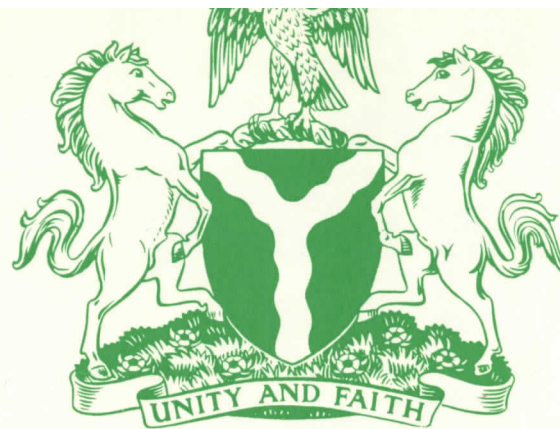


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FOREWORD

It is a privilege and a pleasant duty as Patron of the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture to provide a foreword to this publication on the Festival coming up in January/February 1977. People and culture are inseparable. For culture is the aggregate of concepts and values which characterize a community. It then follows that a people without culture are in themselves not in full existence.

Nothing is more appropriate at this time in Black and African history than a re-discovery of those cultural and spiritual ties which bind together all Black and African peoples the world over. It is the full realization of this fact that has motivated the Federal Military Government to take up the responsibility for organizing and staging the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and culture.

The Festival will provide an unusual forum to bring to light the diverse contributions of Black and African peoples to the universal currents of thought and arts. It will also provide an opportunity for recounting the achievements of our ancestors and contemporaries and their invaluable contributions to the enrichment of world thought and ideas.

ideas regarding the cultural values of the Black and African race. The occasion will surely lead to the abandonment of the "museum approach" to our culture by which men of other cultures consider our culture only in terms of pre-historic objects to be occasionally dusted, displayed and studied instead as a living thing containing and portraying the ethos of our peoples

Let me quickly stress that the aim of the Festival is not to underrate or debase the cultural values of other races. Rather we seek to exert our values in a world which is highly competitive so that the Black and African cultural heritage can co-exist with the cultural values of other peoples from other lands without much conflict. In other words we seek cultural harmony based on human dignity and mutual respect.

In a world that gravitates every day to violence, culture remains one of the most important recourses to sanity and meaningful national development. It has proved itself a satisfying mode of promoting International friendship and understanding. Nigeria believes very strongly in the moderating and salvaging qualities of culture in easing world tensions through cultural exchanges.

The Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture will be a momentous event in the annals of our cultural crusade. It is our sincere hope that the Festival will record a meaningful and resounding success in the objectives which it has set for itself to the glory of our ancestors, the admiration of our contemporaries and the joy of our descendants.



(LT-GENERAL OLUSEGUN OBASANJO)

*Head of the Federal Military Government
Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces
of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and
Patron of the Second World Black and African
Festival of Arts and Culture*

INTRODUCTION

*by Commander O. P. Fingsi,
Federal Commissioner for Special Duties
of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and
President of the International Festival
Committee*

It is with great pleasure and a sense of humility that I am presenting here a few expressions as an introduction to this book dealing with the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture. The Festival itself has been established to accomplish a number of objectives. These are as follows:

- (i) To ensure the revival, resurgence, propagation and promotion of Black and African culture and black cultural values and civilization;
- (ii) to present Black and African culture in its highest and widest conception;

- (iii) to bring to light the diverse contributions of Black and African peoples to the universal currents of thought and arts;
- (iv) to promote Black and African artists, performers and writers and facilitate their world acceptance and their access to world outlets;
- (v) to promote better international and interracial understanding;
- (vi) to facilitate a periodic "return to origin" in Africa by Black artists, writers and performers uprooted to other continents.

It will undoubtedly take some time before the far-reaching results of the Black and African festivals of arts and culture begin to have their effects on the lives of Black peoples all over the world. It is only then that Black peoples will come to realise the indelible historic value of these festivals. They are of particular relevance now in the history and development of Africa in view of the growing awareness of the need and the efforts being made all over the continent to revive and propagate our cultural heritage.

The indiscriminate assimilation of foreign elements into the indigenous cultural life of the African society has intensified the crisis in our social life today. For example, institutions like education, marriage, the family system and even our patterns of behaviour have been invaded by foreign influences. The magnitude of delinquent behaviour both adult and juvenile and other social vices expressed in different forms of deviant social behaviour such as bribery and corruption are the unfortunate effects of the culture conflict between the African tradition and the western civilization.

It is therefore not an exaggeration for me to state that this Festival is bound to have a signifi-

cant effect on the lives of our peoples all over the world. Those of us who are privileged to have the unique opportunity to work for the success of the Festival cannot afford to take lightly our responsibility. This is indeed a moment when the Black and African peoples must intensify their efforts to posit their true identity in the contemporary world. This Festival represents an effort on our collective part to come together as a people so as to set in motion a new cultural awakening and cultural awareness in the Black and African world. The cultural heritage of our Black and African people is the focal point of our oneness and strength. This cultural heritage encompasses our world of arts, our songs, our dances, our behaviour to one another, our communal efforts, and our humanism. Inspired and guided by these facts, there can be no person in our world who should not take special pride in belonging as well as in working selflessly for our collective existence.

This is indeed a great moment in the history of the Black and African peoples in the world. It is also a moment when our peoples must positively show that they want liberty and cultural freedom without hypocrisy; that they want social justice and political rights without exploitation; and finally, that they want clear and unequivocal cultural identity for their objective existence in our world. We believe that this positive cultural identity will enable us to establish a new dynamic and positive direction for our peoples all over the world. For these reasons, we in Nigeria, as the host country, are committed as ever to see this Festival through. We can therefore begin now to imagine how significant it is for us to make this Festival a success.

To emphasize again, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture is a momentous event of our time. Besides its uniqueness, it has objectives that all Black and African peoples of the world take pride in associating with. In addition to the great objectives, this is a Festival that seeks to incorporate all heterogenous human elements identifiable to the Black and African world as well as all peoples of the world with African heritage. This is indeed a very important period in the history of the Black and African peoples of this world.

The mere fact that this Festival is taking place from January 15 to February 12, 1977, is not enough to say that we have succeeded. The greater part of our success cannot be measured in quantitative values but rather in terms of the qualitative achievement of the objectives which this Festival has set out for itself. There is no doubt then that the Festival will at least constitute a forum where Black and African peoples from all over the world can come together, reassure one another, and join one another for the protection of our common heritage and the promotion of a secure and purposeful future for all our people for countless generations to come.

In all these months of preparation for this great occasion, the International Festival Committee, over which I am privileged to preside, has endeavoured through its various organs and activities to explain to our people and indeed the world at large, the far-reaching significance of the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture. I have no doubt that the Festival itself will provide the best testimony of the ideals that inspired it.

AFRICAN ART IN FOREIGN HANDS

by Alma Robinson

For centuries, the movement of African art has been an outward flow: hundreds, even thousands, of European military conquerors, administrators and adventurers took home souvenirs of their African experiences. In Europe, the exotic became a priceless source of energy to the budding movement of modern art at the turn of the century. Ten years ago, prices began to escalate with the growing awareness of the uniqueness of African art "antiquities".

Much remains in Africa, of course, sometimes in the care of private families, often at shrines and royal palaces. For instance, the bronze heads of Ife, Nigeria, remain on the palace grounds in a museum, having narrowly escaped a raid by the notorious German, Leo Frobenius, in 1910. Among the Ashanti of Ghana, much golden regalia is still used in traditional ceremonies. Furthermore, some museum systems have acquired sizeable collections of their national art. However, much of the best and the oldest examples of African culture was harvested over half a century ago by Europeans. Now, with justifiable urgency, Africans have begun demanding the fruits of their history for themselves.

In its most public form, the quest for restitution has been crystallized in two United Nations resolutions, a UNESCO resolution and numerous other statements.

Since most of the Western "consumer" nations have consistently abstained from these public resolutions, they may not carry much force. However, the sense of the resolutions has provoked meaningful self-inquiries among some European collectors and museum administrators. Some have committed themselves to finding means to return at least a nominal

number of important pieces – as well as documents – to Africa.

Thus, at the urging of a British firm with a lease to renew in Kumasi, Ghana, the question of returning the Asantahene's regalia was introduced in the House of Lords. While he was negotiating a settlement for Belgian firms in Zaire, the Belgian Foreign Minister publicly acknowledged a previous agreement to return significant works of art to Kinshasa. President Giscard d'Estaing of France announced the return of some ancient Algerian archives during the first visit of a French president to Algeria since the war of independence.

Such open acknowledgements have been infrequent; for in Europe, talk of sending to Africa valuable artifacts has often provoked a tortured outcry from a public which regards the treasures as their heritage, rightly gained, of former empires. The *Cercle Algerianiste*, representing a group of French ex-colonialists, for instance, denounced the "abusive amputation of the national patrimony" after d'Estaing's gesture was published in Paris.

Academics may be the most blatantly possessive, often openly praising the order and convenience of the British Museum as opposed to the expense and difficulty of going to Africa to study African artifacts. Africans, they allege, do not appreciate these old things beyond their monetary value and would sell them unscrupulously if given the chance.

But there is no truth in this charge. African governments are committed to retrieving and maintaining their priceless heritage in Africa – even at a price. While they have been negotiating for the restitution of some antiquities, some

African governments have committed themselves to buying valuable pieces when they come up for sale. The Ashanti Traditional Council bought a gold embroidered cap which had belonged to King Kofi Kalkari for £2,250 at an auction at Christie's in London. The Nigerian government, which purchased some Benin bronzes from the British Museum during the fifties, has continued to purchase unusual pieces when they become available.

Africans have begun to insist that the axis of African art scholarship moves to the land of its birth and away from the former colonial metropolises and newer centres of African studies in America. One way to achieve this goal is to bring back the objects themselves, test them against the surviving cultural traditions and place them in the context of their creation.

In a memorandum explaining the 1973 U.N. resolution to restore plundered art to countries of origin, Ipop Eyebu-Bankand'Asi of Zaire wrote: "There is a deep-rooted and indissoluble bond between nature, man and his artistic creations. The cultural riches of the poor countries are at their best in their natural setting, because they glow in an almost sensual aura. . . . Such works represent the manual skill and innermost feelings of our ancestors. They are our guiding light, the inspiration for the developing countries in their overall development. It is, therefore, proper that the laws of fundamental telepathy should be obeyed and it is both natural and just that these guiding lights, these authentic symbols of constant evolution, should be restored to the developing countries."

His sentiment was anticipated 35 years ago by a Belgian writer, Gaston Denys Perier, who was

then paces (Australia)
Facing page: The joy of dance
Below: The drums of Haiti





impressed by the creative inspiration apparent in African art. "The mask", he wrote, "confers a superhuman force like one possessed by the dead or the spirit of the ancestors. . . . To touch these, destroy them, without caring about the reverent thought which tradition attaches to them is to cause profound injuries, if not hate." Finally, he asked, "What would we say if some people came to our public squares or churches and lifted the statues whose importance or beauty are dear to us?"

European collections of "Africana" started as early as the Portuguese tradition missions of the 16th century. British Museum collections began early in the 18th century. But the interest and the collections steamrolled with the notorious military expeditions of the late 19th century. In Roman style, and strictly against the developing international law of the time, the British conquerors of Kumasi (1874) and Benin (1897) took what they regarded as valuable loot and burned both towns. Waves of colonial administrators, traders and missionaries followed the initial incursions. They often took home souvenirs acquired by virtue of their positions. Some missionaries who encouraged Africans to burn their "pagan effigies" as proof of real conversion quietly collected the best examples and shipped them back home.

As a result of these activities, rows of African objects sit, jewel-like, behind glass in European "ethnographic" museums, often grouped with art of other "preliterate" peoples. The British Museum, for instance, houses its African specimens in a specialized "Museum of Mankind" with articles from Polynesian and Mayan cultures. Untold quantities, perhaps

twenty times the number on exhibition, rest in basement storage rooms, the point a Ghanaian film-maker, Kwate Nee-Owoo, has raised in the documentary film, *You Hide Me* (1972). As the camera glides through aisle upon aisle of boxes full of miscellaneous objects, the commentator asks: "How can the governments of modern African states explain that they cannot see the traditional art in their own country?"

Some Europeans deride the current efforts for restitution as a "nationalistic" drive, contrasting it with nobler sentiments of the "universality of art". The spirit of sharing, of exchange, is said to be antithetical to a drive for national possession. Commentators and academics alike ask why Africans aren't more interested in collecting European art, Oceanic art, Indian art, etc. Probing further, the nub of the European argument reveals a root of possessiveness. "The process (of restitution) might turn into rather a striptease", sniffed the Baroness Lee of Asheridge during the House of Lords debate on returning Ashanti regalia to Ghana.

But no African country has called for the return of all the artifacts and art objects which were taken during colonialism. Even in Zaire, which has led efforts for restitution in the United Nations, the demand consists of asking the Belgian *Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale* at Tervuren to restore one article if the Tervuren Museum has more than one example of it.

Museums in Zaire had been well-stocked until the turbulent sixties. Among the victims of the notorious civil war were the country's two major museums at Lubumbashi and Kinshasa. U.N. troops sent to restore order installed themselves in the newly built Lubumbashi Museum. While

members of a private group, the Society of Friends of the Museum, managed to haul away about two-fifths of the still-crated objects, the troops helped themselves to the rest. Some wooden statues were used as firewood while the most attractive pieces were seized as souvenirs. When the troops left at the end of 1962, the building was empty. Meanwhile, the staff of the museum took advantage of the chaotic situation to sell its stores and exhibits for personal profit. Finally, all that was left was a few items with little commercial value.

In 1924, the Ogoga of Ikere, Nigeria, left a set of doors carved by the distinguished artist, Olowe, to the Wembley Exhibition in London. After the show, officials from the British Museum asked if they could buy the doors. He replied that he certainly couldn't sell them, but he would agree to exchange the doors for a wooden throne built to his specifications. "That does not seem to me to have been a very good bargain for him, for the wooden throne is not a very distinguished piece of British craftsmanship, but I am happy to say that Olowe, being still alive, carved a fine new door to fill the gap left by ours," wrote William Fagg, formerly of the British Museum, several decades later.

This story of uneven bargaining could symbolize thousands of similar transactions which have taken place, perhaps not at such an official level, since the awakening of European interest in African art. Africans who do not agree to sell their family heirlooms or religious images may find themselves victimized by thieves.

Now, along with bilateral and international efforts to recover art and artifacts taken abroad,

measures are being devised to keep the African treasures at home. In many countries, trained museum curators are combing the countryside, buying examples of works no longer produced or persuading their owners to give or lend them to the museum service for safekeeping. "We are grave robbers," joked Fr. Joseph Cornet, the Director General Adjunct of the *Institut National des Musées* in Kinshasa. "But we must do it before the dealers do."

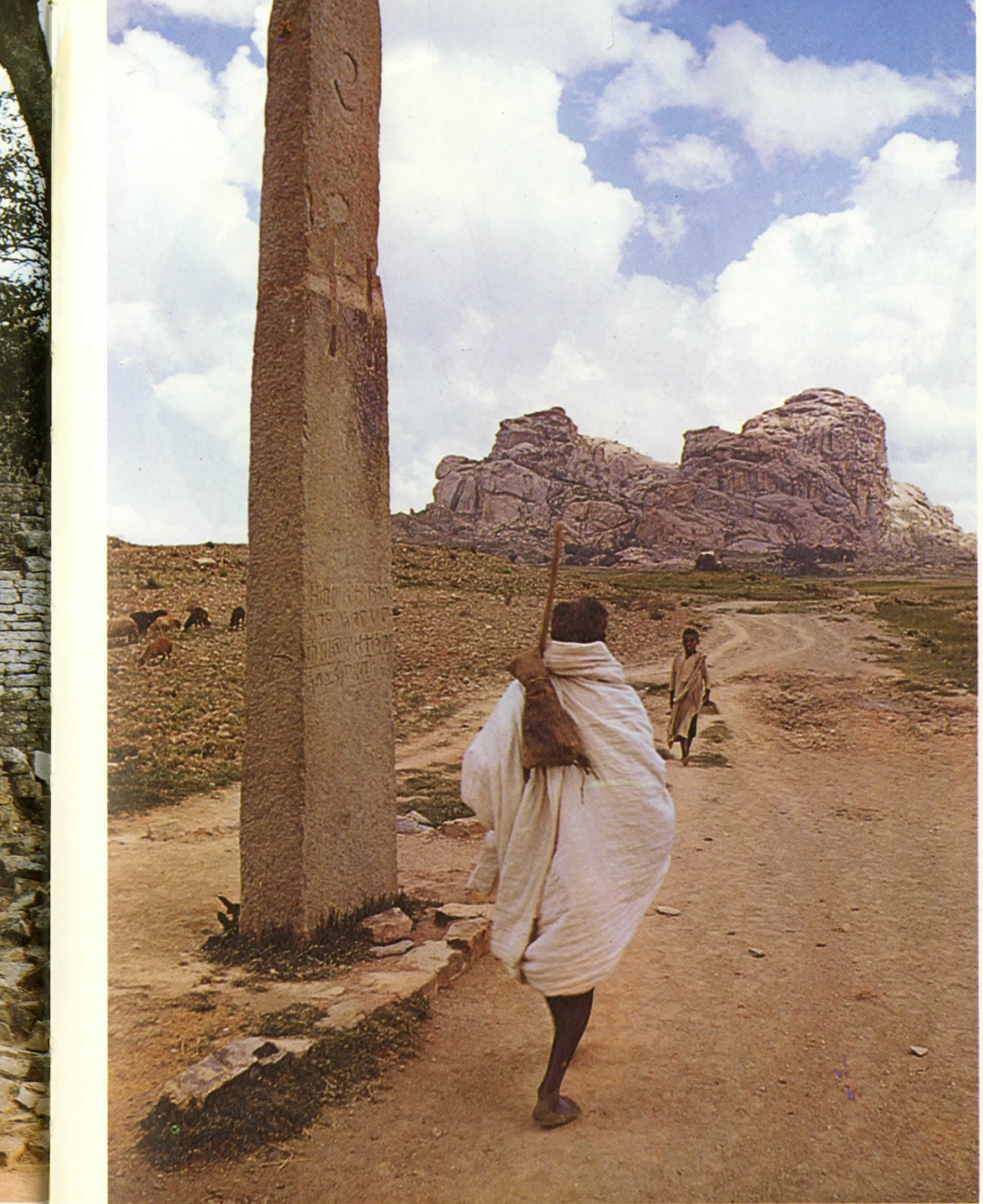
In Nigeria, hundreds of students have been employed to photograph and register antiquities kept by families throughout the country. When indexed, the objects may be easily identified if they are stolen or sold for export. Although Nigeria's laws have protected antiquities since 1939, the drain from the country has continued, accelerating in the past fifteen years. Two years ago, the antiquities department successfully pushed for a total ban on private sales and exports of any antiquity, defined as an art object or craftwork made before 1918 or used in a traditional ceremony. Only the museum or its authorized agent, such as a university, may purchase an antiquity. Furthermore, all dealers were required to be licensed and to submit their stock to the antiquities department for purchase.

The government simultaneously undertook a mass acquisitions programme for the national collections with plans to stock five new museums during the next five years. The decision to try to purchase every item available was made necessary because of tremendous pressures on the country's supplies of art, explained Ekpo Eyo, the director of the Federal Department of Antiquities.

Nigeria requires any person planning to



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The Spirit

export an art object to obtain a permit certifying that it is a non-antiquity at the museum. Similar laws are in effect in most African countries: Angola, Benin, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Ruanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zaire, Zambia.

Casual tourists usually comply with these laws. Up to 300 a month come to the Lagos Museum at Onikan, bringing their souvenirs, ranging from cheap trinkets to expensive modern copies of Benin bronzes. It is the professional dealers from abroad and their African associates who continue to ignore these legal prohibitions.

Says one Belgian dealer who regularly received African salesmen in his gallery: "You can't really stop this trade, because there is too much money to be made, more money with a few transactions than most people make in their lifetimes."

In addition to art dealers, diplomats, airline crews, military experts and foreign aid professionals are among the cream of the illegal traffickers. In the sixties, the American Peace Corp workers were targeted for special investigation and scrutiny in Nigeria. More recently, a group of Soviet technicians was suspended from Egypt after their baggage was inspected and found full of illicit souvenirs.

Often the dealers themselves arrive from abroad to survey the field, leaving instructions for local people after they have returned to Europe or America. One French art dealer went to Zaire several years ago, ostensibly a member

of an entomology team. While they hunted insects, he searched for rare masks and statues. When he was finally apprehended back in Kinshasa, he had apparently shipped off most of his collection or left instructions for it to be sent to him.

Customs agents are usually cited as an easy loophole for illegal traffickers. "Where there is money, there is no customs," one museum official said cynically. As early as 1963, the *Daily Times* of Lagos editorialized that customs officials "are not being vigilant enough", calling "for greater vigour and vigilance on the part of these men to ensure that this nation is not totally deprived of these valuable materials which are part and parcel of our heritage and that of generations unborn".

Although hundreds of African art works are stolen every year, a mere handful, nine since 1968, have been reported to the international police network, Interpol, in Paris. An official there admits that Interpol's low rate of success may inspire little confidence. The agency does not have its own investigative officers for cases of art smuggling. It relies instead on local police authorities in its member countries, sending them information and photographs on reported cases.

Foreign researchers in Africa – social science students and visiting professors in such fields as art history, anthropology and archaeology – have acquired a notorious reputation for collecting souvenirs of their field research. Often the pieces acquire a higher commercial value because of the authenticity associated with publications. Pieces from Leon Underwood's collection, for instance, probably commanded a



Far left: wooden tiara (South Africa)

Centre: West African
decorative figure



higher price because of his name when they were sold recently at Christie's art auction house in London.

Even when the researchers do not themselves profit from their work, publication of an area or ethnic group which was previously "undiscovered" may attract the attention of the underworld. Within months, dealers will circulate flyers to galleries and well-known collectors, perhaps even to museums, advertising new offerings, probably stolen or purchased illegally and certainly illegally exported, validated with footnotes to a scholarly work. A book written by Ulli Beier on sacred woodcarvings in Ilobu, a Nigerian village, was practically used as a guidebook by unscrupulous dealers and collectors. Within months, every shrine named by Beier had been hit by thieves.

Like other Third World countries, African nations have looked for relief in the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illegal Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. The Convention, adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in 1970, was expected to play a deterrent role in the trafficking of cultural objects. States which ratify the convention agree to prevent their institutions, such as museums, from importing objects which have been illegally exported and agree to ban the importation of objects stolen from museums or public monuments. Member states agree to try to recover and return such property. However, a state requesting the return of such an object agrees to pay "just compensation" to any innocent purchaser or to a person with valid title to the object in question.

Since prices escalate with subsequent transactions, the last-mentioned provision would probably limit use of the convention to the most significant objects of a nation's heritage. However, although they have paid lip-service to its ideals, no Western European nations have yet ratified the convention. The United States Senate ratified it in 1972, but legislation to implement the convention has not yet been enacted. Canada is reportedly making progress towards ratification.

Without the support of the consumer nations, the convention is virtually a dead letter. Asked about prospects for the convention in the United Kingdom, one British official said his government shouldn't be expected to enforce foreign export laws. Furthermore, he expressed concern that the convention might have "retroactive effect" which would apply to works of art taken many years ago. The language of the convention clearly states, however, that the illegal import must have taken place after the convention went into effect in the states concerned.

While the convention proceeds slowly, members of the International Council of Museums have tried to stem the trade in illegal antiquities by subscribing to an ethical code; in addition, several American museums and professional associations have announced that they will no longer purchase items lacking appropriate export documents, or papers of provenance.

In explaining the policy of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, Bennett Bronson wrote: "We doubt if anything can be done about the spilt milk of the past, but we will be specially

cautious about objects recovered within the last several years. Some objects looted as far back as 1960 are probably still in the pipeline or in the hands of dealers who originally commissioned the looting and profits from selling those objects would undoubtedly be ploughed back into further looting.”

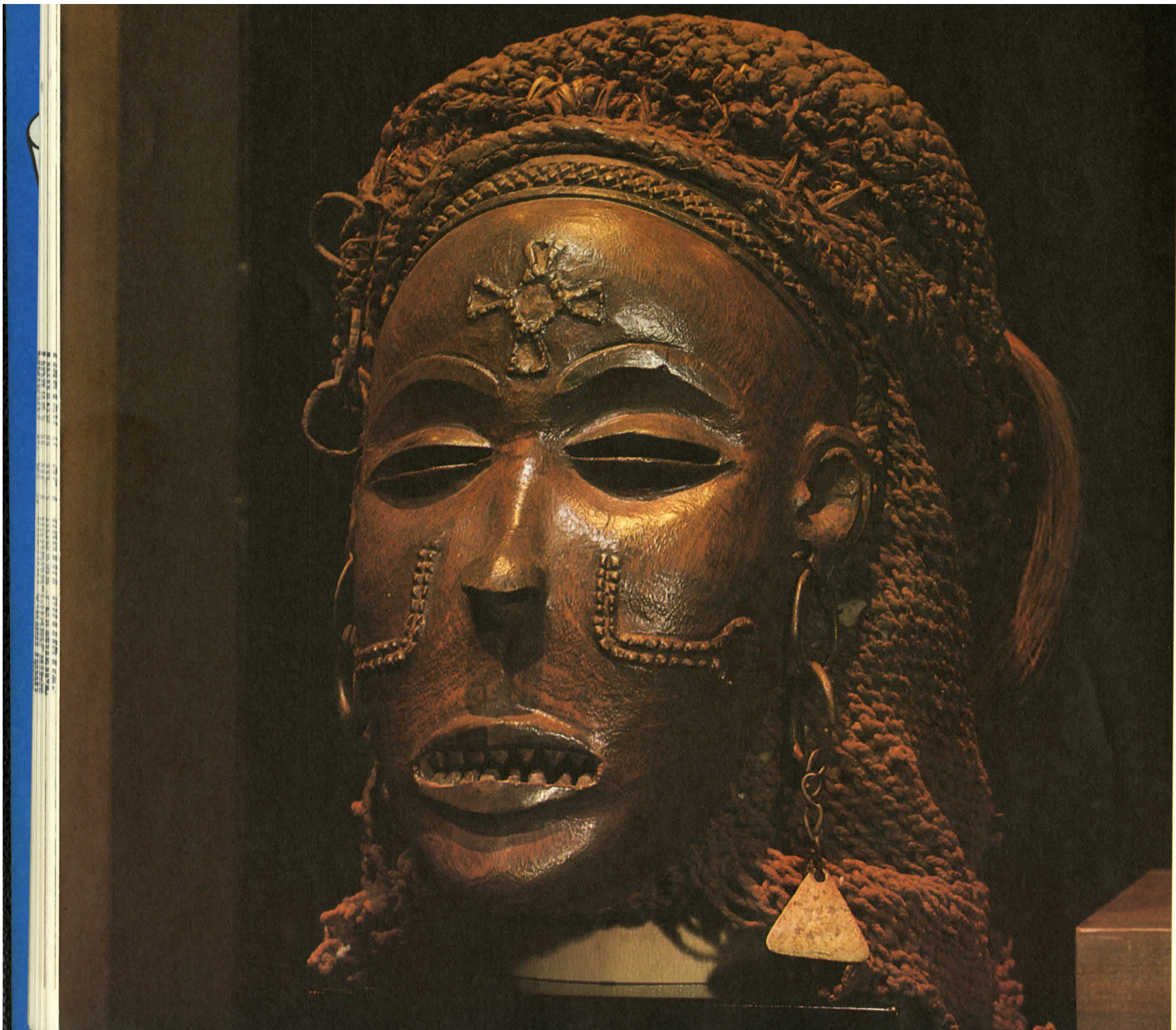
These efforts hardly touch the scruples of private collectors, who may even prefer illegal objects because of their clandestine character. Customers who like to make a profit on illegal goods often end up with fakes, according to Bronson. One well-known American collector may have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars this way, relying on a French dealer.

At the first line of attack, co-operation between African countries, and especially between their customs and police agencies, could be improved. Generally, objects flow between borders and escape domestic protection. Works of art from Eastern Nigeria leave through Cameroon, from Ghana to the Ivory Coast, from Zaire through Burundi, etc.

Last year, the First Intergovernmental

Conference on Cultural Policies in Africa called for co-operative regional efforts to stop the trafficking. To date, the only effective reciprocal arrangement has employed the laws of the former territories of French Equatorial Africa. In at least one case between Senegal and the Ivory Coast, these laws were used to return illegally exported objects. A multilateral agreement is said to be under discussion between Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

An example of an effective regional agreement is the 1972 pact between Mexico, Guatemala and the United States, designed to restrict the traffic in Pre-Columbian art objects and antiquities. Unless an object is accompanied by the written export permission of the country of origin, it can be seized by U.S. customs officials. While the law has had notable success in New York, where galleries specializing in Pre-Columbian antiquities have had to close, it has also been effective in Brussels and Paris, where ethnographic dealers have expanded their wares to include Pre-Columbian artifacts. Any attempt along this line should be subjected to careful scrutiny.





Right: Gazelle mask used in initiation rituals (Ivory Coast)

Left: Mask of the dance cult (Angola)