

*Coffee plantation in the Ituri region.*

Coffee originated in Africa; from time immemorial the Gallas (Abyssinians) used coffee as both food and drink. Bean and pulp were boiled together. In the 15th century, the Arabs began to cultivate coffee. In the 16th century, it was already being used as a drink in Cairo and from there it spread through Syria, Damascus, Aleppo, and then throughout Europe.

When the Congo was occupied by the Belgians, several species of wild coffee trees were discovered in the equatorial forest regions. Their importance was so great that the idea was conceived of establishing plantations of these trees and of experimenting with coffee trees from Arabia, Liberia, and other provinces.

When Belgium took over the Congo, the government established at Lula, near Stanleyville, an experimental plantation of coffee trees covering more than 300 acres where Congolese and other trees were treated in various ways. Larger experimental stations now exist.

Since such high regions of the Belgian Congo as Kivu and Haut-Ituri have been recognized as particularly propitious for the culture of fine Arabian coffee, plantations have greatly expanded. Their produce is mainly sold in Katanga and South Africa, while a certain proportion goes normally to Belgium and the London market.

Weight varies greatly by the acre. In general it is around 1,000 pounds per acre for the Robusta variety.

In the lower colonial regions, the plantations are mainly Robusta: this species is extremely hardy and gives high returns. It is well accommodated to the hot climate of the equatorial regions.

As for the coffees of the Arabic group, whose quality is superior to the Robusta, they are best cultivated in higher, cooler levels, such as in the neighboring region of the African Great Lakes as well as in the central part and in southern Katanga.

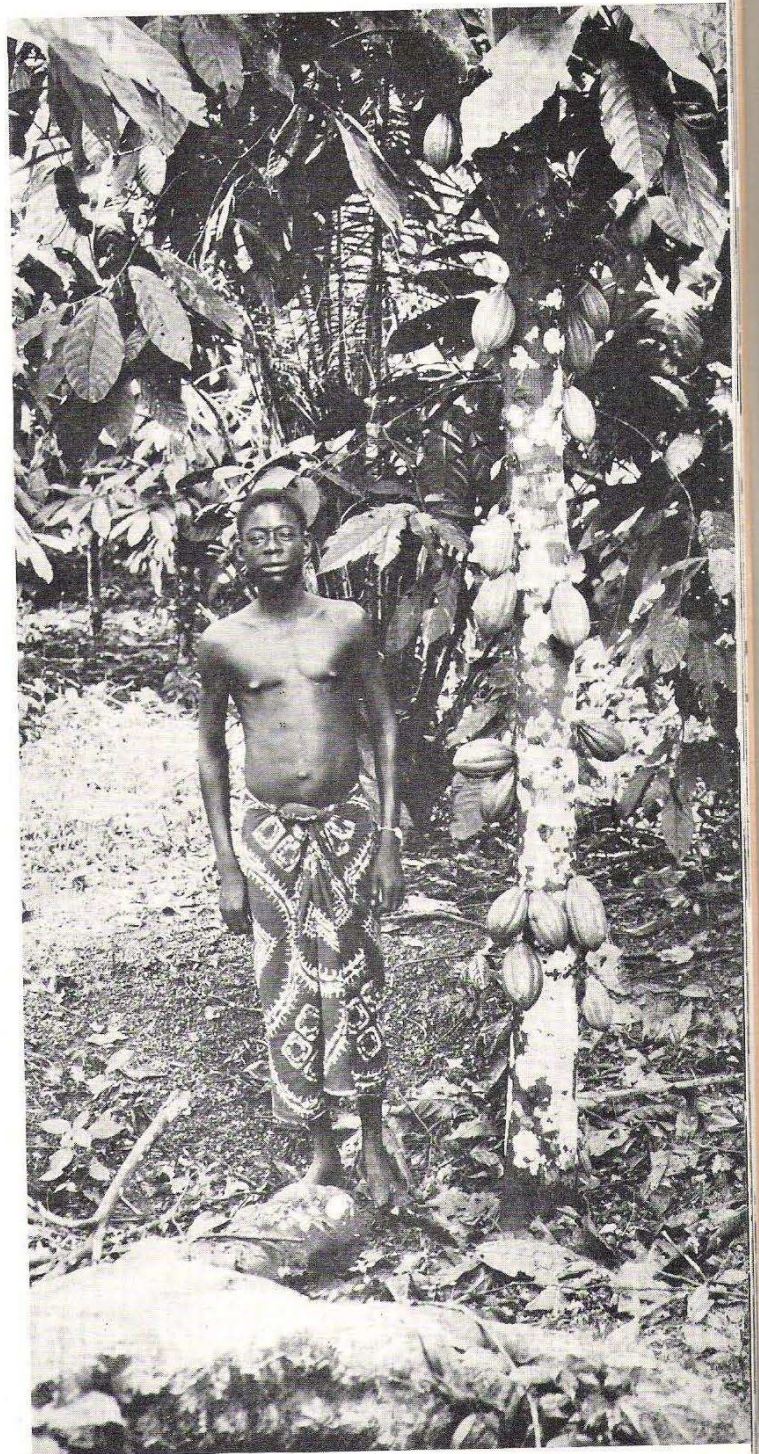
Coffee production today is about 20,000 tons per year.

At the same time the Congo produces 1,500 tons of cocoa per year.

Other products of the Belgian Congo include white maize (28,000 tons of exports a year); manioc (4,000 tons); sugar (14,000 tons) and even small quantities of tea.

## 20,000 Tons of Coffee

*Cocoa tree of the Lukolela plantation.*



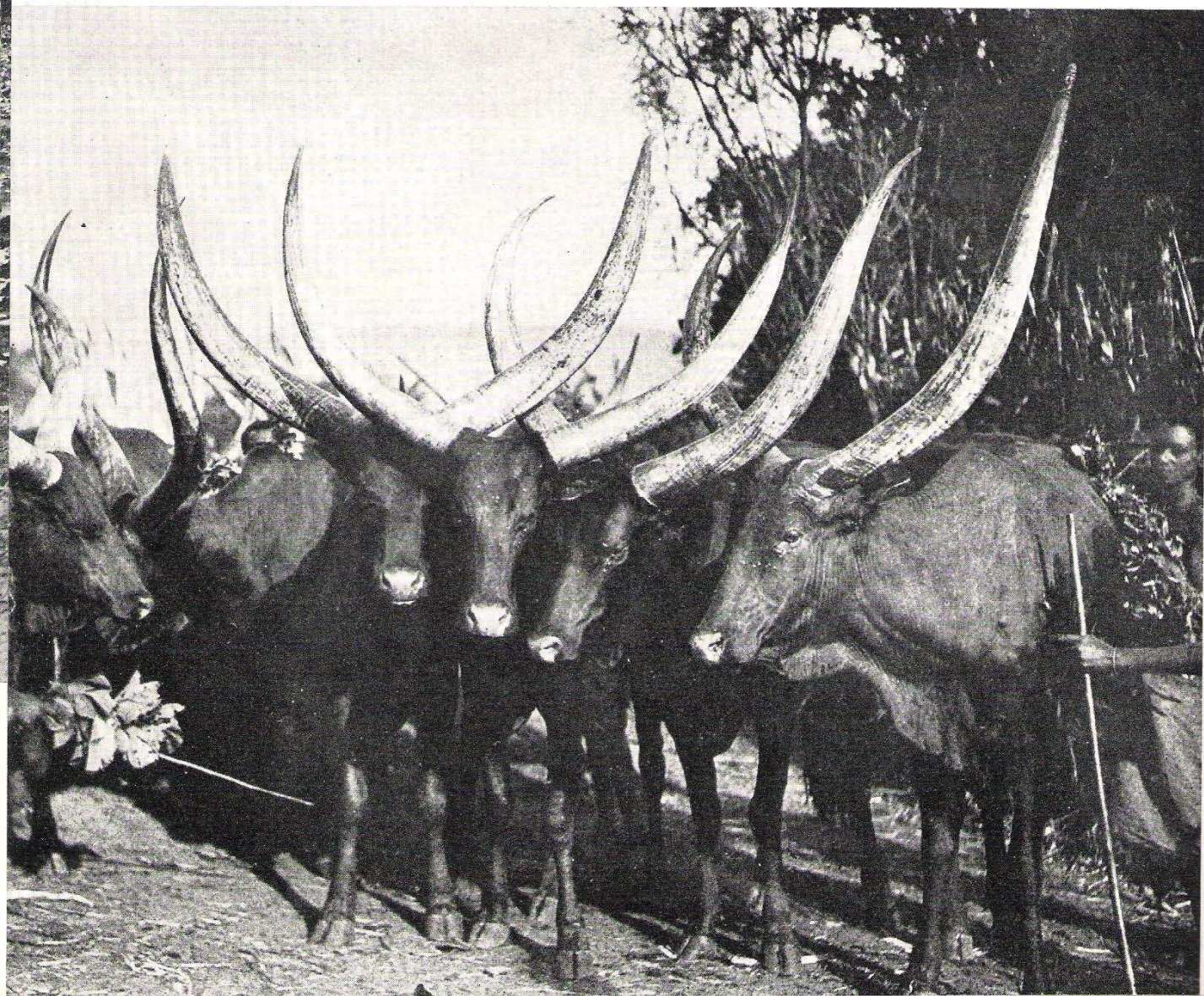
# Cattle, Pride of the Ruanda Urundi Districts

*Cattle is especially important in the Ruanda-Urundi districts where three million heads are to be found. In the other Congolese districts, the total number of cattle does not exceed 500,000 but cattle raising is greatly encouraged by the Belgian Congo authorities.*



*A familiar scene in the Urundi.*

*Choice cattle of the Ruanda.*

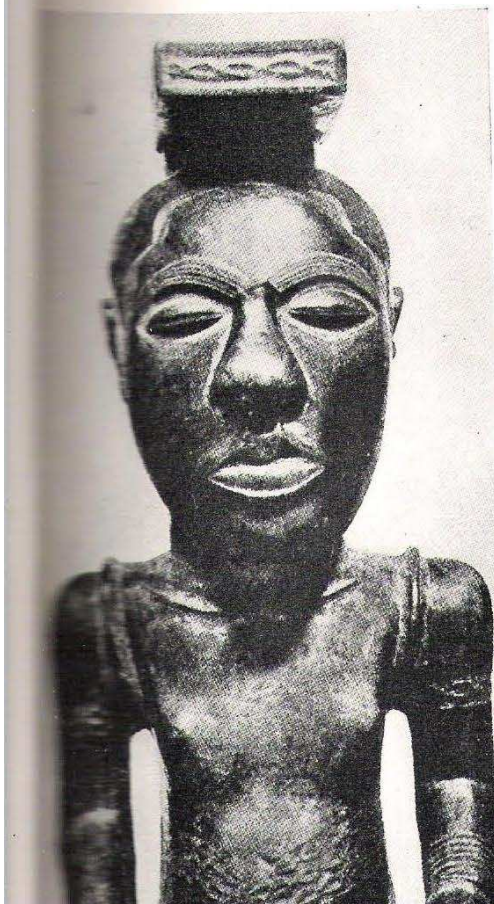


## NEGRO ART

# "Genuine Congo Native Art is Never Vulgar"

The first pioneers came back to Europe laden with the treasures of the *Africa Tenebrosa*. Ivory, leopard and lion skins, arrows, spears, fetishes and musical instruments were

*Bakuba sculpture.*



heaped in decorative piles, resembling the cartouch of Baroque architecture. Naturalists and ethnologists were eager to share the major spoils, leaving the less important pieces to

collectors of exotic curiosities. Masks and figures, arms, and carved tools, basket-work and clothes were studied, compared, classified according to their tribal origin. The religious, military or domestic meaning of every single object was explained by learned men who soon were able to write exhaustive books on the subject.

But it never came to the mind of these early researchers that a Negro mask or a carved drum could possibly be considered as a "thing of beauty." The delicate *rafia* embroideries, the textiles woven of coco-palm fibre in elaborate patterns by the Ba Kuba natives, were examined as to their function in domestic life, just as if they were kudu horns or zebra skins.

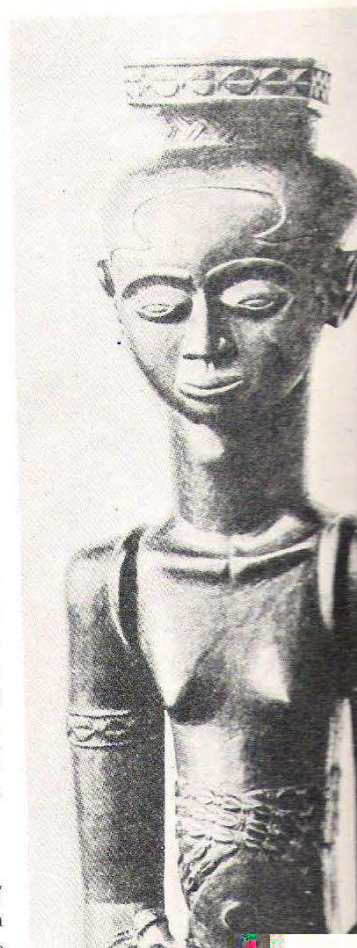
Negro art was discovered by European artists. About the year 1905, such young painters as Picasso, Derain, Matisse and Vlaminck, the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, the sensitive art-dealer Paul Guillaume, were the first to realize the profound plastic seriousness of African sculpture. They revealed the dramatic elements, devoid of any picturesque anecdotal quality or exoticism for exoticism's sake, that lay hidden in the mysterious faces of masks and fetishes. And very soon, the influence of their discovery became apparent in their own works.

Since that time, the Ethnographical Museum of the Belgian Congo, created in 1897 in Tervueren (Brussels), by the foresighted genius of Leopold II, became the most important European center for the study of African art. The collections, arranged and classified by the first director of the Museum, Baron Alphonse de Haulleville, finally contained the finest examples of Negro craftsmanship as well as the most touching and significant statues ever carved in wood by the black race.

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The study of the evolution of the fine arts is generally based on previous historical studies. The history of art can only develop as a consequence of general history. In the case of African art, the only documents left are these very works of art that were, for decades, considered as mere "documents." There exists no such thing as a regular history of non-Mediterranean Africa. All we know about the empires of Benin, Yoruba, Melle, and Fanda is legendary or so fragmentary that it cannot possibly give us an understanding of Africa's historical evolution. This is the chief reason why the "discovery" of Negro art is due to creative artists and not to historians or other scholars.

*Bakuba sculpture.*





A curious consequence of their revelation was to clear Leopold II and the early Belgian pioneers of the charge of having destroyed native culture. It was established in fact that, already in the XVIIIth century, Negro art was falling into a decline from some obscure, internal cause. The most perfect specimens of sculptures and carving were executed, as was proved by oral tradition and by comparison with later work, between the beginning of the XVIIth and the second half of the XVIIIth century.

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Not all parts of the immense Belgian empire were equally favored as to artistic development. Although the Wa Reggo region, north of Lake Tanganyika, and the Basonge, between the Congo River and the Lomami, have given birth to an abundant and valuable artistic production, it is in the basin of the Kasai, the most important tributary stream on the left bank of the Congo, that African art attained its highest achievements. Two tribes or nations, the Ba Kuba and the Ba Luba are still active in creating wonderful decorative art, ornamented tools, spoons, bobbins, head-rests and musical instruments, which however



*Bela Lulua statuettes.*

only reflect the past splendor of the Bushongo kingdom that flourished in the region inhabited by the Ba Kuba from the XVth till the XVIIIth century. As was pointed out by H. Clouzot and A. Level, Bushongo art did not entirely spring from religious feeling: It is laic, domestic, familiar. The decorative themes of the fibre weaver and the basket maker passed into the craftsmanship of the woodcarver. Hence the rich and varied compositions of stylized geometrical elements that embellish the simplest utensil. In Ba Luba art, the patterns of surface decoration are simpler, more naturalistic and at the same time more architectonic. The masks, used in ritual ceremonies are impressive with a sort of baroque grandeur.

A particular Ba Kuba mask, the Bombo, is believed to represent the stylization of a Pygmy's face. The dwarf-race, driven centuries ago from the parklands into the depth of woods and marshes, has acquired a kind of magic prestige in the minds of the far more civilized tribes.

A dynasty of Bushongo kings has been immortalized in a series of wooden statues. The natives, perhaps on the grounds of ancestor-worship, have hidden the images of their



*Kasai-Lulua statuettes.*