

BERNARD DE GRUNNE

BONGO

MONUMENTAL STATUARY FROM SOUTHERN SUDAN





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2011

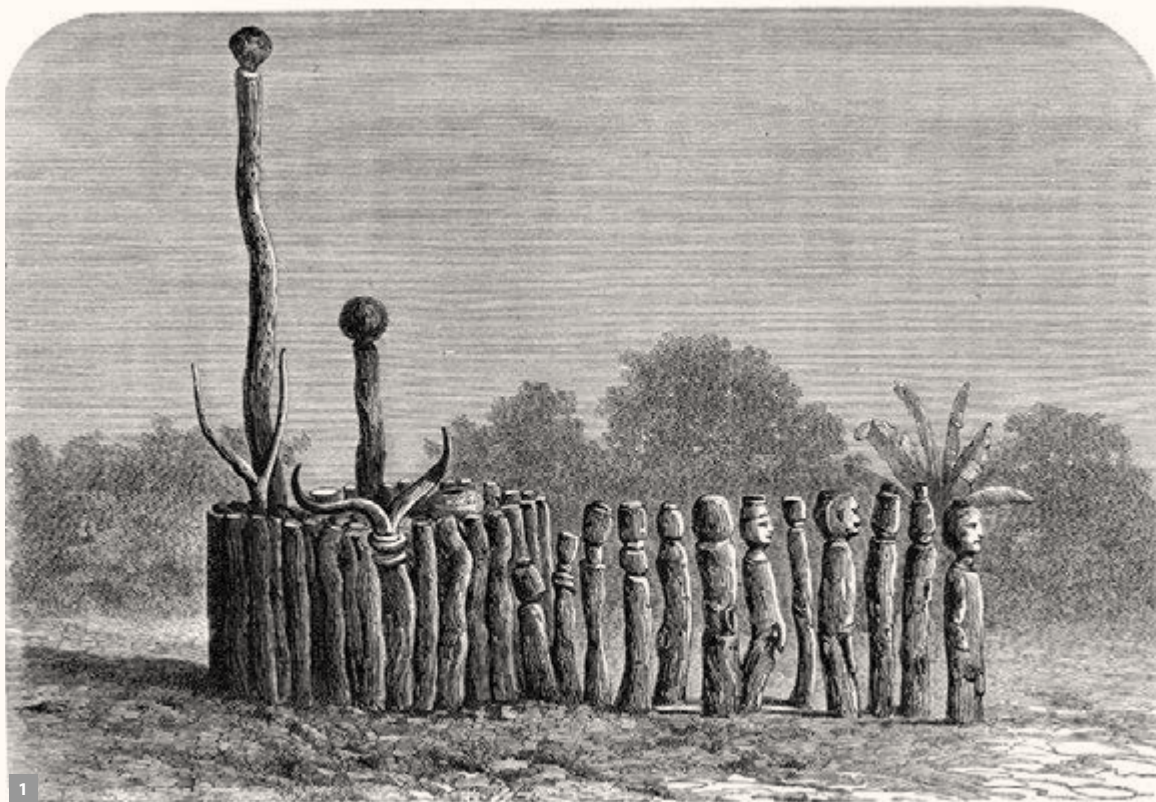


Fig.1 : Grave of Bongo chief named Yanga in the village of Mouhdi in 1869 from George Schweinfurth, *Au Coeur de l'Afrique 1868-1871. Voyages et découvertes dans les régions inexplorées de l'Afrique centrale*, Paris, Hachette, 1875, p. 274

Bongo Monumental Statuary from Southern Sudan: the Ur-style of African statuary.

Life-size wooden statuary representing founding patriarchs, important chiefs or cultural heroes is a rare occurrence in the art styles of Sub-Saharan Africa. Other than the Bongo and related groups from southern Sudan, a cursory survey finds some examples among the Soninke and the Dogon in Mali, the Igbo, Urhobo, M'Boye and Yoruba in Nigeria, some of the Grassland chiefdoms of Kom, Batuffam and Bamun in Cameroon, a few Nkisi power figures from various Kongo kingdoms, some very rare Lengola and Ngata figures from Northern Congo, the Giryama from Kenya and the Konso in Ethiopia. However, it is only among the Bongo and Belanda from Sudan and the Konso from Ethiopia that one finds monumentality as an essential formal characteristic of their art style. Among all the other styles listed above, life-size statuary is more the exception than the norm.

Traditionally, scholars have used the name Bongo to describe various large size statues created not only by the Bongo themselves, but also other related ethnic groups such as the Bongo-Mittu, Belanda, Basiri, Madi-Moro, Babukur, Kref and the Luo groups.¹

The Bongo and their neighbors may have numbered up to 250.000 people or more during the nineteenth century but the expansion of the Zande kingdom around 1850 as well as the misery and destruction wrought by Arab slavers and ivory traders in the region have decimated these populations to less than 100.000 by the 1870's and by the 1920s at no more than 5000.²

These small groups live the southern part of the province of Bahr-el-Ghazal, a region of deserted grassland in southwestern Sudan. According to Krüger who collected some Bongo figures during his trip in 1974, these small groups live isolated from each other, with concentrations around the towns of Tonj, in the region of Wau, around the river Bussere and in the Tembura, Rumbek, Maridi and Yambio regions.³

{1} C. & B. Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London, 1932, p. 463 & C. Evans-Pritchard, "The Bongo" in *Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol. 12, 1929.

{2} Jeremy Coote, "catalogue entries 2.18a & 2.18b" in Tom Phillips, ed., *Africa. The Art of a Continent*, London, Royal Academy of Arts, 1995, p. 137-8

{3} Klaus-Jochen Krüger, "The Arts of Bahr-el-Ghazal. Funerary Sculpture of the Bongo and Belanda", in *Tribal Arts* Winter 1999 / Spring 2000, VI:1, pp. 82-101 et "The Arts of Bahr-el-Ghazal. Funerary Sculpture of the Avukaya, Morokodu, Nyamusa, Beli, Lori, and Zande", in *Tribal Arts*, Spring / Summer 2002, n° 28, VII:3, pp. 80-95



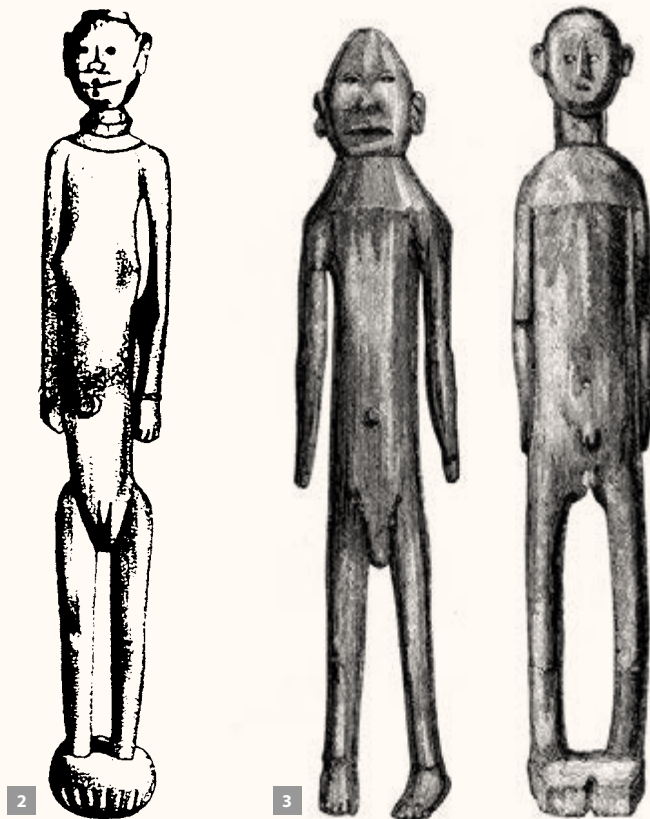


Fig.2 : Bongo Memorial figure of a deceased wife, Height : 70 cm from George Schweinfurth, *Artes Africanae*, F.A. Brokhaus, Leipzig, 1875, plate VIII, 5.

Fig.3 : The two figures collected by Petherick in 1855 ; on the left, Bari and on the right Bongo(?)

Their social structure is characterized by a system of clans which consists usually of less than 100 members each and are led by an elder who functions as a chief. The *loma*, the creator god, plays a central role in the religious life of the Bongo. He is believed to be an omnipresent spiritual power that pervades everything on earth. The ritual expert *bi loma*, are very close to the *loma* and have healing powers, are able to make rain and insure the dead and a good place in the village of the *loma*.

Important men are given a very elaborate burial place which is often adorned with one or sometimes several life-size figures called *ngya*. These statues were made exclusively by specialists which are particularly talented sculptors. The statues represent the departed and serve as a monument for the living, but also scare off witches through their striking human features.

Since each Bongo man could gain prestige by successfully hunting large animals and killing enemies in battle, his relatives would honor him a year after his death by erecting these *ngya* figures on his graveside and holding a feast. Apart from the effigy of the deceased, the relatives would also add large notched posts that recorded the number of the deceased's successful kills –human and animal- and sometimes effigies of his victims. On some *ngya*, the notches are carved directly on the lower part of the figural post itself instead of on a separate post.

The first westerner to reach the Bongo region was John Petherick, Her Majesty's Consul for the Sudan, who describes in November 1855 a Dôr village of the Djour[Jur] tribe "where narrow footpaths leading to the center of the village with both sides ornamented with rough wooden posts, carved into semblances of human figures four feet apart; the first were largest in size, the other has on their heads wooden bowls. These figures were said to represent the chief proceeding to a festival, and, followed by his retainers, bearing viands and mau to the feast."⁴ Two wooden figures collected by Petherick were published in 1868 (fig. 3) : the first attributed to the Bongo belongs to a peripheral style unrelated to the most "canonical" Bongo style and sold to a Mr. Wareham is now in the British Museum and the second is a statue from the Bari, which Petherick sold at the time to Colonel Lane Fox (later know as General Augustus Lane Fox Pitt Rivers).⁵

{4} John Petherick, *Egypt, The Soudan and Central Africa*, William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh, 1861, p. 402

{5} J.C. Wood, *The Natural History of Man being an account of the manners and customs of the uncivilized races of men*, London, George Routledge and Sons, 1868, p. 500. The Bongo figure (height: 98 cm) is in the collections of The British Museum (inv. n° 7392) while we do not know where the Bari figure is today although Pitt Rivers may have given it to the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford (See Hermione Waterfield, *Provenance. Twelve Collectors of Ethnographic Art*, Paris, Somogy, 2006, p. 37-43).





Fig. 4 : A Bongo or Mittu Funerary monument. Photo by Dr Tucker in C. & B. Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, London , 1932, plate XLIX



Fig.5 : A Bongo Funerary monument, and Fig. 6 A Moro of Akukaya Grave, Photos by Evans-Pritchard in *Idem*, plate XLIX & LII

During his travels between 1868 and 1871, German botanist Georg Schweinfurt illustrated the grave of a Bongo chief named Yanga in the village of Mouhdi.⁶ As one can see from his drawing (fig. 1), the tomb was decorated both by Bongo anthropomorphic figures as well as two tall abstract posts clearly more Moro or Mittu in style. According to his informants the figures "represented the chief followed in procession by his wife and children, apparently issuing from the tomb."⁷ Schweinfurt also gives two other bits of information on these statues. The first is the tradition of carving a portrait of a deceased wife which is kept inside the house (fig. 2) which could explain that all Bongo statuary was not always a truly funerary sculpture since it was not erected on the grave site.⁸ Secondly, statues could have a role in a judicial context: the statue carved as a portrait of a man killed by another member of the same village was abruptly displayed during a special gathering of the entire village and its sudden appearance would frighten the culprit who by trying to run away would be immediately identified and punished.⁹

{6} I tried to locate this village in Schweinfurt's maps in his book but could but could not find it.

{7} George Schweinfurt, *Au cœur de l'Afrique*, 1868-1971, Paris, Hachette, 1875, p. 273

{8} George Schweinfurt, *Artes Africanae*, F.A. Brockhaus, Leipzig, 1875, plate viii

{9} George Schweinfurt, *Au cœur de l'Afrique*, 1868-1971, Paris, Hachette, 1875, p. 274



The first large *ngya* statue to arrive in Europe was collected by Captain Walther von Wiese und Kaiserswaldau, the main ethnographer of the Second Central African Expedition of 1910-1911 organized by Duke Adolph Friederich von Mecklenbourg. After a stay of three months with the Nzakara and Zande kings in Oubangui-Chari, Walther Von Wiese und Kaiserswaldau reached Tambura in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and from there his route took him through Wau and the Bongo and Belanda territory to Khartoum and back to Europe. This quite tall Bongo/ Belanda statue was then given to the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg.¹⁰

The anthropologist Charles G. Seligman was the first to publish a Bongo funerary sculpture in 1917. The statue as far as one can judge from the fairly poor quality photo published seems to be an elongated male torso.¹¹ This portrait of a deceased Bongo chief was found on the El Ateesh road from Wau to Tembura and was carved some time before 1886 and the invasion of the Bahr el Ghazal under Kheirmallah.

Charles and Brenda Seligman as well as their student Edward Evans Pritchard published detailed studies of the tombs of the Tonj region of both the Bongo, Belanda and Moro groups. They describe in detail the construction of a Bongo/ Belanda grave as a vertical shaft with a terminal chamber for the corpse bounded in a tightly contracted position. The entrance to the chamber is closed with wooden stakes, plastered on the outside with earth. The shaft is filled in and a heap of stones piled over the grave.¹² A year or so after death a feast is held and the wooden anthropomorphic posts as well as notched tally posts which recorded the number of large animals killed by the deceased such as elephant, lion, leopard or buffalo are erected by relatives.

They distinguished four types of funerary monuments (fig. 4, 5, 6): the Bongo tombs where the statue of the deceased is planted in the ground in front of the tomb covered by heaps of stones; the Mittu tombs where the grave is surrounded by stakes about four feet high, with the central space filled with lumps of iron-stone and the wooden effigies in front of the palisade, and the Moro tombs where the body after being rubbed all over with oil is placed in a chamber closed by wooden stakes over which stones are laid and eventually a small earthen mound is raised over the level of the grave. Finally, among the Moro of Abukaya, the graves are excavated from a large ant-hill with a vertical shaft from which a small chamber is dug in, covered by stakes and a neatly plastered conical mound is built over it surmounted by a carved abstract wooden post called *lusi*. The *lusi*, while not carved in the likeness of a human figure, was meant to represent a dead man or women as the prominence given to the umbilicus makes clear.

A detailed study of Bongo graves and monuments was carried during their field work in 1958/59 by Andreas and Waltraud Kronenberg. They collected sixteen posts for the Ethnographic Museum in Khartoum of which thirteen were full figures or torsos and three abstracts posts.¹³ The Kronenbergs were the first scholars to provide a name for a Belanda artist: Usta Ukun of the Bviri section of the Belanda who carved three posts: the oldest, whose surface was charred by bush fires and the finest of the three (inv. n° 2474) is a rare feminine portrait of Agale, mother of a famous hunter and warrior.¹⁴ The second post (height figure: 157 cm; Inv. n° 2475) also carved by Usta Ukun is a portrait of Katru of the Mberedi section of the Belanda, a famous warrior who had killed ten enemies. This post shows considerable weathering and both arms are broken off. It was collected on the Tembura /Wau road near the village of Maringindo. The third figure, a female figure, was carved also by Usta Ukun in 1959 as a commission for the Ethnographic Museum. (Inv. n° 2473, height: 181 cm). The sculpture looked indeed brand new when it was collected and does not show any sign of wear or age. If indeed all three posts were carved by Usta Ukun, he must have been quite old when he was commissioned to carve this third post since the other two showing both age and wear must have carved at least 30 or 40 years earlier.

[10] Hamburg, Museum für Völkerkunde inv. n° 12.148:1909, Height: 191 cm. Cfr. Beate Schneider & Christine Stelzig, "From the Congo to the Niger and the Nile. The Second Central African expedition of Duke Friederich of Mecklenburg, 1910-1911", in J.-L. Grootaers, *Ubangui. Art and Cultures from the African Heartland*, Mercatorfonds, Bruxelles, 2007, illus. 6.11, p. 271

[11] C.G. Seligman, "A Bongo Funerary Figure", in *Man*, June 1917 n° 67, p. 97-98. This post (total height: 205 cm and height figure 95 cm) was originally in the Museum of Gordon College in Khartoum. It was transferred to the Khartoum Museum as n° 160 according to A & W. Kronenberg, "Wooden Carvings in the South Western Sudan", in *Kush*, Vol. VIII, 1960, p. 275. We are not sure if it was transferred to the newly created National Museum of Sudan founded in 1971.

[12] C. & B. Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London, 1932, p. 470, 473 & 486 ; C. Evans-Pritchard, "The Bongo" in *Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol. 12, 1929, pp. 1-61

[13] Ethnographic Museum, Khartoum Inv. n° 2465, 2466 & 2467 are the abstract ones and Inv. N° 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2468, 2469, 2473, 2474, 2475 are all anthropomorphic posts. Cfr. Waltraud und Andreas Kronenberg, *Die Bongo. Bauern und Jäger in Südsudan*, Frans Steiner Verlag, Weisbaden, 1981, abb. 25 to 49

[14] Its total height is 222cm while the statue itself is 158cm, See A & W. Kronenberg, "Wooden Carvings in the South Western Sudan", in *Kush*, Vol. VIII, 1960, p. 280





Fig.7 : Anonymous photo of a Ngbandi Figure next to an ancestor hut by a Flemish Kapucijn missionary before 1910 in Jan-Lodewijk Grootaers, *Ubangui. Art and Cultures from the African Heartland*, Brussels, Mercatorfonds, 2007, plate 1.17, p. 28

Fig.8 : Photo of a Northern Ngbandi Figure next to an ancestral hut in the village of Dondo (today Kotakoli) D.R.C. by Father Basile Tanghe, in B; Tanghe, *De Ngbandi naar het leven geschest*, Drukkerij "De Gruuthuuse Persen", Brugge, 1929, p. 262

Fig.9 : Bongo Statue by Kwanja Gete, Height: 140 cm, private Collection

Fig.10 : Statue of a Kushite King, Tabo, Argo Island, Meroitic Period 400 B.C. – 400 A.D., Height: 50 cm, Inv. n° 24705, Sudan national Museum in Derek A. Welsby and Julie R. Anderson, *Sudan. Ancient Treasures*, The British Museum press, 2004p. 128, plate 102

Two Bongo posts were also collected by the Kronenbergs. The first, an elongated torso without legs is the portrait of Ngul Pot, great hunter who killed ten elephants.¹⁵ The second post, a long and narrow full figure, is the portrait of a Zande warrior killed by Ngul Pot.¹⁶ Finally, they also collected three figures carved by the sons of Kwanja Gete, the "Master of Tonj" (also known as Bandja Geti), arguably the most gifted Bongo carver. All three figures were commissioned around

{15} Inv n° 2462, Total height : 223 cm height of the figure : 128 cm , Cfr. Waltraud und Andreas Kronenberg, *Die Bongo. Bauern und Jäger in Südsudan*, Frans Steiner Verlag, Weisbaden, 1981, abb. 34

{16} Inv. n° 2463, total height : 198 cm and height of the figure : 139 cm. Cfr. *ibidem*, , abb. 35



1950 for a grave around the village of Modul near Tonj whose ceremony was postponed due to the sudden death of a relative. This unfortunate event allowed the Kronenbergs to collect them for the Khartoum museum.¹⁷

Although Bongo art had been known by a few specialists, no major Bongo work appeared in any Western public collection until Belgian dealer Christian Duponcheel went to Sudan in 1972, just after the cease-fire of March 1972 of a long civil war which had started in 1955. He collected eleven anthropomorphic figures of which four were Belanda and seven were Bongo, collected in the vicinity of Tonj.¹⁸ Here is a complete list of the Duponcheel group.

1. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art Inv; n° 1973.264, sold by Alan Brandt in 1973 Height: 191,3 cm
2. Houston, Menil Foundation Inv. n° 83-029 DJ, sold by Baron Freddy Rolin in 1983. Height: 240 cm
3. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, Gift of Barbara and Murray Frum, 1999, sold by Christian Duponcheel in 1979, Height: 183 cm
4. Geneva, Musée Barbier-Mueller Inv.n° 1027-1, sold by Henri Kamer in 1973. Height: 200 cm
5. London, British Museum Inv. n° 1973.AF.35.1, Height: 145 cm
6. Collection Georg Baselitz, Derneburg Germany, Former collection Baron Freddy Rolin, Grez-Doiceau, Height : 220 cm sold at Christie's Amsterdam, July 2, 2002, lot 314
7. Collection Georg Baselitz, Derneburg Germany, Former collection Baron Freddy Rolin, Grez-Doiceau, Height : 191 cm sold at Christie's Amsterdam, July 2, 2002, lot 315
8. Private Collection, Belgium, Former Collection Count Baudouin de Grunne, sold by Christian Duponcheel in 1972, Height: 133 cm
9. New York, Private Collection, Height: 185 cm
10. Zug, Collection Wally and Udo Horstman, Height: 157cm sold by C. Duponcheel in 1990
11. Bruxelles, Collection privée, Sold by Duponcheel to Alvin Abrams in 1979, Raymond A. Britt Family Collection (Sotheby's New York, November 11, 2005, lot 145, Height: 112 cm

Klaus-Jochen Krüger published the most recent study on this style. After collecting himself a wonderful statue in 1974, he published first a very interesting essay on Bongo statuary and Gwanja Gete, the "Master of Tonj" in my Masterhands catalogue in 2001.¹⁹ According to his research, Gwanja Gete invented his own style characterized by a rendering of movement in his statues: his figures with oval heads and eyes inset with snail shells have one arm raised and bent, both legs bent with one leg placed slightly forward which gives a feeling that the figure is moving forward and which is his signature formal characteristic. He also published a long study on the arts of the Bahr el Ghazal in Tribal magazine in 2000 and 2002.²⁰ He identified fifteen local styles or ateliers and published the first detailed iconography on the art styles of this region.

The Duponcheel expedition really put Bongo statuary on the map of African art history. Since the 1980's a number of statues and posts have reached Europe. Thanks to the interest in this important style, these abandoned funerary sculptures have now been saved from destruction, fire and civil disturbance associated also at one point with Muslim occupation in this region.

More research needs to be done on this unique art style and I would suggest two further alleys of research. Firstly, as Jeremy Coote suggested, one should not classify this art style with the memorial figures of such east African peoples as the Konso and Gato of Ethiopia and the Gyriyama of Kenya.²¹ One should do better by looking westwards towards the traditions of the Zande and other Central African peoples for meaningful comparisons. To buttress this point, I included two rare and early photos of life-size Zande memorial figures in situ. The first photo (fig. 7) taken by an

[17] Inv. n° 2469 total height : 143 cm and height of figure : 112cm, Inv. 2468, Total height: 128 cm and height of figure: 98 cm and *Ibidem*, abb. 30

[18] Jeremy Coote mentions fifteen statues (See J. Coote, "catalogue entry Bongo" in Laurence Mattet, ed., *Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie. 100 ans de collections Barbier-Mueller*, Paris, Hazan, 2007, p. 249) while Krüger writes about sixteen figures collected by Duponcheel (Cfr. Klaus-Jochen Krüger, « The Arts of Bahr-el-Ghazal ; Funerary Sculptures of the Bongo and Belanda », « In *Tribal Arts*, Spring 2000, VI :1, p.87) . Eleven is the number I received from Baron Freddy Rollin in 1993 in a short unpublished essay written by him and C. Duponcheel and given to this author by Baron Rollin at the time.

[19] Klaus-Jochen Krüger, « Kwnaja Gete et les sculpteurs Bongo du sud du Soudan, » in B. de Grunne, ed., *Mains de Maîtres. A la découverte des grands sculpteurs d'Afrique*, Bruxelles, Espace Culturel BBL, 2001, pp. 235-245

[20] Klaus-Jochen Krüger, « The Arts of Bahr-el-Ghazal ; Funerary Sculptures of the Bongo and Belanda », « In *Tribal Arts*, Spring 2000, VI :1, pp. 82-101 and "The Arts of Bahr-el-Ghazal, Part 2: Funerary Sculptures of the Avukaya, Morokodu, Nyamusa, Beli, Lori and Zanda," in *Tribal Arts*, Summer 2002, VII:3, pp. 80-95.

[21] Jeremy Coote, "catalogue entries 2.18a & 2.18b" in Tom Phillips, ed., *Africa. The Art of a Continent*, London, Royal Academy of Arts, 1995, p. 137.



anonymous missionary from the Flemish Kapucijnen missionaries in 1910 and published by Jan-Lodewijck Grootaers shows a Ngbandi large statue next to an ancestor hut in a manner similar to the Bongo and Belanda rituals.²² The second photo (fig. 8) taken by another Kapucijn missionary Father Basiel Tanghe in 1920 also shows a large size Ngbandi figure carved as a memorial of one Limalo-Kule, the artist who made the figure in the village of Dondo (today' Kotakoli) in RDC.²³ This statue was standing next to the ancestral hut which consists of six to eight forked sticks around a meter high with a roof of straw or leaves in a spatial arrangement reminiscent of the Bongo/Belanda traditions. Further research could show more connections between these two important artistic traditions.

Ngya statues are obviously of a very archaic style: they are generally frontal, rather simple in their modeling of the human body and elongated. *Ngya* statuary is reduced to its basic rudiments, the simple kind of pole sculpture that might almost have been carved on a living tree. It is reminiscent of what the German art historian Eckart von Sydow described as *Pfahl* and *Baumplastiek* (sculptures in the shape of posts and tree).²⁴ The idea that these *Pfahl* and *Baumplastiek* styles of the Bongo could have been the Ur-styles of African statuary was suggested by no less than William Fagg in his comments on a Bongo statue from the Frum family collection. He remarked that "for between five and ten thousand years in this area of southern Sudan, the Bongo or their predecessors have maintained this genuinely primitive art unchanged in essence from the time when there was no other African art."²⁵ For Fagg, even if one cannot prove any direct link between a nineteenth century statue and the art of those early times, one could speculate that this southern Sudan province could be the general area through which the art of sculpture was diffused Africa south of the Sahara.

Pushing Fagg's argument even further, one could speculate some kind of link between the Bongo / Belanda traditions of funerary mounds and statues to guard them with the ancient traditions of Egypt and their pyramids. The image of a wonderful bronze statue (fig. 10) of a Sudanese Kushite king from the Meroitic dynasties between 400 B.C. and 400 A.D. standing with one leg forward in the same manner as one of the masterpieces of Bongo sculpture by the famous Bongo artist Gwanja Gete (fig. 9) will give a free rein to new and fascinating speculations and subjective judgment.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Klaus-Jochen Krüger, Francesco Pelizzi, Udo Horstman, Dr. K.F. Schädler, Charles Meur, Lavuun Quackelbeen, Jo Christaens, Eric Duponcheel and Heini Schneebeli for their help.

{22} Jan-Lodewijck Grootaers, *Ubangi. Art and Cultures from the African Heartland*, Mercatorfonds, Brussels, 2007, illus. 1.17, p. 28

{23} P. Basiel Tanghe, *De Ngbandi naar het leven geschetst*, Drukkerij « De Gruuthuuse Persen », Brugge, 1929, p. 262 and Herman Burssens, « Statues and Applied Sculpture in Northwestern Congo, in Jan-Lodewijck Grootaers, *Ubangi. Art and Cultures from the African Heartland*, Mercatorfonds, Brussels, 2007, p. 117

{24} Eckart von Sydow, *Afrikanische Plastik*, Verlag Gerb. Mann, Berlin, 1954, p. 15

{25} William Fagg, *African Majesty from Grassland and Forest. The Barbara and Murray Frum Collection*, Toronto, The Art gallery of Ontario, 1981, p. 152



The Duponcheel Bongo Expedition

Although Bongo art had been known by a few specialists, no major Bongo work appeared in any Western public collection until Franco/Belgian dealer Christian Duponcheel went to Sudan in 1972, just after the cease-fire of March 1972 of a long civil war which had started in 1955.

Christian Duponcheel (born in Estaimpuis, France April 2nd 1941, married to Nicole Vervaeck with whom he had one son Eric, born in 1966 and deceased in Pietrebaix on the 23 December 2004) was a self-taught art dealer and scholar. His first trip to Africa was his honeymoon voyage where he hitched-hike all the way with his wife to Congo passing through Congo Brazzaville and Gabon in 1964/65. He collected in situ a great abstract Mahongwe mask sold to the Dapper Museum (inv. n° 0741, cfr. C. Falgayrettes-Leveau et alii, *Gabon. Présence des esprits*, Paris, Musée Dapper, 2006, p. 10 and some Kota helmet masks (See Private Collection cfr. Alisa La Gamma, *Eternal Ancestors. The Art of the Central African Reliquary*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007, plate 109, pp. 298-9).

He left on a second trip to West Africa lasting nine months in Nigeria in 1968, financed partially by the Musée Royale de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren. He carried out a major excavation of a Nok site at that time finding the first complete Nok statue ever, since only heads and fragments were known before. He also field collected among the Eket, Igbo and Ibibio of southern Nigeria (See his famous Eket headdress published in Luc de Heusch et alii, *Utotombo. L'art d'Afrique noire dans les collections privées belges*, Bruxelles, 1988, p. 179, n° 120).

Among his other remarkable finds are two fabulous Mabea Fang Reliquary figures found in a private collection in Barcelona. The first Fang figure belonged for a long time to Philippe Guimiot before ending in a private New York



collection(Cfr. Alisa La Gamma, *Eternal Ancestors. The Art of the Central African Reliquary*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007, plate 13, p145) while the second is in the collection of Alain Schoffel (Cfr. P. Laburthe-Tolra et C. Falgayrettes-Leveau, *Fang*, Paris, Musée Dapper, 1991, p. 139).

He published a small catalogue "Esthétique Nègre" at his gallery "Cowries Gallery", rue de Livourne, Brussels in 1970 and a long essay of the art of Congo Brazzaville in *Masterpieces of the People's Republic of Congo*, New York, The African American Institute, 1980.

His trip to Sudan in the summer of 1972 introduced Bongo statuary to the museums and collectors in Europe and America. He collected eleven anthropomorphic figures of which four were Belanda and seven were Bongo, mainly in the vicinity of the town of Tonj.

1. New York, Private Collection, Height : 185 cm
2. Collection Georg Baselitz, Derneburg Germany, Height : 220 cm
3. Collection Georg Baselitz, Derneburg Germany, Height : 191 cm
4. Geneva, Musée Barbier Mueller Inv.n° 1027-1, Height : 200cm
5. Private Collection, Belgium, Former Collection Count Baudouin de Grunne, Height : 133 cm
6. Houston, Menil Foundation Inv. n° 83-029 DJ, Height : 240 cm
7. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, Height :183 cm
8. Bruxelles, Collection Privée, ex. Britt Family Collection Height : 112 cm
9. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art Inv; n° 1973.264, Height : 191,3 cm
10. London, British Museum Inv. n° 1973.AF.35.1, Height : 145 cm
11. Zug, Collection Wally and Udo Horstman, Height : 157cm





1

Bongo Funerary post, Bussere Style

Total height : 184 cm

Height statue : 129 cm

Datation : A.D. 1770 \pm 45 years
(Test C 14, Dr. George Bonani, Zurich,
n° ETH 20227, April 1999)



Bongo grave, photo by E. Evans-Prichard in Charles and Brenda Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, London Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1932, Plate XLIX





2

**Bongo funerary figure by the
workshop of Kwanja Gete**

Total height : 84 cm





3

**Bongo funerary figure by
the sons of Kwanja Gete**
Total height : 109 cm



Photo of a Bongo figure by Kwanja Gete photographed in situ by Klaus-Jochen Krüger in 1974





4

Bongo Funerary Figure

Total height : 150 cm





5

**Bongo Monumental
figure by the workshop
of Kwanja Gete**
Total height : 157 cm



Bongo Funerary Post

Total height : 138 cm

Height statue : 83 cm



7

**Bongo Funerary Figure,
region of Wau**
Total height : 164 cm



8

**Bongo Funerary Figure,
region of Wau**

Total height : 158,5 cm

Height statue : 97 cm





**Bongo Funerary post,
Bussere Style**
Total height : 145 cm

10

**Bongo Funerary post,
Region of Tonj**

Total height : 138 cm

Height statue : 103 cm



11

Bongo Funerary post

Total height : 134 cm

Height statue : 76 cm



12

Bongo Funerary post

Region of Tonj

Total height : 171 cm



13

**Bongo Funerary post,
region of Tonj**
Total height : 140 cm



14

**Bongo Funerary post,
region of Tonj**
Total height : 113 cm



15

Belanda funerary post

Total height : 121 cm



16

Belanda Funerary Post

Total height : 173 cm



17

Bongo Funerary torso

Total height : 103,5 cm



18

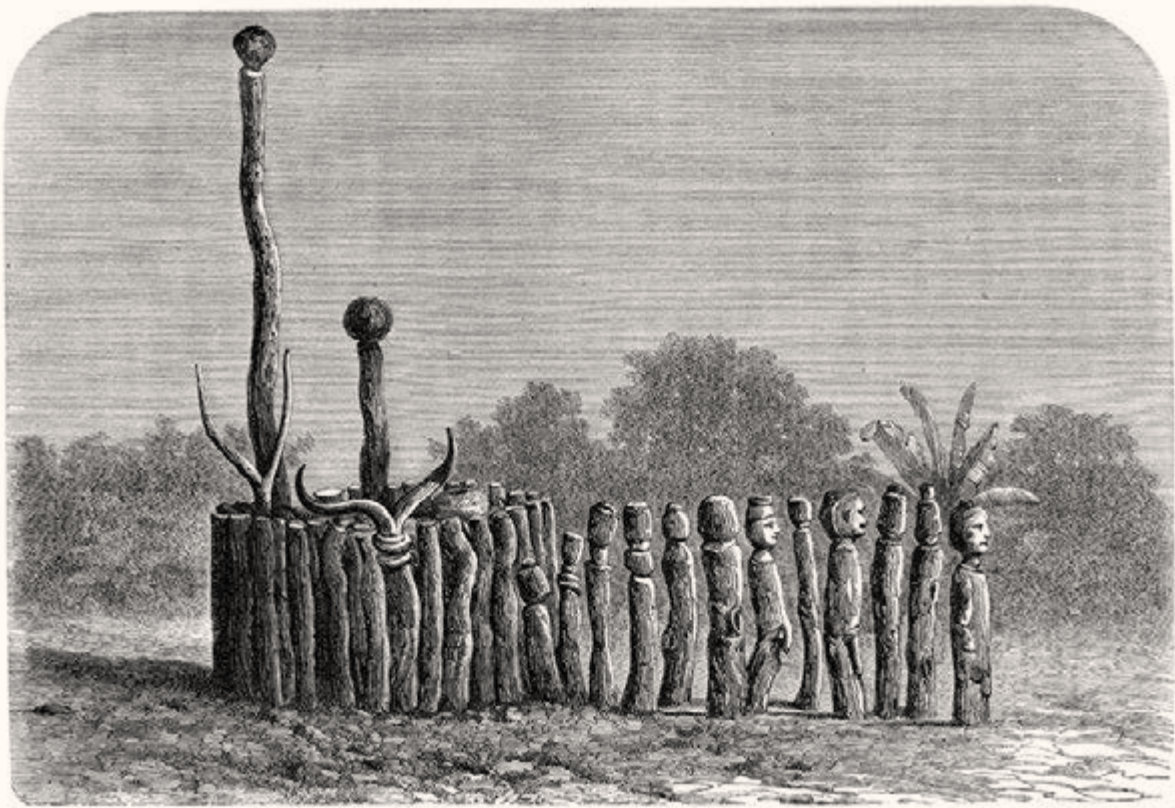
**Bongo Funerary post,
Tembura region**
Total height : 168 cm





19

Morokodu Funerary post
Total height : 232 cm



Grave of Bongo chief named Yanga in the village of Mouhdi in 1869 from George Schweinfurth, *Au Coeur de l'Afrique 1868-1871. Voyages et découvertes dans les régions inexplorées de l'Afrique centrale*, Paris, Hachette, 1875, p. 274





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Avukaya Funerary post

Total height : 174 cm



← Photo of an Avukaya grave by E. Evans-Pritchard in Charles and Brenda Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, London Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1932, Plate LII

↓ Photo of Avukaya tombs near Maridi in 1975, in Klaus-Jöchen Krüger, "The Arts of Bahr-el-Ghazal: Funerary posts of the Avukaya, Morokodu, Nyamusa, Beli, Lori and Zande", in *Tribal Arts*, Summer 2002, n° 28, p. 82





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