

EXPO FROM JUNE 4TH UNTIL SEPT. 26TH 2009

CONGO GALLERY

RITUAL ART FROM

TANGANYIKA



ill.2



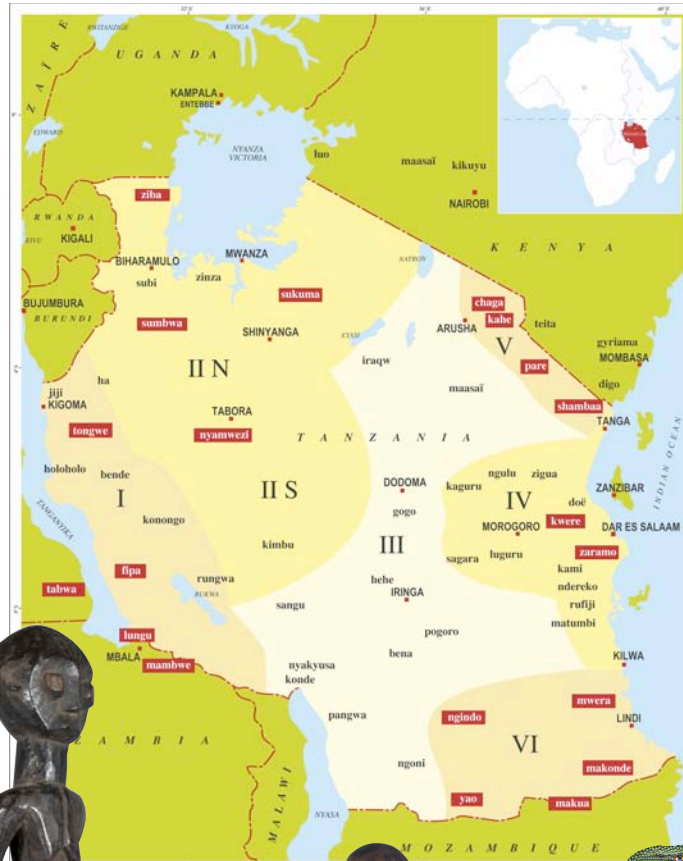
ill.4

For the title of our exhibition I prefer to use the word "Tanganyika" rather than "Tanzania" because the ZAN in TanZANia stands for ZANzibar and not a single object in our exhibition comes from this beautiful spice-laden island. The ritual art we show comes from the "TANGA" part of TANGAnyika. Tanga stand for "bush" and indeed this is where the vast majority of objects in this exhibition come from.

The name Tanganyika was given to the whole mainland, after its huge and deep lake when it became a British protectorate in 1919 having been taken away from the defeated Germans after World War I. Deutsch-Ostafrika had been part of the German African colonial empire since 1885.



ill.5



Basically all "African Art" books published prior to the 1990's pretended that there was no art to be found in Tanganyika. Only a few books and articles (mainly German) mentioned the Nyamwezi, the Makonde or the Zaramo. Whereas the Jiji and Holoholo sculpture productions were included in the Congo art sphere. We know better since the 1994 groundbreaking and vast Tanzania exhibition in Berlin and its accompanying book.

In reality a great number of peoples in Tanganyika produced ritual art, this in most areas of this vast country. In order to keep things simple I divided Tanganyika in six zones, going from the West to the East :

- I. The people living on the shores and the hinterland of Lake Tanganyika.
- II. The people living on, around or south of Lake Victoria.
- III. The central plains and highlands.
- IV. The people living along the coast and in the hinterland of the Indian ocean.
- V. The people living in the hills and high plateaus that separate Tanzania from Kenya.
- VI. The people living along the south coast and its hinterland.



ill.1

slave-driven spice plantations since at least the 10th century AD.

I am convinced (based on the material culture) that the Tanganyikan coast (and probably the hinterland) was occupied by

Southeast Asian (Indonesian?) seafaring people from about the 4th century AD if not earlier. Roughly at the same time the first Bantu-speakers started to infiltrate from the west.

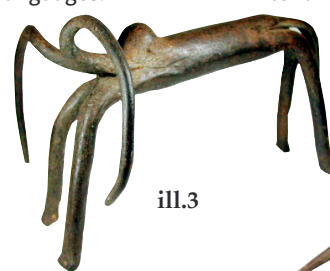


ill.7a

The mainland is commonly believed to have been previously occupied by Cushitic speakers as well as speakers of "click consonant" or Khoisan languages.



ill.6



ill.3



ill.8



ill.9

In **Zone I** we find people that were heavily influenced by the art from East-ern Congo, we therefore find a typology that

is somewhat similar to objects found among the Tabwa, Hemba and Luba peoples such as figures in pairs, power figures, ancestor figures, bowl bearing figures and a few male and female masks. To this are added objects that are typically Tanganyikan such as fertility "dolls" and figures of (andogynous?) chiefs standing on a throne (ill#1)

In the **north of Zone II** we find peoples living in the interlacustrine hilly areas, they make and use fierce masks (ill#2) and a few figurines. The Karagwe kingdom was famous for it's works in iron, unique are its abstracted iron animal figures said to have been made in the first half of the 19th century by the King himself (ill#3). Trough zithers are a typical instrument of this area.

In the **south of Zone II** we find savanna dwellers who make and use huge animated polychrome anthropomorphic figures in pairs and expressionistic masks (ill#4). Concentric circles decorate their extraordinary long wooden trumpets (ill#5).



ill.13a

In **Zone III**, consisting of plains and highlands, we only rarely find ritual sculpture and the few masks are made of cowhide decorated with beads (ill#6). It is in this area that war-clubs are used as emblems of rank,

some are decorated with human or animal heads (ill#7). Only a few figurines were found here. They are difficult to localize with precision though (ill#7b)



ill.7b

In **Zone IV** we find we find Bantu matrilinear people, the major part of their ritual art is geared towards initiation to adulthood for nubile girls. The ubiquitous icon is the "Mwana Hiti" a phallic bust figurine surmounted with a single or multiple crests that many associate to labia (ill#11).

This icon is found on staffs, posts, flywhisks (ill#12), fertility "dolls", high-backed "thrones", stools, musical instruments, snuffcontainers, medicine gourds (ill#13) etc.



ill.15



ill.10

Zone V is inhabited by mountain and high plateau dwellers, they are famous for the animal horn power containers (ill#8) whose stoppers are often in the shape of humans or animals.

We also find here human and animal clay figurines that often are swathed (ill#9). Only a few (anthropozoomorphic?) masks were found in this area (ill#10).

In **Zone VI** we find people that originally came from further south in Mozambique and South Africa, the most famous are the Makonde they are renown for their unique body masks consisting of a wooden swollen belly that were worn in combination with a face mask (ill#14). They also make masks of the helmet type that are in fact portraits, we will not deal with these here.

Also unique to the Makonde zone are the terra-cotta "masks" used by women. Their neighbors

also make face-masks some of which depict animals (ill#15). Hourglass shaped drums are typical for this area (ill#16).

My first field-collecting trips in Tanganyika date from 1973 and my last visit to beautiful Tanzania was in January of this year.

I am proud to have contributed to correct the injustice done to Tanzanian artists of times bygone by exhibiting and publishing their most remarkable productions here and elsewhere. I hope that I have managed to convince you that Tanganyika truly deserves it's place as an art producing area.

MLF June 2009



ill.11



ill.12



ill.14



ill.13b



ill.16

CONGO GALLERY Exposition TANGANYIKA

from June 4th until Sept. 26th 2009
in August we are closed

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