



## TRADITIONAL SCULPTURE OF THE BETE TRIBE, IVORY COAST

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In vain should we look through standard publications treating the art of Black Africa in search of information on the Bete tribe. Although this tribe living in the centre of the former French colony of Ivory Coast is relatively a big one, we won't succeed in finding any references to it — as would be expected — even in the hitherto most extensive French representative publication on African art, which was written in the sixties by the then head of the department of Black Africa at Musée de l'Homme of Paris, Jacqueline Delange,<sup>1</sup> nor in a similar book by the director of African collections at the Musée des arts africains et océaniens in the same period, Pierre Meauzé.<sup>2</sup> It wasn't even mentioned at the great international exhibition of African art which was organized within the framework of the first International Festival of Negro Art in Dakar in 1966<sup>3</sup> and was later repeated in Paris.

Although the Bete are mentioned in the classic work by Eckart von Sydow<sup>4</sup> under a problematical denomination of Shien already in 1930, this reference is based on a single mask of the then Trocadero (Cat. No. 61,218) which was published in the preceding year by Basler<sup>5</sup> and in 1954 in Sydow's posthumously published work.<sup>6</sup> The datum on its origin, however, seems to be incorrect. This mask undoubtedly belongs to the Dan-Ngere stylistic complex, with which the art of the Bete is usually associated,



but it is not on the margin of its influence and it does not reveal any characteristic features of the now known masks that were influenced by this complex.

As far as I know a real Bete sculpture first marked by this tribe's name was published by William Fagg in 1964 in connection with the well-known West Berlin exhibition of African Art, perhaps in order to fulfill the formal goal set out in the title of the exhibition, that is the presenting of 100 various tribes.<sup>7</sup> The figure was lent to Berlin by the Abidjan Museum, where at that time Bohumil Holas, an expert on Africa of Czech origin, was the director. In the following years he published other Bete figures and masks from the collections of the Abidjan Museum.<sup>8</sup> A correctly ethnically labelled and highly stylized Bete mask was also published in the sixties by William Bascom.<sup>9</sup> In the same year (1967) I published an animal mask stating this ethnical origin<sup>10</sup> together with seven other masks to which I did not give a detailed ethnical marking for reasons stated in the introduction to the cited book (pp. 23—24).

Obviously this does not mean that this tribe's objects of art were unknown until the sixties. Some specimens must have been included in museums' as well as private collections a long time before this period and wrongly considered to be products of the neighbouring tribes of Ngere and Guro, the sculptures of which show similar features as those of the Bete, or they were correctly labelled in museum catalogues and other records without ever having been published. This is for example true of one of the oldest known Bete figures in the Ipswich Museum, which was collected in 1912 but had not been published until 1979.<sup>11</sup> The former case, i. e. the Bete sculpture being ascribed to Ngere and Guro tribes is, however, the most common. For example a mask from the Chaim Gross collection published in 1976 as Bete, Liberia (sic!)<sup>12</sup> was shown already in 1959 marked as "Warthog initiation mask of the Ngere"<sup>13</sup> at the exhibition of African art at the Toledo Museum of Art and two years later the same mask was labelled by L. Segy as "Initiation ceremony mask. Guere-Ouobe".<sup>14</sup> The mask, well known from Kjersmeier's classic work,<sup>15</sup> originally attributed to the Dan tribe, associated with the Ngere-Wobe by Vandenhoute<sup>16</sup> and later cautiously labelled "Ngere stil, Elfenbenkysten og Liberia" by the editors of the Kjersmeier collection catalogue<sup>17</sup> can serve as another example.



Since the beginning of the seventies Bete masks and rarely even figures can be found with correct ethnical labelling in auction catalogues as well. That makes even more incomprehensible the fact, that as late as in 1978 ten Bete masks were published unmarked in a catalogue of a private Paris gallery exhibition under a promising title "Guere-Wobe-Bete" (the other masks were unmarked too), although in the introduction the collector speaks of his field experience and therefore he must have been familiar with their origin.<sup>18</sup> And since in 1978 it was unthinkable to be unfamiliar with the importance of documentation, the concealing of this basic information can only be considered as intentional. With regard to this it is interesting to note, that Pierre Mauzé published in his above mentioned book of 1968 one of the masks from the Henri Kamer collection in Cannes,<sup>19</sup> which undoubtedly comes from the Bete, under the incorrect label of Ngere-Wobe.

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William Fagg has written in his commentary on the above mentioned Bete figure from the Abidjan Museum: "The Bete are a substantial tribe of the South-central Ivory Coast about whom surprisingly little information is available in the literature."<sup>20</sup> This is particularly true of the art production of this tribe. That is also what Fagg had in mind, because he goes on to say: "It would seem that their old hunting-and-gathering economy has been rather sharply acculturated to dependence on the exportation of coffee, and this upset to the tribal way of life is perhaps responsible for the paucity of documented specimens of their art." This explanation is surely only partial. The territory of the Bete tribe has been accessible since the beginning of the century. After all the first available information on the Bete, relevant to a certain degree also to their art, comes from the year 1903.<sup>21</sup> Coffee and cocoa plantations were introduced to the forested part of central Ivory Coast only between 1920 and 1930. Even though the impact on ecology as well as on the way of life of the Bete tribe must have been great, it is difficult to imagine — with regard to the size of the territory and also to the substantiality of the tribe — that it should have been so sudden and penetrating, that owing to it their once certainly grand and wide-spread art, whose existence can be deduced from what we know today from world collections, should have disappeared almost without trace and notice. If the production of the western, eastern and northern



parts of this former French colony has belonged to the best known and most sought after by collectors almost from the beginning of European interest in African art, why should the central part have stayed so remote from this interest as to remain undocumented in the greatest French museums? After all European impact has caused the annihilation of traditional culture in other parts of Africa too, and yet their art is well-known in spite of some information being no longer available. There is no point in devising unfounded hypotheses based on analogy about why this should be so. Historical research in the colonization process in this area would probably yield a definite answer to this question.

It was only in 1939 that the first more substantial study on the Bete culture was published.<sup>22</sup> In spite of the promising title no reference can be found in it to traditional sculpture, almost as if it had never existed. In contrast with the first reports of Thomann from the beginning of the century, it does not mention anything, that would have an at least secondary connection to sculpture, for example tattoo or hair arrangement. After the second world war literature on Bete increased in number, but again it threw almost no new light at the knowledge concerning their traditional sculpture. In the first place it was C. Hallouin's study from 1947<sup>23</sup> and nine years later an exclusively comparative economic study by A. J. Köbben.<sup>24</sup> Thus first information on the Bete sculpture based on personal field experience can be found in Denise Paulme's monograph of 1962.<sup>25</sup> The author does not mention figures at all. She speaks only of masks and her statements concerning these are contradictory. She for example claims that "one feature distinguishes the Bete from the Dan and Guere, their forest neighbours, that is — the absence of masks."<sup>26</sup> Previous to this she, however, states: "several Bete masks, which are to be seen, are second-rate copies of Guere masks and they are displayed on the official holidays of July 14 and January 1, sometimes even on Sundays."<sup>27</sup> This would prove that the masks were an acquired innovation not deeply rooted in native tradition and that they were used only at festive occasions of European yearly cycle. In contrast with this she says elsewhere: "Sometimes a mask will appear at a funeral of a significant personage." That on the other hand would testify to the usage of masks in traditional Bete culture, just as a report of an informant according to whom "after men have left for a war expedition, two or three



masks are kept at the entrance to the village to prevent a deserter from coming in, and to give a respectful welcome to the home-coming victors." In fact this points to a very old tradition, because it is unlikely that an informant should have invented this and in the fifties war expeditions were certainly a matter of bygone history.

The fragmentary and contradictory character of Denise Paulme's reports seems to result from the fact that the research had covered only a small part of the Bete territory, i. e. the Daloa *subdivision*. After all even the above cited study by Hallouin was limited to this area and so was the hitherto most recent and important report on Bete art based on the field research of A. M. Rood, published in 1969,<sup>28</sup> which will be discussed later. Rood, however, gives a more complicated picture of the carving production than D. Paulme does. In the first place he undoubtedly managed to penetrate deeper into the local conditions and secondly he was familiar with the Bete objects of art and commentaries on them which were in the meantime published by B. Holas in the sixties. Unfortunately A. M. Rood's important reports are not illustrated by reproductions of the various types of masks that are being discussed.

B. Holas seems to be the only researcher in African art who, as can be deduced from short notes in his illustrated publications, was familiar with the whole Bete territory, especially that of the south-eastern part of the Gagnoa *subdivision*, which is of particular importance to the knowledge of Bete art. If he had personally obtained for the Abidjan Museum the figures he had published, he was probably the only researcher to have seen them *in situ*. As far as I know, however, he had never completely published the informations he had gathered on Bete art, not even in his large monograph dealing with this tribe.<sup>29</sup>

And that is all that has so far been ever published on the Bete. It seems quite possible that further study, particularly that of archival documents will yield important forgotten data that will clarify the tribe's history of art and its role in the society. But till then we must make do with the little that we know and with the information which can be obtained from the preserved Bete sculptures themselves. That is why it is so important to publish as much as possible of this material, if it's available, and



thus reduce the "paucity of documented specimens of their art" to minimum.

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As I have already mentioned in the above cited book on African tribal masks, the Náprstek Museum in Prague owns a quite extensive collection of Bete sculptures. This collection has been acquired in several stages. The first part was purchased in December 1934, the second part in July 1935 from Alexander Golovin (born 1905), who studied architecture and for a short time also sculpture in Prague. The collection was assembled by his brother, Vladimir Golovin M. D. (born 22. 7. 1902), student at the Prague Medical Faculty of the Charles University, where he graduated on 12. 10. 1928 and went to work to the Ivory Coast in the early thirties. He sent his brother in Prague these African sculptures apparently so that he could sell them here. Eight photographs documenting doctor's Golovin trip to the Ivory Coast have survived in the archives of the Museum. Two of them are snaps taken from the verandah of his African bungalow, the masks and figures on the walls can mostly be identified as objects to be found in the Prague Museum collection. Golovin's museum collection from the years 1934 and 1935 contains 6 human figures, one ritual object with a human head, one ritual object with an anthropo-zoomorphic (?) head, one haddle pulley decorated by a human head and 20 masks, besides one mask of doubtful tribal provenance. In addition to Bete sculptures Golovin's collection contains 2 Guro masks, 2 Baule masks and one figure of this tribe. Besides wood-carvings, 22 ethnographic objects are included in the collection. All the objects have been listed in the museum book of records under Nos. 25—28/35 and 210—232/35. The individual objects have their provenance stated as that of the Bete (in nine cases Bété-Shien), the *cercle* (as that of Sassandra or Daloa) or the *sub-division* (as Soubré, Gagnoa) and in some cases both of these denominations are given, the *tribu* and in several cases even the name of the locality.

Originally Golovin's collection had been larger. This is recorded in the diary of the greatest Czech collector of African art, writer Joe Hloucha (1881—1957), kept in the museum's archive. From the diary we learn that at least a part of the collection had already been in Prague in April 1933 and then it kept coming to Prague gradually. At that time Hloucha made the acquaintance



of Alexander Golovin and bought from him two masks from the Ivory Coast. Between April 1933 and August 1935 Hloucha purchased from Golovin the total of five masks and four figures from the Ivory Coast, but it is not known whether they were all of Bete origin; apparently they were not. In 1936 Hloucha sold a large part of his collection of African art to the Náprstek Museum. Among other specimens there were two Bete figures (Cat. Nos. 26,569 and 26,570) and one Bete mask (Cat. No. 26,568). As can be proved these three objects had been among those purchased by Hloucha from Golovin a short time previously. Owing to the fact that both of the figures had been part of a private collection, no data on their origin are available. The data on the mask, on the other hand, are fortunately very precise. They have been inscribed apparently by Golovin's hand on the inner side of the mask. As the museum had bought other woodcarvings of Hloucha's from the Ivory Coast besides the Bete sculptures, it seems quite possible that there were other objects among them which had originally belonged to Golovin. Obviously Hloucha had not been the only person that Golovin had done business with. It is also a well-known fact that especially in the period of the second world war Hloucha sold his specimens to many Prague collectors. Therefore other Bete sculptures of Golovin's may have become private property, either through Hloucha or from Golovin himself and they may not yet have been discovered. It seems that the museum was fortunate enough in securing one of them in 1973. At present it is the biggest female Bete figure owned by the Náprstek Museum forming a pair with a male figure which had been acquired through Hloucha.

At a party in December 1934 Hloucha met a young economist famous for having recently undertaken a hazardous and adventurous journey to Kabul and back to Prague in his small motor-car. The young man himself later became a passionate collector of African and tribal art in general, and in the period between January 1940 and November 1945 he purchased at least 17 African wood-carvings from Hloucha. He was no other than the later *directeur du Centre des sciences humaines, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire*, Bohumil Holas. And it was the Holas family that the museum obtained the above mentioned female Bete figure from. It seems unlikely, however, that Holas should have acquired this figure through Hloucha. Surely Holas had also other sources for en-



larging his collection, it is probable that he knew Golovin and obtained it directly from him.

We also have Hloucha's testimony on a remarkable wood-carving from Golovin's collection, but the search for this object in Prague has been so far unsuccessful. It was a small round table, the desk of which was supported by three human karyatids. This table can be seen in one of the photographs taken from the verandah of Golovin's African bungalow and it resembles a similar table of the Ngere which is reproduced in Viand's monograph on this tribe.<sup>50</sup> The photograph, however, is unclear and the table is partly covered by another object making it impossible to judge the ethnical origin of the table from it.



Catalogue of Bete Sculptures  
in the Náprstek Museum

(The geographical data on the origin of the individual objects are stated according to the museum sources. The data in parentheses are given to make the information complete.)

1. A standing female figure of light-brown wood, painted brown-black, with a dull shiny patina. The projecting parts of the body (nose, lips, nipples, fingers) are very worn by long usage. This points to the considerable age of the figure at the time when it was collected. The soles are missing, they were destroyed by insects. The figure probably stood by itself without a platform. The crown of the head is egg-shaped, the hair growth is smooth and set away from the forehead. A vertical scarification keloid runs down the center of the forehead. The eyes are horizontal with narrow incisions, seemingly looking downwards, the mouth is horizontal and closed. On the right cheek near the lower edge of the nose there is a small finely carved rectangle divided into four parts by three vertical grooves. This tattooing seems to be secondary. The now little perceptible scarification keloids forming an arch from the root of the nose across the cheeks towards the ears, disappearing in the center of the cheeks are primary. The column-shaped neck is smooth with a slightly protruding Adam's apple. With the light falling from the side it is evident, however, that originally the neck was decorated by five ringed folds standing out in low relief, which have been partly rubbed off and partly they disappeared under the layer of patina. The trunk is column-shaped, on the left hip there is a plastically carved scarification arch disappearing under a layer of patina, round the naval there is a disc carved in relief with diagonally radiating incisions. On the back, along the whole length of the trunk, the spine is indicated by a groove, from which a chain of plastically carved small rectangles stands out. Originally perhaps a lightly protruding belt ran vertically down the centre of the chest to the naval, now it is barely visible. A wide strip of white paint, now rubbed off to a great extent, assymmetrically coils round the whole figure. White paint used to form a big triangle on the right half of the forehead<sup>31</sup> and it extends diagonally from the right temple across the cheek to the chin. On the left side of the face there is a vertical, slightly curved band running from



the hairline across the left temple to the edge of the mandible and another shorter band runs paralelly with the first one from the left ear downwards (the scheme of decoration of the figure is attached, Nos. 1a—1d). The white band is secondary or it has been renovated. That is also proved by its application on the worn parts of the buttocks.

h. 65 cm (present state without soles)

Bete, *c.* Sassandra, *subd.* Gagnoa, *tribu* Pacolo, village Seriho (perhaps identical with the Seriyó location to the south-west of Gagnoa on the road connecting the towns of Sassandra and Gagnoa)

Cat. No. 7,628

Note: An anotation written by the collector has survived identifying the tribe as Bété Shien, the record book gives only Bete.

2. A mask carved of yellow-white soft wood, painted grey-brown, with a smooth dull shiny surface, oval, convex. A vertical band of scarification runs down the centre of the forehead. The hairline is heart-shaped and proceeds from the temples in a curved line of scarification granules to the nasal bone. The eyes have no slits, the pupils are made of large iron nails. The nose is triangular, the rectangular mouth projects forward. In it four pairs of teeth can be distinguished, the upper pair of central incisors has been filed. A plait of fair hair has been woven into the crest-shaped hairstyle.

h. 39 cm

Bete, *c.* Sassandra (*subd.* Gagnoa), *tribu* Pacolo, village Baloneoalegnoa

Cat. No. 7,656

Publication: Herold, *op. cit.*, pl. 23

3. A mask carved of pale wood, painted grey-brown, with smooth dull shiny surface. Above the forehead the hairline forms two arch-shaped lines, the headdress forming two horns at the crown of the head. The cheeks are marked by scarification on both sides of the nose in the shape of slanting rectangles with cross-hatch pattern. The nose is triangular. The rectangular projecting mouth holds six pairs of teeth, the upper central incisors have been filed. The right half of the mask has been damaged by insects.



h. 44,5 cm

Bete, *c. Sassandra*, *subd. Gagnoa*, *tribu Pacolo*, village  
Doudonkou

Cat. No. 26,568

4. A mask carved of pale wood, painted brown-black, with a dull shiny surface. It represents a long human face with a high arched forehead with a vertical scarification keloid running in its center. Brows in the shape of half-moons project above the large eye holes. The lower half of the face is styled into a low cone which ends in a small open mouth. The hairstyle forms a crest-shaped ridge at the crown of the head. Six strings have been inserted in the chin to form a beard. Two diagonal scarification lines run from the ears to the lower edge of the nose.

h. 28 cm      w. 15,5 cm

Bete, *c. Sassandra* (*subd. Gagnoa*), *tribu Zédié*

Cat. No. 7,654

Publication: Herold, *op. cit.*, pl. 21

5. A mask almost identical with the preceding one. Traces of white paint have remained in the scarification grooves on the cheeks, originally there was a line of white dots along the hairline on the forehead, but most of it has been rubbed off. No beard.

h. 28 cm      w. 14,5 cm

Bete (*c. Sassandra*), *subd. Gagnoa*, *tribu Zédié*

Cat. No. 7,625

6. A mask almost identical with the preceding one. A line of white paint runs along the hairline on the forehead (partly rubbed off).

h. 26,5 cm      w. 13 cm

Bete (*c. Sassandra*), *subd. Gagnoa*, *tribu Zédié*

Cat. No. 7,624

Note: The words "half-breeds of the Guro" have been written by the collector on the surviving note.

7. A mask almost identical with the previous one, but with a different hairstyle forming a disc-shaped ornament at the crown of the head. Its front side is decorated by a simple geometric design.

h. 32 cm      w. 13,5 cm

Bete, *c. Sassandra* (*subd. Gagnoa*), *tribu Zédié*

Former Cat. No. 7,655



Note: The Náprstek Museum exchanged this mask with the Austrian collector H. L. Diamond from Vienna in 1968.

8. A mask carved of yellow-white light-weight wood, painted grey-brown. It represents a stylized human face with a domed forehead in the centre of which runs a vertical scarification keloid. From its centre scarification in the shape of a fish-bone radiates to both sides. The projecting lower part of the face is tilted forward. Slanting eye holes, a massive but narrow nose, the slit-like projecting mouth is connected with the nose by a low bridge. Asymmetrical scarification bands made of granules line the cheeks. The straight broad side walls of the mask are set at a right angle to the flat cheeks. At the edge of the cheeks, under the eyes there are bulging protuberances. Along the chin-line there are holes into which brown strings have been inserted to form a beard.

h. 25,5 cm      w. 15 cm

Bete, c. Sassandra (*subd.* Gagnoe), *tribu* Gottibono,  
village Podié

Cat. No. 7,658

9. A mask similar to the preceding one. The forehead is slightly arched, the scarification on the forehead on both sides of the vertical keloids forms cross-hatched rectangles, there is no scarification on the cheeks, the eyes are straight, no brows, the mouth holds two iron teeth. Remnants of white wash colour are evident at the crown of the head, on the side walls, round the eyes and on the nose.

h. 31 cm      w. 19 cm

Bete, c. Sassandra (*subd.* Gagnoe), *tribu* Gottibono,  
village Podié

Cat. No. 7,659

Publication: Herold, *op. cit.*, pl. 22

10. A mask similar to the preceding one. No scarification on the forehead or on the cheeks. The brows are indicated by a triple line of granules.

h. 31 cm      w. 20 cm

Bete, c. Sassandra (*subd.* Gagnoe), *tribu* Gottibono,  
village Podié

Cat. No. 7,660



11. A mask carved of pale wood, the surface is painted black-brown. It represents a stylized human face which takes the form of a slightly concave oval with a nose shaped like a triangular pyramid and a mouth cut in low relief projecting from it. Rectangular hollows without slits have been made to indicate the eyes. Above them is a horizontally placed arch cut together with the mask from one piece of wood. There are holes at the corners of the mouth into which twisted strips of skin with fur have been inserted to replace a beard (there is only one strip of bare skin left). The broad side walls are set at an angle of almost 90° to the surface of the face. There are holes along the edge of the chin into which tufts of coloured bast have been inserted.

h. 27 cm      w. 13 cm

Bete (c. Sassandra), *subd.* Gagnoa, *tribu* Gottibono

Cat. No. 7,619

12. A mask carved of pale wood, the surface is painted brown-black. The oval, slightly concave face has a large nose in the shape of a triangular pyramid, eyes without slits are cut in a low relief, a small oblong hollow indicates the mouth. Under the eyes, on either cheek there is a tube-shaped protuberance and into its hollow a strip of skin with fur has been inserted. A horizontal arche made of a bent rod has been fitted into the holes of the mask and placed above the eyes. Holes have been bored along the edge of the chin and tufts of coloured bast have been threaded through them to look like a beard.

h. 30,4 cm      w. 15 cm

Bete (c. Sassandra), *subd.* Gagnoa, *tribu* Gottibono

Cat. No. 7,618

13. A mask carved of pale wood, the surface is painted brown-black. It represents a human face of an almost oval shape, the wide side walls are set at an angle of nearly 90° to the face. The forehead which constitutes almost the whole upper half of the mask is domed, and has a vertical scarification keloid running through its centre. The horizontally placed eyes form small rectangular slits. The eyelids or brows as well as the nostrils are suggested by plastically carved circle segments. The mouth takes the form of a small oblong hollow. At its corners holes have been bored and rolls of skin with black fur have been inserted (one is missing). The chin is decorated by a beard similar to that of the two preceding masks.



h. 29 cm      w. 16 cm

Bete (c. Sassandra), *subd.* Gagnoa, *tribu* Gottibono

Cat. No. 7,620

14. A mask carved of pale, light-weight wood, its surface is dull, dyed black. It represents the front part of a human head and neck. A vertical scarification mark runs down the centre of the domed forehead, the lower half of the mask forms a concave area with a large prominent nose in the shape of a triangular pyramid. The eyes take the shape of small rectangular slits and above them, carved in low relief, are the half-moons of the upper eyelids or brows. A small oblong hollow forms the mouth. On the cheeks, on either side of the nose there is tattooing taking the form of two horizontal short, deep lines. The forehead is defined by three projecting arches which indicate the hair growth.

h. 29,3 cm      w. 15 cm

Bete (?), Sinfra (?)

Cat. No. 7,622

Note: The original collector's annotation on this mask has not survived, and the record book gives an absurd provenance of "Baule, Sinfra".

15. An anthropo-zoomorphic (?) mask carved of pale wood, the face is concave and in its centre are horizontal slit-like eyes with holes, the narrow nose is of conic shape. The face is bevelled at the bottom and two horizontal grooves have been cut into the thus formed oval surface to suggest the mouth. Square tattoos mark the cheeks. There is a pair of flat horns at the crown of the head. The edges of the mask form a rectangular frame, the face hollow is in the shape of a quadrilateral pyramid. A pair of holes have been burnt into the upper edge of the side walls so that the mask could be attached, but they do not reveal any signs of usage. The surface of the mask is covered by white wash pigment, the leave-shaped areas on the forehead and the eye grooves as well as the mouth are brown-red, the broad peripheral band with plastical grating is black.

h. 41,5 cm      w. 17 cm

Bete Shien (c. Sassandra), *subd.* Gagnoa, *tribu* Badié

Cat. No. 7,626

Publication: Herold, *op. cit.*, pl. 15

16. A mask carved of pale wood with polychrome, similar to the preceding one. From the crown of the mask itself a pole-



-shaped neck with a miniature human head protrudes. There are no eye-slits, and the mask varies from the preceding one in the ornament on the forehead, the peripheral band (no ornament here) and the polychrome. The head on the attachment has a crest-shaped hairstyle, round ears, open eyes with their whites coloured white and pupils coloured black. The tattooing forms four double vertical grooves on the cheeks below mouth level, two triple horizontal grooves at the temples, and in the centre of the forehead, one above the other, are two double horizontal and one double arch-shaped grooves. The hollow of the mask is in the shape of a quadrilateral pyramid.

h. 70 cm      w. 18 cm

Bete Shien (*c. Sassandra*), *subd. Gagnoa, tribu Badié*

Cat. No. 7,623

Publication: Herold, *op. cit.*, pl. 17

17. An anthropo-zoomorphic (?) mask carved of pale wood with a brown-black, smooth, dull surface, similar to the two preceding masks, particularly to No. 15 (Cat. No. 7,626). The mask has a line of holes along its edge where a garment or a fringe were attached, at mouth level connecting the side walls is a bar by which the mask was held in the teeth of the wearer.

h. 37 cm      w. 17 cm

Bete, *c. Sassandra (subd. Gagnoa), tribu Pacolo*

Cat. No. 7,653

18. An anthropo-zoomorphic (?) head on a long column-shaped pedestal which protrudes from an eleven-sided pyramid, carved of pale wood, no paint, no patina. The head is styled similarly as the three preceding masks, the difference is in the tattooing which has been burnt in. On the front side of the pole horizontal lines have been burnt in. In the height of 6 cm from the lower end of the pole is a ringed set of deep vertical incisions, which may have served for the attachment of feathers.

h. 84 cm

Bete Shien (*c. Sassandra*), *subd. Gagnoa, tribu Neridé*

Cat. No. 7,634

Note: In the manuscript list of purchases the object is marked as a "totem", the provenance is stated as "*tribu Niabré, from the village Afradomnou, subd. Gagnoa*".



19. A head on a column-shaped neck which protrudes from a massive pedestal in the shape a truncated cone. Carved of pale wood, the surface is painted black. The head is egg-shaped, the eyes horizontal, the nose narrow with a sharp ridge, the mouth is indicated by a small arch and juts out. There is square tattooing on the cheeks under the eyes (the tattoo grooves under the eyes are filled with white pigment). A quadruple line forming four arches separates the face from the crown of the head. The hairstyle is crest-shaped at the nape of the neck and forms a tooth-like protuberance at the crown of the head. The surface of the neck is completely lined by scarification. The whole periphery of the pedestal is decorated by a band of concentric triangles.

h. 40 cm (h. of head 18 cm)

Bete, c. Sassandra (*subd.* Gagnoa), *tribu* Badié

Cat. No. 7,670

20. A zoomorphic mask carved of pale wood, painted black. It represents an animal head with curved horns and an open mouth. The eyes are in the shape of low truncated cones, the narrow straight nose is anthropomorphic. The ears are wedge-shaped. The points of the horns, the upper facets of the eyes, the ears and the edge of the mouth are covered by white wash pigment, which has also been used to indicate tattooing along the sides of the nose.

h. 37,5 cm      w. 19 cm

Bete Shien, c. Sassandra, *subd.* Gagnoa, *tribu* Niabré

Cat. No. 7,627

Publication: Herold, *op. cit.*, pl. 12

21. A figure of a man standing on a circular pedestal, carved of pale wood, the surface is dull, painted black-brown. The head is narrow, flattened at the sides. The hairstyle separated from the forehead by a quadruple line forming four arches, is indicated by plastical carving and by a narrow strip of monkey fur with long black hairs. The eyes form crescents with the open sides facing upwards, the eye sockets are filled with white paint, the hollows under the eyes with red paint. The elongated neck is marked by vertical and diagonal stripes of scarification. Similar scarification is on the lower part of the trunk. Legs without feet grow straight out of the pedestal. A necklace of a double string of glass beads.



h. 87,5 cm

Bete Shien, c. *Sassandra* (*subd.* *Gagnoa*), *tribu* Niabré

Cat. No. 7,657

22. A standing female figure without pedestal, carved of pale light-weight wood, painted black. The head is egg-shaped, the mouth juts out forward and forms a small arch with its open side facing upwards, scarification in the form of small squares on the cheeks and traces of white paint. The hairline forms two arches of four parallel grooves, the hairstyle takes the form of an incised band running across the crown of the head down to the nape. Scarification indicated by notches marks the elongated column-shaped neck as well as the lower half of the trunk. A band of scarification with a pattern of plastic triangles under the breasts. On the abdomen under the bulging naval the scarification forms an arch. The sex organ is carved in relief and the area round it in the wide crotch is painted white.

h. 69,5 cm

Bete (private property of J. Hloucha from 1934 till 1936, since 1936 part of the Náprstek Museum collection. No other data on the provenance are available).

Cat. No. 26,570

23. A standing female figure without pedestal, carved of pale wood, the surface has been smoothed, it is shiny, painted grey-black. The woman carries a flat bowl resting on a circular base (or a stool?) on her head. The tattooing or scarification on the forehead takes the form of 5 plastical crosshatched squares, there are seven deep cuts on either cheek, one square at the root of the nose and at the back three pairs of squares one above the other. Seven grooves line the front of the column-shaped neck. Scarification in the shape of a crescent open downwards above the big naval hernia. A plastically carved loin-cloth passes between the legs. The figure has European shoes on her feet.

h. 65 cm

Bete Shien, s. *Sassandra*, *subd.* *Gagnoa*, *tribu* Niabré

Cat. No. 7,632

Note: To the existing annotation of the collector the words "Depicting a woman going to the bazar" have been added by a museum employee. The information is probably based on the statement of the collector.



24. A sitting female figure with a bowl on her head, carved of pale wood, the surface is painted brown-black. The head is egg-shaped and flattened at the sides, the eyes are horizontal, the mouth forms a curve with the open side facing upwards, the ears take the form of plastically projecting small discs. No scarification on the body. Schematically indicated legs without feet coalesce with the conical stool.

h. 58,5 cm

Bete Shien, s. *Sassandra*, *subd.* *Gagnoa*, *tribu* Niabré  
Cat. No. 7,631

25. A standing male figure in a tropical helmet (?), carved of light-weight pale wood, with dull, black-grey painted surface. The hands are upraised to shoulder level in front of the body. The figure is similar in style to the preceding one, there is no scarification. White tooth-sawed arches have been painted under the eyes. Legs without feet grow straight out of the oval pedestal.

h. 65 cm

Bete Shien (c. *Sassandra*), *subd.* *Gagnoa*, *tribu* Neredié  
Cat. No. 7,633

26. A standing male figure, without pedestal, carved of pale wood, the surface is dull, painted grey-black. The head rests on a column-shaped neck marked by scarification. The hairstyle forms a sharp crest at the crown of the head. The eyes, the teeth in an almost rectangular mouth, and the nails on the toes are covered by white pigment. The trunk is cylinder-shaped with large naval hernia, underneath, on the abdomen, three parallel arch-shaped grooves with the open side facing upwards seem to indicate scarification. Bronze manillas are fixed on the arms. According to an old published photograph the figure had a string with a pendant of perhaps antelope horn round its neck.<sup>32</sup>

h. 81 cm

Bete (Private property of Joe Hloucha in the years 1933—1936, since 1936 part of the Náprstek Museum collection. No other data on the provenance are in existence.)  
Cat. No. 26,569

27. A standing female figure, no pedestal, carved of pale light-weight wood, the surface is shiny grey-brown with a patina. The head rests on a column-shaped neck lined by scarification. The horizontal eyes have white colour in their slits. The flat down-



ward pointing triangular breasts are carved in a low relief. There is scarification resembling a Maltese cross round the large naval hernia. The front part of the feet has been broken off and lost.

h. 87 cm

Bete (Originally part of Bohumil Holas collection, since 1973 when it was purchased from the Holas family part of the Náprstek Museum collection).

Cat. No. A 9,415

28. A handle of a haddle pulley, carved of light wood, with a dull surface painted black. Decorated by a miniature human head resting on an elongated neck with abundant scarification. The hairstyle is defined by a twisting line of double plastical braid. There are no apparent signs of usage on the object, there are no holes for the attachment of the pulley in the fork of the handle and there is no hole in the head for a string by means of which it could be hung.

h. 30,7 cm

Bete (c. Sassandra), *subd.* Gagnoa, *tribu* Gagnoa

Cat. No. 7,635

29. An anthropo-zoomorphic mask, carved of pale wood, the surface is painted brown-black and shiny. It represents a human face with a domed forehead in the centre of which runs a sharp dividing line. The eyes are horizontal with slit-like holes, the nose has the shape of a triangular pyramid, the small animal mouth is open. On the crown of the head are two flat sickle-shaped horns. The crown of the head is separated from the forehead by four parallel zig-zag lines. There is a continuous line of holes in the edge of the mask for the attachment of a garment or fringes, at mouth level a bar has been inserted into the side walls so that the wearer could hold the mask in his teeth. On the cheeks along the nose there is tattooing in the form of small rectangles divided by a vertical line. Red lips, white teeth, a white arch above the eyes and a red one under the eyes.

h. 41 cm

Bete, c. Sassandra, *subd.* Gagnoa, *tribu* Guia, village Sokoroboguoya

Cat. No. 7,652

Publication: Herold, *op. cit.*, pl. 25



30. A mask carved of pale wood, with a black painted, dull surface. The crown of the head is flat, the narrow forehead projects high above the level of the flat face. The horizontal bulging eyes have slit-like holes under them. Massive, broad, conical nose, the mouth is stylized into a rectangle which is divided by four vertical partitions to form five shallow square-shaped hollows. Two arches cut of a separate piece of wood and attached to the mask by means of European nails are placed above the lower edge of the nose. Cylindrical projections have been similarly attached at the corners of the mouth. The forehead is lined by a strip of fur and a beard of bast is attached to the edge of the mask.

h. 31,5 cm      w. 20 cm

Bete, c. *Sassandra* (*subd.* Soubré ?), *tribu* Lobloé

Cat. No. 7,649

Publication: Herold, *op. cit.*, pl. 10

31. A mask carved of pale wood, the surface is painted brown-black and is dull shiny. A vertical scarification keloid runs down the centre of the domed narrow forehead. Horizontal slits under the forehead. The nose with a sharp concave ridge broadens at the lower end and extends to the sides of the mask. A horizontal arch carved together with the mask is placed above it. Under it are two low cylinder-shaped protrusions representing the eyes, traces of red paint can be found on their upper circular facets as well as in the deep groove on the arch above the eyes. The wide mouth holds six teeth made of white china fragments. Fringe of bast are attached to the edge of the mask.

h. 31 cm      w. 21 cm

Bete, c. *Sassandra*, *subd.* Soubré, *tribu* Kouzié

Cat. No. 7,617

Publication: Herold, *op. cit.*, pl. 20

32. A figure of masked dancer (?), carved of pale wood, with a dull, black painted surface. It represents a standing man wearing a rather simplified version of the preceding mask, it could be by the hand of the same carver. The head is almost egg-shaped, eyes made of mirror splinters are set deep below the forehead marked by a scarification keloid. The mouth holds four teeth made of mirror splinters.



h. 80 cm

Bete (c. *Sassandra*), *subd.* Soubré, *tribu* Kouzié

Cat. No. 7,630

Note: The words "A fetish which they have in the corner of their hut" have been inscribed by a museum employee on the original annotation by the collector. They are probably based on the collector's information.

33. A mask carved of yellow-white soft wood, the surface is painted black-brown. It represents a fantastic anthropomorphic face with a conic neck. A couple of small slits are concealed under the low domed forehead with a scarification keloid. There are two pairs of tube-shaped protuberances on the sides of the wide beak-shaped nose with a sharp ridge. The orifices of the upper pair are filled with white paint, while the lower pair has the surroundings of the eyes painted white. The surroundings of the wide lips are red, four metal teeth are set in the upper lip. A beard of raffia is attached to the mask.

h. 31,5 cm      w. 19,5 cm

Bete (c. *Sassandra*), *subd.* Soubré, *tribu* Loblé,  
settlement Matogoué

Cat. No. 7,616

34. A mask carved of pale, soft wood. The surface is dyed dark brown with traces of white paint. A couple of small holes at the root of the nose serve as slits. Along the nose, one above the other, there are three pairs of tiny holes covered by a beard of plant fibre. The tetragonal holes on the frontal circular facets of cylindrical protuberances are blind. The mouth holds 16 wooden teeth. The right arch-shaped horn on the crown of the head and the horn on the left temple pointing downwards have been broken off. A beard of plant fibre has been attached with wooden pegs to the edge of the mask.

h. 33 cm (without beard)      w. 26 cm

Niabwa, c. Daloa, village Niaboua (according to collector's information lying on the *Sassandra* river, 63 km west from Daloa).

Cat. No. 7,615

Publication: Herold, *op. cit.*, pl. 11



Note: According to the words of a museum employee attached to the collector's original note, the mask was obtained from the son of a deceased chief, who used it for curing.

35. A mask carved of pale wood, with a black-brown and brown-grey painted surface. The forehead is arched, the face is flat with no slits. A nose with a sharp ridge stands out from the face and from the nostrils two arches extend to the sides, proceeding up along the edge of the mask and turning back to the forehead in a plastically formed arch, thus forming a frame of the face. On the sides of the mask there are two pairs of horizontal arch-shaped protuberances. The animal mouth is rounded and it resembles a monkey's mouth. There are no traces of usage on the mask.

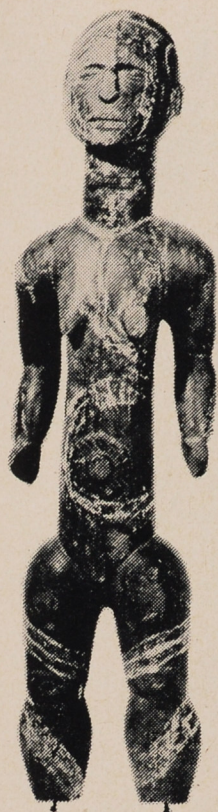
h. 33 cm      w. 20,7 cm

Bete ?, Ivory Coast

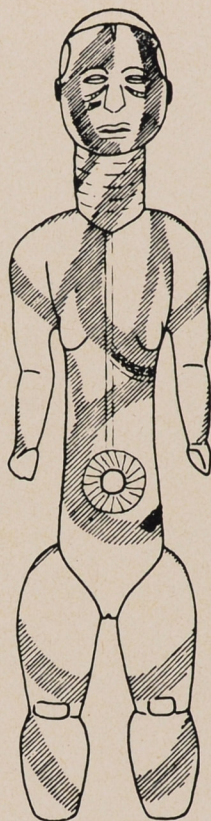
Cat. No. A 2,698

Note: This object has probably been in the collection of the Náprstek Museum since the time before the second World War. We have no knowledge, however, of how the Museum acquired it. Its conception is very similar to the above mentioned mask from Kjersmaier's collection (see notes 15—17), which has a bird's beak instead of a monkey mouth. Since the Náprstek Museum had no objects from the Ivory Coast until the time when it obtained the Golovin collection, perhaps even this mask comes from Golovin and by an administrative mistake it was perhaps never purchased and stayed thus unfiled. But it can also come from sources independent of Golovin.





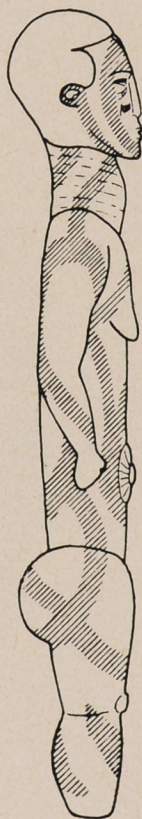
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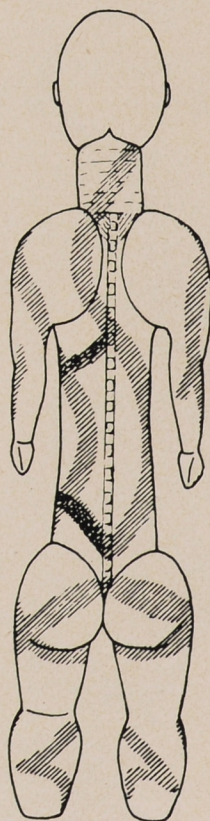
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1b

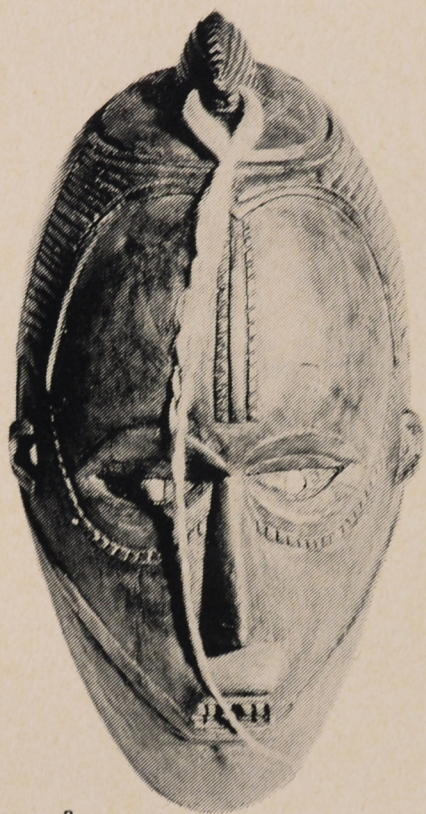


1c

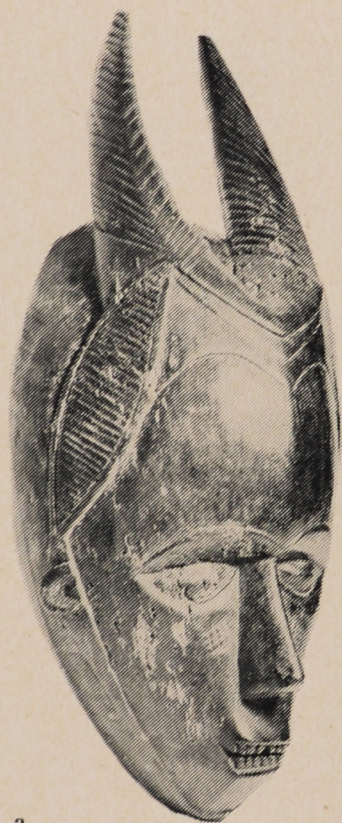


1d





2



3



4

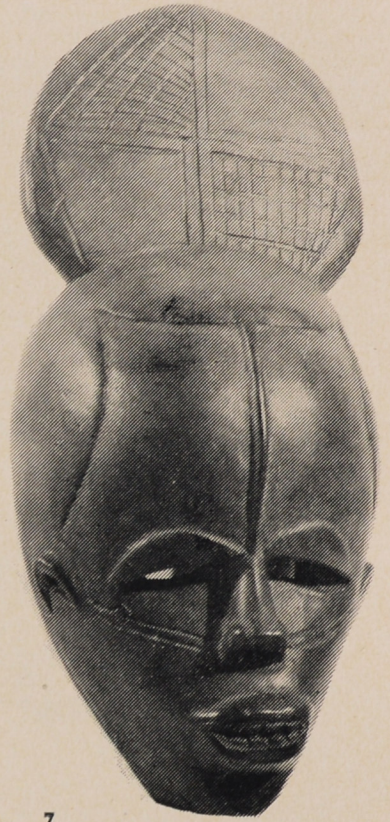


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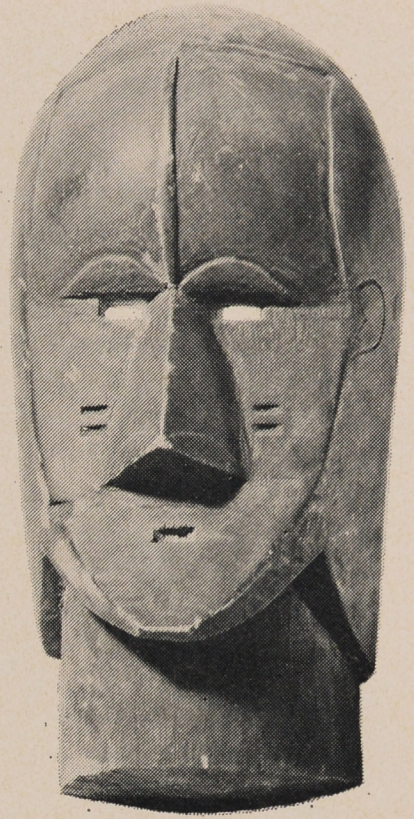


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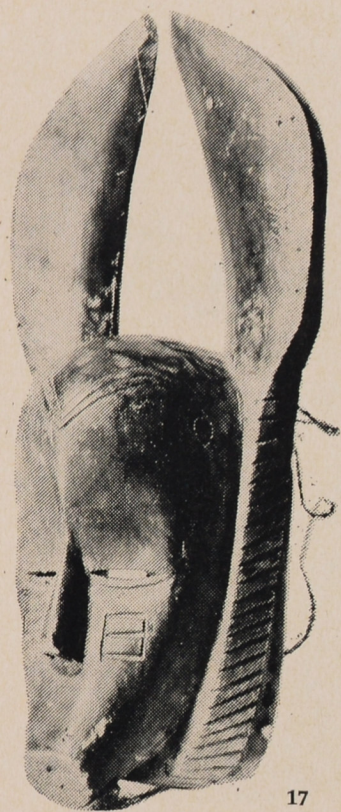
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16



14  
15







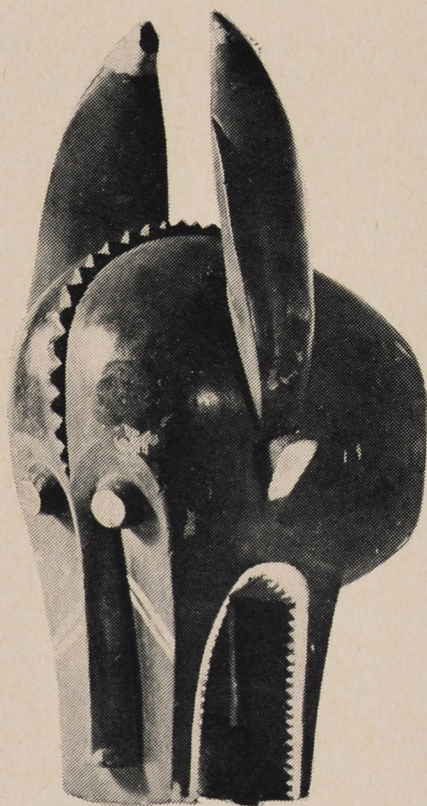
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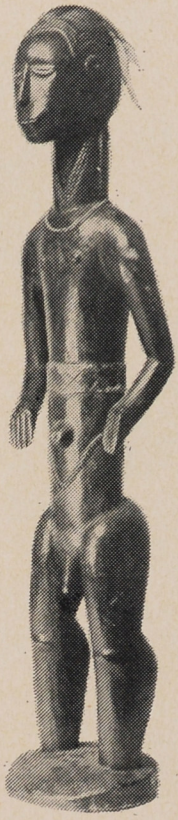


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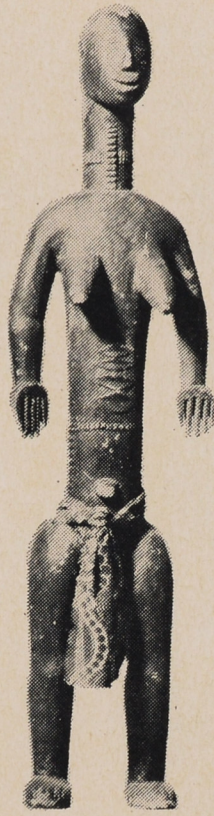


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21



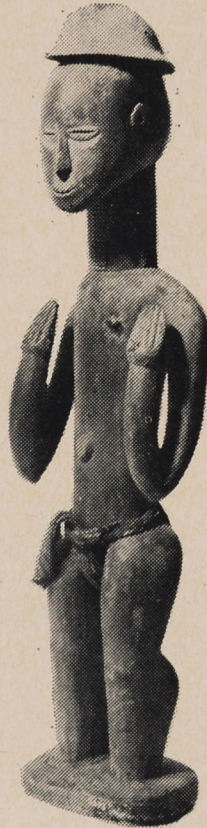
22



23



24

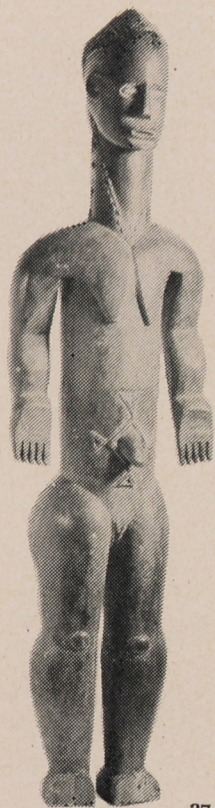


25



26





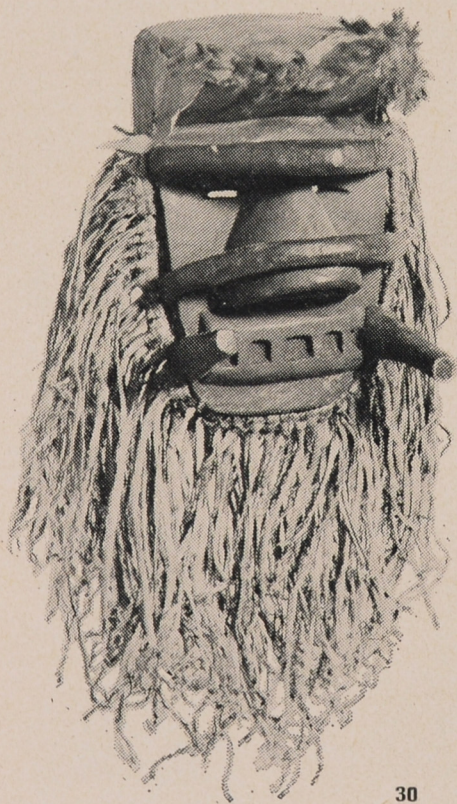
27



28



29

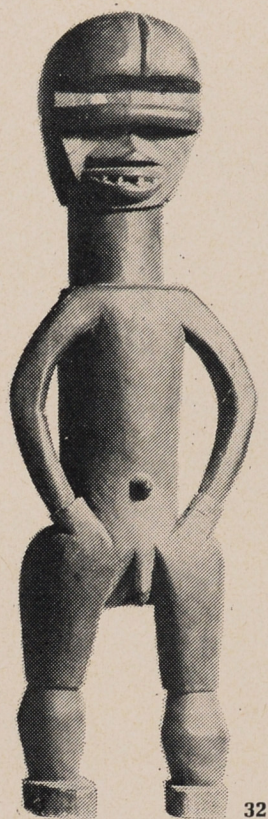


30



31





32



33



34



35





36

#### Golovin's Ethnical and Geographical Data

Golovin's collection of Bete sculptures contains the total of 34 specimens. In one case (mask No. 34) the ethnical origin is given as that of the Niabwa tribe. The territory of this tribal group corroborates the collector's data on the geographical origin of this mask (approximately 60 km west of Daloa).

In four other cases *subdivision* Soubré in *cercle* Sassandra, that is the south-western part of the Bete territory, is stated as the place of origin. In two of these cases *tribu* Kouzié is named as the ethnical milieu of origin (Nos. 31, 32), and *tribu* Loblé or Lobloé (Nos. 30, 33) in the other two. The existence of *tribu* Kouzié in the Buyo region is documented by E. Dunglas<sup>33</sup> and B. Holas, *tribu* Loblé (Lobloé) is probably a distortion of Loboué.<sup>34</sup> The Matogoué settlement mentioned in connection with mask No. 33, may be identical with Madogüe, which is to the south



of Issia near the borders of the former Sassandra and Daloa *cercles* and the *subdivision* of Soubré and Issia, on the presumption that Golovin's *tribu* Loblé (Lobloé) is really a distortion of the name Loboué (at present a *canton* of a Bete group from Issia).

Ten objects have been explicitly labelled by V. Golovin as of the Bete Shien ethnical origin. In the work of C. R. Hiernaux this name appears on a map of the neighbouring tribe of Gagu even in the post-war period.<sup>35</sup> The Bete Shien are marked on the western periphery of the Gagu tribe territory, to the east of the town of Gagnoa in a *subdivision* bearing the same name. D. Paulme says of the Bete: "The Guro sometimes call them Shyenne, and some authors, particularly military ones, believed that the Shien form a separate group."<sup>36</sup> B. Holas speaks of "a sizable branch of the Bete living round Gagnoa (formerly labelled 'Shien' — a term now fallen into disuse)".<sup>37</sup> The two denominations Bete — Shien therefore seem to be equivalent (at least as far as the eastern part of the tribe is concerned), they are probably doubles of the same type as for example Mashukulumbwe — Ila, Senufo — Siena, etc., so frequent in Africa. The older name Shien is in fact a nickname given to the Bete tribe by their north-eastern neighbours, the Guro, which was in the early times accepted by the Europeans, because their first permanent contact was with the Guro. The denomination of Shien apparently prevailed longer for the Bete living near the Guro in *subdivision* Gagnoa, because this "sizable branch" showed some peculiar features and perhaps not only of cultural character. V. Golovin definitely pronounces those objects obtained from *tribu* Niabré (Nos. 20, 21, 23, 24) and Badié (Nos. 15, 16) as of Bete Shien origin. *Tribu* Niabré is certainly connected with the present *canton* of the same name mentioned by B. Holas<sup>38</sup> and perhaps even with the locality of Niablé lying to the east of Gagnoa and to the south of the road which links this town with Oumé. Supposing we have correctly identified the names of the *tribu* with the names of the localities, then these objects come from the utmost eastern territory of the Bete tribe, close to the Gagu and Guro tribes. There is no existing documentation to figure No. 22, but judging from the style its origin is the same as that of the objects labelled *tribu* Niabré. The ritual object No. 19 of *tribu* Badié seems to have been inadvertently marked simply as Bete and not Bete Shien. I have not succeeded in



establishing the location of *tribu* Neredié mentioned on two objects. Of the three objects from the *tribu* Pacolo, one object is marked as Bete Shien (figure No. 1), the other two simply as Bete (masks No. 2, 3). *Tribu* Pacolo is probably related to the name of the Pakolo *canton*, which is mentioned by Holas. The origin of each of these three objects is put into different locality, which corresponds with the situation described by A. P. Rood.<sup>39</sup> If village Seriho (mentioned at figure No. 1) has been correctly identified as the Seriyó locality (identical with Holas's village Sahirihio in *L'image . . .*, page 28 ?), then we must look for the origin of the objects in the area south of the Gagnoa town. Six objects labelled only as Bete (Nos. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13) obtained from *tribu* Gottibono, which is placed into this very locality on the right bank of the Davo river by E. Dunglas, come from the same region.<sup>40</sup> Other four masks (Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7) obtained from *tribu* Zédié (apparently related to the *canton* of Zédi mentioned by B. Holas in *L'image . . .*, page 23) also come from *subdivision* Gagnoa. I have not been successful in establishing the location of *tribu* Guia, with which a single mask seems to have its origin (No. 29). A mistake seems to have been made in the book of records in the case of mask No. 14. The provenance is stated as Baule, Sinfra. It is not clear whether it is the Sinfra town or the *subdivision* of the same name lying to the north of Gagnoa. Although this territory is occupied predominantly by the Guro tribe (after all even V. Golovin collected two masks of this tribe here) we cannot eliminate the possibility that the mask was obtained from the Bete living there. It is out of the question, however, that it could have been obtained from the Baule. Apparently, though, even this mask was acquired in *subdivision* Gagnoa. Haddle pulley No. 28 also comes from this region (the existence of *tribu* Gagnoa has not been, however, confirmed) and undoubtedly also the two remaining figures (Nos. 26, 27) for which no documentation is available for the above mentioned reasons.

All the Bete sculptures from the Golovin collection, with the exception of Nos. 30—34 coming from the western *subdivision* Soubré, were obtained in the south-eastern part of the territory occupied by the Bete tribe, in *subdivision* Gagnoa. The verification of the correctness of identification of all *tribus* with the localities bearing the same or similar name, and possibly the identification of the remaining *tribus* (Neredié, Guia) would probably be enabled



only by field research. The localization of villages mentioned by Golovin could perhaps be done in the same way, or with the help of more detailed maps unavailable in Prague. On the other hand it is possible, that at least in some cases these villages ceased to exist owing to the expansion of plantation mass-production.

Even the correct identification of all *tribus* and villages mentioned by Golovin does not, however, mean that the objects were carved in these communities and localities. With regard to the situation in *subdivision* Daloa, A. P. Rood says "a carver of superior skill will often be commissioned to prepare masks for nearby villages and it is not uncommon for the best mask ensemble to preside over the last rites of an important chief."<sup>41</sup> A similar situation can be rightfully assumed even in the south-eastern territory of the tribe, in *subdivision* Gagnoa.

#### Bete Human Figures from *subdivision* Gagnoa

The Golovin collection includes five human figures from the Bete, which are the most characteristic of this tribe, all probably coming from the Gagnoa *subdivision*. Three of these figures are female and two are male (Nos. 1, 21, 22, 26, 27). They represent naked human figures standing on slightly spread legs with no pedestals (with one exception). Their arms are very short in comparison with the proportion of their long trunks from which they project, bent at the elbows, with the palms of the hands turned upwards, as if the figures had suddenly stiffened in a certain gesture. Their heads are small when compared with the rest of the body, a feature rather unusual in African sculpture, and the column-shaped neck is elongated similarly as the trunk.

In the sixties B. Holas published three similar female figures from the collection of the Abidjan Museum, the fourth from the same museum was published by W. Fagg:

I. A female figure,<sup>42</sup> according to Holas it represents "a ritual depiction of a deceased ancestor (*représentation rituelle d'une aïeule défunte*).“ It is said to be an old votive figure found near the town of Ouragahio.

h. 70 cm

II. A female figure,<sup>43</sup> representing an ancestor. Central region of the Ivory Coast.

h. 53 cm



III. A female figure<sup>44</sup> with shiny black patina, according to Holas a votive figure of an ancestor with a characteristic hairstyle and overspread scarification (? — *scarifications tégmentaires*). It is said to be the work of a sculptor from the area round Daloa. h. 80 cm

IV. A female figure which “nevertheless suggests a distinctive and well developed tribal style more related to that of the Dan-Ngere group to the west than that of the Guro and Baule to the east.”<sup>45</sup> h. 73 cm

Apart from the general tribal labelling W. Fagg does not give any other data on its provenance. His note on the style, which is similar to the stylistic complex of the Dan-Ngere suggests that it could have come from the western region of this tribe. The figure, however, does not in fact show any features connecting it with the style of the western neighbours of the Bete, and apparently even W. Fagg would not be able to state them concretely. This figure is also one of those coming from *subdivision* Gagnoe, whose relation or similarity to the traditional Guro sculpture can in fact be proved.

Apart from the Golovin collection the only male Bete figure known to me is the already mentioned figure in the Ipswich Museum, Suffolk:<sup>11</sup>

V. A male figure made of very light-weight wood. Collected by Sidney Nicholson in Half Assini, a port on the borders of Ghana and Ivory Coast round 1912. h. 136 cm

A figure marked as Guro by J. Delange<sup>46</sup> as well as by H. van Geluwe<sup>47</sup> who had published it a year before in the catalogue to an exhibition of the well-known J. Vander Straete Belgian collection, must also undoubtedly be attributed to the Bete:

VI. A female figure, according to van Geluwe a statue of an ancestor or of fertility. h. 60 cm

A beautiful female figure which appeared in a Paris exhibition catalogue<sup>48</sup> in 1968 and whose origin was wrongly stated as Liberia is also certainly a remarkable art object of the Bete tribe:

VII. A female figure made of soft wood, with brown-black dull patina and with white painted teeth. h. 64 cm

Other Bete figures of this category<sup>49</sup> were published in advertisements of the De Havenon Gallery<sup>50</sup> in New York and of



La perle d'Afrique<sup>51</sup> giving only the ethnical provenance and the height, as well as in advertisement of the Pokou Gallery,<sup>51a</sup> New York, merely with its ethnical origin:

VIII. A female figure                    h. 51 cm (20 inches)

IX. A female figure                    h. 40,5 cm (16 inches)

IXa. A female figure

In six cases the documented figures come from the Gagnoa *subdivision* (Nos. 1, 21, 22, 26, 27, I) and in a single case (No. III) the provenance is given as *subdivision* Daloa by B. Holas. He has not, however, published any additional information about this figure. We can therefore assume, that this figure had been brought there just as in the case of the figure from the Ipswich Museum (No. VI), which was collected a long way from the Bete settlements, in the milieu of Akan tribes. However, it could just be possible that figure No. III is a unique proof to the fact that this type was once spread even among the north-western Bete. No additional data on the provenance of all the other figures (Nos. IV, V, VII, VIII, IX, IXa) have been published. We can safely assume from formal analogy, however, that they too come from *subdivision* Gagnoa.

Until the time when further research brings more light as to the function of these figures, Holas's explanation must be considered as the most likely, i. e. that they are related to the cult of ancestors, perhaps stressing the function of female ancestors, and that the Bete refer to them as to the *yousrokpo*, *isrokpo* or *kouéi*.<sup>52</sup> Particularly one pair of human figures undoubtedly made by the hand of one carver (Nos. 26 and 27) point to the cult of tribal, clan (*tribu*) or village ancestors. Although figures Nos. 21 and 22 are stylistically very close, made either by the same carver or by somebody within his range, we must assume at least a time lapse between the carving of the both figures, because of their different concept (a loose figure — a figure with a pedestal), a considerable difference in their size and differences in the details of styling (for example the hands), and in such a case it is not certain that the figures belong to each other, that they form an ancestral pair. The prevalence of female figures can naturally be explained by the casual character of collecting. In this connection it is important to note that the only known larger collection systematically assembled in the time of Golovin's



medical practice contain two such pairs (but with the above mentioned reservation).

There is nothing to support the hypothetical connection of these figures with the cult of fertility.<sup>53</sup> Common attributes of African figures of this category are missing: None of the figures represents a pregnant woman, the breasts of the female figures are not exaggerated, they are rather small and vary in concept from firm erect breasts (No. 22) to a low relief (No. 27). The indication of the sex organs of the male and female figures is also very sketchy. It expresses no more than the fact that it is a male or a female figure. On the other hand special attention is paid to the naval of the figures or even naval hernia, which in two cases out of the three published is even larger than the penis. On a number of figures it is further emphasized by a frame of plastical scarification.

The remaining three full-size human figures, all from the Golovin collection (Nos. 23, 24, 25), can be characterized as genre figures meant for the European market rather than for domestic cult use. Figure No. IX can perhaps be counted as one of this category. It is related with the former, undoubtedly ritual group by its posture and the position of arms and hands. On the other hand similarly to figure No. 23 it has plastically carved clothing, a loin cloth and a strip of cloth passing between its legs, and shoes, or rather sandals as a new cultural element. While figure No. 23 is still connected with the former group by its material, size, emphasis on the naval hernia, and scarification, the remaining two figures (Nos. 24, 25) show a prevalence of new features (the sitting position, bowl on the head, tropical helmet /?/, uncommon gesture of the male figure's arms). Although their style reveals a close relation to some figures of the first group, the absence of any scarification or tattooing on both of these figures points to a break with the tradition and thus to their independence of the cult.

On the other hand scarification appears on the remaining figure sculptures, whose function is undoubtedly anchored in domestic traditional setting. It is the haddle pulley No. 28 from the Golovin collection and two other specimens comparable with it:

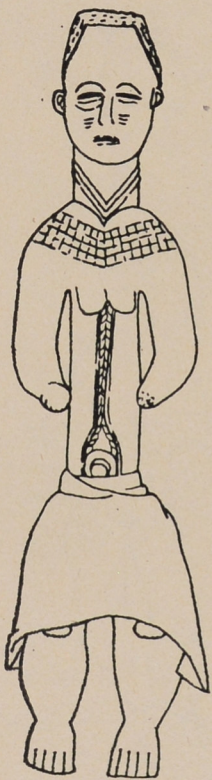
- X. A haddle pulley, published in the advertisement by J. Camp Associates, Ltd., New York,<sup>54</sup> the size is not given.



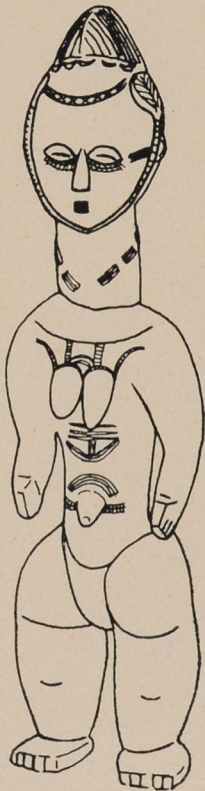
XI. A haddle pulley, ascribed to the Baule tribe by W. Fagg (“... This piece is a marvellously bold interpretation of Baule style”).<sup>55</sup> h. 23 cm (9 inches)

It is possible to agree with W. Fagg that it is a case of “bold interpretation of style”; if we, however, assume that this object originated with the Bete tribe, then the interpretation of style seems to be far less bold, than if we ascribe it to the Baule. The ground for the attribution of this object to the Bete carving tradition is the small tooth-sawed arch above the eyes (compare figure No. 25), the hair growth defined by three arches and especially the long column-shaped neck with characteristic scarification.

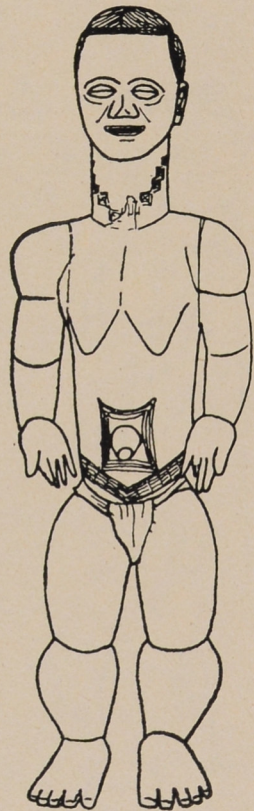
Golovin mentions the *Gagnoa subdivision* and *tribu* bearing the same name as the place of origin of his pulley. The origin of the other two pulleys must also be sought in this part of the Bete territory and not only for reasons of style, but particularly because it neighbours on the Guro tribe and indirectly also on the Baule, where the figural conception of haddle pulleys was common unlike the western neighbours where it was unknown.



I

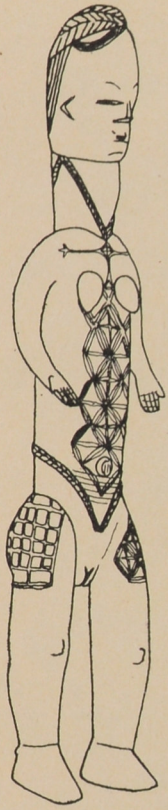


II

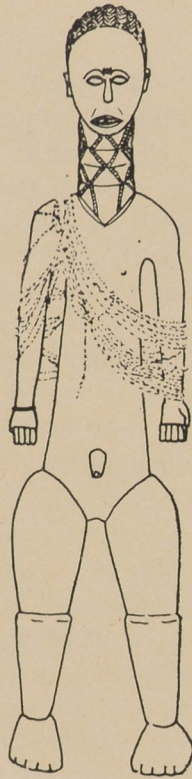


III

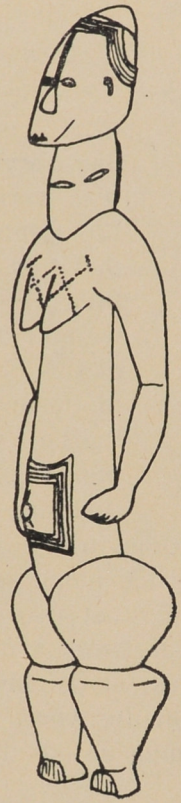




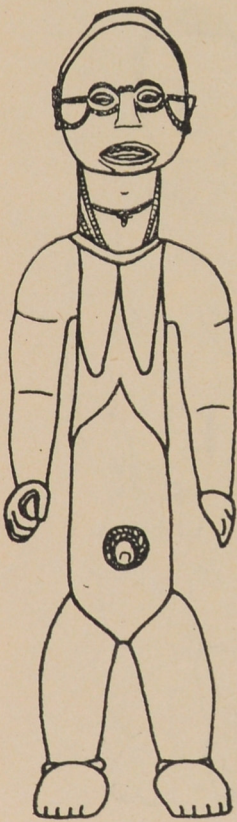
IV



V

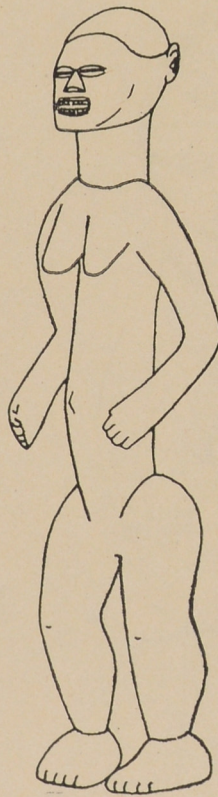


VI

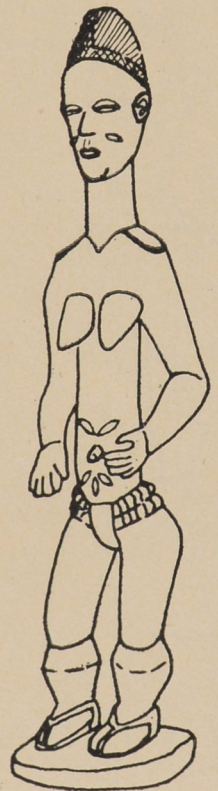


VII

007

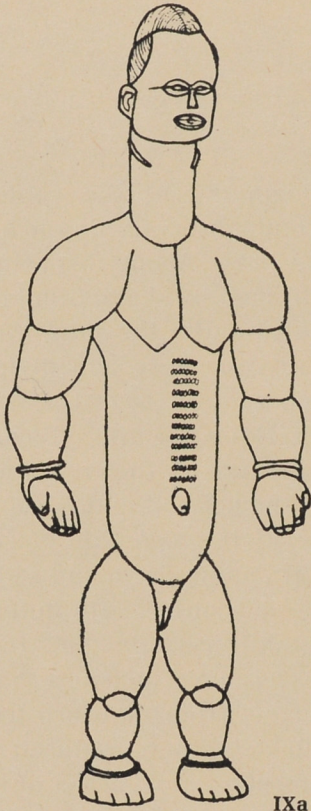


VIII

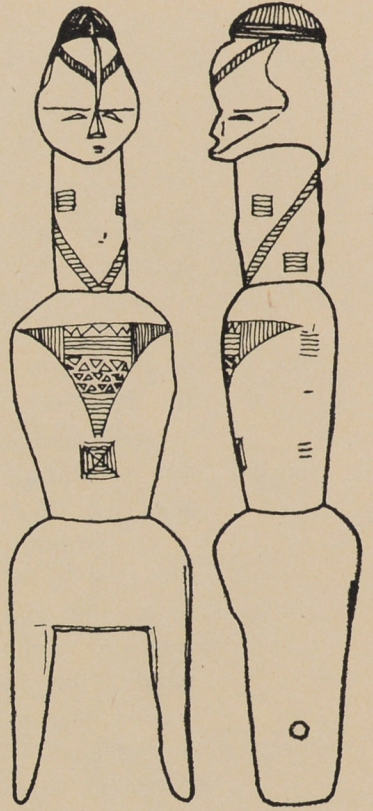


IX

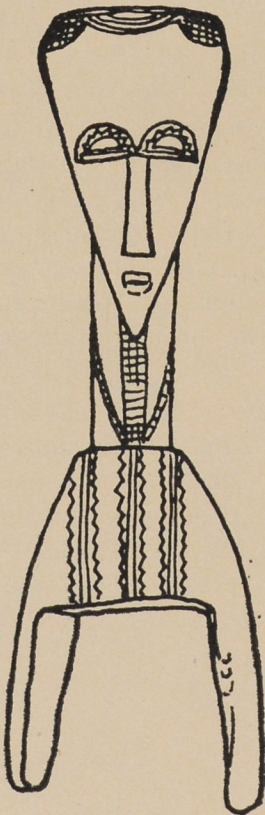




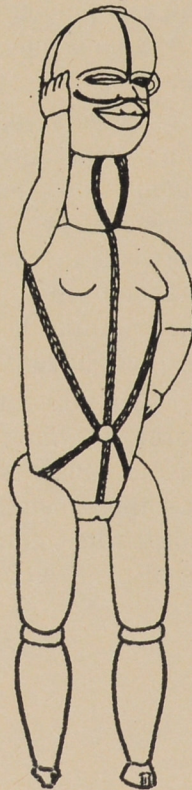
IXa



X



XI



XIa



Scarification on the Bete Figures  
from *subdivision* Gagnoa

In his travels sketch from the beginning of the century G. Thomann noted down several important observations on how scarification was then done in the Bete tribe. About the people from Boboué he says: "The abdomen is framed by scars. Similarly as all the Bete, they have a stick concealed under the skin in the scars on the forehead, and that elongates the nose and divides the face into distinct halves."<sup>56</sup> Elsewhere<sup>57</sup> he says: "I have noticed that the Bogüé (identical with Holas's canton Boguhé in the region of Issia ?) add several ornaments to the traditional scarification of the Bete. Many men have thick scarification ridges on their temples or forehead. They are parallell, diagonally placed, pressing closely against each other and gradually becoming shorter, so that the resulting shape is that of a triangle." He noticed that the women from Bliha had three small scars on their foreheads and their abdomens were lined by long incisions.<sup>58</sup> He voiced an assumption that the women came from the Guro tribe in the east. (The scars seem to be typical scars reproduced on the foreheads of Guro figures or on the foreheads of masks of the *zamle* type.) About the Bete from Zeble he wrote: "Some of them have an additional vertical scar on their forehead, but no foreign body is placed under the skin, the mark thus being barely visible . . . Women bear distinct signs of their country of origin — Guro and Lo, they have broad parallell cuts on their arms and neck."<sup>59</sup>

Twenty years later L. Tauxier<sup>60</sup> noted about the women of the Gagu tribe neighbouring on the south-eastern Bete of the Gagnoa *subdivision*, that they took on the tattooing of this tribe which consisted of a vertical line in the centre of the forehead running between the brows down to the base of the nose, and about the men he stated: "They have a single line dividing the forehead and running between the brows down to the nose, but only some of them have it."

Thus historical evidence on the scarification of the Bete is surely fragmentary, unsystematic and it covers only a small part of the tribe's territory in short periods of time. Scarification was not the substantial point of interest of the observers, nobody recorded its importance and at what time in life it was done, there is also no pictorial documentation. Nevertheless most of the de-



scribed types of scarification can be identified on the known carvings of the Bete tribe.

Most important in the facial lineage, which will be discussed later in connection with masks, is the vertical keloid in the centre of the forehead. It is documented on the evidently oldest figure of the Golovin collection (No. 1) and on the undoubtedly relatively old figure of the Vander Straete collection (No. VI). From the quality of reproduced photographs it cannot be safely judged, whether there are no traces of this scarification also on the figures No. VIII and IX. It is clearly visible on the haddle pulley No. X. The frontal keloid does not appear on the male figure from the Ipswich Museum, which was probably the first to be collected, as early as in 1912, nor on any other male Bete figure. The above cited Tauxier's statement proves that frontal scarification was a custom of the Gagu tribe women, who are said to have adopted it from the Bete, as well as of the men. Thomann's evidence on frontal scarification is not limited only to women either. It is, therefore, probable, that it was an old custom which was dying out in the 20th century and was practiced longer by women. But we have very few male figures at our disposal to be able to come to a definite conclusion.

Thomann also reports artificial scarification on the abdomen in two different parts of the Bete territory. In the first case he simply says "the abdomen is framed by scars" and in the second case he speaks about the women's abdomen being lined by long cuts and he voices an opinion that the women came from the Guro tribe. The documentation of this framing can be seen in several parallel scars forming a frame round the naval of unmistakably older figures No. III and VI, but also in the long lines on male and female figures No. 21 and 22. The rather rare figures of the Guro tribe can give no proof to the fact that this habit came from this tribe.

The same is true of the last piece of evidence on Bete scarification — the broad cuts on arms and neck, that are again put into connection with the Guro by Thomann. Scarification taking the form of broad incisions on the neck can be seen on nearly all Bete figures, while the Guro figures have a quite different type of scarification, also common on Baule figures, i. e. three bead-shaped keloids at the back of the neck (cf. for example the beautiful Guro figure from the collection of the Opočno castle



in Eastern Bohemia, Cat. No. 1547, h. 49,3 cm). The lineage on the column-shaped necks of the figures as well as on the haddle pulleys of the Bete tribe comes in various modifications, although usually the two diagonal lines forming a V-shape at the front and two vertical lines on the sides of the neck do not change. These basic lines are to be seen repeatedly even on the figures whose local or individual style, and even their age no doubt, distinctly differ. The haddle pulley No. 28 has a geometric ornament forming a vertical line at the front of the neck, but the same ornament again forms diagonal lines on figure No. III. It seems to be the same ornament which is designed to form a diagonal line on the neck of the genre figure No. 23. Various modifications of the basic pattern and the adding of other ornamental forms (tetragonals, arches) may be considered as local or clan identification variants. Even if we do not accept Thomann's opinion, that it originally was the scarification of the Guro tribe, he helps us to place this scarification primarily into the eastern regions of the Bete territory neighbouring on the Guro.

#### Some Stylistic Features of the Bete Figures

Scarification on the necks of figures (and apparently also of living people) was so important that it gave rise to the basic and most prominent stylistic feature of the Bete figurative sculpture, i. e. the long column-shaped neck. Rich scarification of the trunk seems to have been originally no less important, though there is no first-hand evidence to prove this, it can be deduced from the rich scarification on some figures, particularly on Nos. I, II and IV from the Abidjan Museum, or on figure No. 22 from the Golovin collection, and from the abnormally long trunks of almost all known figures. The length of the necks and trunks of the figures is probably caused by the need to crowd in the rich scarification, which being the tribal, clan or local sign of identification could not be altered, simplified or even left out altogether. An analogical process of styling is also known from Congo (for example Dengese or the small figural sculptures of the Bembe), that does not mean, however, that the abnormally long trunks on some African figures have always been motivated by this need.

A second important stylistic feature of the Bete figures is the manner in which the buttocks and legs are joint with the



trunk, a manner which seems to have been devised for modelling in clay rather than for wood-carving. The legs and hips are attached to the trunk from the side; the hips and buttocks bulge out, they do not gradually pass into the trunk, on the contrary they are set at a right angle to it at the line of refraction. It looks as if the artist had made a long roller out of clay, bent it in the middle to form a narrow arch thus creating the buttocks, into the arch he set the trunk and then bent both ends of the roller downwards thus creating the forward-bulging hips and finally he modelled legs out of the rollers. This characteristic feature is repeated with more or less emphasis on all Bete figures. It is so expressive that it may have even influenced the sculpture of the neighbouring tribes. It can be seen for example on a unique figure of the western neighbours of the Bete, the Ngere tribe, in the New Orleans Museum of Art<sup>61</sup> (No. XIa), which bears traces of other influence of Bete figures (small breasts, long trunk, imitation of scarification on the neck and trunk). Obviously a reverse process can also be considered, i. e. that it is a Bete figure whose face bears influence of Ngere models of masks (massive lips, broad nose with arches of scarification extending from it on the cheeks). But the perfect execution of the face in Ngere style and on the other hand the seemingly clumsy rusticalised imitation of the trunk and legs which are unusually feeble and also the purely formal and unskilful imitation of the scarification on the neck and trunk testify to the influence working in the direction from the Bete to the Ngere, and not the other way about. It also appears on some sculptures of the coastal tribes in the south and south-east regions of the Ivory Coast<sup>62</sup> but with the fragmentary character of material from this part of the country, which as yet has to be closely examined, it would be premature to pass any judgement at this moment. Finally it can also be found on some Baule figures, but the great abundance of wood-carving production and the great number of carvers of this tribe point to the fact, that it is perhaps only a matter of individual style that need not be explained by contemplations on interethnic relations and influence.

Of all the sculpture of the Ivory Coast, the Bete sculpture shows the most marked tendency towards the reproducing of musculature, particularly on the legs of the figures. This tendency, almost on the margin of realism on figure No. III, led to a



"cubistic" styling of muscles on the forarms of figures No. 26 and 27 in the Náprstek Museum collection. The pronounced "realism" of the Bete carvers resulted in a feature rather infrequent in Africa, i. e. the need to depict the knees of the figures by clearly defined bulges. This tendency reappears again in a misunderstood interpretation on the Ngere figure from New Orleans (No. XIa). Together with the exaggeration of muscles on the calves of the legs on some figures (Nos. V and VI) making them look as if they were wearing high boots. It is interesting that this styling of legs, unknown elsewhere in Africa, appears again on some figures which are said to have come from the coastal tribes in the south of the country.

#### Masks of the Bete from *subdivision* Gagnoa

The Bete masks from the Golovin collection form several groups varying in general concept, style and probably even in function, of which, however, very little is known. Data on their clan or local origin connected with stylistic criteria enable their classification into two substyles — southern and eastern.

Supposing we have correctly identified the Seriho village (figure No. 1) with the Seriyó locality to the south-west of Gagnoa, then masks No. 2 and 3, which were obtained in two different unidentified villages, but which are said to come from the same *tribu* Pacolo as figure No. 1, must be ascribed to the southern style too. Although the two masks differ considerably, their concept coincides to such an extent that it entitles us to assume that they are by the hand of one carver. They have the same oval contour, same treatment of the eyes, nose and projecting mouth with the central incisors in the upper jaw filed into points,<sup>63</sup> the hair-line forms two arches above the forehead and the hair is indicated by notches. The masks vary in hairstyle and scarification. Mask No. 2 has a low crest-shaped ridge at the crown of the head with a braid of fair European hair woven into it, while the hair of mask No. 3 is styled into two horns. L. Tauxier reports that the men of the Gagu tribe make small horns out of their hair similarly as the Guro. Apparently it used to be a widespread custom among the various tribes in this mixed territory and we can rightfully assume that it also existed among the Bete. This would suggest that the two masks, female and male, belong to



the same category of the same marked, mature local style. The traditional scarification on the forehead of the female mask No. 2, supplemented by scarification arches on the cheeks similar to the ones on the female figure No. 1 in this group, would be in accordance with this explanation, while the male mask lacks this traditional scarification, a fact which again is in accordance with the practice of figural sculptures.

Closest to these two masks are a group of four masks (Nos. 4-7) from the Golovin collection acquired from *tribu* Zédié. Several other masks published from various collections also belong to this group. Chronologically the first to be published was a mask labelled as Guro from Wurtzburger's collection (No. XII), 26 cm high (10 ¼"),<sup>64</sup> a mask from the Abidjan Museum (No. XIII) found according to Holas's information in the Gagnoa region,<sup>65</sup> a mask published in an advertisement of Alfred Scheinberg's Gallery in New York with no data on its ethnical provenance or size (No. XIV)<sup>66</sup> and finally a specimen from the Metropolitan Museum,<sup>67</sup> Cat. No. 61,184, according to the published information of an incredible height of 49 cm (15 ½ in.), labelled as "Bete or Guro" (No. XV).

A large domed forehead constituting more than a half of the total height of the mask is the distinguishing feature of these masks. The forehead is defined by three arches, one at the top and one on either side, forming the margin of hair growth, the surface of which remains smooth. On two masks the elevated area of the hair growth has a piece of skin nailed to it, the now lost fur representing the hair. On the Abidjan mask (No. XIII) the skin is on the crown of the head, on the mask No. XIV it is at the sides of the coiffure. The eyes are set deep under the dome of the forehead, they have slitlike holes cut into them, and above them eyelids have been carved in a low relief, just like on both of the masks in the first group. The ears are small, carved again in a low relief at the sides of the mask at eye level. The nose in the form of a small triangular pyramid is slightly uplifted, the nasal bone is sometimes rounded. The mouth is small with slightly parted lips and visible teeth. In the case of mask No. XV from Rockefeller's collection the mouth is rectangular and notably protrudes forward just like on the masks of the first group (No. 2, 3). All of these masks have a vertical scarification keloid running down the centre of the forehead and most of them have arch-



-shaped cuts running from the nostrils to the ears. These cuts may perhaps be considered as having been derived from similar scarification and facial painting used by the Ngere tribe in the west. The beard made of string which have survived on mask No. 4 shows that it is a male mask. Mask No. XV also originally had a beard. Apparently there used to be fur on the now bare strips of skin attached diagonally to the cheeks of the mask. Judging from the row of holes left by nails along the hairline, a piece of skin with fur was once attached also to the crown of the head. The horns on the mask No. XII again seem to be part of a man's hairstyle, as we have discussed in connection with the mask No. 3, and there is a possibility that even the disc on the former Prague mask No. 7 was only a variant of this male head ornament. The presence of the frontal keloid on these male masks can be explained by the fact, that old tribal scarification, once used by both male and female members of the tribe, was preserved on ritual masks. Masks No. 4—7 of the Golovin collection are undoubtedly made by the hand of one carver, who is probably also the author of the mask from Wurtzburger's collection (No. XII). The remaining three published masks were made by different carvers and perhaps even at different periods of time.

On the mask No. XIII B. Holas says that it is "rather rare" and labels it as "*masque sylvestre*" saying that "it is undoubtedly the work of a Bete carver affected by foreign influence" (*l'oeuvre d'un sculpteur bété qui a du subir quelque influence étrangère*). Unfortunately he does not say, and this was habitual of this author indulging in learned allusions, what foreign influence it was, and we can only guess at the meaning of the expression "*masque sylvestre*". It can either simply mean that it is a mask from the forest region or that it represents the spirit of the forest etc. The human expression of these masks does not, however, support this explanation. After all Holas himself concedes elsewhere their "human and realistic appearance"<sup>68</sup> and explains their origin in a curious fashion, that is that "a sizable branch of Bete living round Gagnoa abandoned the various hornlike and pointed features of their masks (i. e. masks of the western Bete) and endowed them with a high prominent forehead etc.". This, however, is a purely literary phrase, because in fact nothing like this happened. These masks are, no doubt, the result of a totally different art tradition than the masks of the western Bete. The



Bete round Gagnoa *did not abandon* the horns and pointed protrusions of the *western* masks, but they *did not accept* these features for their *old original* masks of this type. In 1966 Holas spoke of a foreign influence in connection with these masks. Apparently he had in mind the influence of their eastern neighbours, the Gagu, which he rejected in 1968 saying: "It is sometimes said that this transformation is the effect of the ancient Gagu culture, which has managed to survive nearby around Oumé. But this theory seems hard to substantiate." Unfortunately I do not know "the few problematic specimens of the Gagu masks", mentioned by Holas and so I cannot pass judgement on this matter.<sup>69</sup>

The masks, which according to the information of the collector come from *tribu* Gottibono living to the south of Gagnoa on the right bank of the Davo river, also belong to the southern substyle. They can be divided into two distinctly differing subgroups. The first is formed by three masks (No. 8—10), which were supposedly collected in an unidentified village Podié and which were unmistakably made by the hand of the same carver without great artistic ambitions. These masks appear to be thematically related to those in the preceding large group, they seem to be their primitive rusticalized versions. While the masks in the preceding group are true sculptural masterpieces, these three masks from the *tribu* Gottibono are only rather crudely carved reliefs. Nevertheless nearly all features of the masks which perhaps were used as their models can be distinguished on them; these features, however, either lack understanding or are exaggerated or even caricatured. The vertical keloid in the centre of the forehead is far too high, the asymmetrical scarification on the cheeks of the mask No. 8 appears to be a purposeless decorative element employed to fill up empty space, while it is completely missing on the other two masks, because the carver was apparently unaware of the importance of this scarification on the models, the conventional defining of the hairstyle by means of three arches is arbitrarily changed, the "classic" domed shape of the forehead is altered to a slightly arched or even flat shape, etc. As the beard of string suggests, they are again male masks. What is really new on these masks is the horizontal frontal scarification which runs to the sides of the vertical keloid on the masks No. 8 and 9. Small rounded protrusions on the edges of



the masks under the eyes constitute a second innovation in comparison to the hypothetical models. Similar protrusions which were perhaps meant to be ears can be often seen also on masks of the western neighbours. It is not surprising, because the influence of western masks undoubtedly effected the second subgroup consisting of masks from the territory of *tribu* Gottibono as well. Two masks can be considered as a connecting link between the above mentioned three masks and their more refined models: a Bete mask, 28 cm high (11 in.), labelled as Guro and published in an advertisement of Gallery K (No. XVI), and a 25 cm high mask, which was years ago stolen from a Belgian collection belonging to Christian Duponsteel (No. XVIa).<sup>70</sup>

This subgroup also bears a number of identical features with the little known Bete masks from the region of Issia — Soubré lying approximately to the west of the territory from which masks No. 8—10 derive their origin. As far as I know in this connection we can depend on a single mask (No. XVII) published by Holas.<sup>71</sup> It is said to be a female mask of the so-called *tôlou* group and it is worn by a younger dancer. Holas's interpretation of these masks is rather inconsistent. Of the Bete from Issia and Soubré he says: "They employ only various costume rituals, they paint their bodies and wear heavy crowns made of feathers, and that does not strictly speaking belong to the category of masks as we understand them in Black Africa."<sup>72</sup> On the other hand he published a photograph of a young dancer wearing the above mentioned mask from the very region of Issia — Soubré. On the female *tôlou* masks he says that they are counterparts of the male *dougbaoulou* masks, which he describes as the known Bete masks from the Daloa region (with "an ugly face with horns and decorated by dangerous magical attributes") and he places both these types into the Daloa region.<sup>73</sup> He classifies the female masks lower in ritual hierarchy than the male masks. Why then do we know a great number of male masks from the Daloa region, while no female masks from this area, although they should be easier to acquire owing to their less sacral function, got into world collections? In the same material Holas concedes that the Bete from Issia exceptionally do have masks, masks of the *gougla* type, which they are supposed to obtain from their western neighbours, the Ngere. He does not, however, give an example of this type, nor does he describe it. On the other hand we know of a splendid



specimen of an evidently male mask (beard') without those terrifying attributes that are typical of the Daloa region and it bears identical stylistic features with Holas's female mask from Issia — Soubré. It seems that this mask is the male counterpart to the female masks of this region (No. XVIII).<sup>74</sup> A less expressive male (?) mask (No. XIX) from a Stuttgart private collection published in 1971 by Elsy Leuzinger in a catalogue to a large Zürich exhibition appears to be of the same origin.<sup>75</sup> These three masks and our three masks from *tribu* Gottibono have the following features in common: a relatively broad and rather flat face, a massive nose in the shape of a triangular pyramid, a high running vertical keloid in the centre of the forehead and the hair growth. Certain similarity can also be seen in the slitlike eyes. The Gottibono masks, however, are flatter and on the whole more primitive, and in comparison to the masks from Issia — Soubré they again appear rusticalized products of a cultural periphery, just as they do in comparison to the masks of their eastern neighbours in the Gagnoa region.

Masks No. 11—13 and probably even mask No. 14, although it does differ in details from the other three masks and V. Golovin may have really obtained it in *subdivision* Sinfra, form a second very interesting hybrid group. The common origin of these masks, either by hand of one carver or more probably from the circle of one workshop, is indicated by the regular oval outline, the more or less flat side band separated from the face by a sharp edge, the strict geometric styling of the nose in the shape of a triangular pyramid with plastically carved nostrils, and a certain stylistic manner of depicting the "orifices" in the face, such as the eyes and mouth, by means of small rectangles. Two of these masks (Nos. 13 and 14) have large domed foreheads with vertical scarification keloids and upper eyelids carved in relief, mask No. 14 even has the "classic" border line of the hair growth consisting of three arches. These features disclose a close relation to the masks in the second group of southern masks from *tribu* Zédié. On the other hand masks No. 11 and 12 unmistakably reveal the influence of western models. The characteristic arch above the the eyes on both of these masks must be attributed to this influence. Just how foreign this element was to the authors of these masks can be seen on the mask No. 12, where the carver was rather at a loss as how to execute it and so he attached the arch



into the finished mask by inserting a bent rod into holes. This is a thing that a western carver would have never done. The mask is even equipped with the two characteristic tube-shaped protrusions which can be found on masks of the western Bete but naturally on masks of Ngere, Niabwa and Ubi tribes. While on the masks of these ethnical groups they contribute to the general fantastic and terrifying appearance, here from a purely artistic point of view, they seem rather ridiculous.

The eastern substyle is represented primarily by three masks No. 15—17 and by sculpture No. 18 unidentifiable as to its function. The collector states *tribu* Badié as the provenance in the case of two masks (Nos. 15, 16) and *tribu* Niabré in the case of sculpture No. 18. We have attempted to identify these *tribu* with the localities Badié and Niablé lying on the borders of the Bete and Gagu tribes' territories, to where undoubtedly also the Guro population extends from the north. Surely even mask No. 17 comes from this region, although the collector, perhaps by mistake, stated its provenance as *tribu* Pacolo. All four objects are identical as to their style and concept to such an extent, that we can rightfully assume that they originated in one workshop and they may have even been made by the hand of one carver. Their style also corresponds to their provenance from an ethnically mixed territory. The soft S-shaped line forming the profile of the faces resembles the sculptures of the Guro tribe. The most striking common feature of these objects — the trunk-shaped elongated lower part of the faces geometrically styled into the shape of a truncated cone, with two parallel cuts forming the mouth on the upper round facet — may perhaps also be attributed to this influence. This unusual styling makes it impossible to decide, whether the masks are anthropomorphic or zoomorphic. The latter possibility is supported by the horns at the crown of the head on three of these objects, but even these need not necessarily be animal horns, they might represent only a type of a man's (?) headdress. When considering a possible foreign model for these masks, it is again the Guro elephant masks which reveal certain similarity. No matter what meaning we attach to the horns, they need not be at variance with this interpretation, because syncretistic joining of various animal and human features, especially on masks, is a very common and well-known phenomenon in West Africa. One technical element of these masks unmistakably points to a strong



Guro influence — the way in which the dancer held the mask in front of his face. Mask No. 17 has a rod fitted into the side walls at about nose level, so that it could be held in the teeth. This manner of holding the mask, rare in Africa, is typical of the Guro masks and otherwise it appears, as we shall see, only in the ethnically mixed regions on the western border of this tribe's territory.

Instead of frontal scarification all three masks have a square carved on the cheeks, similarly as figures of the same provenance (Nos. 22, 19, 23). Apparently it represents the local or clan scarification. The red-brown patches with a vertical line in their centre on mask No. 15 seem to be a styled replica of the Guro hairstyle as it is documented on a Guro mask in Musée des Arts africains et océaniens (No. XX), which after all probably also comes from a territory, where Bete ethnical influence was spread.<sup>76</sup>

Mask No. 16 has a long column-shaped staff ending in a small human head at the top of the head, and it is also remarkable in a number of ways. The theme seems to be based on a wide-spread African notion for it can also be seen on masks reaching from Mende tribe far in the west, accros the Ibibio in Nigeria, up to the Fang tribe in Gabon, though of course it could ensue from quite different motives in ethnical groups so far apart. It can be found in perhaps all ethnical groups of the Dan-Ngere complex, including the Grebo. It was from this tribe that already L. Frobenius<sup>77</sup> published the first documented mask of this type and another very old specimen from the costal area between the Ivory Coast and Liberia is in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.<sup>78</sup> But the Yaure,<sup>79</sup> for example, to the north of the Bete territory have it too. In any case the problem of the spreading of this theme, particularly on the Ivory Coast, rates a special study. Unlike all of the other specimens of this kind, our specimen from the Bete tribe is exceptional, because there are two styles represented on a single mask. Usually the small head on the column-shaped staff is styled as a miniature replica of the mask itself. In this case, however, the almost realistic small head is in sharp contrast to the highly stylized mask, no matter what its meaning is. In the first place this shows that a tribal carver is not bound by one style, that in order to express his intention he can employ various styles, and this piece



of information is of a more general import. The question remains, why such a manner was employed by the carver in this case. The tattooing on the miniature head indicates the answer. There is nothing like it on any other known Bete mask or figure and so we have a right to assume that the little head represents a foreigner, a member of a tribe where such tattooing or scarification is used. With regard to the place of origin of this mask the probable answer is that the head represents a member of the Gagu tribe. But this assumption would have to be checked with the situation which existed in this respect in the Gagu tribe at the time of creation of this mask and perhaps also with the historical relations between the two tribes, and that exceeds our possibilities.

Sculpture No. 18 may not be such an isolated object as it seems at first glance. We need not accept the collector's explanation of it being a "totem" literally. It is a well-known fact that a layman labels anything that he encounters in Africa and of what he has no knowledge as a "totem" or a "fetish". As a rule he cannot even define either of the expressions. The function of this object may have been similar to the function of the human head on the column-shaped pedestal (No. 19) from the same region. But even on that we have no positive information. As a possible, though unconfirmed explanation we can present the one attached by W. Fagg to a comparable head probably from the Dan tribe:<sup>80</sup> "According to Himmelheber, who saw this head, it is a replacement carving to substitute for the chief in the village council after his death; or when the men in agricultural societies were working for the chief, singing in unison, the head might be put at the place towards which they worked." The occurrence and function of these heads on pedestals on Ivory Coast, resembling the *anok* sculptures of the Baga in the west, constitutes a separate problem.

From the artistic point of view the characteristic feature of this eastern group is the separation of the forehead from the crown of the head by means of two triple arches; it repeatedly appears on the masks (Nos. 16, 17) as well as on figures (No. 21, 22, 19). This striking stylistic element may again be derived from similar practice of the Guro carvers. And it is this Guro hairstyle — which often appears on figures and haddle pulleys ending in a human head which are so common with this tribe — that is undoubtedly copied in the headdress of the head No. 19.



Golovin's collection contains two more masks originating from the eastern territory of the Bete and bearing a number of stylistic features employed in the works of their eastern neighbours. This primarily applies to the zoomorphic mask No. 29 obtained from an unidentified *tribu* Guia. It very closely resembles the Guro masks by the line of its profile, by the rod fitted into the side walls for holding by teeth, by the quadruple refracted line separating the forehead from the crown of the head and by polychrome. Scarification taking the form of a square on either cheek is identical with the facial lineage on masks and figures of *tribu* Badié and Nebrié. A similar mask from the collection of Marcel Gimond<sup>81</sup> marked Guro (No. XXI) probably also comes from this mixed territory. Besides its general likeness to the Prague mask the Bete frontal keloid is to be found on it too and it even has the typical arches on the cheeks, which are strange in Guro sculptures. As we have seen, they have derived from an artistic style and apparently even from actual facial decoration of the Ngere tribe, to the west of the country. Although we may assume that both of these masks were perhaps made by a Guro sculptor on commission for the members of the Bete tribe, still their expression seems to be different from the usual Guro production containing features typical only of Bete sculptures.

The second mask makes the impression of being definitely exotic in the Bete milieu. It is again zoomorphic (No. 20). It was undoubtedly modelled on the buffalo masks of the Goli demon made by the Baule tribes. It was probably acquired from *tribu* Niabré. We can only guess at how the handing over of this cultural possession was mediated. H. Himmelheber gives us some idea of this in his observations from among the Baule tribes on the Ivory Coast.<sup>82</sup>

In connection with the art of the eastern Bete a group of masks counted among the masterpieces of African art must be mentioned. In the collection of the Náprstek Museum the group is represented by a single specimen, Cat. No. A 2,844, which I first published in the year 1967,<sup>83</sup> and which was shown at international exhibitions of African art in Dakar, Paris<sup>84</sup> and Zürich.<sup>85</sup> In all of these cases it had been labelled Guro. It is a face mask with polychrome made of pale wood, the surface is painted black, the colour passing to light brown, the details are painted in red and white, there is a thick layer of patina on the outer as well as



the inner side. The hair and beard is made of monkey fur, narrow strips of animal skin have been attached to the edge of the upper eyelids. Originally there was fur on them to substitute for the eyelashes. The mask is 29,5 cm high. A very similar mask from the collection of R. Vander Straete was shown at the exhibition of African art in Tervuren in 1963.<sup>86</sup> W. Fagg published another mask of the same group, 25 cm high, from the collection of Christoph Tzara from Paris in the year 1965 (No. XXII). He labelled it Guro, whose style "is almost always distinguishable by a greater sensibility and emphasis on a flowing line . . . It (the Guro style) is here represented by a superb example from a rare substyle identified by the vertical keloid on the forehead".<sup>87</sup> In the year 1970 the same author published another mask, 35,5 cm high (14 in.),<sup>88</sup> which was perhaps made by the same carver as the preceding one (No. XXIII). He published it with the following interesting commentary: "We here postulate a western group of Guro whose masks are an approximation to Dan style while still being recognizably of Guro origin. The characteristic of vertical mark of scarification on the forehead is shared with Dan masks, although the Dan appear to use this mark as a definitely female characteristics, whereas in this Guro style it is evidently male since this mask has a beard of monkey fur. This mask is a clone duplicate of a famous one in the collection of M. Charles Ratton in Paris, and indeed it seems to be by the same hand. These masks appear to come from the village of Bundugu to the west of the centre of the Guro and are specifically subject to influence of the Bete, which satisfactorily accounts for the admixture of Dan styles."<sup>89</sup> Fagg wasn't the first to publish the mask. The same mask and even the same photograph can already be found in a catalogue to an exhibition of African art held in 1959 by Margaret Plass.<sup>90</sup> The mask is labelled Guro and the following commentary was added by the author: "Guro art is closely allied with the style of neighbouring Baule. This great old mask shows Baule characteristics as well. (Illustrated in *Masques africaines*, by Charles Ratton, 1950, plate 1, H 14".)<sup>81</sup>

Thus the masks have been attributed to the Guro tribe by all authors who have published them. The specimen in the Náprstek Museum came to Prague in the thirties with no documentation. When I published it thirty years later it was the "flowing line" that Fagg spoke about, the combination of white and red colours



used in its decoration which is to be commonly seen on Guro masks, and last but not least the rod fitted into the side walls of the mask bearing teeth marks which led me to mark it Guro. All of these masks, however, differ in a number of features from the other known Guro masks as Fagg was well aware when he saw in them "a rare substyle" and considered the possibility of them being influenced by foreign styles (Dan and Bete). M. Plass's note that "this great mask shows Baule characteristics as well" is not to be taken seriously and this statement would be very difficult for her to prove. This mask simply has nothing whatsoever common with Baule masks or figures. Apparently the author did not deduce this observation from the mask itself, but only from the widely accepted truth which she stated before that "Guro art is closely allied with the style of neighbouring Baule".

W. Fagg "postulated here a western group of Guro whose masks are an approximation to Dan style". At the same time he went on to say that "they are specifically subject to influence of the Bete, which satisfactorily accounts for the admixture of Dan styles". What can in fact be attributed to the individual styles of these three tribes on these masks? As for the Guro style the answer is obvious, ensuing from Fagg's commentary as well as from the reasons which led me to attribute the Prague mask to this tribe. What did Fagg consider to be "the approximation to the Dan style"? Apparently it was "the vertical mark of scarification on the forehead shared with Dan masks..." With the best will I can find no other characteristics common to the Dan masks and the masks of this group. We have seen, however, that this "vertical mark" is an old traditional tribal mark of the Bete documented in the field already at the beginning of the century and that it appears on many figures and especially masks of undoubtedly Bete origin found in regions very distant from the territory of the Dan tribe, who lives in the west on the borders with Liberia. W. Fagg states the place of origin of the masks as "the village of Bundugu to the west of the centre of the Guro", in other words the place where the ethnical Guro element meets the Bete element, while the Dan element again remains far in the west. W. Fagg overcame the gap by claiming that "influences from the Bete satisfactorily account for the admixture of the Dan styles". He never proved, however, that such an admixture really exists in Bete art. If he had in mind the Bete masks influenced by the

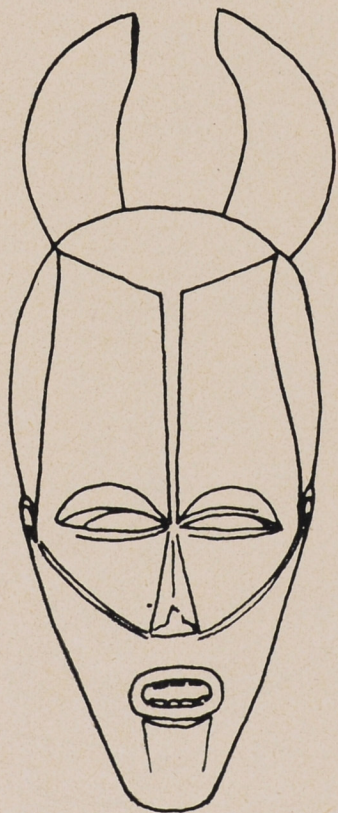


so called Dan-Ngere complex, these come from the western region of this tribe and their influence ended somewhere in the middle of its territory. And as we have seen it manifested itself more in the fantastic element attributed to the Ngere tribe. The vertical scarification keloid on the forehead is certainly not a speciality of only the Dan tribe, and if it had originated in one tribe and spread out to the rest, it might have just as well come into existence among the Bete and from them spread out to the other tribes including the Dan. Of this process, however, we have no knowledge. In other words the scarification keloid on the masks of this "western group of Guro" cannot be criterion for the "admixture of Dan styles". And no other Dan characteristics can be found on these masks. If we compare them, however, with the group that according to Golovin come from *tribu Zédié*, we can observe a number of remarkable coincidences. In the first place it is the whole relatively high, domed forehead with a vertical mark, separated from the hair growth by means of three characteristic arch-shaped lines. Hair is indicated by an attached piece of fur similarly as on masks No. XIII and XV. The nose is again styled in the shape of a triangular pyramid (No. 36) or a cone (Nos. XXII, XXIII). The arches of scarification, tattooing or painting on the cheeks, which we have seen on figures and masks of the southern Bete, are to be seen on both of the masks published by Fagg, but they are moved somewhat higher under the eyes. Again there are the striking plastically carved eyelids like on the masks of *tribu Zédié*. The whole area of the mouth again projects a little forward like on all Bete masks and figures, and the upper teeth in the mouth of both Fagg's masks even reveal traces of filing, a feature typical of Bete. In addition the filing appears also on the lower incisors, and that is a characteristic that we haven't seen on any other Bete sculpture yet.

If we sum up all these parallels and known facts, we can state that these rare masks should rather be ascribed to the art of the Bete from the point of view of style and from the more technical point of view (the manner of fixing the mask in front of the face, polychrome) they reveal the influence of the Guro production exactly in such a degree as we have also seen on masks evidently coming from the Bete. A critical inquiry into the data on the origin of the masks from the village of Bundugu (the reliability of the data, the exact location of the village, its



ethnic structure, possibly its relation to the neighbouring ethnic group etc.) would help to establish their origin and function. This task cannot, however, be solved by logic speculations but only by field research. The mask recently published in an advertisement of the Arcade Gallery (No. XXIV)<sup>92</sup> definitely shows several similar features with these masks. It documents that we are not dealing with a substyle limited perhaps to a single village, one period of time or even a single exceptional carver.

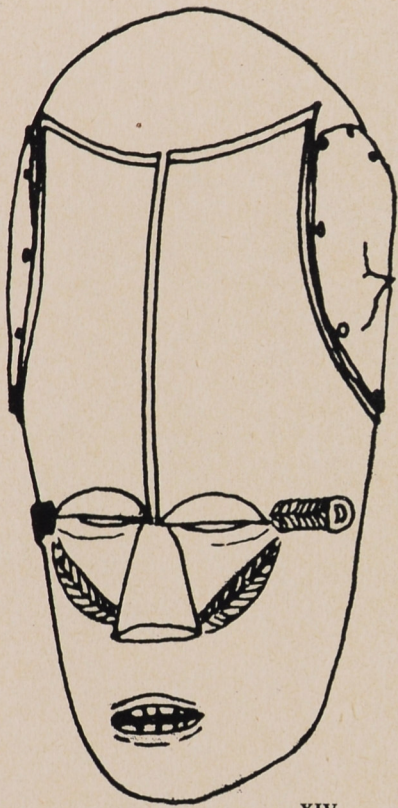


XII



XIII





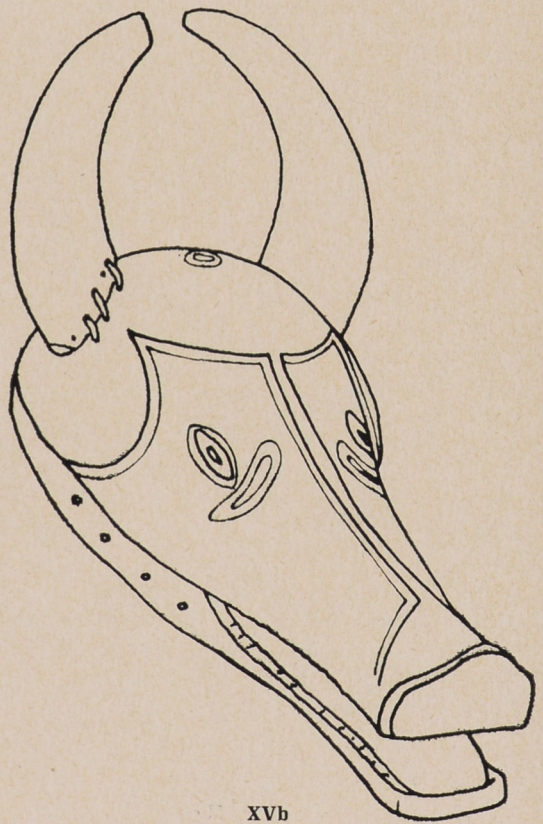
XIV



XV



XVa

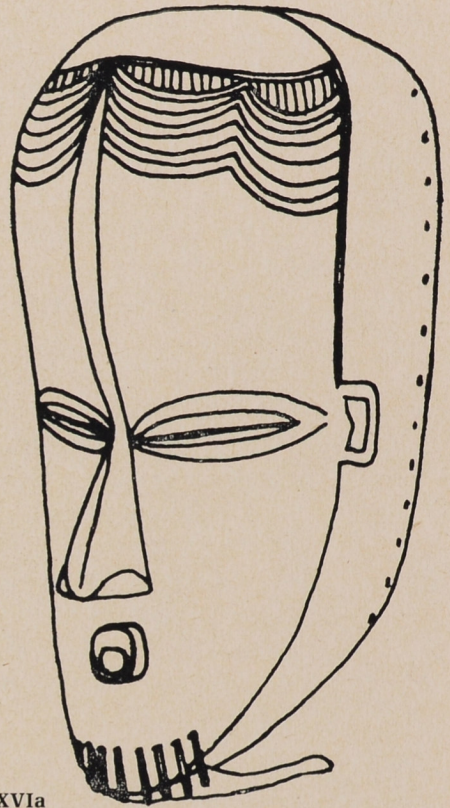


XVb





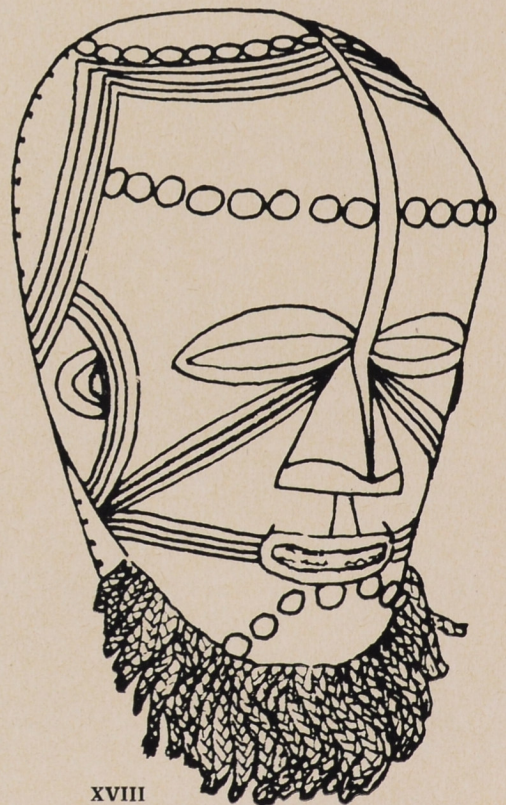
XVI



XVIa



XVII



XVIII



## Bete Masks from the Daloa Region

From the abundant and varied carving production of the Bete tribe by far the best known seem to be the masks from the Daloa region which "seem to combine the dark, carefully finished surfaces of the Dan-Gio mode with the complex projections of some Ngere-Wobe variants"<sup>93</sup> and they can even remind someone of "*les casques japonais en fer*"<sup>94</sup> They were these masks from the western peripheral region of the Bete territory that caused, that the whole Bete art, if mentioned at all, is usually classed with the so called Dan-Ngere complex. Although at first glance these masks make an impression of being bizarre and varied, a single type predominates — it is, however, subject to local, individual or time variations. Its styling oscillates from a certain descriptive surrealism to strict formal abstraction, but the basic idea of the mask is always distinguishable. The crown of the head of the masks is low and rounded, the forehead is low and domed, similarly as on the well-known more or less fantastic masks of the Dan-Ngere complex. Just like on these masks a vertical scarification keloid runs down the low forehead (ascribed to the Dan influence) and continues upwards forming a low crest at the crown of the head. The lower part of the forehead ends in a deep horizontal incision cut at a diagonal to the surface of the face, above which it highly projects. The face is dominated by a massive nose with a sharp arched nasal bone and wide nostrils, extended to form side arches which project from the face. In some cases the ends of the arches again coalesce with the material of the mask, in other cases they turn upwards resembling a huge mustache. The eyes are usually not indicated at all, there is only a couple of holes at the root of the nose enabling the masked dancer to see out. Very often these holes cannot be seen on reproductions, because there is a pair of horizontal arch-shaped protrusions above the face at eye level, especially on the probably newer masks, coalescing to form a compact arch. Under the first pair of protrusions there is usually another pair of shorter ones. On the newer masks these are again modified into horizontal protuberances on cheeks and at the sides of the nose, sometimes they are even further reduced to eyes (for example No. XXV). The mask ends in a jutting monkey mouth, the animal shape of which is not so apparent on the newer specimens. I know of only



one case, and it is one of the oldest masks, having a curved bird beak instead of the monkey mouth. It is the already mentioned mask from Kjersmeier's collection (No. XXVI), whose attribution to the Bete on the published parallels seems to be definite. On the newer masks a second pair of horizontal protuberances is added between the nose and its side arches, and the arch above the eyes, for example on the mask No. XXVII from the Abidjan Museum<sup>95</sup> or on one of the most expressive masks of this type from the collection of Helen Kamer (No. XXVIII).<sup>96</sup> The tendency towards the most possible abstract styling, towards the expressing of all components in the fantastic face of the mask by means of horizontal lines and arches, counterpointed by the vertical band of scarification keloid on the forehead culminated on the mask published by W. Bascom (No. XXX).<sup>98</sup>

In the last twenty years a number of masks of this type have been published. All of them are variants of the described design, reaching various stages of artistic mastership and invention.<sup>99</sup> In some cases features common on Ngere masks can be seen on them, these were probably mediated by the production of Wobe and Niabwa tribes neighbouring directly with the Bete territory in the region of Daloa. They are tube-shaped eyes and vertical tusk-shaped protrusions.

According to B. Holas it is a "*masque bété de type ancien*"<sup>100</sup> from the Daloa region, elsewhere in the same study he says that it was adopted on the basis of a neighbouring model ("*d'ailleurs emprunté en partie au modele voisin*") and reserved only for some parts of Daloa region ("*est réservé a certaines fractions de la région de Daloa*").<sup>101</sup> The authors of the catalogue to the Brussels exhibition<sup>102</sup> see this mask as a substyle developed under the influence of the Dan group, while Deborah Waite comments upon an almost identical mask as having "derived from so-called warthog masks produced by neighbouring Guere tribes".<sup>103</sup> There is no doubt that as to their style the Bete masks from the Daloa region belong to the so called Dan-Ngere complex, and that they are subsidiary more to that element, which is usually and certainly by right, ascribed to Ngere style. Their iconography, however, seems to be autochthonous, i. e. Bete, in spite of its using foreign elements.

B. Holas claims that it is a semi-human, semi-animal mask, Deborah Waite sees more of the animal element in it and there-



fore puts it into connection with the "so-called warthog masks" of the Ngere tribe. If we are to see the animal element in the mask, we must also say, what animal it should represent. B. Holas does not specify the animal element in any way. D. Waite has a warthog in mind. As far as I know, the first person to use the term "warthog mask" for a fantastic Ngere mask was William Fagg,<sup>104</sup> and perhaps he was right. The mask which he characterized in this way has two pairs of tusk-shaped protrusions, one horizontal and one vertical, resembling the upper and lower tusks of a warthog. Additional protrusions on other specimens may be explained as wart lumps on the head of *Phacochoerus*. I have heard of no-one, however, asking the carvers and ascertaining in this way, that this is in fact the model that they had in mind when creating these masks. In the case of the Bete masks the general idea is certainly different, because they have a monkey mouth and in one case even the beak of a bird. Even if we concede that the horizontal protrusions on Bete masks are derived from the tusks and warts of the African hog, the masks still do not represent one concrete animal, but a syncretism of attributes of various animals — a feature quite common in Africa. The large horizontal arches extending from the nostrils on Bete masks really seem to have been adopted from the expressive canon of the Ngere. Not, however, from their "warthog masks", but from the facial scarification or painting frequently reproduced on human masks of the Dan-Ngere complex (for example on the mask in the Náprstek Museum collection, Cat. No. A 13,507, No. XXXI) which, as we have seen has also appeared on masks of the southern and eastern Bete. There in the Bete milieu of Daloa region this originally semantically important feature could have been transformed into a purely decorative one, which could be freely changed and to which originally perhaps a sense of caricatured exaggeration was attached. That would reflect the frequent scornful relation to ethnically foreign neighbours, which after all is manifested in Africa also in the names given to neighbouring tribes. This process affected the Bete on the other end of their territory from the Guro as well. In that case the mask would not be interpreted as being horrific, but on the contrary as rather comic, and that would coincide with the assumption that this mask "is in all likelihood not employed in the older and secret society rites but secular entertainments in which an entire village would



participate".<sup>105</sup> Whether it is this explanation that is nearer to the truth or the explanation from the above cited catalogue of the Brussels exhibition saying that the mask "*personifie les forces de la nature qui sont très diverses et parfois obscures*", it does not alter our analysis of those striking horizontal arches extending from the nostrils of the Bete masks.

There is something of difference between this most common type of Bete masks from the Daloa region and a second type once published from the collection of Chaim Gross by Margaret Plass, who again marked it as "warthog initiation mask of the Ngere".<sup>106</sup> Ladislav Segy later moved its provenance further east and ascribed it to the Ngere-Wobe tribe.<sup>107</sup> In the catalogue to the collection of Chaim Gross from the year 1976 it was already labelled Bete (No. XXXII).<sup>108</sup> B. Holas published another specimen, unfortunately only an excision, in 1966 and stated that it had been found in the Daloa region.<sup>109</sup> In 1969 B. Holas published one more mask of this type (No. XXXIII) giving no data on its provenance but putting it into connection with the "monstrous creatures (*monströse Geschöpfe*) from the Bete folklore".<sup>110</sup> An almost identical mask, perhaps by the hand of the same carver, also appeared on an auction in Munich in 1980.<sup>111</sup> Another specimen was published in an advertisement of J. Camp Associates<sup>112</sup> in New York (No. XXXIV) and a very similar one from the collections of I. F. A. N. in Dakar was shown at the exhibition of art of Black Africa in Sao Paulo in 1969.<sup>113</sup>

This type is characterized by a strikingly elongated shape of the face, and although similarly to the preceding type it has various protrusions — perhaps animal attributes — here the human element prevails. The forehead is high and arched, with a vertical keloid running down its centre, the nose has a geometric shape — the shape of a triangular pyramid characteristic of the Bete — with plastically carved nostrils, the mouth as well as eyes are human. The tusk-shaped protrusions no longer form an organic whole with the mask as with the preceding type, but they rather appear as a foreign element. They are completely missing on the mask shown at Holas's exhibition in Vevey as on an analogical mask from the Munich auction. Instead of them these two specimens have a pair of small horns, which definitely do not resemble the tusks of a warthog but rather the horns of an antelope and which appear in the same position as magical symbols for example on



some *bundu* masks of the Mende tribe in Sierra Leone. On both of the masks as well as on the mask from Chaim Gross's collection the hairstyle tapers off in a wedge on the forehead and is comparable to the hairstyle of some masks of the eastern Bete and Guro (cf. Nos. 15 and XX) but not to anything that we know from the western neighbours of the Bete. On the mask No. XXXIV a second low forehead and crown of the head, a feature stereotypically repeated on the masks of the preceding type, has been attached above the high domed forehead, as if the carver had used a stylized element foreign to him without being aware of its meaning.

The third type of masks from the Daloa region again has a very low forehead and it bears horizontal or vertical horns or tusks like the two preceding types. This type comes the nearest to the core of the style of the Dan-Ngere complex thanks to the tube-shaped eyes. It also most closely resembles the mask from the Niabwa tribe in Golovin's collection (No. 34). One of the most beautiful masks of this type from the collection of Elisofon (No. XXXV) was published by W. Fagg.<sup>114</sup> Also B. Holas speaks of "*la proximité du masque niabwa*"<sup>115</sup> in connection with the specimen of this type (No. XXXVI). In fact their likeness is so great that it is impossible to determine to which of these two ethnic groups a mask of this type should be attributed only on the basis of formal analysis and without knowledge of a larger number of exactly localized masks. In accordance with that no attribution was for example given to a mask advertised by Gallery Concorde Ltd., Los Angeles,<sup>116</sup> in other cases these masks are probably wrongly ascribed to the Ngere-Wobe.

#### Sculptures of the South-Western Bete from *subdivision* Soubré

Apart from the several masks coming according to B. Holas from the closer unspecified region of Issia — Soubré, which we have spoken about in connection with Bete masks of *tribu* Gottibono in *subdivision* Gagnoa, no other documented sculpture has been published from the south-western territory of this tribe. Thus the three masks and one figure in the Golovin collection in Prague are, with the above mentioned reservation, the only known testi-



mony to the traditional art of this region. They suggest a situation, which can with regard to the proximity of the very influential stylistic centre of the Ngere in the west, be only expected. It would be to these western neighbours that we would attribute mask No. 33 without any hesitation, if we did not know Golovin's exact geographic datum on its origin. The same can also be said of mask No. 31 and figure No. 32, made probably by hand of one carver, although in this case the comparison with masks of the type most common in the Daloa region is compatible too. In spite of the two woodcarvings being undoubtedly made by a master carver, they vary. While the mask is a perfectly harmonious work of art, in the case of the figure there is a striking contrast between the face and the rest of the figure. This shows that the carver in accordance to the lack of tradition in figural sculpture in this part of the country, was at a loss as to its design and groped after the unifying of the somewhat simplified replica of the preceding mask and of the body, in order to create an integrated figure. It is a situation similar to the one we have observed when speaking of the Ngere figure No. XI. The styling of the figure does not appear to be the result of an established tradition but more of an immature attempt ad hoc. V. Golovin stated that it was a fetish which stood in the corner of a hut, but in regard to the lack of other proof it can be assumed that although the figure perhaps really may have stood in the corner of a hut by chance, this was an isolated case, or else that the figure in fact had no ritual function at all and may have been even made as a genre figure on commission for a European customer. The last mask (No. 30) is again a variant of the first type of the Daloa mask, a variant whose styling has, however, deviated considerably from its model. The fact that the lower arch passing over the nose and the two unconventionally placed tusks at the corners of the mouth have been carved separately and then nailed to the mask, testifies to the lack of tradition in masks of this type in the place of its origin. The unusual treatment of the mouth and teeth taking the shape of hollowed out tetragons distantly connects this specimen with another unique Bete mask, supposedly of the *tôlou* category, published by B. Holas with no other data on its provenance (No. XXXVII).<sup>118</sup> If the place of origin of mask No. 30 can be deduced from this connection, then it must be looked for in the area between the towns of Issia and



Soubré, and that corresponds to the settlements of *tribu* Loboué on the Lobo river and the ethnical origin as given to mask No. 30 by Golovin.

### Conclusions

The Bete tribe, which according to the numbers from 1959 has about 150,000 souls and which belongs to the Kru branch of the Kwa language family,<sup>119</sup> lives in the central part of the Ivory Coast, an area once covered by tropical rain forest which has now been changed to a great extent to coffee and cocoa plantations. This ethnic group, owing perhaps to its animosity towards foreigners, eluded the attention of researchers for a number of decades, and thus in comparison with other ethnic groups of this West African republic very little is known of its culture and traditional sculpture in particular. All the reports dealing with it come only from the sixties, they are incomplete and often contradictory. The most important pieces of information were handed down by the late Africanist of Czech origin Dr. Bohumil Holas, former director of the Abidjan Museum. Even those, however, are inconsistent — and as I have tried to point out — they sometimes contradict each other.

On the basis of the data and collection of the apparently largest existing collection of Bete sculpture (at least apart from the territory of the Ivory Coast), which had come to Prague in early thirties thanks to M. D. V. Golovin, I have tried to sum up and classify all the information that could be deduced from this material. To the greatest possible degree — but of course without claiming to be exhaustive — I also have taken into account other works of the traditional sculpture of the Bete tribe, published in the now already confusing flood of literature dealing with African art, including exhibition and auction catalogues. A number of sculptures had been attributed to other ethnic groups and their reclassification was possible only on the basis of style analysis and on the known analogies. Naturally the conclusive evidence of this material is limited because it is undocumented, and besides the possibility that some of the published specimens are counterfeits cannot be excluded. Nevertheless I believe that the results have convincingly changed the former views on the art of the Bete tribe.



Above all it appears that the usage of ritual masks was not practically limited to the western groups round Daloa, that the existence of masks among the eastern Bete in the Gagnoa region was not exceptional, and that even the groups of this tribe living in the region of Issia — Soubré — in contrast to Holas's statement<sup>120</sup> — used dance masks and perhaps use them up to this day. Bete masks from Daloa region, which are the best known works of art of this tribe and which also most frequently appear in collections, are related to the Dan-Ngere complex in style, especially to its southern Ngere element, whose influence has been exercised particularly through the mediation of the tribal groups of Wobe and Niabwa. Apart from this western dominant influence on some masks of this region, presumably the newer ones, traces of eastern morphologic models can be observed. The influence of the western forest tribes' production is of course also to be seen with the south-western groups of Bete in the Issia — Soubré region, where the occurrence of masks has evidently been smaller, but where the formal principles of south-eastern production, a production seemingly representing the purest original tribal style and Bete themes, has made a stronger impact. At the eastern and north-eastern borders of the tribal territory the influence of the great art of the Guro tribe has made itself felt, in the region further to the south it has perhaps even been the old style of the Gagu tribe, of whose former art, however, we have no knowledge. With regard to the existence of intertribal relations in the past it must be presumed, that the influence has also worked in the opposite direction, particularly towards the Guro tribe. The defining of this influence, which demands the analysis of Guro sculptures, constitutes, however, a much more exacting task owing to the large number of objects in existence from this tribe. Some stylistically hybrid masks having no known documentation seem to indicate that new discoveries enriching and completing the overall picture of the arts map of the Ivory Coast may be extended.

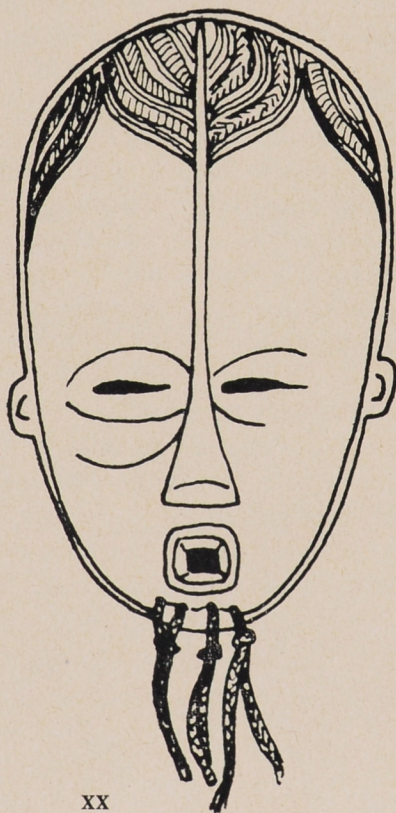
The fact that not only masks but also figural sculpture has survived in mature form only in the Gagnoa region, which seem to have been the art core of the tribal territory, is in accordance with this picture. It is remarkable that although some parallels with the art of the neighbouring regions may be observed also on figural sculptures, they are features testifying to the existence



of a broader cultural unity rather than concrete influences or borrowings. The existence of several subgroups of masks in the Golovin collection from the Gagnoa region shows, that masks were not an exceptional phenomenon there, possibly even adopted from a foreign ethnic group, but on the contrary that there was a wide art production of figures as well as masks with a number of productive centres that are today only fragmentarily documented by the collections in existence or by those that have not been as yet published. Therefore the traditional art of the Bete tribe deserves a far greater attention than has been paid to it until now, in field research as well as with regard to the unpublished objects of museum collections, first of all, and possibly even historical photographic material documenting the now nonexistent and forgotten hairstyles and scarification.

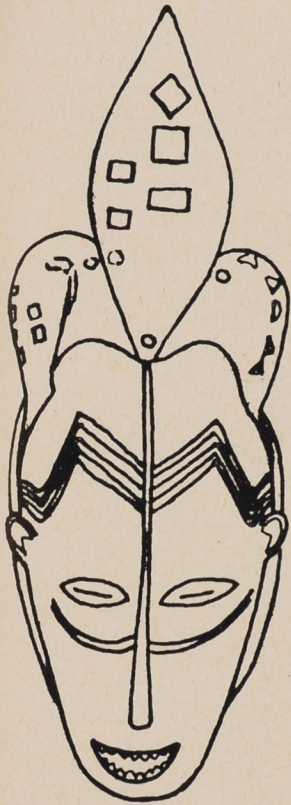


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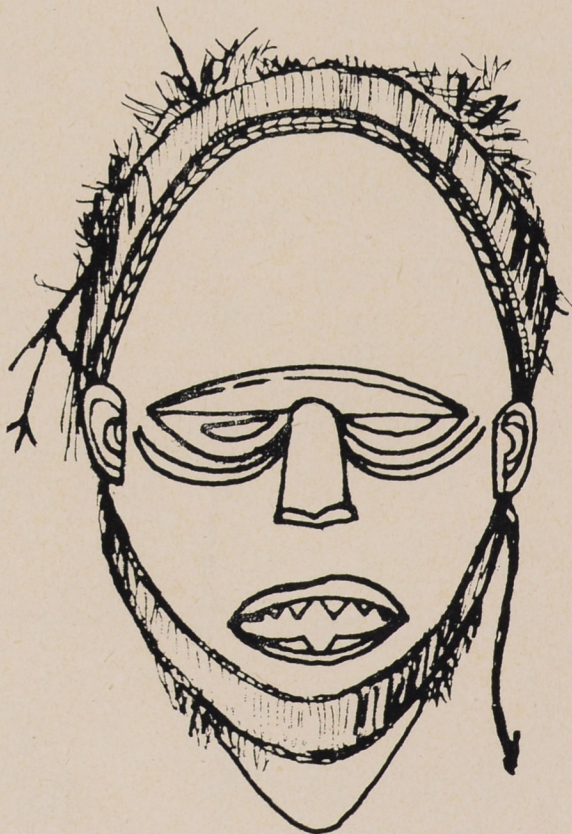
XXI



XXII

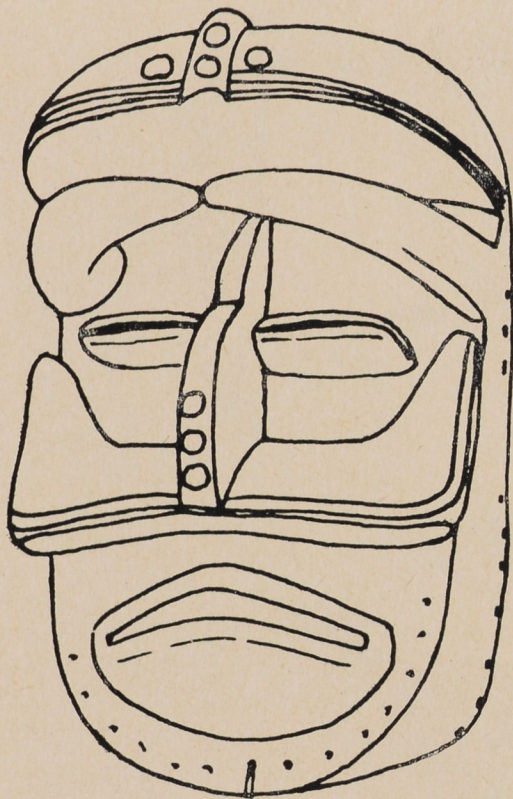


XXIII

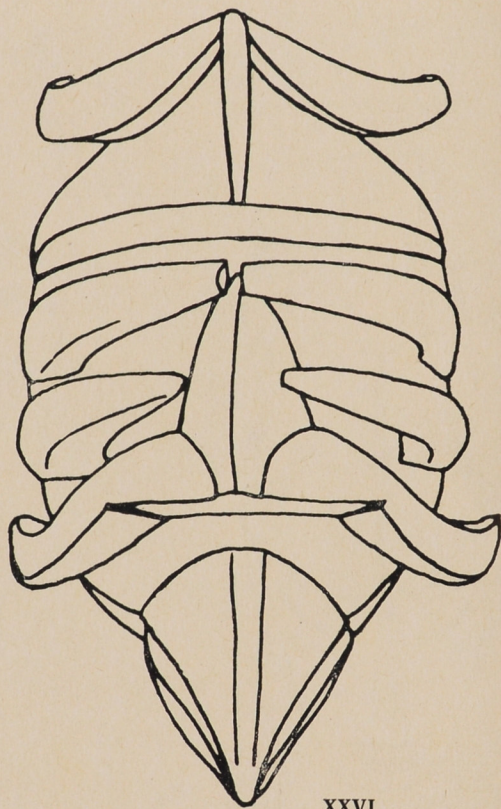


XXIV

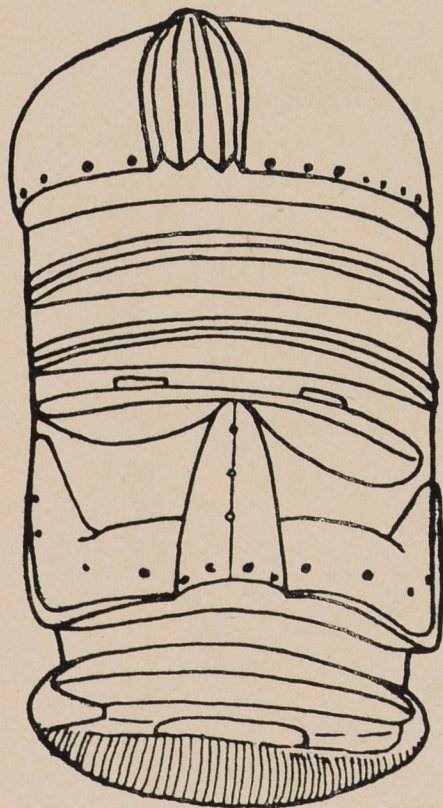




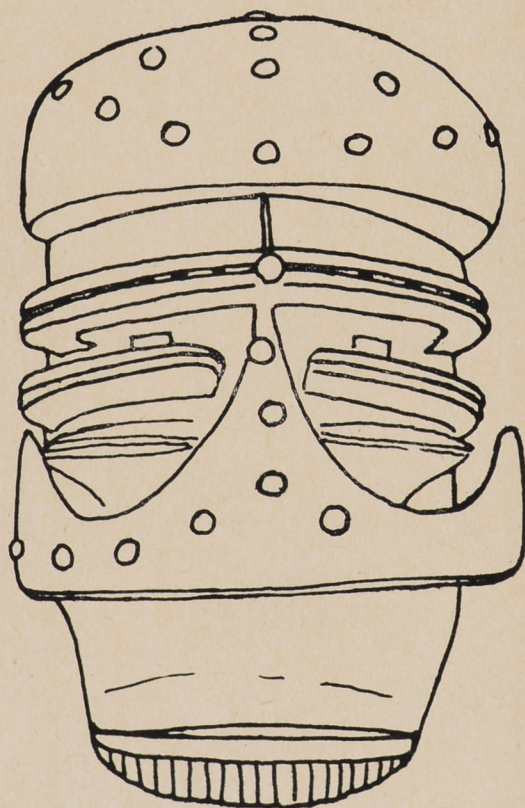
XXV



XXVI

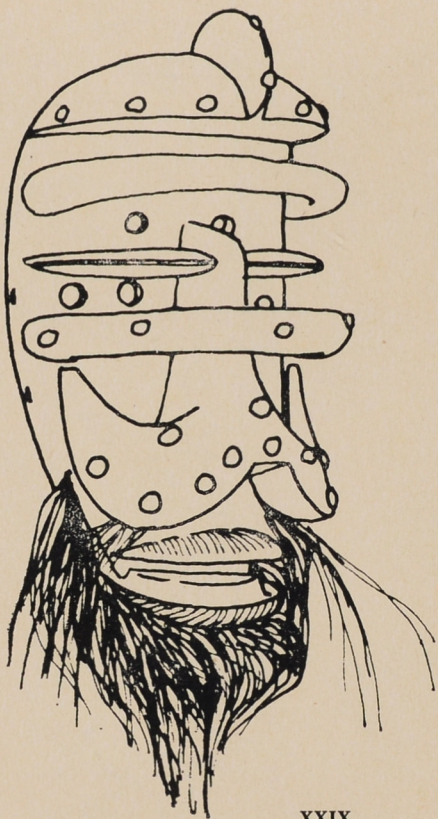


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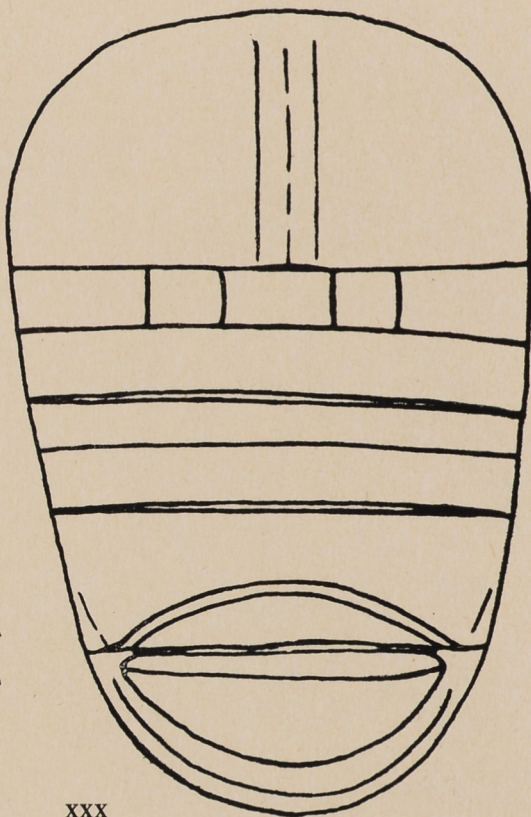


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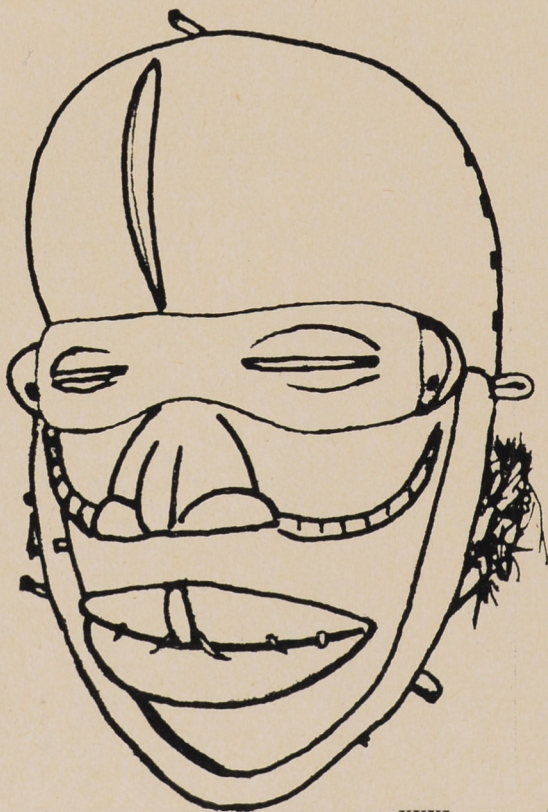




XXIX



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XXXI



XXXII





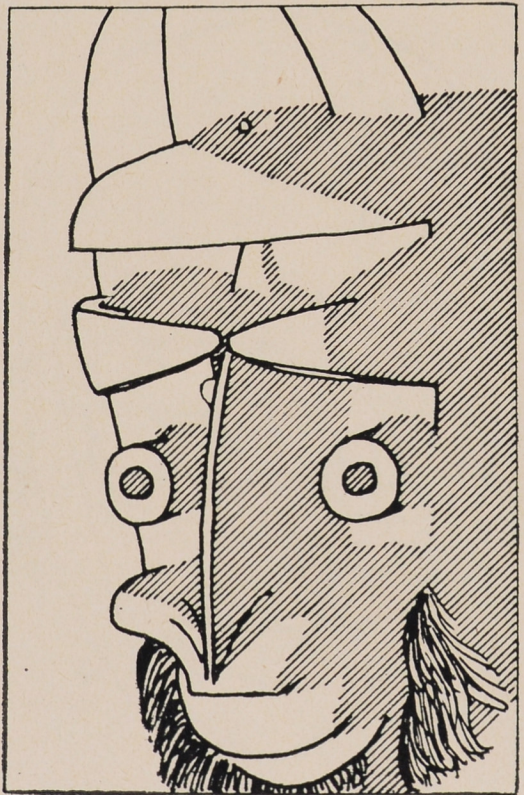
XXXIII



XXXIV



XXXV



XXXVI





XXXVII



## Notes

- 1 Leiris — Delange, 1968
- 2 Meauzé, 1968
- 3 *L'art nègre. Sources Évolution Expansion*. 1966
- 4 Sydow, 1930, p. 98
- 5 Basler, 1929
- 6 Sydow, 1954, pl. 10 A
- 7 Fagg, 1964
- 8 Holas, 1966; 1968 A; 1968 B; 1969 A; 1969 C
- 9 Bascom, 1967
- 10 Herold, 1967, Cat. No. 12
- 11 Review of the exhibition: *The African Collections, Ipswich Museum, Suffolk. African Arts*, Vol. XIII/1, p. 85, Nov. 1979
- 12 *The Sculptor's Eye*. 1976, p. 40
- 13 Plass, 1959, Cat. No. 35
- 14 Segy, 1961, p. 171
- 15 Kjersmeier, 1935, No. 64
- 16 Vandenhoute, 1948, p. 25
- 17 Lundbaek — Mork, 1968, Cat. No. 87
- 18 *Guéré — Wobé — Bété*, 1978, pl. 15—24
- 19 op. cit., p. 162
- 20 Fagg, 1965, p. 14
- 21 Thamann, 1902—1903
- 22 Dunglas, 1939
- 23 Hallouin, 1947
- 24 Köbben, 1956
- 25 Paulme, 1962
- 26 *ibid.*, p. 147—8
- 27 *ibid.*, p. 10
- 28 Rood, 1969
- 29 Holas, 1968 B
- 30 Viand, 1934
- 31 A similarly painted forehead on the photograph of a Bete man from the Issia region, see Holas, 1969 D, p. 177
- 32 Čapek, 1938, pl. III
- 33 "les Kouzić de Soubré states Dunglas, op. cit., p. 5
- 34 Holas, 1968 B, pl. 14
- 35 Hiernaux, 1950, p. 489
- 36 Paulme, 1962, p. 11
- 37 Holas, 1968 A, p. 108
- 38 Holas, 1968 B, p. 14
- 39 Rood, 1969, p. 76: "... the largest political unit in the traditional sphere was a relatively small collection of villages which were bound together by a common ancestry and a single local chief."



- 40 Dunglas, 1939, p. 5
- 41 Rood, 1969, p. 40
- 42 Holas, 1968 B, pl. III
- 43 Holas, 1966, pl. 31
- 44 *ibid.*, pl. 107, 179
- 45 Fagg, 1965, p. 15. Segy, 1975, p. 178 derived his general description of Bete figures from this exceptional specimen.
- 46 Leiris — Delange, 1968, p. 295, pl. 339
- 47 Geluwe, 1967, pl. 3
- 48 *Collection d'un amateur*, 1968, Cat. No. 51
- 49 Figure from a private collection in Karlsruhe, labelled Bete, published by K. F. Schädler, 1973, p. 94, is problematical. Its almost exact counterpart labelled Ngere was published by Holas, 1969, p. 102—3
- 50 *African Arts*, Vol. XI/3, p. 8, 1977
- 51 *African Arts*, Vol. XIII/3, p. 80, 1979
- 52 Holas, 1968 B, p. 66
- 53 Geluwe, 1967
- 54 *African Arts*, Vol. XII/3, p. 13, 1979
- 55 Fagg, 1971, p. 32
- 56 Thomann, *op. cit.*, p. 350
- 57 *ibid.*, p. 367
- 58 *ibid.*, p. 386
- 59 *ibid.*, p. 387
- 60 Tauxier, 1924, p. 129
- 61 *African Arts*, Vol. XI/4, p. 20
- 62 For example Holas, 1969 C, p. 191, or Holas, 1967, p. 71
- 63 This custom is documented for the Bete by G. Thomann and for the neighbouring Gagu by L. Tauxier, *op. cit.*
- 64 Wingert, 1954, p. 19—20
- 65 Holas, 1966, pl. 134
- 66 *African Arts*, Vol. XV/1, p. 25
- 67 Newton, 1978, p. 62
- 68 Holas, 1968 A, p. 109
- 69 A somewhat hybrid mask published in the catalogue of *Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer*, 1978 A, Cat. No. 164, h. 26 cm, whose hairstyle reveals influence of its models, the Guro masks (pl. XVa), as well as the unique animal mask which seems to be closely related to the masks of tribu Zédié of Golovin collection, Cat. No. 39 in the catalogue of *Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer*, 1983, l. 55 cm (pl. XVb) also belong to this group.
- 70 *African Arts*, Vol. VI/2, p. 79 and Vol. IX/2, p. 58 in the *Caveat emptor* column.
- 71 Holas, 1968 B, pl. X
- 72 *ibid.*, p. 120



- 73 *ibid.*, p. 122
- 74 Celenko, 1980, p. 37
- 75 Leuzinger, 1971, Cat. No. F 23. The author describes the mask as a female one apparently under the influence of Holas's interpretation although it has a beard of string.
- 76 Meauzé, 1968, p. 170; also *Sculptures africaines dans les collections publiques françaises*, 1972, pp. 53, 55. The two sources give a different height of the mask, 34 cm and 28 cm.
- 77 Frobenius, 1899, fig. 112
- 78 Robbins, 1966, fig. 59
- 79 Holas, 1969 C
- 80 Fagg, 1968, fig. 66
- 81 *Arts primitifs dans les ateliers d'artistes*, 1967, fig. 89
- 82 Himmelheber, 1935, p. 14 and elsewhere.
- 83 Herold, 1967, Cat. No. 13
- 84 *L'Art nègre. Sources . . .*, 1966, Cat. No. 132
- 85 Leuzinger, 1970, p. 116, Cat. No. G 13
- 86 *Art d'Afrique dans les collections Belges*, 1963, Cat. No. 378
- 87 Fagg, 1965, p. 15
- 88 The difference in height stated on the two masks, 25 cm and 35,5 cm (14 inches) is with regard to their great similarity and probable origin by the hand of one carver, rather suspicious. It seems to have been caused by the measuring of the first mask without the beard and the second with the beard.
- 89 Fagg, 1970, Cat. No. 125, p. 110
- 90 Plass, 1959
- 91 W. Fagg thus says that another mask exists ("a close duplicate") similar to this mask in Charles Ratton's collection, while M. Plass says, that it was this mask which was reproduced in Ratton's book on African masks. Unfortunately Ratton's book is unavailable to me and so I cannot compare the reproductions. I assume, however, that Ratton surely published his own mask and not a foreign one. Was Fagg then mistaken and was the mask that he himself published in 1970 identical with Ratton's mask? Or did perhaps C. Ratton have two masks and did he sell one of them to USA?
- 92 *African Arts*, Vol. XIII/1, p. 16. This mask was labeled Guro/Bete, h. 14", i. e. 35,5 cm
- 93 *The Sculptor's Eye*, . . . 1976, p. 40
- 94 *Arts premiers d'Afrique noire*. 1977, Cat. No. 25
- 95 Holas, 1969 A, p. 199
- 96 *Guéré — Wobé — Bété*. 1978, pl. 23



- 97 *ibid.*, pl. 22
- 98 Bascom, 1967
- 99 For other masks of this type see also for example: *Géré — Wobé — Bété*. 1978, pl. 15—21, 24; Waite, 1969, p. 12; *Collection d'un amateur ...* 1968, Cat. No. 17; *The UNESCO Courier*, May 1977, p. 17 (labelled Ngere); Gillon, 1978, p. 162 (labelled Ngere-Wobe); Holas, 1966, pl. 168, 172; *African Art from the Collection of Jay C. Leff*, 1967, p. 31, Cat. No. 45; *Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer*, 1978 A, Cat. No. 132; — 1980, Cat. No. 93, 94; Morigi, 1980, No. 127—9.
- 100 Holas, 1966, pl. 41
- 101 *ibid.*, pl. 168
- 102 *Arts premiers d'Afrique noire*, 1977, No. 25
- 103 Waite, 1969, p. 12
- 104 Elisofon — Fagg, 1958, p. 72, fig. 74
- 105 Waite, *op. cit.*
- 106 Plass, 1959, Cat. No. 35
- 107 Segy, 1961, p. 171
- 108 *The Sculptor's Eye*, 1976, p. 40
- 109 Holas, 1966, pl. 162
- 110 Holas, 1969 A, p. 198—9
- 111 *Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer*, 1980, Cat. No. 92
- 112 *African Arts*, Vol. II/2, p. 16
- 113 *Africa. Arte negra ...* 1969, Cat. No. 65, picture on p. 15 wrongly marked as Cat. No. 63
- 114 Fagg, 1970, p. 106, Cat. No. 119
- 115 Holas, 1966, pl. 53
- 116 *African Arts*, Vol. XII/2, p. 70
- 117 *Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer*, 1978 B, Cat. No. 65a
- 118 Holas, 1969 B, p. 95
- 119 Murdock, 1959, p. 260
- 120 Holas, 1968 B, p. 120



#### A d d e n d u m

While the present paper was in print, the book "*Primitivism*" in *20th Century Art* appeared, published by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, on the occasion of the Exhibition of the same title. The article on Picasso by W. Rubin is illustrated on p. 289 of the first volume, by a reproduction of an African wood-carving, identified only as a figure from Ivory Coast. For the first time, it was reproduced in the book *African Negro Art: Its Influence on Modern Art* by Marius de Zayas, in 1916. I have not seen the book itself.

This is a female karyatid carrying a round disc on her head. She bears all the substantial features of the Bete figures from the Gagnoa area in the south-eastern part of the tribal territory. The forehead representing more than a half of the total height of the face is bordered by three crescent-shaped arches of hair, divided in the middle by a vertical keloid; on the right side of the neck, there is a typical slant scarification. In this concept, the face belongs to the group of masks of the Golovin's *tribu* Zédié. The trunk is high, and column-shaped, the breast being small and there is a scarification in the form of three concentric circles around the prominent umbilical hernia. The legs of the figure seem to be influenced by the style of neighbourly southern Akan tribes.



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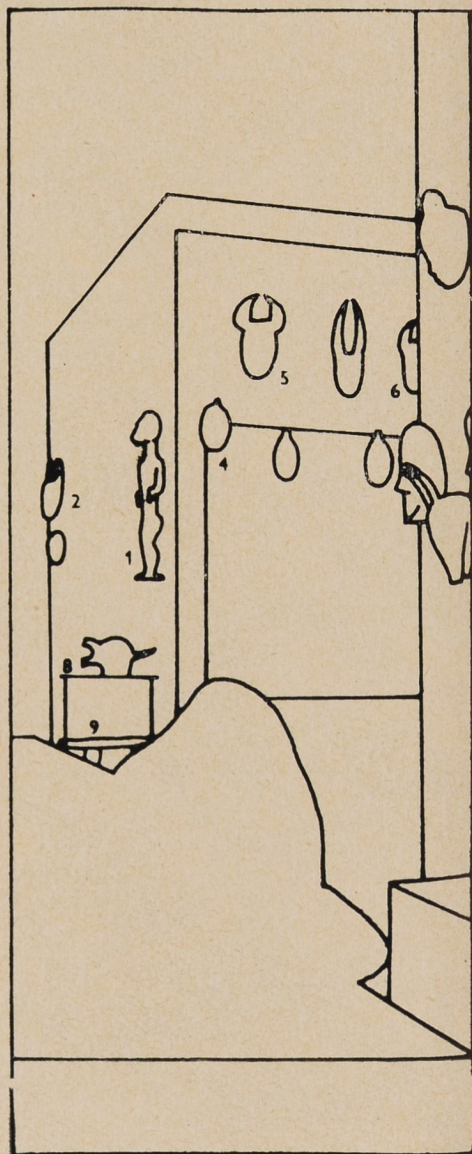
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Sculptures identified on the photographs  
taken on the verandah of Golovin's African  
bungalow:

- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| 1. Male figure, Bete — Náprstek Museum | Cat. No. 7,657 |
| 2. Mask, Bete                          | Cat. No. 7,626 |
| 3. Mask, Bete                          | Cat. No. 7,623 |
| 4. Mask, Bete                          | Cat. No. 7,656 |

XXXVIII





- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| 5. Mask, Bete  | Cat. No. 7,652 |
| 6. Mask, Bete  | Cat. No. 7,653 |
| 7. Female figure, Baule  | Cat. No. 7,671 |
| 8. Mask, Baule   | Cat. No. 7,629 |
| 9. Small table on three karyatids of unknown tribal provenance, mentioned in the text. |                |

XXXIX

