestal, which in some figures replaces the rendering of the legs. In pieces where the legs appear, the toes may be represented. The hands, which are almost always carved with the fingers, are characteristically held to the belly. A horn is sometimes inserted upright at the top of the head and strips of metal appliqué and studs are attached to the face. Many of the large figures in particular tend to be

covered with multi-media paraphernalia of animal, plant or mineral substances. With reference to these large carvings the Songye say that the nkishi must possess all the physical attributes of a man: "a man who can hold a weapon and defend himself". What they mean, though, is that the nkishi must portray not only the physical strength but also the social rank comparable to its mystical power. This notion is especially evident in figures which are clothed in the regalia symbolizing the power of a chief and by associations also that of a hunter, smith, and nganga (ills. 136, 144, 145, 148). At the same time, the protruding abdomen common to most Songye figures, although also expressed in other Central African sculpture (e.g. magical statuary of the Kongo, ancestral figures of the Fang and Tsogo) seems to be a sign of fertility, more extensive in connotation, one which relates simultaneously to the ancestors and the newborn, hence to the continuation of the lineage established by the culture heroes - hunter, smith and nganga.¹

The essence of this mystical force derives from combinations of material substances inserted usually into the horn or hollow on the head of the figure or inside the abdominal cavity. These ingredients, called bishimba, are hidden and secret formulae assembled by a particular nganga. Collectively they define the function of the piece and although they are not visually identifiable their presence is often alluded to by the protruding abdomen. Thus, the specificity of each piece is determined by its bishimba. Without these substances it has no purpose and it is regarded simply as "a piece of wood". Briefly, figure sculpture is a specific type of container for bishimba among many other possible types of objects such as horns,

shells, calabashes, and even old food tins (ills. 109-112).

The formula according to which the diverse plant, animal, and some mineral substances of bishimba are assembled effects a mystical reaction, bringing spirit forces into play with the physical world. The resultant action is, however, relative and ambivalent. To the user it confers a supposed benign and defensive effect, whereas to the victim or evildoer it is malign and offensive. Hence it makes sense that the bishimba of a nkishi which is intended to ward off witches or sorcerers must share certain component elements with the concoctions of the bifwebe sorcerers.

All bishimba which serves as protection against evil spirit forces, and is therefore meant to restore health, peace, fertility, and a fruitful yield of game and crops, is used as bwanga. This term, although already noted, must be re-examined in relation to magical statuary. It denotes broadly any form of medicine, magical or profane, which is socially approved as benign and protective. Mankishi are therefore one type of bwanga, as are also herbal concoctions administered for physical ailments. As herbal manga are only effective if used according to specifications of dosage and time of usage, so mankishi perform only under certain prescribed conditions. However, the conditions which apply to mankishi and other types of magical manga containing bishimba relate specifically to spirit appeasement. The magical objects are therefore fed and anointed, sacrifices are made to them, and they are integrated into the life of the community or that of an individual. The user must also abide by certain taboos so as to enhance the efficiency of the bwanga.

The protective benign quality of bwanga arises from the belief that it was contrived by Efile Mukulu at the dawn of creation. However, most informants stress that only horns and calabashes were used originally as containers for bishimba. The nkishi form is a later innovation, according to some, introduced at a time when sorcery was especially vicious. Its origin of making is associated with a lake and therefore perceived in opposition to the mountainous birthplace of the bifwebe. At Mulopwe, informants elaborated on this mythical interpretation, explaining that it was Yantambwe, one of the first banganga, who visited the lake Kupokola and there heard a voice which instructed him how to carve a figure, which species of wood to use, and how to activate it. This lake, like Yashika near the village Cungu, manifested unnatural phenomena associated with ancestral spirits, but it remained unknown to the populace, and only specialists with mystical power or knowledge could draw inspiration from it.

If the innovation of the anthropomorphic sculptural form is indeed of later origin, then the implantation of the horn on top of the head was conceived of as a separate entity of the piece; as a reinforcing appendage. Historically this formal innovation is difficult to substantiate, still the distinction made between the two parts of the figure in the origin belief is significant. It suggests that the horned mankishi function on the basis of two vital centres of force: the bishimba in the abdominal cavity and that contained in the horn. Whether or not there is any difference in the composition or the formula of ingredients in these two centres is a point to be tested, for it could lead to a wider scope of definition for the mechanism of magical figures.

In addition to the function of the bishimba, the external paraphernalia, typical of the large figures, constitute another important facet. The most common features such as nails, studs, and skins of different animals seem to augment the power of the nkishi. However, it is their cumulative effect which renders a visual and symbolic impact of strength as opposed to the qualitative and specific action of the bishimba. On some of these large mankishi shells or horns also filled with bishimba are suspended from the body of the figure providing still another source of magical manipulation. These objects seem to be categorized with all the other external paraphernalia, however they assert a specific reinforcement associated with persons of specialized rank and power. They are in fact imitative of the types of manga worn by hunters, banganga and chiefs (ill. 46), yet they are also similar to the protective objects carried by the bifwebe masqueraders.

b) Types of Mankishi

Thus far in the general discussion on magical statuary references have been made to large figures, those reaching a height of almost one meter, as opposed to small pieces some of which may be only a few centimetres in height. The two types of mankishi share many common morphological features but the smaller figures are often reduced or entirely devoid of external paraphernalia. This distinction, together with the factor of size, provides the most apparent visual indication of differences in ritual usage between the two types of mankishi. Although these criteria seem very generalized it is true in most cases, not only for Songye pieces but also for better known magical statuary of Central Africa such as that of the

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Kongo people, that the large figures serve the needs of a community, most often one village, whereas the small ones are personal mankishi used by an individual, male or female, or an entire household.

In discussions about community magical figures, most informants answered questions with reference to specific mankishi known to them during their lifetime. Thus, when asked generally about the function of this type of statuary almost always a chronological list of their proper names and respective uses was outlined. A similar type of response was recorded by Merriam in the Bala village of Lupupa Nyge.² During my investigation certain mankishi such as Kabambi, Yankima, and Yantambwe were cited throughout the region from Kabinda to the Eastern Songye and usually in that particular order. Still, apart from these a great many others were named, but not in any apparent pattern of correspondence.

The most important point which emerges from these findings is that the usage of specific community figures marks a historical time process for the Songye. Events in the life of the community are related, for example, to the 'period of Yantambwe or Yankima'. The mankishi are individualized on the basis of particular feats and accomplishments. Some of them, such as the three noted above, received extensive acclaim far beyond the village level, hence their power was sought elsewhere but not necessarily for the same protective purpose. Although most community mankishi serve a limited range of social needs such as procreation, protection against illness, sorcery, witchcraft, war, and the preservation of territorial claims, those which bear the same name do not represent one and the same

usage. Even though informants assert that Yantambwe, for example, existed both among the Kalebwe and the Eastern Songye, the two figures may have differed functionally and also morphologically. The correlation between the two pieces could not be made simply on the basis of visual signs. What this means then is that the identifying factor of the nkishi called Yantambwe rests essentially with its inherent power or efficiency. This, of course, is its bishimba and other magical attributes. Moreover, it is a unique formula of a particular nganga who is credited with the 'making' of all Yantambwe figures.

Broadly speaking, community mankishi are distinguished from other magical objects because they are instruments of spirits of a higher order, those associated with ancestors with whom the community identifies. In other words, the ancestral spirits are invoked by the living through the material being of the nkishi. This is not to say that they inhabit the figure, rather they are believed to communicate and project their power through the medium. They are the spirits said to reside high up in the spiritual hierarchy, in the domain of Efile Mukulu, whose presence among the living is recognized through aspects of the environment such as trees.

Since the application of the nkishi encompasses collective needs, visually the figures portray generalized attributes of ancestors whose social roles are vital to the community at large. Aspects of chieftainship are particularly apparent as are also associated elements representing, for example, the warrior or hunter. Invariably a male figure is represented. Thus, all community

mankishi are assigned proper names of former chiefs or of animals which symbolize figures of authority.

Inasmuch as these particular mankishi are vital agents in the magico-religious practices of the community, at the same time their usage is short-lived, being dependent partly on the fulfilment of their task and partly also on the rise in esteem of other banganga. In that sense their duration corresponds to the changing phases and generations of human lives. Thus, even though the nkishi relates to the ancestors it is subject to physical mortality as are all types of magical objects, yet its existence is preserved in the collective memory of the community.

Personal mankishi, because they serve the diverse needs of individuals or nuclear families, and are attainable by anyone, form a kind of anonymous Songye tradition in comparison to the community figures. For one thing personal mankishi are too numerous to be counted or named; moreover, their diversified application does not effect the preservation and continuity of a socio-political group as a whole. What is significant about these figures is that their multiple functions are individual and therefore specific expressions of a community's ills and tensions. Thus, alongside a village nkishi which may have been procured for fertility, a woman obtains her own magical statuette specifically to prevent further miscarriages, or a man may commission one for his household of wives to rid them of the disease which is causing their infertility.

Yet, some personal mankishi of those actually seen in use or

merely discussed, were said to have been made especially as protection against witchcraft or sorcery. Since suffering and misfortune are often attributed to the supposed action of evil spirits and malevolent practitioners, this may be interpreted as a very broad definition applicable rather to the function of community figures.

However, these types of personal mankishi express a very specific relationship and stage of interaction between the user of the figure and the practitioner of evil magic. Generally the user has received warning signs from a witch or sorcerer or he has had a conflict with someone who he believes is in possession of mystical powers which could be activated by revenge. So, the nkishi is procured upon impending danger rather than as a result of an existing or a former malediction. Someone who experiences repeated nocturnal menacing, diagnosed as the testing of his strength by witches, a victim subjected to kumwasha masende, or one who is fortunate in being warned that he is the chosen sacrifice for masende initiation, could seek deliverance through nkishi magic. However, it appears that the magical essence of this special category of mankishi differs in the treatment of witchcraft and sorcery. That is to say, the Songye classify them separately since they can be formulae devised by different types of specialists. Traditionally the nganga dealt with most cases of malevolent magic, however, in the last few decades an anti-sorcery cult of specialists, known as the Toni-Toni, has gained extensive social esteem especially for masende affairs (ills. 113, 114). This movement, first reported by R.E. Toussaint in 1953, originated in Kabongo among the Luba, according to this author as well as my Songye informants.³ The Toni-Toni are in effect basha masende of the highest rank who supposedly channel their mystical

knowledge into benevolent social actions. Mankishi potentiated by these specialists possess a particular type of bishimba which is known as mwasambale.⁴ This distinction in terminology upholds the belief that bishimba is good medicine despite its potentially evil or aggressive action, whereas mwasambale is different because it is always 'the evil medicine of sorcerers' regardless of its possible benign social effect. Essentially the two types of magical substances represent one and the same thing.

The spirit power interacting with personal mankishi is more vaguely defined than in the case of community figures. Familiar protective spirits may be invoked but generally an explicit identification is not made. The spirits are assumed to be benevolent except in the case of anti-sorcery mankishi which are believed to evoke the action of malevolent forces. This distinction makes sense in view of the fact that both types of spirits are said to be the wandering mikishi associated with the transitory and earth-bound realm of Kafilefile. Moreover, one could add that the relative positive/negative action of these mankishi epitomizes the co-existent duality of this spirit realm.

Diversity of plastic expression and quality of craftsmanship is more pronounced in personal mankishi than community figures (ills. 149-164). Although male figures are normally portrayed, female representations are occasionally conceptualized, but most often in usage as pairs (ills. 130a, 130b). The magical substances of personal mankishi are localized in one or two cavities on the figure; usually on the head and sometimes in the abdomen. However, one

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unusual manipulation of bishimba exists in the case of flat-headed figures (ill. 115). Here the substances are placed on top of the head and burned prior to the prescribed or required effect with the belief that the smoke thus emitted creates the protective magical seal around the user.

Some personal mankishi, such as family protectors, are passed on from generation to generation, but a great many are treated as perishable objects. They serve their purpose for a desired length of time until, for instance, a woman has conceived, or a child has been kept in good health to the end of its breastfeeding period. Thereafter the bishimba seems to lose its efficacy since the context for which the magical substances were formulated no longer exists. The piece may be discarded, although precise details were only rarely revealed.

Today, in my field work region of the Songye, very few community mankishi still exist. The remaining ones are well guarded. All my attempts to see the few old pieces I learned of failed, since it 'just happened' that they were sold to a museum the evening before my visit to the village. Personal mankishi are still employed throughout the region although their usage is more conspicuous among the Eastern Songye than in the regions of the Kalebwe and Cofwe where western influences, and in particular the work of missionaries, have inhibited such practices.

c) The Making of Mankishi

i) Specialists

When asked who made a particular nkishi, the Songye, like the Kongo people, invariably name the specialist who endowed the figure with magical substances, namely the nganga.⁵ Qualifying appellations exist such as nganga nkishi, nganga bishimba, and nsendwe nkishi; however, in practice these are used arbitrarily. The latter reference to the smith (nsendwe) is of particular significance as it embraces the concept of associated ancestral professions: that of the nganga and the smith, both of whom possess innate mystical powers.

Often the nganga is also a carver of mankishi, but since this occupation is regarded as separate and profane it is secondary to his mystical practices. The nganga would almost always be called upon specifically for his magical expertise and only if his skills as a wood carver are commensurate would he also be asked to sculpt the figure. It is unlikely that a nganga's services are sought merely for the carving process and that another nganga assembles the bishimba.

There is no doubt that the skill of the common wood carver, designated by the name sea or seshi, is valued and assessed on the basis of aesthetic criteria and quality of craftsmanship. However it is equally appreciated in the making of magical and profane objects. So, carvers produce diverse artefacts for accepted social usage indiscriminately; bowls, mortars, ladles, musical instruments or mankishi can be commissioned from one and the same craftsman. But, it is also well known that many of today's carvers, especially

west of the Lomami, profit from a new and more extensive market demand. That is, they continue the production of traditional objects which satisfy local consumption and simultaneously but intermittently western interests (ills. 117, 118). This is evident in recently made pieces from a private collection in Kabinda which conform closely in morphology and quality of craftsmanship to those made by the same sculptor for use in a traditional context (ills. 119, 120). On the other hand, in the collection of mankishi owned by a nganga at Eyombo two of the pieces exemplify the type of naturalistic sculptural form and representation of carvings made exclusively for urban and western markets. Yet, these pieces were filled with bishimba and used in a traditional magical context (ill. 121, left and right figs.). Although such contemporary cases may not be unique to the Songye they do bring to mind important questions about the degree of interaction between different specialists involved in the making of mankishi.

Generally it is the nganga who provides the carver with specifications on the morphological features, the dimensions, and the selection of wood species. This, however, is more strictly adhered to in the making of community mankishi than personal figures. In the latter case the individual user is more apt to contact the specialists of his choice separately, so that he could, through his actions as an intermediary, effect innovations in the making process. The user may in fact carve his own figure, as reported by Merriam.⁶ This practice, common among other Central African peoples such as the Teke, probably accounts for an inferior quality of craftsmanship in many examples of personal figure sculpture (ills. 122a, 122b).⁷

His participation is especially noteworthy with mankishi containing anti-sorcery bwanga concocted by a Toni-Toni. Although the social role of the Toni-Toni is approved, his identity is kept at a certain level of secrecy, since his techniques of operation and even his alliances are ascribed to masende practices. As an anonymous figure, no direct or overt co-operation can exist between him and other publicly known specialists and craftsmen. What is more, the Toni-Toni, unlike the nganga, deals strictly with magical ingredients. He is not likely to be involved in wood carving or the actual consecration of the figure with magical substances.

The Toni-Toni merely supplies his client with the mwasambale and the latter is then at liberty to participate in the composition of the nkishi. One of the most interesting examples of this process of interaction is demonstrated by pieces such as the one found at Ehata among the Bena Muo (ill. 123). Instead of the statuette functioning as a receptacle, the mwasambale was placed in an old food tin and the figure superimposed on the magical substances. This piece is not of any particular aesthetic importance; however, its visual form is striking as a conceptual inversion of the nkishi mechanism.

ii) The Selection of Wood Species

The range of wood species used for nkishi figures seems to be far more extensive than in the case of the bifwebe. There are no particular species designated as nkishi woods. Nonetheless throughout the region mumbu (Lannea welwitshii) and kifwenkese (Commiphora sp.) were cited as common preferences, and among the Eastern Songye

nko or kako (family: Rubiacea⁸) was also included. It is significant that these few widely favoured species were named with reference to well known community mankishi, although they are by no means the only woods used for these types of figures.

Other species named are to a large extent local preferences used in the making of both personal and community mankishi. The following compilation is only a very limited representation of the diversified selection process particularly if compared to Dechamps' findings.⁹ On the basis of a botanical examination of 248 Songye statuettes from the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale he identified 48 different species; however, the provenance of these pieces probably extends beyond my region of investigation.

West of the Lomami River:

kavi (Morinda lucida¹⁰)

kafungufungu (Swartzia fistuloides¹¹)

mumanya (Canthium sp.)

nsanga or mufula

kidibudibu

kicipicipi or cintombentombe (Erythrina abyssinica)

East of the Lomami River:

mutondo

moko (Sterculia quinqueloba)

mukufu

cikoyo

katembo

mutaci

kanyangala

mukuta

As with bifwebe woods the scientific identification is incomplete since most of the vernacular names of species are not yet known or recorded in the literature, and not all the wood specimens were obtained. The organization of the list into two groupings indicates a correlation in the usage of woods west of the Lomami as opposed to a different selection east of the river. It may be that this is symptomatic of the changing distribution of species throughout the Songye territory. This question remains to be answered by further botanical and ethnographic field studies.

The Songye maintain that the selection of woods is based primarily on the criterion of hardness, durability, and resistance to insect damage, hence, on properties directly opposed to those of bifwebe woods. This seems to hold true more consistently in the making of community figures, particularly those made of mumbu, kifwenkese, nko, kavi, kafungufungu, mumanya and nsanga. All of these savanna species are said to have wide trunk diameters and are therefore dimensionally suitable for the carving of community mankishi. Kifwenkese which is categorized as one of the softer ones of the series is favoured because it does not crack easily. It should be recalled that the use of this wood was also noted for the commercial production of masks. However, in view of the number of different species cited, it is difficult to define the properties which relate to the criterion of selection. Certainly the choice of

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a wood such as kicipicipi, which is a traditional kifwebe wood and distinguished as a very light-weight species, exemplifies the relative measure of the said anatomical properties and the wide scope of selection particularly in the case of personal mankishi.

Although my data on the general uses of these trees are limited, certain factors cannot be overlooked. For instance, it is significant that in comparison to bifwebe woods many of these are valued for their medicinal properties. The characteristic white sap of mumbu is used as bwanga for severe headaches and it is said to be effective in inducing conception.

Kifwenkese, whose curative properties were noted in discussion of bifwebe woods, has, under the generic listing of Commiphora sp., a widespread medicinal repute throughout Central and South Africa confirming that it is a traditional nkishi wood rather than one designated for the bifwebe.¹²

The roots of the kavi tree are crushed and dried together with palm nuts, mixed with water and administered as a purge to children suffering from abdominal distension. Watt and Breyer-Brandwijk record a number of other medicines made from the same species and used in treatments similarly requiring some form of evacuation. For example, the leaves of the kavi are boiled and used as a diuretic by inhaling the vapours or by bathing in the liquid. Also a purgative is prepared from its roots and leaves, and scrapings of the stem are rubbed on the abdomen as an oxytotic.¹³

Another species, kafungufungu, although said to be poisonous,

is used medicinally by the Songye in the treatment of haemorrhoids.

According to Dechamps, the mumanya tree is also noted for its toxic properties but its roots are crushed and prepared as a poultice for wounds.¹⁴ A similar treatment has been recorded among the Luvale; however, these people use the leaf of the Canthium sp., mixed with kaolin and water, and apply it to skin lesions in smallpox. The timber of this species is equally valued by the Luvale for its strength and durability, hence it is used in the construction of granaries.¹⁵

Mufula and kicipicipi are used in the treatment of coughs and gynaecological disorders as discussed in chapter II.

The medicinal properties of these trees relate to the active curative function of mankishi, but in addition to this it is significant that a number of the most popular species also play a part in the preservation of ancestral bonds. Mufula, moko, and mumbu mark the seat of ancestral rule, that is, the supreme chief's epata residence. Similarly kicipicipi is one of a combination of species designating the sacred ground where ancestral spirits are venerated. Certain species, namely, mumbu, kifwenkese, and kafungufungu, possess features such as a milky or viscous sap which relates symbolically to the domain of Efile Mukulu and correspondingly to the superlative, life-enforcing mikishi.

Within the scope of available data on these trees it is only possible to draw attention to some of their properties and uses which could be important in the criteria of selection for this type of

statuary. The anatomical strength and size of the species, their curative value and other contextual associations to ancestral protection allude to the benevolent social action of nkishi magic.

Two of the species, kafungufungu and mumanya, were noted as having toxic properties which is also a relevant aspect defining nkishi action. The nkishi must have the force to extirpate the source of evil or misfortune. It enriches the life of the villagers by counteracting the malign, underlying cause of suffering. However, to reiterate, the active source of the nkishi is only the bishimba; the sculpture is essentially only a receptacle. Thus, the properties of the wood do not, I believe, contribute in themselves to the mystical spirit invocation of the magical substances. Their importance is rather associational or symbolic. Ancestral spirits do not reside in these trees, but as the villagers of Popwe explained, it is thought that they favour the species hence their usage is conducive to the desired effect. In spite of the limitations of these findings it is apparent, nonetheless, that the data on the selection of nkishi woods constitute a coherent set of beliefs more clearly definable than in the case of bifwebe woods. Yet, this selection seems to be more formalized in the making of community statuary than personal figures, partly because of the singular role of certain reputable specialists among the Songye.

iii) Tree Cutting, Carving and the Magical Consecration of Mankishi

The making of a community nkishi is an event of public knowledge. West and east of the Lomami River similar rites were performed, although some informants in the eastern chiefdoms claim

that the lineage chief or chiefs, the elders and other chosen villagers were the only active participants. In either case this group constituted the decision-making core which commissioned and paid the nganga and the sculptor, and chose a guardian for the nkishi.

Thus, in the morning, after preliminary discussions between the chief, the elders, the nganga and the sculptor, the villagers, if permitted, join the procession to the tree cutting site. The carver carries a white chicken or rooster which the chief plucks en route while invoking the ancestors. They are called out by name and asked to come and join the procession to the tree. At the same time the villagers collect the fallen chicken feathers and set them in their hair, thereby seeking recognition from the ancestors. In other words, this gesture involving the sacrificial animal and the symbolic colour sign white, expresses an appeal to the spirits to grant approval and favour.

According to most informants the particular tree of the designated species is chosen by the sculptor on the basis of technical considerations especially those relating to its dimensions. At this tree the villagers begin to dance and to sing, paying homage to the supreme mikishi. The entire site is animated audio-visually, mounting in intensity until some participants fall into a trance, giving evidence that spirit contact has been achieved. Then the chicken offering is tied to the trunk of the tree to be eaten by the spirits, and the chief addresses the tree beseeching it to accept and respond to the ancestors. A villager chosen by the sculptor undertakes the felling of the tree while wearing, symbolically, a white cloth tied

around his head. As in the case of the bifwebe the making process activates spirit forces, benign as well as malign, hence it requires protective signs.

Once the tree has been toppled, the desired section of the trunk is extracted and taken to the village, there to be worked in front of the chief's house. According to some Eastern Songye informants the nkishi is carved in secret. The sculptor, like his co-worker who cut the tree, wears a white cloth or a raffia weaving around his head to avoid interference and contamination from evil spirits. Due to the hardness of the species selected, the carving begins immediately while the wood is still in its green state. That entire day, while the carving continues, the villagers refrain from all work. They bring food and beverages to the sculptor and in celebration assist in the creation of the nkishi.

The very same tools are used for the carving of magical statuary as for the bifwebe (ills. 124-126). In sculpting a full-figure, first the cylindrical block is marked off into three sections designating the proportions of the head, the trunk, and the legs and pedestal, the latter being a common feature of Songye statuary. Then, by a process of reduction, the forms are rendered, working generally from top to bottom. Lastly the carver prepares the abdominal and/or head cavity for the magical substances as specified by the nganga. The surface of the carving is then polished and stained slightly with an application of palm oil. A light coloured species of wood such as mumanya darkens considerably with the application, but this is only the beginning of a patination which develops with

continued ritual usage of the piece. At this point, unless the carver is also a nganga, his task is completed and the contract is sealed by payment.

The endowment of the figure with bishimba and external paraphernalia is the most decisive ritual action, resembling subsequent new moon rites, when the nkishi receives fortification. My informants did not specify as to whether or not the making of a new nkishi corresponds to that lunar phase or another time period; however, it does seem that this question may lead to other important findings. The villagers did stipulate that the nganga's work must take place in the evening. All the villagers extinguish their fires and only one is lit near the figure which is believed to draw the ancestors and the benevolent mikishi who come to warm themselves. This single village fire, symbolic of the solar extension on earth, is thus perceived in spatial opposition to the moon. The two cosmic elements here represent not only life-emitting forces but also the dimensions of the spiritual realm which mark the cyclical passage of bikudi. Thus, the nkishi, being aligned next to the fire, is drawn into a cosmological representation which relates to its magical function.

Being the focus of communication with ancestral spirits, the nkishi receives offerings. Chickens and goats are sacrificed and their blood spilt over the figure. The chickens are then cooked with palm oil and hallucinogenic leaves of the kidimbu and the kambayimbayimba trees, and the dish is shared ritually amongst the villagers. All present are thereby drawn into the mystical invocation. Dancing and singing intensify the aura and, once again, as

at the tree cutting site, some villagers manifest spirit possession. They are shut away in a hut until the effect has worn off, for, inasmuch as the reaction is anticipated and supposedly positive, there is a fear that if uncontrolled evil elements may be involved.

As the dancing continues throughout the night the nganga is at work inserting the bishimba into the receptacles of the figure and covering the piece with skins, raffia cloth and various other paraphernalia. What the villagers witness is the visual transformation of the figure, that is, the readable symbolic elements. The formula of the bishimba remains unrecognized, although the nganga may at this time cut off bits of hair from the villagers or from mystically endowed persons such as albinos or twins and combine them with the magical ingredients. Such components are only variables of the entire mechanism which effect an identification of the community with the function of the nkishi. On occasion it may even become known which particular substances constitute the bishimba; however, their preparation and proportions to one another are a personal secret of the nganga. In addition though, it appears that the inherent power of the nganga is also a determinant in the efficiency of the mystical response, for it is upheld that some practitioners have greater success than others, although their empirical knowledge might be comparable. Moreover, it is believed that during this magical preparation of the nkishi, the nganga receives special reinforcement from the ancestors, despite the fact that his methods of operation must converge with those of evil practitioners.

In comparison to the public ritual installation of a community

nkishi the making of personal protective figures is described rather pragmatically, and often as part of an immediate curing procedure which varies according to the needs of the user. To begin with the task is usually undertaken in response to specific ills. As noted earlier, a person may have been exposed to the effects of sorcery. However, most commonly, symptoms are based on dream interpretations; thus, on supposed visitations of witches (buci or kiswenene) or on images of the deceased, which account for misfortune or are said to lead ultimately to illness. A nganga is called who first prepares mwanyi, the required herbal bwanga. The patient inhales the vapours of this concoction or he takes it orally. Once the nganga diagnoses that the treatment has taken effect, thus in the case of a supposed infliction from evil forces, or the patient regains his strength after an actual illness, a nkishi is commissioned for continued reinforcement and protection. The procurement of the figure may be arranged by the patient or the nganga, unless the latter happens to be a carver himself. Elders in Lubao explained that the nganga selects a particular species of wood and actually brings the material to the sculptor. If it is the nganga who arranged the transaction for the making of the figure he pays the sculptor from the sum which he receives for his services. He then inserts the magical substances into the statuette, usually in his own time and alone, assigns a particular name to the nkishi, and instructs the patient on the usage of the bwanga.

d) Bishimba and External Paraphernalia

As suggested by de Heusch, the multiple substances comprising the bishimba can be classified as metaphoric and metonymic expressions of the nkishi's potency.

Alors que la série métaphorique exprime l'action défensive ou offensive du bwanga, la série métonymique renvoie au sujet qui exerce au mode actif cette action (agression de la sorcellerie ou de la contre-sorcellerie), ou subit au mode passif la protection du bwanga. Par le double jeu de la métaphore et de la métonymie, l'object-discours bwanga établit donc un rapport nécessaire entre son propriétaire et le monde surnaturel, par la médiation du monde naturel.¹⁶

The aggressive force of the nkishi which is asserted metaphorically consists of a long list of materials of which only the most common, used mainly for community mankishi, are noted.

- bones, flesh, fur or claws of a lion (ntambwe), leopard (ngye), monkey (nkima), or a civet cat (nshima)
- earth from the tracks of an elephant
- a type of rat (muncembwa) which emits a penetrating odour¹⁷
- scales of a dangerous snake (nsanci) or the sexual organs of a crocodile¹⁸
- feathers of a hawk (kabemba: small species, very vicious)¹⁹ or a bird whose call is associated with danger or misfortune such as the lubulankadi²⁰
- bees
- excreta of lightning (tufi twa mpeshi); described as a hard wax-like substance found among the roots of a tree struck by lightning. According to Plasmans any part of such a tree may be utilized.²¹
- bones or flesh of someone who committed suicide

- hair, nails and flesh of a deceased sorcerer
- bones of warriors found at a battleground or the ashes of burnt trees from such a site.
- hair and nails of an albino (nsaka) and epileptic²²
- umbilical cords from twins²³

All the animals named possess a specific type of physical power or premonition which defines the desired action of the bishimba. Many of them enter into the symbolic decoding of the kifwebe, hence the practices of malevolent magic. They are strong or large, carnivorous or venomous. They bite or sting or they are merely associated with impending or potential danger on the basis of sensory signs: the call of birds, or the noxious odour of mucembwa the rat. Similarly, plant or human matter from a battleground can be interpreted as an active offensive ingredient. The following three elements named: the residue of lightning, parts of the corpse of a sorcerer or a suicide victim, are all related to the aggression of malevolent spirits. Lightning that kills or injures is always believed to be sent by sorcerers, whose own spirits and actions on earth are governed by evil mikishi. The spirits of those who defy the death of Efile Mukulu (suicide cases) are ill-fated and similarly suspected of malign deeds. On the other hand, organic matter of twins, albinos, and epileptics is representative of innate mystical powers which are ambivalent, thus potentially both offensive and defensive like the dual power of the nkishi.

The metonymic series of elements of the bishimba contextualize and give direction to the magical action. In community mankishi

these consist of the villagers' bits of hair and nails which are ritually inserted during the making process. Plasmans explains that in the case of a nkishi designated for procreation, the villagers go to the bush to have intercourse and then the nganga collects the leaves and grass where they were lying to be combined with the bishimba.²⁴ A personal nkishi logically contains only the nails or hair of its user. Thus, as the individual or the community identifies symbolically with the magical object so the response of the ancestors is supposedly projected onto them. De Heusch explains this symbolic process in the following passage.

Le protecteur comme le protégé continuent de toute évidence à être ailleurs, tant il est vrai que le bwanga n'est qu'une façon de parler avec force pour se donner l'illusion d'être fort. Ces deux démarches métonimiques complémentaires établissent un contact, une intimité entre l'homme et le sacré le plus proche (le monde des ancêtres), alors que le symbolisme métaphorique indique seulement dans quel sens, voulu par l'homme, et pourquoi cette intimité devra se déployer.²⁵

In comparison to the invisible, active aspect of the bishimba, the external multi-media paraphernalia typical of community figures respond to a second act of metaphoric elements which are known and visually intelligible but not a part of the magical formula. Most of the elements affirm the image of ancestral leaders and dignitaries and uphold thereby a general reference to the desired strength of the community.

The various features of these paraphernalia can be considered under the subsequent categories.

Horns:²⁶

<u>ntengo</u> , <u>ntengu</u>	antelope; lassaby (<u>Domaliseus lunatus</u>)
<u>mbudi</u>	antelope; sitatunga (<u>Tragelaphus spekei</u>)

ngulungu bushbuck (Tragelaphus scriptus)
mbashi common reedbuck (Redunca arundinum)
mbo African buffalo (Syncerus caffer)

Animal skins: mammals and reptiles

ngye, nge leopard (Panthera pardus²⁷ or Felis pardus²⁸)
lombe type of lizard (Varanidae²⁹/Varaanus niloticus?³⁰)
nyoka a soswa)
) poisonous snakes
nyoka a subu)
nshimba genet
nshima civet³¹
mbala type of cat³²
nkima monkey³³
kabunji hydrax or dassie; common name "rock rabbit"
 (Procaviidae)³⁴

The different fur attachments and all neck and torso rings made from skins of reptiles are called mikala.

Feathers:

kipongolu, kipungulu owl, multicoloured
mumba, momba sparrow hawk³⁵
nduba turaco (Musophaga rossae)³⁶

Diverse Paraphernalia:

mpeko raffia cloth attached as chief's dress
bipo beaded necklaces or bracelets
mambele cowry shells (eyes on figure 137)
mele metal bells suspended from waist on some mankishi

<u>bishishi</u>	metal studs (nails; blade of hoe or other tools may also be added)
<u>bingala</u>	strips of copper applique on face
<u>tutundu</u>	cylindrical large wooden pegs attached to waist belt at each side; said to be filled with magical concoctions (<u>mushila</u> and <u>bishimba</u>) (ills. 135, 137, 139-144)
<u>tupulu</u>	small series of <u>tutundu</u> also suspended at side of figure (ill. 135)

Although many of the animals here listed differ from those used for the bishimba and in particular those that define the bifwebe, their behavioural characteristics are essentially the same. They project strength and dominance; they are dangerous and feared. However, that which sets them apart is that most are identified directly with figures of authority. The leopard skin and various feathers constitute the chief's regalia whereas skins, such as that of the varan, are associated with the status of ministers and nobles. This does not, however, apply to the horns which are used for both community and personal figures. In fact, they may be aberrant to the category, since they are more closely linked to the bishimba and are, in effect, unrelated to the anthropomorphic representation. Still, horns are a distinguishing visual feature of many mankishi and, symbolically, they are meaningful to the category as they represent the wisdom of elders. This is important since it also holds true for the bifwebe. Thus, being associated with sorcery and protective magic or anti-sorcery, the horn indicates that both mystical practices draw their resources from the same pool of natural variables, even though all of these may not be made visually explicit.

One and the same concept is embraced by the other animal references. The leopard represents chieftainship. The varan is

the guardian of ancestral regalia: the staff and sceptre of office.³⁷ He is the impartial arbitrator because, as Wauters's Eki myth explains, he has no ears.³⁸ Nshima the civet is the chief's spokesman; all palavers are addressed to him.³⁹ In the Eki myths nkima, the monkey, assumes a role of importance on account of his shrewdness and cunning.⁴⁰ The sparrow hawk is the chief's bird. Similarly the turaco, known to be ferocious and cruel, probably characterizes uncompromising strength of rule. Indeed among the Luba its red feathers, symbolic of sacrificial bloodshed, are worn by chiefs during their investiture.⁴¹ The owl on the other hand, still one of the larger birds, is distinguished because of its peculiar nocturnal call. Although the precise identification has not been made, the fishing owl (Scotopelia peli), which has a wide distribution throughout West and Central Africa, may be considered. Its physical appearance seems to match the description of kipungulu noted in the Eki myth ("Grand Duc - sans cou, car ses plumes sont tout son cou").⁴² Apart from its large size and rather ferocious appearance it is symbolically significant, with reference to ancestral rule, that it inhabits dense riverside trees and its call is described as "a sort of snorting humming sound [like] that made at times by leopards".⁴³

Of the other paraphernalia the raffia skirt and the beaded necklace are the most obvious imitative features of chiefs' regalia. Correspondingly the various metal attachments and cowry shells inserted as eyes which appear on some mankishi recall the alliance of chief, smith, and hunter ("chasseur d'eau"). Although the latter specialization is interpreted specifically from the Kalebwe myth of state organization, an origin account presented by A. Moeller reveals a similar motif, that is, a dispute between two brothers, Somo Lengela

and Ilunga Bili (Nsomwe Olengiele; Ilunga Mbidi), over the ownership of a lake which they discover contains an important source of wealth in shells.⁴⁴ This pervading concern with the culture hero and his life-giving trades is interlinked, but in a broader sense, with the symbolism of several other objects typical of mankishi. For example, the blade of a hoe which refers to the simultaneous development of the forge and agriculture alludes to a prosperous livelihood and therefore a strong community.⁴⁵ A similar line of thought is expressed by the iron bell on some figures, which was traditionally worn by pregnant women and it is said to represent procreation; hence, the continuation of the ancestral heritage.

These symbolic metal objects eclectically augment the belief in the strength of the nkishi because of their association with benign ancestral powers. By comparison the nails and metal studs assert the notion of a specific and active magical effect. Thus, metaphorically, the nkishi is unchallenged; one who contrives evil against it, meaning against the community, risks injury.⁴⁶

The facial metal appliqué is perhaps one of the most characteristic and enigmatic features of Songye figures. Most of my informants were very vague in explaining its significance. Relating my findings to those of Plasman it would seem that this feature parallels the concept of the nails, but it bears a specific relation to the effect of lightning.⁴⁷ That is, the nkishi can counteract and channel lightning against the source of evil or a particular aggressor. Curiously enough the Songye stipulate that only copper must be used for these facial strips, a metal which happens to be one of the best electrical conductors. Another point of interest

concerns the pattern in which the strips are set. The commonly recurring diagonal arrangement is reminiscent of the striations on the male bifwebe. This visual relationship is possible in view of the convergence of magical action between mankishi and that of sorcerers. First, we know that lightning which injures is invariably believed to have been sent by a sorcerer, and secondly it is true that the function of many mankishi is to ward off these malign practitioners. Many mankishi are in fact made specifically for protection against lightning, however, inasmuch as this natural phenomenon is a very real and frequently occurring danger in the Kasai, this is said only to conceal suspicions which cannot be openly manifested in accusations.

Apart from the purely symbolic external attachments some qualify or contribute to the magical effect of the nkishi as, for example, the tutundu and the tupulu, the wooden pegs which are supposedly also filled with bishimba. The latter are said to be manga against war. Whether or not this means that they are imitative of specific magical objects used and associated with warriors is uncertain. The purpose of the tutundu was not revealed, although informants in Lubao mentioned that these are removed whenever the figure is being carried through the village or the bush. These fragments of information are unsatisfactory and require further investigation. Merriam, in his discussion of Lupika, the community nkishi of the village Lupupa Ngye, provides an interesting interpretation, suggesting that these wooden pegs are measuring devices of the nkishi's active power. He writes:

The figure may lose its power for any of a variety of reasons, but most specifically when its maker dies; it is then taken to another village and brought into confrontation with its counterpart. Crucial in this confrontation are two carved wooden cylinders about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter; these are attached to the figure's belt by means of short strings which pass around the belt and through a hole drilled in one end of each cylinder. These tukonya (s. kakonya) indicate the comparative strength of the two figures; if both of them on both figures stand straight out from the belt, then the two mankishi are of equal and high strength. If the two cylinders of one figure stand straight out and those of the other figure hang down in normal position, the former is the stronger but, more important, the latter has probably lost its power. In this case, a new nkishi is commissioned.⁴⁸

The importance of this passage can also be taken in summary of several basic concepts discussed about the nkishi mechanism. In the first place it alludes to the far-reaching repute of certain banganga who consecrated a series, thus, of related mankishi throughout the Songye region. Secondly, it reaffirms the fact that the potency of the magical formula is proportional and in some way affected by the nganga's innate power. The nkishi figure is simply an object of symbolic interaction between the realm of the living and the dead; "between the protector and the protected, between the sacred and the profane" [my trans.]⁴⁹ The nganga is the intermediary who initiates the ritual process between spirits and men. But since his mystical operations are ambivalent as they require knowledge of sorcery, after death the manifestations of his spirit seem to be questioned, as is the remaining power of the nkishi. The belief that the power of the nkishi can dissipate with the death of the nganga reflects in part also a pragmatic attitude. That is, being essentially a perishable object, at the time of the nganga's death, if the desired magical effect has not been achieved or satisfied, an opportunity is created for the making of yet another, more effective nkishi.

e) Manipulation of Mankishi

A community nkishi is kept in a hut of its own (shibo ya bwanga) which is normally located in the centre of the village or near a chief's house. A small gong is attached to the front door of this hut and a drum (kyondo), such as the one referred to in Kitumbika's account, is kept inside. These instruments are used when the villagers dance for the nkishi, but as Merriam states, they are communal property and may be borrowed by anyone at any time.⁵⁰

All mankishi are assigned a guardian (nkunja or kunca), either an old man or an old woman; however, some informants do not stress this age distinction. Plasmans reveals, though, that the guardian of the nkishi at the village of Kalembeyi was chosen because she was an epileptic.⁵¹ It is evident that one who is honoured with this task assumes a very important role in the ritual life of the statuette. Nkunja represents the collective desire of the village. He or she is the interpreter who receives messages from the nkishi through dreams and who gives evidence of the intervention of evil spirits through states of possession. This person also acts out, on behalf of the village, the prescribed restrictions outlined by the nganga which seem to co-ordinate the particular effect of the bishimba with the life of the community. These restrictions therefore differ for each nkishi yet the following are the most recurrent.

The fire in the hut of the nkishi cannot be transferred outside.⁵²

Neither the nkishi nor nkunja is allowed into the hut of a menstruating woman.

Nkunja cannot eat a rooster in the company of anyone.

Nkunja cannot drink water brought from a source by someone else.

The day of the new moon rite nkunja is not permitted to leave the nkishi's hut.

According to Merriam's discussion of the nkishi Lupika, only collective appeals and consultations were made to the figure and these were restricted to the occasion of the new moon rites.⁵³ This may have been specifically the practice in the village of Lupupa Ngye since my Kalebwe informants explained, in reference to Yankima at least, that the nkishi was used in individual curative sessions. If someone in the village became ill, for example, the nkishi was carried to the house of the patient and set touching the body for a short while. Nkunja would then fall into trance, supposedly from spirit possession, receiving thereby the knowledge of the curative herbs to be sought.

Public appearances of the nkishi were said to occur any time nkunja dreamed of danger. Dreams of fire, lightning or ravines were interpreted as evil omens; those of water or white kaolin were considered favourable.⁵⁴ The nkishi was then taken outdoors and normally poles (bikumba or milonga) made of wood from a burial ground, bearing an association with the materials of bishimba, were attached with raffia string under its arms (ills. 127, 128).⁵⁵ Two villagers were chosen to carry the figure, though the Songye are careful in explaining that these men simply hold it. The nkishi is thus said to walk through the village confronting malign spirit invaders. The elders at Canga-Canga reported that the guardian, who accompanies the nkishi on all occasions, may become the

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instrument of these evil spirits in which case he begins to speak in the foreign tongue of the place from where these mikishi originated. Such a manifestation provides public evidence of existing danger. In the event that an epidemic has seized a village and the nkishi has been brought out, it leads its carriers into the bush to particular species of trees. There questions are addressed to the nkishi: "What shall we take from this tree; the leaves?" If the answer is affirmative the nkishi begins to tremble, and if it is negative it remains still. After the compilation of all the herbal substances the nkishi signals by means of similar gestures the manner in which the bwanga is to be concocted and administered to the villagers.

It is apparent from this account that those who participate in the daily care of the nkishi, such as the nkunja and the carriers, are definitely instrumental in defining the actions of the nkishi. This would seem to indicate that they are persons of particular knowledge, herbalists and perhaps diviners, and that they are probably believed to possess innate mystical powers (e.g. epileptics). The Songye are very evasive in giving ground to these questions since they would reveal a contrived manipulation or at least one which might negate the power of spirits of the dead.

The handling of personal mankishi is as varied as the multiple functions which they serve. Most commonly the magical statuettes are kept in the hut of their owners concealed from public view. Small pieces are often set into a basket which serves as a receptacle for food offerings (e.g. morsels of cassava meal) made to the nkishi

regularly at meal times. The nkishi Kapenga, for example, owned by a chief at Kakasu I rests on top of an old inverted sieve which had been used for cassava flour (ills. 129a, b, c). Although the piece serves to protect all members of his household from death by sorcery, it remains in his personal hut. If one of his wives or children falls ill it is then temporarily relocated in the residence of that family member. Only the chief himself is obliged to observe the nganga's prescript forbidding him to eat chicken eggs and red ants during the active life of the nkishi.

The flat-headed figures which require the burning of bishimba are frequently pegged into the ground in front of the entrance to the hut of the user. One of the chief's wives in Katondo, whose last infant had died, acquired a pair of these mankishi, representing a male and female, to spare her newborn from the same 'mystically induced' illness (ills. 130a, b). A white line of cassava flour symbolically encircled the woman's hut and every night before retiring the magical substances were burned, thus making the mother and child invisible to malign spirits and practitioners. The use of these bifwame figures was prescribed for the duration of the breast-feeding period after which they are to be burned in secrecy.

Certain mankishi, usually small in size, accompany the movements of their owners; they are carried along when travelling beyond the familiar bounds of the village or they may be worn continuously such as the finger rings worn by the chief of Ehata village (Bena Muo; ill. 131a). The three pieces exemplified in illustrations 131b, one anthropomorphic representation, the other an abstract figure phallic in form, and a wooden ball, all function independently

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on the basis of their specific bishimba content, yet all three are used by the chief as protection against poisoning.

Some family figures, like community mankishi, are guarded in their own hut-like constructions at the centre of the compound. This was also seen in the case of a personal protector belonging to a nganga at Eyombo (ill. 132). Other small figures are often kept at the back of the central house in thatched roof shelters where tools and weapons are stored (ills. 133a, b). A most unusual practice was observed in Mulopwe-Malango, where a pair of figures, a male and a female, were buried near the roots of a banana tree (ekonde) but close to the surface of the ground so as to leave the bishimba-filled horns visually exposed (ills. 134a, b). The banana tree, symbolic of fertility, reinforced the belief in the function of these magical figures which were acquired for the procreation of the family upon their settlement at the present-day site.

f) Ritual Usage of Mankishi

The day of the first quarter of a lunar cycle (mukapasu) is one of the most important public rituals among the Songye as well as the Luba.⁵⁶ This reappearance of the moon, after its 'temporary death' (chapter II) brings about new life, potential wealth in offspring, and fertility to the land. The lunar phases coincide with a woman's time of conception and with the agricultural pattern. They designate the time of the hunt and the emergence of different types of termites (swa). Thus, at the occasion of mukapasu, spirits of the dead are venerated to ensure continued prosperity and all

mankishi are recharged through the process. That day work is not permitted; all chickens are enclosed, nobody is allowed to leave the village to fetch water, and manioc leaves (preparation in palm oil called kaleshi) cannot be eaten.

The community nkishi becomes the focus of ritual proceedings. In the morning at the first call of the rooster it is set outdoors on a chief's stool and at this time all other personal mankishi in the village may be brought out to share in the ritual effect. A rooster is killed in honour of the ancestors and its blood is spilt on top of the nkishi's head. Nkunja (in this case only a female guardian was being referred to) prepares a manioc meal and the rooster together with mwanyi. A small part of the food is placed symbolically on the nkishi's head in offering to the spirits, and the remainder is carefully distributed among the villagers. Then all the magical statuary, starting with the community nkishi, is anointed with palm oil and rubbed with manioc flour or kaolin. The villagers similarly apply the symbolic white powder to their faces exposing the purity of their hearts to the ancestors. Sorcerers and other evildoers who partake in this gesture are said to die a few days henceforth. Schmitz, who was among the first to record his observations of such a rite, noted that the elders at Dibwe actually withdrew from this communion because, as the villagers explained, their hearts had turned evil.⁵⁷ In addition to the kaolin application a concoction is prepared from mashed eposha leaves mixed with water which pregnant women rub on their abdomens so as not to abort. The nkishi is then carried by its poles from one end of the village to the other, hounding all malevolent intruders, and once it is returned

to the stool singing and dancing commence. It is at this point that the white female kifwebe makes its dance appearance. Being associated with the moon, fertility, and benign mystical power, it animates spirit forces which sustain and protect the community. The mere presence of this supernatural creature gives assurance of an existing interaction between the dead and the living. At the same time its affiliation with the male bifwebe alludes to the effect of aggressive magical force such as that which is sought from the mankishi.

Comparing Schmitz's findings to those of Plasmans and my own findings it is apparent that the ritual proceedings of this lunar celebration vary from one community to another.⁵⁸ These differences in practice and sequence of events depend partly on the specific requirements of each community nkishi; that is, on the instructions set forth by the nganga and the periodic indications given by the nkunja.

Footnotes

- 1 J.W. Fernandez, "Principles of Opposition and Vitality in Fang Aesthetics" in Art and Aesthetics in Primitive Societies, ed. C.F. Jopling (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1971), pp. 365, 366.
- 2 An African World ..., pp. 123, 124.
- 3 "Notes sur la Secte 'Toni-toni' en Territoire de Kabongo", Bull. Jurid. Indig., 21, No. 5, 99.
- 4 A brief reference to the term "mwanzambale" appears in Les Baluba by Colle, p. 469. He writes: "... le grand remède, c'est le mwanzambale qui a le pouvoir de renvoyer le maléfice sur la famille de l'ensorceleur; tout maléfice qui atteint le possesseur de ce remède retourne donc par ricochet sur l'enfant, la femme ou un parent quelconque du ndozi".
- 5 Z. Volavkova, "Nkisi Figures of the Lower Congo", African Arts, Winter (1972), p. 57.
- 6 An African World ..., p. 122.
- 7 R. Hottot, "Teke Fetishes", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 86 (1956), 26.
- 8 Identification of wood specimen by Dechamps, 21 November 1978.
- 9 "L'Identification Anatomique des Bois ...", pp. 28, 29.
- 10 Identification of wood specimen by Dechamps, 21 November 1978.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 J.M. Watt and M.G. Breyer-Bandwijk, The Medicinal and Poisonous Plants of Southern and Eastern Africa (Edinburgh & London: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd., 1962), pp. 153, 154.
- 13 Ibid., p. 900.
- 14 Personal communication with R. Dechamps, 21 November 1978.
- 15 Watt and Breyer-Brandwijk, The Medicinal and Poisonous Plants ..., p. 897.
- 16 "Pour une Approche Structuraliste de la Pensée Magico-Religieuse Bantoue", in Pourquoi l'Epouser? et Autres Essais. (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 181.
- 17 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 71.
- 18 Plasmans, catalogue notes, no. 63/12-61 (village Musangie, Bekalebwe).
- 19 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 74.

- 20 Plasmans, catalogue no. 64/406-178 (village Kasesa, Bekalebwe).
- 21 Plasmans, catalogue no. 64/153-43 (village Seke, Songye).
- 22 Plasmans, catalogue no. 64/261-24, 25, 26 (village Nkoto, Bekalebwe).
- 23 Plasmans, catalogue no. 67/68 (village Puma, Bekalebwe).
- 24 Plasmans, catalogue no. 175 (village Kabamba Kombe, Bekalebwe).
- 25 "Pour une Approche Structuraliste ...", p. 182.
- 26 All horned animals identified according to vernacular name by Roger Minne, April 1978.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Identification of vernacular name by D. Meirte, Curator of Mammals, Vertebrate Section, Musée Royal de L'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, TLS 26, March 1979.
- 29 Identification of vernacular name by Minne, April 1978.
- 30 Identification of vernacular name by Meirte, March 1979.
- 31 Wauters, L'Esotérie ..., p. 369.
- 32 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 42.
- 33 Stappers, unpublished Songye vocabulary.
- 34 Identification of vernacular name by Minne, April 1978. Common names given in Dorst and Dandelot, A Field Guide to the Larger Mammals of Africa, p. 152.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Wauters, L'Esotérie ..., p. 337.
- 38 Ibid., p. 335.
- 39 Ibid., p. 353.
- 40 Ibid., p. 315.
- 41 Van Avermaet, Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français, p. 122.
- 42 Wauters, L'Esotérie ..., p. 335.
- 43 C.W. Mackworth-Praed and C.H.B. Grant, Birds of West-Central and Western Africa (London: Longman, 1970), I, 499.

- 44 Les Grandes Lignes des Migrations des Bantous de la Province Orientale du Congo Belge, 80, No. 6 (Bruxelles: Inst. R. Colon. Belge, 1936), pp. 143-145.
- 45 Plasmans, catalogue no. 64/312-98 (village Esanga, Bekalebwe).
- 46 Plasmans, catalogue no. 67/68 (village Puma, Bekalebwe), and discussion of Yankima at Bashilangie.
- 47 Plasmans, catalogue no. dated 2 June 1964 (Bashimike, Eki).
- 48 An African World ..., p. 125.
- 49 "Pour une Approche Structuraliste ...", p. 182.
- 50 An African World ..., p. 124.
- 51 Plasmans, catalogue no. 65/484, 160-169 (Bekalebwe).
- 52 Plasmans, catalogue no. 64/231 - 19 (village Epamba, Bekalebwe).
- 53 An African World ..., p. 124.
- 54 Plasmans, catalogue no. 175 (village Kabamba Kombe, Bekalebwe).
- 55 Plasmans, catalogue no. 167, dated 22 September 1965 (village Kielume, Bekalebwe).
- 56 Burton, Luba Religion and Magic ..., p. 48.
- 57 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 322.
- 58 Van Overbergh, Les Basonge, p. 322; Plasmans' catalogue notes.

CHAPTER VIII

Characteristics of Central Songye Figures

a) General Remarks

Although Songye figure sculpture is more abundant in public and private collections than the masks, its development is even more difficult to trace. The major problem of this survey is that very few pieces were seen in the field and these were only personal mankishi found among the Eastern Songye. Community figures which seem to have influenced the plastic expression of personal mankishi were not accessible, or, as in the case of the Kalebwe, no longer in existence. In addition to the scanty findings on the present, museum data on the older collections such as Tervuren and London are vague or entirely absent. Compared to the little we know about Kalebwe sculpture, virtually nothing is available on the Eastern Songye tradition. This means that we are unfortunately dealing with visual material which is unequally represented in time and space.

As with the masks, my compilation of data from the field inquiry was based largely on the identification of black and white photographs of pieces from the Tervuren and London collections. The same process of questioning was used, and again the problems of fatigue, poor eyesight and difficulty in the reading of two-dimensional imagery on the part of the elders impaired the results. By far the greatest problem faced, more critical than in the case of the masks, was the uniform scale of the prints used. Large

community mankishi were reduced in the prints to the same dimensions as small, morphologically similar personal figures, hence giving rise to false interpretations of their function.

On the whole the prints of statuary elicited somewhat less interest than those of the masks. In each locality where they were tested a certain number of pieces did not evoke any commentary at all. This can be explained by the fact that mankishi received restricted public exposure, certainly far less than the bifwebe. The bifwebe of each society were publicly seen not only in their own locality but also in distant villages where they were invited to perform or to restore order. In comparison, community figures may have attained a far-reaching reputation, but they were on view only to the inhabitants of their respective villages. Personal mankishi, although seen by the community during lunar rites, together with a multitude of others, remained private and anonymous property.

Most curiously, certain examples of statuary were immediately rejected as Songye and attributed repeatedly to the Kuba people who live to the north-west in the plains between the Sankuru and Kasai Rivers. Contacts between the Kuba and the Songye are certain to have taken place in the latter part of the nineteenth century at the trading centre of Lusambo, but whether or not this led to the trade of carvings or the commissioning of foreign craftsmen is not known.¹ The particular objects negated by the elders are unquestionably old, used Songye pieces, yet for some reason unacceptable to my informants. It was my impression that the name "Kuba" was synonymous with "alien".

Thus given the limitations of the data, this survey seeks to highlight only the most significant morphological and stylistic features within the different genres of magical figures in the central Songye region. The main genres to be considered are community mankishi, personal figures and an atypical form of white-faced figures which relate visually to the bifwebe.

b) Community Mankishi

The most common examples of Songye statuary are represented by figures such as 135 to 146. Significantly all these community figures, regardless of their exact provenance, typify the style of the Kalebwe which is seen as the dominant artistic wave in the region. This attribution is based on available documentation, visual comparisons and on the photographic identification of pieces such as 135, 136 and 137. Among the Cofwe and the Eastern Songye there does not seem to be a notable or distinct figural expression in this genre. The Cofwe, we know from identified Tervuren and Plasmans pieces, followed in the tradition of the Kalebwe. In the case of the eastern chiefdoms, the nature of the collections and the lack of data could be an obscuring factor. Yet, the area may have been less prolific and therefore influenced by the Kalebwe to the extent of commissioning carvers for these important statues.

Except for one cruder piece in the Tervuren collection, number 135, which was recognized as Yantambwe from the village Mandungu near Cofa and said to have been 'made' (probably meaning consecrated) by the nganga Kasongo ka Bikudi to promote fertility, the provenance and usage of most pieces was not known. Most informants, if they

recognized certain morphological features similar to mankishi used in their own village, provided information relating to their own magical figures.

All the mankishi under examination are large stocky figures averaging 82 centimetres in height. In general their quality of craftsmanship and of the material is fairly high, mainly because these types of figures were made by skilled and reputable carvers. The hard woods used were of the kind responsive to a fine patina (see identified examples and captions 136, 137, 147). Yet, in comparison to the intense, rich surface quality of other Central African sculpture such as that of the Hemba, the Kuba or the Cokwe, in Songye statuary this property of the surface is simply not emphasized. It is primarily the result of natural wear rather than any special treatment or aesthetic considerations. Also, since the figures are laden with different types of paraphernalia, the patina that has developed is uneven. Most of the polish and staining of wear is seen on the face and the arms, whereas the top of the head and the legs and pedestal, which were usually covered, are noticeably lighter in colour and seemingly unfinished in texture.

The paraphernalia, whose symbolic significance has been discussed in the previous chapter, contribute a great deal to the overall impact of the figures. In fact, in some examples the attachments are so lavish that they tend to conceal the actual characteristics of the wood carving (ills. 144, 145, 148). This attitude toward the nkishi form confirms that the sculpture is of secondary importance to the bishimba and the external paraphernalia.

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Generally though, the combination of multi-media materials: cloth, feathers, skins, metal, animates the static volumes of the sculpture. Free-flowing feathers and cloth contrast with the heaviness of the metal appliqué. Skin belts are fastened tightly around the neck and torso while various other objects are merely suspended from the figure. But, inasmuch as the paraphernalia are meant to portray generalized attributes of ancestors, the pieces are individualized, since the attachments vary from figure to figure. Some pieces are crowned by a mass of feathers whereas others only have a hide head covering. The chief's skirt varies in style from an apron (ills. 140, 141) to a full-bodied skirt, gathered loosely (ill. 136) or tightly (ill. 142) and sometimes at varying lengths (ill. 137).

Of all the paraphernalia the most interesting feature is the attachment of other small carvings such as the half-figure in illustration 148. The small piece is abstracted in form and stylistically different from the large figure. As will be seen, many of its features comply with the genre of personal mankishi. In functional elements too, the small figure seems to be distinguished from typical community mankishi in that it lacks the abdominal protrusion and receptacle. Instead the principal cavity containing the bishimba is localized on the head. Although this small nkishi reinforces the magical effect of the community figure it may possess its own combination of bishimba which justifies its different stylistic form.

Despite the importance of the paraphernalia, except for the metal appliqué, the various attachments are the most perishable

aspects of a figure. Among the illustrated examples some pieces have clearly been stripped of their headgear or skirts as seen by the lack of patination on the wood. In many cases early collectors have been responsible for divesting the nkishi of some of its "hideous" garb, although sometimes this has been done with the best intentions of saving the sculpture from further insect ravage (ills. 140, 142).² But, it is conceivable that certain objects were added or removed by the villagers themselves during the ritual usage of the piece, also because of damage or else in accordance with the magical effect of the nkishi.

The changing phases of the nkishi's patina and its paraphernalia define the visual dynamics of magical statuary. Yet, for the art historian the nature of the materials only obscures attempts at dating the figures. Since all the nkishi woods, especially those used for community figures, are dense, less prone to attack by insects, and therefore less perishable than bifwebe woods, their natural life span is potentially longer. This factor together with the variable effects of the patina, partly determined by the placement of the paraphernalia, makes it more difficult to assess the relative age of the pieces. The condition of the paraphernalia alone is not always reliable^{evidence} since certain objects may be either more recent or else even older than the actual carving. It may be possible, with the co-operation of museum conservation departments, to analyse scientifically the metal attachments, that is, the strips on the faces of the figures and perhaps the metal lids covering the abdominal cavity, since these are probably the most integral elements of the sculpture. Although indigenous metals are normally

used there are three unusual and conceptually amusing examples among the illustrated carvings with tops of European tins covering the receptacles (ills. 140-142). The lids are clearly marked with import inscriptions ("Importe d'Italie", "Italie" and "France").

In many respects the Songye figures under examination conform to the canons of Central and even West African statuary. The most obvious of these common characteristics, seen in both community and personal mankishi, is their rigid frontality with the non-rotation of the spinal axis, the head and the neck. Also, the figures are tightly non-gestural. As in many African pieces, the arms are held at the side of the body, with the elbows bent at right angles, and the hands set on the belly. The legs, if rendered, are foreshortened and represented in a knees-bent stance. Of course there are some subtle deviations from the norm or occasionally a figure may give an illusion of being off centre without necessarily being so. For example, the head of figure 136 is slightly rotated to the side. In figure 137 there appears to be a contortion in the posture which is created by the opposition of the head extending noticeably frontwards and the disproportionately slender arms being pulled back toward the shoulder-blades. In some pieces the concavity of the face and the extension of the jaw create the illusion that the head is somewhat tilted upwards (ills. 138, 139). On the whole though, any asymmetries in the pose of central Songye carvings seem to be haphazard.

There is a general explanation for the static frontal human depiction. It is a widely shared social trait that a rigid stance, symmetry and controlled, serious facial expressions define a pose of

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dignity and strength.³ When being photographed my informants, particularly chiefs and elders, automatically froze into position and remained motionless for any desired length of time. But regardless of the situation, whether passive or even active, an attitude of physical composure was especially pronounced when wearing their regalia. So it makes sense that statuary representing important dignitaries embodies the same behavioural characteristics. Although this applies specifically to the genre of community figures, beyond the central Songye region there are some as yet unexplained exceptions to be found among the Ilande whose figures are sometimes depicted with the heads turned to the profile or in three-quarter view (ills. 169, 170).⁴

The body proportions of the illustrated community carvings are fairly consistent in comparison to the variations in scale seen in personal mankishi. In all Songye pieces the head is particularly emphasized. As opposed to much Central African sculpture where the head to body proportions are about 1 : 4, in some of these Songye pieces the scale is reduced to an even smaller ratio of 1 : 3 or slightly less. This measure must include the plinth since it is rendered in some pieces as an integral part of the legs, which may be up to one third of the body size (ills. 143, 146). However, since the figures are usually draped from the waist down, there is a sense of elongation which conceals the disproportion of the lower part of the body.

Looking at the morphology of the pieces it is necessary to distinguish common Songye features from those which typify the

Kalebwe style. In the first place, the heads, although they vary from ovoid to triangular shapes, display the most clearly identifiable Kalebwe traits. They recall the forms of the bifwebe in the emphasis on the rounded cranium and the squared off protruding chin. Also in the facial features this affinity to the masks is evident in the representation of the triangular noses with their forehead extensions and the open mouths, particularly the rectangular, oval and closed-U lip shapes. By comparison, in carvings from adjoining chiefdoms, such as the Ilande and Eki, the head shapes tend to be rounder and the features less emphatic (ills. 171, 173-175).

The use of copper studs and especially the metal appliqué on the faces is a feature inherent among the Songye which is not seen in the sculpture of neighbouring tribes. Kalebwe pieces are distinguished by the preference for metal strips. Their appliqué design, which is arranged along the nose/forehead extension, across the temples and diagonally on the cheeks, bears the closest reference to the kifwebe striations. Eki pieces, for example, are mostly embellished with metal studs which may cover much of the face but even when they are aligned as in the Kalebwe design the association with the masks is not as apparent (ills. 173-175).

On many Songye mankishi the beard too may be covered by metal appliqué although it is often incised in a relief pattern as in Ilande and Luba figures. However, in two of the examples shown, a curious detail in the treatment of the beard should be noted, namely the centred vertical incision which cuts across the unit of the design (ills. 137, 138). Most likely it is meant to depict a two-tuft beard as in figure 145. The handling of the

representation indicates that this style of beard is not widely popular among the Kalebwe.

Two features on the heads of these figures, the large mouths and the bulbous crania, require additional consideration since their forms are also important functionally. According to Kalebwe informants some mankishi were fed through the mouth, or, as in figures 143 and 145, magical substances were inserted therein, hence perhaps the exaggeration in the size of this feature. As for the bulbous heads, they were originally covered by a head-dress of feathers or fur. Stripped of this gear their pronounced roundedness reveals (as discussed by Z. Volavkova with reference to Lower Kongo magical statuary) the leeway and the choice given to the nganga for the placement of the head cavity, the bishimba and the head-dress or covering paraphernalia.⁵ It is to be noted that with my selection of Kalebwe figures the horn receptacle, so often implanted on the heads of Songye figures, has been omitted. There is one example in which the horn hangs loosely, suspended from the neck of the figure (ill. 148). But in most of the pieces the magical substances have been inserted unobtrusively in a small hole on the crown, and sometimes also in the ears, thus confirming the abdomen as the central repository. Still there are examples of other Songye statuary where the head is not only crowned by a horn but it is laden with metal blades, and also a head-dress (ill. 175). Although the overabundance of head gear is more common for the Eki and Ilande - bearing in mind that we are often dealing with sculpture which is not intact - essentially these external attachments, the head cavities and the distribution of the magical ingredients are

the choice of the individual nganga rather than formalized conventions. Even the carver who works to the nganga's specifications cannot predict the final outcome of the figure.

In the representation of the body, Songye figures of various sub-groups incorporate some widely shared characteristics. The ringed neck, adopted most consistently by the Kalebwe, is prevalent in the carvings of the Lulua people, the Hemba and even in West Africa among the Mende. In Kalebwe figures the neck is usually long and the rings vary in number up to about ten. Some are rendered as voluminous rolls whereas others are cut in narrow ridges which in one example converge at an angle on a central axis (ill. 143). None of my informants furnished any clues as to their significance. Among the Lulua the rings are seen as part of an elaborate form of body scarification.⁶ Similarly among the Hemba the likelihood of an anatomical embellishment would be consistent with their attitude to the figural representation.⁷ For the Sande as well, the neck-rings are an important sign of beauty in the masks of the Poro female's society.⁸ However, the case of the Songye, and especially the Kalebwe, is puzzling because scarification and in general the concept of beauty is not a part of their tradition in figure sculpture. In this respect the neck-rings stand out as an alien feature. It could be that they were meant to be imitative of some form of regalia similar to the layered skin necklets attached separately to the figures.

The principal feature affecting the form of the upper body is the articulation of the abdomen. While emphasized in many African

works, this feature assumes a particular importance in magical statuary such as that of the Kongo and the Teke. But unlike the latter two peoples who build up the abdomen and even the torso in function of sealing the magical retainer, in Songye figures only the opening for the bishimba is covered, without altering the sculptural form.⁹ With most of the central Songye pieces the abdominal protrusion is so voluminous that it allows for only a small, underdeveloped chest which appears either as a vertical drop (ills. 139, 140) or simply as a recession from the belly (ills. 141, 142). There are, however, some community figures where the belly is less pronounced, hence the entire torso takes on a cylindrical form (ills. 137, 138). In these carvings especially, the small pointed male breasts, typical of Songye statuary and some Hema ancestral figures, are made conspicuous.¹⁰ The piece in illustration 143 is unusual in that the belly is matched in protuberance by a very different treatment of the upper thorax. Triangular breasts are placed above the level of the armpits and, as in certain Hema male figures; they are delineated almost from the extremities of the shoulders.¹¹

In addition to the development of the abdomen, the position of the arms adds weight and volume to the central part of the body. Clearly this is more pronounced when the shoulders are flat and wide and the arms bulky and tightly drawn against the torso (ills. 136, 138, 139, 142, 143). But even in the few examples where the arms are slender (ills. 137, 141, 144) or held further apart from the trunk (ill. 145) their rigidly angular position emphasizes the squat body form.

Commonly in Kalebwe figures the space between the arms and the torso does not conform to anatomical realism. Where the formation of the upper body is closed, holes have been pierced in the proximity of the armpits cutting through part of the arms, the torso or both (ills. 135, 137-144, 147, 148). According to my informants this feature was introduced specifically for the purpose of attaching carrying poles to the figures. But since traces of wear around some of the perforations are negligible it is doubtful whether all the figures were manipulated by means of the wooden bikumba. We do find though that the holes were also introduced, or perhaps later adapted, for the purpose of suspending and binding some of the paraphernalia to the figures (chest belts - ills. 135, 136, 139, 146; satchels - ills. 138, 147; skins - ills. 143, 144; a small carving - ill. 148). The important point is that in all the mankishi, regardless of their form, the functional consideration of an armpit opening was provided even though the ritual handling and embellishment of the piece may have varied according to the instructions of the nganga and the guardian.

Some of the detailed features in Songye statuary, such as the representation of the hands, fingers, nails, feet and toes, are typical of a great deal of Central African sculpture, amongst others that of the Luba, the Lulua, the Kuba and the Cokwe. Yet within the Songye region as a whole the treatment of the extremities reflects different attitudes to the sculptural form. The Ilande and Eki complete, usually without fail, the representation of both the hands and the feet (ills. 169-175). On the other hand, in Kalebwe community figures, attention to detail in general is restricted to the upper part of

the body. The entire lower body tends to be simplified, perhaps due to the carver's pragmatic calculation that the figure will, more than likely, be draped from the waist down.¹²

Thus, most often Kalebwe community figures are distinguished from those of the adjoining chiefdoms by their abstract combinations of the legs and the plinth. The plinth, also a very common Central African feature, is important in these carvings not merely because of its exaggeration in size but also because it is conceptualized as an integral part of the anatomical form. Where it engulfs the entire lower part of the body the figure seems to emerge from the original block of wood. The legs are only suggested by the minimal lines and indentations asserting the reading of the hips, the buttocks and the upper thighs (ills. 135, 143, 146). But regardless of the degree of abstraction male genitals are always represented.

Yet, even in figures where the legs are rendered they are shortened, voluminous and often devoid of the feet (ills. 147; in figure 140 toes are outlined on the front edge of the pedestal). The bent-knees stance assumes almost a sitting position. Compared to this compressed, massive formation of the lower limbs, in Eki and Ilande pieces the legs are generally longer, slightly rounded, thinner and set apart. Typically, very large feet spread over the top of a separately shaped pedestal (ills. 169-175).

In terms of style the Kalebwe-type community figures embody the most distinct and homogeneous elements in central Songye figure

sculpture. Their sharp angles, projections and slight curves are tightly controlled. Hence stark contour lines are dramatized by shadow effects. The forms are massive and essentially closed and truncated. This austere and powerful treatment is directly opposed to the rounded more open and decorative forms of related peoples such as the Luba and the Hamba. Significantly, the greatest stylistic contrast exists between the Kalebwe and their direct but matrilineal kin the Hamba, even though the carvings of the two peoples share certain morphological traits. But even in comparison to the figures of other Songye chiefdoms such as the Eki, Ilande and Lembwe, Kalebwe works are bolder in their geometrization and in the emphasis on large volumes. The two curvilinear pieces seen in illustrations 147 and 148 are clearly unusual in form, however, they do display that sense of monumentality and rigid structure typical of the Kalebwe.

The unique expressive character of Kalebwe pieces is largely the result of a dichotomy between the handling of the head and the body. The head is the focal point of the sculpture. In comparison to the heavy static volumes of the body it is dynamic in form and expression.

This attitude to the figural representation, giving emphasis to the head, has wider implications. Although especially pronounced in Kalebwe community figures, among the Songye in general it is reflected in the preference for carving busts and half-figures which are more common than in the surrounding areas.¹³ In this respect Songye figure sculpture bears a reference to the masking tradition

which, in the case of the Kalebwe-type figures, is made explicit by the morphological similarity between the facial forms of community mankishi and the bifwebe.

c) Personal Mankishi

In comparison to the limited representation of community mankishi in which a homogeneous Kalebwe production dominates the central Songye region, examples of personal mankishi present a broader range of figure types. Plasmans' documented collection reveals the morphological variations of this genre both west and east of the Lomami River.

Based on the criterion of form the most common personal mankishi fall into two main categories: full-figures (ills. 149-154 and half-figures (ills. 155-164). Although the distribution of the different forms is equally widespread, half-figures seem to be preferred in the eastern chiefdoms to full-figures. In addition to these two groups the janus form is another familiar depiction found throughout the central Songye region but in smaller numbers^{than the other two categories}. I chose not to separate these janus forms in a category of their own since they conform to the visual principles of the two major groups and they also occur in the genre of white-faced figures (ills. 153, 161, 167, 168). Moreover, no decisive information was obtained to distinguish these types of figures functionally, except for the general belief that the dual representation of the heads endows the mankishi with a wider scope of clairvoyance.¹⁴

Being expressions of individual needs, tastes and carving skills, personal mankishi throughout the region are conceived with a licence for diversity. Thus, even though all the forms are strongly influenced by the western tradition, their traits and external signs differ substantially. The factor of size is the most important distinguishing feature of the genre although it covers a wide scale. The illustrated figures range between 4 and 36.8 centimetres. Similarly, all levels of craftsmanship can be seen in the carvings since they were made by specialists as well as laymen. This means that the choice of wood species is as diversified as the expertise of the carvers. Hence the finish and patination of the figures is also affected by the uneven quality of the materials. On the whole though, variations in surface effect are more pronounced in personal figures than community carvings mainly because of their different methods of usage.

Community mankishi are generally handled in a similar prescribed fashion, periodically, and within certain restrictions of access to individuals. Many personal figures, due to their small size, are more readily touched and fondled in the hand despite their different means of manipulation. Whether they are kept in a basket, set on the ground, manipulated with rods or carried on the person, these small objects come into daily use. Thus they are more apt to develop a patina evenly over the entire figure rather than on specific parts of the body only, as in community figures. Also, the placement of the paraphernalia is less of an obstruction in personal mankishi. The attachments are restricted in quantity or entirely absent, in some cases perhaps due to the small size

of the figures but mainly because of their different and varied symbolic connotations. Yet, the intensity of the patina depends also on the age of a piece. In this respect personal mankishi vary a great deal. The ageing effect of a carving which has survived several generations is obviously not comparable with one used for a short and specified duration of time such as that of an illness.

In terms of general Songye characteristics the proportions of full-figures tend to conform to those of community pieces. However, in half-figures there are greater variations in scale. Irrespective of their provenance, the enlargement of the head is consistent with the Kalebwe style (ills. 156, 157) whereas the smaller head size is apparent in pieces which have adopted other alien features (ills. 154, 160, 161). Within the overall dimensions the plinth retains its importance as a formal element of the sculpture. It is exaggerated dimensionally in some of the half-figures (ills. 157, 158), although not normally integrated into the figural form as in the large Kalebwe pieces.

The pose of the figures, while bound by the essential principles of symmetry and frontality, can result in some unusual contortions in janus forms. For example, in figure 153 the two heads are matched by one frontal view of the body which is indicated by the position of the arms. Perhaps the carver has here omitted an explicit representation of the feet so as not to complicate further the human form.

Morphologically the familiar Songye depiction of the bent arms with the hands on the belly shows certain digressions. Sometimes with the half-figures the arms extend the length of the torso and the bend occurs unnaturally at the wrist instead of the elbow (ills. 115, 160, 163). In some of the pieces the hands are abstracted in form contrary to the treatment of the extremities seen in community figures (ills. 115, 156, 157, 158). Also, in examples with the closed formation of the upper body the armpit perforations have not been standardized as in the community statues (ills. 156, 157, 161). Although many of the figures do imitate the large carvings in the attachment of chest belts and one or two metal gouges for manipulation, the feature of the openings seems to have been added only when required for these functions.

As with the torso there are numerous interpretations of the lower body. Apart from the half-figures, in full-figures the legs are usually rendered, with or without feet, in open or closed stance, sometimes in abstract form and in most cases greatly compressed. The contextual usage of a piece certainly determines the form of the lower body more explicitly than in community figures. This is evident in the small piece in illustration 156 which was kept standing upright in a basket. Although being a fine carving, it is incomplete from the waist down, lacking the convention of the plinth adopted even in half-figures. But what is most atypical in this example is that the torso also has been contracted and proportionately distorted by the placement of the hands and the umbilicus on the chest of the figure.¹⁵

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In morphology and also in style the mark of the Kalebwe sculptural tradition is imprinted in many pieces of both categories of personal mankishi (ills. 149-153, 155-161). This is clearly readable in the features of the head. The bulbous cranium, the extension and angularity of the jaw and the prominent often rectangular mouth, are all characteristics of the community figures. But also the bodies, even in the different forms of the half-figures, preserve the angular and stocky Kalebwe expression.

Many of the full-figures are modelled more concisely on the large Kalebwe carvings, sometimes even in the imitation of the chief's dress. However, their visual signs are not necessarily revealing of their provenance since the morphology of the Kalebwe-type figure was diffused over a large part of Songye territory. A carving such as 152, which appears to be in every way a work of the western chiefdoms, comparing closely to the two identified Kalebwe works in illustrations 149 and 151, was in fact collected among the Eastern Songye. Yet, alongside the widespread conformity to the Kalebwe tradition it is not unusual to find considerably divergent figure styles even in the midst of Kalebwe country (e.g. ill. 154).

With the category of half-figures the problem of attribution is just as complex. On the one hand we find similarities between eastern and western carvings when handled in the Kalebwe style (ills. 155-160) and on the other there are very different examples from both sides of the river whose formal explorations are difficult to account for as they do not show any distinct or consistent

relationships to other carving styles (ills. 162-164).

In some cases certain details of both figure types are recognizably borrowings from surrounding Songye chiefdoms or adjacent tribes. For instance, the chevron-shaped closed mouth with curved lip formations in figures 149 and 150 are more common in the carvings of the Ilande and Eki chiefdoms. The relief treatment of hairdressing in figures 150, 159 and 160 could also have been inspired by the Ilande, although in the case of the latter two eastern pieces the neighbouring Hemba or Luba influence is also plausible. The fact that we are left in doubt as to the exact source of influence, even in these pieces where the alien elements can be isolated, is symptomatic of the licence for diversity which allows carvers to draw freely and at random from an unrestricted range of characteristics.

Compared to the formal, conventionalized community statues, the production of this popular genre was subject to personal expressions and the varied skills and experiences of the carvers. This explains the general admixture of form and style and the resistance to regional distinctness. But inasmuch as there is scope for individuality in these figures, many of them reflect the social and visual impact of the Kalebwe sculptural tradition and, in particular, their community art. These two tendencies of diversification and yet conformity, although not equally pronounced, do co-exist throughout the central Songye region defining the genre of personal mankishi.

d) White-Faced or Kifwebe-type Figures

The white-faced figures are the only original Eastern Songye carvings. They stand out in a category of their own because they seem to be more recent in origin, departing radically from the deep-rooted central Songye tradition. Their uniqueness and importance to this classification is their use of polychromy and their obvious mask-like faces.

The figures comprise both community and personal mankishi; however, these are not consistently distinguished according to the accepted criterion of size. In the illustrated examples figures 167 and 168 are both described by Plasmans, the collector, as community pieces. Apart from the fact that neither of these carvings adheres clearly to the visual signs of that type of statuary, only one of them corresponds in size to the community genre (ill. 168), whereas the other (ill. 167) is small and comparable to personal figures the same as those in illustrations 165 and 166.

The figural representation of this group of sculptures seems to be the most varied. The chosen examples consist of: the half-figure or bust with single head (ills. 165, 166), the half-figure or bust in janus form (ill. 167) and the full-figure in janus form (ill. 168). But regardless of the form in all the pieces the head is of ultimate importance. It is carved with greater care than the body and, unlike any other Songye statuary, painted in white, red and black. The body is negated by being concealed with raffia, cloth or fur.

Clearly the combination of the body covering and the morphology and painting of the face resembles the kifwebe masqueraders, in particular the female types. The pieces with the grooved striations covering the white surface are particularly revealing although the lesser known non-grooved mask is also represented. In this respect the large janus figure in illustration 168 is curious in that one of its faces is painted and grooved whereas the other is monochrome and entirely devoid of facial markings.

Symbolically it is significant that only the white female mask should be depicted, since the benevolent function of female masks corresponds to the protective social role of mankishi. According to Plasmans' catalogue notes, figure 167 was used for protection against sorcery. As such the kifwebe heads which signal the power of female masks indicate that the nkishi is capable of detecting and extirpating malign magical forces wherever they may come from. The active power stems from the figure's magical substances which in this case may be mwasambale, the specific anti-sorcery bwanga inserted on top of the head. Unfortunately documentation on the function of the other pieces is lacking, hence it is difficult to determine whether or not these mankishi consistently served the same purpose and in the same social context. It is conceivable that because of their visual signs they were used by the bwadi bwa kifwebe society. Yet it would also make sense that they served the non-initiated villagers as protection against the punitive actions of the male masqueraders.

In morphology, symbolism and perhaps function these white-

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faced mankishi embody a link between figure sculpture and masks.

In so doing they are also an important visual statement of developments in Songye sculpture. Their kifwebe faces pay homage to the influence of the Kalebwe master carvers and yet the actual innovation of the masked figure and its use in the past few decades gives credit to the Eastern Songye who preserved the bwadi tradition until today.

Footnotes

- 1 Torday, "Land and Peoples of the Kasai Basin", p. 31.
- 2 The head-dresses were removed by the collector, Dr. Lucien Van Hoorde, and also a damaged section at the back of the head on figure 145 was cut off.
- 3 F. Willett, African Art (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1971), pp. 144, 213, 215, 220.
- 4 In "Une Acquisition du Musée du Congo Belge", L'Eventail, 63, No. 5 (10 nov. 1950), 11, A. Maesen speculates that the rotation of the head is symbolic of the figure's power to ward off aggression coming from diverse directions.
- 5 "Nkisi Figures ...", pp. 57-59.
- 6 F.M. Olbrechts, Les Arts Plastiques du Congo Belge (Bruxelles: Erasme, 1959), p. 62.
- 7 F. Neyt, La Grande Statuaire Hemba du Zaire (Luvain-La-Neuve: Institut Supérieur d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art, 1977), pp. 383, 384.
- 8 R.B. Phillips, "The Sande Society Masks of the Mende of Sierra Leone", Diss. U. of London, S.O.A.S., 1979, p. 141.
- 9 Volavkova, "Nkisi Figures ...", pp. 57, 59; Hottot, "Teke Fetishes", p. 30.
- 10 Neyt, La Grande Statuaire Hemba ..., pp. 386, 387.
- 11 Ibid., pp. 386, 387.
- 12 Volavkova in her article on "Nkisi Figures of the Lower Congo", p. 56, notes the same attitude. The difference is that in Kalebwe figures the contrast in quality of carving is rather found between the head and the entire body which tends to be covered by paraphernalia.
- 13 Olbrechts, Les Arts Plastiques ..., p. 76.
- 14 In "L'Acquisition de la Semaine au Musée du Congo", L'Eventail, 65, No. 18 (6 mars 1953), 4, A. Maesen suggests that the dual representation of the heads symbolizes the figures protection from attack of living spirits on the one side and those of the dead on the other. This general interpretation seems possible although it has not been confirmed by my informants.
- 15 It is to be noted that a bishimba cavity has been placed above the 'supposed' navel, high up on the chest of the figure. As there is one fairly large receptacle on top of the head, the abdominal one may have been added at a later stage of usage to strengthen the magical power of the nkishi.

SUMMARY

This thesis has defined the function and meaning of masks and magical statuary among the Songye by examining the social, symbolic and visual aspects of the two sculptural forms in the central chiefdoms of the Kalebwe, Cofwe and the Eastern Songye.

It has been found that the striated masks, or bifwebe, are used as agents of traditional figures of authority to exercise social and political control through practices of evil magic, that is, the "actual" operations of sorcery and the "supposed" powers of witchcraft. The masqueraders inflict punitive ills upon the populace and absolve them through payment, thus increasing the resources of chiefs and elders who are the anonymous and ruling members of the bwadi bwa kifwebe society. At the same time rivals of the political elite can be subjugated by involuntary initiation into the kifwebe society of sorcerers.

The masking society of the Songye probably emerged as a result of increased tension over succession. With the adoption of a bilateral system of descent chiefdoms were plagued with rivalry between numerous potential successors and their supporters. Hence, separate masquerading societies diffused throughout Songye country with the rise of different political factions. Membership was acquired through payment in human deaths and bound by initiation into the male society of sorcerers (basha masende). But, the hierarchic rank of members was not only based on the degree of expertise in sorcery but also on the additional inherited powers of witchcraft.

Among the societies' public performers, such as musicians and singers, three mask types existed in each bwadi ensemble: two grades of male masks classified as the youth and elder, and one female mask. The male masks, unlimited in number, exercised witchcraft and/or sorcery overtly, whereas the female mask of each society demonstrated passively the ambivalent powers of witchcraft. As such the male masks undertook the policing activities which formerly included supervising the maintenance of roads and fields and they participated in warfare. In some areas of Songye country they were also called to guard circumcision proceedings and bukishi initiations. Female masks performed essentially in dance animating benign spirits and detecting malevolent mystical powers. If asked to participate in rituals the benign aspect of their role was linked symbolically to lunar rites and the death and investiture of chiefs.

Although all traditional Songye masks are painted in red, white and black the main difference between male and female masks is seen in their design. Male masks are distinguished by a striated pattern of the three colours, whereas female masks are predominantly white with the features accented in black and some red. In morphology the most important signalling feature between the two mask types is the form of the crest. In male masks the crest is protuberant; the height of the elder's crest exceeding that of the youth. In female masks this feature is always flat.

However, symbolically there is one generalized concept of the kifwebe creature despite its emphasis on aspects of the male mask. This concept is an eclectic one in which all parts of the mask and

costume are defined in esoteric terms relating to ambivalent aspects of cosmology, nature and culture. It is also significant, symbolically, that most masks, both male and female, are made from the soft mulela wood which has a white growth ring section and a red sap filled core, these being the two main signalling colours of the bifwebe. Moreover, it is one of the species contextually associated with chieftainship and its ambivalent mystical powers.

In style, multiple variations of male masks evolved, whereas the female masks, the first to be carved in each society, seem to have retained the characteristics of a prototypical model. From the male masks studied two tendencies developed in the central Songye region: the western mask style of the Kalebwe/Cofwe and that of the Eastern Songye. Kalebwe/Cofwe masks, which are only being produced today for western trade, were distinguished by narrow, closely-set grooved striations. The masks of the surviving eastern tradition tended toward more geometric forms and broad, flat colour stripes.

The kifwebe tradition which exists also among the Luba, seems to have originated south of the eastern chiefdoms in an area of Songye/Luba admixture. According to the Songye this provenance is confirmed by the interpretation that the kifwebe striations relate (apart from the zebra) to a pugnacious species of striped bushbuck antelope which inhabited that area. In studying the organization of bwadi societies and the nomenclature of its members some Luba influence can be detected in the Songye tradition. However, in terms of stylistic innovation the kifwebe form of both peoples

relates more closely to the figure sculpture of the Songye than the Luba. The Kalebwe chiefdom, in particular, must have played a dominant role in these plastic developments, since the prototypical female forms and the earlier eastern masks bear a resemblance to Kalebwe masks and figures.

In opposition to the feared actions of the bifwebe the magical function of figure sculpture, or mankishi, is socially regarded as benign. Magical figures are carved either for a community or an individual to cure illness, bring wealth in offspring or good fortune in hunting. Yet, as such their magical power must be ambivalent - both offensive and defensive - in order to counteract the evil spirit forces which are at the root of the problem and so to ensure prosperity. This concept is made explicit by some figures which are made specifically as anti-sorcery protection. It therefore follows that mystical practitioners who deal with the "good" magic of mankishi do also possess some experience of "malevolent" practices.

A wood carving on its own is powerless like a mask without a sorcerer behind it. To the Songye the figure is merely a piece of wood until its abdomen and/or head have been filled with bishimba, the animal, plant or mineral substances which evoke the desired magical effect. Of these ingredients there are the aggressive components, for example, parts of ferocious animals whose behavioural characteristics are similar to the species defining the kifwebe creature. However, there are also the identifying elements of the user; bits of hair and nails of the individual or village to whom

the benign magical effect is to be directed. Thus, it is the formula of the bishimba rather than the characteristics of the carving which defines the function of a nkishi.

In the making of mankishi, a wide selection of wood species is used, most of which are considered for their hardness and durability and, symbolically, for their medicinal or poisonous properties. Among the Songye the carver's skill, although appreciated aesthetically, is considered a profane activity. It is the nganga, the specialist dealing with the bishimba and the external paraphernalia of a figure, who is credited with the work. In the past highly esteemed banganga were commissioned to "make" village figures throughout the central Lomami area. The names of these pieces now mark a historical time process for the Songye.

The two main categories of magical figures, community and personal, differ in size and usually in the content of their covering paraphernalia. Relatively speaking, community figures tend to be large, reaching one metre in height, while personal figures are made portable for an individual. In magical operations it is believed that the ingredients of community figures invoke the supreme ancestral spirits and so the figures are often represented in chieftain's dress with the regalia and magical objects of important dignitaries, hunters and warriors. Personal figures interact with the familiar spirits who are associated with the same transitory, earth-bound realm as the evil wandering spirits of sorcerers. Apart from the assumption that with most personal mankishi the invoked spirits are the benevolent ones, they are not characterized

and so there is no specification as to the paraphernalia of personal figures. Also in usage community figures are handled in a similar prescribed fashion whereas the manipulation of personal figures varies greatly. Only on the occasion of lunar rites, when both ancestral and familiar spirits are venerated, both genres of mankishi appear together with the female kifwebe.

In morphology and style community figures throughout the central Songye region bear the mark of a fairly homogeneous Kalebwe production. Full-figures are represented, some of which tend toward abstraction of the lower body. Their geometric volumes and especially the characteristics of the head - the squared-off protruding chin, the triangular nose-forehead extension and the designs of the metal appliqué - indicate a relationship to the bifwebe. By comparison, in personal figures throughout the central region there is an admixture of form and style and great variation in quality of craftsmanship. Several formal categories exist: full-figures, half-figures and janus variations of the two. Departing from the traditional forms of personal and community carvings, among the Eastern Songye a recent genre of white-faced figures evolved which conceptualizes some of the relationships between Songye masks and figures.

pages 277 and 278 were deleted

Appendix

Songs of the Bwadi bwa Kifwebe

The following is only a selection of a few bwadi songs collected by Plasmans. Unfortunately the notes do not include the original Songye text.

Village: Mulo, Kalebwe (cat. no. 66/581)

- 1) Oh! Ngolo qui est en deuil (bis)
Le feu sorti du bosquet a brûlé un antilope et
un lion à Mambu et à Mulenda
- 2) Soyez en paix, oh Kalembwe: Vous,
sculpteur d'un trou
- 3) Oh Kalenga que j'avais envoyé
cueillir (moissoner) les haricots;
le voilà inerte dans le champ.
- 4) Guêpes! venez donc me piquer
aujourd'hui (ter.)

Village: Munga, Eastern Songye (cat. no. 67/16)

- 1) Payez votre dette; messenger; ne
perdez pas votre temps à regarder
et a fermer la porte
- 2) Oh! pilipili!
- 3) Messenger, fermez la porte et ne
regardez pas
- 4) Mettez-vous à l'affût, nous ne
sommes pas nombreux.
- 5) Oh! Léopard de l'Occident
- 6) Chez les aveugles, on voit beaucoup trop.

Village: Ka/c/ioma, Eastern Songye (cat. no. 67/22)

- 1) Arbres rouges comme du piment
- 2) Forêts ou habitent les léopards
- 3) Animal noir qui ne fait que contempler le corps des autres
- 4) Petite chèvre qui se frotte contre les moutons

Village: Kabamba, Eastern Songye (cat. no. 67/21)

- 1) Allons, je vais vous amener
- 2) Nshima (bête noir) qui ne fait que regarder
- 3) Chauve-souris, venant de Gongo (village)
- 4) Guêpes, venez piquer maintenant

GLOSSARY

Classes of Nouns

As in other Bantu languages the class pairs are not fixed but can fluctuate, e.g. kyanda (7/8) has an alternative form eyanda (5/6); mukishi (3/4) can also pluralize as bamikishi. Moreover, words with plural prefixes can sometimes have singular meanings and vice versa, e.g. mankimba (6) - chief, mele (6) - bell; byashi (8) - cassava dish.

Some common singular/plural pairings are: 1/2, 1a/2, 3/4, 5/6, 7/8, 9/6, 9/10, 11/10, 12/13, 14/6.

Class Prefixes

	Singular		Plural
1	mu-	2	ba-
1a	zero prefix		
3	mu-	4	mi-
5	e-	6	ma-
7	ki-/ci-	8	bi-
9	m-/n-	10	m-/n-
11	lu-		
12	ka-	13	tu-
14	bu-		
15	ku- (verbal noun prefix)		

bana bua	ruling members of supreme chief's family, Kalebwe
bankonkole (1a/2a)	twins
bikumba (7/8 also 3/4)	carrying poles of a community magical figure
bilamba (7/8)	clothes; kilamba - chief's raffia skirt
bishimba (8)	animal, plant or mineral substances comprising magical formula of a figure or other magical object

buci (14)	witchcraft
bukishi (14)	Eki institution concerned with the transmission of socio-religious teachings.
bwadi bwa kifwebe	name of masquerading society; bwadi - society
bwanga (14/6)	any form of medicine, magical or profane, which is socially regarded as benign and protective
bwisha (14)	black mud from a riverbed used as a dye
byashi (8)	cassava and maize meal dish
cibelo (7a/8)	member of <u>kifwebe</u> society who collects payment from initiates, levies fines on non-initiates who enter the camp of the <u>bwadi</u> and on members who break the laws of the society
cikala (7a)	title of minister, supreme chief's delegate responsible for the allocation of resources
cikoyo (7a)	species of tree used in making magical figures especially among the Eastern Songye
cite (7a)	title of minister; supreme chief's most important advisor
dalamumba	title of supreme chief's sister, Kalebwe
dipumba	title of minister; investigates any problems presented to ruling members
ebwe (5/6)	rock
Efile Mukulu	name of supreme being
ekonde (5/6)	banana tree
elanga (5/6)	chief's walking cane, emblem of office
epata, ehata (5/6)	place of residence of supreme chief
eyaso (5/6)	forge
fita	black, substance made of burned ashes of herbs
funci (1a)	general term for "one who works in wood"; carver of figure sculpture, sometimes also masks
fwa kasulo (12/13)	village sub-chiefs, Kalebwe

ikala	to be, to dwell
kabea ka musongo	mythical name for earth (Wauters)
kabemba (12/13)	small species of vicious hawk
kabunji (12/13)	hydrax or dassie, common name "rock rabbit", <u>Procaviidae</u>
Kafilefile	perjorative name of supreme being; evil son of supreme being
kafukufuku (12/13)	bat; mythological ancestor of animals and man, the first agent of death
kafulamakoba (12)	species of tree; one of a series of species associated with ancestral spirits
kafungufungu (12)	species of tree; <u>Swartzia fistuloides</u> ; used in making of magical figures among Kalebwe and Cofwe; has poisonous properties but also used medicinally in the treatment of haemorrhoids
kahulu (12/13)	magical object carried by <u>kifwebe</u> masquerader to enhance the quality of his performance and to prevent accidental falls. Consists of fruit of <u>kisangu</u> tree filled with magical substances
kahumba (12/13)	general term for Eastern Songye minister
kaka	title of Kalebwe chieftainess; guardian of ancestral inheritance
kako (12) or nko (9)	species of tree, <u>Rubiacea</u> ; preferred among Eastern Songye for the making of magical figures
kakuta (12/13)	kifwebe member who dresses the masqueraders
kalengula (12/13)	raffia constructed mask; used for amusement by children, youths and women
kaleshi (12)	manioc leaves cooked in palm oil
kamatofu, kabutofo (12)	species of tree, <u>Onyokea klaineana</u> ; one of the four most important woods used for the making of masks among the Kalebwe
kampemba (12)	species of tree; also magical object used by <u>kifwebe</u> masqueraders to enhance the quality of their performance and to prevent accidental falls; consists of resin of this tree worked into a ball

kanyangala (12)	species of tree; used in the making of magical figures among the Eastern Songye
kapete ka bipikwa	special knife used to prepare hallucinogenic concoction taken by sorcerers of the <u>kifwebe</u> society
kapia (12)	fire
kashila (12)	type of squirrel, <u>Galagoides demidoffi medius</u> ; also chief of protocol of the <u>kifwebe</u> society
kashimangesu (12)	species of tree; one of a series associated with the ancestral spirits
kasupa kamungu (12/13)	small calabash
katambula (12)	non-masked official of the <u>kifwebe</u> society who collects payment from the villagers for infractions against the masqueraders and for healing services
katembo (12)	species of tree; used for magical figures among the Eastern Songye
katonko, katonkwe (12) or kisambila (7)	singer of <u>kifwebe</u> society, first voice
katundu (12/13)	cylindrical large wooden peg suspended from the waist of a magical figure
kavi (12)	species of tree, <u>Morinda lucida</u> ; wood used for magical figures among Kalebwe and Cofwe; roots used in a medicinal concoction for children suffering from abdominal distension
kema	title of Kalebwe official responsible for the extraction of palm wine
kicipicipi (7) or cintombentombe (7a)	species of tree, <u>Erythrina abyssinica</u> ; one of a series of trees associated with ancestral spirits. Its wood is one of the four most important for the making of masks throughout the central Songye territory; also used for magical statuary among the Kalebwe and Cofwe. Its bark is used in a medicinal concoction for the prevention of coughs and against gynaecological disorders.
kidimbudimbu (7)	species of tree, used for magical statuary among the Kalebwe and Cofwe
kifumbe (7)	species of tree, <u>Pliostigma thonningii</u> ; one of a series associated with ancestral spirits

kifwebe (7/8)	wooden mask, masquerader and name of society
kifwebe mukashi	female mask
kifwebe mulume	male mask
kifwenkese (7)	species of tree, <u>Commiphora</u> ; its wood is used for magical statuary throughout the central Songye territory and it has recently been adopted for the making of some masks. The bark is employed in a medicinal treatment for those who are underweight
kihanga or kilongo (7/8)	carver of masks, initiated member of kifwebe society
kikudi (7/8)	human elements of energy characterizing the physical and mystical world
kilase (7/8)	helix-shaped white shell
kimankinda (7/8)	warrior hero
kimantanda (7)	species of tree, one of a series planted around the residence of the supreme chief
kingala (7/8)	strip of copper appliqué on the faces of magical figures
kinkanka (7)	dish made of boiled and mashed plantain bananas
kinui (7/8)	mortar
kipama (7/8)	species of yam
kipanga (7/8; also kanyingisha, 12/13)	judge and possibly also carver of masks
kipasula (7/8)	title of Kalebwe minister; messenger
kipo (7/8)	bracelet or necklace of blue beads
kipungulu or kipongolu (7/8)	multi-coloured owl
kipudi (7/8)	whistle, used by guide of masqueraders to announce their arrival
kisanya (7/8)	member of <u>kifwebe</u> society who cares for the shoes or soles of the masqueraders
kishishi (7/8)	metal stud; many used on faces of magical figures

kiswenene (7/8)	old, female witch
kituto (7/8)	chief's headdress
kitumba (7/8)	place where new Kalebwe supreme chief is secluded prior to his investiture passage to <u>epata</u>
kitunga mfumu (7/8)	Kalebwe sub-chief who rules over several villages
kiyoyelo (7/8)	front room of secret house of <u>kifwebe</u> members; used as meeting and resting place
kumwasha masende	(kumwasha - to show) term for compulsory initiation into the <u>masende</u> society of sorcerers (lit. to show sorcery)
kushi	low
kwata kwa masende	(ata - seize, hold, surprise) term for voluntary initiation into the <u>masende</u> society of sorcerers
kunundu	high
kushika	corpse
kutomboka musanga	dance performed by Kalebwe supreme chief at his investiture
kwisamuna (15)	self-eulogy
kyanda (7/8; also eyanda, 5/6)	secret clearing in the bush where the <u>kifwebe</u> society meets
kyobo (7/8)	secret house in the bush of the <u>kifwebe</u> society where the masks and magical paraphernalia are stored and where members meet
kyondo (7/8)	slit gong
lamine	title of minister, guardian of supreme chief's property
lombe	species of lizard, <u>Varanidae</u> / <u>Varaanus niloticus</u> (?)
lubembu (11/10)	double metal gong
lubondo (11/10)	unmasked sorcerer and/or witch who dances with the <u>bifwebe</u> ; also substitute mask-wearer

lubulankadi (11)	bird whose call is associated with danger and misfortune
luele (11/10)	bell, carried by guide of masqueraders
luhete (11/10)	knife
lukenene (11)	star
lukomba (11/10)	woman past menopause who cleans up and gathers wood at the camp of the <u>kifwebe</u> society
lukunga (11/10)	title of Kalebwe minister, messenger
lumaceca (11)	mask made from gourd; used for amusement by children, youths and women
lumuna (11)	also kidimba (7/8) or kashiba (12/13) <u>kifwebe</u> society's guardian of masks
lundo (11/6)	species of palm
lupapi (11)	wind
lupelampungi (11)	species of tree, <u>Maesopsis eminii</u> ; wood used for the making of masks
lupuna sulu (11/10)	chief's stool
lusengwa (11/10)	horn
lushingie (11)	craftsman who weaves raffia costumes of <u>bifwebe</u>
lutaha mema (11/10)	woman past menopause who fetches water for <u>kifwebe</u> members at their camp
luteka (11/10)	also kiteshi (7/8) or nyina bwadi woman past menopause who cooks for <u>kifwebe</u> members at their camp
madiba (6)	raffia woven cloth
mankimba (6)	chief and representative of <u>kifwebe</u> masqueraders
masende (6)	sorcery
mbala (9/10)	type of wild cat
mbashi (9/10)	common reedbuck, <u>Redunca arundinum</u>
mbele (9/10,9/6)	cowry shell

mbo (9/10)	African buffalo, <u>Syncerus caffer</u>
mbudi (9/10)	antelope, <u>Tragelaphus spekei</u>
mele (6)	metal bell, several suspended from waist of some magical figures
mema (6)	water
mfumu (1a/2a)	general term for chief; also sub-chiefs (lineage heirs) among Eastern Songye
moko (3/4)	umbilical cord; also the name of a tree, <u>Sterculia quinqueloba</u> . Planted around the supreme chief's residence; symbolizes ancestral life-giving and continuity. Its wood is used among the Eastern Songye for magical figures and its roots or bark are prepared into fibres for the <u>kifwebe</u> costume
monga	dark red of pigment made from the grains of the <u>kabenga nkoto</u> tree
mongo	species of tree, one of a series associated with ancestral spirits
mpafu (9)	species of tree, <u>Canarium schweinfentii</u> or <u>Commiphora</u> sp.; planted at sacred burial ground of Kalebwe chiefs
mpeko (9/10)	raffia cloth used as dress
mpibwe (1a/2a)	hunter
mpingu (9/10)	small sticks, 4-5 cm. long, filled with magical substances; carried by <u>bifwebe</u> to enhance the quality of their performance and to prevent accidental falls
muadi (1/2)	general term for any initiated member of the <u>bwadi bwa kifwebe</u> society
mubikale (1/2, 1/14)	general term for minister of supreme chief
mufula (3/4) or nsanga (9)	species of tree, one of a series planted around the residence of the supreme chief. Among the Kalebwe and Cofwe its wood is used for magical statuary; the species is also exploited medicinally for the treatment of coughs and gynaecological disorders
mufulangoma (3/4)	species of tree, used for the making of masks
mufuta (3/4)	species of tree, <u>Vitex</u> ; one of a series associated with ancestral spirits

muiyata	exercise of authority from <u>epata</u> , the supreme chief's residence
mukala (3/4)	fur attachments and all neck and torso rings made of reptile skins which are fastened to a magical figure
mukanda (3/4)	book
mukapasu (3/4)	lunar rite, first quarter of a lunar cycle
mukishi (3/4, 1/2 + 4)	spirit
mukishi a balemine	spirit condemned to eternal wandering
mukufu (3/4)	species of tree, used in the making of magical figures among the Eastern Songye
mukulu (1/2)	elder; also leaders of <u>kifwebe</u> society are referred to as <u>bakulu</u> by other initiated members
Mukungu	mythical first ancestor
mukuta (3/4)	species of tree, used for magical figures among the Eastern Songye
mulela (3/4)	species of tree, <u>Ricinodendron rautanenii</u> , one of a series planted around the residence of the supreme chief. The wood of this tree is most commonly selected for the making of masks
mulopwe (3/4 or 1/2 + 4)	Luba divine chief, king
mumanya (3/4)	species of tree, <u>Canthium</u> , used for magical figures among the Kalebwe and Cofwe. Species possesses toxic properties but its roots are used medicinally as a poultice for wounds
mumba (3) also momba	sparrow hawk
mumbe (1/2)	boy or young male, 6-15 years old, member of <u>kifwebe</u> society
mumbu (3/4)	species of tree, <u>Lannea welwitshii</u> , planted in the centre of the supreme chief's place of residence and associated with ancestral strength of rule. Wood is used for masks and magical figures. The white sap underlying the bark of the tree is used medicinally for severe headaches and for inducing conception

muncembwa (3/4)	type of rat
mungangese (3/4)	species of tree, one of a series associated with ancestral spirits
mungwa wa busungu	magical concoction probably hallucinogenic, consumed by <u>masende</u> sorcerers
muntu (1/2)	man
musanga (3/4)	slit gong
musanguci (3/4)	species of tree, used in the making of masks
musangusangu (3/4)	species of tree, preferred for the making of masks among the Eastern Songye
musenge (1)	guide of <u>kifwebe</u> masqueraders, messenger, exponent
mushinte, mushindwe (1/2)	non-initiated
musokoma (3/4)	species of tree, one of the four preferred woods for masks used especially among Cofwe and Eastern Songye
musumba (3/4)	camp of hunters or warriors
mutaci (3/4)	species of tree, used for magical figures among Eastern Songye
mutengwa (3/4)	spatula, ritually important utensil to mother of twins
mutondo (3/4)	species of tree, used for magical figures among the Eastern Songye
mutonkolo (3/4)	chisel
mutuwa (3/4)	species of yam
mwasambale (3)	anti-sorcery magical substances
mwanyi (3)	any herbal preparation made to be taken orally (medicinal, magical)
mwenji (3/4)	moon
mweshieshi (3/4)	shadow
myanda ibidi	eight twos = 16; also secret code for the number of deaths required for initiation into the <u>masende</u> society of sorcerers

myandaku	Kalebwe term for first wife; muadi (sing. & pl.) among Eastern Songye
nantunga (1/2)	member of <u>kifwebe</u> society who announces the judge's decision to the accused
ndjiya (9)	species of yam
ndoshi (1/2)	evil spirit of living person, witch
nduba (9)	turaco, <u>Musophaga rossae</u>
nganga (1a/2)	benevolent magical practitioner; sorcerer in the context of the <u>kifwebe</u> society (only initiated members know and use this term)
nganga nkishi) nganga bishimba)	qualifying appellations for specialist who endows figures with magical substances
ngolo (9/10)	zebra
ngomba	drummer of <u>kifwebe</u> society
nguba (9)	sun
ngulu (9)	mountain
ngulungu (9/2)	antelope bushbuck, <u>Tragelaphus scriptus</u> ; term for mask wearer of <u>kifwebe</u> society
ngye, nge (9/10)	leopard, <u>Panthera pardus</u> or <u>Felis pardus</u>
nkima (9/10)	monkey
nkishi (9/6)	figure sculpture containing magical substances
nkolo, nkololo (9)	curved gouge
nkonga (9/6)	Eastern Songye term for drummer of <u>kifwebe</u> society
nkongolo (9)	rainbow
nkula	red, pigment made of sandstone from river bed
nkunde (9)	bean
nkunja (9)	male or female guardian of community magical figure
nsaka (9)	albino
nsanci (9)	species of dangerous snake

nsendwe (1/2)	smith
nsendwe nkishi	qualifying term for specialist who endows a figure with magical substances (same as <u>nganga</u>)
nseso, nsesu (9)	adze
nshima (9)	civet
nshimba (9)	genet
nsuna (9)	costume of <u>kifwebe</u>
ntambwe (9/10)	lion
ntengo, ntengu (9)	antelope, lassaby, <u>Domaliseus lunatus</u>
ntoshi	white, kaolin from river bed
nungu (9)	porcupine, <u>Hysterix galeato</u>
nyimu (9)	peanut
nyindo (9)	piece of iron
nyoka (9/10)	snake
nyoka a soswa) nyoka a subu)	poisonous snakes
pamba	mother of twins
sea (1a.?)	general term for "one who works in wood"; generally carver of magical figures, may also make masks
seshi (1a ?)	general term for "one who works in wood"; generally carver of magical figures, may also make masks
sha masende	sorcerer
shibo ya bwanga	hut where community magical figure is kept
shibo ya kifwebe	back room of secret house where masks and magical paraphernalia of the <u>kifwebe</u> society are kept
subile	<u>kifwebe</u> member commonly responsible for the repair of costumes and the repainting of masks
toka	white; pigment made from a forest clay

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tufi twa mpeshi	excreta of lightning; described as hard, wax-like substance found among the roots of a tree struck by lightning
tukila (12/13)	non-masked performers, the chorus
tupulu (12/12)	small series of wooden pegs suspended from the waist of a magical figure
Yakitenge	title of Kalebwe supreme chief

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LIST OF CAPTIONS TO VOLUME II

Except for photographs of their own collections provided by the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, by Karel Plasmans, and the one print received from the Harvey & Anuschka Menist Gallery, Netherlands, all other field and studio shots were taken by the author during 1977/78.

With the collections of the Museum of Mankind, London, the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, the Institut des Musées Nationaux, Kinshasa and Lubumbashi, and the Plasmans Collection, the first two digits of the accession number indicate the date of acquisition, unless specified otherwise.

- 1 Kalebwe chief Kitumbika Ngoy at his present residence in Lubao.
- 2 Supreme chief of the Bena Sangwa, Eastern Songye, presiding over ehata. He is dressed in his regalia and seated on two mats symbolic of his status.
- 3 Gathering of all Sangwa sub-chiefs at ehata near the village of Sangwa, Eastern Songye.
- 4 Eastern Songye head-dress made from the feathers of a hawk.
- 5 Supreme chief of Cofwe chiefdom, Yanjibu Ngoy Mumba (right) with one of his ministers.
- 6 Chief's blue beaded necklace and cap made of raffia fibres and studded with white shells; village Zewe near Kabinda.
- 7 Chief Kyomba Kahenga in his regalia; village Mukala, Eshadika chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 8 Chief Pyanyi Mamba in his regalia; village Kakasu I, Ebombo chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 9 Chief Ngoy Ntambwe Mulanga in his regalia; village Lubudi, Embyadi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 10 Stool of chief Ngoy Ntambwe Mulanga. Made for his investiture in 1954 by a Kalebwe carver. Village Lubudi, Embyadi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 11a Chief Kitumbika's stool with leopard skin and blue beaded necklace; Lubao, Kalebwe chiefdom.
- 11b Kitumbika's stool; typical Songye example. Lubao.
- 12 Chief's stool at ehata near the village of Mukala, Eshadika chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Note the representation of masks on the legs.

- 13 Chief's first minister, cite, with his staff of office; at ehata. Sangwa chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 14a front view) Staff of cite; Sangwa chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 14b side view)
- 15 Cite Kinkumba Kilolo with his staff of office; village Katondo, Kafuma chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 16 Staff of a cite; village Lubao, Kalebwe chiefdom.
- 17a full figure) Children's mask kalengula; Kamana, Kalebwe
- 17b mask) chiefdom.
- 18 Bwadi ensemble at the village of Kikomo, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye; elder's mask (right), two youths' masks, drummer, singers.
- 19 Bwadi ensemble at village Luama, Munga chiefdom, Eastern Songye; elder's mask Lobo (right), youth's mask Nkwali, drummers and singers.
- 20 Bwadi ensemble at village Ngoma, Munga chiefdom, Eastern Songye; elder's mask Bukuku (left), female mask Kalyanga, two drummers, and adult and youth singers.
- 21 Musenge with three mask types; village Ilunga Ngulu, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 22 Musenge with drummers, female (left) and elder's mask; village Ngoma, Munga chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 23 Musenge with elder's mask Kasosha; village Kita I, chiefdom Muo, Eastern Songye.
- 24 First singer with youth's mask Lushiye; village Kikomo, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 25 Singer with two youths' masks; village Luama, Munga chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 26 Two drummers (makonga) playing slit gongs; village Luama, Munga chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 27 Two drummers with youth's mask; village Kikomo, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 28 Bwadi ensemble in front of kyobo, the hut in their forest hideout; near village Kikomo, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 29 Kyobo, near village Kikomo, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 30 Palm leaf shelters used for storage by the masking society; village Kilaye, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.

- 31 Ruins of a kyobo with an old inverted mortar; village Basala Bale, Kafuma chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 32 Masks running through the village, Bukuku the elder (left) and Kabushi the youth; village Ngoma, Munga chiefdom. Eastern Songye.
- 33 Youth's mask, Kayuyu, running through the village; Kikomo, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 34 Two youths' masks with sticks threatening punishment; village Kikomo, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 35 Youth's mask, Nkwali, with sticks threatening punishment; elder's mask, Lobo, dancing in the background; village Luama, Munga chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 36a Elder's mask, Kasosha, with sticks gesturing threats of punishment; village Kita I, Muo chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 36b Same as above.
- 37 Female mask, Kalyanga; village Ngoma, Munga chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 38 Female mask, Kalyanga, dancing; village Ngoma, Munga chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 39 Elder's mask, Ndale; village Kikomo, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 40 Female mask, Kikangala; village Ilunga Ngulu, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 41 Youth's mask, Nkwali; village Luama, Munga chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 42 Elder's mask, Ndale; village Kikomo, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 43 Two masks from the village Mulobelo, Bwabwe chiefdom. K. Plasmans' field photo, cat. no. 66/573, 197.
- 44 Masks from Mulenda, Ebombo chiefdom. Plasmans' field photo 1966.
- 45 Symbolic application of white paint on the faces of twins; village Ilunga Ngulu, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 46 Symbolic usage of white body paint by a magical practitioner; village Ebombo, Cofwe chiefdom.
- 47 Corpse of a small girl symbolically wrapped in a white cloth; village Lubao, Kalebwe chiefdom.

- 48a front) Youth's mask: Lushiye. Village Kikomo, Kiloshi
48b side) chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 49a front) Elder's mask: Ndale. Village Kikomo, Kiloshi
49b side) chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 50 Elder's mask: Kasosha. Village Kita I, Muo chiefdom,
Eastern Songye.
- 51a front) Youth's mask: Kabwende. Made in 1972; village
51b side) Mumbo, Mumbo chiefdom.
- 52 Male masks: Mukamba (right) originally made as elder's mask,
now used as youth; Kwali (left) youth's mask. Both made in
1968. Wood species: musokoma. Village Kilaye, Kiloshi
chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 53 Male mask: Katea, from village Ngongo, Kiloshi chiefdom,
Eastern Songye. Height: 30.6 cm. I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa:
71. 3. 118.
- 54a front) Youth's mask: Nkwali. Village Luama, Munga
54b side) chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 55a front) Elder's mask: Lobo. Village Luama, Munga chiefdom,
55b side) Eastern Songye.
- 56a front) Male mask from village Katea(?), Kiloshi chiefdom,
56b side) Eastern Songye. Made circa 1958. Height: 44.3 cm.
I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa: 71. 1. 397.
- 57a front) Male mask from village Katea, Kiloshi chiefdom,
57b side) Eastern Songye. Height: 40.5 cm. I.M.N.Z.,
Kinshasa: 71. 1. 395.
- 58a front) Male mask from village Kalunga, Kaseya chiefdom,
58b side) Eastern Songye. Height: 38 cm. I.M.N.Z.,
Kinshasa: 71. 1. 399.
- 59 Male mask from Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Height:
69 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 1966
acquisition.
- 60 Male mask: Kasosha from Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
Height: 67 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium:
66/551.
- 61 Male mask: Mukambo from village Pafu, Kiloshi chiefdom,
Eastern Songye. Height: 44 cm. Plasmans private
collection, Belgium: 66/537, 179.
- 62a front) Youth's mask: Lububu, from village Mumbo, Mumbo
62b side) chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Made in 1972.

- 63 Male mask: Fwifwi, from Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
Height: 40 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium;
66/549.
- 64a front) Youth's mask: Lububu, from Village Pafu, Kiloshi
64b side) chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Height: 41.5 cm. Wood
species: musokoma. I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa:
72. 303. 275.
- 65 Male mask: Bulenga from village Kasense, Kongolo region,
Eastern Songye. Height: 59 cm. Plasmans private
collection, Belgium: 66/547, 186.
- 66 Male mask, Eastern Songye (my attribution). Height: 38 cm.
Museum of Mankind, London: Oldman collection 1949 Af46 - 502.
- 67 Male mask: Tambwe from village Katea, Kilushi chiefdom,
Eastern Songye. Height: 48 cm. Plasmans private
collection, Belgium: 65/432.
- 68 Male mask, Eastern Songye (my attribution). Height: 32 cm.
Wood species: Ricinodendron: identified by R. Dechamps.
M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 51. 57. 8, negative no. 60553.
- 69 Male mask, Eastern Songye (my attribution). Height: 39.5 cm.
Museum of Mankind, London: Webster Plass collection: 1956
Af27 275.
- 70a front) Male mask, Eastern Songye (my attribution).
70b side) Height: 40.3 cm. Museum of Mankind, London:
1956 Af27 274.
- 71 Male mask from village near "Bwana Tshofwe" (F.P. Burton),
Kalebwe chiefdom. Collected 1928. Height: 46.8 cm.
Wood species: Ricinodendron: identified by R. Dechamps.
M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 30619, negative no. 4787.
- 72 Male mask from village near "Bwana Tshofwe" (F.P. Burton),
Kalebwe chiefdom. Collected in 1928. Height: 54.2 cm.
Wood species: Ricinodendron; identified by R. Dechamps.
M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 30620, negative no. 5614.
- 73 Male mask, Kalebwe chiefdom (my attribution). Height:
45.4 cm. Museum of Mankind, London: 1949 Af32 23.
- 74 Male mask from village near "Bwana Tshofwe" (F.P. Burton),
Kalebwe chiefdom. Collected in 1928. Height: 55.6 cm.
Wood species: Alstonia; identified by R. Dechamps. M.R.A.C.,
Tervuren: 30621, negative no. 5317.
- 75 Male mask, Kalebwe chiefdom. Catalogue notes indicate
provenance "Combelga"; this was the name of a Belgian mining
company located near Kabinda. Height: 53.9 cm.
Wood species: Ricinodendron; identified by R. Dechamps.
M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 51. 35. 4, negative no. 2781.

- 76 Male mask, Kalebwe chiefdom. Height: 42.9 cm. Wood species: Ricinodendron; identified by R. Dechamps. M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 54. 77. 11, negative no. 60554.
- 77 Male mask, Kalebwe chiefdom (my attribution). Height: 41 cm. Wood species: Ricinodendron; identified by R. Dechamps. M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 55. 5. 1, negative no. 5864.
- 78 Male elder's mask: Ndoshi, Kalebwe style (my attribution), Eastern Songye provenance. Collected prior to 1928 in the area of Katombe, Kabalo territory (Luba/Songye region). Height: 42 cm. Wood species: Ricinodendron; identified by R. Dechamps. M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 30500, negative no. 69938.
- 79 Male mask from village Lualaba, Ebombo chiefdom (Kalebwe origin). Height: 55 cm. I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa: 72. 459. 34.
- 80 Male mask: Kifwebe Kilume kya Batshibe Mikila from village Lualaba, Ebombo chiefdom (Kalebwe origin). Height: 55 cm.; colours: grey and green, made of three different types of leaves. I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa: 72. 459. 33.
- 81 Male mask, probably made in Ebombo chiefdom (my attribution). Collected in Kamina, Luba-Shaba region. Height: 71.3 cm. I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa: 72. 654. 7.
- 82 Male mask from village Mulenda, Ebombo chiefdom (Kalebwe origin). Height: 61 cm. Wood species: probably musangusangu (cat. notes). I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa: 72. 459. 60.
- 83 Male mask, newly made at village Lipopo near Mulenda, Ebombo chiefdom (Kalebwe origin). Workshop production 1978. My field photo; dimensions unavailable.
- 84a front) Male mask possibly from Ebombo chiefdom, Kalebwe
84b side) origin (my attribution). Height: 68 cm. Collected prior to 1936. Acquired by Museum of Mankind, London in 1954. Wellcome collection: W 242 960.
- 85 Two masqueraders, male. Colours of bifwebe: red, white, black and blue. Plasmans field photo from village Mulenda, Ebombo chiefdom (Kalebwe origin), 1966.
- 86 Male mask from village Mulenda, Ebombo chiefdom (Kalebwe origin). Height: 66 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium, 1966.
- 87 Male mask from village Mulo, Kalebwe chiefdom. Made by carver from Mulenda, Ebombo chiefdom. Height: 55 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 66/581.
- 88 Male mask from village Kalongo, Ebombo chiefdom (Kalebwe origin). No dimensions given. Plasmans private collection, Belgium, 1964.

- 89 Male mask from village Kakasu, Ebombo chiefdom (Kalebwe origin).
Height: 57 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 1965.
- 90a Carver Leonard Poshi Yakatato with two male masks. Village
Muepu, Kalebwe chiefdom. Plasmans' field photo 66/555, 194.
- 90b Male mask: Gala Masa. Made by L. Poshi Yakatato at Muepu,
Kalebwe chiefdom. Height: 55.6 cm. Colours: red, white,
black and blue. Plasmans private collection, Belgium:
66/555, 194.
- 91 Male mask from village Mulo, Kalebwe chiefdom. Height:
45.3 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: not catalogued.
- 92 Male mask from village Mbutu, Kalebwe chiefdom. Height:
48 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 64/194.
- 93 Male mask from village Kankesa, Kalebwe chiefdom.
Height: 46 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium:
65/444.
- 94 Male mask from village Peshi, Kalebwe chiefdom. Height:
46.6 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: not catalogued.
- 95a Male mask: Kilolo Ngiefu, from village Butu, Kalebwe chiefdom.
No dimensions given. Plasmans private collection, Belgium:
66/571, 198.
- 95b Plasmans' field photo of above.
- 96 Female mask: Kalyanga, from village Ngoma, Munga chiefdom,
Eastern Songye. Made in 1976. Wood species: musokoma.
- 97 Female mask: Songye. Collected prior to 1934 in area of
Katompe, Kabalo territory (Luba/Songye region). Height:
35.5 cm. Wood species: Ricinodendron; identified by
R. Dechamps. M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 35652, negative no. 65677.
- 98 Female mask: Kikangala, from village Ilunga Ngulu, Kiloshi
chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 99 Female mask: central Songye territory. Height: 37.4 cm.
Acquired by Museum of Mankind, London, in 1956. Webster Plass
collection: 1956 Af27 273.
- 100 Female mask from village Loni, Eastern Songye. Height:
40.3 cm. I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa: 71. 1. 388.
- 101 Female mask from village Kamana, Kalebwe chiefdom.
Dimensions missing. I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa: 72. 36. 1.
- 102a front) Female mask from village Mulenda, Ebombo chiefdom,
102a side) Eastern Songye. Height: 53.1 cm. I.M.N.Z.,
Kinshasa: 72. 459. 68.

- 103 Female mask: Maciecie, from Mumbo chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Height: 37 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 67/15.
- 104 Female mask: Mulemba-Lemba from village Kaseshi, Muo chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Height: 47 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 66/522.
- 105 Female mask from Kalebwe chiefdom. Height: 42 cm. Date of acquisition, Musée Léopold II, Lubumbashi: 1946. I.M.N.Z., Lubumbashi: 78. 02. 66.
- 106 Female mask from Kalebwe chiefdom (my attribution). Height: 37 cm. Date of acquisition: 1936. M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 36440, negative no. 4774.
- 107 Female mask, Luba Shaba, from village Lengwe, Kongolo area. Height: 37.5 cm. I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa: 74. 163. 304.
- 108 Male mask, Luba Shaba, from village Kiende, Manono area. Height: 35 cm. I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa: 72. 303. 205.
- 109 Magical object called kitele; made of buffalo tail, skin of lizard (lombe), horns of an antelope and two iron rings. Used for luck in hunting; when hunter blows into the horns he becomes invisible to animals. Field photo: village Casama near Cungu, Kalebwe chiefdom.
- 110 Magical device called kulu; bowl, containing magical substances and water, placed on three-pronged tree trunk. Stands in centre of family compound ensuring protection against evil spirits. Village Mulopwe-Malango, Ilande chiefdom.
- 111 Chief of ehata, Kitambala Somwe, wearing diverse magical objects: 1) hunter's whistle containing magical substances for protection against masende and buci, 2) piece of stone worn by previous Muo chiefs for general protection, 3) magical figure in tin can containing mwasambale, anti-sorcery medicine. Village Ehata, Muo chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 112a Magical device called kilumbi; small straw construction set on three-pronged tree trunk. Used to cure illness of chief's children; located behind the hut of his first wife.
- 112b Close up of above. A chicken is offered to the familiar spirits; its head is placed inside the straw construction and the feathers are set on the exterior. Village Katondo, Kafuma chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 113 Toni-Toni with his insignia: skin of civet cat containing three types of magical objects: snake skin, horns and small figure called Lumami. Village Saka, Kisengwa chiefdom, Eastern Songye.

- 114 Preparation of a Toni-Toni's insignia; insertion of magical substances. Village Ehata, Muo chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 115 Personal magical figure from village Elumba, Kalebwe chiefdom. Dimensions not recorded. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 64/375.
- 116 Newly made nkishi figure; not consecrated, used to keep door shut. Village Pumuzika, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 117 Carver Kanyemesha Pondo in his workshop with newly made personal mankishi. Village Kabinda, Kalebwe chiefdom.
- 118 Carver Kanyemesha in his workshop with newly made community figures; Kabinda, Kalebwe chiefdom.
- 119 Recently made nkishi; unused. Height: 20.5 cm. R. Heldenberg private collection, Kabinda, Zaire.
- 120 Recently made nkishi, unused. Height: 22 cm. R. Heldenberg private collection, Kabinda, Zaire.
- 121 Magical figures belonging to a nganga of Eyombo village, Cofwe chiefdom. Two larger figures are recent fabrications; the central one is a traditional representation, nkishi called Kikudi. The latter is nganga's clairvoyant; those he has administered medicines to he can check up upon to see the effectiveness of his concoctions.
- 122a front) Personal magical figure from Ehata village, Muo
122b side) chiefdom, Eastern Songye. (Note the small figure
inserted on top of the head.) Height: 32 cm.
- 123 Magical figure in tin can containing mwasambale, anti-sorcery medicine; camwood powder is rubbed on the surface of the figure to increase its power. Used for protection against sorcery and witchcraft. Ehata village, Muo chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Given to author for protection during field work.
- 124 Carver/smith, Njibu Lupanda; Cofa village, Kalebwe chiefdom, working with adze on community figure.
- 125 Carver Kanyemesha of Kabinda working on personal figure with chisel.
- 126 Carver Kanyemesha of Kabinda using knife to complete details of community figure.
- 127 Stools changed in usage to community figures (note attachment of carrying poles). Village Ilunga Ngulu, Kiloshi chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 128 Community magical figure with carrying poles; Songye. (Not catalogued.) Height: 64.2 cm.(?), length of poles 72 cm. I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa.

- 129a front) Nkishi Kapenga; used for protection against death
 129b side) by sorcery. Nkishi is kept inside hut on top of a
 129c back) sieve; manioc flour is rubbed regularly on its
 surface. Height: 11.5 cm. Village Kakasu I,
 Ebombo chiefdom (Kalebwe origin).
- 130a Mankishi, male and female, called bifwame, pegged into ground
 in front of door to hut, made to protect newborn from illness.
 Village Katondo, Kafuma chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
- 130b Close up of above figures.
- 131a Chief of Ehata village, Muo chiefdom, Eastern Songye, wearing
 rings, kalea, all of which are used for protection against
 poisoning devised by sorcerers.
- 131b Close up of the above magical rings.
- 132 Hut in front of a nganga's residence made for his most
 important magical figure. This statue seems to be endowed
 with the controlling source of power of all the other magical
 objects and figures belonging to the nganga. Village Eyombo,
 Cofwe chiefdom.
- 133a Roof shelters used as storage for weapons, some magical
 substances and mankishi. Village Pumuzika, Kiloshi chiefdom,
 Eastern Songye.
- 133b Close up of magical figure in above shelter.
- 134a Cikudi: two magical figures, male and female, buried at the
 roots of a banana tree. Made in 1951 for the procreation
 of a family. Village Mulopwe-Malango, Ilande chiefdom.
- 134b Close up of horns implanted on top of heads of figures.
Mankishi are said to be full-figures made of mpami wood, a
 very dense, hard species. Village Mulopwe-Malango, Ilande
 chiefdom.
- 135 Community magical figure from village Mandungu, Kalebwe
 chiefdom. Height: 84 cm. Wood species: Albizia zygia
 (D.C.) Macbride; identified by R. Dechamps. Date of
 acquisition: 1940. M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 39583, negative
 no. 5664.
- 136 Community magical figure, Kalebwe style. Height: 86.5 cm.
 Wood species: Vitex madiensis Oliv. var. milanjiensis
 (Britten); identified by R. Dechamps. Date of acquisition:
 1946. M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 43950; negative no. 69652.
- 137 Community magical figure, Kalebwe style. Height: 78 cm.
 Wood species: Vitex; identified by R. Dechamps. Date of
 acquisition: 1951. M.R.A.C., Tervuren; 51. 38. 1;
 negative no. 65591.
- 138 Community magical figure, Kalebwe style. I.M.N.Z.,
 Lubumbashi. (In display case, dimensions unobtainable;
 figure not catalogued.)

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- 139 Community magical figure, Kalebwe style. Height: 76 cm.
Date of acquisition: 1946. M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 43951.
negative no. 2682.
- 140a front) Community magical figure, Kalebwe style and
140b side) provenance. Height: 85 cm. Collected by
140c back) Dr. L. Van Hoorde in 1934 or 1935. A. Godard
private collection, Brussels.
- 141a front) Community magical figure, Kalebwe style and
141b side) provenance. Height: 90 cm. Collected by
141c back) Dr. L. Van Hoorde in 1934 or 1935. A. Godard
private collection, Brussels.
- 142a front) Community magical figure, Kalebwe style and
142b side) provenance. Height: 98.5 cm. Collected by
142c back) Dr. L. Van Hoorde in 1934 or 1935. A. Godard
private collection, Brussels.
- 143a front) Community magical figure, Kalebwe style. Height:
143b side) 87.8 cm. (First acquired by Musée Léopold II,
143c back) Lubumbashi; date not recorded.) I.M.N.Z.,
Kinshasa: 73. 513. 4.
- 144a front) Community magical figure, Kalebwe style. Height:
144b side) 97 cm. (First acquired by Musée Léopold II,
144c back) Lubumbashi; no date.) I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa:
73. 153. 2.
- 145a front) Community magical figure, Kalebwe style. Height:
145b side) 84.6 cm. (First acquired by Musée Léopold II,
Lubumbashi; no date.) I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa:
73. 513. 1.
- 146a front) Community magical figure, Kalebwe style. Height:
146b side) 53 cm. (First acquired by Musée Léopold II,
Lubumbashi; no date.) I.M.N.Z., Kinshasa:
77. 35. 29.
- 147a front) Community magical figure, atypical Kalebwe style.
147b side) Height: 65 cm. Wood species: Vitex madiensis
Oliv. var. milanjiensis (Britten); identified by
R. Dechamps. Date of acquisition: 1946.
M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 43948; negative no. 67485.
- 148a front) Community magical figure, atypical Kalebwe style,
148b side) provenance "Tshofa"(?) village. Height: 67 cm.
Wood species: Lannea; identified by R. Dechamps.
Date of acquisition: 1940. M.R.A.C., Tervuren:
39581; negative no. 69654.
- 149 Personal magical figure, Kalebwe style. Height: 29 cm.
Date of acquisition: 1919. M.R.A.C., Tervuren:
23466 ²/1; negative no. 23087.

- 150 Personal magical figure, Kalebwe style. Height: 15 cm.
Date of acquisition: 1949. Museum of Mankind, London:
1949 Af46 500.
- 151 Personal magical figure: Ngoy, from village Nkoto, Kalebwe
chiefdom; used for success in hunting. Height: 36.8 cm.
Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 64/26i - 24, 25, 26.
- 152 Personal magical figure: Kankesa, from village Kisengwa,
Kisengwa chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Height: 22 cm.
Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 64/345 - 87.
- 153 Personal magical figure, janus form, in Kalebwe style.
Height: 32.5 cm. Wood species: Erythrina tomontosa;
identified by R. Dechamps. Date of acquisition: 1930.
M.R.A.C., Tervuren: 32437; negative no. 5812.
- 154 Personal magical figure from village Lualaba, Ebombo
chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Height: 15.6 cm. Plasmans
private collection, Belgium: 63/19c.
- 155 Personal magical figure, Kalebwe style. Height: 16.5 cm.
Museum of Mankind, London: 1949 Af46 804.
- 156 Personal magical figure in Kalebwe style; from village
Mulubule, Sangwa chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Used as
protection against illness. Height: 9 cm. Acquired by
author in 1978.
- 157 Personal magical figure: Kitshinda, in Kalebwe style, from
village Bushimba, Ebombo chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Height:
28.5 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 64/25i - 22.
- 158 Personal magical figure: Kicincia, in Kalebwe style, from
village Kisengwa, Kisengwa chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Used
for fertility. (No dimensions given.) Plasmans private
collection, Belgium: 64/346 - 87.
- 159 Personal magical figure in Kalebwe style from village Masha,
Sala chiefdom(?), Eastern Songye. (No dimensions given.)
Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 64/177.
- 160 Personal magical figure: Nkombe, Eastern Songye provenance.
Height: 16.9 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium;
64/155 44.
- 161 Personal magical figure: Kashama, from village Inga,
Kalebwe chiefdom. (No dimensions given.) Plasmans private
collection, Belgium: 63/52c.
- 162 Personal magical figure: Kasongo, from village Kolobey,
Kalebwe chiefdom. Used for fertility. Height: 12.4 cm.
Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 65/458 - 121.

- 163 Personal magical figure: Yakashingu, from village Muasa II, Ebombo chiefdom, Eastern Songye. (No dimensions given.) Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 63/63c.
- 164 Personal magical figure: Ntambwe, Eastern Songye provenance. Height: 8.6 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 64/153 - 43.
- 165 White-faced magical figure, Eastern Songye (my attribution). Height: 34.2 cm. J. Vander Straete private collection, Lasne, Belgium.
- 166 White-faced magical figure, Eastern Songye (my attribution). Height: 19 cm. Harvey & Anuschka Menist private gallery, Netherlands, exhibited 27 April - 7 May 1979.
- 167a) White-faced community magical figure from
167b) Janus form: village Kilumba, Muo chiefdom, Eastern Songye.
167c) Used as protection against sorcery. Height: 28.5 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 66/575 - 197.
- 168a front) Janus form: white-faced community magical
168b side view) figure called Mulange. From village
of two heads) Kapaka, Kisengwa chiefdom, Eastern Songye. Height: 75.5 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 66/562.
- 169a side) Community magical figure from village Muyemba,
169b front) Ilande North. Height: 56 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 63/2e.
- 170 Community magical figure from village Lualaba Nguba, Ilande North. Height: 55.6 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 63/23 c.
- 171 Community magical figure from village Bafinie, Ilande North. Height: 66 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 65/114.
- 172 Community magical figure from village Tunta, Ilande North. Height: 68.3 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 63/47 d.
- 173 Community magical figure from village Kyabola, Eki chiefdom. Height: 96 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 65/349.
- 174 Community magical figure from village Miombe, Eki chiefdom. Height: 76 cm. Plasmans private collection, Belgium: 64/200; 60, 61.
- 175 Community magical figure, Eki chiefdom (my attribution). Height: 99.5 cm. B. de Grunne private collection, Belgium.

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