

VISAGE

Images of Belief, judgement, mediation, and fun from Cork to the
Congo, from Limerick to Lhasa.



1. Black Baule Mask

- Baule, Yaure or Gouro mask from central Ivory Coast.
- There is a cultural kinship between these people's in which masks share the same stylistic characteristics . Some of these masks often combine male and female facial features in a hermaphrodite manner.
- They could sometimes appear at night to restore order when a society had unsettled by a death
- Picasso's collection included a Baule figure.



2. White Punu Mask

- Possible source upper Ngoume River, Angola.
- White Ancestor face, probably to represent a dead young female spirit. Scarification typical of a women's society, see also mask 40.
- Also called Balumbo Mukui Society mask –p.93 African Art

3. Songye tribe, Kifwebe Mask



- Probable source Congo River Basin.
- A very distinctive mask from the Bwadi Bwa society., A female mask worn by men, (male masks have a high central crest, though this mask has nose hair, a masculine trait.) Ref. the Barbier-Mueller collection, the British Museum and the Quai Branly museum.



4. Circumcision Mask

- From Francophone Africa, possibly Guinea Bissau. Other sources identify it as Ibibo from Nigeria



5. Guardian Mask

- Source Irian Jaya, Papua New Guinea.
- To protect against evil spirits



6. The Woman of Woot

- Source the Kuba People of Gabon and the Congo.
- Used in dances at the Royal Compound to tell the story of the origins of the rulers of Kuba, who have a matrilineal line of descent Also called **A Bushoong Nady Amwash Mask**.
- See also mask 27 & 28 from the same group of people's.



7. Helmet Mask

- Source probably Grebo Ivory Coast/Liberia.
- Picasso was very influenced by similar masks and had several of them in his studio. Judith Miller in her book *Tribal Art* maintains that Picasso had little understanding of the religious nature of the objects he collected, for him, the Aesthetic qualities were overwhelming enough, and contributed to the concept of Cubism, though his writings show an awareness of fetishism.



8. Monkey Mask

- Source Irian Jaya, Papua New Guinea.



9. Mask showing a foreigner

- Source Irian Jaya, Papua New Guinea.
- Usually made as a caricature of a white man, often a missionary whose mannerisms would be copied. Ref: British Museum.

10. Foreigner mask

- Irian Jaya. Papua New Guinea
- Probably a missionary's wife, again to be made fun of.





11. Helmet Mask

- Possible source, the Dogon People, Mali.



12. Deangle Mask

- Source Dan people of the Ivory Coast.
- Used by the Go or Gu Society, see also number 48.



13. A Luba or Baluba Mask

- From the African Art Collection of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Madrid. Also identified as Basangue.
- The Luba are from Katanga region of the Congo.
- Mask encrusted with libations see 21 & 64



14. Woman's Mask

- Either Grebo, Liberia, Guro, Ivory Coast: Gu mask? Vendors in Paris identified it for me as Baule, Ivory Coast. An ideal of feminine beauty.ref African masks p37.
- Beautifully painted in fine detail, note bird on headdress, which relates to funerals.
- Gu was a family cult with certain taboos, often the masks were not worn by its owner but by a family member who was an exceptionally good dancer.



15. Animal Mask

- Source probably Dan, Ivory Coast.
- Round eyes are unusual for this type of mask. (possibly used as a race mask).



16. Village guardian

- Source Irian Jaya P.N.G. That was vendors information. But the round eyes are suggestive of Tiki carvings from the nearby Marquesas islands. (Tiki was the God of creation)



17. Ancestor stone

- Source Irian Jaya P.N.G.



18. Dogon Mask Mali

- Usually worn for a festival once every 5 years for 'Dama' memorial services, about 400 masks would be worn at the same time. What appear to be ears are actually antelope horns, of the mythical Walu.
- A stylized Walu (antelope), but with Human features.
- See also mask number 54 & possibly 53

19. Face Mask of a Young Woman



- Source Nigeria/Ibo
- Used at harvest festival where it would be worn by a young man pretending to be a woman.
- See also 59



20. Indian Village Dance Mask

- From the story of the universal myth of spring. The mask is of a minor God who reported to Shiva.



21. Dan mask

- Ivory Coast/Liberia
- Its function is unknown but prosperity is indicated by the nut beard and cowrie shell crown. Round eyes are unusual. Cowrie shells were used as money from China to Africa for approximately four thousand years. Up until the 1920s you could pay your taxes to the British authorities in Uganda with cowrie shells. (*Sapiens*, Yuval Noah Harari).
- Mask partially encrusted by libations
- see also 13 & 64



22. Frog Mask

- Source Java,
- From the classic fairy story of the princess kissing a frog, apparently a Universal tale.



23. Shield mask

- From Ibo, Nigeria.
- Shield mask probably from the Cross River, Nigeria
- A shield face usually interpreted as being an evocation of the Great Mother, a creator divinity associated with the full moon.

24. Contemporary Nigerian dance shield.

- Possibly Yoruba





25. Contemporary Black Tibetan Mahakala Mask

- These masks embodied the wrathful deity. They are supposed to create fear in the forces of evil but could also promote calm to the Buddhist who is seeking enlightenment.



26. A very old bronze Okuye
white face maiden mask.
Punnu Lumbo, Gabon.

- Punnu Lumbo, Gabon
- Could be worn as an amulet



27. Bwoom Helmet Mask

- Democratic Republic of Congo. One of the three royal masks at the centre of Kuba traditions.
- Provenance dates this mask at over 100 years old. See also masks 6 & 28
- It was collected by Major Ian Kelsey between 1898 and 1920



28. Lele Mask

- Democratic Republic of Congo
- From the western region of the Kuba people, so it is related to Mask 6 & 27. The Lele are a subgroup of the Kuba.
- Note also the cowrie shells.

29. Pende Mask

- Scarified, from the Congo river basin. The Pende are settled on the Kwilu and the Kasai rivers. An alternative identification suggests that it could be Yoruba because of the scarification. The features are reminiscent of Ancient Greek drama masks. Coincidence or classical influences?



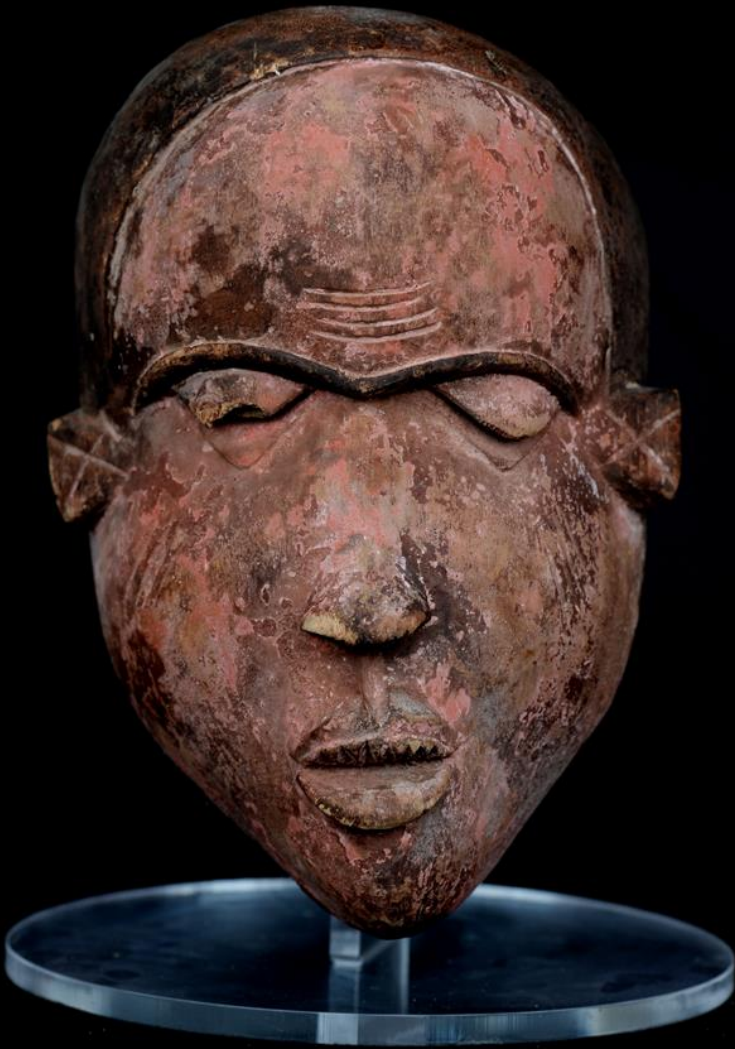


30. Face Mask, Vuvi, Gabon

- Relatively flat, ovoid face with arched eyebrows. Vertical strokes on cheeks suggest Mwiri initiation marks, the dark strip from mouth to chin represents a beard. (*African Masks, The Barbier Muller Collection*, p 74).

31. Ogoni Young Man's Mask

- Nigeria,
- Coloured with red ochre. Scarified on forehead.



32. Ancestor Head

- Irian Jaya,
- Reminiscent of the mud men of P.N.G.





33. Classical Faces

- Art exhibition Beaune France 2001



34. Baluba Helmet Mask with Topknot

- Katanga, Democratic Republic Congo
- See also 13
- Provenance dates this about 100 years old
- It was collected by Major Ian Kelsey between 1898 and 1920.



35. Young Woman's Mask

- Nigeria.



36. War Mask

- Possibly a Bete Gere Ivory Coast war mask or battle standard. Gla society of the We. (*African Masks, The Barbier Muller Collection*, p 35).
- Note blue on mustache



37. Reproduction Venetian Doctor's Plague Mask

- Contemporary, hand decorated. Originally the mask would have been worn when most in society in Venice wore masks. In the 17th century the mask would have been stuffed with herbs so that the doctor would not have to breathe the same air as his plague patients.



38. 16th Century Stucco Woman's Face

- Probably from an Italian church.



39. Bamana Mask

- Mali.
- Bamani or Bambara live on the banks of the Bani river and on both sides of the Niger River in southern Mali. Life in the villages was ruled by all male secret societies. The mask represents a human face carved in a very cubistic style, many European artists were influenced by such masks.



40. White Punu Mask

- Gabon, probably Lola River, or Ogoe river.
- Typical scarification of a women's society, but the normal coiffure is changed into a complex cowl. The reliquary masks of Gabon are regarded as masterpieces of African Art. The Punu have continued their dances to this day, but without their earlier significance. These serene masks were worn by stilt-walking initiates and appear in the half light of dawn or dusk. Note also the bird motif, hugely important in death rites.
- See also masks 2 & 14



41. Bamana? Mali

- Mali
- This is only a guess, purchased in an Irish Bric-à-brac



42. Ibo Woman's Helmet Mask

- Nigeria,
- Used during an 'Okperegede' performance representing the 'Queen of Women'
- Izzi group. (*African Masks, The Barbier Muller Collection*, p 54).

43. Buddhist Mahakala Mask

- Nuristan, Afghanistan probably from 19th century before the forcible conversion of the region to Islam.



44. Kore Society Antelope Mask

- From the Marka people, Burkina Faso or Mali.
- Brass strips suggest is dates to the pre-1920's.





45. Baule Twin Mask

- Ivory Coast, possibly mblo group.
- Twins were a cause for celebration among the Baule. (*African Masks, The Barbier Muller Collection*, p 41).



46. Nkondi Nail Fetish Twin Headed Figure

- Democratic Republic of Congo.
- According to the tradition, people would swear an oath on the figure and if they reneged on their deal, the figure would come after them. (*Tribal Art Classics*, Adrian Schlag, p 21 and *Tribal Arts of Africa*, p 128).

47. Bambara Mask

- Mali,
- represents an ape.





48. Dan Deangle Mask

- Ivory Coast, Go or Gu society.
- Vertical strip indicates guard mask. Could be a reproduction. See also number 12.



49. Bapende Mask

- From Kwango, Congo. (*Landmarks of the World's Art*, Andreas Lommel, p 160).



50. Kalimantan Mask

- Indonesian Borneo,
- Possibly Dyak (famous as head hunters) or Asmat.



51. Senofo Kpeli Yehe Mask

- Ivory Coast, members of the Poro society.
- Used for funerals

52. Kalimantan Door Spirit Guard

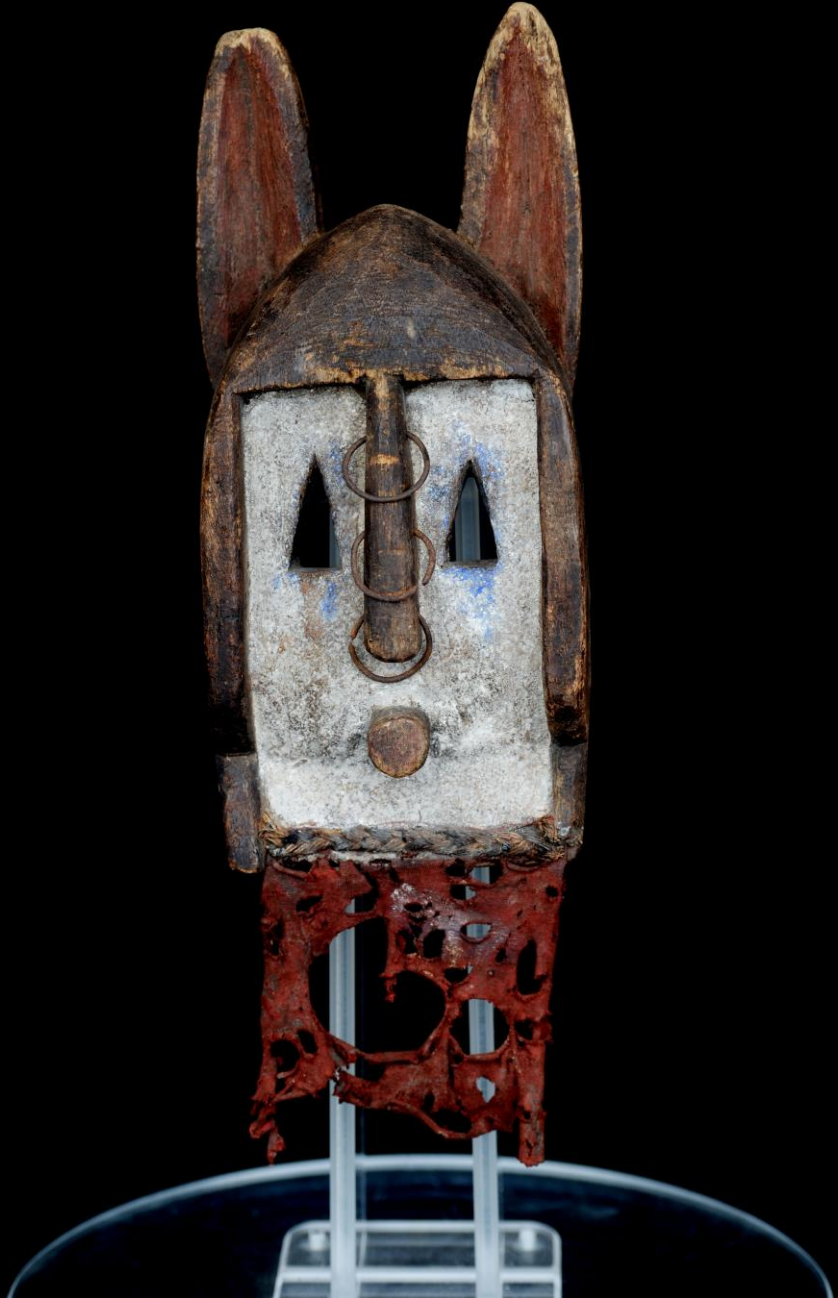
- Borneo, cut from a door lintel.





53. Hausa Mask

- Burkina Faso, the Hausa are a minority people in B.F.



54. Dogon Walu Mask

- Usually worn for a festival once every 5 years, about 400 masks would be worn at the same time. See also mask 18.

55. Pygmy Monkey/Ape Mask



- Democratic Republic of Congo, possibly Baka. Alternatively, Redmond O'Hanlon describes a gorilla mask worn by the Kabounga pygmys. (*Congo Journey*, Redmond O'Hanlon, p 142).
- Smells of smoke because of being hung over a fire to protect from termites.



56. Santa Esêtvão Day Mask

- Braganza, Portugal. Mask traditionally worn on 26th December, St. Stephen's day.



57. Conical Helmet Mask

- Vendor information was Bambara from Mali which is possible but the triangle eye suggest Dogon Mali.
- See also 18 & 54



58. Polynesian idol

- Probably Tiki note extended tongue reminiscent of Maori carvings. This is not a Maori mask.



59. Nigerian Igbo harvest mask

- See also 19



60. Baule? Woman's Mask

- Ivory Coast
- Woman's mask, encrusted with libations
- A helmet mask with green on the eyes and lips



61. Baule 'King Mask'

- Ivory Coast
- 19th century
- Collected by a doctor working there at the time.



62. Animist Ancestor Mask

- East Timor,
- From approx 1800

63. Winiamas Fish Mask, Burkino Faso



- The Winiamas or Garunsi as they are pejoratively called by their Mossi neighbours, are famed for their zoomorphic masks.
- Among them masks are strictly a male prerogative. (B.M p9)



64. Luba or Baluba Monkey Mask

- The Luba people come from the D.R.Congo.
- They live mainly in the regions of Katanga or Kasai in the southeastern DRC
- A large mask with an almost alienlike expression dated to the 1970's



65. Cubist Gerbo Mask

- Ivory Coast
- A beautifully coloured mask from the 2nd half of the 20th century.



66. Guere Bird Mask

- Ivory Coast near Liberia.
- The Guere, also known as Dan Mahou, Dan or Yacuba are famous for their masking traditions, often using them to enforce social unity. (see also mask 15, 21, 55)