



114. MASK

Gabon, Tsogo
Wood, paint, H. 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (32.1 cm.)
19th–20th century

Tsogo masks take many different forms, all related stylistically, but individualistic in expression. They are part of the continuum of styles found in the bend in the Ogowe River area. These range from the white masks of the Punu and Ndjabi peoples to the polychrome masks of the Aduma and even the Kota. Tsogo, as well as Sango and Vuvi masks, tend toward a heightened abstraction in which facial features, barely shown in relief, become pure signs. The double inverted arc of the eyebrows, extending into the flat triangular nose, occurs in the tattooed emblem of initiation into Bwiti.

Each mask has a name, a specific meaning, a song, and a mode of dancing. More than a simple assemblage of wood and fiber, it is a complete personage, a forest spirit (*mogbondji*). The name of this mask is not known, but it is related to a series known as *nzambe-kana* ("ancestor") and *oso* ("face"), at the National Museum of Arts and Traditions in Gabon.

The division of the face by color into quarters or sections—two-toned chin and forehead, light eye sockets, and decorated cheeks—is a common convention in Tsogo art and prefigures the styles of the Aduma and Kota.

L. Perrois

Published: Cannes 1957, no. 297 (ill.); Besancon 1958, no. 447 (ill.); Paris 1966, no. 89 (ill.); Jerusalem 1967, no. 195 (ill.); Sieber and Rubin 1968, no. 114 (ill.); Fagg 1970, no. 171 (ill.).

115. KING RETURNING FROM VICTORY

Cameroon, Bafum area
Wood, hair, ivory, bone, bead, cloth, H. 45 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (115.9 cm.)
Early 19th century?

During his lifetime, a chief in the Cameroon grasslands must commission a statue that represents him in a traditional posture, either seated or standing, and holding various royal attributes. After the chief's death, the commemorative statue plays a role in certain ceremonies.

In this example, we see the powerful image of a king of the Bafum-Katse chiefdom that is known today as Isu or Esu. The statue commemorates a return from victory—a frequent subject in the art of this region. Seated on an animal, probably a leopard, whose head has been lost, the king holds his battle sword in his right hand and displays the enemy's severed head in his left. In contrast to the seemingly composed features of the dead man's face, the king's expression is both joyful and menacing. Human hair adorns his chin, and his teeth are indicated by a piece of incised ivory inserted into the mouth, a technique that is rare in Africa, if not unique. The king wears a large Venetian bead of chevron design and a piece of bone around his neck.

This figure is possibly the work of the early nineteenth-century master sculptor whom Rothe heard about in 1912 and who was known for the terrifying appearance he gave to his figures.

Pierre Harter

Reference: Harter, forthcoming.

Published: Sieber and Rubin 1968, no. 98 (ill.).

FOR SPIRITS
AND KINGS

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