AFRICAN CONCEPTS OF ENERGY AND THEIR MANIFESTATIONS THROUGH ART

A thesis submitted to the College of the Arts of Kent State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I became interested in the different concepts of energy in which people believe ever since I learned about Pranayama during my yoga teacher-training program. To a yogi Pranayama means one’s breath and life force. This concept interests me because I have also come to the conclusion that many cultures have different interpretations, terms, and artworks that help to describe and even manifest such a force. In addition, what I have found is that Non-Western societies have a different understanding on how energy is supplied and transferred.

Though different cultures around the world have their own defining terms for this concept of energy, they all encompass the same meaning, which is to elucidate the substance that creates and animates one’s life, the power to take action, and prove that we are all one, connected to each other and our earth.¹ I believe several different cultures in West Africa share an underlying belief that all energy comes from our earth and there are special ways to harness this energy and use it to our own advantage. For example, Patrick McNaughton references a missionary who defined the Bamana term nyama as: “force,

¹ Orenda is a word in our Western dictionaries that shares a similar concept to the African cultures that I will be discussing. The Native American Iroquois Indians taught the term orenda to ethnologist J.N.B. Hewitt. The Merriam Webster dictionary states: “Orenda is an extraordinary invisible power believed by the Iroquois Indians to pervade Merriam-Webster, “Orenda,” http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/orenda (accessed January 10, 2016).
power, and energy...a kind of fluid possessed by every living being.”

Monteil stated, “It (nyama) is a fluid common to all nature.” Nyama has been defined as being prevalent in all forms of life. It is the energy that flows through all beings and allows one to connect with our earth and spiritual nature. Though different terms may be used to describe such a force, there are many similarities in their culture’s descriptions, use, and ways of life, which can be seen in the art that they produce.

I have chosen to focus on the Yoruba from Nigeria, the Bamana in Mali, and the Kongo and Luba peoples in the Democratic Republic of the Congo because there are many parallels and similarities in their concepts of energy and how it is manifested through works of art. Each of these cultures has several different examples that demonstrate how their concepts of energy can be materialized. For the purpose of this paper, I am going to focus on objects that directly contain power or life force rather than paraphernalia and regalia that can only symbolize power. In African art, the men in power are often identified as leaders due to the regalia that they wear or surround themselves with. For instance, a Luba chief is seen with a bow stand and a caryatid style stool while in public settings. This helps the community members and outsiders to be able to identify him as a man of importance. Though clothes, jewelry and items of wealth may indicate a status of leadership, they rarely convey a direct concept of energy and power.

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3 Ibid.
Some of the questions I will address are: What is it that makes an object powerful? What materials are used to convey efficacious energy? How are these objects used? Who is allowed to make and handle such objects? What are some of the ways these objects are perceived? Other broader subjects that I wish to explore are the relationships African people have with power, and what that means for the community and their beliefs. I also wish to examine how gender roles in the community contribute to their understanding of energy and power.
CHAPTER TWO

AFRICAN TERMS

Yoruba

The Yoruba’s concept of energy is referred to as *asé*. To the Yoruba *asé* is the life force or dynamism that animates one’s being and has the ability to make things happen.

According to Babatunde Lawal:

… *asé* is: generated by a Supreme Being called Olodumare (the Eternal One), Olorun (Owner of the Sky) and Alase (Divine Authority and source of *asé*). In short it is Olodumare’s divine power or *asé* that makes things happen in the Yoruba universe, changing materials from one state to another, enabling the sun to shine; the moon to heighten the sky; the wind to blow; the rain to fall and the river to flow, giving form to the formless, motion to the motionless, and life to all things.\(^4\)

The art created by the Yoruba that I will be discussing are the beaded crowns worn by rulers, the various devices that are utilized during divination practices, and the masks and performances for Gelede. In Yoruba culture, there are specific artists and carvers that create a variety of objects. However, in most cases it is the use or special inclusions added by a diviner, or *babalawo* that make an item spiritually enhanced and able to mediate energy and connect the spiritual realm with the living.\(^5\) For example, after an artisan embellishes the Yoruba crown with elaborate beaded motifs; the crown is then given to the *babalawo* to insert a portion of the previous ruler’s heart.

The Yoruba see the universe as a gourd split into two separate hemispheres. The top portion *orun*, encompasses the spiritual world, and the bottom portion, *Aye* represents

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\(^5\) A Yoruba diviner is referred to as a *babalawo*, father of secrets.
the living and tangible hemisphere. *Orun* has masculine qualities and represents the heavens, the sky and invisible spirits. *Aye* is the female portion containing life bearing waters and the physical world. Together the two hemispheres are one, and create balance, and *asé* is the powerful force that keeps the calabash suspended in space.

A *babalawo* is a unique and distinguished individual that has the ability to use an assortment of different tools that allow for mediation between the realm of the invisible and the realm of the living. The invisible realm is where one’s ancestors and deities reside. The Yoruba believe that a *babalawo* has the ability to use specific tools and oral incantation in order to gain access to the ancestors and deities\(^6\) *orishas* wisdom, advice, and guidance. For one to create a passage to the other realm, it is vital to appease and honor the deities as if they were living among them. Some of the devices used to seek out answers and resolutions are: a divination board (*opon ifa*), the accompanying sixteen palm nuts, a tapper (*oroke ifa*), and bowl (*agara ifa*).

In addition to the divination arts, the Yoruba crown is also an item that portrays life force and energy of action. Special artisans bead the crown, but it is the *babalawo* that infuses it with life force and meaning by adding sacred materials. Some of the different motifs present on the crown may symbolize the king’s true self or *ori inu*, connecting him to the original dynasty. One’s *ori inu* is represented as abstract beaded faces. Other common motifs are birds that are symbolic of ‘our mothers’.\(^7\) The specific colors used are also significant and are representative of specific views associated with

\(^6\) In Yoruba religion, *orishas* are their gods and goddesses.

\(^7\) ‘Our Mothers’ is a collective term that refers to all postmenopausal women who yield excessive amounts of *asé*. 
the orisha. The colors correspond to attributes, temperament, and personality of particular orisha.

**Bamana**

The Bamana equivalent to the Yoruba term *asé* is *nyama*, or “energy of action.”

The majority of art produced by the Bamana conveys energy and power. This is illustrated through the production of a variety of different masks, amulets, ironwork, and textiles. It is the Blacksmith that act as the primary artist and healer to the Bamana people. It is solely their responsibility to create the iconic and definitive mask forms that are used for specific rituals relating to *ton*. It is because the blacksmiths have such a great understanding of the earth’s elements and how to manipulate them that the people have learned to simultaneously respect and fear a blacksmith’s vast knowledge and power. They have the major responsibility of helping their community members in time of sickness, transition, and overall guidance. They also use particularly powerful masks to help ward off any evil and cleanse their communal grounds.

The only other men that are highly revered in the Bamana community are the hunters because of their vast amount of knowledge about the earth and its magic. One fascinating artifact that shows a great amount of power and energy is a shirt that is covered in different natural materials from the hunt and bush that distinguishes hunters from other men.

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9 *Ton* are associations designed by Bamana men that are used to help teach the community about proper societal behavior and responsibilities.
It is believed that because the blacksmiths produce much of the art, and are capable of transforming raw metals, such as iron, into useful objects, that they yield enormous amounts of nyama. It is this knowledge and capacity to manipulate nyama that makes these men highly powerful and feared by the other community members. This paradox creates an interesting relationship between the blacksmith and the community.

The Bamana blacksmiths are revered as the most powerful men in their society. They produce many art objects that are embedded with layers of complex meaning and power. Some of the items I will be focusing on are the multiple ton masks with emphasis on the komo kun helmet mask, as well as boli figures, and mud cloth known as bolkolanfini which is produced by the Bamana women.

Kongo

The Kongo scholar Fu-Kiau has described Kongo cosmology in a manner similar to the Yoruba. The Kongo people believe there are two distinct realms that occupy our universe. One being nza yayi, which is ‘this world’, and the other is nsi a bafwa, ‘the land of the dead’.10 These two realms are imagined as two distinct mountains with a large body of water separating the two at the base. The water acts as a barrier as well as means of passage to the land of the dead, mpemba.

The rising and setting sun symbolize the death and rebirth of man, creating an understanding that all life is in a continuous cycle; that there is no life and death but only the process of change.11 Contrary to many Eurocentric belief the Kongo people had long

used the cross as a symbol prior to the European invasion. The Kongo people have used the symbol of the cross to represent their beliefs and understanding of their human relation to the earth. The four arms of the cross signify the four moments of the sun, which coincide with the four stages of the life of man. MacGaffey describes the four phases as: “(1) Rising, beginning, birth; (2) ascendancy, maturity, responsibility; (3) setting, death, transformation; (4) midnight, existence in other world, eventual rebirth.”

This interpretation makes it evident that the Kongo people view their own lives as intrinsically connected with our earth and the solar cycles.

Crucifixes that confirm the Kongo people’s belief of how the act of driving nails into a body can release one’s prepotency. Followers of Christianity believe that through Christ’s crucifixion the sins of man were taken away. Because nails were used to hold the body of Christ to the cross, the Kongo people have correlated that act to the similar action of driving nails into the N’kondi figures. The N’kondi figures are used to help secure the community from evil and wrong doers, as well as inflict punishment upon and seek retribution from those found guilty of committing crimes.

The Kongo people have a central ruler, in which there are individual city-states that all report back to a single head chief or leader. The primary art form that conveys power and energy of action are known as N’kisi or the larger communal version N’kondi. A carver is given precise instructions by the miganga (diviner) or patron’s family to produce these wooden figures. Once finished, the miganga, adds enhanced materials from

11 Ibid., 44.
12 It was the cross form used as a crucifix that was introduced by Europeans.
13 Ibid.
the earth that gives the figure its life force. The smaller *N’kisi* is made for personal household use but the larger *N’kondi* is used directly by the *mijanga* to protect the community and persecute wrongdoers. Individuals are able to consult the *N’kondi* but they must first make some kind of payment. This creates a relationship where only the wealthy, ruling class can afford to control the *N’kondi*.

**Luba**

Also found in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are the Luba people. In Luba culture the diviner is known as a *bilumbu*. A *bilumbu* uses special tools to help him navigate through clients’ problems. Like the Kongo and Yoruba, a special carver produces the tools utilized by a Luba diviner, but it is not until the *bilumbu* adds special charged elements found in nature that the item becomes an implement of power and prestige. The *bilumbu* has a very close relationship to the king which can be traced all the way back to their myth of origin. This close relationship enables the *bilumbu* to respond to the community in such a way that reflects the king’s interests. The art works produced by the Luba that exemplify the intrinsic concept of energy are their divination arts: a *nagaka*/ headband, a *mboko*/ divination bowl, and *shekesheke*, quick answer divination device.

When viewing the artwork and concepts of these four African cultures, I find that the Bamana and Luba cultural arts have a strong sense of need to maintain balance and order, whereas the Yoruba and Kongo arts display an attempt to harness the earth’s energy to exert power and prestige. One commonality is that each of these cultures uses devices to intercede between the invisible realm of the ancestors and spirits and the realm
of the living. In each of these four cultures there is often a specific plant or animal that is believed to contain the magical powers and energy of the earth and the deceased. Through their art and rituals these cultures have found a way to access the cycle of energy and manipulate it to help those in need.
CHAPTER THREE

MYTHS OF ORIGIN

Myths of origin play a major role in how their societies function and the art they create. Common themes in these stories are the combination of mythical and primordial beings, hunters, heroes, and the earth’s elements. Each story shows a connection to how the people within each culture relate to their beliefs in cosmology, life cycles, transference of energy, and overall how they operate as a society.

Yoruba

The Yoruba originated in south western Nigeria, but the belief in their deities orisa is widespread. Rather than a holy book or sacred text, religious tradition is kept alive through family tradition, making Yoruba belief in orisa fluid and ever changing. Due to the transatlantic slave trade, the Yoruba belief in orisa is extensive throughout South West Nigeria and the new world such as Cuba and Brazil. As a result of Yoruba religion in the diaspora there are over four hundred documented orisa. The connection of Yoruba people’s belief in orisa is based off the intrinsic correlation between Yoruba mythology and history. In fact, several of the kings, known as oba, are believed to be descendants of the orisa Oduduwa.

In Visions of Africa, Yoruba, Babatunde Lawal estimates that over twenty-five million people today practice the belief in Orisa. Though the interpretations are vast, there seem to be a few common adaptations of their creation story. The beginning of

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14 Lawal, Yoruba, 13.
religion and human existence began for the Yoruba when Olodumare, ‘the eternal one’, sends Obatala with two hundred grains of sand and a five-legged cock down from the heavens. The cock scattered around the grain, which formed the land we live on today. Another common teaching is that Obatala was given a snail shell full of dirt, a chicken, and a chain to use to descend from the heavens. Obatala consumed too much palm wine on his way down and became inebriated. His brother Oduduwa saw Obatala in this state and finished the creation of earth and the sacred town of Ile-Ife. It is believed in Yoruba oral history that Ile-Ife is where life began. Due to Oduduwa completing the task of creating this new land, he is revered as the founding ruler, and some oba can trace their lineage back to Oduduwa, making the oba not only king, but a divine ruler.

The crown of a Yoruba king (Figure 5) serves as the major symbol for his power and represents the ancestral dynasty that the Yoruba oba has descended from. Only kings that can trace their lineage back to the original king, Oduduwa, may wear the crown. A special craftsman makes the crowns individually for each ruler. The crowns are conical and elaborately decorated in beads. The beads create intricate interlace patterns, geometric registers and figures.

The color patterns can refer to specific orisa, protection spells, and the primary colors of funfun, pupa, and dudu. Funfun colors are white, gray, ivory, and silver. They relate to meanings of nurturing, motherhood, and goodness such as a mother’s milk or clouds. Pupa colors are in the spectrum of reds, including yellow, orange, pink, and brass. Pupa colors are an indication of fire, blood, or danger. The final color grouping is

of the deepest shades, *dudu*, this includes, blue, black, indigo, brown, and purple. As a whole, the use of beadwork is a symbol of unity and solidarity. All colors are categorized into groups that share conceptual symbolic significance.

The prominent faces on a Yoruba crown represent the face of the dynasty and the founding ruler as well as personify the ruler’s *ori inu*\(^\text{16}\). “When wearing a crown a ruler is transformed. He becomes one with his inner head and his sacred authority, power, and the *asé* of his ancestors\(^\text{17}\).”

**Bamana**

To the Bamana the spoken word is a very vital part of how they live. Within their *ton*, they are taught to keep the secrets of their people from an early age. For the Bamana, history lives through the spoken word and is recited by specially trained *griots*, West African keepers of history. A *griot* must have a well-trained memory and be able to recite cultural history and the epic of their origin, Sunjata. Sunjata Keita is the man responsible for founding the Mali Empire. The story begins with Sunjata Keita’s father, Fatakung Makang, the king of Niani. One day, Fatakung’s soothsayers tell him that he will create a great ruler through marriage with an ugly woman.

Fatakung visited the neighboring village of Sanakang and asked to marry a native woman. The king Sankarang Madiba Konte obliged in order to maintain a good alliance. After Fatakung won over the woman Sologon, they married in Manding\(^\text{18}\). She

\(^{16}\) An *ori inu* is one’s inner head or true character


\(^{18}\) Manding is an area in West Africa.
experienced a tremendously long pregnancy that lasted seven years.¹⁹ Before giving birth to Sunjata, the king Fatakung stated that if any of his wives was to birth a son, that son would become king.

Sunjata refused to walk for fourteen years. His mother grew ashamed of him and the other co-wives often mocked the idea of a prophecy that would place a crippled man in a position as mighty as a king. The advisors to Fatakung often reminded him of the prophecy and that Sunjata had the birthright to rule the kingdom. Like the rest of the community, Fatakung, however doubted the prophecy because he thought Sunjata to be weak.

Upset by the people’s disbelief, Sunjata was fueled with determination to prove everyone wrong. He requested that his father’s blacksmith forge him iron crutches. It took three grown men to transport each of the crutches to Sunjata and once they arrived he knew right away they would not be strong enough to hold him up.²⁰ Nevertheless he tried, and as expected the iron rods crumbled beneath his weight. He then asked for his mother’s support. With her help, he rose with ease, and continued to walk forward to the baobab tree at the center of town. He plucked the tree from the earth, and ate the seed from the fruit. The Bamana people believed that if one were to eat a seed from the fruit of the baobab tree they would become king for the next sixty years. The action of Sunjata doing those three things made the community realize he was now a man of power.


²⁰ Ibid., 27.
After Fatakung passed away, Sunjata’s half brother became king and Sunjata was exiled. During Sunjata’s exile he traveled and learned of the lands’ injustices, as well as different cultures, and their customs. He slowly began to build an army against an evil sorcerer king Soumaoro Kanté. Once this sorcerer threatened his home land of Niana, the people begged for Sunjata’s return. Sunjata was successful in defeating the evil king and founds the Mali Empire.

In the retelling of the epic by author B.K. Sidibe he includes an introduction that draws attention to key characters, concepts, and underlying meaning. In the forward he mentions that nyama is such a fundamental belief that it is not even mentioned within the story, but for the uninformed he has included a definition stating it is the “innate spiritual force believed to be possessed by all living things. It is a defensive weapon which acts like a spiritual poison against that which attacks the creature, as well as against the attacker’s family.”

Sidibe goes on to explain that different levels of creation have a varying degree of power. Plants have less than animals, and animals less than most people. One cannot attack a person or animal of greater power than they possess themselves without causing great harm to themselves and their family. A person’s energy, or nyama cannot be destroyed, but one is able to enhance his or her own nyama by using special magic. It is believed that greater families yield more power and nyama in comparison to lesser families and that relation of special powers and magic can be shared through blood.

21 Ibid., 12.

22 Ibid., 13.
The epic of Sunjata follows themes of Bamana family life, such as how one relates to their mother in contrast to the relationships between co-wives and children of the same father. The concepts of *badenya* and *fadenya*, (mother’s children and father’s children, respectively) are further explained in the next chapter, as well as how it affects their societal structure.

**Kongo**

Although not much has been said or written about the origins of the Kongo Kingdom, once the Portuguese began arriving in the fifteenth century there is documentation of their finding a vast and sophisticated kingdom.\(^\text{23}\) Though I have not found a solidified myth of origin, it is believed that the cultural hero NeKongo descended from the heavens with the innate wisdom of how to combine the elements and create medicine called *n'kisi*. He formulated the medicine inside an earthenware vessel and then set it on top of three termite mounds.\(^\text{24}\)

Colonial influence has also played an integral part on the Kongo and their art that we know today La Gamma.\(^\text{25}\) writes that the Kongo people were already in the habit of creating *n'kondi* and *n'kisi* figures prior to the European arrival, but post invasion they had more reason to put them to use. Wyatt MacGaffey, believes there was a wide


\(^{24}\) Ibid.

suppression of creating these medicinal forms due to the government’s fear that the *n’kisi*
and *n’kondi* would dismantle their power and support.\(^{26}\)

The Portuguese introduced Christianity to the region and though many Kongo
people converted, some held on to the tradition and continued to create *n’kondi* and
*n’kisi*. Many have related the action of driving nails into the *n’kondi* figures was
equivalent to Christ’s suffering on the cross as a possible release of his energy and
expulsion of man’s sins.

**Luba**

For the Luba, divination is an active and intrinsic component to their
mythological beginning and present day political system. According to Thomas Q.
Reefe\(^ {27}\), the mythical tale of Luba origin is as follows: Long ago there was a tyrannical
ruler named Nkongolo Mwamba. One day a handsome young hunter prince by the name
of Mbidi Ilunga came to visit. Nkongolo was fond of Mbidi and gave him two of his
sisters to marry. Eventually, Mbidi decided to return to his homeland with his two wives
and the diviner, Mijibu wa Kalenga. Before departing, the diviner Mijibu, informed
Mbidi that each of his wives was pregnant, and that the child born with beautiful black
skin like his own is in fact his child, but a child born with red skin like the tyrant is not of
his kin. In sight of this newly acquired information, Mbidi asked Mijibu to look after his
two wives and children. He left Mijibu with a basket containing the following items: an

\(^{26}\) Wyatt MacGaffey. *Art and Healing of the Bakongo*, (Bloomington, IN: Distributed in

iron marble, a rubber ball, and a few specially carved arrowheads. Mijibu was tasked with the instructions that when a child is born with black skin like his own to give him the arrowheads and send him east to find him in his homeland. When a man arrives holding his arrowheads he will know that he is his son.

Many years passed, and as the diviner had said, two children were born, one with black skin and the other with red. Nkongolo grew very jealous of the child with dark skin, for he was beautiful and skilled. This child was named Kalala Ilunga. Due to the uncle’s jealously, he challenged Kalala to many competitive games. Kalala was able to use the objects given to him in order to deafeat Nkongolo. Due to Nkongolo being overly agitated from loosing to his nephew he decided to set a deathly trap for Kalala. Thankfully, Kalala had his father’s diviner, Mijibu informed Kalala something was odd about the king’s request and to pay special attention to the drummer, for he would send warnings if necessary. Kalala paid attention to the drummer and whenever Kalala got too close to the trap the drummer would beat out a pattern that would alarm him. Kalala grew suspicious and eventually revealed the trap. At once, Kalala returned to thank Mijibu and was given the special arrowheads. Kalala traveled to his father’s homeland with the arrowheads and was recognized by his father and his people. Together they assembled troops to overthrow Nkongolo and Kalala Ilunga established a royal court at Manza.

This mythical tale of origin is vital to the understanding of the Luba political structure and the importance of diviniers. Without Mijibu, Kalala would not have succeeded in overcoming the despot Nkongolo. Consequently, it is understood that the king has a very close relationship with his diviner. It is understood that every king is said
to embody the first rightful king, Kalala Ilunga, just as each diviner becomes Mijibu under possession.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 67.
CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Yoruba

The Yoruba are composed of several different self-governing city-states, ruled by a king (oba). There in an intrinsic link between the Yoruba people’s belief in sacred kingship and their belief in orisa. The obas that are considered descendants of the orisa Oduduwa are allowed to wear special regalia that signify this connection. One particular item of importance is the Yoruba crown, which includes sacred charms and symbols that embody the original dynasty. Most Yoruba Oba are chosen through ifa divination practices.

Once the crown, adé is placed upon the head of the new ruler, he is no longer his past self, but is believed to embody the persona of royal ancestors. Pemberton has stated that the crown itself is an orisa and that one’s ori inu, inner head is connected with the ori of all prior oba and once the crown makes contact with the head of the new Oba, the two destines become one.29

The Yoruba political structure is based upon autonomous city-states that share the Yoruba language and artistic characteristics. Their society is organized by a kinshio system where families stay in patrilocal compounds. The Yoruba have high respect for their elders and cultural traditions. Many of their social and communal behaviors and organization are based off of African oral philosophy and proverbial sayings. When one

29 Lawal, Yoruba, 52
comes of age to begin work they often begin an apprenticeship through their family workshop.  

**Bamana**

The Bamana’s recognition of *nyama* is present in all their actions and art. As part of their societal structure each man takes on roles in separate associations known as *ton*. Within these associations, young members create camaraderie as they learn their primary roles within each *ton*. The fundamental *ton* to the Bamana societal structure is the *N’Tomo, Kore, Komo, Kono, Chi-Wara*, and *Gwan*. Each of these associations commission masks or figures to help carry out their initiation processes.

The way an individual relates to his or her own *nyama*, or energy, helps define which association one should join. However, there are those that do not conform as easily to their cultural and social norms. Those who do not relate to a typical way of life may go on their own paths to better understand the world around them; such is the case for most hunters and blacksmiths. Though all men go through *N’Tomo* at a young age, later on hunters and blacksmiths are often out cast from the community due to the societies fear of their great knowledge and power.

Like the other African cultures discussed, the Bamana are polygamous, meaning a single male takes many wives and has more opportunities for offspring. Due to this arrangement, there are allusions to particular traits individuals display within their

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community. Badenlu and fadenlu, are terms used to refer to mother’s children and father’s children, respectively. Those who fall into the conventions of badenya are all born of the same mother and father. They are quiet individuals who do not stand out. They take on their respective roles and fit nicely into the folds of society. In opposition, the fadenya, or father’s children display competition. These individuals share the same father but have different mothers and therefore compete for attention. They are more likely to feature mannerisms that stand out from the crowd. These mannerisms include being aggressive, emotional, and willing to push boundaries to rise to a level of prominence.

Hunters and blacksmiths are good examples of people who display fadenya characteristics. They are feared for having more knowledge of earthly manipulations and handling of nyama. These men are often the ones who end up creating and contributing to their society in exceptional ways. They often segregate themselves from others as a means to further their thirst for knowledge and power. These actions further facilitate fadenya characteristics. They display competitive nature that was instilled by having different mothers than their siblings. These men are willing to go beyond the confines of social groups in order to make a name for themselves. Throughout their lives they hear oral legends of great warriors and hunters, such as the Malian founder Sunjata.

Heroes and hunters are very prestigious and dangerous characters in this society. They acquire much fame through their accomplishments. Particularly, hunters will seclude themselves for months at a time, living, and thriving in the bush. Due to much time spent alone, it is said that these men become very self-aware. The bush, to the general Bamana population, is a place to be feared. There are to many dangers lurking in
the bush that take the form of wild animals, poisonous plants, and the malevolent dark spirits called *jinew* that reside there. However, the Hunters learn to live among these elements and prosper.

Hunters learn *jiridon*, or the science of the trees. *Jiridon* entails learning special recipes or *dalilu*. *Dalilu* are steps that need to be taken in order to achieve a desired outcome. An example would be knowledge of the types of plants that have medicinal properties and how to utilize those resources to aid one’s health or protection. This includes proper harvesting and preparation techniques to achieve the desired result. Hunters and blacksmiths alike will go far distances to acquire new *dalilu* from their elders called Kara – Mogow. These recipes help men gain wisdom of how *nyama* works and impacts societal life.

The first association a young man must go through is *N’Tomo*, which is the basic prerequisite to get into any other association. At this early stage in a young Bamana boy’s life, he is educated and disciplined. Within *N’Tomo* they begin to learn to keep secrets and how to handle being disciplined. Around the age of seven the boys are circumcised. The blacksmith does this, as well as creates the *N’Tomo* masks.

The wooden mask (Figure 11) is oval-like and adorned with cowry shells and toxic red abrus seeds. Rising out of the top of the forehead are between two to eight different spikes. This mask comes out during the dry season to beg for food from the young boys going through initiation. The act of begging when supplies are scarce demonstrates the family’s commitment and dedication to the *N’Tomo* society, and its role in the community as a whole.
All of the materials used to create this mask are directly found in nature. The wooden base of the form contains the *nyama* that allowed for the tree to grow. The poisonous seeds that decorate the wood hold the potential for causing illness; hence they too contain active and inactive forms of *nyama*. The cowry shells that also embellish the masks front are symbolic to the Bamana as representations of wealth, prestige, and power. The shells may also represent the young boy’s families’ contributions to the *N’tomo* association.

The next age grade association is *Kore*. The *Kore* mask (Figure 12) is representative of a hyena or antelope. It has a curved face and exaggerated features, such as a long snout and large ears. Here in the association the boys’ education is furthered. They undergo a symbolic death, are removed from the society, and taken to the outskirts of the bush. *Kore* helps establish male identity and teaches them how to accept responsibilities. The boys learn basics of herbal medicine, life cycles, and ancestral history. In order to be reborn back into society they must renounce childish things and take on responsibilities of a man. At this stage, they are still unaware of the secrets of any other masking associations.

The *Kore* mask is a skeuomorph taking the shape of a four-legged animal’s head. Animals have a much more intimate relationship with nature than man. In this early stage of associations, the young members are permitted to learn more about their own intrinsic connection with nature. I believe the natural materials used to create the *Kore* mask demonstrate the parallels between the boys’ realization of their own place in nature.

The *Chi-Wara* association deals with the fertility of the land (Figure 13). The carved mask connected with the *Chi-Wara* takes the form of male and female antelopes.
These power objects are adhered to the top of a helmet mask. These masks are danced in the rainy and harvest seasons to ensure the fertility of the land. The Bamana are farming people, and believe to have learned agriculture and the ways of the land from a half man/half antelope deity. *Chi* means farming and *Wara* is the equivalent Mande word for beast. This creature taught them how to till the land, what crops to sow, and when to harvest.

The unity of the male and female *Chi*-*Wara* symbolizes the first primordial couple and their offspring. The male *Chi*-*Wara* is recognizable by his penis, decorative mane, and straight horns. He represents the male principle of the sun. His female counterpart is represented carrying their offspring on her back as human women do, and has curved horns. She represents the female principle of the fertile land and water. As a pair, they can successfully produce offspring, much as the men and women working the farm can produce and abundant harvest by working together.

*Chi* – *wara* literally translates to mean farming beast. Perhaps this shows the most fundamental and intimate relationship with our earth. By honoring the creature that taught the Bamana how to treat the land in order to have a successful harvest and sustain their lives, they show understanding and appreciation of the earth’s fertility and duality. The Bamana have an excellent understanding of how the masculine and feminine powers surround us. Their knowledge encompasses the intrinsic nature of *nyama* and how likewise the masculine sky waters our fertile feminine earth; a man and woman can create life.

The *Kono* and *Komo* association masks contain even more *nyama* than those already mentioned. The *Kono* mask is used for cleansing rituals for the society. It helps
control troublemakers and fosters fertility. This mask has large ears and snout. When not in use, this mask is kept enshrined with other powerful items charged with nyama. The sanctuary is restricted to only elite members of the Kono or Komo. The enclosure is a conical in form and guarded by a societal member.

The Komo mask (Figure 14) is the most powerful mask of the associations. The Komo association has a direct link of power through the acts carried out by the blacksmith. In order to become a blacksmith, one must be born into this association. Powerful nyama is passed to them by blood, hence the patrilineal alliance and recognition of fadenya. Blacksmiths must be apprentices for a minimum of eight years while they learn how to control and manipulate nyama. Through all of their works they refine and cultivate more power. The direct correspondence between a blacksmith and the Komo association gives high prestige and the capacity to influence others. The Komo mask is encrusted with sacrificial materials. It is not meant to be attractive; its intent is to amass large quantities of nyama. Its encrusted appearance and use of animal quills and horns makes it very intimidating. The enrichment of sacrificial materials on the surface is mostly comprised of animal blood and plant matter. The blood is likely from a chicken and the plants are intentionally picked for their medicinal qualities, making the mask very powerful and full of capable energy, nyama. Its dance is swift, aggressive, and beast like. This mask repels danger from the society and acts as a diviner and supreme judge. The Komo presides over all other events and has the most authority.

Other power items include amulets, figures, and boli. Boli can take on figural shapes such as a four-legged animal or a person. Boli figures (Figure 15) contain an immense reserve of nyama that can be manipulated as needed by the blacksmith. The boli
are powerful and encrusted with a thick patina that regularly receives libations of sacrificial materials to renew and increase their power.

**Kongo**

The Kongo is located in central Africa. In 1482, Portuguese voyagers arrived in the Congo and found a large and complex kingdom in place, with the central capital being Mbanza Kongo. The founding king Ktinu Lukeni is said to have been the first to set the codes of law and bring to his people the knowledge of iron-smithing and arts. A king acts as supreme judge and is believed to have special mystical powers and access to a spiritual realm. Their sacred symbols of the leopard, pangolin, and civet cats are all based upon the belief that these animals are capable of moving between the realms of the living and spiritual.

A Kongo king’s regalia are comprised of the spotted animal skin, a necklace of leopard teeth, a strong staff, and the sword of power. All of these items combined convey a message to the community that the king himself acts as a living *nkisi*, a personification of supreme power which rules with wisdom and strength. These items of regalia portray the king as being supreme. It is important to note that these items alone do not hold energy and power. Without being placed upon the king they are solely recognized as symbolic references to said power.

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32 Thompson and Cornet, *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds*, 34.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.
The Kongo people believe that the realm of the living is mirrored by a body of water with the land of the invisible underneath them. Due to that conviction, they regard their diviners, *nganga* as capable of moving freely between the two realms. People seek the advice and guidance from *nganga* for a number of reasons, including but not limited to: marital issues, theft, witchcraft, or even drought. A common device used by an *nganga* is referred to as *nkisi* or *nkondi*. There are noted cases of using these devices for both healing and benevolent desires, as well as more malicious intentions such as persecuting criminals.

**Luba**

The Luba people are one of the largest ethnic groups of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As previously stated in the Luba myth of origin, the first Luba king is Nkongolo. Nkongolo is viewed as a divine python that can stop the rain, and is sometimes personified as a rainbow. Nkongolo’s nephew Kalala Ilunga overthrew his tyrannical uncle and established new rule over the Luba people. For the Luba, their royal system has a strong link with the female body. Similar to the Yoruba, the Luba believe that the human body serves as a vessel for one’s soul. The body of a postmenopausal woman is most desired for possession and the containment of a powerful soul. Imagery of Luba women with their hands placed over their breasts symbolizes their knowledge and secrets of the kingdom.

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The Luba kingship is in close contact with the *mbudye* association. The *mbudye* association is composed of well-trained diviners that dually serve as ‘men of memory’. Depending on the current king, the diviners known as *bilumbu* will retell history that suits their king’s political agenda. Due to the belief of the Luba myth of origin, it is well understood within the societal structure that the royal diviners and the king have a dynamic relationship that molds the society around it.
CHAPTER FIVE
DIVINATION ARTS

The divination arts of the Yoruba, Bamana, Kongo, and Luba help illustrate the numerous devices that people create in order to mediate energy and enable communication with higher powers, such as gods and ancestors. Specific forms, shapes, and iconographic figures help open passages to deliver and receive messages across the realms of the living and the dead, the visible and the invisible.

Being able to communicate and seek help from local diviners and healers allows these African cultures to maintain their societal needs. The diviner acts as an overall voice of reason and wisdom for the community. It is often the job of the diviner to cleanse their communal living spaces as well as help with general guidance and well-being. In cases like the Bamana, their blacksmith acts as a man of many responsibilities including artisan, healer, and judge.

Yoruba

Yoruba diviners known as babalawo, meaning “father of secrets” are trained to memorize different verses (odu) that correspond to a specific arrangement of palm nuts that have been tossed onto a divination board called an opon ifa.\(^{36}\) Once the babalawo deciphers eight different pairs of palm nuts, he recites the related passage to the client for interpretation.

The two Orisa that preside over divination are Eshu and Orunmila. Orunmila is a mediator between earth and the heavens. He was present at the creation of Earth and has

\(^{36}\) Lawal, *Yoruba*, 7.
innate knowledge of everyone’s fate. Orunmila had eight children, one of which was a son, Olowo. Olowo became the king of Owo, but disobeyed his father’s wishes. Feeling dishonored, Orunmila departed the tangible world for Orun, the spirit realm. In order to stay in touch with his children, Orunmila left each of them sixteen palm nuts to use in order to contact him. The tapper is used in the center of the board while the diviner recites incantations to evoke Eshu and Orunmila to carry their queries and hopes into the spiritual realm.

The face of Eshu is present on most divination trays. Eshu is the Orisa of crossroads and trickery. His colors are red and black. Most of his representations portray him holding a flute, having a conical, phallic-like projection from his head, and wearing bells or cowry shells. The cowry shell necklace worn by the Eshu may indicate the outdated use of cowry shells as currency, their use in gambling, as well as in the marketplace. Eshu personifies chance, change, uncertainty, or even trouble. He is often found in the marketplace, where many decisions are frequently made and people can be deceptive.  

All opon ifa carry the face of Eshu. A common warning from diviners is: “life is like bailing water with a sieve if Eshu is not acknowledged”. Mean the evocation of

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37 Depictions of Eshu may also mark many doorways, gates and crossroads. He has become such a big influence that even those that do not practice appeasing the Orisa use his name in cultural expressions such as: “Eshu misled me”. Eshu is often depicted with a hooked head. The conical form denotes the reference that the conical shape itself is a powerful form that acts as a passage between heaven and earth. In spite of the fact that Eshu is the trickster god that representing crossroads, and places of uncertainty and doubt, he is also the divine messenger to all other Orisa.

38 Ibid., 15.
Eshu must be achieved, and he must be constantly appeased to receive his blessings and pass your business to the other side. The word *opon* itself is a term that’s etymology is understood to mean, ‘to flatter’. 39

Before helping the client, a diviner must greet and flatter their ancestors and pay tribute to those that have passed down the knowledge of divination. Figure 1 shows a *babalawo* as he begins a divination session by dusting the *opon ifa* with a white chalk or sand. He then uses his finger to draw a grid onto the board. These markings signify the crossroads referred to as *orita meta*. Each section is then appropriately praised in the form of poetry. 40

A well-versed babalawo knows how to use the *opon ifa* and tapper, *iroke ifa* (Figure 2) to call upon Eshu and their ancestors. The female form of the divination tapper alludes to women being receptacles for energy. Due to the fact that women can bear children, it is understood they have more *asé* than a man. Being able to harness large amounts of *asé* is a favored quality by the sprits because it allows them to use the female body as a vessel for possession. The tapper in Figure 2 depicts a kneeling female with her hands at her breast. The kneeling gesture is humbling and can be seen in many votive offerings.

The face of Eshu is often carved on the *opon ifa* at the top center and surrounded by many other figures and symbols in the tangible world such as: axes, cups, tools, drums, and animals. The example in Figure 3 shows the carved face of Eshu at the top center flanked by a human figure to the right and a snake to Eshu’s left. On each corner, 39

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39 Ibid.
there are four cowry shells, totaling sixteen. The interlace pattern that climbs both vertical sides of the tray represent a symbol for infinity. At the bottom there is a bird and a snake. Birds are a common inclusion due to their reference to “our mothers”, female ancestors and elders that have special powers and knowledge. To the Yoruba, birds are also a representation of decorum, order, and settlers of disputes. Snakes are closely related to the Earth. This is due to a snake’s lack of limbs, which enables its body to be in constant direct contact with the Earth. Snakes are said to be able to communicate with the spirit realm. In addition, due to their ability to shed their skin, they are symbolic of rebirth and rejuvenation. No two divination boards are identical, though they all share common symbols. Each opon ifa is carved with specific diviner or cliental wishes in mind.

A third divination item owned by a babalawo, is a carved bowl referred to as, agara ifa. These bowls hold the sixteen palm nuts and possibly other divination paraphernalia such as opele, diviner chains. The bowl in Figure 4 shows a kneeling female holding the wooden carved bowl above her head. She has three scars above each brow. The large almond shape eyes and flaring nostrils are all typical Yoruba features. The shape of the tapper itself is conical, referring to the passage between orun and aye. With a strong knowledge of asé as the vital force that connects all life visible and invisible, a babalawo is able to create a bridge between the two realms and help remedy any of his client’s troubles.
**Bamana**

The Bamana do not have divination arts in the same sense as the other three cultures. It is their association masks that help cleanse their society and ward off evil and wrong doers. For example, the *Kore* mask helps aid in learning, the *Chi-wara* teaches about balance and fertility, the *Kono* mask can be used for ritual cleansings and the *Komo* mask is brought out to enforce fierce protection and punishment. The Bamana also use many different amulets made from plant and animal materials to help provide protection. In a Bamana society, it is the blacksmith that acts as a diviner among many other roles. Though the diviner does not utilize objects to contact the spiritual realm in the same manner as the Yoruba, Kongo, and Luba do. Though some of the powerful members in society have access to great powers and knowledge of their natural resources, many still rely on fortune telling to gain a greater insight.

**Kongo**

There is an interesting dual dynamic that colonialism brought to the Kongo. The slave trade took many of the town's men and left the women with an increase need for protection and fertility to help rebuild and secure their society. As with many other cultures, colonialism left the Kongo people in devastating circumstances, which led to the continued use of *N'Kisi* and *N'Kondi* during the fifteenth century. Many ‘fetish items’ were stolen as European nations gained interest in 'nail fetishes' and other African arts. The medicine figures were stolen and their use was discouraged, but their need became more apparent. Furthermore, the teachings of Christianity strengthened the Kongo peoples’ views on how great power and energy could be released by driving nails into a
human figure. As previously stated the Kongo people were able to recognize the parallels between the action of driving nails into the body of Christ as a way to release his virility and their own use of *nkisi*.

The smaller *nkisi* are used in personal household settings where the larger *nkondi* can be activated by the local *miganga* (diviner) to help in times of communal stress, or need. The fiercer *nkondi* (Figure 17) is capable of seeking out and punishing wrong doers as well as protect against outside evil forces and malevolent witchcraft. Some of the uses for these figures include healing charms, cursing charms, and blood sacrifice charms. In the book *Art and Healing of the Bakongo*, Wyatt MacGaffey includes very elaborate lists and sketches of the numerous elements and devices that can be added to an *nkondi* to increase its power or heal specific ailments. Depending on the particular client’s needs the *miganga* are able to use natural herbs and earth substances to help ameliorate a plethora of different unfortunate circumstances, from healing a fever to catching a thief.

The foundation of an *nkisi* or an *nkondi* is a wooden base or shell. This base acts as a vessel to carry the special medicines, *bilongo*. Writer and anthropologist, Luc De Heusch has found that after analysis of these divination objects, there are two major categories the *nkisi* and *nkondi* can be divided into, these are metaphoric and metonymic.41 In a metaphoric sense, the *nkisi* and *nkondi* figures are representative of the overall purpose and conclusion to the diviner or owner’s wishes. The shell acts as a visual embodiment of the objective. In a metonymic sense, these figures hold the magic that creates the link between the realms of the living and dead.

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The theory of individual categories presented by De Heusch demonstrates a direct link between the chosen medicines and their intended use. Without the inclusions of the herbal medicines, the figure is considered useless. It is necessary for the diviner to follow a recipe meticulously to succeed the appropriate outcome. If one is careless, the life forces that encompass a nkisi or nkondi can become malevolent and seek retribution upon its creator.\(^{42}\)

According to Kongo writer Nsemi Isaki all nkisi have energy or life force. He believes if otherwise, how could it be possible for them to help, heal and curse people? He goes on to state that:

“\(n\)kisi are said to be as it were forces in its body to help it to work. The \(n\)kisi is at it is, but if it lacks medicines it cannot do a thing. So the \(n\)kisi has medicines, they are its strengths and its hands and feet and eyes; medicines are all of these. For this reason, whatever \(nkisi\) lacks medicines is dead and has no life.” \(^{43}\)

Due to these medicines being so versatile and powerful, whenever nksisi or nkondi are seen in western institutions all of the interior medicines have been removed to prevent harm or misuse.

In cases of divination the nkondi figures can be used to correct any misfortunes or wrongdoings. Most western art institutions list large communal nkondi (Figure 17) in their catalogs as ‘nail fetishes’ due to the excessive amount of hardware that has been wedged into the body of the divination figure. In \textit{Art and Healing of the BaKongo}, MacGaffey argues that the addition of blood, nails, or verbal insults can all activate an nkondi to inflict pain and punishment. He goes on to describe that the action of driving

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 173.

\(^{43}\) Ibid.
nails into the nkondi will make the person being implicated to feel as though knives are being driven into his chest.\textsuperscript{44} This is relative to the other readings I have done that foretell of specific added materials implying the type of punishment to come. For instance, if a diviner were to add the head of a snake, it is believed that the life force of the nkondi will then have the power and ability to ‘bite’ its victims.\textsuperscript{45}

Literature by Marie-Claude Duprie has classified many Kongo divination figures according to their vitalizing energy or spirit.\textsuperscript{46} She has stated that the destructive types are masculine and relate to the forces of the sky, whereas the productive and healing devices express the feminine energies from mother earth, such as cleansing waters and fertility which are further explored in chapter six.

Based upon the literature prepared by LaGamma and MacGaffey, I think these figures do a good job of illustrating how the Kongo people are able to manifest their concepts of energy. Nkondi and nkisi do not always need to take the form of a human body. In some cases a simple pot or shell can be utilized. What I find important is that regardless of the form the nkisi-nkondi takes, it must be composed of elements from nature, such as wood taken from trees, clay from our earth to create a pot, or even a seashell washed up upon shore. All three of those possible vessels carry with them the energy from our earth; therefore can all be used to shelter a spirit or soul.

\textsuperscript{44} MacGaffey. Art and Healing of the Bakongo, Commented by Themselves : Minkisi from the Laman Collection, 26 and 141.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 6.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
Luba

The Luba royal diviners (bilumbu) are part of the Mbudye association, comprised of members known as “men of memory”\textsuperscript{47}. It is their responsibility to record and retell court history as well as initiate all Luba title-holders.\textsuperscript{48} Men from the Mbudye association are taught how to read a lukasa, memory board. In Figure 21 two lukasa can be seen placed on a mat in front of two bilumbu. Lukasa are rectangular mnemonic devices that are held vertically with the two longer sides concaved toward the center. The outer surface mimics a tortoise shell with many diagonal incisions, each incision is said to represent a good deed performed by the king.\textsuperscript{49} In Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History, Mary Nooter Roberts shed light on the lukasa. On the inside of each lukasa are colored beads or shells that represent a significant person or event. It is speculated that the beads act as points of loci.\textsuperscript{50} Since each lukasa is read by its corresponding bilumbu, the retelling of history is personalized to reflect the king’s interests.

The bowl given to Mijibu in the tale of origin has evolved into a divination bowl (mboko) that is sill used today. The initial form of the mboko is carved from a hollow

\textsuperscript{47} LaGamma, and Pemberton, Art and oracle: African art and rituals of divination, 11.

\textsuperscript{48} John Pemberton, Insight and Artistry in African Divination. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press 2000), 76.


\textsuperscript{50} The loci method of recalling memory had been employed for centuries. I learned of it during an undergrad psychology course. The method used by ancient philosophers such as Plato. The method entails a person visualizing a walk down a familiar path. In order to remember a list events or things one simply visualizes an appropriate corresponding image and places it somewhere along the path. As a person visualizes walking down the chosen path they will encounter the mentally placed objects and recall the associated information.
dried gourd. The contents within the *mboko* vary for each diviner, but a few common items are: small replicas of iron tools, small human wooden figures, seeds/pods, teeth, chalk, shells, and beads. The *bilumbu*, in Figure 20 can be seen holding his *mboko* and wearing a specific headband.

According to Mary Nooter Roberts, each diviner understands a concept of proofs and promises.\(^{51}\) When a diviner is consulting his *mboko*, they will shake the gourd and contents around while mentally reciting their concerns to the spirit realm. Once the diviner stops moving the *mboko* and the items settle, he will peek inside to see what message is revealed. Any objects that are standing indicate a recommendation or further questioning. The ‘promises’ (*mulao*) refer to the foreseen prophecy for survival and the ‘proofs’ (*byeleke*) refer to the tangible translation of the prophecy being true. For example, in the tale of Kalala Ilunga, it was the diviner Mijibu who foresaw the trap set by NKogolo. The vision in this case acts as the promise, and when Kalala reveals the hidden spears acts as the proof.

Another type of Luba divination employs a gourd referred to as *kilemba*. The *kilemba* is used as a means of trial for people within the community. During a divination session, the bilumbu will set the *kilemba* onto the clients lap. If the gourd adheres to the clients legs, the diviner knows the client is either guilty or lying, whereas if the gourd is easily removed from the client’s lap, they are telling the truth.

The three royal *bilumbu* diviners seen in Figures 20 and 21 depict them wearing a special headband referred to as, *Nkaka*. This headband shares the same name as female

body cicatrization, as well as the Luba word for pangolin.\textsuperscript{52} Pangolins are a species of anteaters. They have tough scales on the outside of their bodies that serve as protection against predators. The \textit{Nkaka} headband has a corresponding purpose of protection for the diviner and the spirit it is possessing. The \textit{Nkaka} acts as a shield, containing the spirit safely within the \textit{bilumbu’s} head. The reference to female cicatrization is equally important because like the Yoruba, people of Luba descent are conscious of a female’s enhanced capability to act as vessels of life for the living and dead.

As previously mentioned, Luba diviners have always been an important component of the royal court. One shared item of court regalia that is used by both the Luba king and \textit{bilumbu} is a type of caryatid bowl (Figure 22). These bowls serve a similar function as the Yoruba \textit{agara ifa}, which contain the \textit{babalawo}’s palm nuts and other divination paraphernalia. However, for the Luba these bowls contain a white chalk. People entering a king’s palace will apply the white chalk to their foreheads to signify their approval of their king. According to Nooter Roberts, “To be chalked in white signifies acceptance by the spirit world and implies a state of passage from one status to another.”\textsuperscript{53} Consequently, white chalk is also applied liberally to the king during each stage of initiation.

The diviner wears the chalk that is stored within the \textit{mboko} along with the \textit{Nkaka} headband to display evidence of a spiritual presence within. Another important role for these elaborate vessels is to act as a receptacle for the possessing spirit’s spouse. During a divination ritual, the \textit{bilumbu} will have his own wife sitting to his right and the vessel

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 71.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 70.
containing chalk to his left. This act represents the balance of human qualities, both masculine and feminine.

Similarly to how the Yoruba make use of an opele divining chain for quick closed ended questions, the Luba have a similiar device known as a kashekesheke, seen in Figure 25. The implement is carved to represent two connected female forms, with an opening between them where the diviner and client can each place a few fingers. One does not have to be a royal bilumbu diviner to own or use this device. Rather, a non-royal diviner would have a dream of their personal kashekesheke and then have their vision become tangible by commissioning a carver to create the friction oracle they saw in their dreams. According to Mary Nooter Roberts and what I have learned from Dr. Fred Smith, the oracle is implemented by the diviner and client placing their first few fingers inside the opening at the figure’s base. While each person has hold of the kashekesheke figure, the base is placed upon a mat on the ground. Depending on the pattern the device moves, either the yes or no answer is indicated. If the figure moves back and forth the answer is ‘no’, and if the figure moves in a circular pattern which creates the “sheke- sheke” sound the answer is ‘yes’.
CHAPTER SIX

WOMEN AS VESSELS OF LIFE ENERGY

Because women have the ability to bear children, it is believed in many African cultures that women possess a greater amount of asé, nyama, or life force. Many cultures utilize the female form as vessels for possession and to display balance in a political realm to get the attention of their gods. Due to the fact that males hold many official positions, art forms that display the female body are often present as a way to express equality and balance. In some cases, male diviners will wear women’s hairstyles in order to get the attention of the desired deities. The art items are composed of naturally occurring elements from our earth; creating a sacred and symbolic connection of the female to mother earth.

Yoruba

There are a prominent number of female figures in Yoruba art. Women are depicted as powerful and nurturing members of society, which are to be feared and respected. This is due to the recognition that women have control over sustaining life from the womb into adulthood. In Yoruba communities, women are also responsible for running the market and much of the farming. Not only do women have the capability to conceive and carry children, they also have the main control over the food and nourishment that keep their families alive.

Women have a strong presence in Yoruba art because in many ways they are symbolically more powerful than the king himself. Without a female there cannot be any continuation of one’s lineage. The examples that I have chosen to help prove my
contention of how woman are depicted as formidable and intrinsic to the concept of *asẹ* in Yoruba art include: the birds seen on crowns for the Yoruba king (Figure 5), palace veranda posts by Olowe (Figure 6), divination/ Ifa paraphernalia; such as tappers and palm nut bowls (Figures 2 and 4), an oshe Shango wand (Figure 9), and Gelede masquerading (Figure 8).

The inclusions of birds are almost always present on the Yoruba crown. Perani and Smith state: “The presence of birds shows the vital company of women in the royal entourage, and alludes to the powers of witchcraft, divination, and medicine that merge with the power of the royal ancestors.”

Birds are commonly interchangeable with figures of women in Yoruba art. They are a common reference to ‘our mothers’, a shared term to refer to all female ancestors and elders. Women that are postmenopausal are believed to have special powers and knowledge, and are often referred to as witches. These women are said to have the power to transform during the night and fly to wherever they wish and watch over anything they so choose. It is during this time that these women are able to carry out their desires, good or bad. Furthermore, Yoruba birds represent decorum, order, and the settlers of disputes. Birds flourish in both realms of earth and sky, connecting past spirits with present life on earth. The representation of birds pays homage to women, for without them the culture would not be in existence today. Including birds on the king’s crown makes a statement to the community that the

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The king acknowledges ‘our mothers’ and shows that the king operates with their cooperation. The presence of powerful women can also be seen in the ruler’s palace (afin). In particular the veranda posts (Figure 6) of king Ogoga in the Ikere palace courtyard show common Yoruba iconic themes. These include: women with twins, equestrian figures, and the king with the queen mother. One of the veranda posts created by Olowe for the Ikere palace courtyard depicts a king seated with the queen mother behind him. It is the queen mother that places the crown onto the king’s head, therefore is appropriate to see the queen mothers standing behind him. In the post carved by Olowe the artist has taken the liberty to make the queen mother much larger than the seated king in order to emphasize her importance in the community. This particular veranda post really indicates the profound significant roles women have in Yoruba populations. By representing the larger sized queen mother behind the king she is portrayed as a strong capable woman. Her breasts frame the sides of the king’s head, and signify woman’s ability to procreate and produce milk to sustain life. Her towering figure shows her support for the king and his rule. Additionally, this particular female veranda post acts as a caryatid, holding up the weight of the palace roof and creating a parallel that places emphasis on how women help uphold the structure of humanity and a household.


Olowe was a highly praised carver from Nigeria born around 1875. Many of his commissions were for Yoruba aristocrats. He is most famous for his veranda posts, door carvings, and Ifa (divination) bowls.
It is thought in Yoruba that when a woman elevates an object or vessel to rest on her head that she is in total control of it.

Other depictions of women in Yoruba art are frequently seen in shrines and divination paraphernalia. Women are referred to as vessels of procreative power. It is for that reason that the Yoruba deities (orisha) prefer the bodies of females for possession. Many divination tappers (iroke ifa) and ifa bowls (agree ifa) used by a babalawo show a kneeling woman. The kneeling gesture is a sign of respect, as is the female gesture of crossing their arms over top of their breast. Lawal states that: “Kneeling is a humbling gesture and also a Yoruba reference to motherhood. It shows supplication and asking for a favor such as help in conceiving a child, or in the moments before birthing one.”

The tappers have a long conical projection that protrudes from the top of the female figure’s head. The conical form relates to the Yoruba creation myth and the formation of land. This is also widely recognized in parts of Western Africa, as being able to possess or contain large amounts of energy and power. Conical forms are said to be passages of mediation to the heavens, which also makes it an appropriate shape for the Yoruba kings crown.

Often priests and priestesses of Shango use wands called ose shango (Figure 9) Shango is a male orisha that is considered hot, due to his nature and reputation. Shango

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58 Lawal. *Yoruba*, 34.

59 Though most divination arts depict prominent women figures, there are some that do not.

60 Drewal, Pemberton, Abiodun, and Wardwell. *Yoruba : nine centuries of African art and thought*, 32.
was the fourth Yoruba ruler of the Oyo kingdom\textsuperscript{61}. Oral legend states that he loved magic so much, that it consumed him. He is known for using thunder and lightning to his advantage, by overwhelming his enemies on the battlefield with his control of the storms. After his death, his association with thunder and lighting continued.

*Ose shango* frequently depict a kneeling woman and a double-sided axe. The axe is said to be double sided in reference to thunderstones or possibly all of the twins that Shango fathered during his reign in Oyo.\textsuperscript{62} Yoruba myth states that the axes can be found on the earth after a storm, indicating the places that Shango has thrown lightning. The female form also helps encourage communication with their *orisha* and epitomize the large capacity for energy that women can transmit. It is so well understood by Shango priests of how much more perceptive women are to containing *ashé*, that the male priests often wear typical women’s hairstyles in order to grasp the attention of Shango.\textsuperscript{63}

A large amount of art production that reflects women in the community is created for *Gelede* (Figure 8). *Gelede* is a masquerade about showing the power of women, and their importance in their communities. *Gelede* is restricted to the Yoruba in southwest Nigeria. The masquerade is limited to only postmenopausal women and the men that they have chosen to join. The women coordinate the events and choose male performers to wear the masks and perform in the masquerade. It is an annual event that takes place in the beginning of the planting season, in association with mother earth and fertility. By

\textsuperscript{61} Blackmun. *A History of Art in Africa*, 244.

\textsuperscript{62} Perani and Smith. *The visual arts of Africa: gender, power, and lifestyle rituals*, 146.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 147.
celebrating *Gelede* during the rainy season the Yoruba people are creating a connection between both human and agricultural fertility.

There are two parts of *Gelede*, *Efe*, which happens the night before the larger spectacle, and then *Gelede* the following afternoon. *Gelede* is performed in the marketplace because it is an area that is run by women and demonstrates one of their important roles to the community as having the ability to supply the community with nourishment. The *Gelede* performance is one way the Yoruba community recognizes the power of women and celebrates them in hopes to control any potentially dangers. If women are appeased and honored, they are less likely to cause any trouble. The first portion of the event, *Efe* is a gathering that is restricted to members. It involves praise songs and joking around. There is minimal masking that takes place during *Efe*.

The afternoon following *Efe* is when the main spectacle of *Gelede* takes place. The masks used are very attractive. In Yoruba culture, it is believed that beauty is a weapon. Some attributes of the masks are a slanted full face, large pierced eyes, semi-circular ears, facial scarification and a platform hairstyle or head wrap. In addition to female hairstyles, masks can have an array of different objects and scenarios placed a top of the platform above the face. Some typical adornments contain the use of birds and snakes. There is minimal emotion reflected through the *Gelede* masks because they are supposed to appear calm, serene, and in control.
Bamana

Nyama is found in various forms, one of which is mud cloth called bolkolanfini made by the Bamana women. All the materials used are natural and local to the Bamana. The cotton is grown, picked, and then taken into a woman’s compound to be spun. Once spun, it is then woven into narrow bands and goes through a resist dye process, which women manipulate to obtain particular symbolic patterns. The dye used is made out of tree bark and other vegetation mixed with iron-polluted mud. The mud cloth is dyed, washed, and sundried in a process known only by woman. This process produces very rich dark contrasting forms. Some of the patterns represent crocodiles (an important and dangerous animal related to sorcery), battles, folk heroes, and paths taken by individuals.

Bolkolanfini has a number of different roles. One of the roles is to be used by the hunters who make individualized smocks out of the mud cloth (Figure 10). As they acquire new knowledge and skills, they attach amulets and different artifacts of the hunt to their smocks. The smocks begin very plain and uncluttered, only having few protective amulets attached that their teachers gave these to the young hunters. As time goes on, many shirts become an impressive display of a man’s accomplishments in the bush. Horns, teeth, furs, and claws are some examples of displayed trophies. The additional attachment of stringy, thin pieces of leather symbolizes the vines and the entangled forested area of the bush that these renowned men must navigate through to survive. These hunter smocks are only worn when the men are not engaged in hunting practices, but rather are worn for particular events and ceremonies in town. The smocks are not worn into the bush, for they would cause too much noise and prevent the stealth-like
swift, movements necessary to explore and hunt. In addition, these shirts are sacred to the men, to which they belong and may not be worn by others, even after death.

_Bolkolanfini_ like the one seen in Figure 16 is also given to young women after their clitorectomy. Receiving a _bokolanfini_ symbolizes their new status as capable women, rather than being children. Elder female potters generally administer this ritual procedure. Due to the loss of blood after such an excision, the mud cloth is said to help collect the woman’s _nyama_ that escapes her. These same _Bolkolanfini_ are worn during the woman’s marriage ceremony, and are used to wrap their newborn children. In addition, this important cloth is wrapped around the body of the deceased to protect the living from the _nyama_ being released from the dead.

Another way Bamana women are connected to the art and energy of their people is through pottery. Barbara E. Frank states that a “female potter is born into a family of blacksmiths and potters, who protect the secrets of their trades by endogamous marriage practices. The Bamana term for potter, _numumuso_, is generally translated as "blacksmith woman", but means much more than the wife or mother of a blacksmith.” They act as the female equivalent to their male counterpart. They perform the female circumcisions and must be present at all important coming of age events such as births, marriages and funerals. The female Bamana potters are often the main source of income for their family, not only by generating income from their hard labors of pottery production, but also for being a giver of advice and accepting offerings to style girls’ hair in intricate fashions.

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Like their husbands, the female potters have the ability to control and manipulate large amounts of *nyama* through their intimate work with raw clay. The preparatory work for the clay is very laborious. Due to the raw clay containing so much *nyama*, it must be handled properly or it could lead to severe consequences such as infertility, illness, or even death.\(^65\) Blacksmith women and their husbands are the only people permitted to remove clay from the pits due to their ability to appease and control the spirits, or *jinn* that preside there. In some cases, specific greetings and prayers are recited aloud. The women must also create a protective solution that she can use to coat her body in order to protect from the harmful gases that the earth emits while removing the raw clay. Other members of society do not go near the pits for fear of the control and power that the blacksmiths and their wives have over the clay pits and the inhabiting *jinn*.

Once the women carry back a large quantity of the raw clay, they begin the subsequent preparatory work such as removing any impurities and getting it to a working state. According to Barbara Frank, in the Kokoani region the Bamana women use a special platter to build their pots upon. This platter must be made by a blacksmith whose wife is already deceased, otherwise it is believed that the wood used in the platter contains such great *nyama* that if not already dead, she would certainly die during his attempt to complete such an assignment.\(^66\)

Most of the pottery made by the Mande women has been commissioned for a wide array of different uses such as grain storage and water collection to cooking vessels.


\(^{66}\) Ibid., 30.
Some women will also carry additional pots into the market to sell. The life of a woman potter can be very hard work. Their knowledge is kept within the family and passed down from generation to generation. Though many mothers wish to liberate their daughters from this life of hard work, they also want to uphold the tradition.

### Kongo

The Kongo use figures of women and children that work in a similar manner as the masculine nkondi. These female figures are smaller and more personalized like a household nkisi. However, they are not used maliciously and are not activated by driving nails into its body. LaGamma has stated that in the Kongo the sculptural arts of women secure their views on the continuation of life.\(^{67}\) Due to the slave trade leaving a low population count, it was necessary for the women to take on the responsibility of rebuilding their communities.

Women used reproductive medicine called Mpemba to help increase their fertility as well as using nkisi medicine to hold the special bilongo that would aid in their maternal concerns. A Belgian man, Nathanial De Cloone, who was in the Congo from 1893 to 1932 noted that in the Kongo, a mother not only acts as the conduit of life, but also as a means to instill social values into their children which become the next generations of society.\(^ {68}\) The Kongo women had to not only endure the extra

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\(^{67}\) Alisa LaGamma, Kongo: Power and Majesty (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art), 163.

\(^{68}\) Ibid.
responsibilities the male population could no longer fulfill, but also had to help rebuild their community and uphold their social ideals.

Figures 18 shows a female nkisi holding her child. At the center of her stomach one can view the cavity that once held the magical bilongo. In the catalogue for the Metropolitan Museum, LaGamma has stated that the stomach is the center of their being. Because her stomach is only the location where one can witness the growth of the child, it is obvious why the artisan has chosen it to be an appropriate place to fill with medicines that can help a female create and sustain new life. Even the small child the carved figure holds at her hip has a similar smaller cavity in the same location.

Nsemi Isaki wrote that nkisi “is a hiding place for people’s souls, to keep and compose in order to preserve life.” It is of interest that the word nkisi carries many definitions that all refer to the same notion that these implements can be used to harness the vital energy of life. In Figure 18, we can see a visual reference to the magical idea that these figures combined with the right herbal inclusions can help assure the security of the Kongo society as well as the physiological connection of the importance of women and their reproductive qualities.

Figure 19 shows a seated female nursing. Like the previous carved sculpture, the woman’s mouth is seen agape revealing her sharp teeth. The exposure of her teeth may indicate sexual interests as well as a fierceness that goes along with motherhood. When it comes to a mother caring for and protecting her child, or in this case the re-building of Kongo society, nothing is more intense than the passion a mother has for her loved ones. The small child is seen reclining in a natural position in the mother’s lap with his right

69 Wyatt MacGaffey, "Fetishism Revisited: Kongo Nkisi in Sociological Perspective.", 173.
hand outstretched to grasp the breast he is feeding from. Not only is this a common and natural implication of breastfeeding, it also shows their intimate connection.

This figure does not have a distinct cavity for the bilongo but rather a resin pack placed just below the center of her breast, above the feeding child. I chose this image because not only does it demonstrate the life giving nourishment a mother provides, it also reiterates that women’s bodies are seen as great vessels that can help future generations and transmit the energy of life.

**Luba**

The art of the Luba is plentiful with imagery of women in order to create visual balance of the genders within the kingdom. Because all of the official titleholders are men, it is believed that the presence of women helps create visual equality. Another reason for this practice is due to the king’s profound spiritual connection with the past rulers and their wives. Professor Mutombo Nkulu-N’Sengha stated that:

The king is often referred to as the wife of a deity, and there is a certain element of women’s power found in the personality of the king who embodies both males and female elements. Anything in art that the king touches will always have a figure of women. When it comes to life, women have a special connection with the ancestor and with the source of life itself.\(^\text{70}\)

For example, men use bow stands and stools with female iconography. During divination practices a diviner will have his wife sit next to him to create balance and a symbolic link that honors their ancestors and encourages participation. In Luba art, there is a consistent

reference to the power of women and the society pays homage to them as being the primary source of power through their arts and practices.

The Luba are a patrilineal society but the next heir is always the son of the king’s sister rather than the king’s own son. This tradition shows a matrilineal connection that is unique to the way Luba societies balance the leadership and demonstrate a strong connection to their ancestors. This idea begins at a child’s birth where the names are not gendered but are chosen based upon which ancestor spirit had come to visit in a dream. Mutombo Nkulu-N’Sengha believes that this matrilineal concept of passing on kingship is based on the belief in *bumuntu*, or humanity. Mutombo stated: “At the center of this life, women are the ones giving life. The foundation of kingship is the women.”

The female figures’ presence acts to balance the role of the male, showing that even though a male rules in a more public way, it is the women who play the key roles in alliance building, decision making, and creating the foundation in which spiritual connections can be made with guardian sprits called *bavidye*. Even the royal staff, *mulumbu* more often than not includes a prominent female figure. In Dr. Smith’s course on Art of Central Africa, I learned that another important reason for depicting women in most Luba art is because Luba women are believed to carry the sacred secrets of royalty and kingship within their breasts. It is also believed by the Luba that each Luba king is

71 Ibid., 69.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid., 68.

74 Ibid.
incarnated from the first female spirit medium, Mwadi.\textsuperscript{75} It is necessary that a female medium is utilized because the Luba people accredit the female body as being the only form powerful enough to contain the spirit of a king. According to the Luba all power is dual. A common Luba proverb states, “Men are chiefs in daylight, and women are chiefs during the night.”\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{75} John Pemberton, \textit{Insight and artistry in African divination}, 72.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

In yoga one connects with their life force through the practice of pranayama. The act of following one’s breath allows one to become fully present; body, mind, and spirit. Pranayama connects the practitioner to the energy of the universe, which presides within us all. By writing this thesis, I hope to have shown that like the ancient Indian cultures that created yoga, African cultures have also found ways to link their own spiritual nature to the energy that we all share. In Bill Nye’s commencement speech at Rutgers University in 2015 he stated:

“Researchers have proven scientifically, that humans are all one people. The color of our ancestors’ skin and ultimately my skin and your skin is a consequence of ultra-violet light, of latitude and climate. Despite our recent sad conflicts here in the U.S., there is really no such thing, scientifically, as race. We are one species. Each of us is much more alike than we are different. We all came from Africa. We’re all made of the same stardust. We’re all going to live and die on the same planet- a pale blue dot in the vastness of space…”

After discussing art from the Yoruba, Bamana, Kongo, and Luba, I have shown that outside of western cultures there are many societies that have found ways to use

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energy to benefit themselves and their communities. These four African cultures are only a starting point, and by expanding exploration of different culture’s concepts of energy and ways to manifest them, we can grow from there and see the universal connection between us all. Once attuned to the energy that surrounds us we can better understand our world and natural resources and use them in a way to help heal, protect, and transform. By obtaining and utilizing the different traditions passed down by our ancestors we all have the ability to tap into the universal energy that surrounds us and use it to our advantage.

The profound link between the four cultures I have discussed is their understanding of earth’s sacred energy. Through their works of art they have all been able to manifest tangible forms that convey this vital life force. As a result, their art shows a deep respect for nature and the innate energy that animates all living things. The Yoruba, Bamana, Kongo, and Luba have found a way to tap into the power of our earth and the energy of their deities, spiritual realm, and ancestors. Their consciousness and knowledge of the links between visible and invisible realms has enabled them to guide their communities out of times of hardship.

In the art produced by the Yoruba, one can see definitive forms that signify the link between the living and the spiritual. The respective use of the conical form denotes the passage between realms. The use of animals and symbols indicate the link between all earth’s creatures. Finally, the use of the female form provides evidence that the Yoruba are highly respectful of females and their capability to carry life within them.

The Bamana use several different mask forms to connect their age grade associations with the powers and forces of our earth. Each mask represents a different
stage in life or characteristic that is necessary to maintain a balanced community. The blacksmiths in particular are sought out to be healers and overall men of wisdom that can be knowledgeable in any situation. It is because these men have been educated about the intrinsic fundamental energy that pervades all things that they are able to be useful in many situations from cleansing and healing to warding off dangerous spirits.

The Kongo people have been able to use spiritually charged divination figures to help fulfill their communal needs, from repopulating society to persecuting wrong doers. By being aware of how to manage the spirits and energy from our earth, they have been successful at controlling their environment and the people within it. As a result of their traditional beliefs in nkisi and nkondi they have been able to uphold and restore their kingdom.

The art produced by the Luba shows a strong devotion to females and their life bearing potential. Their divination art and rituals illustrates how united the Luba are with the earth and its capacity to either help or harm people. They have been able to use numerous elements from nature to assist their people in finding the desired outcome to their societal issues ranging from commerce to fertility.

I have examined the ways in which these cultures are able to manipulate energy to their own advantage. All of the powerful objects I have discussed demonstrate these cultures’ intrinsic connection with earth and how they can tap into her efficacious energy. In most cases, it is their knowledge of earth’s elements that allow them to effectively succeed in their social endeavors. By being conscious of how all life is connected to one another and our earth we can not only better understand one another, but we can harness the dynamic energy that embodies all living things and use it in a way that can help heal
and ameliorate illness and hardship. I hope that by recognizing different cultures’ concepts of energy scholars will be able to apply their knowledge to a new global perspective.
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Figure 1. Porogun Quarter, Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria, 1992
Figure 2. Yoruba Ifa Divination Tapper (Iroke Ifa)
Nigeria; Ivory. 12in, Baltimore Museum of Art
Figure 3. Nigerian; Yoruba people Opon Ifa (Divination Tray); carved wood 3/4 x 12 7/8 x 16 in.
Smith College Museum of Art, http://www.smith.edu/artmuseum/
Figure 4. Ifa Divination Vessel; Female Caryatid (Agere Ifa); Ivory, wood or coconut shell inlay. Nigeria, Guinea Coast
Figure 6. Veranda Post of Enthroned King and Senior Wife (Opo Ogoga)  
By: Olowe of Ise Yoruba Ikere, Ekiti region, Nigeria. From the palace of the ogoga (king) of Ikere 1910/14; Wood and pigment  
152.5 x 31.75 x 40.6 cm (60 x 12 1/2 x 16 in.)  
Figure 7. Ifa bowl, carved by Olowe. Kneeling female figure with bowl (olumeye); Wood, pigment, and paint. Dallas Museum of Art.
Figure 9. Staff for Shango. Yoruba; Wood, 15” University of California, San Diego

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Figure 10. Bamana Hunter’s Shirt, (donso duloki); Cloth (strip weave), leather, teeth, claws, aluminum, and yarn. Seattle Art Museum, http://www.seattleartmuseum.org
Figure 11. Bamana, Mali. N’Tomo mask. ARTstor slide gallery.
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Figure 12. Bamana, Kore Society Mask; Wood. (19 13/16 x 6 1/8 x 6 15/16 in.) Princeton University Art Museum. [http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/](http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/)
Figure 13. Bamana Chi-Wara; Wood, Animal Hyde, Hair, Pigment. Male (left) 37”, Female (right) 34”, http://www.discoverafricanart.com/Chi_wara_pair.html.
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Figure 14. Bamana, Komo Kun Mask, Wood, resin, feathers, quills, fibers, animal hair, 27 in., Indiana University Art Museum Bloomington, IN (Photograph: A History of Art in Africa)
Figure 15. Bamana Boli; Earth, organic material. ARTstor Slide Gallery. Data from University of California, San Diego.
Figure 16. Bamana, Mali, Bokolanfini; Cotton, Mud dye.
http://hum.lss.wisc.edu/hjdrewal/Textiles.html
Figure 17. Kongo, Republic of the Congo. N’Kondi: Mangaaka, 19th century; Wood, iron, resin, ceramic, plant fiber, textile, pigment. H. 46 1/2 in. (118 cm), W. 19 1/2 in. (49.5 cm), D. 15 1/2 in. (39.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/320053?&imgno=7&tabname=label.
Figure 18. Kongo, Standing Female with child. Photograph by: National Museum of World Cultures, Leiden.


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Figure 19. Kongo, Seated Female nursing child. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.
http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/sep/18/kongo-power-majesty-african-art-met
Figure 21. Luba Diviners with Lukasa
https://africa.uima.uiowa.edu/home/SearchForm?Search=lukasa&Go=Go
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Figure 22. Luba Diviners Bowl; Wood. ARTstor Slide Gallery.
Figure 23. Luba Caryatid stool; Wood, glass beads, string. Yale University Art Gallery. http://artgallery.yale.edu/.
Figure 24. Luba Divination Device, Kashekesheke; Wood. http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/84033.
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Further Reading


