



176



468

Wood height is 30 cm, totaling 1 m.

BONGO justice bell mask (BWOOM family) The Lukengo, king of the Kuba (Nyimi) was not permitted to view it as he transcends earthly laws. Revered for its sacred nature, it serves the cause of imminent justice.

Any defendant had to stand before him, encircled by dignitaries. If found guilty, the individual underwent the ordeal: trials involving poisons and fiery tests that were consistently debilitating. There were instances where the monarch was summoned to face this formidable arbiter, and the verdict was delivered by the tolling of a bell when he shook his head. A ruling for a grave transgression against the populace could lead to capital punishment. Upon conviction, a parrot feather was presented by the KOLM (dignitaries), compelling resignation from their duties. This could even extend to self-poisoning or reaching into the punishment basket (See image 480).



177

Height: 30 centimeters

The Queen Mother's mortuary face is crafted from a specific plant material, akin to weaving, created weeks following her passing. It is utilized for months during a sequence of ceremonial tributes. The Nyimi's consorts, along with mourners and priestesses, will offer reverent homage to prevent incurring her displeasure upon the realm. In animist traditions, metempsychosis is intertwined with this concept, where all living or inanimate objects are believed to be inhabited.



178

Height: 40 cm (wood)

Ostentatious bell mask from the small kingdom of Kuba-Bieeng-Kete-Pende in the south.



179

Notable KUBA on the left: the lace (the headdress) is ritually removed with the adze which deposes him, here he is seated on aquatic grasses (water lilies); return to childhood, to innocence due to old age and excess. The crossed frog-legged legs, the swollen face, the marks of excess and the blows made to the left breast announce through this symbolic death the real one that will follow. The individual on the right is poised for investiture, displaying all the unique symbols associated with their upcoming role, including the symbols of loyalty to the reigning monarch that are still depicted there.



180

The IKUL: elite knives. This model is crafted from aluminum sheet, showcasing exceptional skill in metalworking, using materials recycled from an airplane cabin. Some knives were also crafted from wood for evening wear, following a royal decree from LUKENGO that banned carrying metal weapons after dark.



377



378

Assorted utility baskets



382

Height: 53 centimeters

ISHYEN IMAALU. Occasionally worn as a headdress. In this case, the laquet (similar to the Hebrew yarmulke) has been stripped of feathers for ease of transport due to its potential 1-meter diameter.



404

Height: 26 centimeters

Babende ISHYEEN IMAALU with feathers: Kuba IYOOL warrior Used to prepare for a punitive expedition. Consecration to war for war's sake.



405

Height: 25 centimeters

Babende ISHYEEN IMAALU (SHOOWA) without feathers: a lower-ranking warrior who maintains courage and reputation in combat, despite being subordinate in hierarchy.



470



471



472

Belts, pearl headdresses, court carpets,

471: Staff of prestige, adorned with a lion's tail and a handle made of pearl.

472: Cat's mane hair necklace.



473

Height: 30 centimeters

Palm oil margarine container.



479

Height: 25 centimeters

Depiction of a colonial-era territorial administrator. Brutal, arrogant, alcoholic, unkempt, and physically neglected. Unaware of it, he is ridiculed by the entire population during a celebration held in his "honor" to which he was invited. The subterfuge involves wearing a mask, a crucial tool to dispel any suspicion. It enables people to make mocking gestures just a few meters away from the despised individual who has been intoxicated with palm wine or LUTUKU.



525

Height: 25 centimeters

Maternal bonding with the infant's fontanelle, as a mother embraces her daughter on her abdomen, desiring to maintain proximity despite the daughter's transition into adulthood and readiness for marriage.