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Author(s): Marla C. Berns

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# Ceramic Arts in Africa

MARLA C. BERNS

This special issue of *African Arts* is one outcome of a panel held at the 1987 African Studies Association meeting in Denver, Colorado. Titled "African Ceramic Arts: History and Identity in Clay," the panel's objective was to explore how ceramic traditions contribute to our understanding of the roles, meanings, and history of art in Africa. No preferential distinction was made between studies emphasizing pottery vessels and those emphasizing pottery sculpture, or between studies on contemporary forms and those on archaeological traditions. Instead, participants were asked to deal critically with several suggested issues concerning ceramic arts: 1) how they inform us about social processes, values, or modes of establishing identity, or how the explication of social context helps us better understand the active roles of such arts; 2) how they help us reconstruct or understand history, or how history aids our understanding of ceramics; 3) how they relate to or are informed by other arts produced by a group, or how knowing the larger universe of art production informs our knowledge of any one, including ceramics. Each of the five papers presented here addresses one or more of these issues through the study of figurative sculpture, anthropomorphic vessels, or decorated pottery. These ceramics represent a broad geographic distribution, including the people of ancient Jenne in southern Mali, the Senufo of northern Ivory Coast, the Gurensi of northern Ghana, the Ga'anda and 'Béna of northeastern Nigeria, and the Mangbetu of northeastern Zaire.<sup>1</sup>

There is little doubt that fired clay (called variously ceramic, pottery, earthenware, or terracotta) represents one of the oldest media and techniques in the history of African material culture. The essential permanence of fired clay means that evidence of its production dates from the eighth millennium B.C. at sites in

the Sahara, which supports the "indigenous African invention of pottery" (S.K. & R.J. McIntosh 1986:419). The earliest terracotta sculpture yet discovered is associated with the Nok Culture of northern Nigeria (500 B.C.-A.D. 200). The ubiquity of the potter's art across the continent further justifies attention to this tradition as a means of expanding our understanding of African art and history. Much has been published on pottery techniques, taxonomies, and typologies, approached from ethnographic and archaeological perspectives.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as John Picton laments, "the greater part" of systematic work on pottery production in Africa is "yet to be done" (1984:n.p.). Our knowledge of sculptural ceramics is limited to several geographical regions, and the areas studied have largely been determined by accidents of discovery. Systematic excavations at sites in Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, and Chad have begun to shed light on Jenne, Akan, Nok, Ife, and Sao terracottas.<sup>3</sup> Recent discoveries in Komaland, northern Ghana (Anquandah & Van Ham 1985), and in Boura, Niger (Gado 1984), for example, only suggest that which still remains to be unearthed and understood.

The versatility of clay increases its sculptural possibilities over those of many other media; yet its essential malleability has proven to be a dynamic counterpoint to the fundamental conservatism of most utilitarian pottery styles. Indeed, the importance of pottery to the archaeologist is based on the assumption that "... from among the almost infinite possible combinations of pastes, techniques, forms and decorations, only a small selection characterizes the pottery of any one culture. Pottery is a vehicle for the expression of cultural patterns" (David & Hennig 1972:21:1). And by extension, changes in pottery are often the primary evidence for interpreting developments and changes over time. While environmental, functional, and technological constraints certainly influence pottery styles, other factors mediate the evolution of ceramic forms and their symbolic meaning. Understanding the latter poses the greater challenge and requires the careful scrutiny of how material culture operates within its social and historical contexts. David and Hennig's 1972 study of the settled Fulani of northern Cameroon is one important exploration of the variables influencing the production, distribution, and consumption of pottery, with a view to critically assessing "archaeological assumptions about the relationship between pottery and society."

Sculptural ceramics tend to be less stylistically consistent than more utilitarian pottery, owing at least in part to differences in how they function in African societies. Certain corpuses of archaeological material, like the figurative sculpture from the Inland Niger Delta, the Chad Basin, and the Nok Culture area, are strikingly diverse and enigmatic. How such material relates to a total social and cultural system is difficult to reconstruct when the systems no longer exist. Archaeological investigation has expanded our knowledge of the contexts in which sculptural ceramic arts operated, and it has been argued that without "scientific, stratigraphic excavation and radiometric dating," they are destined to hang in an "interpretive limbo" (R.J. McIntosh & S.K. McIntosh 1986:51). Yet, when cir-

CHAM POT CALLED JINAKWIMTIYU, FOR  
PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF A PREGNANT WOMAN.  
IT IS BELIEVED TO BE PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE  
AGAINST VOMITING.

25.2cm. MADE IN 1965 BY NGAJI.  
ALL THE POTS ILLUSTRATED IN THIS ARTICLE WERE  
COLLECTED IN NORTHEASTERN NIGERIA BY  
ARNOLD RUBIN IN 1970 AND ARE NOW IN THE COLLECTION  
OF THE MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, UCLA.



CHAM POT CALLED *JINABITIBIYU*, FOR  
PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF A NEWBORN INFANT.  
17.5cm. MADE IN 1964 BY TELA.

CHAM POT CALLED *JINABITIBIYU*, FOR  
PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF A PREGNANT WOMAN.  
ACCORDING TO RUBIN'S NOTES, IT HELPED TO  
PRODUCE A STRONG CHILD AND TO RELIEVE THE  
WOMAN'S DISCOMFORT DURING THE LAST  
TRIMESTER OF PREGNANCY.  
13.3cm. MADE IN 1964 BY TELA.



cumstances prevent this avenue of inquiry, studies of extant ceramic sculpture are not only valuable in and of themselves, but contribute to the clearinghouse of cross-cultural ethnographic data by which archaeological materials may be compared.

Ceramics have been studied by artists, art historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians, reflecting a broad range of disciplinary interests, objectives, and methodologies. In this compilation of five articles, the work of art historians, anthropologists, a historian, and an archaeologist is represented. As a microcosm of the dynamic and interdisciplinary nature of African art studies, these papers deal with problems or approaches that do not necessarily coincide with the mainstream interests of their respective fields. For example, Roderick McIntosh, an archaeologist, begins his paper (p. 74) with a summary of the investigative priorities of revisionist Western art history because they parallel his own approach in interpreting Middle Niger terracottas: that an object should be

studied "through examination of the history, social practices, and strategies of those with authority to create and recognize objects as art."

Although the articles included here primarily deal with one category of artistic production, the themes addressed are not exclusive to the study of ceramic material. All the papers contribute to our understanding of how art production and use are inextricably bound to social, historical, and structural processes rather than abstracted from them. These papers also partake of a broad operational definition of art, one that crosses the boundary often drawn between art and craft (ceramic sculpture vs. pottery), showing that such arbitrary distinctions can prevent, and have prevented, our full understanding of African material culture. The blurring of this boundary takes us further from a reliance on what Western aesthetics have determined is "art," and brings us closer to letting the objects define for us their role and importance in African culture history. Indeed, as Philip Ravenhill observes, "...the recognition of some elements of African material culture as ART, has led to the almost total neglect of many other domains. The ultimate ethnocentrism is one in which recognition of the other is based solely upon the similarity to self" (1987:34). Furthermore, several authors here demonstrate the significance of looking beyond the single art product to the larger visual and contextual universe in which art operates and interacts.

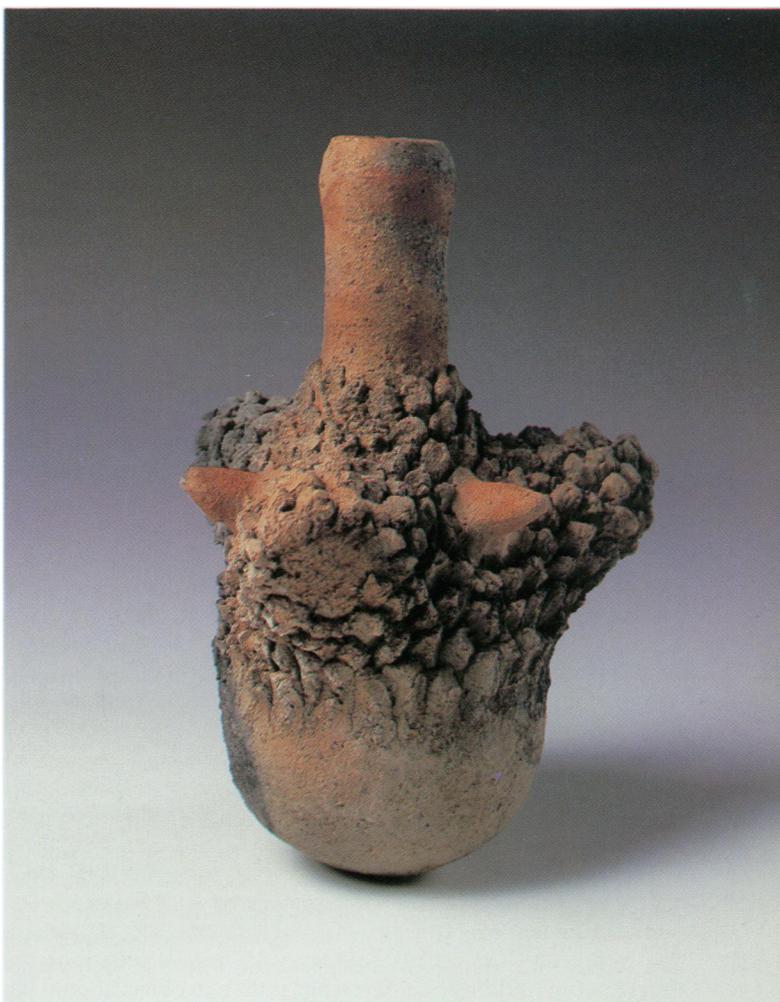
The paper on Mangbetu pottery (p. 38) by Enid Schildkrout (an anthropologist), Jill Hellman (an anthropologist), and Curtis Keim (a historian) reminds us of the selective attention paid by scholars and collectors to anthropomorphic traditions, largely because greater realism has been equated with expressions of advanced civilization. A preoccupation with such traditions and their presumed ritual or sacred importance perpetuated a distorted picture of the role and meaning of Mangbetu representational ceramics. Of the 200 pots collected during the American Museum of Natural History's Congo Expedition in the early twentieth century, only 20 are anthropomorphic. The authors of this article argue convincingly that the production of figurative pottery by the Mangbetu depended upon a long-established regional tradition of decorated utilitarian wares. By understanding the variables governing the production and consumption of utilitarian pottery in northeastern Zaire, the emergence of a figurative tradition for a brief historical period can be better explained. And the record shows that these anthropomorphic vessels were never intended for sacred or ritual use as had been presumed. The larger universe of figurative prestige objects made in other media by Mangbetu artists helps explain further the creation of a ceramic equivalent.

Contrary to the usual situation in the study of African art, the authors of the article on the Mangbetu have "a great deal of historical evidence to help us interpret the meaning of these pots." McIntosh's paper supports the position, taken by Jan Vansina (1984) and other Africanist scholars (e.g., Kasfir 1984; Ravenhill 1987), that art historians have not much advanced the effort to delineate a history of art in Africa. Furthermore, art historians have not focused enough attention on the social circumstances surrounding the production and use of art. It is not my intention, in this introduction, to respond in depth to such critiques. Others have engaged in valuable discourse on the state of African art scholarship and its historiography.<sup>4</sup> Yet, such criticisms, which remain largely unchallenged, tend to underplay both the progress art historians have made with field studies and the rather considerable obstacles scholars face in writing a *real* history of art for areas in Africa about which little was written or known until recently.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps most significantly, the relative paucity of archaeological data in the African record has restricted our diachronic investigations to isolated areas on the map, and even in places where considerable work has been done, like Nigeria, we are still far from understanding the historical or social circumstances surrounding the "treasures" that have been unearthed or the relationships between them. Even Vansina, in his presentation of a "streams of tradition" model for doing art history, illustrates his approach using only areas for which "adequate archaeological information exists" (1984:191). And he fails to answer his own inevitable question: "What if archaeological data are absent, however, or so sparse as not to make a difference?"

McIntosh's paper convincingly reveals the substantial insights ceramic sculpture has provided into the history of the Middle Niger region of Mali. Systematic and controlled archaeological excavations he has undertaken with Susan McIntosh since 1977 have made it possible to propose a historical sequence for the emergence of the city of Jenne-jeno and for the parallel evolution of terracotta sculpture. The archaeological material provides more than a context in which to evaluate

the sculpture, which is notable for its variety, its elaborate surface decoration, and its complex iconography. The terracottas excavated at Jenne-jeno shed light on the town's progressive urbanization because they were active ingredients in its process of social and historical change.

Despite a wealth of contextual information recovered through excavation, McIntosh was still faced with the problem of explaining the meaning of the sculptures themselves — their distinctive styles — for which there are no direct ethnographic or ethnohistorical parallels. Herein lies the challenge, and one that has impact on the study of other groups of objects for which no direct descendant population survives. McIntosh argues that objects "serve as an instrument of communication by making references, however abstractly, to archaeologically discernible realities of the social life and history of their makers' community." Thus, understanding art or material culture is inextricably tied to knowing the world in which it exists. Yet, without the means or evidence for knowing that world, is there no avenue for knowing its artistic products? McIntosh places something of a stranglehold on ethnographic analogy, an approach that deserves closer scrutiny as a comparative means of reconstructing and evaluating the past. While the relative merits of ethnoarchaeology may be debated, the potential in such analogy depends on rigorous attention to the clustering of patterns and traits rather than on the exaggeration of random concurrences. Without this potential avenue of interpretation, how can we begin to evaluate artistic traditions for which archaeological contexts do not exist or have not yet



CHAM POT CALLED FERU, FOR CURING CHICKEN POX AND OTHER CHILDHOOD DISEASES. 21.4cm. MADE BY NGAJI.

been investigated, and how can we adequately interpret the meaning of archaeological evidence, without living informants to explain it? It is here that the methodologically sound field studies can continue to be significant.

My article on ceramic sculpture from northeastern Nigeria (p. 48) is one effort by an art historian to meet the challenge of pursuing a historical approach to art in Africa for which archaeological evidence is absent. This case study of sacred ceramic vessels made by two Gongola Valley groups, the Ga'anda and the 'Bëna, does not establish a datable chronology — an impossible task given the available data. Yet it does advance our understanding of interethnic, intraregional historical relationships as reconstructed from ceramic and other evidence. Instead of focusing on one group or on one art product, I emphasize the similarities and differences in cultural complexes existing within and between groups over time, which include art *and* the contexts in which it is used and functions ideologically. Essentially, the model proposed in this paper shows to what extent the detailed and particularistic study of ceramic traditions can contribute to an explication of history, albeit one that without archaeological evidence must remain speculative and heuristic. The success of this approach further depends on synthesizing data drawn from linguistics, oral history, geography, and ethnography. In agreement with McIntosh, Vansina, and others, this paper takes the firm position that art's potential for explicating history rests on the conviction that its production, use, and meaning are vital to the very historical as well as social and cultural processes it seeks to define.

Art historian Carol Spindel's article on Senufo potters of Ivory Coast (p. 66) deals exclusively with a utilitarian pottery tradition, but one whose technology of production is firmly rooted in the cultural values of Senufo society. This paper goes beyond a study of process and shows how technology reflects other patterns of culture. The continuity and repetition in the production of pottery are structurally parallel to the functioning of the Senufo age-class system. Spindel supports the point raised by Picton in his introduction to the anthology *Earthenware in Asia and Africa* (1984) that "any technology is part of a given cultural system, and may be constrained by other parts of that culture." Although as outsiders we may be able to deal exclusively with techniques of manufacture, the producers themselves are less likely to abstract this activity from their total social or cultural matrix.

The value of looking at the interrelationships between areas of cultural activity and expression is illustrated in the paper by Fred Smith, an art historian, on the Gurense of Ghana (p. 60). To elucidate the importance of pottery to the Gurense, Smith identifies the technical, stylistic, and conceptual parallels between pots and mud or clay containers that constitute other categories of material culture. Since the sacred forces associated with the Gurense deification of the Earth regulate life, the pots, houses, granaries, and shrines made of Earth's material essence are by extension associated with maintaining social stability and continuity. While the role of female potters takes on social importance for the Gurense, Smith shows that evaluating their contribution depends on exploring the wider material and ideological universe of which they and their work are a part.

Smith's and Spindel's articles support the observation that the role of potters in African societies deserves greater attention. Nigel Barley argues that it is because of an obsession with smithing that the social and ritual implications of pottery-making have been largely ignored (1984:98-100). This points to

important issues of gender and technology, and our Western preoccupation with a men-iron-smithing paradigm over one exploring women-clay-potting. Barley believes that more attention should be paid to the female potter in West African ethnography because the process of pottery-making serves as a rich model for the ways societies handle change. His ideas suggest the potential in exploring the symbolic analogies between technology, gender, and social and ritual process. Spindel's and Smith's papers — which deal with caste systems centered on male smithing or casting — identify briefly how pottery-making structures and reflects social relationships. My paper on Gongola Valley ceramics extends Barley's transformational paradigm to the production of spirit-containing vessels. How these ceramics look as well as how they are made refer to changes in social or sacred states of being.

The ways ceramic arts can illuminate African art and social history are rich and varied, as this issue of *African Arts* demonstrates. In these studies, the potential of fired clay is implicit by its very antiquity, durability, and ubiquity. Despite the flood of modern containers entering the African marketplace, the production of pottery persists, often quite vigorously. The practicality of terracotta containers in meeting the domestic needs of agricultural communities has not yet been matched by a modern mass-produced equivalent. Thus, opportunities exist to study and document this art, while probing the social and historical circumstances of production, use, and meaning. Nonutilitarian and often anthropomorphic pottery used in ritual or sacred contexts has suffered more from the changes brought by Islam and Christianity. While I studied over fifteen groups in northeastern Nigeria still making and/or using ritual and sacred anthropomorphic vessels, the acceleration of religious conversions has prompted their abandonment by many, and in some cases their purposeful destruction (see Chappel 1973).

It is not an exaggeration to suggest that much terracotta material still lies buried under sub-Saharan African soil. Substantial barriers — financial, political, legal, and otherwise — impede the discovery, exploration, and excavation of archaeological sites. Not unique to the African context or to the contemporary world is the rampant pillaging of sites and the illicit traffic in antiquities.<sup>6</sup> Despite the 1970 articles of the UNESCO Convention or the laws prohibiting the commerce in antiquities, the illegal appropriation and sale of cultural property persist at the expense of gaining access to information about an African, and indeed a universal, human past.<sup>7</sup> That this loss is irreversible makes it all the more lamentable. Philip Ravenhill's description of the situation (1987:34) as it affects its most vulnerable victims — African national museums — provides closure to this introduction, which has stressed the past, present, and future contributions of ceramic art studies to building an art history in Africa: "Our insistence on the intrinsic worth of an African *objet d'art*, on its plastic self-sufficiency, cannot be separated from the fact that all too often the African art object in a Western museum or art collection is otherwise mute; its provenance and real history have been lost due to the series of commercial transactions that have brought it out of Africa, and its 'identity' has been shrunk to a stark ethnic label. It may be 'saved' as art, yet 'lost' as a cultural and historical document." □

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BËNA POT CALLED NGWARKANDANGRA. FOR  
TREATING SKIN DISEASES.  
30.9cm. MADE IN 1958 BY RABKABAW.



film, Cissé's cinematic eye spans a spectrum of Malian landscapes broad enough both to effect a nostalgia within those who have traveled there and to beguile even the most casual viewer. From a Fulani cattle-encircled well, to a water- and reed-filled depression where Nianonkoro's mother performs a prayer, to a perfectly maintained clay-and-thatch compound, to the graves and granaries of the Dogon cliffs, Cissé frames a seductively cross-cultural and timeless vision of his country.

If the film is viewed as a documentary, scholars of Mali will have problems with its lack of ethnographic *verité*: Fulani equestrians' faces are painted in shocking colors and decorative patterns, and village residents are clothed in matching sienna cowhide; a large sculpture of a seated man, located in the Kore initiates' grove, is of questionable Bamana origin; the bathing scene at Bongo Spring bares, however discreetly, both male and female genitalia, not normally displayed; the plank called the wing of Kore looks mechanically milled; prisms as a source or conduit of power are not artifacts of mythic time; Kore blacksmiths were not, as portrayed, ordinarily culled from those of Diarra descent but more usually from Fame, Kante, or Ballo lineages. One point of interest may help to explain some of these more poetic interpretations: the Cissé clan was originally Soninke, early-Islamized marabouts, and thus was generally not privy to the most impenetrable of Bamana knowledge (Tereba Togola, pers. comm., Oct. 1, 1988).

Yet, the above criticisms may be beside the point, for it is perhaps in these very digressions that Cissé has both "betrayed" and "succeeded." If he has betrayed cultural *verité* as a result of adopting the urban Muslim's point of view, he nonetheless succeeds in conveying a singularly impressive epic of classical proportions, much in the tradition of Sunjata. It has been suggested that a hero need "not represent a role model of morality . . . (and that) . . . he may have to violate social norms in order to fulfill his destiny . . . but that if he is going too fast with his ambition, the occult may destroy him" (Johnson 1986:42-43). In this regard, the character of Nianonkoro fulfills the timeless role of the hero. Beyond this, if *Yeelen* is viewed as an acknowledgment of Malian cultural diversity and interplay, poetically excerpting aspects of Bamana, Fulani, and Dogon customs for the purposes of the narrative, then Cissé again succeeds.

Stressing the work as a personal statement, two anecdotal points are noteworthy. First, Nianonkoro's son is played by Cissé's own child. Second, in one scene Soma and his two porters are played by actors other than those in the rest of the film. Apparently, this eccentric inclusion constitutes Cissé's private tribute to the actor originally chosen for the part of Soma, who died shortly after filming began (Samuel Sidibe, pers. comm., Aug. 24, 1988). All of the performers do a splendid job, each defining his or her character as intensely individual. In particular, Nianonkoro and the Fulani village chief exhibit a touching range of subtle emotion, and when Niamanto Sanogo, who portrays the hysterical Soma, transforms himself into the

serene D'Djegui, we believe they are two different people.

Ultimately, Cissé paints a picture of guarded optimism. As the young boy, a product of Bamana and Fulani union, strides over the spine of the dune, he carries both the wing of Kore and Nianonkoro's *grand boubou*. He is not yet man enough to use the former or wear the latter, but still he carries them proudly toward the horizon.

Children in West Africa embody hope for the future; they are considered a family's greatest wealth. This child—really, this "young son of Mali"—issued from nothing less than Nianonkoro's betrayal. Nianonkoro's act of betrayal, however, may mirror Cissé's own in suggesting that *here* is the wealth of the future; he seems to say that it is in cultural synthesis rather than in the battles waged against one another or in the contrivance of ethnic purity that hope is found. Indeed, this may be the case. Thus, in *Yeelen*, by sustaining civilization's forward movement via the child, Cissé appeals for an end to the enmity represented by Soma, reconciles to a certain degree D'Djegui's fears for the future, and offers his own hope, by way of Attu and Nianonkoro's progeny, for the re-creation and regeneration of the Malian universe.

Rachel Hoffman  
Los Angeles, California  
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## new publications

*Art Journal* (Summer 1988), guest edited by Henry John Drewal. Special issue: "Object and Intellect: Interpretations of Meaning in African Art." The College Art Association of America, New York, 1988. 166 pp., 91 b/w illustrations. Single issue \$5 paper.

*The Drama Review* (Summer 1988), guest edited by Margaret Thompson Drewal. Special issue: "African Ritual Performance." The MIT Press for New York University, Cambridge, MA, 1988. 208 pp., 98 b/w photos, 8 drawings, 3 maps. Single issue \$7 paper.

*Art et mythologie: Figures tshokwe*, with essays by Luc de Heush, Marie-Louise Bastin, Anne Leurquin. Fondation Dapper, Paris, 1988. 118 pp., 29 b/w & 43 color photos, 20 drawings & maps. Text in French. FF100 paper.

*Art of South African Townships* by Gavin Younge. Rizzoli International Publications, New York, 1988. 98 pp., 34 b/w & 100 color illustrations, biographies, glossary. \$17.95 paper.

*African Art from the Rita and John Grunwald Collection* by Diane M. Pelrine. Indiana University Art Museum in association with Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988. 160 pp., 85 b/w photos, 6 illustrations, map. \$35 cloth, \$20 paper.

*Caribbean Festival Arts: Each and Every Bit of Difference* by John Wallace Nunley and Judith Bettelheim. University of Washington Press in cooperation with the St. Louis Art Museum, Seattle, 1988. 224 pp., 36 b/w & 130 color photos, notes, glossary, index. \$39.95 cloth.

## notes

TAYLOR: Notes, from page 30

1. The five distinct groups that make up the Western Apache were the White Mountain, Cibecue, San Carlos, Southern and Northern Tonto. These were Athapascan-speaking peoples related to the Navajo who probably migrated from Alaska and Northwest Canada some time in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The history of these Southern Athapascans is discussed in Appendix A of this volume, which reprints Grenville Goodwin's excellent paper on this group, first published in *The Kiva* in 1938.

It will not perhaps be amiss to mention that I studied the Plains Indian collections at the State Museum in 1976-77. The well-organized storage facilities and careful documentation apparent at the museum are reflected in this volume dealing with Apache culture.

2. These are reprinted from the *American Anthropologist* (vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 55-64, 1935) with the permission of the American Anthropological Association. *The Kiva* (vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 5-10, 1938) is reprinted with the permission of the Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society.

3. This comment is based on personal observations made in Washington, D.C., July 18, 1988.

4. *Some Protective Designs of the Dakota*, A.M.N.H. Anthropological Papers, 1915.

5. The book carries the perceptive dedication: "To THE WESTERN APACHE who utilized their world so well."

BERNS, "Ceramic Arts": Notes, from page 37

1. I would like to thank all the participants in the double panel I chaired at the 1987 ASA meeting, although everyone is not represented here. All the articles in this issue, with the exception of Fred Smith's, are revisions and expansions of papers presented at the ASA meeting.

2. Space does not allow the publication of this extensive bibliography here. I would like to thank Janet Stanley, Chief Librarian, National Museum of African Art, for her generous assistance with a bibliographic search of the literature on African ceramic arts. One of the most frequently referenced works is *The Potter's Art in Africa* (Fagg & Picton 1970); also worth noting are Drost's survey of African pottery (1967) and Leith-Ross' survey of Nigerian wares (1970).

3. There are many publications dealing with the work accomplished on these terracotta traditions. Some of the primary sources are B. Fagg (1977), J.-P. and A. Lebeuf (1977), R.J. and S.K. McIntosh (1979), and Willett (1967). Other references and surveys include *Ancient Treasures in Terra Cotta of Mali and Ghana* (1980), de Grunne (1980), Eyo and Willett (1980), Schaedler (1985), and Stössel (1984).

4. See Ben-Amos 1987, Biebuyck 1983, and Kasfir 1984, among others. Several panels have recently been organized to address these issues; they are summarized in Frank 1987: 90, n.1.

5. In their critiques of Africanist art history, both Kasfir (1984: 166) and Ravenhill (1987: 35) at least acknowledge the paucity of primary historical data, especially for the precolonial period.

6. The recent discovery of an unlooted Moche tomb in Peru, described in the article "Discovering the New World's Richest Unlooted Tomb" (Alva 1988), underscores the historical and geographical dimensions of this global problem. Even though it emphasizes the spectacular, the *National Geographic* article illustrates unequivocally what can be learned by studying the contents of a Moche burial *in situ*. The J. Paul Getty Museum was recently accused of acquiring a rare fifth-century B.C. statue illegally exported from Italy (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Aug. 4, 1988). Though the Getty's culpability is still being debated, the allegation alone shows how the international art market is serviced by grave robbers and looters of archaeological sites at work all over the globe. Whether it is a terracotta from Mali, a gold prestige object from Peru, or a marble statue from Italy, all are examples of cultural patrimony difficult, if not impossible, to protect from the unbroken cycle of theft, export, and sale as collectable art masterpiece.

7. The market for illegally exported art and the negative impact of its removal on scholarship are discussed in depth by R.J. and S.K. McIntosh (1986). They explain the 1970 UNESCO Convention as one concerned with a "means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property."

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SCHILDKROUT, HELLMAN, KEIM: Notes, from page 47

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1. See Claire Kuennen (1983) for a study of Mangbetu anthropomorphic pottery based on published examples.
2. Mangbetu is a Central Sudanic language, but the Mangbetu cultural area includes peoples of diverse origins. The Mangbetu kingdoms of the nineteenth century also incorporated non-Mangbetu peoples.
3. Azande is the noun form, while Zande is the adjectival form.
4. King Leopold II personally ruled the Congo Free State until 1908, when the government of Belgium took over the administration of the colony. From 1908 until the end of Belgian rule it was known as the Belgian Congo or simply the Congo.
5. In 1902 a major large mammal discovery had been made in Africa—that of the elusive okapi, the sole remaining relative of the giraffe. The AMNH and other natural history museums (including the MRAC) were interested in obtaining study and exhibition specimens of the okapi, the white rhinoceros, and other African fauna.
6. The AMNH will open an exhibition of this material in May 1990. "African Reflections: Art from Northeastern Zaire" will travel to a number of other venues, under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Services. The participating institutions have not been identified as of the writing of this paper.
7. Meje is the spelling of the colonial post/town, while Meje is the modern spelling used for the people.
8. Some of the references to examples of nineteenth-century pottery are found in Schweinfurth (1874, vol. 1: 292; 1875, Tab. XIV, Tab. XV, Tab. XVI); Junker (1891: 285); Casati (1895: 90); Van Overbergh and de Jonghe (1909: 261-64). Examples are rare but can be found in the Ethnographic Museum in Leningrad and the Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna.
9. It is curious that this pot is diminutive in Schweinfurth's drawing of King Munza, although in his description and illustration of it (fig. 2), it appears to be of the usual size—30-35 centimeters.
10. Schweinfurth further noted that the Mangbetu differed from their neighbors (e.g., the Azande) in that they did not use pottery pipes, but rather employed the midrib of the plantain leaf to smoke "Virginian tobacco" (1874, vol. 2: 117).
11. The museum is officially known as the State Ethnographical Museum of the Peoples of the USSR. This pot is illustrated in Junker's account (1890, vol. 2: 285) and is described as a drinking vessel for beer.
12. The literature switches between the terms "king" and "chief" although the Mangbetu term *nekenyi* applies to both. After King Munza, of Schweinfurth fame, died in the 1870's, powerful men and potential heirs (succession followed the male line) fought for power and carved up what remained of the short-lived centralized state of earlier days.
13. This knife, perhaps the finest carving in the AMNH collection, is a well-worn example that clearly was made for local use.
14. Schweinfurth wrote "Munza," but the Mangbetu say

"Mbusza."

15. They have completely disappeared, and today Mangbetu do not know how to play them. They used to be played for individual entertainment. See the forthcoming AMNH exhibition catalogue for a fuller discussion of Mangbetu music by Didier Demolin.
  16. The published drawing of this harp (Schweinfurth 1875) identifies it simply as Azande, but the unpublished drawing of the same piece, in the collection of the Frobenius-Institut in Frankfurt, notes the identity of the image.
  17. It should be noted that the northern Budu were in close contact with the Mangbetu, and that some were ruled by Mangbetu chiefs. The Budu and others in the region are also known to have adopted the Mangbetu custom of elongating the head, which makes it still more difficult to determine who was being portrayed in this typically Mangbetu image.
  18. Larken, writing in the 1920s, says that "waterpots are of the conventional type, and many people of both sexes know how to make them" (1927: 129ff.). During the 1930s, when Evans-Pritchard did fieldwork among the Avungara Azande in the Sudan, men made most of the pottery, even the most utilitarian forms. Evans-Pritchard actually apprenticed himself to a male potter and studied the craft in some detail.
  19. These photographs are in the collection of the MRAC (cat. nos. EPH 14114-14125).
  20. Before the mid-nineteenth century, many northern peoples—Azande, Bangba, Barambo, and others—were incorporated by the Mangbetu. However, fortunes reversed in the last third of the century, when most northern Mangbetu territories were actually taken over by people from the north—the Bangba-Matchaga and the Azande-Avungara. In Lang's time the Mangbetu kingdom around Niagara was ruled by the Bangba-Matchaga and the Zande kingdom around Poko included subjects who had at one time been in the orbit of the Mangbetu.
  21. C.G. Seligman, who spent time with the Azande of Southern Sudan and other peoples to their north in 1920-21, makes a reference to the pottery technique of the Mbegumba, a Belanda-related group who lived northwest of the Bongo and the Azande. He says women made the pots and that "before firing the pots are coated with a slip of the special kind of black mud called liki in Zande; the finished pot has a high polish, presumably obtained by burnishing before firing" (1932: 481). He provides no pictures, unfortunately, but from the description there seems clearly a relation between the burnished pottery surface of this area and that of the northern Mangbetu and Zande pottery.
  22. This will be described in further detail in John Mack's contribution to the forthcoming catalogue of the AMNH exhibition, "African Reflections: Art from Northeastern Zaire."
  23. This was based partly on information from Evans-Pritchard, who worked in the area in the 1920s.
  24. Such as AMNH nos. 90.1/4658 and 90.1/4704, and 90.1/4678 and 90.1/4657.
  25. For example, 90.1/4683 and 90.1/4692.
  26. The ways chiefs cooperated with colonial officials changed over the years but included collecting rubber and taxes, providing labor, and enforcing various laws.
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BERNS, "Ceramic Clues": Notes, from page 59

The field work on which this article is based was conducted in northeastern Nigeria from September 1980 to June 1981, and September 1981 to June 1982. I am grateful to the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad program and the International Doctoral Research Fellowship Program of the Social Science Research Council for their support. There are many institutions and individuals to whom thanks are owed for their contribution to the success of my research in Nigeria and the work that has resulted from it. The Nigerians who generously shared details of their lives, their arts, their beliefs, and their history have my sincere appreciation. I thank Doran Ross for commenting on an earlier draft of this paper. I also would like to acknowledge Arnold Rubin, whose impact on my life and work has been immeasurable. He introduced me to the beauty of northeastern Nigeria, and shared with me his profound respect for and knowledge of its peoples and their arts. His tragic death has deeply touched us all. This article is dedicated to Arnold's wisdom and friendship, which are inextricably bound in its words and images.

Specific references to locations of ceramic shrines or vessels have been intentionally omitted in the captions. Anyone desiring particulars about a photograph should contact me.

The following orthographic conventions have been used here: x = voiceless velar fricative; è = schwa; 'b = glottalized 'b'; n' = voiced velar nasal; hl = voiceless lateral fricative.

1. Leith-Ross' 1970 survey of Nigerian pottery included examples of work by several groups from the "North-East" and from the "Niger-Gongola Valley." Her collection, much of which is still on display in the courtyard of the Jos Museum, focuses on domestic wares and only secondarily on ceremonial vessels. It wasn't until Arnold Rubin did field reconnaissance in the Gongola Valley from 1970 to 1971, as a part of his larger survey of the Benue River Valley, that the variety and extent of sacred ceramic vessels became evident. Rubin's field notes confirmed some of Meek's (1931) descriptions of isolated traditions. Other articles appeared in the 1970's-80's dealing with the work of single ethnic groups (Chappel 1973; Slye 1977; Teilhet 1977-78) or single vessel types (Hare 1983; Pearlstone 1973). It was not until I completed two and one-half years of field research in the Gongola Valley (1980-82) that I was able to draw a more comprehensive picture of the region's ceramic arts. This article is based on this larger study and Ph.D. dissertation, "Art and History in the Lower Gongola Valley, Northeastern Nigeria" (1986).

2. Arguments supporting this claim are included in David (1976), Ehret and Posnansky (1982), Greenberg (1966), Sutton (1979), and Wescott (1967).
3. Ballard's model (1971:295-96), proposed with regard to the Nigerian Middle Belt, is applicable to other comparably complex areas like the Gongola Valley.
4. Hansford, Bendor-Samuel, and Stanford classify the 'Bèna within the Yungur group of Adamawa languages (1976:182). There they are called the Lala, a name that has long been recognized as imprecise and confusing (e.g., Meek 1931, vol. 2:369). 'Bèna is the name preferred by the peoples referred to elsewhere as the Lala, Roba, and Yungur. I have used the incorrect spelling Gbina in the past and am grateful to Roger Blech for his correction. To clarify the differences (linguistic and ethnic) between the northern 'Bèna (Lala and Roba) and the southern 'Bèna (Yungur), I am using the name 'Bèna here to refer only to the northern groups; Yungur is used to distinguish the southern groups.
5. Meek wrote that the various 'Bèna sections were subjected to "constant attacks by the Fulani governors of Adamawa. . . Neither he [Lawa] nor his successors made any real conquest of the tribe, though the Fulani of Song used to raid the Yungur on their farms" (1931, vol. 2:437). Oral histories I collected in the field in 1980-81 consistently celebrated both Ga'anda and 'Bèna resistance to the Fulani. A Ga'anda version of this story is recorded in Hammandikko (1980:4-6).
6. In order to validate the Ga'anda oral history recorded by Hammandikko (1980) principally about the Gudban lineage and verify its applicability to other Ga'anda communities, I collected the testimonies of over ten different patrilineal groups representing the three dialect subsections of Ga'anda (Ga'anda, Boka, Gabun). While I respect the limited usefulness of oral lore in reconstructing history, I still find that the accounts collected reveal valuable information about Ga'anda origins and about social, political, and ritual processes. Their strength as evidence seems to lie in the remarkable consistency between them. It is hoped that my extensive Ga'anda archive of taped histories can be transcribed and translated from the Hausa to become more widely available.
7. Because so many pottery shrines in the Ga'anda district have fallen into disrepair or entirely lack their grass enclosures, it was difficult to ask questions about whether Ngum-Ngumi vessels were "removed" on ritual occasions. At one Wetu shrine, several of the spirit's brethren were visible, but Ngum-Ngumi itself was said to be buried under a large boulder adjacent to the shrine. Informants at Mokwar and Wudu indicated the Ngum-Ngumi did not like sunlight and thus was always kept so protected. The