

BERNARD DE GRUNNE



SONGYE
KIFWEBE

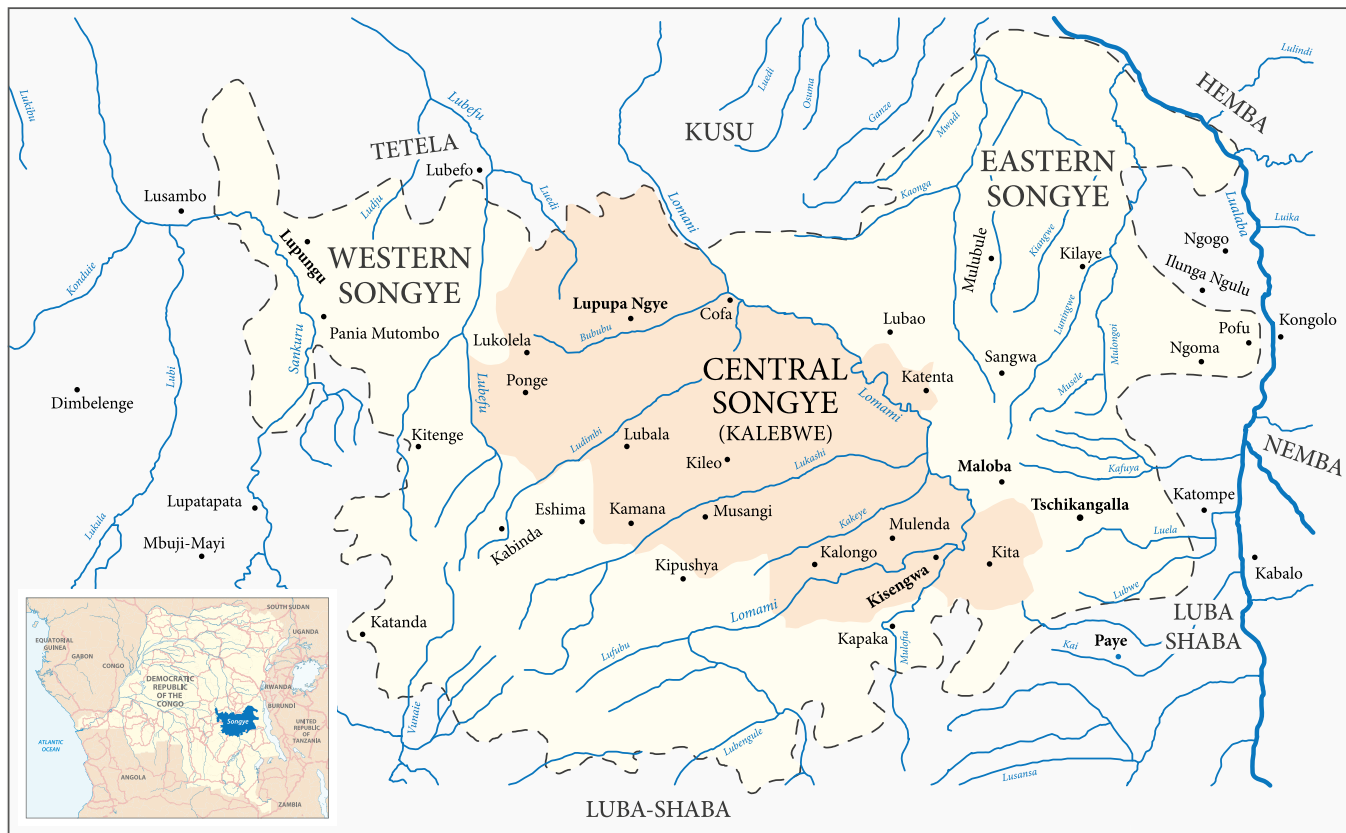
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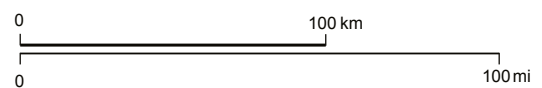
KIFWEBE



The earliest photo of a kifwebe mask taken by M. Dirieck in 1914 published in J. Maes, *Aniota Kifwebe*, edition « De Sikkel », Anvers, 1924, Fig. 42



Songye territory



A short art history of Songye kifwebe masks

Bernard de Grunne

These cannibal Bassonge were among the types we met with, one of those rare nations of the African interior which be classed with the most aesthetic and skilled, most discreet and intelligent of all those generally known to us as the so-called natural races. Leo Frobenius, 1913.¹

Songye *kifwebe* masks have been amongst the most fascinating masks from Congo with their unique mix of serene beauty triggered by elegant semi-closed eye lids with powerful geometric designs of polychromatic striations.

This aesthetic mix of beauty and aggressiveness was already remarked by Théodore Masui in 1897 when he described the Songye: "The Songye among the negroes are the most handsome and strong even if according to [Dr. Paul] Pogge, their faces are reminiscent of that of bulldogs."²

The purpose of this publication is to establish a comprehensive corpus of historic Songye *kifwebe* masks with their precise provenance and date of collection in order to build a solid foundation for a chronological and stylistic evolution since their discovery in 1885. Recently François Neyt has published a large corpus of one hundred and eighty Songye and Luba/Songye *kifwebe* masks from the collection of American sculptor Woods Davy analyzing the later development of this style, starting circa 1950 and expanding until present times.³

Scholarship on Songye *kifwebe* masks has been fairly thin before the 1970's. The first detailed analysis of *kifwebe* masks was published by the American ethnomusicologist and anthropologist Alan Merriam in his seminal articles in 1978. His research was based his field work in the village of Lupupa Ngye among the Bala sub-group of the Central Songye area in 1959-1960.⁴

Karel Plasmans, a Belgian engineer/agronomist working for the cotton company Cotonco focused his research on statues and masks from the Central Songye groups while travelling on business through the region. He collected more than two thousand figurers and masks between 1955 and 1972 and left a comprehensive but unfortunately unpublished documentation aa well as detailed field notes on the geographical provenance and rituals pertaining to the works he collected.⁵

Jean Willy Mestach, the well-known artist and African collector from Brussels published a short but significant essay on Songye sculpture with the help of some of the Plasmans archives to which he was given access.⁶

The Canadian anthropologist Dunja Hersak is the first scholar to focus specifically on Songye masks. She spent a year in Songye territory between March 1977 and April 1978, starting among the Central Songye around the Kalebwe and Cofwe areas first and then focusing more on the Eastern Songye around Lubao. She has published extensively

¹ Leo Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, first published as *Und Afrka Sprach*, 1913, Benjamin Bloom, Inc., New York and London, 1968, p. 14

² Théodore Masui, *L'Etat indépendant du Congo*, Bruxelles-Tervuren, 1897, p. 174.

³ François Neyt, *Kifwebe. A Century of Songye and Luba Masks*, Milano, 5 Continents, 2020

⁴ Alan Merriam, "Kifwebe and other Masked and Unmasked Societies among the Basongye," in *Africa Tervuren*, XXIV, 3, & 4, 1978.

⁵ See Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and Figure Sculpture*, London, Ethnographica, 1986, p. 6.

⁶ Jean Willy Mestach, *Etudes Songye. Formes et symbolique. Essai d'analyse*, München, Galerie Jahn, 1985.



Photo of the Songye mask Cat. 64 (Africa Museum inv. EO.O.O.30593) taken by Hoofd in the village of Paye, Katombe Chiefdom, territory of Kabalo, before 1928, Africa Museum archives inv. N° 132655

on the Songye, starting with the results of her remarkable dissertation in 1985. ⁷ Professor Julien Volper, curator of the Ethnographic collections at the Africa Museum, Tervuren, published two significant essays on Songye and Luba striated masks. ⁸

Belgian dealer/collector René Vanderstraete purchased a *kifwebe* mask of considerable age in 1966 (cat. 07) for which he was able by family oral traditions to connect its early collection history to Capitaine Liévain van de Velde (1850-1888), a Belgian officer who worked in the E.I.C. under Stanley between 1881 and 1883. According to his itinerary in the Congo, Liévain Van de Velde stayed essentially on the west coast of Congo around Loango exploring the source of the Upper Kwilu river and never inland and certainly not as far as the Songye region. ⁹ Further research could one day allow us to substantiate this truly remarkably early date.

The earliest Songye mask for which we have specific documented evidence is a female *kifwebe* mask (cat. 10) collected by Jorgen Valdemar Rosendhal, a Danish Lieutenant of the Etat Indépendant du Congo (E.I.C). Rosendhal arrived in Congo in 1898 and ended his career as *chef de station* at Riba Riba (now Lokandu), north of Kindu on the left bank

⁷ Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and Figure Sculpture*, London, Ethnographica, 1986, p. 6. See also Hersak, "The Kifwebe Masking Phenomenon," in Frank Herreman & Constantijn Petridis, *Faces of the Spirits*, Antwerpen, Ethnographic Museum, 1993 ; Hersak, "Colours, Stripes and Projections: Revelations on Fieldwork Findings and Museum Enigmas," in Luc de Heusch, ed., *Objets et Signes*, Tervuren, Annales, 1995, pp. 161-73; Hersak, "On the Concept of Prototype in Songye Masquerades," in *African Arts*, Vol. 45, n° 2, 2012, pp. 12-23.

⁸ Julien Volper, *Pour qu'en bas on l'entende. Les masques ronds striés des Luba orientaux*, 2010, Momentum Publication et J. Volper, *Autour des Songye*, Fine Art Studio, Gourcuff Gradenigo, 2012

⁹ M. Coosemans, « Van de Velde Liévain », in Institut Royal Colonial Belge, *Biographie coloniale belge*, Bruxelles, Tome II, p. 878-882 ; Albert Chapaux, *Le Congo*, Bruxelles, Charles Rozet éditeur, 1894, pp. 14, 88, 164-1677 et Anne Vanderstraete, *Provenances et anecdotes relatives à l'acquisition des objets songye*, unpublished ms, n.d.

of the Lualaba river at some distance from Songye territory. Rosendhal died in 1901 and this mask was given to the National Museum in Copenhagen in 1902.¹⁰

Another mask with a very early collection date is the famous mask in the Linden Museum, Stuttgart collected between 1898 and 1903 by Heinrich Fonck, a Hauptmann in the German Schutztruppe for German Ost-Afrika (Cat. 01). This mask morphed into the famous "Frobenius" mask as allegedly collected by Frobenius before 1905. The confusion about its early history comes from information provided by ethnologist Ernest Vatter (1926) where he quotes an unpublished comment by Frobenius on this type of Songye mask.¹¹ Fonck sold the mask to Graf von Linden in 1905, a year before Frobenius returned back from his first expedition in the Congo in May 1906. The Linden museum mask together with another in the museum in Hamburg was the earliest kifwebe mask to be published.¹²

Furthermore, as Fonck was based in the town of Ujiji on the Tanzanian side of Lake Tanganyika (a German colony at the time), he probably never set foot in the Congo, let alone in Songye territory. A formal detail of this mask is the absence of small circular carved holes piercing the perimeter of the mask used to attach costume elements. This characteristic could suggest that the mask was never used in a ritual context. However, five other Songye masks with early accession dates between 1909 and 1930 are also missing the pierced holes on the periphery of the mask: two belong to the MAS Museum in Antwerp (cat. 03 & 06), two are in the National Museum in Copenhagen (cat. 04 & 20) and one in the Africa Museum Tervuren (cat 05). Maybe these six masks could have been part of an active trade in early curios made for commerce at the time or could have served another ritual purpose such as static ritual icons for the *bwa kifwebe* society.

The German ethnologist and Africanist Leo Frobenius (1873-1938), is the undisputed Grand Master and discoverer of *kifwebe* masks as he was the first trained ethnologist and art historian to carry field work among the Songye. His maiden expedition to Africa baptized the DIAFE I (Deutsche Innerafrikanische Forschungs-Expedition I) led him to explore the forest peoples in the Kasai and Congo basins. After leaving Antwerp in December 1904, he arrived at Boma on January 19. Going upstream on the Lulua river, Frobenius visited the Kuba and Pende, arriving in Luluabourg (now Kanaga) in November 1905. Starting in January 1906, he went north following the Sankuru River in Songye territory. Frobenius left the Congo on May 29, 1906 arriving back in Germany in July 1906.¹³ During this first expedition he collected no less than 8.000 artefacts and countless oral traditions.¹⁴ Ten *kifwebe* masks were part of this collection.¹⁵

As one of the main sponsors of his expedition, the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg received among those 8000 artefacts ten *kifwebe* masks. Seven of these masks went to the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg while the last three may have been sold privately by Frobenius to the trading firm J.G. Umlauff also based in Hamburg. J.G. Umlauff subsequently negotiated them with other institutions such as Leipzig and the Penn Museum, Philadelphia.¹⁶

Both the index cards of the Hamburg museum and his field notes give fairly precise geographical attributions to these masks. Two masks are attributed to the Kalebwe, a large Central Songye group while four other ones are attributed

10 Cfr. H. Jenssen-Tusch, *Skandinaver i Congo*, Copenhagen, 1902-1905, Gyldendalske, p. 674

11 See Ernest Vatter, *Religiöse Plastik der Naturvölker*, Frankfurt am Main, 1926, p. 107. Indeed both Leuzinger, (1960) Merriam (1979), Mestach (1983), Hersak (1990), Volper (2012) and Dumouchelle (2020) have attributed the provenance of the Linden Museum mask to Leo Frobenius.

12 The Linden Museum mask was published by Rudolph Utzinger, *Masken*, Orbis Pictus, Verlag Ernest Wasmuth, Berlin, n.d. [1922 or 1923?] and also L. Frobenius, *Das Unbekannte Afrika*, Oscar Beck, München, 1923, Tafel 155

13 L. Frobenius, *Im Schatten des Kongostates*, Berlin Verlag Georg Reimer, 1907, p. 284-286 & 462.

14 Leo Frobenius, *Auf den Trümmern des klassischen Atlantis* [On the ruins of Classical Atlantis], Vol. I of *Und Afrika Sprach*, Berlin 1912, p. 32

15 The DIAFE I expedition was financed by the Karl Ritter Foundation, Berlin, the Rudolph Virchow Foundation, Berlin as well as the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg. Cfr Janheinz Jahn, *Leo Frobenius: The Demonic Child*, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, 1974, p. 8

16 Fuhrmann published the Leipzig mask with a specific provenance of Lupunga near Kabinda most probably the Lupungu village where Frobenius collected many of his masks. See E. Fuhrmann *Afrika*. Folkwang Verlag, Hagen und Darmstadt, 1922, plate 90. Cfr. also Yaëlle Biro et Constantine Petridis, "A Pioneering Collection: Acquiring Congolese Art at the Penn Museum", in *Tribal Art*, N° 68, Summer 2013, p. 104

more specifically attached to the Bena Mpassa or Bena Mwasa. This attribution has been confirmed later by Merriam and Hersak.¹⁷

Frobenius even specifies the names of two villages, Tschikangalla and Maloba known for their reputed carvers without connecting them to specific works.¹⁸ The larger of the two masks still in Hamburg (Cat 19) was purchased by Frobenius in Lupungu, the large village of Chief Lupungu situated upstream of the Sankuru river.

Frobenius left us a detailed description of Lupungu, describing it even as a small town with hundreds of inhabitants and an impressive twenty meter wide main street of considerable length.¹⁹ Chief Lupungu, then quite old, remembered meeting another German explorer Herman von Wissmann in 1883, some twenty three years earlier. The relationship between Chief Lupungu and Frobenius went so well that Lupungu made every effort to support his research by sending request out in all possible directions and to all the villages of his vast territory asking all those who knew the old traditions and legends to come to Frobenius and tell them to him.²⁰ Frobenius was so successful in accumulating a large number of artefacts and his collections were growing so much in size to approximately 400 loads that it caused him to worry how he could bring them all back north.²¹

Leo Frobenius was able to have access to fascinating data on the symbolism and rituals pertaining to the making of a new *kifwebe* mask most probably when he stayed in the village of Lupungu. In a letter dated August 17th, 1907 published by Vatter in 1926, Frobenius provide some general information to Count von Linden who had just purchased a very fine *kifwebe* mask (cat 01): "The Bena Mpassa carve ceremonial masks for the Bassonge tribes. These masks are certainly the most valuable of those whose provenience is of the regions to the south of the Congo for, during the production of each one; several people have to lose their lives. Long mystical ceremonies accompany the production of such sacred images. Your example belongs to the finest. I was able to acquire a series of these masks, of which only a few have been subjected to the final stage of sanctification."²² This final remark by Frobenius can explain why among the ten *kifwebe* masks he collected, the majority show very few traces of use and would have never passed the final consecration rituals and thus could have been carved during his stay as presents to him.

Ernest Vatter added important details on the rituals pertaining to the creation of each new *kifwebe* mask, information possibly based on conversations he had with Frobenius: "These masks [referring to the Linden museum mask] are considered to incorporate extraordinary magical powers and to confer unusual power on their owner, if they have been prepared according to the ancient, bloody rite of the *Nganga* or witch doctor. In their production, the mystery of transformation becomes reality by means of the mask itself. This report thus casts light on the dark depth of the human soul, out of which the mask is born. Whosoever wishes to possess such a mask carved in wood, orders it from the *Nganga*. When it has been completed, the client, accompanied by a slave, goes to the *Nganga*, who kills the slave and divides the corpse longitudinally. Then the mask is brought and laid on the ground between the two halves of the cadaver. The client must then seat himself before a large basket and gaze attentively into it. "The *Nganga* seizes the freshly carved mask and casts it into a brightly burning fire. And while the mask is charring, the great mystery occurs: the man staring into the basket sees the burnt mask ascend with heightened beauty."

17 Alan Merriam, "Kifwebe and other masked and unmasked societies among the Basongye," in *Africa Tervuren*, XXIV, 1978-3, p. 63 and Dunja Hersak, "The Kifwebe Masking Phenomenon," in Frank Herreman & Constantijn Petridis, *Faces of the Spirits*, Antwerpen, Ethnographic Museum, 1993, p. 146

18 Hildegard Klein, ed., *Leo Frobenius: Ethnographische Notizen aus den Jarhen 1905 und 1906, IV, Kanyok, Luba, Songye, Tetela, Songo, Mena, Nkutu*, Frank Steiner Verlag, Weisbaden 1990, p. 107

19 L. Frobenius, *Im Schatten des Kongostates*, Berlin, Verlag Georg Reimer, 1907, p. 422

20 We have even a detailed description of the rituals pertaining to a Songye statue witnessed by Frobenius. During his stay Frobenius was invited to attend a ceremony in the remote hut with the local *Nganga* (magician) who manipulated a Songye figure by making it move around, dance and speak by ventriloquism in order to find out who stole some food from the camp. Cfr. L. Frobenius, *Im Schatten des Kongostates*, Berlin, Verlag Georg Reimer, 1907, p. 434

21 L. Frobenius, *Im Schatten des Kongostates*, Berlin, Verlag Georg Reimer, 1907, p. 435

22 Letter by Leo Frobenius, dated August 17, 1907, Linden Museum Stuttgart, Inventory book Nr. VII, pp. 216-17 published in E. Vatter, *Religiöse Plastik der Naturvölker*, Frankfurt am Main, 1926, p.181, cat. entry Tafel 47



Photo of forty-seven masks taken in Kongolo by Father Julius Teernstra, CSSP (Congrégation du Saint Esprit), published in *L'illustration congolaise*, February 1934, n° 149, p. 4846

With regards to the further meaning and use of these masks, Frobenius was only able to learn that they are related to the cult of the dead and make an appearance in the case of severe illness and in front of the dying. The mask is then danced in the evening, accompanied by the deafening noise of drumming and penetrating screams. It is apparently preventive medicine against the demons of disease, and death, perhaps for banishing the souls of the dead as well. That the mask only acquires its "power" by means of the human sacrifice is distinctive. Masks of the same type, during whose production no human is slaughtered are regarded as inefficacious.²³

Other early reports about the purposes and function of the Kifwebe masking tradition were scarce. According to Maes, they were connected to the manipulation of magico-religious powers and were danced at funerals of chiefs or dignitaries, title-taking ceremonies or visits of important dignitaries.²⁴

The German art historian and ethnographer Hans Himmelheber undertook a total of fourteen expeditions to the Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, the Congo and Alaska between 1933 and 1976. His innovative studies on African artists and their aesthetics provide very important impulses until today on the identification of great carvers and Master hands as he was among the very first and rare scholars to interview artists about their careers, their work, their technique and the aesthetic concepts.²⁵

Returning from his trip in Alaska to study the Eskimo culture on Nunivak Island in 1937, Himmelheber struck a friendship with Erhard Weyhe, owner of Weyhe Gallery, an art gallery in New York, who agreed to finance an expedition in the Congo. Only one week after his return from the USA, Himmelheber, who was just thirty years old at the time, set off on a two-year expedition to Cameroon, Gabon and the Belgian Congo. Between May 1938 and June 1939, he travelled in the region between the rivers Kwango, Kwilu and Kasai through to Sankuru and Lomani, in the heart of Songye territory. As an independent scholar not attached to a museum or a university, Himmelheber was forced to rely on the

23 Ernest Vatter, *Religiöse Plastik der Naturvölker*, Frankfurt am Main, 1926, p. 107. The translation appears in Jean-Willy Mestach, *Etudes Songye*, München, Galerie Jahn, 1985, p. 156

24 Joseph Maes, *Aniota-Kifwebe*, Anvers, éditions De Sikkel, 1924, p. 36-37

25 Michaela Oberhofer & Nanina Guyer, "Introduction: Fictions and Art Worlds of the Congo between Past and Present", in Nanina Guyer and Michaela Oberhofer, *Congo as Fiction. Art Worlds between Past and Present*, Museum Rietberg, Zurich, 2019, p. 17



Photo of a group of kifwebe dancers taken by R.P. William F.P. Burton n° BPC 01.3 circa 1930-40 in Anita Nettleton et alii, *The Collection of W.F.P. Burton*, University of Witwatersrand Galleries, Johannesburg, 1992, p. 26

acquisition and trade of artefacts to finance his scientific work. For his Congo expedition, he was commissioned by the Swiss ethnology museums of Basel and Geneva as well as the Weyhe Gallery in New York and the Galerie Charles Ratton in Paris.²⁶

The recently opened exhibition *Congo as Fiction* at the Rietberg museum provided a trove of field notes, photos and artefacts from Himmelheber's Congo expedition and more specifically Songye kifwebe masks which have all been donated very generously to the Rietberg Museum by the direct descendants of Himmelheber.

Himmelheber wrote briefly about the Songye in his important *Negerkunst und Negerkünstler*, publication: "The art of these four tribes is also clearly related, and we will thus refer to them together here as the "Basonge group. Two types of artworks are characteristic of the entire region: firstly, large masks carved in bold cubistic forms, painted all over with parallel red, white and black stripes. Collectors call them *kifwebe* masks. "Kifwebe" means "mask". In several villages, the Basonge brought me about a dozen masks, but did so quite secretly, and when I asked them about their meaning, they merely replied that "they were for play". One also informed me that the government had prohibited the masks and had confiscated them everywhere. We read in Frobenius that people had to lose their lives when these masks were made, in order that the latter should be properly empowered."²⁷

Himmelheber noted in the entry of his April 24, 1939 field notes how difficult it was for him to find Songye *kifwebe* masks: "But in every village the same answer: the père de Kongolo has taken away the masks or burned them. Until I arrived at the big chief's village of Sangua, when I am eagerly shown a mask kept in a ruin in the bush, then another- and very pretty figures too. Finally. The masks are actually very beautiful, precisely the style for which I have been hunting for so long [...] and which was recently shown to me in the mission [...] Just twenty of these very highly paid masks make the long journey worthwhile."²⁸

Of the twenty *kifwebe* masks he collected, we can identify at least six (cat 47, 55 & 58) in the Rietberg Museum, (Cat. 46 & 67) in the Webster Plass collection donated to the British Museum, (Cat. 52) from the collection of Erhard Weyhe,

²⁶ Nanina Guyer and Michaela Oberhofer, *Congo as Fiction. Art Worlds between Past and Present*, Museum Rietberg, Zurich, 2019, p. 18.

²⁷ Hans Himmelheber, *Negerkunst und Negerkünstler*, Braunschweig, Klinkhart & Biermann, 1960, p. 401

²⁸ Nanina Guyer, "Feared Masks, Cubistic Icons: Kifwebe from the Songye Region," in Nanina Guyer and Michaela Oberhofer, *Congo as Fiction. Art Worlds between Past and Present*, Museum Rietberg, Zurich, 2019, p. 217

New York, plus possibly two more (Cat. 60 and 61), also possibly sold Margaret Webster Plass and donated to the British Museum.

Two museums stand out in terms of holdings of Songye masks. Dunja Hersak published fourteen *kifwebe* masks belonging to the newly inaugurated National Museum of Kinshasa known now as the MNRDC.²⁹ The Africa Museum in Tervuren has also a large holding of twenty Songye *kifwebe* masks.³⁰

We are fortunate to have a few rare photos documenting *kifwebe* masks and the dances in which these striated masks would appear. The first document is a field photo published by Joseph Maes in his classic study *Aniota kifwebe*, 1924 and taken by M. Dirieck in 1914.³¹ It illustrates a dancers wearing a classic *kifwebe* white female mask in the village of Kisengwa, a village and a chiefdom just east of the Lomani and adjacent to the Kalebwe area referred to by Frobenius. Hersak underlines the fact that this photo is the earliest evidence to date of *kifwebe* masquerades from that region and located it as a sub-group of the Bena Mwo chiefdom.³²

A second photo before 1928 by l'administrateur colonial Hoofd in the village of Paye, Katombe chiefdom in the region of Kabalo, show a masks dancer standing alone in the middle of a large esplanade, surrounded by men and women. Two musical instruments seen on the left side are a large trapezoidal slit drum called the *nkumvi* and a cylindrical skin drum called *ditumba*. The large *nkumvi* drum are used for long distance communication concerning important dignitaries while the *ditumba* drums are preferred for chants and dances. Volper underlines that the presence of these two drums is highly symbolic and must be understood as signs of the mask's important status and inherent powers.³³

However, the most remarkable photo of a group of *kifwebe* masks is one taken in Kongolo at the edge of Eastern Songye territory by Father Julius Teernstra around 1934.³⁴ It was first published in *L'illustration congolaise*, 1934 and became better known thanks to Jean Willy Mestach's publication of 1985.³⁵ This fascinating document shows a massive group of forty-seven masks *kifwebe* dancers lined up in three rows like a soccer team or a Broadway musical. This important document is a proof that Songye *kifwebe* masquerades were clearly a very public affair as the appearance of masked dancers on such a scale must have been quite striking. Out of the forty-seven masks, thirty-six are covered by white striations showing a mixture of Central and Western Songye styles and Eastern Songye/Luba styles. The eleven other masks are decorated with alternating rows of white, red and brown striations. One mask (Cat 57) is standing alone and apart on the proper left side of the group; a position which suggest a very specific and special role for this dancer.

Another obvious aspect of this fascinating masking tradition is that fact that it evolved at one point into a more secularized form of entertainment with brotherhoods of dancers as one can see from the photo of the forty-seven masks taken by Julius Teernstra in 1934.

I have attempted to map out in an evolutionary tree the early art history of Songye *kifwebe* masks based on the historic corpus published here. Since the majority of *kifwebe* masks have been collected in Songye territory, both Hersak and Volper agree that the Songye *kifwebe* masks is the nuclear or core style from which the Luba striated masks originated.³⁶ The *kifwebe* Songye style is clearly a 19th century style with an efflorescence between 1850 until the 1920's, evolving into a more baroque phase starting in the 1930's and into a rococo explosion in the 1950' and 60's.

29 Musée National de la République Démocratique du Congo, founded in 1970 as the IMNZ See Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and Figure Sculpture*, London, Ethnographica, 1986

30 Alan Merriam, "Kifwebe and other Masked and Unmasked Societies among the Basongye," in *Africa Tervuren*, XXIV, 3, 1978, p. 66

31 Joseph Maes, *Aniota-Kifwebe*, Anvers, éditions De Sikkel, 1924, p. 38 et fig. 42

32 Dunja Hersak, "The Kifwebe masking phenomenon, in Frank Herreman & Constantine Petridis, *Faces of the Spirits. Masks from the Zaire Basin*, Antwerp, Ethnographic Museum, 1993, p. 146

33 Julien Volper, *Autour des Songye*. Fine Art Publishing, Gourcuff Gradenigo, 2012, p. 34

34 Father Julius Teernstra of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (C.S.Sp.) (misspelled Teenstra by Mestach, 1983, p. 146) was born in Amsterdam in 1891 and died in Gennep, Limburg in 1972. He was a missionary in the Belgian Congo between 1929 and 1961. I was able to identify his presence in the Congo in a very useful book by Abbé Corman, *Annuaire des Missions catholiques au Congo Belge*, Bruxelles, Edition Universelle, S.A. 1935, p. 282

35 *L'illustration congolaise*, février 1934, n° 149, p. 4846 et Willy Mestach, *Etudes Songye*, München, 1985, p. 146

36 Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and Figure Sculpture*, London Ethnographica, 1986- pp. 42-44 and J. Volper, 2012, p. 55-61

This nuclear style, curvilinear and always covered by thin narrow grooves which evolve latter in larger flat ones was invented among the Central Songye groups such as the Kalebwe. Two nuclear substyles coexisted, one with a monochrome dark brown to black surface blackened by immersion in swamp mud (cat. 01 to 09)³⁷ and a second covered with white pigments made of crushed clay or kaolin (cat. 10 to 16)³⁸. The white "female" mask functioned as the prototype for the entire style. From this prime object, the forms and stylistic permutations of the male masks seems to have evolved from the basic nuclear white or dark model, showing dynamic variations and permutations in a striking display of sculptural inventiveness.³⁹ In the 1920's the style became more exaggerated and evolved into more geometric forms characterized by alternating white, red and black broad flat stripes such as the series collected by Himmelheber in 1939 (cat. 58 to 61).

The final step in this stylistic evolution are the masks collected by Plasmans and the IMNZ which are larger in size, up to 63 cm, with an excessive prominence of the facial features with eyes and mouth jutting out, and a nose/crest extension projecting forward like a vertical disk. They are a testimony to a non-traditional context of folk art and trade production. Apparently, on the advice of a European trader of informed taste, Cornet states that a workshop of carvers created a new category of exaggerated form of kifwebe masks.⁴⁰

After 1950, many art collectors have been drawn to the imaginatively transformed, highly abstract Songye *kifwebe* masks. Just like *Les Femmes d'Alger* was considered first as ugly by the public for modern art when it first came on view in 1939, *kifwebe* masks, which share some formal affinities with Picasso's and Braque's radical approach to the representation of a human face even if we know that both artists were never exposed to this radical innovation, have triggered a profound change in taste in the last fifty years promoting both *Les Femmes d'Alger* and the *kifwebe* masks to an epic status.

Brussels, February 2020

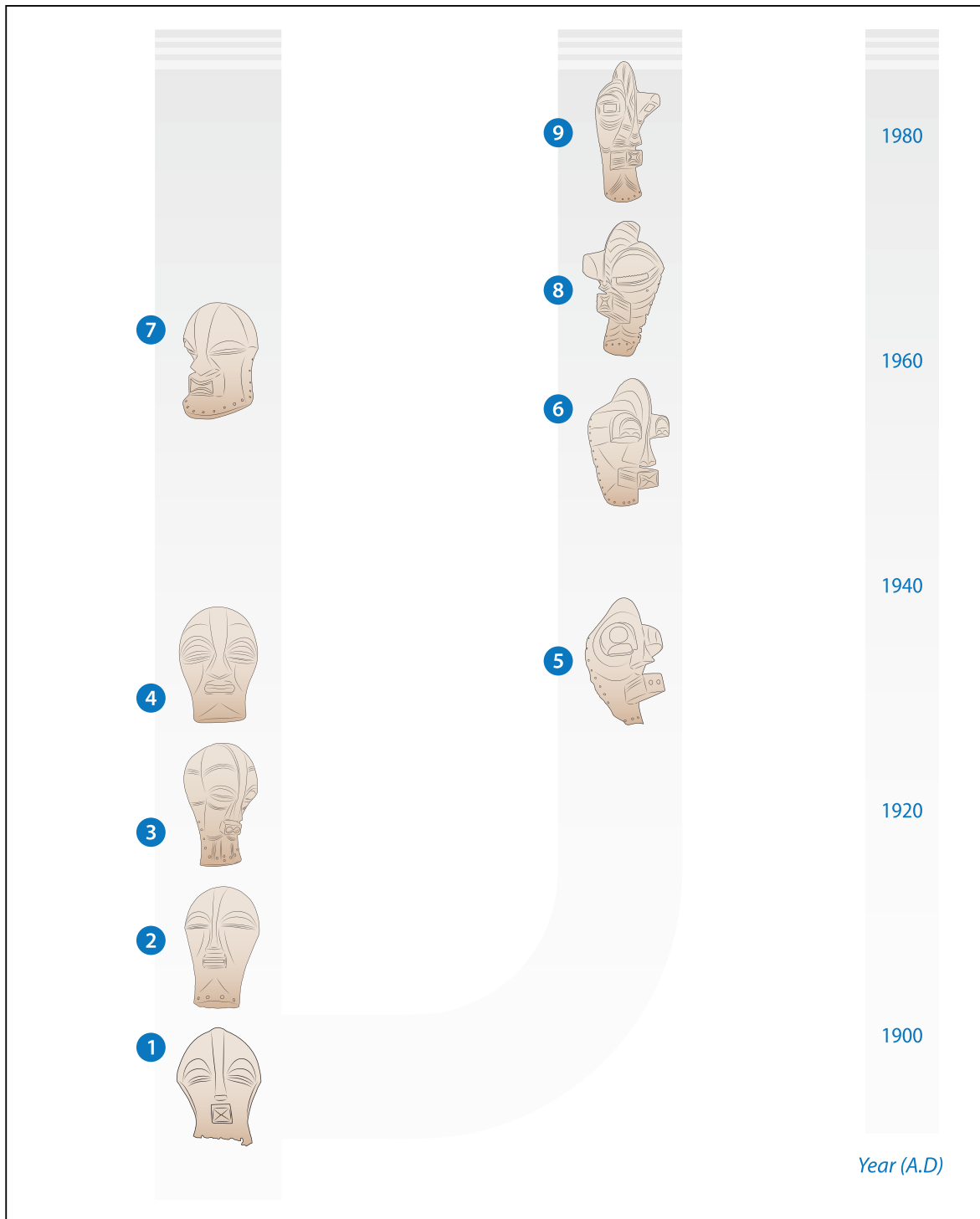
I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to the following persons who were all extremely helpful in my research. James Hamill, Curatorial Collection, The British Museum, London; Dr. Sandra Feracutti, Curator of Africa Collection, Christoph Rippe and Katja Scharff, The Linden-Museum Stuttgart; Dr. Barbara Plankensteiner, Director, Mareike Späth, Research assistant, Catharina Winzer, Head of Photographic Archive, The Museum am Rothenbaum (MARKK), Hamburg; Dr. Yaelle Biro, Associate Curator of African Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Dr. Kristen Walker, Director and Curator Collections Care and Estates, The Horniman Museum and Gardens, London; Dr. Dwaune Latimer, Keeper of the Africa Collection, Alessandro Pezzati, Senior Archivist, The Penn Museum, Philadelphia; Dr. Julien Volper, Curator of the Department of Cultural Anthropology and History, Africa Museum, Tervuren; Els De Palmenaer, curator of the Africa collection, Museum aan Stroom (MAS) Antwerpen; Dr. Jesper Kurt Nielsen, Curator of the Africa Collection, Wibeke Haldrup, Curator, The National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen and Thomas Otte Stensager, National Museum of Denmark; Dr. Silvia Dolz, Curator of the Africa collection, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden; Dr. Michaela Oberhofer, Curator of the Africa collection, Museum Rietberg, Zurich; Dr. Eberhard Fischer, Winterthur; Marc Léo Felix, Brussels; René et Anne Vander Straete, Lasne; Bernard Dulon, Paris; Jan Calmeyn, Sint Niklaas; Michel Vandekerckhove, Brussels; Didier Claes, Brussels; Susan Kloman, International Head of African & Oceanic Art, Christie's and Bruno Claessens, Christie's Paris; David Rosenthal and Bettina von Lintig, San Francisco

³⁷ Hersak, 1986, p. 92

³⁸ Hersak, 1986, p. 67

³⁹ Dunja Hersak, « On the Concept of Prototype in Songye Masquerades, » in *African Art*, Summer 2012, vol. 45, n° 2 p. 13-14

⁴⁰ Joseph Aurélien Cornet, « African Art and Authenticity », in *African Arts*, October 1975, Volume IX, 1, p. 55



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Stylistic evolution based on dates of collection of kifwebe masks

- 1** 1897-1901, cat. n 10
- 2** 1906, cat. n 20
- 3** 1913-1919, cat. n 13
- 4** 1925-1930, cat. n 34
- 5** before 1928, cat. n 40
- 6** before 1959, cat. n 48
- 7** 1960-1970, cat. n 38
- 8** 1955-1972, from F. Neyt, Kifwebe, 2020, plate 28
- 9** 1955-1972, from F. Neyt, Kifwebe, 2020, plate 23

01

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.

Height : 45.5 cm

• Provenance :

Collected by Heinrich Fonck (1869-1933) between 1898 and 1903

Sold to Count Karl von Linden, in 1905 adding it to the Stuttgart's *Württembergischer Verein für Handelsgeografie* (Württemberg's Association for Commercial Geography), which became the Linden-Museum Stuttgart
Stuttgart, Linden-Museum, 1905, inv. n°043811

• Publications :

Leo Frobenius, *Das Unbekannte Afrika*, Ockar Beck, München, 1923, tafel 155

Rudolf Utzinger, *Masken*, Orbis Pictus vol. 13, Berlin,

Ernest Wasmuth, [n.d.] (1922 or 1924?), Tafel 39

Ernst Vatter, *Religiöse Plastik der Naturvölker*, Frankfurt 1926, Fig.47



Photo of Heinrich Fonck in H. Fonck, *Deutsch-Ost-Afrika. Eine Schilderung deutscher Tropen nach 10 Wandjahren*, Berlin, 1909, inside cover



02

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 53 cm

• **Provenance :**

Horniman Museum and Gardens, London, inv. N° 0107081 and N° nn3482,
Purchased circa 1910-1940?

• **Publications :**

William Fagg, *African Sculpture*, Washington, National Gallery of Art, The International Exhibitions Foundation, 1970, p. 148, cat. N° 187
Valerie Vowles, "African Art at the Horniman Museum", London, in *African Arts*, May 1981, Vol. XIV, number 3, p.; 66



03

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 42 cm

• **Provenance :**

Henry Pareyn, Antwerp, before 1920
Antwerp, MAS, Museum aan de Stroom,
n°AE0334

• **Publications :**

Frans Olbrechts, *Tentoonstelling van Kongo-Kunst*, Antwerpen, Antwerpse Propagandaweken, 1937, N° 130
Frank Herreman et alii, *Het Etnografisch Museum Antwerpen*, Brussels, Musea Nostra, 1991, p. 30
Frank Herreman and Constantijn Petridis, *Face of the Spirits, Masks from the Zaire Basin*, Anvers, 1993, p.153, fig.73



04

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 40 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Christian Knauer in Kasongo before 1909
Copenhagen, The National Museum of Denmark,
inv n° G .1483

• **Publications :**

Christen Friberg, « Lidt om Graensen mellem Poesi og
Malekunst, » (A little on the border between poetry and
painting) in *Klingen*, vol. 2, n° 2, 1918, p. 10
"Skjulte Skatte. Katalog over udstillingen, 3 april- 16 maj.
1965", in *Louisiana Revy*, Arpil 1965, 4 Argang, Nr. 4, 1-8
*Guides to the National Museum. The Ethnographical
Department. Primitive Tribes of the Tropics*, Copenhagen,
1956
Nicolaisen Yde, *Art of Central America*, The National
Museum of Denmark, 1972, fig.34



Christian Knauer in 1901 near Kassongo, R.D.C. in H. Jenssen-Tusch,
Skandinaver I Congo, Copenhagen, 1902-1905, Gyldendalske, p. 643.

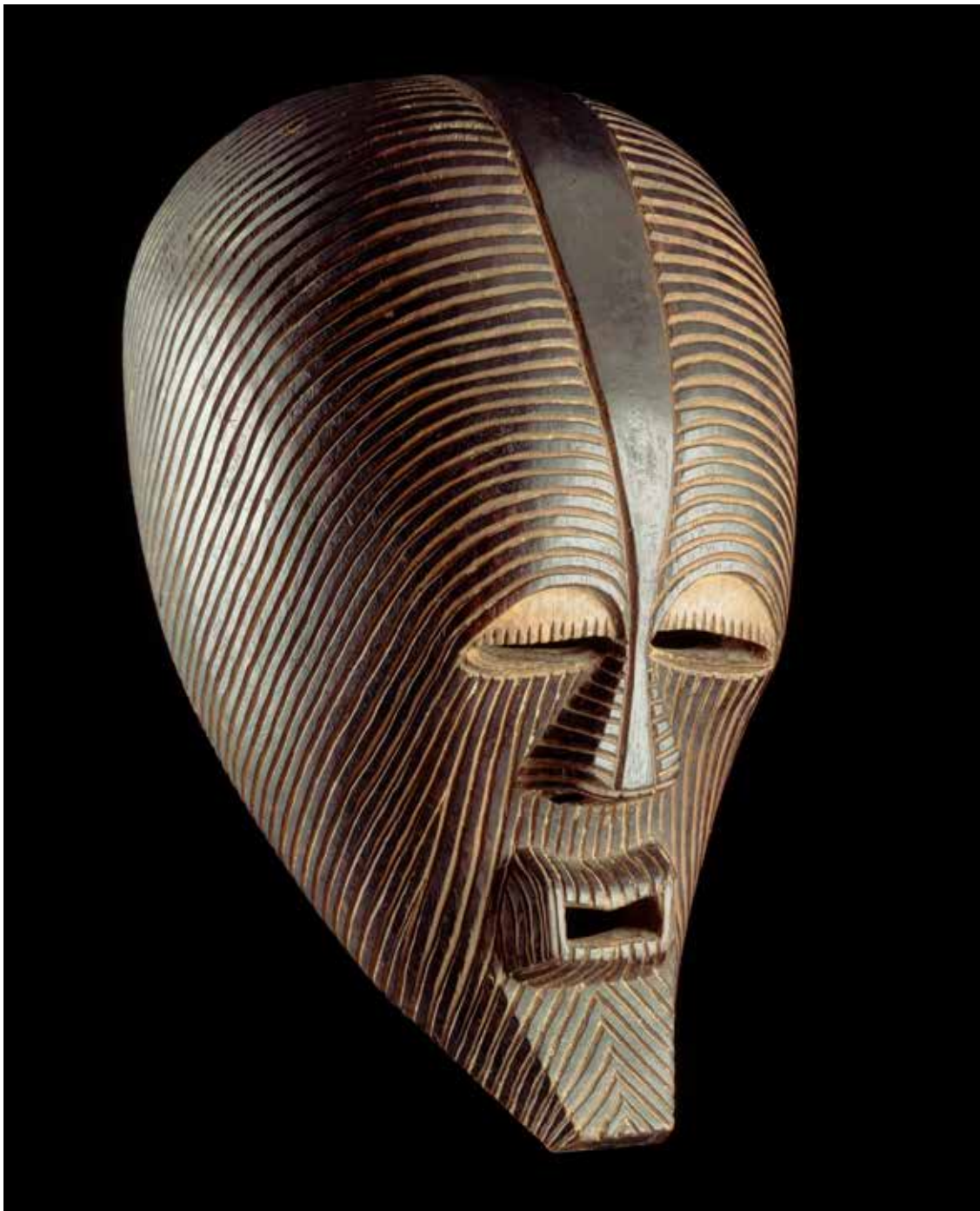


05

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 32.1 cm

• Provenance :

Henri Pareyn, Antwerp, before 1917
Tervuren, Africa Museum, Purchase Arnold, 1917,
inv. N° EO.O.O. 20768



06

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 30.5 cm

• Provenance :

Veiling Zaal Breckpot, March 26, 1930, lot 738 (150 francs)
Antwerpen, MAS Museum aan de Stroom, inv. n°AE0335

• Publications :

Frans Olbrechts, *Tentoonstelling van Kongo-kunst, Catalogus*, Antwerpen, Antwerpsche Propagandaweken, 1937, p. 24, n° 131

Frank Herreman and Constantijn Petridis, *Face of the Spirits, Masks from the Zaire Basin*, Anvers, 1993, p.149, fig.70



07

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 34 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected between 1883 and 1885 by Liévin Vandavelde
Georges Stroobants, by family descent
René VanderStraete, Lasne, circa 1966
Collection privée.

• **Publications :**

Frank Herremann and Constantijn Petridis, *Faces of the spirit*, Antwerpen , 1990, p. 144, cat. 68
Anne-Marie Bouttiaux et alii, *Initiés. Bassin du Congo*, Paris, Musée Dapper, 2013, p. 139



Lieutenant Liévin Vandavelde dans Albert CHapaux, *Le Congo*, Bruxelles, Charles Rozez éditeur, 1894, p. 87



08



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 44 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected before 1914
Colonial collection, Antwerp
Nadya Levi, Antwerp circa 1970
Merton Simpson, New York
Freddy Rolin, Bruxelles
Jean-Jacques de Launoit, Bruxelles
Private collection

• **Publication :**

Sotheby's, Important Primitive Works of Art, The Property of a European Nobleman and others Owners, 23 juin, 1981, Londres, p.210, fig.210

09



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 46.5 cm

• **Provenance :**

Jean Willy Mestach, Brussels, avant 1981
William S. Rubin, New York
European Private Collection
Myron Kunin, Minneapolis (Christie's, New York,
22 November 1996, lot.168)
Private collection (Sotheby's New York, November 11, 2014, lot 147)

• **Publication :**

François Neyt, *Arts traditionnels et histoire au Zaïre*, Louvain-La-Neuve, 1981, p. 269, fig. XIV.9
Jacques Kerchache et alii, *L'Art africain*, Paris, Citadelles Mazenod, 1988, p.451, n°717

10

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 34 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collection by Mr. Jorgen Valdemar
Rosendahl before 1897 and 1901
Copenhagen, The National Museum of
Denmark, 1902, inv. n° G 1222



Lieutenant Jorgen Valdemar Rosendahl, in H. Jensen-Tusch,
Skandinaver i Congo; Copenhagen, Gyldendalske, 1902-1905,
p.674

11



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 40 cm

• **Provenance :**

Jeanne Walschot, Brussels, circa 1930
Harvey Menist, Amsterdam
Leo and Karin van Oosterom The Hague
Eddy Hof, (1914-2001), The Netherlands
Ana et Antonio Casanovas, Madrid, 2003
Collection Privée

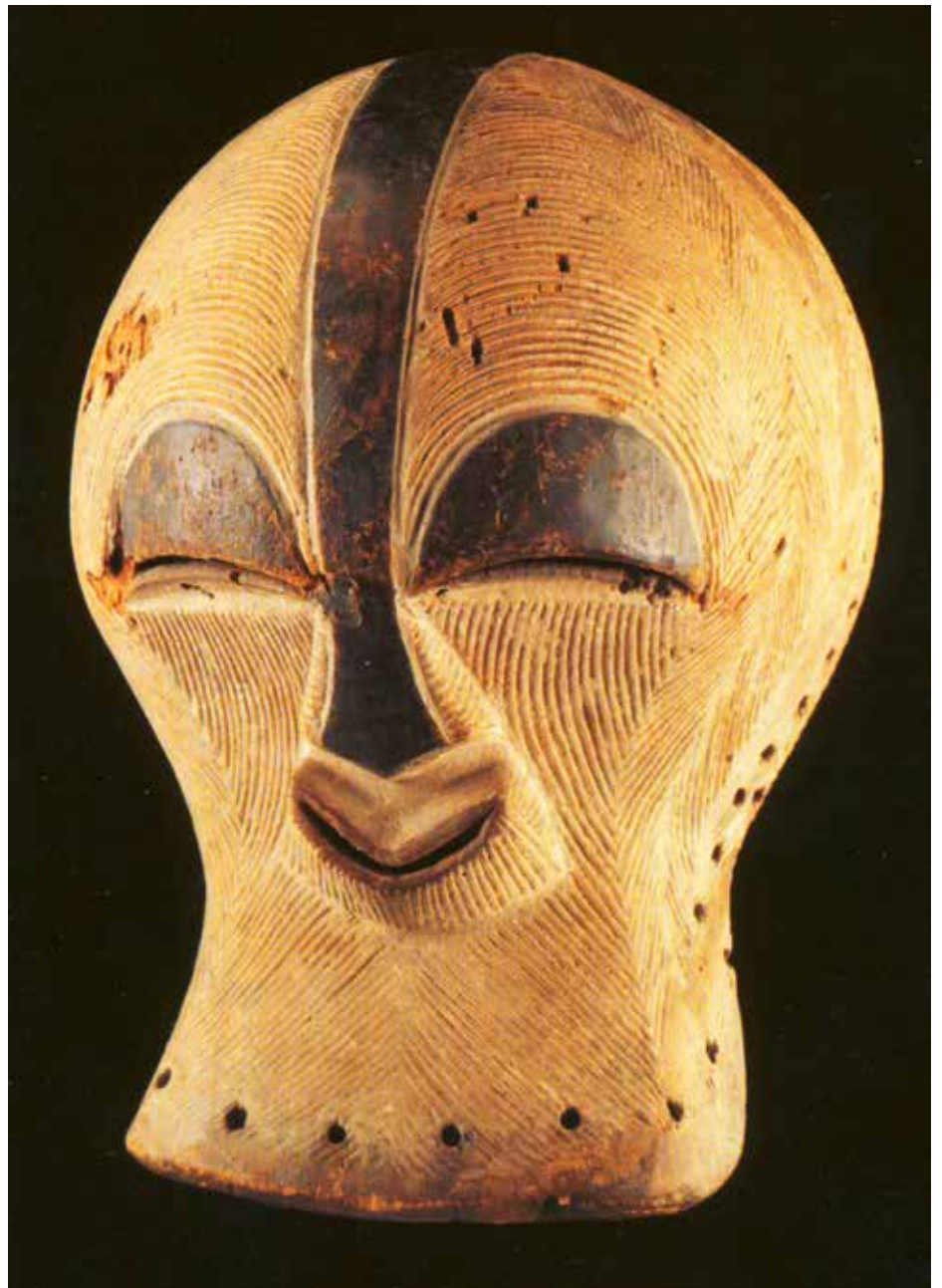
• **Publications :**

Toos van Kooten and Gerard van den Heuvel, ed., *Sculptuur uit Afrika en Oceanië*, Rijkmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterloo, 1990, p. 165, cat. 72
Oliver Wick and A. Denner, *Visual Encounters, Africa, Oceania, and Modern Art*, Fondation Beyeler, Bâle, 2009, Fasc. III, n° 34
Ana and Antonio Casanovas, *Adam. Ancient Masters from Africa, Pacific and America*, Madrid, 2014, fig. 62
Agnès Lacaille et Nico Gastmans, African art in Brussels as seen through the lens of Germaine Van Parys, in *Tribal Art*, N° 88 Summer 2018, p. 143



Photo by Germaine van Parys in 1931 of the African Art collection of Jeanne Walschot in Agnès Lacaille et Nico Gastmans, "Les arts africains à Bruxelles dans l'optique de Germaine Van Parys", in *Tribal Art*, N° 88, Summer 2018, p. 143, fig. 5

12



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 34 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Belgian administrator in Congo before 1930
Collection Baron Lambert, Bruxelles,
Christie's London, December 3, 1991, lot 109
Philippe Guimiot, Bruxelles
Collection B. de Grunne
Private Collection

• **Publications :**

Joseph Cornet, *L'Art d'Afrique noire au pays du fleuve Zaïre*, Arcade, Bruxelles, 1972, ill.136
Frank Herrreman et Constantijn Petridis, *Face of the Spirits, Masks from the Zaire Basin*,
Anvers, Snoeck, 1993, p.157, fig.75
Philippe Guimiot, *Regards sur une collection, Art et Objets Tribaux II*, Burxelles Guimiot
éditeur, 1995, plate 24

13

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 38 cm

- **Provenance :**

Collected by Joseph Van den Boogaerde between 1913-19
Paris, Charles H. Vignier, galerie Arts d'Asie, 1921
Philadelphia, Penn. Museum, AF 5115

- **Publications :**

Allen Wardwell, *African Sculpture*, 1986, p.123, fig.58
Constantijn Petridis, "Art from the Congo", in Yaëlle Biro
et alii, *African Art, New York, and the Avant-Garde*, Tribal
Art Magazine, Special Issue #3, 2013, p. 47, Fig. 42



Collection Joseph Van den Boogaerde, Enghien-les-Bains, 1913. Archive Bernard de Grunne



14

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 35.5 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collection Joseph O'Leary, (1911-1993,) U.S.A.
Private Collection, U.S.A. (Christie's Paris, June 19, 2014,
lot 200)
Didier Claes, Bruxelles
Collection Sindika Dokolo, London

• **Publications :**

Didier Claes, *XXVII^e Biennale des Antiquaires*, catalogue
d'exposition, Paris, 2014, p.54
Sindika Dokola & Kendell Geers, *incarNation. African Art
as Philosophy*, Bozar/Silvana Editoriale, 2019, p.118





15

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 38 cm

• **Provenance :**

Gift of Mrs. Webster Plass, London, 1947
Paris, Musée de l'Homme, inv. n° MH 479153
Paris, Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac,
inv. n° 71.1947.91.53

• **Publications :**

Francine Ndiaye, *Magische maskers, Afrikaanse maskers uit het Musée de l'Homme*, Snoeck, 1996, p. 159, fig. 100
Yves Le Fur, *Masques. Chefs d'œuvre des collections du musée du quai Branly*, Paris, 2008, p. 101



16

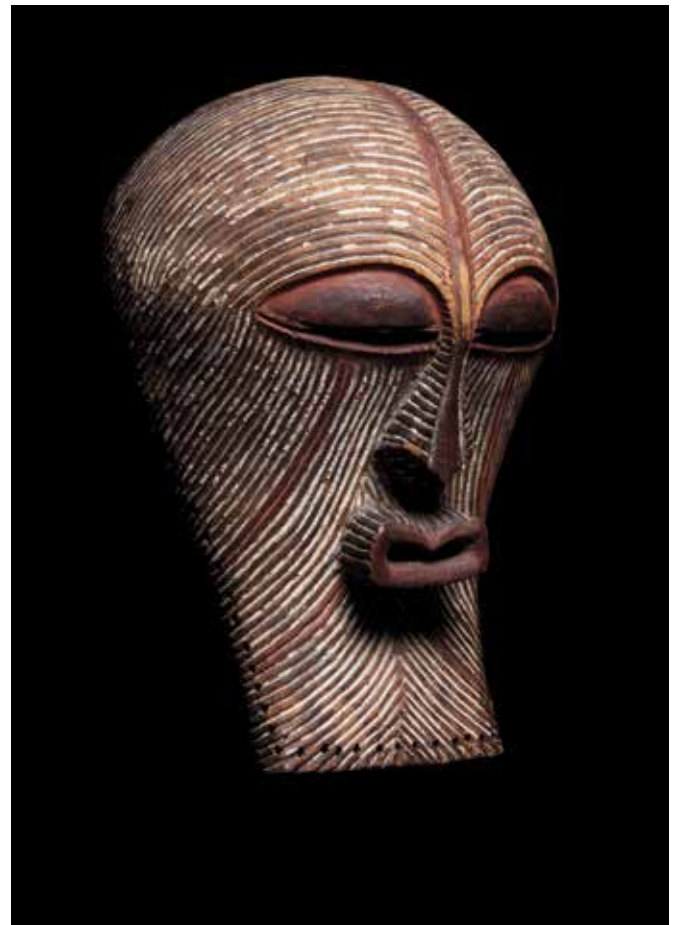
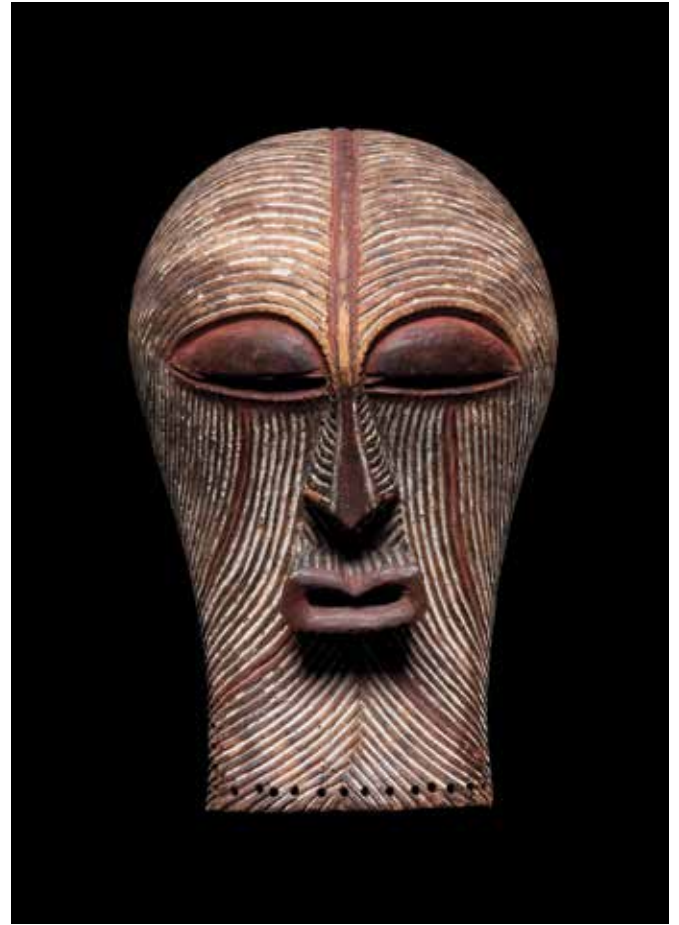
Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 56 cm

• **Provenance :**

Marcel Dumoulin Galerie Dumoulin & Meulemans ou
Galerie Zodiaque inv. n° 1220 in white paint below mouth
Christian Duponcheel, Pietrebais, circa 1980
Jack Naiman, New York
Pace Primitive, New York
Collection Hiroshi Ogawa, Gallery Kan Kan, Tokyo
Private Collection

• **Publications :**

Kerchache, J. et al, *Art of Africa*, Paris, 1989, Couverture
intérieure, n°5
W.Rubin ed., *'Primitivism'and 20th Century Art*, Volume 1,
New York, 1984, p.343
Gallery Kan Kan Tokyo, Gallery Kan Kan,1990, cover and #42
Hiroshi Ogawa, *Power of Form, African Art in Japanese
Collections*, Tokyo, 1999, p. 115, n° 155
Christie's, *Art Africain, Collection d'un Amateur*, 4
décembre 2009, p.20, fig.140



17



Germaine Van Parys, vue de l'exposition, *mille objets nègres de la collection de mademoiselle Walfchot*, au Cercle artistique et Littéraire de Bruxelles, janvier 1934 © Germaine Van Parys - Germaine images

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 42 cm

• **Provenance :**

Jeanne Walschot, Bruxelles, avant 1933
Collection Jacques et Denise Schwob, Bruxelles inv. N° 149,
circa 1960
Private collection

• **Exposition :**

Bruxelles, Cercle artistique et littéraire du Théâtre Royal du Parc, *1.000 objets nègres de la collection de Mlle Walschot vous transportent dans le monde merveilleux des Noirs*, 23 décembre 1933-7 janvier 1934.

• **Publications :**

Carlo Severi et Bernard de Grunne, *Imaginary Ancestors*, New York, Almine Rech Gallery, 2017, p. 229
Agnès Lacaille et Nico Gastmans, « African Art in Brussels as seen through the lens of Germaine van Parys-Belgian Photojournalism Pioneer », in *Tribal Magazine*, Summer 2018, n° 88, p. 150, fig. 16





18

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 38 cm

• **Provenance :**

André Lefèvre, Paris, vers 1920 inv. n° painted in white
353 & 2541

Harold Rome, New York (Sotheby's London June 21,
1979, lot 141)

Collection Wally & Udo Horstmann, Zug

• **Publications :**

Henri Clouzot et André Level, « L'art du Congo belge » in
Art et Décoration, Paris, Novembre 1921 :8, #15

Henri Clouzot et André Level, *Sculptures Africaines et
Océaniques*, Paris, Devambez, 1925, plate XXXI

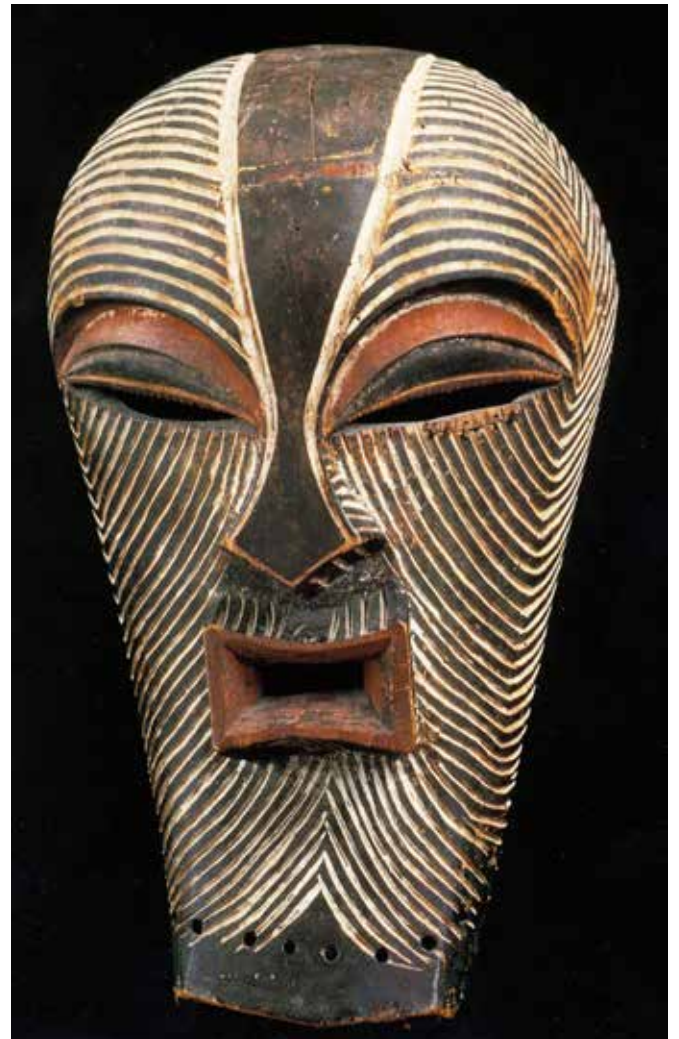
René Huyghe et alii, *Ouverture sur l'art Africain*, Paris,
Musée des arts décoratifs, 1986, p. 48, cat. 38

Bernard de Grunne et Robert Faris Thompson,
Rediscovered Masterpieces of African Art, Edition Art 135,
1987, p. 183, #152

Susan Vogel et Jerry Thompson, *Closeup. Lessons in the
art of seeing African Sculpture*, New York, The Center for
African Art, 1990, p. 140, # 22

Ezio Bassani et alii, *The Power of Form, African Art from the
Horstmann Collection*, Milano, Skira, 2002, p.166, fig.67

Ezio Bassani, *Masters of African Art. Eighty-four Sculptures
from the Horstmann Collection*, Mendrisio, Museo d'arte,
2007, p. 99, cat. 93



19

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 40 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Leo Frobenius in 1906 from
Lupungu, Kalebwe
Hamburg, Museum Am Rothenbaum,
inv. N° 6340:06

• **Publication :**

Jurgen Zwernemann, *Hamburgisches
Museum für Völkerkunde*, Prestel-Verlag,
München 1984, plate 56, p.36



Leo Frobenius, circa 1930



20

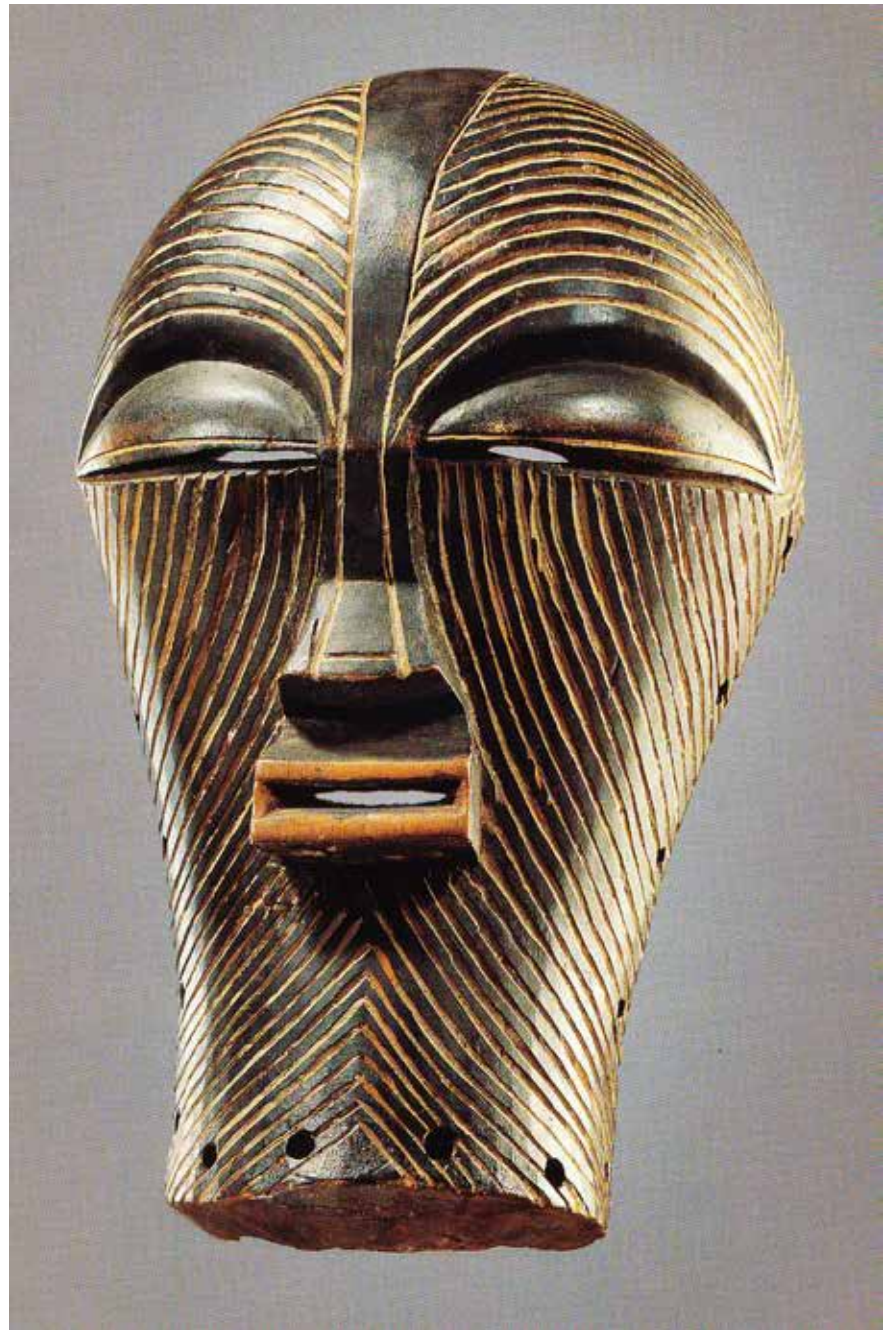
Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 33 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Leo Frobenius in 1906
among the Bena Mpassa
Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg in
1906, inv. n° 5761:06
Peter Loebarth, Hameln, 1975
Collection Walter Bareiss, circa 1978
Neumeister, Munich, *Sammlung/
Collection Walter Bareiss*, 13 november
2008, lot 1238

• **Publications :**

Hildegard Klein, ed., *Leo
Frobenius: Ethnographische Notizen aus
den Jahren 1905-un 1906*, vol. IV, Franz
Steiner publisher, Stuttgart, 1990, illus 301
Christopher D. Roy, *Kilengi, African Art
from the Bareiss Family Collection*, 1999, p.179, fig.102



Leo Frobenius, circa 1930

21

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 42 cm

• **Provenance :**

Carl Kjersmeier, Copenhague before 1935
Copenhagen, The National Museum of
Denmark, inv. N° G.8317

• **Publication :**

Carl Kjersmeier, *Centres de Style de la
Sculpture Nègre Africaine*, Editions Albert
Morancé, Paris, 1935, III^e volume. Congo
belge, plate 16



22

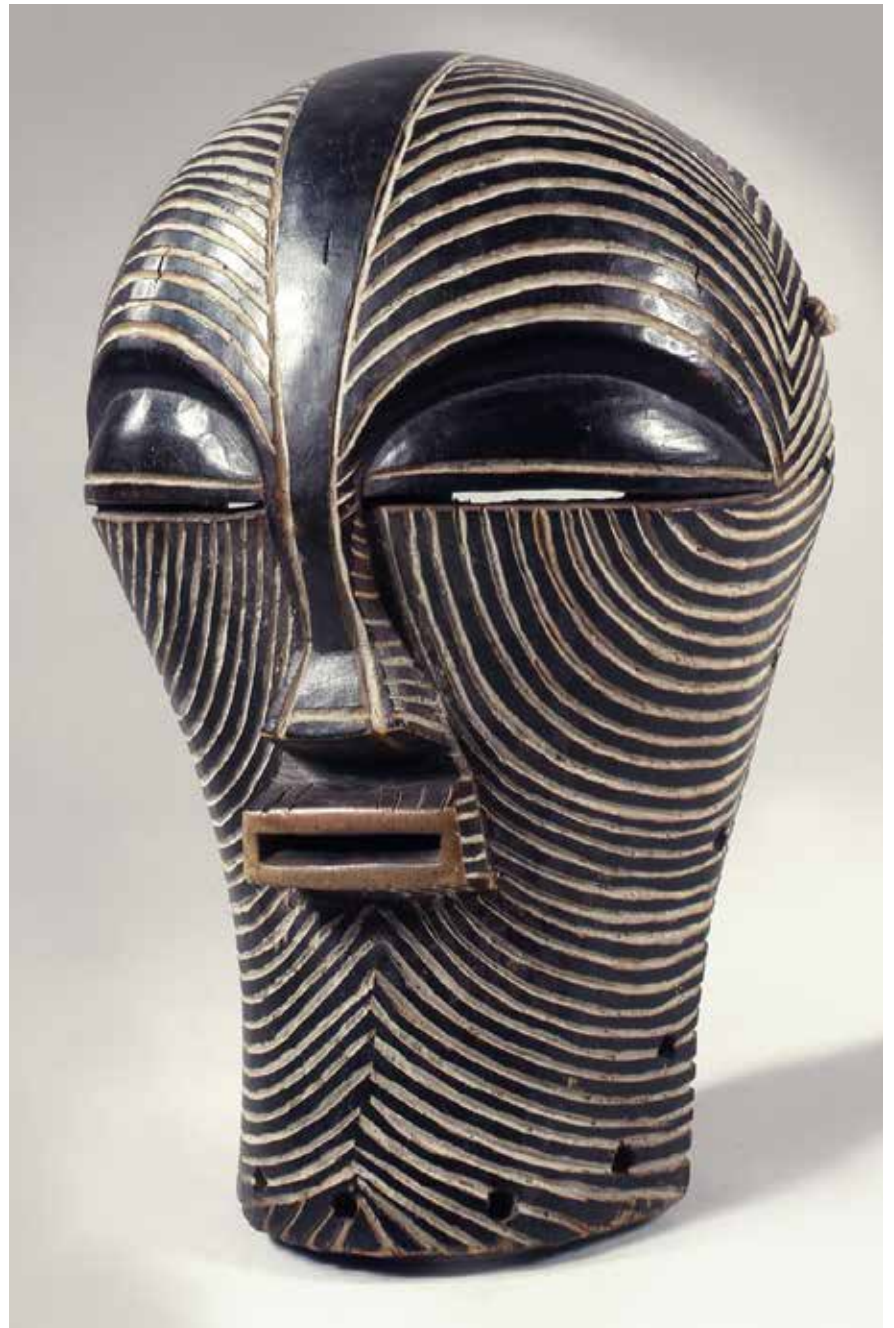
Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 31.5 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Eugen Hintz between 1910
and 1911
Dresden, Museum für Völkerkunde, 1925,
Inv. 41039

• **Publication :**

Iris Hahner-Herzog, *Afrika-Kult und
Visionen*, 1999, p.164, Fig.100



23

Songye Kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 38 cm

• **Provenance :**

Leo Frobenius, 1906
Hamburg, Museum für Völkerkunde
J.G. Umlauff, Hamburg, 1912
Philadelphia, Penn. Museum, inv. N° AF1881

• **Publication :**

The Museum journal, September 1919, Fig. 321



Leo Frobenius, circa 1930

24

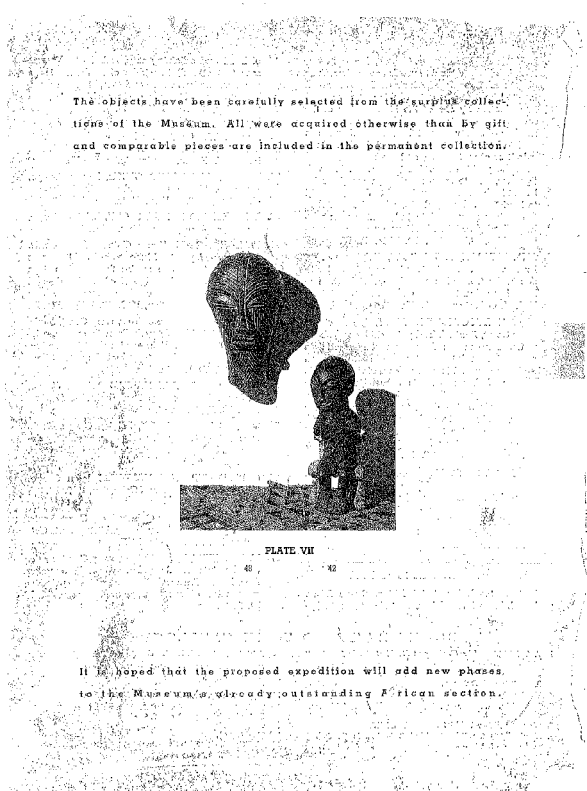
Songye Kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 34 cm

• **Provenance :**

Leo Frobenius, 1906
Hamburg, Museum Für Völkerkunde
Johann Friedrich Gustav Umlauff, Hamburg, 1912
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, (inv. AF/1399)
Sold to the Reading Public Museum in 1936
Bernard Dulon, Paris

• **Publications :**

Leo Frobenius, *Das Unbekannte Afrika*, Ockar Beck, München, 1923, tafel 155
Catalogue of a Collection of African Art to be sold at Auction, The Barclay Hotel,
Philadelphia April 16, 1936, Plate VIII, lot 48
Galerie Bernard Dulon, *XXVI^e Biennale des Antiquaires*, Paris, 2012, p. 7-8



Leo Frobenius, circa 1930



25

Songye kifwebe Mask, R.D.C.
Height : 37 cm

• **Provenance :**

Jeanne Walschot, Brussels, before 1933
Roger Vivier Collection, Toulouse, before
1978

Alain de Monbrison, Paris, 1978
Alain Schoffel, Paris
Private Collection(Christie's New York,
May 14th, 2019, lot 8)

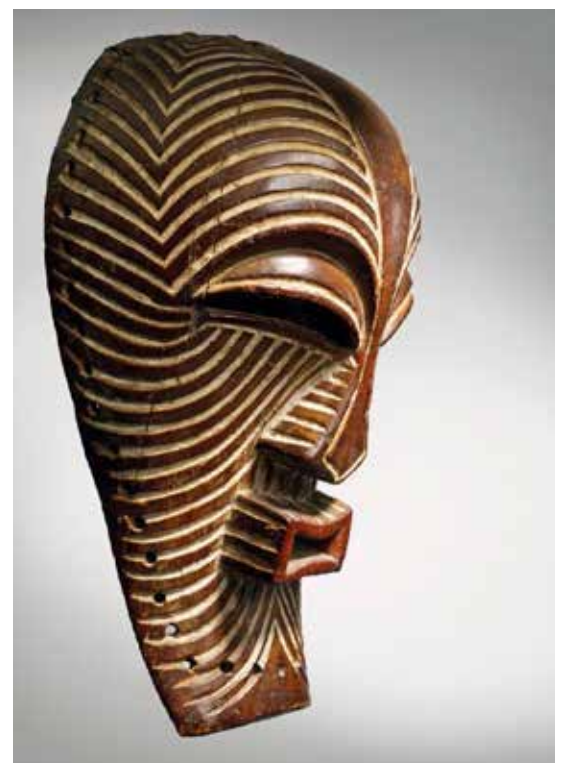
• **Publications :**

Bernard de Grunne & Robert Faris
Thompson, *Rediscovered Masterpieces
of African Art*, Art 135, G. Berjoneau &
J.L. Sonnery publishers, Boulogne, 1987,
cover & p. 182, cat. 151

Christiane Falgayrettes-Leveau et alii, *Masques*, Paris, Musée
Dapper, p. 113

Agnès Lacaille et Nico Gastemans, « African Art in Brussels as seen
through the lens of Germaine van Parys, » in *Tribal Magazine*, n° 88,
Summer 2018, p. 150, Fig. 16

Christine Valluet, *Regards visionnaires : Arts d'Afrique, d'Amérique,
d'Asie du Sud-Est et d'Océanie*, 5 Continents, Milan, 2018, p. 110



26

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 25.5 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Frobenius in 1905 among the Bena Mpassa
Hamburg, Am Rothenbaum Museum,
inv. N° 5762:06

• **Publication :**

Nadine de Meyere, « Le musée de
Hambourg », in *Arts d'Afrique Noire* 16,
hiver 1975, p.14



Leo Frobenius, circa 1930



27

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 25 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Leo Frobenius in 1906 among the Kalebwe
Hamburg, Am Rothenbaum Museum, inv. N° 6339:06
Lost during the WWII

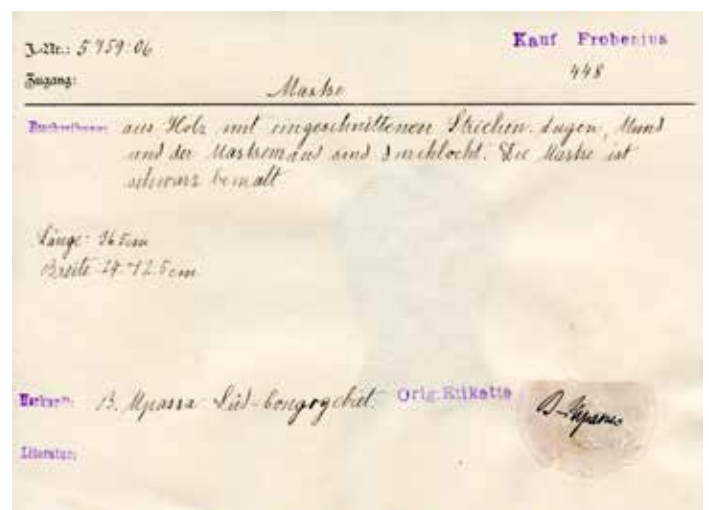


28

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 36.5 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by L Frobenius in 1906 among the Bena
Mpassa
Hamburg, Am Rothenbaum Museum, inv. N° 5759:06
Lost during the WWII

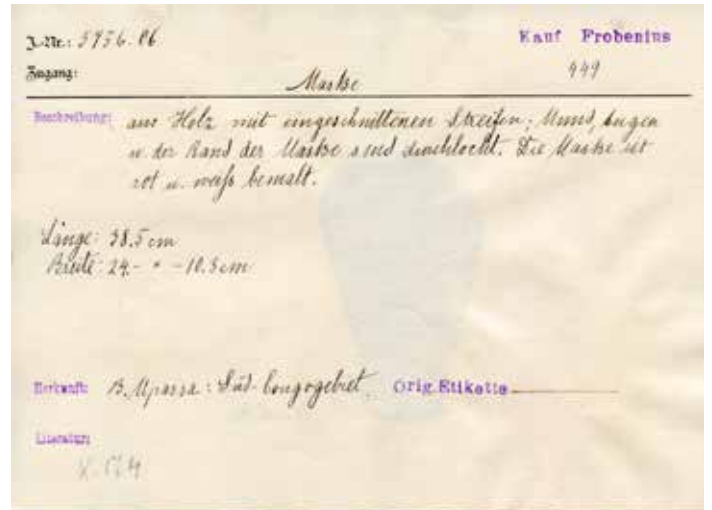


29

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 38.5 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Frobenius in 1906 from the Bena Mpassa
Hamburg, Am Rothenbaum Museum, inv. N° 5756:06
Lost during the WWII

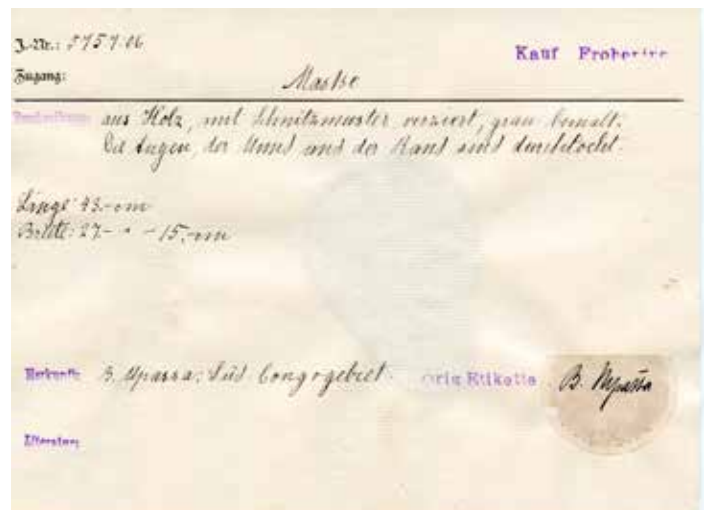
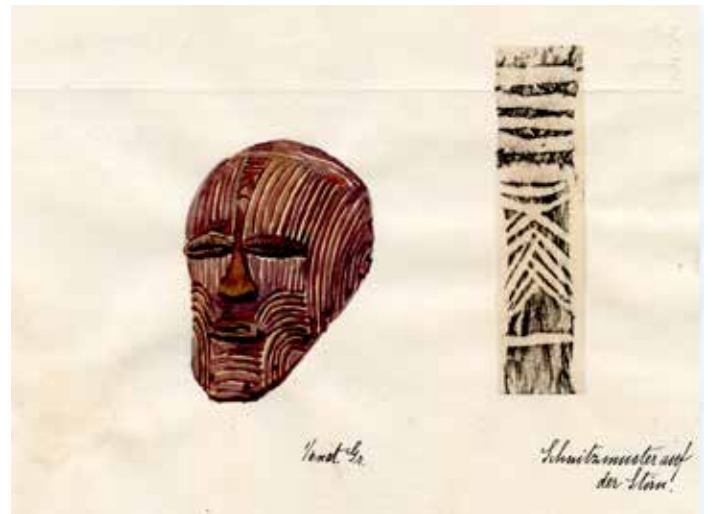


30

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 43 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Frobenius in 1906 among the Bena Mpassa
Hamburg, Am Rothenbaum Museum, inv. N° 5757:06
Lost during the WWII



31

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 43.5 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collection Alex van Opstal before 1936, n° inventaire 934

• **Exposition :**

Exposition Universelle et Internationale de Bruxelles 1958.
Section du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi ; Groupe 2/3
Les Arts et leurs moyens d'expression ; Art Traditionnel,
cat. N° 311





32

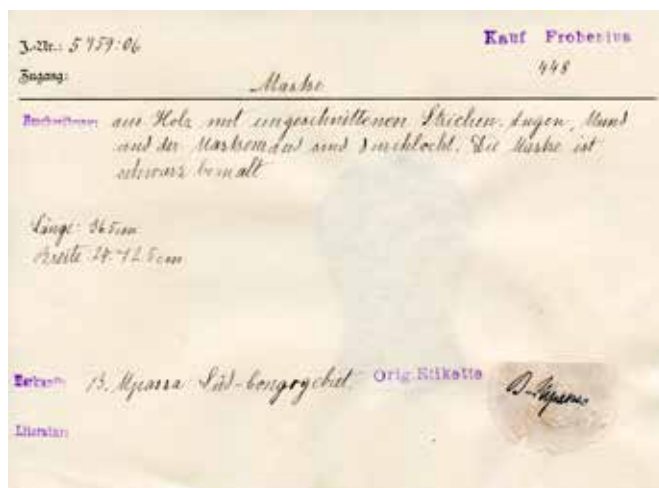
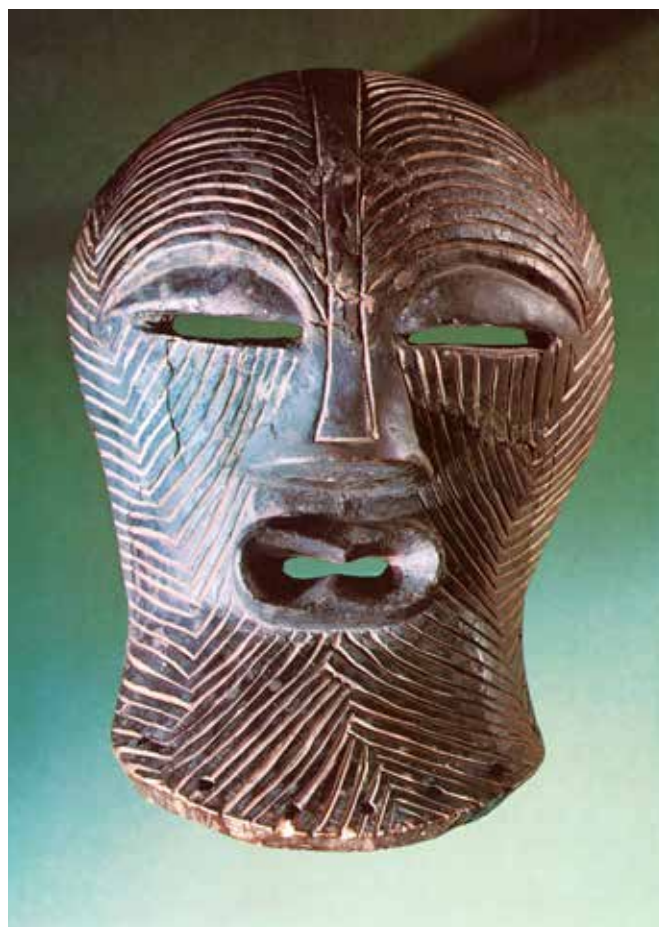
Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 35 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Frobenius ?
Possibly Hamburg Museum für Völkerkunde inv.
n° 5759_06?
By exchange with the Ethnographic Museums of Hamburg
or Leipzig
St Petersburg, Museum for Anthropology and
Ethnography MAE N° 1647-100

• **Publications :**

Dimitri Olderogge, *L'art des peuples de l'Afrique
occidentale*, T. 1
Dimitri Olderogge et G. Tchernova, *Art of Tropical Africa*,
Moscow, undated 1968, plate 130
T. Ganiushkina, R. Razumovskaya and I. Shavrina,
Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Leningrad,
Aurora Art Publishers, 1973, plate 40



Leo Frobenius, circa 1930

33

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.

• **Provenance :**

Leo Frobenius, 1906 ?

Volkermuseum ? Hamburg

J.G. Umlauff, Hamburg, 1909

Leipzig, Museum für Völkerkunde, 1910 inv. N° Maf.17692

• **Publication :**

Ernst Fuhrmann, *Afrika*, 1922, fig.90



Leo Frobenius, circa 1930

34

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 38.1 cm

• **Provenance :**

Maurice de Vlaminck, Paris, before
1937(Hôtel Drouot, *Tableaux Modernes.
Sculptures Africaines et Océaniennes.
Collection de M. Maurice De Vlaminck*, Paris,
July 1st, 1937, lot 46)
JayC. Leff, Uniontown, 1959-1975
Collection Lawrence Gussman, New
York
Jerusalem, The Israel Museum, Gift to
American Friends of The Israel Museum in
memory of Rosaline Gussman, B97.0015

• **Publications :**

Jay Leff and Gordon B. Washburn, *Exotic Art. Collection Jay Leff*, Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute, 1959,
cat. 372
Christa Clarke, *A Personal Journey Central African Art from the Lawrence Gussman Collection*,
Purchase, Neuberger Museum of Art, 2001, p.129, cat.61
Douglas Newton, *African and Oceanic Art in Jerusalem. The Israel Museum Collection*, 2001



35



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 30.8 cm

• **Provenance :**

Edgar Beer, Brussels, before 1954
Tervuren, Africa Museum inv. N° EO.0.0.54.110.7

• **Publication:**

Alan P. Merriam, "Kifwebe and other Masked and Unmasked Societies among the Basongye",
in *Africa Tervuren*, 1978, XXIV, 3, p. 67 Fig. 17

36

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 33 cm

• **Provenance :**

Dr Felix Lauwers, Antwerp
Hélène Leloup, Paris
Galerie Hendrikus Simonis, Düsseldorf
Didier Claes, Bruxelles
Private Collection, Brussels





37

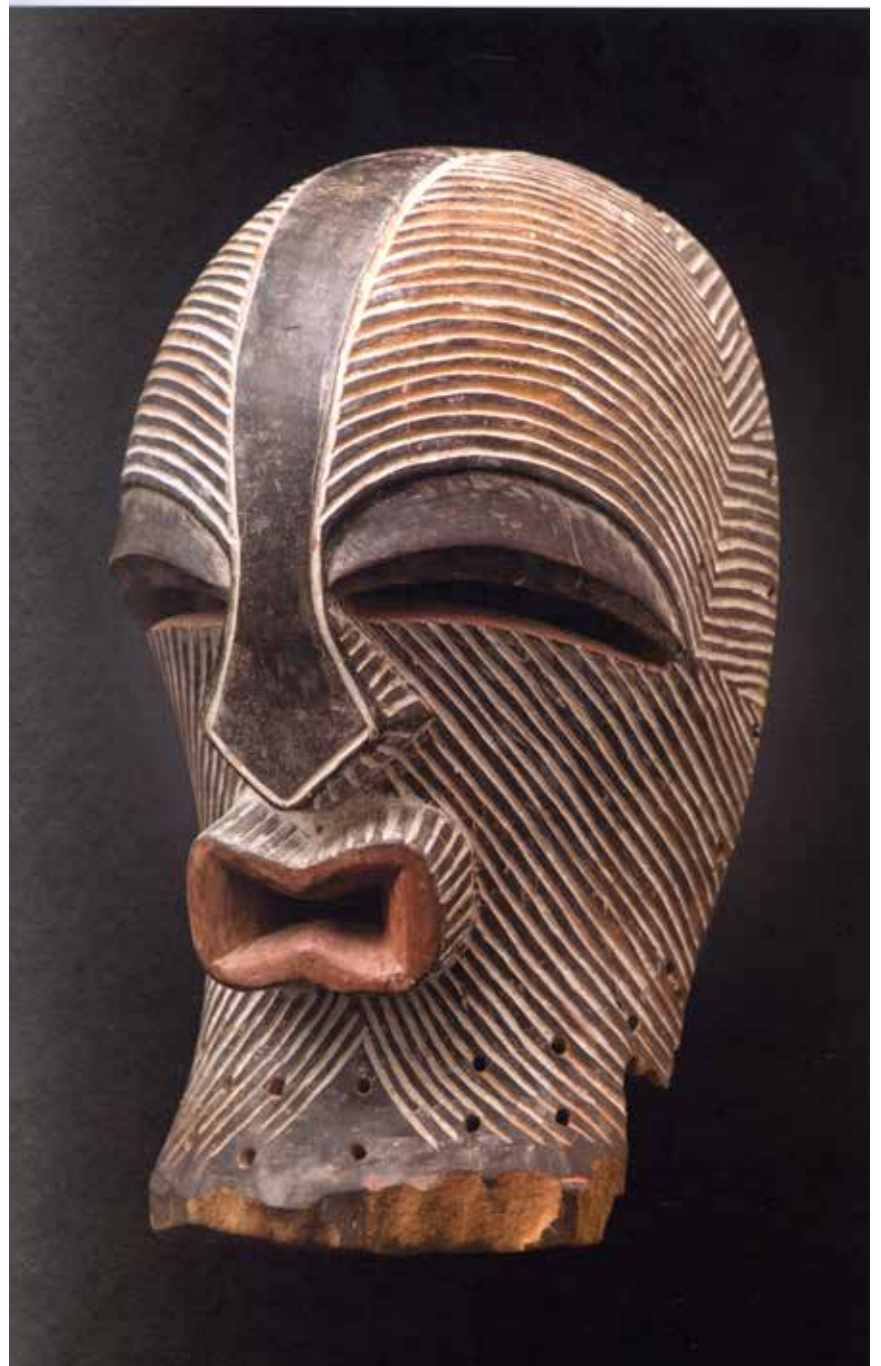
Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 45 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collection Emmett H. and Dorothy Joy
Heitler, (1909-2005) Denver
Didier Claes, Brussels
Collection Aura

• **Publication :**

Paul Matharan ed. *Arts d'Afrique . Voir
l'invisible*, Musée d'Aquitaine, Bordeaux,
2011, p. 55, cat. 29



38

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 42 cm

• **Provenance :**

Helmut Gernsheim, London
Georges Keller, Paris
Paolo Morigi, Lugano, 1980
Rudolph et Léonore Blum, Zumikon, 1994
Private Collection (Christie's Paris, June
19, 2014, lot 50)

• **Publication :**

Paolo Morigi, *Arte Primitiva*, Bern, 1980,
p. 355



39

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 63 cm

• Provenance :

Henri Pareyn, Antwerpen ?
Bela Hein, 1928? -1933
Sydney Burney, Londres, 1935-1950?
Collection Roland Penrose, Londres, 1958- ?
Morris Pinto, Paris, Geneva, 1969
Private Collection

• Publications :

Valentin Marquetty, *Exposition d'art africain et d'art océanien*, Paris, galerie du théâtre Pigalle, 1930, p. 19 cat. 239
Charles Ratton, *Masques africains*, Paris, A. Calavas, 1931, plate 22
James Johnson Sweeney, *African Negro Art*, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1935, fig.452
Eliot Elisofon and William Fagg, *The Sculpture of Africa*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1958, p. 237, plate 302
William Rubin, ed. , *Primitivism in 20th Century Art. Affinities of the Tribal and the Modern*, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1984, p. 16
Charles-Wesley Hourdé et Nicolas Rolland, *Galerie Pigalle. Afrique Océanie*, Paris, 2018, p. 260, cat. 239



Installation of International Surrealist Exhibition, London, 1936
Wendy A. Grossman, *Man Ray, African Art, and the Modernist Lens*, International Arts & Artists, Washington,DC., 2009, p.106, Fig. 5.5



Roland Penrose, Untitled (Paul Eluard and Elt Mesens wearing African and Oceanic masks from Roland Penrose's collection, 1936)
Wendy A. Grossman, *Man Ray, African Art, and the Modernist Lens*, International Arts & Artists, Washington,DC., 2009, p.107, Ill.83

40

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 55.6 cm

• **Provenance :**

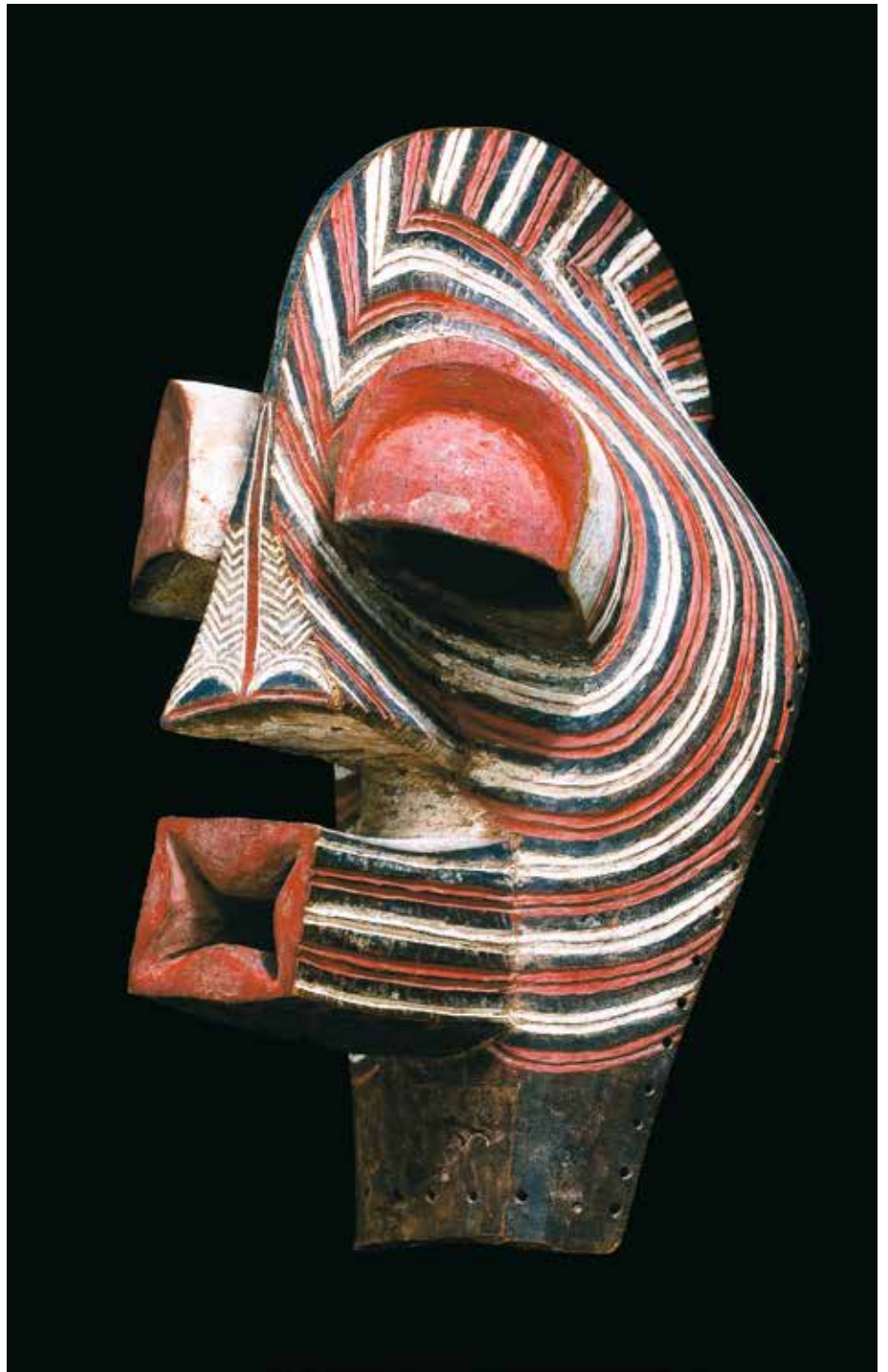
Collected by William Fredrick Padwick Burton around
Katompe before 1928
Africa Museum Tervuren, inv. n° EO.0.0.30621

• **Publications :**

Albert Maesen *Umbangu. Art du Congo au Musée Royal du Congo Belge*, Cultura, Bruxelles, 1960, plate 33
Franco Monti, *Les Arts primitifs. Chefs d'œuvres de l'Afrique noire*, N° 87, Hachette, Paris, p. 1396
Michel Leiris et Jacqueline Delange, *Afrique noire. La création plastique*, Paris Gallimard, 1967
Margaret Trowell et Hans Nevermann *African and Oceanic Art*, New York, Abrams, 1968, p. 55
Frank Willett, *African Art*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1971, p. 157, # 147
Alan P; Merriam, "Kifwebe and other Masked and Unmasked Societies among the Basongye," in *Africa-Tervuren*, XXIV, 1978-3, p. 71, Fig. 22
Jacques Kerchache et alii, *Art d'Afrique*, Paris Mazenod Citadelles, 1988, p. 311, #206
Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and figure sculpture*, 1985, fig.50



41



Songye kifwebe Mask, R.D.C.
Height : 57 cm

• **Provenance :**

Eduard von der Heydt, Ascona, 1938-1952
Zurich, Rietberg Museum, inv. N° RAC 302

• **Publications :**

René Wassing, *African art. Its background and Traditions*, Fribourg, Office du livre, 1969, p. 35, plate 4
Elsy Leuzinger, *Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika*, Kunsthaus, Zurich, 1970, p. 297, V1
Oliver Wick and Antje Denner, *Bildgewaltig. Afrika. Ozeanien und die Moderne*, Basel, Fondation Beyeler, 2009, Fasc. II, n° 33
Nanina Guyer and Michaela Oberhofer, *Congo as Fiction*, Museum Rietberg, Zürich, 2020, p. 214, Fig. 290

42

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 68 cm

• **Provenance :**

London The Wellcome Institute Collection N° 242960- R
14584/1936, before 1936
London, The British Museum inv. N° Af1954, +23,112

• **Publications :**

Dunja Hersak, *Songye. Mask and Figure Sculpture*, London
Ethnographica, 1985, plate 59, p. 105



43

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 70 cm

• **Provenance :**

Purchased from Rev. R.C. Thomas, Hampstead,
November 1928
London, The Wellcome Institute on the History
of Medicine, inv. n° 30573/75811/9777
London, The British Museum, 1954, inv.
n° Af1954, +23 2893



44

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 46.8 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by W.F. P. Burton before 1928
Africa Museum, Tervuren, n° EO.0.0.30619

• **Publications :**

Alan P. Merriam, "Kifwebe and other Masked and Unmasked Societies among the Basongye," in *Africa-Tervuren*, XXIV, 1978-3, p. 72, Fig. 24
Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and Figure Sculpture*, London, Ethnographica, 1986, p.90, fig.47



45

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 54.2 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by W. F. P. Burton before 1928
Africa Museum, Tervuren, n° EO.0.0.30620

• **Publications :**

Alan P. Merriam, "Kifwebe and other Masked and Unmasked Societies among the Basongye" in *Africa-Tervuren*, XXIV, 1978-3, p. 66, Fig. 16
Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and figure sculpture*, London, Ethnographica, 1986, fig.48



46

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 45.4 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Hans Himmelheber in 1938
Mrs Webster Plass, London
London, The British Museum, 1949, inv.
n° Af1949, 32 23

• **Publication :**

Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and Figure Sculpture*, London, Ethnographica, 1986, p. 97,
plate 49



47



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 58 cm

• Provenance :

Collected by Hans Himmelheber in 1938-39
Hans Himmelhebr Collection, 1940-2004
Barbara & Eberhard Fischer, 2004-2013
Zurich, The Rietberg Museum inv. N° H.H.23

48



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 50 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Paul Timmermans, Luluabourg in 1959,
inv. N° L 59.217
Private Collection, Belgium

• **Publication :**

C. Falgarayttes-Leveau, *Arts d'Afrique*, musée Dapper/
Gallimard, Paris, 2000, p. 310.



Paul Timmermans in his private museum in Luluabourg in 1963.

49



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 62 cm

• **Provenance :**

Marcel Demunter, Bruxelles
Willy Mestach, Brussels, 1970
Private Collection

• **Publication :**

Raoul Lehuard, "La collection Mestach," in *Arts d'Afrique noire*, N° 4, 1972, p. 10
Luc de Heusch et alii, *Utotombo. L'art d'Afrique noire dans les collections privées belges*, Bruxelles, Palais des Beaux Art, 1988, p. 228, cat. 212
Frank Herreman and Constantijn Petridis, *Faces of the Spirits, Masks from the Zaire Basin*, Antwerpen, , 1993, cat 71, p. 151
Jean-Willy Mestach and Marc Felix, *Mestach l'Africain*, Bruxelles, 2007, p. 155, cat. 050

50

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 48 cm

• **Provenance :**

Merton Simpson, New York, circa 1978
Jean-Willy Mestach, Bruxelles, before 1981
Collection Felix inv. n° FX13038

• **Publications :**

François Neyt, *Arts traditionnels et histoire au Zaïre*, Bruxelles, 1981, p. 145, fig. VII/11
Willy Mestach, *L'intelligence des formes*, Bruxelles, 2007, p. 153, cat. 049
Manuel Jordan, *Congo. Masks and Music*, Denver, Musical Instrument Museum, 2019, cover



51

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 42 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Karel Plasmans, between 1955 and 1972
Guillaume Vranken-Hoet, Dilbeek
Collection Calmeyn, Belgium

• **Publication :**

Frank Herreman, *Faces of the Spirits. Masks from the Zaire Basin*, Antwerp 1993, p. 69, fig. 24
Alain Matharan, *Arts d'Afrique. Voir l'Invisible*, Bordeaux, Musée d'Aquitaine, 2011, p. 18, cat. N° 30
Anne Vanderstraete, *L'art de la collection. Jan Calmeyn, un artiste envouté*, Paris, Galerie Bernard Dulon, 2019, p. 18, cat. 31



52



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 39.5 cm

• Provenance :

Collected by Hans Himmelheber in 1938/39
The Weyhe Gallery, New York, 1940
Mrs. George W. Crawford, New York
Collection Russel. B. Aitken, New York (Christie's, *The Russel B. Aitken Collection of African, American Indian and Oceanic Art*, April 2003, lot.94)
Groupe 2 Van Hevel, Brussels
Private Collection

• Publication :

Catalogue Bruneaf , XVII, Bruxelles, 2007, p. 67

53

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 42 cm

• **Provenance :**

Don de Madame G. Van de Velde, 1928
Africa Museum, Tervuren, n°
EO.0.0.30500

• **Publication :**

Martin Friedman et alii, *Art of the
Congo*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis,
1967, cover and cat. 22.9
Gustave Versijver et alii, *Trésors
d'Afrique*, Musée Royal d'Afrique
Centrale, Tervuren, ; 1995, p.184, fig.151



54



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 53.9 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected in village of Combelya, south of Kabinda by
Dr. F. Hautmann
Africa Museum, Tervuren, inv. N° EO.0.0.1951.35.4

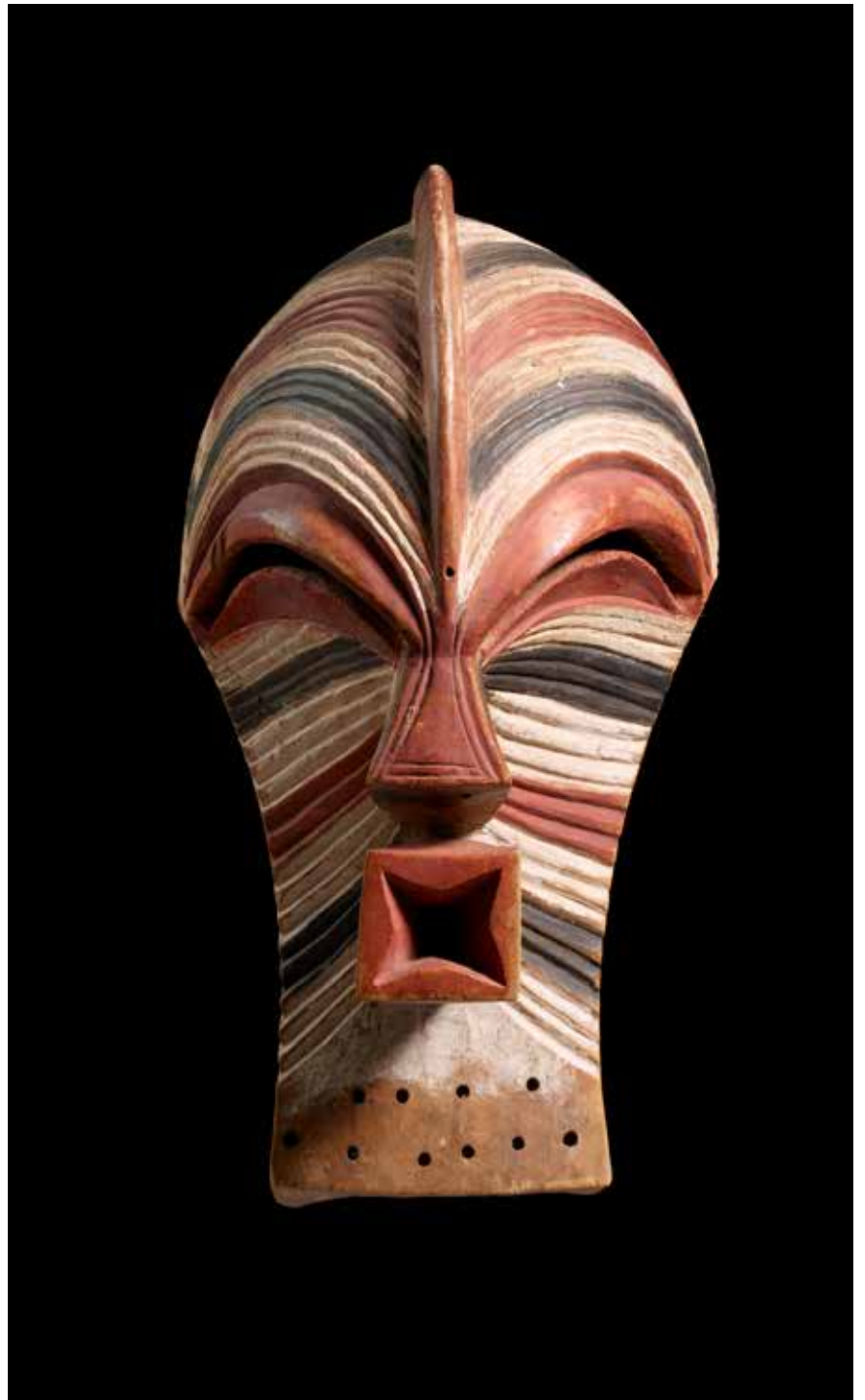
• **Publications :**

Alan P. Merriam, "Kifwebe and other Masked and Unmasked Societies among the Basongye", in
Africa Tervuren, 1978, XXIV, 3, p. 58 Fig. 2
Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and Figure Sculpture*, London Ethnographica, 1986, p. 100, plate 51
Tervuren, *Fetish Moderrnity. Esprit des temps*. Africa Museum, 2011

.....

55

.....



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 43 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Hans Himmelheber in 1938-39
Hans Himmelhebr Collection, 1940-1994
Barbara & Eberhard Fischer, 1994-2013
The Rietberg Museum inv. N° H.H.24

• **Publication :**

Hans Himmelheber, *Negerkunst und Negerkünstler*, Klinkhart & Bierman, Braunschweig, 1960, plate XVI
Nanina Guyer and Michaela Oberhofer, *Congo as Fiction*, Museum Rietberg, Zürich, 2020, p. 213,
fig. 289.1 & 2

56



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 48 cm

• **Provenance :**

Former Convent of the Ursulines, Liège, vers 1965/70
René VanderStraete, Lasne
Private collection

• **Publications :**

J. Cornet, *Art d'Afrique noire*, Arcade, Bruxelles, 1972, planche 135
Christiane Falgayrettes-Leveau et alii, *Mascarades et carnivals*, Paris,
Musée Dapper, 2011, p. 149



57

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 35 cm

• **Provenance :**

Private Collection (Sotheby's Londres, 9 avril 1984, lot 148)
Mrs. Rita Prouvost, Knokke
Didier Claes, Bruxelles
Private collection, Brussels
Collection Aura

• **Publication :**

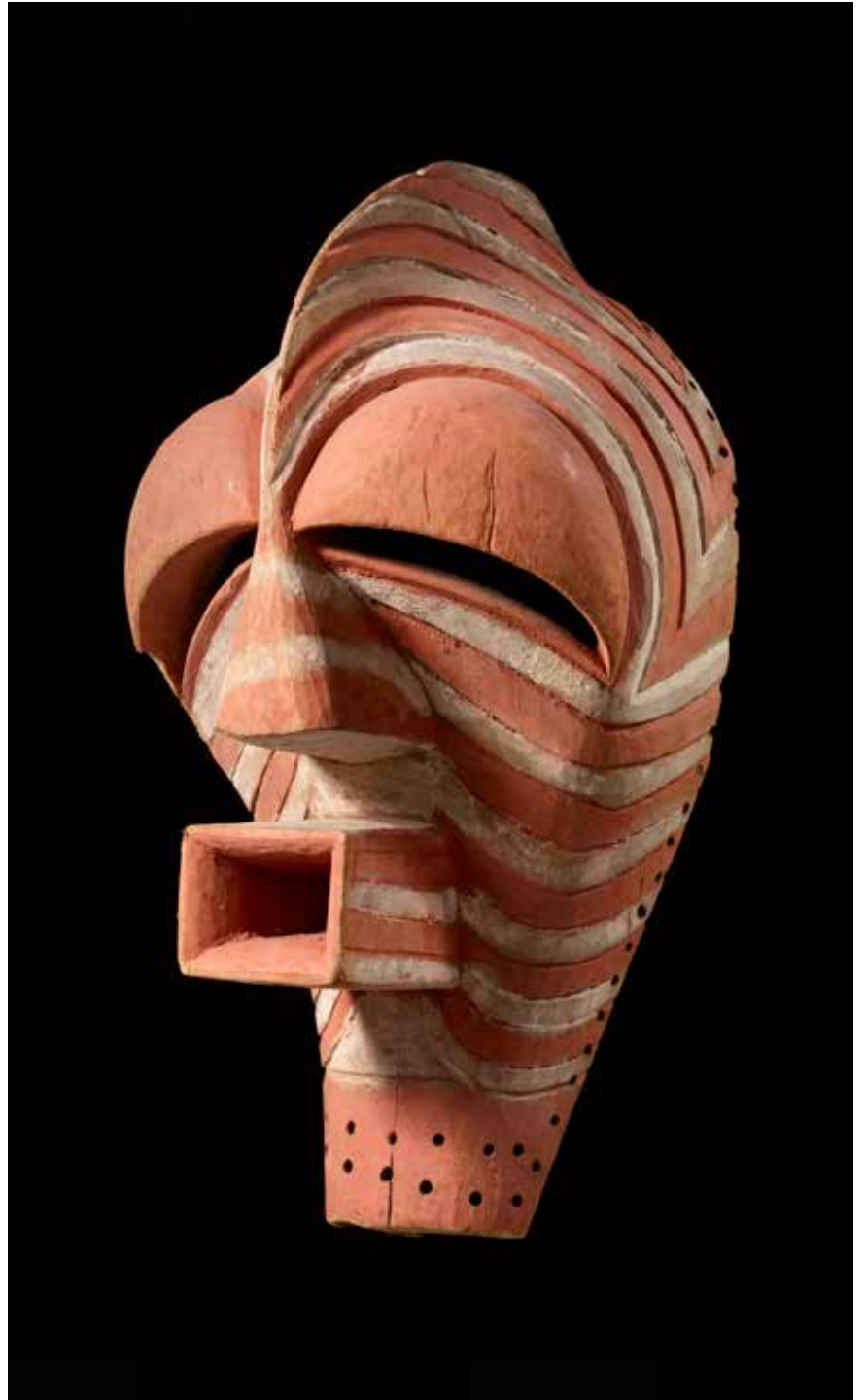
L'Illustration Congolaise, # 149 Février 1934 field photo par
R.P. Julius Teernstra
Anne-Marie Bouttiaux, *Persona. Masques d'Afrique*, Africa
Museum Tervuren, 5 Continents, 2009, p. 168-9
Paul Matharan et alii, *Arts d'Afrique. Voir l'Invisible*,
Bordeaux, Muse d'Aquitaine, 2011, p. 54, Cat. 28



Photo R.P. Julius Teernstra 1934



58



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 45.5 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Hans Himmelheber in 1938-39
Hans Himmelheber Collection, 1940-2003
Barbara & Eberhard Fischer, 2004-2013
Zürich, The Rietberg Museum inv. N° H.H.25

• **Publication :**

Nanina Guyer and Michaela Oberhofer, *Congo as Fiction*, Museum Rietberg, Zürich, 2020, p. 212, fig. 288

59



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 38 cm

• **Provenance :**

William Ockerford Oldman, London
Donated by Mrs D.K.Oldman in 1949
London, The British Museum, London, inv. n° Af1949,46.502

• **Publication :**

Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and Figure Sculpture*, London, Ethnographica, 1986, p. 86, plate 43

60



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 40.3 cm

• **Provenance :**

Mrs. Margaret Webster Plass, London
London, The British Museum, inv. n° Af1956,27.274

• **Publication :**

Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and Figure Sculpture*, London, Ethnographica, 1986, p. 89, plate 46

61



Songye kifweb mask, R.D.C.
Height : 39.5 cm

• **Provenance :**

Mrs. Margaret Webster Plass, London
London, The British Museum, inv. n° Af1956,27.275

• **Publication :**

Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and Figure Sculpture*, London, Ethnographica, 1986, p. 88, plate 45

62

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 56 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Dr Edmond Muller, entre 1924-1936
Adrian Schlag, Brussels
Didier Claes, Brussels
Private Collection





63

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.

Height : 43.18 cm

• Provenance :

Private Collection, Brussels until 1930
S.S.White II & Vera White Collection (info Kamer)
Henri Kamer, Paris and New York, 1958
Nelson A. Rockefeller Collection, 1958-1978
The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, n°58.171
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. n° 1979.206.83

• Publications :

Margaret Plass, *A New Selection of Tribal Art. The African Image*, The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo Ohio, 1959, p. 31 n° 173
Robert Goldwater, *Traditional Art of the African Nations in the Museum of Primitive Art*, New York, The Museum of Primitive Art, 1961, #76
Franco Monti, *Les arts primitifs. Chef d'œuvres de l'Art*, N° 87 Paris, Hachette, 1964, 1369
Franco Monti, *Les maschere africane*, Milano, Fratelli Fabri editori, 1966
Franco Monti, *African Masks*, London Hamlyn, 1969, p. 126, #57
Masterpieces of Primitive Art, the Nelson A. Rockefeller Collection, New York 1978, p.83



64

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 44 cm

• **Provenance :**

Franco Monti, Milano
Johan Levy, Paris
Pierre Darteville, Bruxelles, 2000
Collection Dr. Guy Onghena, Sint Martins-Latem
Didier Claes, Bruxelles
Private Collection

• **Publication :**

Foire des Antiquaires de Belgique XLV, Bruxelles, 2000,
Pierre Darteville





65



Photo du masque Songye MRAC inv. EO.O.O.30593 par Hoofd village de Paye (Katombe, territoire de Kabalo) avant 1928, MRAC inv. N° 132655

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C. Height : 38cm

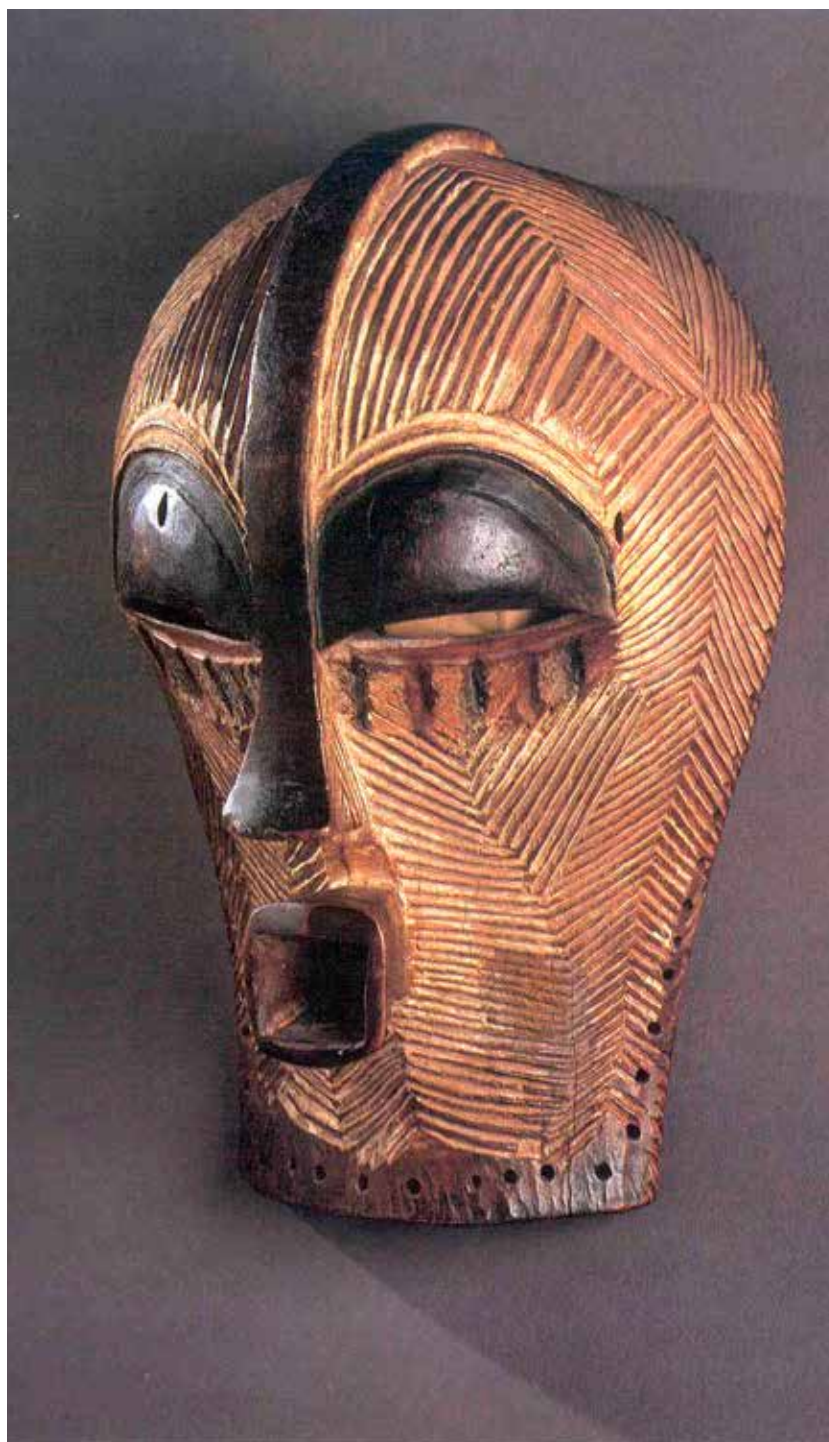
• Provenance :

Collected by colonial administrateur Hoofd in Kabalo before 1928
Africa Museum, Tervuren n° EO.0.0.30593

• Publications :

Alan P; Merriam, "Kifwebe and other Masked and Unmasked Societies among the Basongye," in *Africa-Tervuren*, XXIV, 1978-3, p. 70, Fig. 21
Gustave Verswijver et alii, *Treasures from the Africa-Museum*, Tervuren, 1995, p.184, fig.152

66



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 31.7 cm

• **Provenance :**

René Vanderstraete, Brussels, circa 1962, 1907 painted inside
Irwin Hersey, New York, 1965 (Tribal Art, *Sotheby's*, New York, Wednesday, May 20, 1987, n° 149)
Sheldon Solow Collection, New York

• **Publication :**

Warren Robbins, *African Art in American Collections*,
New York, Praeger, 1966, p. 217, illus. 310

67

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 37.4 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Hans Himmelheber in 1938
Collection Margaret Webster Plass, London, circa 1950
London, The Trustees of the British Museum,
Af1956,27.273

• **Publications :**

William Fagg, *The Webster Plass Collection of African Art*,
London British Museum, 1953, plate XLV, N° 156
Werner Schmalenbach, *Die Kunst Afrikas*, Basel, Verlag zu
IM Holbein, 1953, p. 121, n° 110
William Fagg, *Traditional African Sculpture*, UK: Arts
Council of Great Britain, Welsh Committee, Swansea;
Glyn Vivian Art Gallery, 1957, n° 57
Dunja Hersak, *Songye masks and figure sculpture*, London,
Ethnographica, 1986, p.111, plate 68





68



Songye, kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 40 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected by Mr. Khun, Missionary congregation, Strasbourg before 1940
By family descent, Colmar
Mr. Jacques Duhloste, Basel
Pierre Dartevelle, Brussels

• **Publication :**

Anne-Marie Bouttiaux et alii, *Africa. La figura imaginada*, Barcelona, 2004, p. 182, fig.16
Marc L. Felix, *Congo Mythical Masks*, Bruneaf Brussels, 2009, p.81.
Laurent Jacob, *Pierre Dartevelle. 50 years of Collecting Art of Congo*, Bruxelles, Lempertz, 2018, p. 78, cat. 46

69



Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.

Height : 35.5 cm

• **Provenance :**

Collected in Katombe, near Kongolo by René Vital Ghislain Wauthion in 1934
Tervuren, Africa Museum, EO.0.0.35652

• **Publications :**

Albert Maesen, *Arte del Congo*, Rome , Palazzo Venezia, 1959, cat. N° 249
Marin Friedman et alii, *Art of the Congo*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 1967, cat. 22.11
Alan P; Merriam, "Kifwebe and other Masked and Unmasked Societies among the Basongye, " in *Africa-Tervuren*, XXIV, 1978-3, p. 68, Fig. 18
Dunja Hersak, *Songye Masks and figure sculpture*, London, Ethnographica, 1986, p.110, fig.67
C. Falgayrettes-Leveau et alii, *Initiés. Bassin du Congo*, Paris, Musée Dapper, 2013, p. 140

70

Songye kifwebe mask, R.D.C.
Height : 40 cm

• **Provenance :**

Jo Christaens, Brugges, circa 1975
Willy Mestach, Brussels
Collection Felix inv. n° FX13 0037

• **Publications :**

Jean-Willy Mestach, *Etudes Songye. Formes et symbolique. Essai d'analyse*. Galerie Jahn, München, 1985, p. 19
Marc Leo Felix et Jean-Willy Mestach, *Mestach l'Africain*, Bruxelles, Bruneaf, 2007, p. 151, cat. 048





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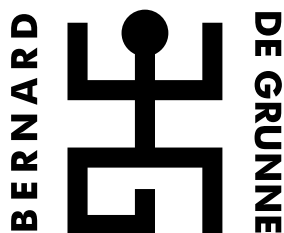
p.74 Photo R.P. Julius Teernstra 1934, Congregatie van de H. Geest

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