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MEMORY

Luba Art and the Making of History

MARY NOOTER ROBERTS • ALLEN F. ROBERTS

In order to force the past, when forgetfulness is hemming us in, poets engage us in reimagining....They teach us "the audacities of memory." One poet tells us the past must be invented:

"Invent. There is no feast
At the bottom of memory."

Gaston Bachelard
The Poetics of Reverie

Memory is a subject of timely and far-reaching import.¹ As postmodernists query the nature of truth, memory, and history; as history books are rewritten to reflect multiculturalism, polyvocality, and the decentering of knowledge; as the humanities become increasingly reflexive; and as issues of memory loss and retrieval are researched, debated, and litigated, it is appropriate to consider how other cultures conceive of and use memory.

"Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History" (exhibition and accompanying book) explores relationships among memory, history, and art made and used by Luba people of southeastern Zaire. Memory boards, royal staffs, divination instruments, and other Luba mnemonic devices dating from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries demonstrate the importance of visual arts to the formation, development, and remembrance of Luba kingship and political relations. "Memory" demonstrates that since precolonial times, the recounting of history has been a specific and highly valued form of intellectual activity among Luba; and that visual representation has been and is a primary vehicle for the making of Luba histories of kingship and center/periphery political relations.²

Memory is not passive, and the mind is not simply a repository from which memories can be retrieved. Rather, memory is a dynamic social process of recuperation, reconfiguration, and outright invention that is often engendered, provoked, and pro-

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The exhibition includes 111 objects from 54 lenders. After showing at the Museum for African Art (February 2—September 8, 1996), it will travel to the National Museum of African Art Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. (October 30, 1995—January 26, 1997) and several other locations.

1. Stool. Luba, Zaire. Wood, beads, glass, fiber; 42.7cm (16.8"). Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, The Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund, no. 91.502.

The soul of each Luba kingship is literally enshrined in its throne. When a king died, his royal residence was preserved for posterity as a "spirit capital," a "lieu de mémoire," where the memory of the king was perpetuated through a

spirit medium called Mwadi who incarnated the royal spirit. This site became known as a *kiten-ta*, literally, a "seat." In other words, the place became a symbolic seat of remembrance and power that would continue the reign of the deceased king. While the sculpted stool is but a concrete symbol of this larger and more metaphysical "seat," it nevertheless expresses the most fundamental precepts of Luba power and dynastic succession.





PHOTOS: MARY NOOTER ROBERTS

Left: 2. Court historians, called “men of memory,” of the Mbudy Association, which guarded and disseminated oral traditions relating to kingship. They display sculpted emblems of office, including two memory boards (*lukasa*) and a staff of office, as well as animal skins, beaded accoutrements, and *pemba*, a sacred white chalk referring to the spirit world. Shaba Region, Zaire, 1989.

Right: 3. A Mbudy official “reads” a *lukasa*, associating memories with particular loci on the board. The recitation of history facilitated by the *lukasa* is a performance, and will vary according to the identity of the reader and his or her audience. Shaba Region, Zaire, 1989.

moted by visual images (Küchler & Melion 1991; Casey 1987). Such an approach to memory is useful for understanding many African contexts in which history is both evoked and produced through oral narratives and performances. Despite ideologies that suggest that history—like truth—is immutable, expressive forms change over time. Paradoxically, their flexible semantic structures allow for the creative re/construction of memory, while at the same time providing “proof” of past truths because they render concepts, emotions, and interactions concrete (Vansina 1985). A sense of security results, as expectations of how things always have been and should be are confirmed, even as new solutions are sought to meet evolving needs.

For Luba peoples, objects and performances generate memory for historical documentation, political negotiation, and everyday problem-solving. This exhibition program presents the nuanced relationships of memory and visual representation in the production of Luba historical thought to suggest how the work of memory is a work of art, and vice versa.

Myth and the Written Word

Luba peoples inhabit the vast savanna, rolling hills, and scrubby forests of Shaba, a province of present-day southeastern Zaire.³ Their location along the tributaries and lakes of the great Zaire/Congo River, their participation in long-distance trade, and their exploitation of rich natural resources, including salt, iron, palm oil, and fish, all contributed to the establishment of an influential central African kingdom in the latter half of the present millennium (Vansina 1966, Reefe 1981). Evidence of such political consolidation is revealed in an astounding archaeological record from what is now deemed the Luba “Heartland.” Advanced metalworking and ceramic technologies over a 1,500-year continuum, as well as linguistic factors, identify Luba as a preeminent proto-Bantu population of central Africa—that is, as the nucleus for expansion by peoples now inhabiting much of central Africa.⁴ In addition, Luba are recognized for an extensive and bril-

liant body of oral history, court poetry, and visual arts.⁵ These include a wide range of royal sculptures and emblems from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, when the Luba kingdom was at its height. The wealth of these materials make the Luba past a rich field for investigating African notions of memory and history, and how they may be related to state formation and other processes of political economy.

A caveat is in order. The written discourses and on-the-ground policies of colonialism and the early postcolonial periods have contributed to the creation of a Luba ethnicity or "super-tribalism," based on growing urbanism and other factors (C. Young 1965:240–41, 264), and reflecting the supposed precolonial existence of a Luba "empire."⁶ Such a rigid model of centralized rule is the result of a literal reading of the founding myth of sacred kingship and a fundamental misunderstanding of African political economy by Belgian colonial authorities, based upon a prevailing sense that kingdoms *must* have existed, even when evidence suggested the contrary. This is by no means to say that a Luba state did not exist, nor would we diminish its accomplishments in political economy, erudition, art and expressive culture, and other domains. Indeed, these are the principal subjects celebrated in "Memory." Instead, we suggest that the Luba state was a far more flexible set of relationships than "empire" connotes, extending in a wide circle of influence rather than authority. "Luba" is a social identity available to a much vaster complex of cultures than that of the Heartland itself. As Pierre Petit notes, it is a most ambiguous category that may refer to five thousand or five million people, depending upon its particular, situationally defined application (1993:30).

To understand how notions of Luba ethnicity and empire were constructed, one must first consider how Luba enshrine the origins of sacred kingship in an epic. Referred to in the literature as a "genesis myth" or a "royal charter," numerous versions of this long oral narrative have been transcribed.⁷ In its basic structure (Heusch 1982), Mbidi Kiluwe, a handsome hunter from the east, introduces royal bearing and a new political order to the indigenous population, then governed by a cruel, drunken despot named Nkongolo Mwamba. The union of Mbidi Kiluwe with one of Nkongolo's sisters produces a son named Kalala Ilunga, who grows to become a heroic warrior. After great antagonism and a protracted battle with Nkongolo, Kalala defeats his maternal uncle with the help of a visionary named Mijibu wa Kalenga and accedes to the throne to institute sacred kingship as embodied and introduced by Mbidi. All subsequent Luba kings are said to descend from Kalala Ilunga.

This political charter gained particular importance through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Luba histories written by early European observers have been based on a literal interpretation of the myth as narrated at the royal court, thereby promoting the notion of a single dynastic line ruling a Luba "empire." The term "empire" first appeared in several histories formulated by Belgian territorial administrators. In his influential *Baluba et Balubaisés du Katanga* (1936), Edmond Verhulpen asserted that there were two Luba "empires," the first that of Nkongolo through the seventeenth century, and the second that of Kalala Ilunga, established thereafter. This second empire allegedly extended to Lake Tanganyika, drawing numerous ethnic groups into the sphere of Luba sovereignty and giving rise to the term *Balubaisés*, or "Luba-ized" peoples. This useful term suggests a dynamic process through which attributes of one culture are emulated, adopted, and adapted by people of another; but there is no credible evidence that Luba-ized peoples ever constituted an "empire" ruled by a supreme authority. Instead, a Luba polity based around the Upemba Depression constituted a Heartland of active commerce and political influence. Armed raiding outward from this center served both defensive and offensive purposes, but there is no substantive proof that "imperial authority" was imposed or even sought by Heartland Luba kings, at least in most cases.

Approaching Luba political organization through contemporary oral accounts stimulated by visual mnemonics, as well as through the available archaeological record, provides a more useful perspective on Luba polity than that of "empire." Although court chronicles accentuate the preeminence of a single royal patriline originated by Mbidi, the mysterious hunter-hero from the east, archaeological records show that Luba have had a continuous and progressive history of socio-political and technological development for more than fifteen hundred years, with no radical changes in kind or degree, and with no clear evidence of the introduction of a new and foreign political order.⁸ Likewise, visual arts and contemporary oral testimonies generated about them indicate that Luba power rested not with a single dynastic line of kings or with a single "center," but with a multicentered constellation of chieftaincies, officeholders, societies, and sodalities that validated claims to power in relation to what we suggest to be a largely mythical center. The paradox is explicit: there is no real center, yet belief in one allows cultural integra-

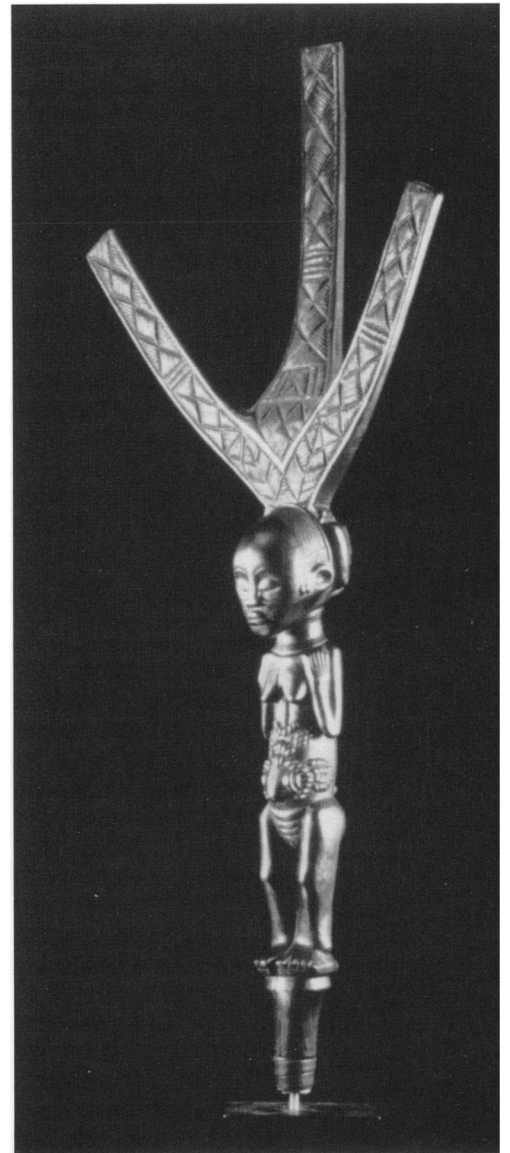


PHOTO: DICK BEAULIEUX

4. Bow stand. Luba, Zaire. Wood, 59.4cm (23.4"). Ethnografisch Museum, Antwerp, no. AE 722.

Bow stands were among the most sacred regalia in the treasuries of Luba kings and chiefs. These beautifully formed objects with three projecting wooden branches and iron shafts functioned as resting stands for bows and arrows, but they were primarily symbols of royal authority. Bow stands serve to remind of the important relationship of hunting to kingship, for in Luba myth, the culture-bearer of kingship, Mbidi Kiluwe, was a renowned hunter whose treasured emblem was his bow. Bow stands were never displayed in public; rather, they were fastidiously guarded in the king's residence by a female dignitary named Kyabuta. For public ceremonies, the Kyabuta followed the chief with a simple bow held between her breasts. Within their protective enclosures, bow stands were regularly provided with prayers and sacrifices, and were subject to elaborate ritual and taboo. The same house contained the relics of past rulers, considered to be the most potent of all royal property.



5. Memory board (*lukasa*). Luba, Zaire. Wood, beads, metal; 34cm (13.4"). Collection of Susanne K. Bennet.

Lukasa memory devices provide a framework for history while permitting multiple interpretations of the past. Through a rectangular or hourglass shape that represents the Luba landscape, the royal court, human anatomy, and the emblematic royal tortoise all at once, the memory board embodies multiple levels of information simultaneously. Beads, coded by size and color, and incised or raised ideograms provide a means of associating events, places, and names in the past.

Incised on the back, or "outside," of virtually every memory board is the stylized depiction of a tortoise shell, for the founding ancestress of the Mbudy Association was a woman in the guise of a tortoise. The triangular regions represent the "scarifications" of the tortoise, or the scutes of the carapace. Mbudy members explain that these scarified regions are called "lakes," and that each lake symbolizes the spirit capital of an important king. Luba believe that just as the patterns on a tortoise shell testify to the animal's longevity, so do the striations within the *lukasa*'s lakes refer to the deeds and accomplishments of each king, and the prohibitions of sacred royalty.

tion of an entire region. Identification with a "center"—more an ideological construct than an empirical reality—was a means of legitimizing the "periphery."⁹

Contemporary Luba accounts of the past contradict monolithic descriptions of a Luba empire that are presented in colonial histories, suggesting more fractured and flexible Luba authority than presumed. The recent transformation of the Luba genesis myth into a written history has diminished the Epic's multidimensionality, and its ability to be retold and remade with every narrative performance. As James Clifford states, in our endeavor to "write" culture, we transform the disjunction of lived experience into the integrated portraits of our cultural representations (1988:39). The impact of the Epic, continually reconfigured according to contemporary socio-political realities, is weakened in the process. Yet as we shall see, just such refabulation of the past is the *work*, as well as the *art*, of memory.

Memory in the Present

It is no longer possible to fully retrieve or reconstruct a positivist's "true" picture of the Luba past. What can be pieced together are the resonances and reprises of later generations. Academic historians possess other tools, of course (Vansina 1985); yet "history is always a problematic and incomplete reconstruction of what is no longer...a representation of the past" (Nora 1984:xix). It is truer to lived experience to consider the past as represented and assigned value according to its purposes for group identity and political legitimacy in the present (cf. Mudimbe 1988:195), and memory is always now.

Luba are concerned with their past, and like people everywhere, they continually reconfigure nationalist and local histories to meet emerging needs of political economy. Often, the primary means for doing so is through text/object relations—that is, how texts are attached to, or secreted in, visual representation. Although text/object relationships have received less attention than oral traditions, they constitute one of the important ways that many African peoples construct and perpetuate their pasts, and at the same time serve as registers of present significance.

Bogumil Jewsiewicki and V.Y. Mudimbe (1993) propose that memory represents a rich, as yet untapped resource for African history. And even though memory remains an

abstract, ambiguous concept, its study permits an incisive approach to understanding indigenous notions of history. "Memory in all its various forms can thus be used much more effectively than 'oral tradition' to conceptualize the post-scripted word" (Jewsiewicki & Mudimbe 1993:4), for "memory is the raw material of history" (Le Goff 1992: flap). Despite how obvious the answer may seem, we still must ask: What is memory?

The Cultural Construction of Memory

Memory has had its own histories in Western and non-Western societies (Casey 1987, Yates 1966, Terdiman 1993). While definitions are perpetually modified, recent research suggests an important premise: memory is not a discrete, biologically grounded, universally shared mental property or activity. Rather, memory is a cultural construction varying from one society to the next.¹⁰ Memory exists in what Kirsten Hastrup calls "Uchronia" (1991:113). Just as a Utopia is ideal because, as reflected in the word's ancient Greek roots, it is a "non-place," so a Uchronia is "a structured world, nowhere in time." Such positions contradict previous theories that memory is a universal function of the mind, a storage bank, so to speak, wherein data and knowledge may be deposited and retrieved at will (Küchler & Melion 1991:3).

Cross-cultural examination demonstrates the extent to which memory is a particular invention of every society and every era, reflecting local cosmologies and inexorably changing cultural values. Memory is active, always in the present; it is a construction, transaction, and negotiation, as opposed to a reproduction. History, too, is



6. Memory board (*lukasa*). Luba, Zaire. Wood, 45.5cm (17.9"). British Museum, London, no. 1954.Af.23.2981.

While most memory boards are of the beaded variety, some are sculpted, combining incised motifs and figures in relief. This exceptional *lukasa* shows five heads sculpted in relief against a background of patterns and ideographs. It is likely that the sculpted heads serve the same purpose as the most prominent of the beads on the other type of *lukasa*: to designate "*lieux de mémoire*," landmarks around which past events structure present memory. *Lukasas* do not symbolize thought so much as stimulate it. They afford a multiplicity of meanings through their multireferential iconography. Yet, the reading of these visual texts varies from one occasion to the next, depending on the contingencies of local politics, and demonstrates that there is no absolute or collective memory of Luba kingship, but many memories and many histories.

PHOTO: TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM



PHOTO: DIANE ALEXANDER WHITE

7. Royal spear. Luba, Zaire. Wood, metal; 135.9cm (53.5"). The Field Museum, Chicago, no. 210462, neg. no. A109443c.

Ceremonial spears were used during a ritual called "the beating of the anvils," when the knees of a new king were struck with a blacksmith's anvil. The transformative processes of smelting and smithing are a metaphor for the transformation of an ordinary man into a king, and serve to remember Kalala Ilunga, the first Luba king, who instituted new ironworking technologies. The spear also serves to recall specific episodes of the investiture ceremony. A royal spear is embellished with the image of a female figure, which originally was never intended for public viewing. The figurative part was wrapped in cloth and uncovered only for rare and private ceremonies of the court.

particular to and located in a social and moral universe, from a Luba or any point of view that does not subscribe to positivist absolutism (Cunnison 1959:35; Gellner 1973:180). If memory is uchronic, history is linked to time. As it is understood here, history is a formalization of memory that implies performance of "involved remembrance" (Connerton 1991:4)—that is, contingent purpose and the seizing upon "the explosive pertinence of a remembered detail" (Davis & Starn 1989:5).

Pierre Nora further differentiates memory from history in ways important to our project:

Memory is life...It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer...Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again...Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative.

And finally,

history is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it.

(Nora 1989:7–8)

Through the centuries, Luba have made history, as they have consolidated their political economy. In reaction, peoples peripheral to the Luba Heartland have made theirs, as well. Memory remains, however, as *lieux de mémoire*—places or concrete things bounded by secular history, to which one can repair and still find release into the affect and ecstasy of memory's Uchronia.

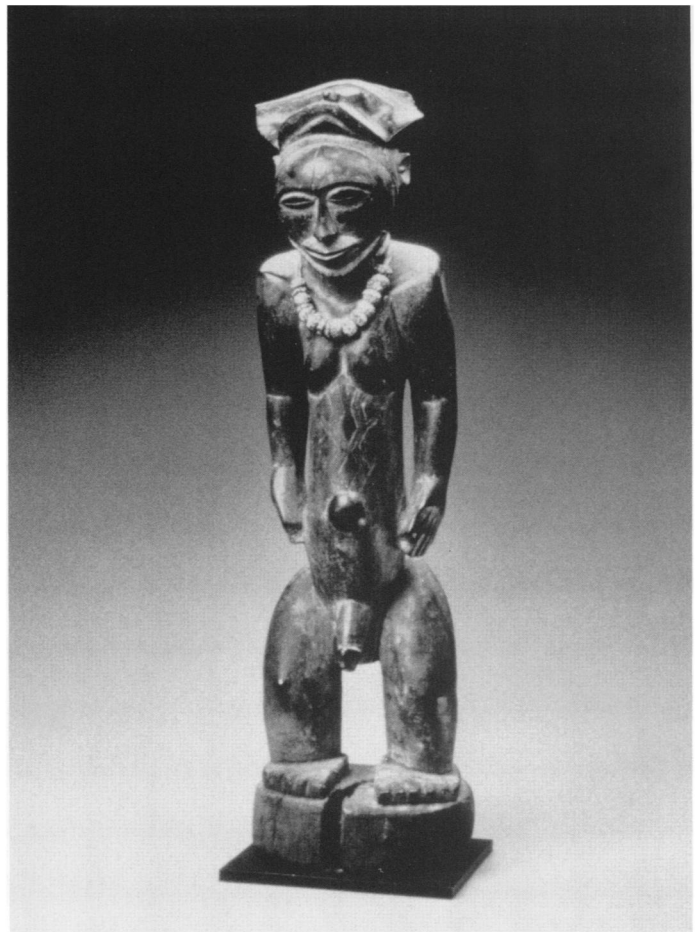
We must, then, consider the dynamic processes of making history; yet, as Anton Blok notes, such a phrase "is not without its problems. First, it carries voluntarist overtones. As Marx wrote in his *Eighteenth Brumaire*, 'men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please' " (1991:121). History takes form in the structures of mythical thought, as Luc de Heusch (1982) has so ably demonstrated, and we must recognize the ironies and accidents through which history is composed; but we must not overlook the intentionalities *because* of which history calls upon memory. Furthermore, a dominant faction's history may require subservient people's "forced forgetting," yet "counter-memory" persists as a subversive source of ontological alternatives.¹¹ Memory and history are closely interdependent, then. Indeed, "memory seems to be the main place where culture exists" (Teski & Climo 1995:2–3).

In order to reconstruct any culture's history, one must begin with an understanding of what that culture means by history and memory in the first place, for "without understanding their conception of history and their attitudes toward it, we cannot hope...to interpret these critical sources. For this reason we must first examine what that attitude entails, what the relevant modes are that help shape their collective thought, and what the different genres of oral traditions are" (Vansina 1978:15).

Luba Memory and Mind

Like all humans, Luba obviously possess memories, remember, and forget, yet there is no reason to believe that they necessarily do so (or at least understand their doing so) in the same ways that one does in the West. To begin to grasp what Luba mean by "memory," one can consult dictionaries that have been compiled for Luba and neighboring peoples. Looking up *mémoire*, one finds the words *kalandu*, *mulandu*, *nangunangu*, *lutesima*, and *lutê* (Gillis 1981:324). Checking these terms in E. Van Avermaet and Benoît Mbuya's wonderfully encyclopedic *Dictionnaire Kiluba-Français* (1954), one finds a fan of meaning and usage suggesting the transactional notion that Luba and their neighbors ascribe to what we in the West call "memory."

There, *kalandu* and *mulandu* are both simply defined as *mémoire* (memory), while the related *milandu* is "a dispute to which one returns"—that is, one which is unresolved and still a source of contention (Van Avermaet & Mbuya 1954:338).¹² *Kilandà* is an outstanding debt, while *bulanda* is "poverty, indigence, misery, sadness, affliction, chagrin, regret, abandonment, isolation, or solitude" (p. 337). The unfulfilled nature of exchange (debt) and of expectation or desire (poverty) nonetheless expresses relationships and transac-



PHOTOS: LEFT, FRANKO KHOURY; RIGHT HUGHES DUBOIS

tion. The Luba verb from which these nouns are derived, *kulanda*, is “to lie” (the truth is “missing”); but then, in what may seem a curious extension, a derivative verb (*kulandala*) is “to cross over a watercourse on a bridge, a tree trunk, or a branch,” or “to crawl [rampier in French] like a lizard, snake, insect, or snail.” At issue are *connections*, sometimes salubrious, sometimes not, and the resulting relationships that are presumed or posited.

The same terms find roughly similar development in neighboring dialects. For Tabwa, the verb *kulanda* is “to speak”; *kulandula*, “to contradict or protest”; and *mulandu*, “words, speech, an affair, litigation.” Such communication implies negotiation among narrators and audiences, often in contexts of local politics; but again, *mulando* is “a tree thrown across a stream as a bridge,” in a more literal connection between one bank and the other (Van Acker 1907:42). *Mulandu* does not appear to mean “memory,” as it may for Luba; instead, such a sense is found in the verb *kulanga*, “to show,” with derivatives meaning “to demonstrate, prove, teach, remind, remember, think, or reflect” (Van Acker 1907:43). Among “eastern Luba” and neighboring Lamba, *malango* (or *malangu*) is also “memory” (Vandermeiren 1913:776; Doke 1933:76). As a Tabwa noun, *mulanga* is “a string of beads,” suggesting that the contingencies of beads in a necklace can be lent symbolic significance, and foreshadowing discussion in *Memory* of bead necklaces as important mnemonic devices.¹³ The attribution of meaning to such contingencies (or the idea that contingency is meaning) is reflected in translations of *malango* as “spirit, intelligence, or thought.” A common praise name for God is Leza Malango, “Almighty Intelligence” (Van Acker 1907:43; Theuws 1954:80). God may possess such omnipotent thought and knowledge, but It (for no gender is asserted) does so through Its demonstration (*kulanga*) of what we in the West would call memory.

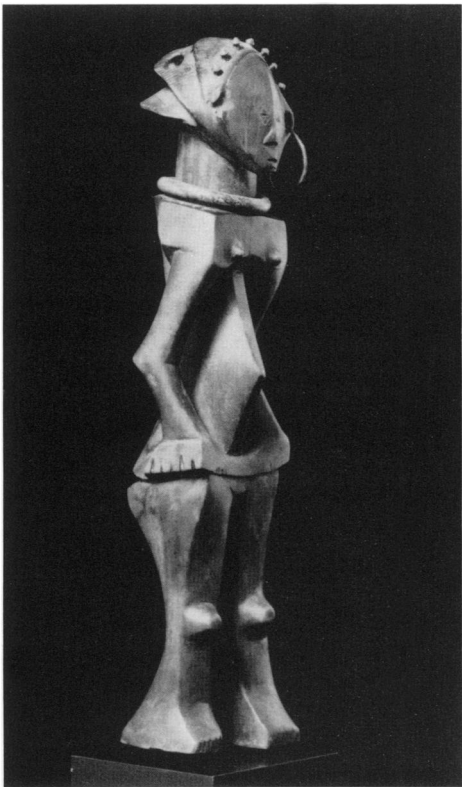
A final Luba term allows one to speculate about the location of memory in human anatomy, and the nature of the mind itself. *Lutê* is defined as “*mémoire*,” and someone possessing *lutê* “has a good memory—he retains or remembers well.” *Lutê* may be derived from the verb *kutâ*, “to set, spread out, or extend” (*tendre* in French), as one does a hunting net, or when building pit traps for larger game. *Kutâ* can also be “to hunt” more generally, and can refer to competitive games (Van Avermaet & Mbuya 1954:656–57, 681–82). In both hunting and game-playing, a sense of unexpected motion and outcome is introduced that is essential to a Luba sense of memory. Van Avermaet and Mbuya extend their discussion of *lutê* by noting that *lutêshima* is also “*mémoire*,” and that *kutâ ku mushima* is “to fix in the spirit,” or “remember” (1954:682). *Mushima*, “the seat of sentiments” for Luba and surrounding peoples, may be the liver, where thought (*malango*), knowledge,

Left: 8. Headrest supported by paired female figures. Luba, Zaire. Wood, 17.8cm (7") National Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C., Museum Purchase, no. 86.12.14.

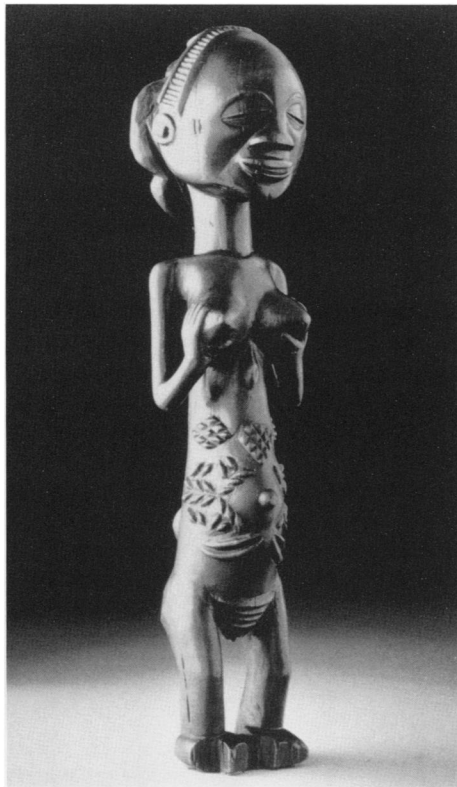
Coiffures were and still are important to Luba; early explorers to the region nicknamed the Luba “the headdress people.” Hairstyles are memory devices, indicating profession, title, status, or personal history. A coiffure can identify a person as single, engaged, married with children, divorced, or widowed. Hairstyles also indicate the professions of fishermen, herders, diviners, secret association members, and chiefs. But the primary purpose of styling is aesthetic: as one Luba person put it, “an elegant coiffure makes a woman radiant.” A beautiful coiffure, like scarification, is a sign of civilization and a visible measure of a person’s social worth and self-esteem. The female figures supporting this headrest may be an allusion to female spirit mediums who often lived in pairs to represent the twinned guardian spirits of Luba kingship.

Right: 9. Standing male figure. Kusu, Zaire. Wood, 66.8cm (26.3"). Private collection.

It is not clear why the patrilineal Luba sculpt primarily female figures and their matrilineal neighbors sculpt male images, but that is the case throughout southeastern Zaire. Kusu, who were linked to Luba royalty through marriage and gift exchange, perfected a tradition of male ancestral representations, of which this monumental work is an example. Kusu figures are not literal portraits, but they do allude to the status and identity of an individual who played an important leadership role in the community, and they serve to remind of his contributions.



PHOTOS: LEFT, JERRY L. THOMPSON; CENTER, STEVE TATUM; RIGHT, TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Left: 10. Standing female figure. Luba-Shankadi, Zaire. Wood, beads, metal; 35.1cm (13.8"). Private collection.

The angular forms of this figure are unusual, the mark of an unconventional and innovative artist. Emphasis is placed upon the points of articulation—the joints, for example—and the hairline. The row of iron tacks along the curve of the forehead creates a kind of crown for the top of the head—seat of power and intention, dreams and memory—and is intended to contain and channel the spirit within.

Center: 11. Standing female figure. Luba, Zaire. Wood, 34.9cm (13.75"). The University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City, The Stanley Collection, no. CMS 298.

The bumps of scarification, and the patterns configured from them, can be combined and recombined in endless variations to create different messages and meanings according to one's status, identity, and political intentions. Luba sculptures such as this one accurately represent actual patterns, which were obtained initially during girls' initiation rites prior to marriage. They were later renewed and added to throughout a woman's lifetime, reflecting the cumulative nature of identity and memory.

Right: 12. Standing female figure. Luba, Zaire. Wood, copper, fiber; 43.9cm (17.3"). British Museum, London, no. 1910-441.

Luba people hold that beauty is not innate, but rather is created. Physical perfection reflects moral perfection, and the body is a canvas to be created. One makes oneself beautiful through the application of cosmetic adornments and manipulations that are considered to be aesthetically and spiritually pleasing. This quietly regal figure with scarifications, an elegant coiffure, gleaming black skin, elongated labia, and the gesture of hands to breasts is a locus of memory and meaning, and a home for the spirit.

ideas, intelligence, will, taste, inclination, desire, love, envy, hate, suffering, and spirit are believed to originate and reside. For Luba, then, "heart," in the figurative sense given in the West, may be the anatomical liver, while the anatomical heart, *mukunka* or *mûngu*, is not attributed with any particularly spiritual qualities. But if this is so, then as the seat of thought, ideas, and intelligence, the *mushima* is also the mind.¹⁴

Memory and Visual Representation

In addition to the culturally specific nature of memory, a second key premise of this exhibition and book is that **memory operates through re/presentation (with an emphasis upon the prefix *re-*). Memory is not a discrete mental operation preceding image-production; rather, it is "a process precipitated and shaped by the relaying of visual information"** (Küchler & Melion 1991:3). In other words, images engender modes of recollection as much as they are determined by them. The exhibition demonstrates how Luba constructions of memory, conceptually based upon association, contingency, transaction, negotiability, and random chance are engendered visually; and how visual and related forms of expressive culture are used to re-create memory in the present through a politics of re-presentation and image-ination.

If Luba have a rich vocabulary for expressing concepts of memory, they also possess a proliferation of visual forms for encoding and stimulating mnemonic processes. These include beaded necklaces and headdresses; wooden memory boards, thrones, figures, and staffs; and scepters, axes, adzes, spears, and other objects incorporating iron and/or copper. These things comprise the treasuries of Luba kings and certain chiefs. Instruments of divination and healing and the initiatory emblems of secret associations are also mnemonic. Yet, despite the stunning breadth and conceptual achievement of these materials, it is only recently that their mnemonic dimensions have been recognized and explored.

Previously Luba art had been viewed only in terms of its aesthetic appeal and for its sculptural strength (Neyt 1994), as well as for its reflection of a complex indigenous African state. The collecting conventions of the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries emphasized and therefore valorized certain kinds of objects to the neglect of others, in response to prevailing Western definitions of "art." Many early colonial collectors only valued works that were representational and figurative, ignoring those that lacked anthropomorphic elements (cf. Schildkrout & Keim 1990; Mack 1991:17, 81). The result is that nonfigurative works and most of those produced from beadwork, textiles, basketry, fiber, feathers, animal pelts, pottery and unfired clay,

metal, gourds, and perishable materials were left behind.¹⁵ Yet, those very objects, as well as in situ graphic arts such as painted wall murals, pictorial earthen thrones, ideographic magical mounds, or unfired clay shrine sculptures (Burton 1961) not only frequently constitute important Luba mnemonic forms, but also shed light upon the symbolism and purpose of the works that *have* been collected as the West's arbitrarily selected signifiers of Luba culture and history.

Among Luba, oral traditions most closely associated with royal history were dependent upon visual memory devices. These oral charters were sacred, to be guarded and disseminated by a politico-religious association called Mbudyé, which has created rituals for memory transmission. Mbudyé historians are rigorously trained "men of memory" (*bana balutê*) who recite genealogies, king lists, and all of the episodes in the Luba Epic (Reefe 1977, 1981).¹⁶ They travel with kings, dance in celebration of their deeds, and spread propaganda to outlying areas about the prestige and sanctity of Luba kingship. The power of Mbudyé is so great that all kings and royal officeholders undergo its initiation, and the association can dethrone a king or chief.¹⁷

Even though literacy was introduced during the colonial period, history produced through oral and visual representation remains an integral activity of rural Luba chieftaincies. Officials still stage oral recitations of local history, and Mbudyé continues as a judicial branch of authority in contemporary politics, inducting new members into its ranks. Mbudyé performs public dances reenacting history and still uses visual memory aids that date from the distant beginnings of the association.

Luba Memory Devices

Principal among Luba memory devices is the *lukasa*, a roughly hand-sized wooden object studded with beads and pins or covered with incised or raised ideograms. During Mbudyé rituals, a *lukasa* is used to teach neophytes sacred lore about culture heroes, clan migrations, and the introduction of sacred rule; to suggest the spatial positioning of activities and offices within the kingdom or inside a royal compound; and to order the sacred prerogatives of officeholders concerning contact with earth spirits and the exploitation of natural resources.

A *lukasa* is the most important record of Luba royal history. The codes of kingship are indicated by its colors and configurations of beads and carved ideograms. Culture heroes are identifiable by beads whose colors have a fan of connotations triggering remembrance of their deeds and exploits, as well as their qualities and physical appearance. For example, Nkongolo Mwamba, the tyrannical anti-hero of the Luba charter, is always represented by a red bead, for he is the red-skinned rainbow-serpent associated with bloody violence. Blue beads (considered "black") stand for Mbidi Kiluwe, the protagonist and culture-bearer of kingship whose skin is shiningly black like that of a bull buffalo, symbol of ambivalent power and secret potential (Roberts 1995). The paths of Luba migration and significant events and relationships are indicated by lines and clusters of beads. Chiefs and their counselors, sacred enclosures, and defined places are shown by circles of beads.

The building blocks of this mnemonic system are to be found in the myriad—and until now, neglected—beaded and shell emblems of Luba royalty, ranging from necklaces and badges to hats and headdresses. Beads constitute a kind of alphabet that articulates a vocabulary for Luba royalty. Their plurality of forms, colors, and sizes provides a perfect vehicle for the "cognitive cuing structures" that constitute mnemonics (Bellezza 1981). The same associations underlie the geometric designs and pictorial ideographs on both mnemonic devices like the *lukasa* and royal emblems in non-beaded media such as wood, metal, painting, pottery, and weaving.

While the *lukasa* of each Mbudyé chapter conveys the history of the Luba state, other memory devices such as sculpted thrones, staffs, bowstands, and spears are used by individual officeholders to elicit local, family, and personal political histories, as well as histories of physical, psychological, or spiritual catharsis. A staff may be used to remember clan history and migrations, for instance. Its owner will exhibit and "read" its iconography when the legitimacy of his authority is at issue. Luba thrones and bowstands often depict female figures in memory of historically or spiritually significant women. As often, though, these female figures stand for the men who once ruled and whose wisdom women still convey as spirit mediums. Yet other mnemonic devices are kinetic. Divination baskets contain symbolic items, similar to the beads or figures of a *lukasa*, that are cast so that their changing juxtapositions can be interpreted. Through such divination, meaning is cut loose from matrix, so that the past may be reconstructed to identify and remedy present misfortune.

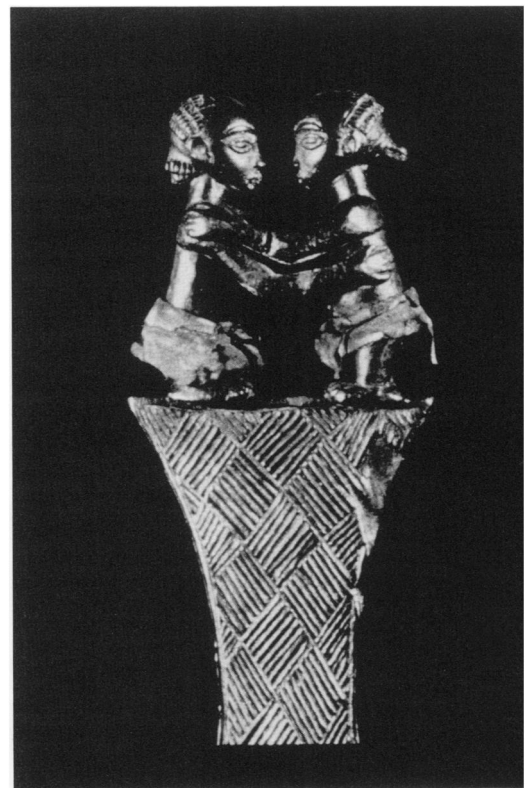


PHOTO: JERRY L. THOMPSON

13. Staff of office. Luba, Zaire. Wood, copper, cloth; 120.7cm (47.5"). Buffalo Museum of Science, no. C12779.

Beyond their role as prestige emblems, staffs serve as historical documents; their forms and designs encode information about their owners' lineage histories. A number of iconographic features allow staffs to be read like sculptural maps. The female figures shown standing at the summit of staffs represent the female founders of specific royal lines or the female spirit mediums who guard the sacred locales of the great spirits of Luba kingship.

Called *dibulu*, the broad sections of Luba staffs represent the administrative center that is part of every royal capital. The *dibulu* often takes the form of a triangle, a diamond, or an hourglass shape, and is always engraved with the same geometric patterns found on the back of the *lukasa*. The long, unadorned or copper-wrapped shafts represent uninhabited savannas and the roads that lead to the administrative centers of the kingdom. And the point of metal at the bottom of most staffs signifies both the material wealth and the strength of the chiefdom that is honored by the staff.

Questions remain. How do these mnemonics embody and enact the active principles of Luba memory while providing a cultural framework for truth? And what is the nature of a system of representation that can produce convention and invention, remembrance and oblivescence, at one and the same time?

Lieux de mémoire

Place memory provides a model for understanding how mnemonics generate the semantic dynamism and social construction of Luba historical thought. Recollection, as practiced by Luba, is neither an account nor a pedigree, such as a genealogy or a king list, but a meaningful configuration of selected, negotiated events around “loci of memory” (Jewsiewicki & Mudimbe 1993:10). A locus of memory, or lieu de mémoire, is a landmark around which past events structure present memory. Lieux de mémoire as both actual and imagined places can be topoi—that is, “both places and topics, where memories converge” (Blok 1991:125). The term originated in classical texts expounding two fundamental principles of memory: places and images (*loci* and *imagines* in Latin). Memory arts (*ars memoria*) were based upon memory places (*loci memoriae*) that could be “seen” and “visited” in the mind (Pierre Nora, cited in Blok 1992:125). To remember their speeches, ancient orators imagined buildings and assigned topics and subtopics to the “rooms” through which they would mentally “walk” as they delivered their talks (Yates 1966).

In a discussion of the powerful effects that architectural spaces can have for vivid recall, Gaston Bachelard (1969) describes how people “house” their memories and how rooms become abodes for an unforgettable past. The more nooks, garrets, attics, cellars, closets, and secret alcoves there are, the more places there are for the storage of sentiment, knowledge, and memory. Significantly, Bachelard discusses the way memory is localized and enacted through space, not time. The actual duration of the past can never be relived, only the thought of it. “Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are” (1966:9). Memory exists in Uchronia, then, independent of linear time and driving purpose, and “implying permanence and antiquity” (Hastrup 1991:115).

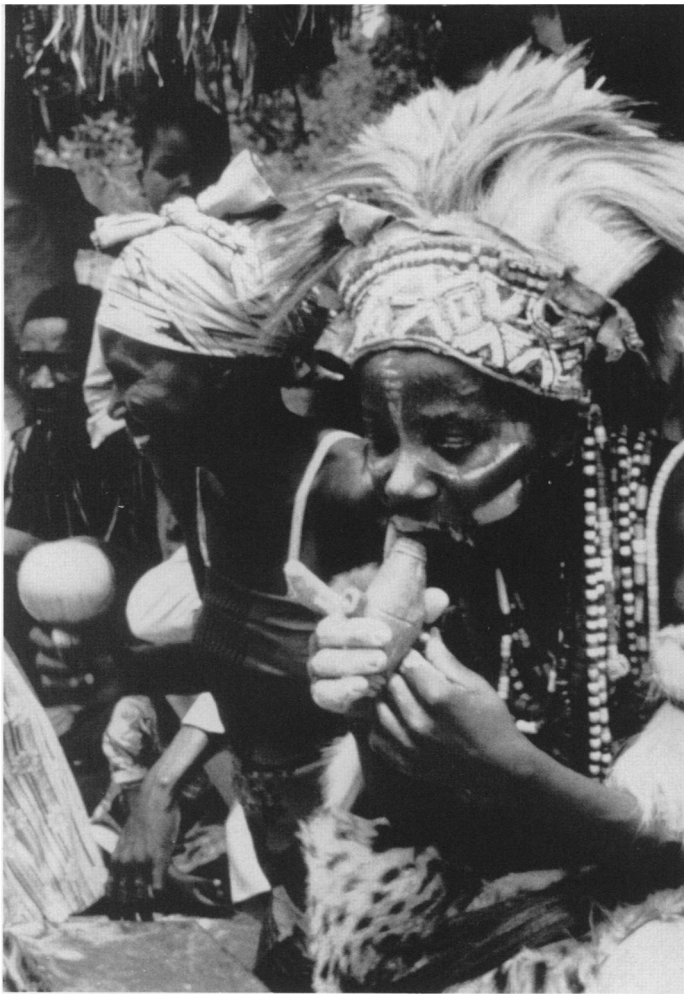
The association of memories with spaces of intimacy is what Bachelard refers to as “topoanalysis.” Camillo’s famous “Memory Theatre” of the Renaissance (Yates 1966:129–59) was based upon the proposition that spatial programming can shape collective memory and consciousness. This was an imaginary space designed to store and preserve the collective knowledge of humanity, yet there was nothing performative about Camillo’s theater. It was an architectonic model—a labyrinthine container for human history, to exist in and occupy the mind. Such a spatial paradigm maps the mind as an architecture of memory and a metonymic model for consciousness within which particular historical facts are selectively preserved and positioned to enable remembrance.

14. Headdress. Luba, Zaire. Beads, cloth, fiber, leather; 50.8cm (20"). Private collection.

The beaded headdress worn by royal Bilumbu diviners and Mbudye Association members when they enter a state of spirit possession is called *nkaka*, which literally refers to the pangolin (a scaly anteater) and also to the name of a women’s scarification pattern. Luba officials state that the *nkaka* headdress is mnemonically coded, referring to proverbs, prohibitions, and “lakes,” which symbolize the spirit capitals of kings and the culture heroes of the Luba Epic. The headdress also serves to protect and enclose the possessed wearer’s head, in the same way that the pangolin’s scaly armature defends it from even the fiercest of prey.



PHOTO: JERRY L. THOMPSON



PHOTOS: MARY NOOTER ROBERTS



Left: 15. A diviner is bedecked in beaded necklaces, bandoliers, and an *nkaka* headdress. The beadwork creates a kind of armature for the diviner's body and head, serving to strengthen and protect his person as his body is overtaken by the memory of his possessing spirit. This diviner blows a whistle to sustain the spirit's attention. Shaba Region, Zaire, 1989.

Right: 16. A renowned female diviner possesses accoutrements that emphasize the color red and include the skulls of hornbills and other animals. By wearing the items that serve to remember particular qualities associated with the diviner's possessing spirit, her body becomes a mnemonic device. Shaba Region, Zaire, 1988.

These Western examples are directly applicable to Luba memory and the making of history, for powerful connections exist between spatial consciousness and memory, as expressed visually. Luba mnemonic devices, whether memory boards, staffs, necklaces, or divination gourds, are devised as *lieux de mémoire* to organize personages, places, objects, and relationships. They encode ideology, enlist politics, and refer simultaneously to anatomy, architecture, landscape, and cosmos. These objects-as-landmarks are multilayered and multireferential, lending themselves to endless possibilities for combination.

The *lukasa* memory board, for example, is based on the spatial paradigm of the Luba royal court, analogous to the Renaissance memory theater. The court exists as a mental geography that maps and orders the universe, the kingdom, human relations, and the mind. The physical and conceptual layout of the court encompasses the structure and order of Luba cosmology, while—a bit like a cognitive pinball machine—the beaded studs and ideograms on it allow passages, detours, random excursions, exits, entrances, rebounds, ricochets, and thresholds that characterize the active social processes of memory. Since beads have no actual connection with the content to be remembered, meaning is assigned to them by contingent positioning. But although a *lukasa* is learned, particular meanings are assigned on a significant occasion in a specified locale for a given audience. Reading the *lukasa*, therefore, is dependent upon the relationships of the signifiers to one another, as well as the relationships of the reader to the audience, and the reader to the constituency that she or he represents. Memory, then, is an art of negotiation and rhetoric, not an “abstract presentation of truth” (Fabian 1983:112).

It is through the activities of negotiation and association that spaces and sites are transformed into places of meaning and memory. For both Edward Casey (1987) and Yi-Fu Tuan (1977, 1990), space and site are undifferentiated and anonymous, possessing “no points of attachment onto which to hang our memories, much less to retrieve them....Place, in contrast, characteristically presents us with a plethora of such cues. Thanks to its ‘distinct potencies,’ a place is at once internally diversified...and distinct externally from other places.” Place aids in remembering by being “well suited to contain memories—to hold and preserve them” (Casey 1987:186). The ultimate container for holding memories is the body itself, the vehicle through which the intimate relationship between memory and place is realized.



PHOTO: JERRY L. THOMPSON

17. Bowl figure in Buli style, from the Miot Treasury. Luba, Zaire. Wood, 37.1cm (14.6"). Private collection.

The term "Luba" is a loose attribution for a congeries of peoples partaking of a single concept of sacred royalty, and the treasuries of kings and chiefs reflect the fluidity of Luba identity.

Among the items in Chief Kalumbi's treasury was this remarkable bowl figure in the "Buli" style. The presence of a work in this anomalous style (originating in the Hemba region close to the Luba Heartland) in an eastern Luba royal treasury not only reflects the het-

erogeneity of Luba-influenced treasuries, but also demonstrates the mobility of artworks during the period of kingship. It indicates a wide distribution of the Buli style, extending as far as the upper course of the Lukuga River, and suggests that the atelier was part of the dynamic history of exchange and interaction among Luba-ized peoples in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This particular figure, one of the earliest known "Buli" works, represents the innovation of an extraordinary artist who went beyond the boundaries of convention and expectation to create a corpus of daringly moving sculptures.

Memory Embodied

Through the lived body, place and memory are actively joined. Casey (1987) discusses the conventional yet misplaced emphasis on memory as a procedure contained within the mind. Yet, as he points out, memory always lies on the border between self and other. The body constitutes the frontier of difference and sameness, and a sieve through which historical facts are negotiated through remembrance, oblivescence, and the signifying games of representation.

Luba works of art, which simultaneously emphasize place and body, offer a signal opportunity to explore a Luba concept of "body memory." Luba mnemonics are almost always anthropomorphized and gendered to serve as spirit containers. Scarification and coiffure, in particular, are marks of civilization that encode memory about a person's place in society and history (Rubin 1988). These and other body arts are developed through an individual's life, with information added as memory grows. Luba explain that only women, as child-bearers, are strong enough to hold, contain, and protect powerful spirits and the secret knowledge associated with them. Most important, every Luba king is incarnated by a female spirit medium after death. Called Mwadi, such a medium inherits the deceased king's emblems, titles, and residence, which become a "spirit capital." Memory lives at and through these sacred sites, in the women who embody the kings of yore, and in visual representations of such women. Through spirit possession and the way it is represented in contingent arts, Luba transform the body into a *lieu de mémoire* and a microcosm of the Luba world. The body's surface becomes a textured text, both "written" and "read." In this way, the past is perpetually reified through the embodiment of memory, lived and enacted in the present.

Memory as Performance

As in any political context, "official" wisdom, even as conveyed through use of a *lukasa*, was and is contested by others' interpretations of the same instruments. Recent research questions nineteenth-century notions of memory as a fixed and accurate record of past experience (e.g., Gyatso 1992), suggesting that memory "is not a fossil of the past but rather a system of categorization in which the past is recreated in ways appropriate for the present" (Lopez 1992:36). Current emphasis is less on mental storage of past events than on the performative function of memory in the present. Mnemonic devices elicit visual, verbal, and performative arts, and Luba objects were and are read, spoken, sung, danced, and manipulated.

That the mnemonic process is performative also means that historical recitation never occurs in precisely the same way twice. Political interests inexorably change, and memory is defective. The need to fill in forgotten details, to adapt history to new circumstances, and to follow fads by borrowing glitzy ideas from prestigious neighbors means that memory is generative. Indeed, *forgetting* must be understood if we are to grasp how and why history is made. The negotiation of historical facts necessarily involves a process of discarding and re-creating. "Forgetting and recollecting are allied mnemonic functions. Forgetting can be the selective process through which memory achieves social and cultural definition" (Küchler & Melion 1991:7). The erasure and selective elimination of certain historical facts are as critical to the collage that is memory as the retention and careful preservation of others. Early Greeks recognized that forgetting and remembering were an indissociable pair intrinsic to the memory process. Only later in the history of Western thought was forgetting forgotten.¹⁸

Luba memory devices do not symbolize thought so much as stimulate and provoke it. They afford a multiplicity of meanings through their multireferential iconography. The reading of these visual "texts" varies from one occasion to the next, depending on the contingencies of local politics, and makes manifest the objects' abilities to instigate processes of politics, economy, and religion.

Whether through the reading of a beaded memory board, the narration of a sculpted wooden staff, or the deciphering of a diviner's object-filled gourd, Luba mnemonics operate according to principles of contingency and association, relationship and refabulation. Some historical facts can be selectively preserved and recombined, others omitted in an editing of the past. As a result, identity and history are always in the making, as new circumstances urge reconsideration of one's relationship to a "center" and to the past, producing the shifting and arbitrary nature of ethnic and political identity that is the Luba past and present. □

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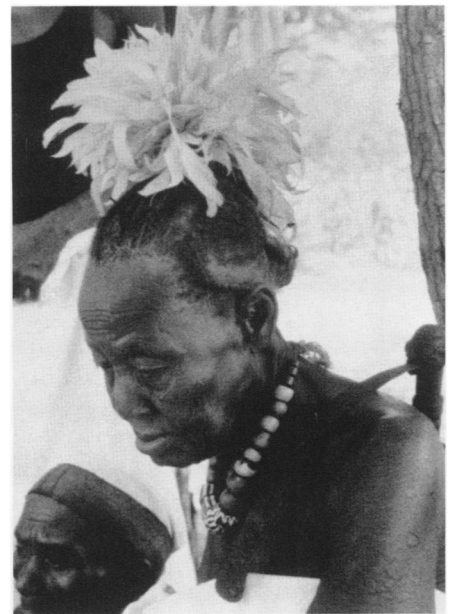


PHOTO: THOMAS G. REEF

18. When a Luba king died, his spirit was incarnated by a female spirit medium, whose title was "Mwadi." The Mwadi in this photograph was the incarnation of King Kasongo Niembo, who died in 1931. She resided in his former royal village, acquired all of his titleholders and his emblems of office, and received gifts on a regular basis from the new king. In the past, each Mwadi was succeeded at death by another woman in her lineage, thus ensuring the perpetuation of the king's memory. This particular Mwadi, however, was the last in the Luba region; her death, marked the end of that tradition. Shaba Region, Zaire, 1970s.

the women especially vulnerable to rape and sexual exploitation.

The catalogue section makes effective use of pictures. Overall, an adequate number of illustrations are used to support the text. However, a few more photographs—particularly of maps, paintings, and other objects whose detailed imagery requires a better view—should have been in color.

The catalogue groups objects according to the themes laid out in the essays. For example, objects linked to trade and economics appear under the headings "The Origins of Transatlantic Slavery," "West African Culture," "Early European Contact," "Trading and Trade Goods," "Destinations," and "European Rewards."

No less than eighteen beautifully executed maps of Africa, Europe, and the Americas accurately show that transatlantic slavery involved four continents. The visual content of these maps alone is worthy of intensive study. Their "exotic" imagery and text trace the evolution of Europeans' concepts about the "others" they began to encounter in the New World.

The profits from slavery generated an astounding number of everyday items. Ironically, certain objects seemed to lend themselves well to decorative themes related to slavery. Therefore, numerous examples in the Liverpool exhibition portray dark-skinned peoples. China and earthenware dishes, porcelain figurines, medallions and coins—all exhibit imagery concerning enslaved Africans. Most emphasize their lowly status. When the British abolitionist movement began to gain strength during the late eighteenth century, however, the image of the black slave was transformed into a symbol of freedom.

The corpus of objects meant to illustrate the lives of slaves is small. Traditionally this has been the most difficult area to investigate, since slaves owned few possessions, and relatively few left written records. All too often scholars searching for material culture have found that only the instruments of punishment have survived.

In her essay, "An African View of Transatlantic Slavery and the Role of Oral Testimony," Mary Kolawole suggests other resources that could be used to interpret the inner lives of slaves. She stresses the rich oral and musical culture that has been passed down for generations in the Americas. These nontraditional sources (like Negro spirituals) are rich in symbolic content, especially suited for expressing the values, beliefs, and world view of the slaves. In recent years they have been successfully probed to bring the slave experience to life, for example in *Old Ship of Zion: The Afro-Baptist Ritual in the African Diaspora* (1993), by Walter Pitts, and *Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America* (1994), by Theophus H. Smith. The innovative inclusion of such nontraditional sources, or even a new way of looking at the "traditional" ones, may contribute to the exhibition's "personal dimension."

Finally, one of the most important goals in *Transatlantic Slavery* is to confront the legacy

of slavery. This is admirably done in Stephen Small's "The General Legacy of the Atlantic Slave Trade." Small states that racist ideologies are the foremost enduring and negative legacy of our slave history. Unfortunately, the book contains no corresponding category of objects to support this theme. A visual component illustrating the framework of legacy would have added the appropriate closure and impact.

Perhaps this could have been achieved by including more analysis of the visual material in the exhibition. Instead, it is assumed (p. 159) that although there was a small black population throughout Western Europe, there were few representations of them in the art of the period. On the contrary, since the era of the slave trade, white artists in Europe and America have created a profusion of complex and varied images of black peoples. The extensive, multivolume series *The Image of the Black in Western Art* (1989), twenty-five years in the making, and *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (1993) are outstanding examples of books that demonstrate this point.

This visual record and white attitudes about dark-skinned peoples are inseparable.

In fact, the visual arts in Western society (and the control of these) remain a primary means by which the West maintains its superiority, excluding and marginalizing the other. As Small pointed out, the modern world continues to be enormously influenced by race and the racial imagery that grew out of the slave experience.

Transatlantic Slavery is a commendable effort in the right direction. An enormous amount of material has been synthesized into a good introduction to the institution of slavery and the material culture it produced. It also encourages the art historian to take on the specialized study of the representation of blacks in the Western world. The wealth of documentation is crucial to the history of Western art as well as the social history of race. The material demands consideration.

Most significant though, is the fact that a permanent exhibition about slavery now exists in Liverpool. To my mind, its presence speaks volumes. I hope that it will stimulate and inspire other public institutions of history and culture in Europe and America to confront our very uncomfortable, but very human, past and present. □

notes

PRICE: Notes, from page 21

1. My use of the organization of art history textbooks to reflect on perceptions of primitive art is indebted to Berlo 1985:26 and Errington 1993:222-23.
2. Although Gombrich's text was written in what might be regarded as a less enlightened time, he was vehemently defending its discussion of primitive art as recently as five years ago (1990:6).

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ROBERTS & ROBERTS: Notes, from page 35

1. The following paper is adapted from the introduction to *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History* (1996), co-authored and edited by the present authors. Full acknowledgments and bibliography are presented there.
2. Among the goals of "Memory" is to correct any lingering misperception that while African cultures without writing

may have collective memory, they possess no history; see Jewswick & Mudimbe 1993. Study of how and why nonliterate non-Western peoples have been portrayed as "lacking history" has been an important anthropological pursuit, led by Eric Wolf's seminal *Europe and the People Without History* (1982) and his students' "articulation of hidden histories" (Schneider & Rapp 1995); see also John Davis's "History and the People Without Europe" (1992).

3. Zaire has been known as the Congo Free State (1885-1908), the Belgian Congo (1908-1960), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1960-1967). Its current name, the Republic of Zaire, is contested by those who would replace or overthrow the oppressive dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko, president since 1967. They would also see Zaire revert to its earlier colonial and postcolonial name, Congo, and the provincial name Shaba to Katanga.

4. Bantu is the name given to a vast complex of languages extending from southwestern Nigeria all the way across Africa to central Kenya, and southward to the tip of the continent. Bantu-speaking peoples share a common grammar and logic (Heusch 1982), like people of European ancestry do who speak Romance languages. Proto-Bantu is the early language and culture shared by Africans living in this enormous area, as Latin is for many European peoples.

5. To name a few more readily available sources, Luba oral and related performative arts are collected and discussed in Faik-Nzuji 1974, Mufuta 1969, and Stappers 1964; music in Gansemans 1978, 1980, 1981; and visual arts in Neyt 1994.

6. Luba ethnicity is discussed in great detail in "Peripheral Visions," the last chapter of *Memory*. In *The Invention of Africa* (1988) and *The Idea of Africa* (1994), V.Y. Mudimbe discusses the process whereby African "identity," as perceived, experienced, and interpreted both by Westerners and Africans, has been constructed in disciplines and discourses about Africa through categories and conceptual systems that depend on a Western epistemological order. Cross-cultural examples of colonial invention of "tribes" and "ethnicities" like "Luba" are presented in Vail 1989.

7. Published and unpublished accounts of the Luba genesis myth include Colle 1913; D'Orjo de Marchovelette 1950; Sendwe 1954; Theuvs 1954, 1962, 1964, and Womersley 1975, 1984. More recent accounts and analyses include Heusch 1982, 1991; Mudimbe 1991; Nooter 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994; Petit 1993, 1995; Reefer 1981; and Roberts 1980, 1985, 1991, 1993.

8. S. Terry Childs and Pierre de Maret review their field archaeology and related literature in "Re/Constructing Luba Pasts," the first chapter of *Memory*.

9. "Peripheral Visions," the last chapter of *Memory*, discusses these relationships and the visual arts of people living east of the Luba Heartland.

10. Although we are asserting the relativism of cultural accounts of what memory is and does, we are aware of neurological research investigating brain structure and the physiological nature of memory.

11. "Counter-memory" is from Foucault 1977; cf. Davis & Starn 1989:2 and Conerton 1991:12. A burgeoning literature concerning "resistance through memory," "state-managed forgetting," "the memory of this forgetting," and history as

"the forcible illumination of darkened memories" in the radical socio-political change of eastern Europe is exemplified by Richard Esbenschade's "Remembering to Forget: Memory, History, National Identity in Postwar East-Central Europe" (1995). Memories of the Holocaust are also the subject of many texts, such as James Young's *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (1993) and Carolyn Forché's collection of poetry, *Against Forgetting* (1993).

12. Van Avermaet and Mbuya (1954) give diacritical marks indicating the tonality of the Luba language that are omitted in the Gillis dictionary (1981) and key ethnographies (e.g., Burton 1961). Because of this discrepancy, it is not possible to judge whether *-lândâ* and *-landâ* (Van Avermaet & Mbuya 1954:337-38) are truly distinct, especially when, as in *kilândâ* and *bulândâ*, the meanings and usages seem so closely related. Our thanks to Jan Vansina for his cogent suggestions regarding this section of our introduction. Professor Vansina's linguistic analysis is acute and his caution well taken when he asserts that tonal differences lead one back to different proto-Bantu roots. When he states that "there clearly is something wrong with the tones in Van Avermaet/Mbuya [1954]," however, he reveals the degree to which close study of Bantu languages is in its infancy. Speculation must result, and we readily admit that our discussion may be broader than Professor Vansina might find comfortable.

13. In *Memory*, anthropologists Jeannette Kawende Fina Nkindi and Guy De Plaen provide a mini-essay called "Pearls of Wisdom" within a broader chapter on "body memory," in which they offer a deeply detailed analysis of a Luba chief's bead necklace. Such a "chain-style" mnemonic device is contrasted to the "peg-style" associations of scarification that map the body, drawing upon Bellezza 1981 for discussion of "cognitive cuing structures."

14. The brain, *bubongo* (Van Avermaet & Mbuya 1954:81), is an organ that is perceived as having little ostensible function, and it is not the location for the "mind," as in the West. Yet cleverness is located in the head (although perhaps not in the brain *per se*), as are perception, dreams, and prophesy.

15. Sometimes colonial collections unknowingly distorted the artistic repertoires they were meant to represent, since they entailed subjective choices on the collectors' parts as to which objects were worth "saving," "salvaging," and carrying away for "preservation" in the West (Clifford 1988:231; Clifford, Dominguez, & Minh-ha 1987; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991:386). Such decisions rarely if ever reflected the judgments of those originally making and using the objects.

16. *Bana* (sing. *muwana*) means "children" or "child," and so the expression *bana balutê* suggests descent from, identification with, or dependence upon memory, rather than simple mastery of it, as one might infer from Reefer's translation. Important chiefs among Luba and surrounding peoples still have *bana balutê*, who assist in litigation and other local political contexts.

17. The ethnographic present of this article refers to the late 1980s, when Mary Nooter Roberts conducted field research among Luba, and the mid-1970s, when Allen Roberts worked among neighboring Tabwa. Luba sacred royalty, the Mbuye society, and other social institutions mentioned here have greatly changed over the colonial and postcolonial periods. As discussed in *Memory*, they have lost much of their pertinence and intensity, but are still vital to Luba memory and the making of contemporary histories.

18. Remembering and forgetting as the interdependent, co-existent sides of memory have been acknowledged since the Archaic Period of Greek history with two gods deified as Remembrance and Forgetting, Mnemosyne and Lemosyne.

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