

over a number of years before the title is acknowledged or she takes possession of a headdress. Three of the titled women I observed were in their late forties or early fifties. As is evident, practices are flexible, adjusted to the woman's reputation and the means and will of her supporting women and her husband's lineage to recognize her, a recognition encouraged by sharing the rewards with her aides and her husband.

2) *Klowainyno*, Generous Provider

The core significance people attached to the term *klowainyno* or Generous Provider is that the woman is prepared to offer food. This titled position is similar to the *wakede*, the "feast-acting woman" (Fischer and Himmelheber 1976: 158, 1984: 124), whom Himmelheber (1965) had so well described as "the most hospitable woman" among the Dan, northeastern neighbors of the Wè/Guéré.⁵ Invariably, both men and women in Canton Boo recounted that a *klowainyno* would always have food reserves and be ready and willing at any hour to prepare a meal for visitors.

Besides storing ample reserves of rice, the *klowainyno* formerly hung a large basket, *klowa toh* (*klowa* referring to the hearth, *toh* "basket"), over her hearth in which there would be dried vegetables, condiments, and a store of smoked fish or meat ready at hand (Fig. 4). Descriptions of her supplies and actions are always phrased in terms of the highest expectations. The *klowainyno* adds to her reputation by sharing food supplies from time to time with women who suffer shortages, without expectation of return in kind. But the performance that gives her fame occurs within a community-wide context, for her work is integral to the masked festival.

The masked festival is the largest and most

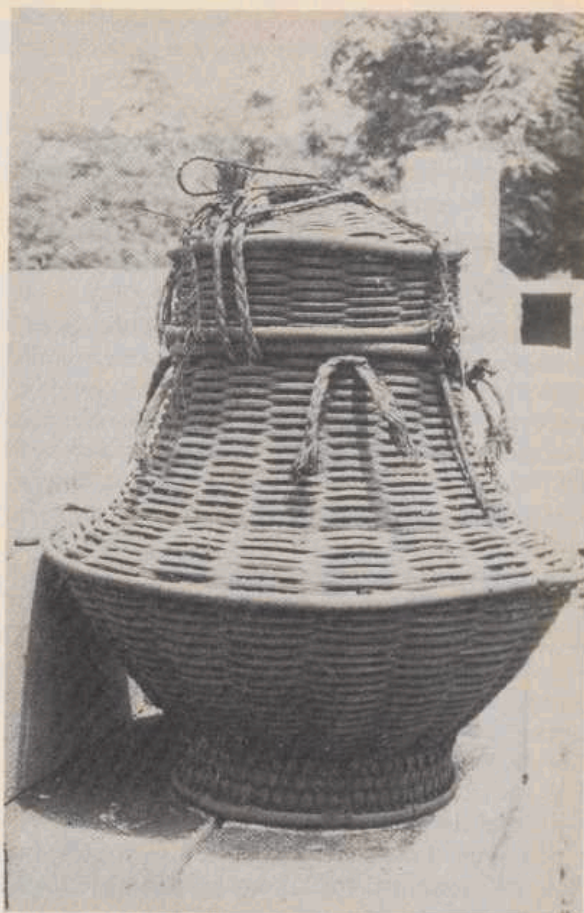


Fig. 4: Basket belonging to Generous Provider, Blé Suzanne, of Medibli (1985).

complexly organized undertaking in this society. Men are in charge of it and all the masked performers are men (for more details on the organization of masked festivals and women's part in them, see Adams 1986, 1987, 1988). Elders will say that, to assure prosperity and well-being, a *sra*, that is, an offering of a meat meal and invocations to the ancestors or other powers, must be performed in the dry season after harvest and before cutting the forest for the next season. The *sra* is sponsored by one or more lineages who share the feast with the heads of all lineages.

The ultimate requirement for lineage prestige is large-scale generosity, best demonstrated by undertaking to sponsor a sacrifice-festival to which masked dancers are invited to perform. Each lineage (except very small newcomers) owns masks and is expected to sponsor a festival at some time, for one reason or another. Frequently, the announced purpose is to commemorate a deceased relative. The scale of the event and the number

⁵ Himmelheber based his information on several research visits among the Dan in Liberia and a trip to the western Guéré in Côte d'Ivoire. This titled role, he points out, depends on the fact that wives produce and manage the staple food supplies of rice. To fulfill the hospitality role, a woman must be an industrious cultivator and be generous; she is not necessarily the wife of a chief. She receives and feeds troupes of dance groups or minstrels who come to entertain the village. When a rich man, to increase his fame, sponsors a festival at which a bull is slaughtered, she assists by providing and serving the rice dish to invited guests. Therefore in 1984–85 when I went to the Wè/Guéré region in Côte d'Ivoire, I expected to find at least the remnants of such a role for women. It was impressive, however, to see the scale and elaboration of this titled woman's performance, especially at the great masked festivals.