BUHABO STATUES FROM THE BENEMBAHO
(BOHOMA)

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The region roughly situated between 3.30 and 5 degrees north latitude and 28 and 29 degrees east longitude is identified on the maps and in the textbooks as the country of the Bembe. To the north of this general area are the Vira, the Furiru (Fulero), and the Nyndu; to the northwest and west, various subgroups of the Lega (Basimwenda, Bamuzimu, Bakabango); to the southwest, subgroups of the Boyo (Bahucwe and Beniambamba); to the south, the Boyo and the so-called Holoholo (Guha) of the Tumbwe kingdom; and to the east, Lake Tanganyika and across it, Burundi and Tanzania, where several riverain groups are related to peoples on the western shore of the lake.

Many of these ethnic labels are deceptive. It cannot be assumed that ethnic groups, as listed on the maps, are comprised of historically and culturally homogeneous components. Certainly some degree of regional homogeneity and ethnic consciousness have developed as the result of acculturation and linguistic assimilation as well as decades of manipulation and regrouping by extraneous powers. It nevertheless remains a fact that diverse units in any one of these ethnic groupings are conscious of their distinctive origins. In addition, prior to colonial reorganization these differences were manifested in various nuances of local custom, in political autonomy, and in numerous secondary bonds fostered through intermarriages, ritual linkages, interdependent cults, and initiation systems. In the oral traditions these diverse origins of specific groups, submerged within larger wholes, are expressed in distinctive genealogies, migration and settlement accounts, and precisely stated relationships with subgroups that are incorporated in other ethnic entities.

The historical and ethnic map of Bemoland is extremely complex since this is an area of transition among savannah-dwelling matrilineal groups in the south, forest-dwelling patrilineal groups in the west, and pastoral patrilineal groups on the high plateaus in the north. The internal ethnic composition of Bemeland is rendered even more intricate. Before the bulk of the Bembe (tracing origin with different Lega divisions) immigrated, ancient hunting groups of varied origin were preestablished there together with offshoots from the Lwindi kingdom (situated in the Itomwe mountains on the divide where Lega, Nyndu, and Bembe meet) and matrilineal populations of western and southern origins. More or less intermingled with Pygmies, these early groups are known under various names such as Bambote, Basilasumba, Bahonga, Basim'minje, Basayangwa, and Basyele.

Along Lake Tanganyika in particular, many non-Bembe entities had shifted from hunting to fishing cultures long before the Bembe from the mountains gradually descended to the shores of the lake, barely a century ago. All along the lake shores from Uvira southward to beyond the 5 degree south latitude, there are settlements of these non-Bembe lake fishermen, frequently mixed with Bembe and Vira villages. They are identified (and identify themselves) under many generic and specific denominations: Bazyoba (Bakyoba) mainly in the north, Basanze and Babwari in the center, and Bahoma (Baoma, Bagoma, Bakoma) in the south. These distinctive groupings have their own occasionally overlapping traditions of origin. Some trace relationships with groups emerging from the Lwindi kingdom, others with the Mbole hunters. Others relate their beginnings to unspecified areas southwest on the Lualaba River and frequently perceive close relationships with specific groups now living among the Boyo and the Kalanga; still others feel bonds with groups established among the so-called Holoholo and the Tumbwe.

For the present analysis, the focus is on the southern representatives of these fishermen, generically referred to as the Bahoma. The cultural and historical position of the Bahoma located along Lake Tanganyika is complicated. They were influenced to some extent by the Bembe and other Bembe-influenced groups that settled among them, but they are not Bembe. From the point of view of origin, it is necessary to distinguish three groups that tend to be classified as Bahoma. In the northernmost area are the Bakwalamona, who are in contact with the Basanze and the Babwari fishermen. Reduced in the early fifties to two villages, the Bakwalamona feel close historical relationships with Chief Penge's Baskikundu (a subdivision among the Buhucwe or Bahulwe) located south of the Bembe among the Boyo in Kabambare territory, near the Lwiko River. It is noteworthy that the Bahoma claim to have encountered these people, whom they call Bahulwe, when they moved northward toward the Bay of Kibanga after having arrived near the lake.

Living in one village south of the Bakwalamona are the Baciba. This group, a small number of whom are established among the Bakwalamona, are said to be of Bambote origin (lit., Pygmies; i.e., Pygmy-influenced hunting groups living in the region before the Bakwalamona, the Bahoma, and the Bembe immigrated). In this respect the oral traditions of the large Bembe-influenced Basyalingwa clan (established in the mountains near Lake Tanganyika

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and on its shores, in proximity and among the Bakvalumona, Baciba, and Bahoma) deserve mentioning. According to these traditions, the Baciba together with the Bahonga hunters (found in the extreme southern part of Fizi territory and in Kabambare territory) are the descendants of Elukwe, an ancestor with whom the Basylangwa trace a sixth degree collateral patrilineal linkage. Offshoots of the Baciba are found also southward among the so-called Holoholo in the Tumbwe chetterie of the former Albertville (Kalemie) territory and among the Bahucwe-Boyo.

Although administratively incorporated among the Bembe-influenced Basylangwa, the Baciba traditionally constituted a recognized independent political unit. In the early fifties, this autonomy was still reflected in their ancestral cult. On behalf of his group, the head of the Baciba worshiped the founding ancestors Azemambano and her son Kizangungu (one of the earliest remembered chiefs). The cult was centered on two wooden figurines (pungu, see plates 1 and 2) representing these two ancestors; they were kept in a circular straw-covered shrine.

Plate 1. — A standing male figurine collected by D. Biebuyck in 1951 among the Baciba (a non-Bembe group established on the western shore of Lake Tanganyika and submerged among Bembe and Bembe-influenced clans). The figurine represents Kizangungu, the ancestral chief of this small group. Used in ancestral cult by the Baciba chief, it was kept in a shrine together with the female figurine illustrated in plate 2; a drum stood between the two statues. MRAC 55.3.168 2/1; H. 49.5 cm; carved in Crossopteryx fruticosa (identification R. Dechamps).

Plate 2. — A standing female figurine collected by D. Biebuyck in 1951 among the Baciba. The figurine represents Azemambano, the mother of the ancestral chief Kizangungu (see plate 1). MRAC 55.3.168 2/2; H. 47.5 cm; carved in Crossopteryx fruticosa (identification R. Dechamps).
house (ngolo) with a drum placed between the two figurines. Four additional statues consecrated in the name of other ancestors (Azemambala, the senior of Kizangungu, Kabwe and his son Mulikwa, and Kabezya) had been destroyed earlier by fire. The cult also included four sacred sheep (named after various ancestors of the Bacinba senior, including his deceased father). The old Mwanadenge Malillo, head of the group and owner of the statues and the sheep, had carved the figurines in his youth. His father had consecrated them by making the first oil rubbing and sacrificing and distributing six sheep on this occasion. Malillo had learned the art of carving from one of his « little fathers », but beyond that he did not trace the origin of the carving tradition. When Malillo gave me the figurines in exchange for a substantial payment, he placed the money and other valuables received in the shrine. He asked the ancestors for excuse and forgiveness, urging them not to be angry because their figurines were now being handed over to « Asker-does-not-die, a European who knows the custom and will not harm them ».

At each new moon, the senior of the cult would sleep in the shrine containing the images and the drum. The drum would be played with sticks by one of his grandchildren; invocations centered on the concept of strength would be made while the images and the drum were being rubbed with palm oil. The figurines are carved in a distinct style reminiscent of sculptures attributed to the Tumbwe and the Tabwa. The male figure has some of the attributes of chiefship (butumu) : the impressive coiffure (mokisi) falling down into a single long tress (called meya, horns), the spear (fumu); the spear held in the right hand is broken and looks like a walking cane), the mahango stripes on the arms, and the kisala loincloth (removed).

In 1951 the Bahoma properly speaking inhabited within the limits of Bembeland seven small villages or hamlets along the lake with Bembe settlements interspersed among them. The oral traditions collected in these seven Bahoma villages state that four chiefs (Kahobi, Kiza, Mulunga, and Mulonda) representing different branches of the Benembaho clan migrated into the present country from an unspecified point in the Luapula River region, across the mountains in the area of Fizi; another closely related chief, Kalunga Mungabwe, remained in Boyoland. These four arrived together with nine titled counsellors-initiators (balumvi) and their kinship groups including the Beneyxango and Beneukunda. They established themselves in an unoccupied region near the lake, on the boundaries where other inhabitants (Balumvu of Chief Angeta, related to Swima and Kiri, Bakwalumona of Pole) had already settled.

This historical layout seems to result from certain manipulations and reinterpretations of fact. Among the Benembago there is a small group called Bakwakamanya. The first missionaries of the White Fathers' Congregation who settled in the Kibanga Bay area in the 1880's encountered two Bahoma chiefs : one in the northern part representing the Benembago dynastic clan (descending from the ancestor Mulanga), and one in the southern part for the Bakwakamanya (descending from the ancestor Kahobe). It is feasible to assume that the Bakwakamanya (now represented in very small numbers) preceded the other Bahoma and that they were of a different historical origin. Some non-Bahoma fishing groups incorporated among the Bembe claim to have met the Bakwakamanya only when arriving in the southern lake area; according to one of these groups (the Bakeci), the Bakwakamanya (or Basikamanya) emigrated early from the Lwindi kingdom. Remnants of the Bakwakamanya migration are found in some parts of Bembeland and are known as Bakamania-Bakunda among the Boyo. Bahoma oral traditions cope with the problem by linking the Benembaho and the Bakwakamanya dynastic groups as senior and junior branches with common origin.

Arriving as hunters with bow and arrow, the Bahoma also knew how to use the fishing spear (mulonda). They soon learned to make rafts (mila) for better fishing away from the shores of the lake and later adopted the dugout canoes. Originally they built circular houses on a framework covered with leaves on the outside and mud on the inside. They were matrilineal; most boys and girls went to live with their maternal uncles until marriage, when the men returned to their fathers' villages and the women joined their husbands.

The Bahoma arrived with centralized political institutions, based on the recognition of autonomous village groups ruled by a chief (originally called kolo and later named fumu) and kinship (e.g., seniority bonds) relationships among chiefs. Succession to chiefship was matrilineal; in the cases studied, a sister's son, an uterine brother, or a sister's sister's son had succeeded to chiefship. Early in the century, however, patrilineal succession began to manifest itself, perhaps under the combined influences of the Bembe and the Arabs who established temporary rule here as well as the pressures of the colonial system. In the example of one living chief, Mbango Matutaa succeeded to Bilate, the son of his father's sister; Matutaa's father had been chief, as matrilineal successor to an earlier chief, Kizembo.

The Bahoma traditionally worship the ancestral founders of the royal group and the dead chiefs of their village-states, and figurines representing and honoring these ancestors and chiefs are central in the cult. In addition they practice the worship of several spirits (Kilingi, Lwanazi, Kabulu, Kasulu, Katangalulu, Kabogo, Kisala, Kaulunganza, Kasafumu, Misozi, Katumba, Katwa, Mulambi, Kawa, Liza or Diza, etc.). These nature spirits are associated with the lake and with the mountains. Each kinship group,
especially the groups of counselors-initiators, had its own cult for any one of these spirits. Corporations of specialized healers and protectors were based on initiation to the secrets of buhабо (bwabo, bugabo, bukabo), mukuki, and mmoni. They never adopted the bwami and its complementary female bhumbwa association from the Bembe.

The intricate ethnic situation in the Bembe’s southern borderland is of special relevance for this study. Here the Bembe and the Lake Tanganyika riverain populations, who were pre-established in the region, are in contact with two well-known groups of people referred to in the literature as Boyo (or Bujwe) and Holoholo. Both denominations cover culturally and historically homogeneous populations. It must be noted that small groups of non-Pygmy hunters called Bahonga are also found in this borderland region. Several groups established among the Bembe, either identified with the Bembe or known along the lake as Basanze, Babwari, Bahoma, and others, trace remote historical relationships with certain subgroups among the Boyo and the Holoholo. The Bahoma in Bembeland also point to several closer relationships with particular villages and kinship groups now incorporated among Boyo, Holoholo, and Tumbwe but whose recent antecedents among the Bahoma are well known. In addition, numerous Bembe villages have settled lately below the 5 degree south latitude, more frequently among the Holoholo than the Boyo. The Bembe tend to be specific when referring to their southern neighbors. For peoples south of them in the lake area, the Bembe use terms such as Bakwamamba (Baholoholo) of Chief Maila, Batabwa of Chief Kasangabinja, Babemba of a subchief of Tumbwe, and Bakwakahindi of Chief Kasanga Kasongo. The same holds true for their other neighbors; for example, when denoting the Boyo, the Bembe distinguish the Bahucwe from the Basikikhundu incorporated among them.

Hore’s map (1883) lists in a north to south direction the following regions situated on the western shore of Lake Tanganyika: Uvira, Ubemba, Msansi, Ubwari, Ukaramba, Ugoma, Uguha, and Marungu. He thinks Ubemba is simply a name derived from Cape Bemba (Bamba) “famous for its kaolin ... and regarded by the natives as a very sacred locality” (p. 13). He mentions active trade of the people of Msansi and Ubwari with Burundi and Ujiji on the east coast. The Bwari are raided periodically by the Warua (a name used for some groups identified as Luba). Ukaramba (the area of Cape Kalamba where villages of the Bakwalumona were located) on the south end of the Ubwari peninsula is a transitional region between Ubwari and Ugoma (p. 14). Ugoma has a steep rugged coastline of about 70 miles, extending well beyond the 5 degree south latitude (the conventionally traced boundary between Bembeland in the north and the lands of the Holoholo and the Boyo in the south).

Governed by “local chiefs”, Ugoma is regularly attacked by the Warua. There is intensive trading of salt, cloth, and beads for ivory, but the most important product of the region is the large dugout canoe (p. 14). The precise location of the dividing line between Ugoma and Uguha “is difficult to say.” Uguha begins somewhere north of the Lukuga River and extends southward for ninety miles. Although “a principality” (p. 14) of the large country of Rua (Warua, Luba), Uguha is a separate entity ruled by several powerful chiefs (which one is the most senior would be hard to determine).

Delhaise (1906, p. 429) observes that te Holoholo occupy a strip of land about 220 km long and 50 to 60 km wide on the west shore of Lake Tanganyika. Included in the area, whose northern limit is Kavumwe (a place just south of the Bakwalumona), are all Bahoma villages discussed in this study; thus the Holoholo are placed in direct contact with the Bwari and the Bembe. Delhaise (ibid., p. 447) remarks that the Holoholo have customs similar to the Bemba (of whom the Tabwa are the northernmost offshoots) and stresses the extreme importance of the cult of nature spirits (located in rocks, islands, and capes on the lake). For Schmitz (1912, pp. 29-33) the Holoholo are culturally closest to the Bemba. Both groups recognize their probable interdependence but are unable to demonstrate the linkages. Ancestors of the Holoholo known as the Guha had moved towards Lake Tanganyika from a southwestern direction. They pushed the Boyo westward, were defeated by “les gens du Goma” (Bahoma), and accepted the sovereignty of the Bakwamamba, a royal family of Bahoma origin. Later the Tumbwe as vanguards of the Luba migrations pushed eastward, chased the Bakalanga northward, were defeated by the Tabwa, and pressed their conquests northwards. After invading the lands of Bakasanga, Bahoma, Babwari, and Basanze, the Tumbwe returned south, where the Guha-Bakwamamba accepted their sovereignty. Other Luba hunting groups, spearheaded by the Benakunda, subsequently invaded the land of the Holoholo and settled there.

These movements and mixtures of populations with diverse historical origins help to explain the strong feelings of relationships held by different components of lakeshore populations such as Babwari, Basanzee, and Bahoma. The “tribal” labels are deceptive: many are just nicknames that apply to a regionally specialized custom developed by historically interrelated but politically autonomous fragments of groups. This situation is well reflected in the observations made by Coupez (1955, pp. 9-10 and map) among the so-called Holoholo. Under that name are classified several small groups situated between the 5 degree south latitude and the city of Kalemie (Albertville), mostly in proximity of the lake. From north to south, they include the (Bakwa)Mamba of Chief Majila, the (Ba)Kuhu (Guha) of Chief Kasanga Kasongo, the Twagi of chiefs Miketo and Kalumbi, and the (Bena)Kunda of Chief Mooni.
Kabwe. Each group claims to represent the Holoholo properly speaking, while they tend to classify the Guha as Bahoma. According to Coupez, linguistic differences among them are relatively minor. Other languages spoken in the surrounding areas by Boyo, Kalanga, and Tumbwe would also be close to the Holoholo group.

All these sources point to the distinctive character of the lakeside region where ancient hunting groups and pre-Luba, Luba-influenced, and Lunda-derived groups have intermingled. Somehow a viable new cultural synthesis resulted from common patterns found in the fishing economy, the elaboration of small-scale state systems and the diffusion of similar cults. This cultural equilibrium had barely emerged when it was shaken again through Bembe and Luba expansionism and foreign influences (slavery, Islamization, Christianization, colonial reorganization).

The two figurines discussed in this article belong to the Bahoma’s buhabo (bwabo) healing and initiation cult, which is considered to be one of their genuine old traditions. I acquired them in 1951 from Mbanu Mafutaa Mwamali, the head of Kilingi village situated on Lake Tanganyika. He kept them together with two stones and the affixed saucerlike plates in a shrine. The figurines themselves represented the Benebyangabo, the highest-ranking counselors of the Bahoma chiefs. The two stones collected at Cape Kabamba (in the Kibanga Bay on Lake Tanganyika’s western shore) were dedicated to the water spirit Mwandalulu. The plates were in honor of the spirit Diza and of the Benekunda, counselors of the chiefs and maternal uncles of Mafutaa’s mother. Mafutaa, an old man who since 1914 had been recognized as village headman by the colonial administration, was a chief (funu) representing the royal Benembaho group. His socio-political position was special and precarious. His father Mageta, a Benembaho, had been chief and succeeded in accordance with matrilineal custom to his mother’s brother. Mageta’s older sister’s son, Bilale, had followed him as chief. When Bilale died, however, Mafutaa, the son of Mageta and member of the Benekunda clan through his mother, had succeeded him. Although this occurred allegedly because no eligible matrilineal candidates were available, in fact it probably also reflected the changing customs under Bembe influence. Although reduced to a village headman by colonial policy and Bembe hegemony, Mafutaa was extremely important in his own right. He had married eleven wives and inherited a twelfth, among other Bahoma, several Bembe clans and in villages he identified as Baholoholo. He was the head of a very large extended family that included several married sons, their wives and children, in addition to unmarried sons and daughters. His oldest daughter (dead in 1951) had been married to a Holoholo chief; other daughters were married to Bembe, Baholoholo, and Bahoma men.

The figurines of buhabo were not part of the royal paraphernalia, which were kept in a ngolo shrine house. Among the northern Bahoma the paraphernalia included one large and two small drums, a double iron gong (kibembo), an iron spear (mulonda), a ceremonial ax (kimeze), a bracelet (mukota, of cubic-shaped iron and copper beads), a leopard hide, a four-legged high stool with copper nails (kikala; without cariatids), and at least two figurines representing the line of the male chiefs (kazema) and that of the mothers of the chiefs (kinyangungu). Among the southern Bahoma, the terminology of the paraphernalia and their composition was somewhat different. Besides the leopard hide, the chief wore the royal diadem (zenga lyamakolo) the ceremonial adze (kango), and he carried the royal spear (itufo). The rest of the paraphernalia included a stool (kyona), one big drum and three small ones, and a double gong. All these objects were kept in a shrine. Exuviae of dead chiefs apparently were not directly incorporated among the regalia. For the northern Bahoma, on the death of a chief, his corpse was dried. Under the supervision of a college composed of the chief’s grandchildren, the bones and the skull of the dead chief were placed in a big pot (covered with a second pot) and exposed on a large rock in Lake Tanganyika. Among the southern Bahoma, the body of the dead chief was seated on a stool (and held by two grandchildren) for seven days; it was then carried into the bush and kept in two large pots for two months and subsequently buried near a tree.

As a healers’ corporation buhabo (bugabo, bukabo, bwabo) is also attested among the Hembas (Collé), the Holoholo, the Boyo (Zangrie), the Bangubangue, the Bembe (Dossiers Fizi, 1925), and among the Bakalanga, Baséba, Benakahela, Bayoro, and Balumbu (Van Vijve). All of the latter groups inhabit contiguous regions in the former territory of Albertville (Kalemie); buhabo is said to be the most powerful association among these peoples (Van Vijve, 1934, p. 246). Among the riverains of Lake Tanganyika, I found the cult as far north as the Bahamba of Makobola village. The cult was centered here around a simple shrine containing a jar with pebbles (mikisi). Oil poured over the pebbles (containing the power of a mountain spirit) was used as a medicine for skin disease. Among the Boyo, the activities of the corporation were very secret. According to Zangrie (1947-1950, pp. 66, 70-71) the membership of bugabo constituted a homogeneous body under a supreme leader (Mugabo Mukuanda; a function generally inherited from father to son). It was an independent institution that could easily counteract the power of the chiefs. The members sold different medicines against sicknesses thought to be inflicted by the dead, and occasionally also furnished poisons.

Van Vijve emphasizes that he could never obtain much information about the highly secret proceed-
ings of *buhabo* among the Bakalanga and others. According to him, only the full-fledged initiate (*mfunu*) had the knowledge necessary to cast spells, heal the sick, and unravel the causes of affliction. Central in these activities was Kabwelugulu, a short pole (30 to 40 cm) with the top sculptured in the form of a human figure and the uncaved bottom placed vertically in a calabash; the gourd was wrapped in a wild cat’s hide. When consulted by a patient, the healer first engaged in divination. He placed the figure before him, began to tremble, talked to it, and asked it questions. When he thought he had perceived the apparition of faces in the eyes of his figure, he looked in a pot filled with water; he threw pieces of carved wood in it, and soon detected the face of the person who had cast a spell. Members of the association were then sent to summon the designated person. After arriving he was indicted by the healer-diviner in front of the others; when the accused person stubbornly declared his innocence, he was given the poison ordeal (made with the bark of the *kilapo* tree; Van Vijve, 1934, p. 248). The corporation also acted against its own members accused of grave offenses. A medicine was placed inside the roof of the house inhabited by the guilty party; if the medicine did not work, a child was sent to deliver a poison mixed in water or food (*ibid.*, p. 247).

The usage of figurines in *buhabo* among the Hembas is mentioned by Colle (1913; see further), Neyt (1977, pp. 495, 496), and Neyt and de Strycker (1975, p. 48). Kabwegulu or Abulugulu figurines (generally female half figurines holding their breasts, made in wood and apparently also in ivory) were placed on calabashes or on the *ngumbu* basket of the *buhabo* initiates. Neyt (1977, p. 495) also mentions two other types of figurines: one (*muzimiza ya iliiba*), modeled in clay, covered with kaolin, and kept in a shrine near a trail, represents an ancestor venerated especially by the members of either *buhabo* or of *bumbuli* (*bumbydeye*); a zoomorphic figurine (*muzimiza ya mbulu*, depicting a varan) made in clay or wood is venerated by hunters of the *buhabo* association.

Among the Bembe properly speaking, the term *bukabo* referred to about three intermediate steps or grades in the initiations of the *bwami* association. This *bukabo* initiation is totally different from the *buhabo* healing and protection cult with which the two statues here discussed are connected. The Bembe did know, however, two forms of *mikabo* healing systems, both of foreign introduction. Called *mikabo ya Basoba* (Moeller, 1936, pp. 419-420) in early reports, one was a treatment introduced by the Bazyoba (riverains of Lake Tanganyika). It was generally provided by a Muzyoba healer. When a Bembe was declared to be sick because of *mikabo*, his body was rubbed with a white oiled stone. The second form, *mikabo ya Beniabemba*, according to the same sources probably originated among the Boyo-Beniabemba and existed since the early twenties in some parts of Bembeland. Membership in this healers’ association was based on initiation and payment. Its activities centered on the administration of a virulent poison as a form of retaliation against foes. Moeller (*ibid.*.) writes that when a member of *bukabo* wished to get revenge against another person he secretly invited a corporation colleague who was in close contact with the enemy to secretly administer the poison to him.

The data I have gathered among the Bembe indicates that there is such a close link between both forms of *bukabo* that they can be regarded as two distinct expressions of the same institution. There is also a strong connection with another healing cult called *bunganga* (also mentioned as *moganga* by Moeller, 1936, p. 420; he poses the question as to whether or not it is related to *bukabo*). An old manuscript, *Secret Sects in Fizi Territory*, indicates that the *bukabo* ceremonies indeed fall into three categories called *lutele*, *kabwalekulu*, and *monganga*. It is difficult to solve this complex issue. On the one hand, extreme secrecy surrounds these activities (a secrecy enhanced by severe governmental sanctions against *bunganga*). On the other hand, the synthesizing tendencies found in Bembe and Bahoma rituals frequently make it possible for elements of disparate cults to be brought together locally into a new and complex system.

The *bunganga* healers’ corporation, introduced among the Bembe via the Mbote and the Boyo, protects members and patients against witchcraft and poison. Its close relationships with *buhabo* and *bulumbu* (a cult centered on aquatic spirits) is attested by Mbote hunters living in southern Bembeland. The essential steps of the initiation include the following. In a secret place in the bush, pieces of nail, cloth, and hair of the new adept are placed, together with the powder of the *m’mungu* tree, in the skull of an *iolo* (*holo*, generic term for a Boyo chief). The initiates subsequently put powder of *mwego* in the nose and mouth of the adept. This powder produces a torpor sometimes so severe that the effects must be mitigated immediately by absorption of an antidote. The sleeping adept is then carried back to the village, where he is placed on a mat and covered with mats. Dressed with many monkey hides and heather hats, the initiates perform dances around the adept, lifting the mats and declaring him dead. Very early the next morning, they return with their patient to a clearing in the bush. The skull (*‘asongo*) is set in a pit and covered with monkey hides. Initiates tap on the skull to make him set the fees for definite entrance into the spirit. A goat paid as a fee is then sacrificed. Its heart is shown to the adept to warn him that the initiates now possess his heart and he cannot escape the obligation for he is in the power of *bunganga*. The initiates could administer poison (*bukanga*) to a person who did not follow the
prescriptions. The adept must bend to the ground where the skull is placed; the initiates knock his head against the skull to signify that he is now « hard » so that no poison (administered by others) can kill him any longer. In a final rite, the adept is led to a sacred mkokoto hut to view his colleagues drum while one sings the praises of bunganga in a deep guttural voice.

Plate 3. — A half figurine identified as female and attached to a calabash. The figurine was collected in 1951 by D. Biebuyck among the Benembaho (Bahoma fishermen settled on the western shore of Lake Tanganyika and submerged among Bembe and Bembe-influenced clans). The figurine and calabash are used by fully initiated ritual experts of the buhabo healers' corporation. Two quartz stones, placed in open wickerwork and originally attached in the book of the sculpture by means of a vine, were removed by the owner. MRAC 55.3.169 2/1; H. 52.5 cm; carved in Parinari curatellifolia wood (identification R. Dechamps).

Plate 4. — A half figurine identified as male and attached to a calabash. The figurine and calabash are used by fully initiated ritual experts of the buhabo healers' corporation. The object was kept in a shrine house together with the sculpture illustrated in plate 3. The two saucerlike plates affixed at the bottom of the carving are made respectively in Erythrina sp. and Erythrophleum africanum woods; the figurine itself is carved in Parinari curatellifolia. MRAC 55.3.169 2/2; H. 47.2 cm (identification R. Dechamps).

In some areas the immediate reason for bunganga initiation is sickness (characterized by delirium) caused by the accidental sight of spiral-shaped stones in which an eseko nature spirit dwells. The initiates must search for the stone in question. When found, they place the stone in a shrine between two branchlike poles in which a rudimentary face is carved. Four young banana shoots are planted near the shrine, which also contains red earth (rubbed on the foreheads of the dancers). Lying for several hours in a pit, the patient
is treated with torpor-producing medicines and then is carried back to the village where he is awakened with blows of a pestle on his head and legs.

Among the Bembe, the *bukabo* healers' corporation specializes in the treatment of certain diseases said to be caused by a nature spirit located in stones and activated by *bukabo*. *Bukabo* also uses poisons. An ancient report of Fizi territory identifies *bukabo y a banista*miba simply as a sect using a poison.) The sickness mainly is caused by accidentally bumping against or stepping over stones (*mi'eci*) said to contain the spirit of *bukabo*; or for women, by deliberately touching the *mi'eci* stones owned by her husband. The sickness manifests itself in various ways: yaws covering the body; vehement diarrhea; lack of erection, and in women, frigidity. Treatment must be provided by a *bukabo* specialist (*ilukakabo*) who possesses the *ekyembab* shoulderbag containing various medicines ('ama'enge, mm'mamba, mantangi, misombo, 'ambimbili, 'atooba). The shoulderbag is guarded in the house of the healer's senior wife, who is also initiated to the cult (female members are called 'abeem'meeci). *Mi'eci* stones are also kept in the shoulderbag. The stones are carefully collected by the specialist working alone and consecrated with beer, medicine, and chicken blood. Generally both spouses must be treated, even if only one is sick, because sexual contact of an initiated partner with a noninitiate at any rate would cause the latter to suffer from the disease.

Treatment occurs at night, usually in the presence of several *bukabo* initiates. It is provided in a specially built healing house (*ilukangakyi*) with four door openings. Many ritual precautions are taken during the actual building of the shrine. The officiating *bukabo* expert wears feather hats and bunches on his head, in his neck, and on his buttocks. When entering the shrine house, the patient must drink an *isaba* preparation of medicines and beer poured over the *mi'eci* stones. (It is explicitly stated that they contain all the power of *bukabo.*) The preparation stands in two or more calabashes near the entrances. Wearing a loincloth and a hat of bark, the initiate is rubbed with white and red clay mixed with oil. After spending the night in the house, the patient is brought to the river to bathe. A goat is sacrificed at the river so that the blood can stream away with the water; part of the pebbles used in the treatment are also thrown away in the water. The patient himself receives part of the *mi'eci* stones on which chicken blood has been sprinkled. The chicken itself is killed in a special manner: an initiate, imitating the movements of a genet, jumps at the chicken and biles open its throat, letting the dying chick flutter around. The stone fragments are kept in a small pot or plate that hangs in a network from rafters in the house. Kinsfolk of the new adept bring offerings of corn, peanuts, and abaka seeds to the *mi'eci* stones. The *ilukangakyi* healing house is burned after the patient has paid a considerable amount of valuables.

The two figurines and their components (plates 3 and 4) should now be looked at more closely. Perforations are made in the flattened bottom part of the bust-like statue and in the top of the reduced calabash neck. A broad fiber of the raffia palm is passed through the holes in order to fix the sculptures to the calabashes. This is not a permanent fixture and the figurines can be removed from the calabashes. A looped string made of another fiber passes between the arms and the chest, allowing the objects to be suspended from a rafter in the shrine. The coiffures of both pieces have been blackened, but the rest of the sculptures and the calabashes themselves are patinated with oil. The statues have nearly the same height (52.5 cm with the calabash). There are no immediately perceivable sexual distinctions in the two figurines: both have small breasts. As is often the case for double or janus statues carved by the sculptor Sambao, however, the figure with the slightly longer and narrower face represents the female element. Two quartz stones originally were affixed to the calabash in the back of the female figure by means of a separate vine. The stones were held in two separate nets partly studded with shells. When I received the objects, the stones had been removed by the owner. Two wooden plates, each with four circular saucer-like concavities, are still attached to the male figure by means of pieces of cloth.

Both brownish patinated statues are carved in the sober style typical of the sculptor (*mi'eci wa mi'eci*) Sambao. He was a Bembe of the Babungwe clan whose lineage had settled long ago among the Bahoma. He had learned the techniques from his father. His style, particularly in the forms of the chest and of the elaborate triangular-shaped chignon, betrays close affinities with sculptures attributed to the Holoholo, the Tumbwe, and the Tabwa, ethnic units that extend southward along Lake Tanganyika. The Bahoma trace relationships with some Holoholo and Tumbwe subunits, and many Bembe villages (also originating in the Babungwe clan) are established in the general region designated as Holoholo and Tumbwe. Except for the absence of scarifications, the overall appearances of the two Bahoma carvings resemble a figurine collected in 1900 by Glauning and attributed to the «Bemba of Moliro» (Tabwa ?; Krieger, 1965, plate 246). The sculptures differ greatly from figurines used in the *bubabo* rites among the Hembas and described in Colle (1913, plate 4, n°55-57; plate 5, n°61), Neyt and de Strycker (1975, plate 48), and Neyt (1977, plates 103-104), although these too tend to be half figurines.

The two figurines are slender and elongated (a feature probably the direct result of the limited diameter of the tree trunk used for these carvings). The bulging almond-shaped slit-eyes sit in concave ovals, separated by a narrow nose. The oval head
and female waterspirit Mtambala. In the same cult
two plates (called mabenga, lit., whirlpools, after the
place where the nemba cult stones are found) con-
tain the remainders of soil with which the images
were made, and portions of which are given the
sick to eat.

The usage of stones (often rounded white pebbles,
spiral-shaped or pointed stones, often quartz
stones) is extremely developed in Bemeland among
the Bembe and other populations. The stones (cal-
led m'ieci as are also the figurines) are the physical
manifestations of nature spirits, but also of ancient
ancestors of the hunting groups. Many types of sick-
ness are attributed to illicit contact with the stones,
which are then ritually treated with and set up in
shrines.

The significance and function of the figurines,
the calabashes, and the plates can now be examined.
Perforated statues called Kabwelulu (lit., stone of
the mountain) are used in the buhabo association
among the Hembas (Colle, 1913, pp. 601-617). There
are two functional categories of statues. The « true,
great Kabwelulu », « the models or principles »
from which the other statues originate are owned
by the highest officials (Kalunga muhabo) of the
healing cult. The derivatives (or « children ») of
these statues are acquired through purchase or initi-
ation and are consecrated by the bene be kab-
welulu, initiates who already had gone through lower
rites. (Ordinary initiates at the lower levels do not
possess these statues.) The statue was kept in a
basket (kihau) covered with a conical lid. In it were
ends in an angular chin (somewhat sharper in the male figure), above which the slightly protuberant mouth is indicated by a shallow silt. A short neck (narrower in the female piece) continues in rounded shoulders from which the slender arms, separated from the trunk, descend angularly to clasp the conically shaped nasal area. There are no finger indications. There are no incisions or decorative ornaments on the figurines, but the blackened hairdo stands out in diademlike relief above the high forehead and ends in the back of the head in a large chignon (forming a reversed triangle with sharp apex). Both figurines have on top of the head a mortar-shaped exoressence (on one of the pieces it is broken).

The xylological and X-ray examinations of the two sculptures undertaken by R. Dechamps (Chef du Service d’Anatomie des Bois tropicaux at the Musée royal de l’Afrique centrale, Tervuren) in January 1980 reveal some extremely fascinating aspects. The wood used for the two figurines is Parinari curatellifolia; one of the saucerlike plates in Erythrina sp. and the other in Erythrophleum africanim. With reference to the other xylological determinations of Dechamps on Central African sculptures (Dechamps, 1970 to 1978), Parinari wood, as far as the current knowledge goes, has not been used by any other ethnic group for the carving of figurines or masks.

Distinctions between different species of Parinari, such as Parinari mobola and Parinari curatellifolia, are not always easy to make. The tree is typical for arboreal savannah and grows to altitudes of 1700 to 1800 meters (L. Hauman, pp. 64-67). The roots of the tree contain tannin, a resin and an alkaloid. In different parts of Africa, decoctions of the roots are used as a blood tonic, a cardiac stimulant, and as a remedy for toothaches and malaria (Watt and Breyer-Brandwijk, 1962, p. 880). Both Erythrina sp. and Erythrophleum africanaum contain highly toxic alkaloids in their roots (ibid., p. 601). These curare-like substances produce a paralysis on the neuromuscular conduction. Their action gradually affects different parts of the muscular system and then causes death as a result of the paralysis of the muscles of respiration.

The use of Erythrophleum africanaum in poison ordeals in Central Africa has been affirmed. The powdered bark of Erythrophleum guineense (growing in dense forest and known as mwavi, mwaï, and kabi) is highly poisonous, and the snuff also has sternutatory action. In various parts of Africa, the bark of this tree serves as an emetic, a purgative, an antidote, and a remedy for skin disease as well as an arrow and a fish poison. It is used in poison ordeals where death or recovery depend on the dose (Watt and Breyer-Brandwijk, 1962, pp. 602-606; Tondeur, 1960, p. 3). Burton (1961, p. 138) includes mwavi among the most deadly poisons used by the Luba. For the Lega and the Bembe, the importance of the kabi tree is so great that the term was generically applied to all ordeals, even those that did not include poisons (such as the hot water or hot iron ordeals).

The X-ray examination of the two figurines discloses some intriguing features (plates 5-6). The female sculpture has a narrow channel running from the funnel-like exoressence on the head to the bottom of the image. Part of this channel has been made by a natural process; the form indicates that the natural channel was made by the larvae of a certain coleopter (and not by termites). The larvae probably were responsible for the decay of the Parinari tree whose wood was then used for this carving. Later the channel was adapted and completed by the sculptor. The male sculpture has two entries: one the natural result of larv activity in the back of the head and neck (the massive chignon is specially carved slightly in oblique to give free access to this hole); the second fashioned by human action in the funnel-shaped exoressence on the piece’s head. The naturally made entrance hole is connected by a short channel with the human made duct that runs from the head to the bottom of the image. The X-ray examination further indicates that a cuplike concavity has been carved in the bottom part of each object; also the fiber that attaches the sculpture to the calabash crisscrosses inside each calabash to form an elementary sieve. Microscopic study of the cupped plates shows in at least one the presence of pieces of a whitish product that is not kaolin. These substances seem to be crystallized alkaloids that have impregnated and saturated the wood.

It is quite clear that nothing in the construction of these ritual objects is done haphazardly. The three types of woods, the calabashes, the perforations of the statues, the small plates with cuplike concavities, and the quartz stones all have a specific purpose. The usage of Parinari and Erythrophleum woods for sculpturing figurines is most exceptional; the occurrence of Erythrina is more frequently attested. (For example, some ancestral figurines collected among the Basikasingo and Bahucwe groups, who live southwest of the unit studied here, are carved in Erythrina abyssinica and Erythrina tomentosa.) Perforation of statues is documented, for instance, among the Hembas (Collé) and occasionally is found elsewhere (e.g., Luluwa). Outside the Hembas area, the affixation of figurines to calabashes is rare in Central Africa, but similar usages of calabashes in medicinal practices and of stones in the cult for nature spirits and ancestors occurs widely in areas of the Luba, Holoholo, and others.

The simultaneous occurrence of a complementarity male and female principle (here signified by the two statues) is widely acknowledged in Central African cult practice. The Bembe themselves make two clay images (in crocodile form) to represent the male
the bush.) The stones used in buhabo are not necessarily activated by Mwanjalulu; among some Bembe, they include spirits such as Lutala, Ebanga, and Amwemo, who are identified with mountains.

Special significance also is attached to the fact that naturally made ducts have been adapted and completed inside the images. These natural channels are most certainly linked with the power of "Yangya," an earth spirit closely associated with the interior part of mushroom-shaped termite nests. Holes in wood are manifestations of this spirit. Scabies (mainly on the head) and delirious trembling are attributed to and healed by Yangya medicines (always including soil from the termite nest and mushrooms growing near it). Among the Hembas, close ritual connections exist between buhabo and termite. The dead healer was buried near a termite nest while another termite mound placed in proximity served as a shrine, on which offerings to his spirit were made (Colle, 1913, p. 617).

To both outsiders and insiders, the three types of wood in which the statues and the affixed plates are carved represent the awesome power exercised by the beings that preside over and protect the proceedings of the buhabo expert. The bark of these trees is essential to the buhabo healers, who obviously have a formidable pharmacopoeia at their disposal. Here a distinction must be made between the activities of buhabo as a lubu'o, a healing system that is widely used to cure patients of all kinds, and as an 'ebu'a, an initiation system. Through the latter system, which is based partly on hereditary rights, highly specialized ritual experts of different degrees of seniority are constituted as an exclusive association or corporation of healers. The secret procedures of this association aim not merely at introducing the adepts to the secret knowledge and preparation of the medicines but also at fostering a vital bond of solidarity among them.

Ritually this esprit de corps is expressed by oath-taking and the physical symbolism of vital participation in each other's life and existence. Practically, the solidarity is expressed in terms of observance of conduct rules (prescriptive behavior and dress, food taboos, respect for secrecy). Members who seriously infringe upon these rules are exposed to poison-taking as are outside offenders of the sacredness of buhabo. Use of the poisonous materials, however, is also part of the initiations. Soaked in water or dried and pulverized, mixed or unmixed with other herbs, bark of the aforementioned trees is administered in various dosages as a snuff or as a potion. Prepared according to various recipes, these same barks were used in the poison ordeals of the Luba (mwavi; Burton, 1936, p. 293), the Boyo (abi; Zangrie, 1947-1950, p. 71), the Lega (kabi), and the Bembe ('abi). Depending on the use of largely unknown antidotes and carefully planned dosages and preparations (e.g., use of dried or fresh bark, of bark from the stem or near the roots), the poison was lethal or nonlethal. The accused generally drank it from a calabash with a rather large quantity of water.

To detect the person guilty, for example, of theft or witchcraft, several types of ordeals existed in the region (the hot ax rubbed three times over the leg anointed with medicines, removal of a copper bracelet or stones from a pot of boiling water, the drinking of the 'abi poison made of pounded bark mixed with water). The members of buhabo, however, seem not to have been involved with these types of ordeals, which generally are under the control of the heads of kinship and village groups. The use of poison by buhabo was rather a threat that could secretly be executed against members and nonmembers accused, for instance, of divulging secrets, of not observing the prescriptions, or of attempting to use witchcraft against a member of the corporation.

The anesthetic torporlike effect was obtained through administration of lighter dosages used, for example, in the initiation of buhabo. The initiate sucked the medicine from a straw/reed inserted into the calabash through the channel of the statues and also received it as a snuff disposed in the saucerlike plates. Fragments of the quartz crystals consecrated to the mountain spirit were also placed in the calabash. Multiple ritual results were obtained. By means of the torpor-producing medicine, the ritual death and later rebirth of the adept was signified. The new initiate had now absorbed the power of the mountain spirit and also of the ancestors, since the fluid had passed through images representing them. At the same time the initiate was vitally bound by these powers. Infringement of the relevant laws would jeopardize their existence.

Much of the initiation characteristic of buhabo and the related bunganga aims at producing fear and dread in the initiate himself and in the villagers who observe some of the initiation results. The initiate undergoing the rites must exhibit manly courage and equanimity in the face of terror; he will ultimately learn that the terror is there but that it is innocuous for the faithful adept. The noninitiates must remain under the impression of terror and the belief in the superior power of their initiated relative who has successfully withstood the ordeals.

The buhabo association — an ancient initiation and healing institution administering poison among the Bahoma — spread among diverse ethnic groups. Its exposure to their influences enhanced its effectiveness and power by incorporating various conceptually interrelated cult and healing elements. Chiefs among the Boyo feared the power of buhabo according to Zangrie (1947-1950, p. 66), but they were influential members among the Hembas (Colle, 1913, p. 602) and the Kalanga and others. (Van Vijn, 1934, p. 248, notes that almost all chiefs encountered in these groups between 1924 and 1928 were called mtumu of buhabo.) Among the Bahoma also, chief-
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tainship was enhanced by membership in buhabo. The chief's control over buhabo's awesome powers, which could work both beneficially and ominously, intensified his power over life and death, particularly his role as a provider of well-being through elimination of witchcraft and other injurious actions. Buhabo also fostered the idea that the chief was immune to the poison and witchcraft of others.

NOTE: Field research among the fishing groups of Lake Tanganyika and the Bembe was carried out from 1949 to 1951 under the auspices of the Institut pour la recherche scientifique en Afrique centrale. In recent years, museum, library, and archival research on the arts of Zaïre has been sponsored by grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities (Washington, D.C.), the Samuel Kress Foundation (New York), and the Rockefeller Foundation (New York), and with the help of the University of Delaware.

The xylological and X-ray examinations of the sculptures were made by R. Dechamps, whose pioneering contributions to the field are acknowledged. Dechamps has described elsewhere (Africa-Tervuren, 1970, XVI, 3/4, pp. 77-82) the methods involved in determining the woods. The Belgian-made X-ray equipment (Baltographe CE 50/10; Balscope Telei 220 A) used in the identification was acquired recently by the Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale. I am grateful to R. Dechamps for this identifications and botanical information, and to Ms. Huguette Van Geluwe for having redirected my attention to these buhabo figurines. Buhabo, the Bembe pronunciation of the term, is also known as bugabo, bukabo, and bwabo. The name Bahoma is sometimes referred to as Bagoma.

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SAMENVATTING

Buhabo beelden van de Benembah (Bahoma).

Morpho-stylische studie met houtanalyse en radiologisch onderzoek van twee beelden elkaar bevestigd op een kalebas.

Deze voorwerpen werden verzameld bij de Bahoma, een vissergroep die gevestigd is te midden van de Bembe op de westelijke oevers van het Tanganyika-meer (Zaïre).

De beelden werden gebruikt in het ritueel van de buhabo, een gesloten genootschap van genezers die ook wel de waarzeggerij bedrijven en soms de gilproef opleggen.

De leden van het buhabo-genootschap moesten een initiatie ondergaan en waren aan zeer strenge geheimhouding onderworpen.

Beide houten figuren zijn van de hand van de beeldhouwer Sambao.
RESUME

Statues buhabo des Benembaho (Bahoma).

Etude morpho-stylistique accompagnée d'une analyse xylologique et radioscopique de deux statuettes fixées chacune sur une calebasse.

Ces objets récoltés chez les Bahoma, population de pêcheurs vivant parmi les Bembe sur les rives occidentales du lac Tanganyika (Zaire), se situent dans le rituel de l'association fermée de guérisseurs (buhabo) qui pratiquaient aussi la divination et imposaient occasionnellement l'épreuve du poison.

Le buhabo était une société initiatique dont les membres étaient tenus au secret le plus strict.

Les deux figurines peuvent être attribuées au sculpteur Sambao.