

reference (see p.ix, under the category *Heads, human*). In that essay, Dark distinguished eight types of »bronze memorial heads«; types 1–5 were male heads which belong to the »court style« and were made in Benin city, type 6 is a provincial style work that is commonly known as a »Udo head«, and types 7 and 8 belong to the so-called Queen Mother group. Each particular type was then accorded a time period when it was produced. By mentioning this earlier styleperiod work and using the same nomenclature within the present catalogue there is of course no further need to either make any sort of distinctions and/or stick his neck out. Some of other violations of the distinction and neck premise worth mentioning will be found on p.xii. There we find such statements as: 1. »The art after the expedition reflects a loss of the understanding of the motives for expressing traditional values of yore.«; 2. »But the art of the last century was no source to turn to for inspiration for it had become static and unyielding, inward looking and confused.«; 3. »Not until 1926 do the arts seem to pick up production«; 4. Concerning the rectangular plaques Dark states that they were a »form which the Edo artist had given up producing three hundred years earlier«. This is not the only area where Professor Dark fails to heed his own advice. On p.ix, we find a plea for deeper study of Benin iconography and a reconciliation of technical information with both: history and style. Subsequently, eg. he consistently refers to the metal sculptures as bronzes (copper-tin alloys) when in fact the overwhelming majority of these pieces are leaded brass (copper-zinc-lead alloys). This distinction is extremely important and unless this is noted there can be little or no hope for meaningful reconciliation.

An all inclusive work, such as been attempted, is bound to have a score of nettlesome errors and omissions. One omission pertains to Dark being unable to find the reference concerning von Luschan's paper dealing with a »bronze« collected before 1897 (see p.xviii, fn. 15). The article in question can be found in *Globus*, Band LXVIII, 1900, pp. 306–307. Another pertains to the bottle or flask (ill. 24, Bottle Y1/3) which has allegedly not been previously published. An illustration of the same work can be found in Ling Roth (1903) and von Luschan (1919). One does not quite know how to classify the next comment. Originally, Dark (Sotheby's 1980) made a point of not calling the ivory gong (ill.67) a sistrum, now he seems to have reversed field and gong has become sistrum. One or two minor errors are: 1. Oba Akenzua II is not the reigning monarch. Upon his death the kingship was taken by his eldest son, now known as Oba Erediaua I; 2. Jigekuma Ombu (1973) should read 1975 (see pp. vii, x, xviii).

Yet, in spite of these serious shortcomings, the catalogue is not without use. For this alone, all those concerned with African art must express a debt of gratitude to Professor Dark for expending so much time and effort in giving us a first.

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DREWAL, H. a. M. THOMPSON DREWAL:

Gelede: Art and Female Power among the Yoruba. Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1983. xxi + 306 pp.

The Yoruba of Nigeria believe that the success of men or women in society is due to the possession of *ase*, a neutral power, an inner life force, that can be used for good or ill. It is a power that makes one's words come true. However, potentially all women and especially older successful women of a reserved nature are thought to possess another kind of spiritual power, to become *aje* or to possess *aje*, that is the ability to transform themselves into birds of the night and meet in the forest to take their revenge covertly on any who have offended them, and thus to bring barrenness, impotence, sickness and death into the community and crop failure in the fields. This invisible collectivity of women is referred to by a euphemism, »our mothers«, as if to appeal to their positive *ase* or powers.

Among the Western Yoruba the Gelede cult, a voluntary association of men and women, organize an annual, elaborate week-long masked festival to entertain and placate living and ancestral women so that they will not exercise their dangerous mystical powers against the community. As one male elder explained: Our »forefathers told us that these were destructive women, *aje*, that we must not look down upon them. If we despise them, it means death. We must pamper them and be living«. The masked dances of Gelede are performed only by men. The festival obtains the support of the town council and is attended by the entire community, who at times join in the singing and dancing.

The Drewals do not want to stress the negative attitudes toward women. They emphasize that Yoruba women are thought of positively as protective progenitors, healers and guardians of morality and the social order, and that the festival pays homage to their spiritual powers which are appraised as greater than men's.

The main content of the book is a treatise on performance of the Gelede festival, one that dips deeply into Yoruba religion and social values. From the opening chapter on the meaning of spectacle, one is swept into the thought-world of the Yoruba by means of extensive quotations of invocations, song texts, drum messages and interview statements. Benefiting from extensive fieldwork and a knowledge of the language, the Drewals describe and explain all aspects of the elaborate sequen-