

# Egungun Costuming in Abeokuta

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In contemporary Yoruba society in southwestern Nigeria, the judicious use of clothing is recognized as a means of building individual, family, and social group prestige. Every important social event demands that participants wear proper clothing made from the proper fabrics. At a gathering such as a funeral weekend, which includes a church burial service, wake-keeping, and other social events, members of a wealthy Yoruba family are expected to appear in a series of traditionally styled garments. These clothes, fashioned from expensive brocades, laces and velvets, or *asho'fi*, the locally made narrow-loom cloth, are a visible expression of self and family affluence and pride.<sup>1</sup>

Recognition of the importance of cloth and clothing is also mirrored in surviving ritual practices associated

with the Yoruba indigenous religion. Sacrifices of cloth are often prescribed by the Ifa divination priests to petition or placate witches and deities (e.g., Bascom 1969), and special fabrics are worn as emblems of membership in religious cults, such as the Ogboni. Cloth also plays an important role in religious observances surrounding death. In a traditional funeral, the corpse is covered with layers of *asho'fi* by his children prior to burial (Lucas 1948:225-26; Parrinder 1953:43).<sup>2</sup> Fabric plays a role again in ceremonies a few days after the burial when a member of the *Egungun* ancestral cult appears impersonating the deceased man and wearing "cloths similar to those in which the deceased was known to have been buried" (Johnson 1921:29).

*Egungun* masqueraders do not appear only in the contexts of funerals. Dressed in enveloping costumes of cloth, members of the *Egungun* society represent the corporate spirit of the Yoruba dead and appear in a number of ritual and public contexts throughout the year. They appear individually at times of family and community rejoicing or crisis and as a group at annual festivals held in honor of community ancestors. Despite modernizing influences and religious change, *Egungun* masqueraders, as

physical manifestations of "Yoruba power," continue to appear in the teeming streets of modern Lagos, in the large indigenous centers of Ibadan, Oshogbo, Oyo, Ilorin, Ife, Owo, and Abeokuta, as well as in the villages and small rural hamlets throughout Yorubaland.<sup>3</sup>

In any particular locality, *Egungun* masqueraders come in many forms or generic types, which are emically labeled.<sup>4</sup> Generic type differences are displayed in the formal attributes of the carved crest mask (if present), the cut of the costume, the kind, color, and condition of the cloth used, iconographic details in additive elements such as embroidery and applique and in the accessories attached to or carried by the masquerader and his attendants. These visual clues of costuming allow the knowledgeable spectator to place a particular *Egungun* into a hierarchical category of generic types, predict its behavior, speculate on its past accomplishments, and even say something about the socio-economic status and personality of its owner.

*Egungun* costuming can be quite spectacular. The crest and platter masks associated with *Egungun* masquerading are displayed in art museums throughout the world. However, for the *Egungun* cult members, the masqueraders, and their Yoruba audiences, it is the flowing cloth shrouding the performer's body that receives more attention. *Ere*, the carved wooden masks, are commissioned when an *Egungun* costume is first assembled and are seldom replaced unless damaged. The cloth of the costume is more flexible. It may be changed, altered, or added to each year. As such, it is the major medium for individual aesthetic and iconographic expression in costuming. The fabrics also play an important ritual role, taking on a supernatural aura with use in costumes. The cloth is a way of tying the *Egungun* spirit, also known as *ara orun* (citizen of heaven), to the cultural world of the living by enclosing it in a man-made cage of fabric. The *Egungun*



1. EGUNGUN ODE LAABO MASQUERADER  
ITOKO TOWNSHIP, ABEOKUTA, 1973

2. EGUNGUN ODE CREST MASK WITH DISTINCTIVE  
ODE HEADRESS, NIGERIAN MUSEUM





costume, in its many forms, as Babatunde Lawal concludes, "conceals the unknowable and yet reveals man's infinite potential for spiritual transformation" (1977:59).

A number of excellent articles and monographs have dealt with the complex symbolism of *Egungun* ritual and costuming and the regional variations that occur.<sup>5</sup> Less attention has been paid to the way in which *Egungun* costuming is used, in a similar fashion to secular dress, as a means of enhancing individual and group prestige in contemporary Yoruba society. Drawing upon data collected in the context of an *Egungun* festival I observed in Itoko township in the Egba Yoruba city of Abeokuta in 1973,<sup>6</sup> I will show how costuming signals the identity of two popular emic types of masqueraders and simultaneously allows the owner of a costume to make idiosyncratic statements of self- and family aggrandizement.

Abeokuta was founded by politically diversified Yoruba groups who came together for mutual protection in an area of rocky hills in southwestern Nigeria during the Yoruba wars of the early 19th century (Biobaku 1957). First, a confederation of small hamlets settled by survivors of five Yoruba kingdoms displaced during this period put down roots in the vicinity of Olumo Rock. Later population growth transformed the clustered settlements into a walled city divided into townships according to the origins of the refugee settlers. Abeokuta became an important military, trade, and religious center in the later 19th century. Christianity was introduced early in its history, and Islam was an additional alternative by the end of the 19th century.

Despite a continuing decline in the worship of the indigenous deities in Abeokuta because of a century of Christian and Islamic influences, the annual *Egungun* festivals remain important social and ritual events. Week-long festivals are held sequentially each spring in the different townships of the city. Family members return home to their lineage compounds, and sacrifices and rituals to honor the ancestors are carried out in most compounds. Throughout the festival week, *Egungun* masqueraders, representing the ancestor spirit, parade through the streets singly or in groups to interact with the living. They can be petitioned to grant the good things of life, particularly the birth of children. Alternatively, they may seek out and punish wrongdoers. The masqueraders often dance and sing or perform magical



3 EGUNGUN ODE LAABO CREST MASK  
WELLCOME COLLECTION, MUSEUM OF CULTURAL  
HISTORY, UCLA.



4 EGUNGUN ODE IJANJUKU CREST MASK.  
ITOKO TOWNSHIP, ABEOKUTA, 1973.

feats, but certain types may also be very violent and have to be restrained. Whatever the activity masqueraders are engaged in, once they enter the public arena they are a center of attention and are continually surrounded by an admiring and sometimes fearful audience.

In Itoko township, located near Olumo Rock, the week of the *Egungun* festival is the only time in the year when large numbers of *Egungun* appear publicly. During the rest of the year, the costumes are kept in special rooms in the compounds of those lineages to which *Egungun* cult membership is restricted. A costume may be corporately owned by an extended family, but most types are individually owned although relatives often share in the cost of assembling the garment and mask.

The making of the costume is a secret, and costly, process involving the separate efforts of a woodcarver (if a mask is needed) and a tailor who specializes in the making of *Egungun* costuming. Only when all parts of the ensemble are brought together and joined in a ritual act does the spirit of the *Egungun* enter the costume. The costume itself, when not being worn, acts as a shrine for the *Egungun* spirit, which may be called upon by the owner throughout the year as needs arise. For example, if a woman of the owner's lineage has been advised to appeal to the *Egungun* for a child, rituals will be carried out in front of the costume to call and petition the spirit. The owner may then put on the costume and appear outside the shrine room so that the woman, who is not allowed to see the costume dormant, may make direct petition. To give food or kill a chicken for the *Egungun* in such a case is referred to as "sacrificing the cloth," thus indicating

the ritual importance of textiles to this cult.

Before a costume can be constructed, an Itoko man who has been advised by a diviner to take up an *Egungun* or who freely chooses to become an owner must select the kind of masquerader he wishes to manifest.<sup>7</sup> He can choose, often with the help of the diviner, from a wide range of generic types. These include such named types as *Egungun babamaawo*, *erin*, *ode*, *arede*, and *kekere*. The choice of a particular generic type is made on the basis of such factors as the age of the owner, the availability of inherited costumes, the obligation to take a deceased relative's *Egungun*, cult affiliations, and individual wealth.

An additional important factor that influences the owner's choice of generic type is the behavioral role he wishes to project in public performances as a masquerader. Two diametrically opposed personality types are exhibited by Itoko masqueraders. On the basis of behavior patterns shown, masqueraders are labeled either *Egungun jeje* (*jeje* = gentle or quiet) or *Egungun ijanjuku* (*ijanjuku enion* = restless person). *Egungun jeje* are supposed to be calm and gentle. They are primarily concerned with singing and dancing in public, and are expected to exhibit admired behaviors, good taste, and at all times present an aesthetically pleasing image. The *Egungun ijanjuku* masquerader, on the other hand, deliberately breaks the rules of proper behavior, taste, and aesthetic form. The *Egungun ijanjuku* spirits cause the masqueraders to act like wild men (*ipata*). They are always "pushing," fighting with other masqueraders, attacking members of the audience, and generally



disturbing the peace during the festival. The *Egungun ijanjuku* masqueraders of Itoko, it should be noted, are particularly noted for their extreme rowdiness (Olajubu & Ojo 1977:265).

These two personality types cut across other emic categories of Itoko *Egungun* masqueraders. Some generic types are only gentle, others are only wild; a few types can be manifested as either *jeje* or *ijanjuku*, whichever the owner chooses. The *Egungun jeje* and *Egungun ijanjuku* are considered to have equal spiritual strength to bless or curse the living, and either of the role extremes well played by a masquerader in public contexts will bring prestige to the wearer-owner—the *ijanjuku* through the fear it can provoke, the *jeje* through the admiration it can evoke.

In public performances, the differences between the *Egungun jeje* and *ijanjuku* are signaled not only in the behavior of the masquerader but also in costuming and in the formal attributes of the headpiece, the cloth and accessories carried by the masquerader, and in the behavior and dress of his attendants. The visual symbols that distinguish the gentle from the wild masquerader are clearly seen in the costuming of the *Egungun ode*, the hunter's masquerader.<sup>8</sup> *Egungun*

*ode* can be manifested with a gentle personality, *Egungun ode 'laabo*, or with the wild disposition of *Egungun ode ijanjuku*.

The basic costume worn by both types is made up of a distinctive carved wooden crest mask that rides on top of the masquerader's head with cloth panels attached to screen the figure, which is clothed in an all-encompassing fitted body-suit. The primary generic identifier of the *ode* costume is the mask in the shape of a stylized male head with a distinctive hairdressing in which long hair is pulled in a tuft to the left side of the head to mimic the larger than ordinary caps worn by hunters. Hunters are said to stuff protective medicines into the peaks of such caps and twist them to the left when worn. This may explain the knob that occurs at the end of the hair tuft on *ode* carvings.

There are two basic forms taken by the *ode* crest mask (*ere Egungun ode*). The first is a single head with a conical base to fit the top of the masquerader's head (Fig. 2). In a second, more elaborated form called *alate* (carrier of a tray), the carved head is the centerpiece mounted on a round platter to be carried on the masquerader's head.<sup>9</sup> The first form can be worn by both gentle and violent *ode* masqueraders; the platter mask is worn by only the gentle, slow-moving type.

An *ode 'laabo* masquerader who came out in this *alate* type of mask in the 1973 Itoko *Egungun* festival is shown in Figure 1. Two male figures depicted on the front of the mask wear the oversized caps of hunters to indicate that the owner is a member of a lineage of traditional hunters, while animal figures symbolize the hunters' power over them. A female figure holds kola nuts to sacrifice to this *Egungun*, stressing its ability to grant children to supplicants. On the back of

the same mask, a monkey's head, common to all *ode* platter masks, and more figures are portrayed. On the right, a masked figure depicting an *Egungun babalaago*, a prestigious type of family-owned *Egungun*, indicates that the owner has this masquerader in his compound.

It is interesting to note that despite the rich iconographic complexity of this mask and the quality of the carving, my informant's spontaneous remarks of admiration were directed to the embroidered cloth panels of the costume, which he perceived as "very fine and costly." Highly decorated panels such as those worn in layers by this *Egungun* are said to be obtained, in part, as gifts from grateful women who have been given children by a particular *Egungun*. In one case, I observed a cloth strip tied to the knob of an *Egungun ode* headdress and was told that it had been presented to the masquerader during the festival by a woman who had given birth after petitioning that *Egungun* the previous year.

The large *alate* masks worn by some *Egungun ode 'laabo* such as that just described would not be worn by masqueraders of the *ijanjuku* type. The size and weight of the platter mask and the need to keep it balanced on top of the head are not compatible with the rushing, sudden movements that characterize the *Egungun ode ijanjuku* masquerader's performance. These masqueraders tend to wear a relatively small version of the single-headed mask form,



5. EGUNGUN ERIN MASQUERADER. ITOKO TOWNSHIP, ABEOKUTA, 1973.

6. EGUNGUN ERIN CREST MASK. NIGERIAN MUSEUM.



7. EGUNGUN ERIN MASQUERADER. ITOKO TOWNSHIP, ABEOKUTA, 1973.



which can be slipped to the back when the performer becomes agitated and lunges about.

In the simpler single-headed form of the *ode* mask worn by both masqueraders, the differences in the personalities are expressed in the facial features. The head of the *Egungun ode 'laabo* is conceived as beautiful, while that of the *ijan-juku* form is made deliberately ugly. In a typical Itoko *ere Egungun ode* of the gentle *'laabo* type (Fig. 3), there is a symmetry of form, a smoothness of facial features, and attention is paid to the elaboration of detail. The headdress will have two or more tiers of hair "like a woman," with the texture of the hair indicated in closely spaced, incised parallel lines. Symbols of supernatural power such as stone celts (*edun ara*) and medicine containers (*ado*) may be carved onto or attached to the mask to emphasize the owner's power. When carving the *ere* of an *ijan-juku* type, on the other hand, the carver deliberately violates the canons of good form (Fig. 4). The eyes bulge outward, the cheeks may be puffed out, and the hair is carved in one tier with little indication of texture. In some versions, the hair is tufted to the back in the style of Eshu, the trickster of the Yoruba deities.

The differences between *Egungun ode 'laabo* and *ijan-juku* masqueraders are reflected in the cloth costumes. The *ijan-juku* masquerader wears a less elaborate costume with perhaps no more than three to four large cloth panels. The distinction between *ode 'laabo* and *ijan-juku* is also mirrored in the dress of their attendants. Important *Egungun* masqueraders do not travel alone during the Itoko festival parades. Male and female relatives of the owner, his friends and clients, and women who have successfully petitioned that particular *Egungun* for children will accompany the masquerader as it moves about the town. One or more groups of drummers are hired to escort the group and announce its coming. The masquerader with his attendants make up a carefully orchestrated ensemble in which the dress of the persons who accompany the *Egungun* visually mirrors and reinforces the public personality of the mask. Male attendants of *Egungun ode* masqueraders tend to dress in the "uniforms" of hunters with the oversized caps and the prominent display of powerful magical objects. Those who accompany *Egungun ode 'laabo* are expected to wear clean, "nice" clothing. Those who accompany *Egungun ode ijan-juku*, on the other hand, may deliberately dress to provide a shocking



8. EGUNGUN IJANJUKU SHOWING FACIAL NETTING. ITOKO TOWNSHIP, ABEOKUTA, 1973.

image. The men on this important public occasion wear work-worn and often soiled clothing. The women dress even more inappropriately, appearing in cloth wrappers without blouses—a kind of dress normally reserved for working in the privacy of their compounds. A special cloth tied around their waists further identifies them with the *ode ijan-juku*. An even more shocking violation of proper Yoruba dress sometimes occurs when the wives and sisters of the owner of the *Egungun* appear in trousers and shirts worn by men. Such reversals of proper gender displays are associated with the worship of Eshu (Westcott 1962).

It is these idiosyncratic aspects of *Egungun ode* costuming and performance that draw comments from the audience that lines the streets to watch the *Egungun* parade. The Yoruba spectators are well aware of the identity of the owners of important *Egungun*, and the degree to which an owner successfully manipulates the personality and aesthetic costuming to project a distinctive social presence in his *Egungun* masquerader is a matter for discussion and evaluation among knowledgeable spectators.

For *Egungun* owners who seek prestige by stimulating admiration for the beautiful, a second generic type of *Egungun* masquerader is particularly appropriate. This is the *Egungun erin*, which appears only in the *jeje* form and utilizes cloth as the major medium for iconographic and aesthetic expression. *Egungun erin* are the fashion plates of the masqueraders. They are the most richly dressed of all the *Egungun* and are the focus of considerable attention and dis-



9. EGUNGUN ERIN MASQUERADER. ITOKO TOWNSHIP, ABEOKUTA, 1973.

cussion during the festival. These masqueraders are called *erin* ("elephant") because of their size, their power to grant the wishes of supplicants or punish wrongdoing, and the amount of money needed to maintain them. They are owned by individuals, and in the contemporary context have gained the nickname "the rich man's *Egungun*."

*Egungun erin* are called "the rich man's *Egungun*" with good cause. In 1973 it was estimated that at least 400 to 600 naira would need to be spent before an *erin* was ready to appear in the festival. New costuming cloth and accessories would be purchased and money spent on rituals and the entertainment of the dancers, drummers, and attendants prior to the event. If the owner was not able to raise the necessary money from private and lineage sources, it was assumed that the masquerader would not appear in that year's festival. Most men who chose to own *Egungun erin* could well afford the cost and thought it justified by the response that the masquerader evoked from spectators and by the continuing prestige attached to owning this most beautiful of *Egungun*.

The *erin* masquerader is a distinctive Abeokuta generic type. It is distinguished by the *ere*, or wooden crest mask, in the shape of a head with a human face and huge upstanding ears that allow it to tower high above the



heads of the crowd (Fig. 6).<sup>10</sup> The mask is finely carved and intricately incised, but it is not the focus of attention. It is the cloth that is worn and the accessories carried that excite comment and allow critical assessments of the beauty of a particular *Egungun erin* masquerader.

The basic costume is a loosely fitted body-suit reaching to the ankles with applied or beaded panels hanging from the bottom edge of the mask. Elaboration of the costume is what makes the *erin* masquerader spectacular. The latest fashion in printed or embroidered brocades and velvets is used to construct the body-suit and a cape or train in the back (Fig. 5). An additional panel embellished with metallic fringe and embroidery adds extra interest to the back of the costume. The front receives the most decorative care. Special attention is given to the panels that flank the netting through which the masquerader looks. These broad strips and an additional decorative panel below the netting are elaborately applied (Fig. 7) or beaded (Fig. 9).

Bead-embroidered panels are considered to be particularly effective because they signify the ritual importance of the *Egungun* masquerader. According to Thompson: "Wherever embroidery in this medium appears we may be assured we are looking at no mere thing, but the embodiment of hidden, important presence . . . the prerogative of ownership is restricted, in the main, to those who



10. ATTENDANT DANCER DRESSED IN ASHO'FI, PERFORMING AS PART OF AN EGUNGUN ERIN ENSEMBLE. ITOKO TOWNSHIP, ABEOKUTA, 1973.

communicate with or become possessed by the gods, the king, the priest, and the herbalist-diviner" (1971:8/1). Design elements on the beaded panels include the interlace, a motif associated with leadership arts and kingship in the Yoruba area for over four centuries (Thompson 1971:8/2). Such beadwork is initially expensive—80 to 100 naira a panel in 1973—so panels are normally reused from year to year, while additive elements of cloth may be changed. Sometimes an owner who desires a new image for his masquerader will sell his panels to another *Egungun* owner and commission new ones of bead embroidery or cloth applique.

The netting surrounded by the highly decorated front panels is also a focus of decorative effort. While a hand-knitted netting (*gbala*) is used by most masqueraders to obscure the face while providing sight (Fig. 8), *Egungun erin* masqueraders seem to prefer some kind of shiny, reflecting, metallic mesh of imported make (Figs. 7, 9).

The crest mask is another focus of decorative attention and is "dressed" with colorfully dyed ostrich plumes, attached cloth cutouts, and garlands of beads that tend to obscure the lines of the carving (Fig. 7). A wand with ostrich feathers attached is fitted into the front of the mask to add to its impressive height. Ostrich feathers are also attached to the tips of the petal-like cloth necklaces fitted around the bottom edge of the mask, and necklaces of coins may be added to underline the richness of the decoration.

Accessories carried in the hand of the *Egungun erin* provide the owner with another opportunity to project beauty. According to one informant: "To go out without something in the hand is not so nice. There must be something nice for the people to look at." "Something nice" for the *Egungun erin* is a fan (*abebe*) edged with ostrich feathers and a rattle made from a long-necked calabash (*shere*) (Fig. 9). The fan may be beaded or of applied leather. The rattle may also be beaded or covered with intricately paneled and applied cloth shaped to fit the calabash. These accessories contrast with the stout staff, whips, and cutlasses (Fig. 8) carried by *Egungun ijanjuku* types, and they reinforce the gentle image of the *Egungun erin*.

During the 1973 *Egungun* festival in Itoko, the parade of the *Egungun erin* on the first day was looked forward to by the community. Large numbers of people gathered on the major streets to await the masqueraders' arrival as they descended from the sacred bush atop

Oke Odogbo, one of Itoko's rocky hills. The coming of each *erin* masquerader, carefully spaced for dramatic effect, was heralded by the sound of drumming, and those persons who were to accompany it as it passed through the town rushed to join it and its owner. When *Egungun erin* masqueraders appear in public, the owners usually do not wear the costume but accompany the masquerader in order to fully enjoy the audience reaction. For the *Egungun* parade, the owner and attendants wear their finest clothing, often *asho'fi*, to visually mirror and reinforce the public importance of the masquerader (Fig. 10). Attendants may also carry additional decorations (*ero*) associated with the particular *erin*. A young boy in the 1973 festival carried a carving indicating that the owner was a devotee of *Erinle*, a river deity. The theatricality of the *Egungun erin* masquerader's appearance is further heightened when a man or boy moves in front of the crowd surrounding the *Egungun*, carrying a banner on which the name of the *Egungun* and its owner are proclaimed.

As the *Egungun erin* masqueraders passed through the streets of Itoko during the festival of 1973, they were discussed by spectators; their beauty was compared and innovations noted. My informant, who considered himself an expert on *Egungun* aesthetics, commented on each, comparing the quality of the decorative panels, the ostrich plumes and decorations of the mask, the design of the facial netting, and the excellence of the import cloth used to cloak the back of the costume. After comparing all the *Egungun erin* masqueraders who appeared that day, he declared that the one shown in Figure 5, along with another *erin*, was "the finest in all Itoko." "It is," he said, "a lot of money!"

I have described two major generic types of Itoko *Egungun* to demonstrate the multivocal symbolism of *Egungun* costuming. Through the use of costume and performance behaviors, the masquerader projects culturally shared values of religion and group identity. Simultaneously, the realization of each *Egungun* allows the injection of idiosyncratic elements so that the owner can symbolically make public displays of self-esteem. *Egungun* costumes, the cloth of the ancestors, do not merely honor the dead; for every owner they are also the cloth of the living. *Egungun* costuming is used, just as clothing is used in the secular realm, as a means of building individual and family prestige. □

Notes, page 91



(Kate Kent, personal communication, May 1980).

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#### WOLFF, Notes, from page 70

The research for this paper was carried out as part of a study on socioeconomic change in carving production at Adugbologe Compound in Itoko township, Abeokuta, from fall 1972 to spring 1974. Fieldwork was supported by a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Grant and done with the cooperation of the Nigerian Department of Antiquities. I wish to thank the many Abeokuta and Itoko people who aided me in this research, particularly the carvers of Adugbologe Compound.

1. Peter Lloyd noted that at such social events as a funeral weekend, "a wealthy man or woman may appear in several changes of costume, each costing up to £800 exclusive of gold ornaments . . ." (Lloyd 1974:118).
2. In some areas, the corpse is wrapped in a special type of black and white funeral cloth for burial (Parrinder 1953:43).
3. See the special issue of *African Arts* (vol. 11, no. 3, 1978) for a series of articles that give evidence of contemporary Egungun society activities.
4. "Emic labels" refer to folk categories or classification systems that utilize criteria meaningful to the Yoruba themselves, as opposed to "etic labels," which are imposed by scholars on the basis of formal attributes. See Warren & Andrews (1977) for an example of a detailed analysis of emic criteria in an African art tradition.
5. Articles and monographs dealing with Egungun masquerading include Bascom 1944; Morton-Williams 1954; Thompson 1971, 1974; Olajubu & Ojo 1977; and Drewal 1978.
6. The 1973 Itoko Egungun festival started on April 9 and lasted seven days.
7. Egungun are taken up under a number of circumstances but only by members of families associated with the Egungun society, currently or in the past.
8. To take up the Egungun *ode*, or "hunter's masquerader," a man need not be a member of a hunting lineage, but it is necessary that he be a worshipper of Ogun, the deity of all who use metal tools in their work.
9. Egungun *atale*, the "Egungun that carries a tray," is an emic category that, like those based on personality, cuts across other emic types.
10. For a more detailed description of the formal attributes and symbolism of the *ere Egungun erin*, see N. Wolff's commentary on the headdress of this type in the Tishman collection (Vogel 1981:110-11).

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#### McNAUGHTON, Notes, from page 58

My research in the Republic of Mali has not focused on hunters or their clothes. I have worked extensively with sculptor-smiths, and so I have come in frequent contact with the ideas of knowledge, sorcery, and the bush that characterize the nature of hunting and influence the activities of hunters. In addition, many sculptor-smiths are also hunters, including the one (Sedu Traore) with whom I have worked most closely. Thus I suspect my data are reasonably dependable. I want to thank Sedu Traore, and Seydou Camara, Sekuba Camara, Kallilou Tera, Chieckna Sangare, Charles Bied, John Johnson, Jim Brink, Mary Jo Arnoldi, and Jerry Cashion for the frequent exchanges of ideas, suggestions, and encouragement they have all offered up during the past few years. For the funds that allowed me to work in Mali I want to thank the Social Science Research Council and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Graduate School. The generosity of both has been very welcome. I thank, too, the government of the Republic of Mali; the Institut de Science Humaine in the Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale was extremely helpful both in 1972 and 1978. I have followed the proper orthography for Bamana words, as set forth in *Lexique Bambara*, by the Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 1968, except in instances where individual Malian authors or artists have already established their names in publications using other orthographies. However, *African Arts* is unable to print accents indicating the open *e* and open *o* symbols.

1. Given the phenomenal importance of traditional hunters in Mande society, precious little has been published on them. The reader may enjoy consulting Travelé 1928:207-212; Sidibé 1930:48-67, and, for the work that has become the classic reference for Mande hunters, Youssouf Cissé 1964:175-226.
2. I discuss this "science of trees" at length in *The Mande Sculptor-Smiths*, forthcoming from Indiana University Press.
3. Many scholars have written on Nyama. Perhaps two of the most interesting sources are Germaine Dieterlen (1951:62-65) and Cissé (1964:192-208). Often this energy or force has been interpreted as consistently malevolent, negative or evil. I argue against this position in my forthcoming *Sculptor-Smiths*.
4. Charles Bird, personal communication, March 1976.
5. Cissé discusses a "Tour Du Monde" undertaken by young hunters in times past (1964:184-86). Such trips were generally of six months' duration but could be as long as eighteen. The hunters went out in groups of two or three, and sometimes they traveled alone. The goal was to acquire a name for oneself by proving one's ability and knowledge, while simultaneously expanding both ability and knowledge. The "trophies" they returned with included, accord-

ing to Cissé: "peaux de fauves, défenses d'éléphants ou d'hippopotames, cornes de buffles et d'antilopes, queues de toutes les bêtes abattues qui étaient réunies en un fagot d'autant plus lourd que le chasseur était adroit."

6. *Komu masks*, for example, are described as *dibi-fintz*—"things of dibi," "things of darkness"—that enter the world of obscurity to fight treachery, malevolent sorcery, and all manner of unpleasant activities.
7. Kallilou Tera, personal communication, July 1977. Medicines, the head, and potent sorcery are also associated in Yoruba thought. See Drewal 1977:43-45, 91.
8. Charles Bird, personal communication, December 1976.
9. The blacksmith and hunter Sedu Traore said this to me on more than one occasion.
10. Interviews with Kallilou Tera, June 1978, and Sekuba Camara, July 1978.

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#### ROY, Notes, from page 53

The research on which this paper is based was carried out in Upper Volta in 1976-77 and was funded by the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Research Abroad Program and the International Doctoral Research Program sponsored by the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies.

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