The Spectacle of Africa Through the Lens of Herbert Lang

Belgian Congo Photographs 1909–1915

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Colonial photographs of Africa, like all photographs—from mundane family snapshots to Victorian portraits to contemporary commercial work—depict aspects of a constructed reality that incorporates the perceptions, politics, and tastes of the photographer, the photographic subject, and the intended audience. Historical photographs of Africa taken by Westerners inevitably portray the encounter between Western and "exotic" cultures and reveal conventions of picture-taking in another time. They have been shaped by the very different values and assumptions held by both photographer and subject and by each one's perceptions of their relationship. How each party has interpreted the act of taking a photograph, or of being photographed, is crucial in forming the image we see today. Photographic images also have to be interpreted within the terms of the visual vocabulary of their viewers, who often are a heterogeneous public audience that changes over time and place.

The ethnographic photographs of Herbert Lang taken in the Belgian Congo between 1909 and 1915 inevitably incorporated some of the clichés found in all African colonial photography of that period. Lang, a white man, although not a Belgian, was inevitably associated with the colonial power, bringing with him relative wealth and a fascinating new technology. Not officially a representative of the colonial government, Lang nevertheless represented the alien European culture, which at the time was imposing itself on Africa in thousands of ways, one of which involved prodigious collecting of examples of local flora, fauna, and material culture as well as the commissioning of painted and photographic images of the natural and human environment. Working for the American Museum of Natural History in New York, he took thousands of photographs in northeastern Zaire in the years immediately following the takeover of the Congo Free State by the Belgian government.[1] Lang had a definite audience in mind; it included trustees and funders of the expedition, and scientists and the general public—in perpetuity.

These pictures obviously reveal a great deal about Lang and the epoch in

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS IN THIS ARTICLE EXCEPT FIGURES 5 AND 13 ARE BY HERBERT LANG AND ARE FROM THE PHOTO ARCHIVES OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, NEW YORK.

1. IN ORDER TO CREATE WHAT HE PERCEIVED AS A SCIENTIFICALLY VALID SERIES OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL PORTRAITS, LANG LINED UP MEN WHO HE "ASCERTAINED" WERE OF THE PYGMY "RACE." HE THEN PHOTOGRAPHED EVERY THIRD, FIFTH, OR SEVENTH INDIVIDUAL, DEPENDING ON THE FINAL NUMBER OF IMAGES DESIRED. THESE FOUR PORTRAITS WERE SELECTED FOR PUBLICATION IN LANG'S 1919 ARTICLE ON THE PYGMIES. NEG. NOS. 226063, 226117, 226018, 226070.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

2. PYGMIES DANCING TO CELEBRATE A SUCCESSFUL HUNT AT THE MAKERE VILLAGE OF NIAPU, 1914. NEG. NO. 226192.

which he worked. However, in this paper I will also show that the people he photographed had considerable input into the construction of the images. We are able to analyze Lang's photographs in this way because he recorded so many different individuals who came from many communities and ethnic groups in northeastern Zaire. Many individuals were photographed repeatedly, and the images can be compared with each other, with Lang's extensive descriptive notations, and with the artifacts he collected. The pictures of Mangbetu rulers—only one of the groups Lang photographed—depict a people who consciously constructed an image of themselves for outsiders that relied on their perception of outsiders' perception of them. As in a series of mirrors, images are caught, reflected back, and gradually distorted as they pass before successive audiences, including, finally, ourselves (see Figs. 6, 12, 13).

Herbert Lang was asked by the American Museum of Natural History to lead a two-man expedition to explore the natural history of what is now northeastern Zaire. Lang thought of himself as a taxidermist, collector, and mammalogist—a naturalist who used photography as a documentary tool.[2] It is not known whether he received any formal photographic training; his pictures, however, suggest that he had a good technical knowledge of the medium. Lang knew how to handle difficult light situations, how to use several cameras at once, and how to control the depth of field with a high degree of precision. He also processed all his own film under difficult conditions. Finally, even though he did not see himself as an art photographer, it is clear that photography was his real passion.

Lang and the American Museum of Natural History

For the Museum's Congo Expedition, Lang and James Chapin, a young ornithologist, were asked specifically to collect and document zoological, botanical, and anthropological collections. Photography was not part of the original assignment. From the outset, however, Lang knew that it would be an important component, and he formulated an agreement with the Museum concerning the financing of the photography and the rights to the pictures. Lang paid for all of the photographic work, devoting virtually his entire salary of $125 a month to equipment and supplies. He sent reports back to the Museum every so often (not often enough from the Director's point of view), most of which were accompanied by prints. The prints were to give the administration and the sponsors of the expedition an idea of the project's progress. Lang was aware of the value and the limits of black-and-white photography in conveying the atmosphere of the trip; he lamented the lack of color, and also noted that to get the full effect the viewer would have to get into a steam bath while looking at the pictures. He wanted photography to give the viewers a sense of being there, and he wanted the images to capture, as closely as possible, reality as he and Chapin experienced it.

Many of Lang's photographs were used in public lectures in the 1920s and 1930s. Recently a set of tinted lantern slides turned up that was used by Chapin himself, and by others in the education department. The Museum produced and sold many lantern slide sets, including one called "Okondo's vil-

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

3. EVEN THOUGH LANG DEFENDED THE BELGIAN ADMINISTRATION IN THE CONGO, HIS CAPTION FOR THIS PHOTOGRAPH, TAKEN IN 1909 IN THE AREA CALLED STANLEY POOL, WAS "CONGO ATROCITY." THE NEGATIVE WAS LABELED "A CORNER OF STANLEY POOL. NATIVE HUTS BURNING." NEG. NO. 226936.

4. MANGBETU WOMEN IN A FORMAL BELGIAN GARDEN IN THE BELGIAN CONGO, CA. 1910. FROM A STEREOSCOPE GLASS PLATE NEGATIVE, NO. 426S.

5. HERBERT LANG WITH A DEAD RHINOCEROS. PHOTOGRAPH BY JULIUS KIRCHNER, NEG. NO. 104694.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

lage."[3] (Okondo was an important Mangbetu chief.) The hand-painted colors on the lantern slides are interesting: although they may have faded, the brass is still brighter than gold, and feathers that are normally a subtle shade of green or dark blue are a vibrant turquoise (Figs. 6, 11, 17, 18).

Lang used a tripod camera that produced images on 4"x 5" and 5" x 7" glass-plate negatives, which he printed in the field. According to Chapin, after a whole day's fieldwork, Lang would stay up late into the night developing his negatives. The fact that he had darkroom facilities in the field is important, because it meant that the subjects could see prints of the pictures.[4] Lang and his black-hooded box became commonplace in those villages where he lived for long periods, like Okondo's. This does not mean that people took photography for granted, but rather that as time went on they must have become increasingly conversant with what images the camera could capture. Lang also used a more portable Verascope Richard stereoscope camera for impromptu work, not for formal portraits. Scenes with great activity, like dances, were photographed using both the stereoscope and the tripod camera.

Lang was well aware of the potential for public interest in his photographs. Not only were "Great White Hunter" images becoming part of popular culture—Theodore Roosevelt was on an African safari in the same year—but the Congo Expedition commenced just one year after the Congo Free State had been ceded from King Leopold II to the Belgian government. Photography had been an important tool for the reformers, who published graphic images of the atrocities associated with the Congo Free State regime. At Lang's suggestion, the Museum agreed not to release any of his pictures to the popular press until the conclusion of the expedition. The agreement protected Lang's interests in the photographs and allowed him to have control over their publication during his lifetime; after his death the Museum would have all rights to the negatives.

Lang summarized his understanding with the Museum in the Tenth Report from the Congo dated July 27, 1912 (American Museum of Natural History, Unpublished Archives, File 771, Tenth Report, p. 11). Note his comments about "principles of representation":

> I beg to state that I consider the publication of photographs accompanied by questionable information not in the interest of this Expedition. Such articles should at least be free from any dubious remarks about colonial administration and not present incorrect figures about taxes. I have no objection, however, to make exceptions later on if these articles show that dignified character that is in keeping with the principles of representation of the American Museum. It is and always was my desire that these photographic results be used to the best advantage of the Museum, and if there is any photograph of special interest in this collection I should like to see it appear first in one of the publications of the Museum. You have seen from my letter of May 3, 1909 that the entire expenses for this division are borne by myself, and I have never hesitated to furnish any amount required. The sum spent on this division exceeds today $4000.00, and it is the only expenditure in the administration of this expedition that may appear extravagant, but the very complete record, not only zoological but in every respect, should offer very desirable assistance to the American Museum, which is practically the proprietor of all negatives.

Photographing Wildlife

Lang saw himself first and foremost as a wildlife photographer whose subjects had to be momentarily tamed in order to be captured on film. Seven years after his return, in 1915, to New York he described the following incident to a journalist:

> Some years ago, while making photographic studies of wild animals for scientific purposes, I happened one day to be in the cage of

a large puma in the Bronx Zoological Gardens, in New York City. The keeper was behind me, between me and the door. The puma on which I was focusing my camera, was five or six feet in front of me—and showing signs of nervousness.

I had got the camera in focus and was about to snap the picture when the puma suddenly ran around behind me, then leaped—landing on my back, with one of its fore paws at the base of my neck, the other on my shoulder.

I steadied myself, taking care to make no unnecessary movement. My sole thought was to keep from exciting the animal further; and I remained bent over in the position I had been in when it landed on me, because I wanted to make the puma *just as comfortable as I could* [italics in original], so long as it wished to stay there.

Fortunately it did not choose to stay very long. After a moment, it jumped off with a clean leap, and alighted on the floor of the cage in front of me.

Had I struck at it while it was on my back, or tried to fight it off, I should only have increased its nervous fright to rage....As it was, the puma seemed satisfied that it was in no danger from me and I got good photographs.

(Wisehart 1922:60)

This account of Lang's encounter with a puma demonstrates an attitude that extended, as we shall see, to human subjects as well as to wildlife.

With Chapin, Lang collected thousands of zoological specimens, representing almost every species then found in northeastern Zaire.[5] He specialized in small mammals, but he also collected insects, reptiles, and invertebrates as well as the large animals required for the dioramas of the Akeley African Hall. During the course of the Congo Expedition, the two men collected several hundred thousand specimens, enough to satisfy Museum curators interested in the northeastern Congo for years to come. Despite this prodigious collecting activity, Lang was actually interested in conservation and disliked hunting except when he could rationalize it in the name of science. He was a photographer with a gun, not a hunter with a camera. Not surprisingly, this metaphor was incorporated into the titles of some of his writings, for example, "Camera Shots at American Game" (1922a) and "Hunting with the Camera" (1922b).

There are several ways to interpret Lang's use of the hunting metaphor. On the one hand, he seemed to see the act of photographing as an act of capturing, subduing the subject, taming the wildest possible "other." On the other hand, he seemed to see this very act not as conquest, but rather as the establishment of a moment of trust in which the subject would forget his innate fear of the camera or the photographer and collaborate in the production of an image.

In "Hunting with the Camera" Lang wrote an introduction to an exhibition of prize-winning photographs of mammals held at the American Museum of Natural History in 1922. In his text he spoke of these pictures as works of art and described the seemingly ingenious techniques that the photographers used to capture their images:

A camera is not the only requisite. Of equal importance is a perfect knowledge of the behavior of the animal to be immortalized. That some of the best photographs in the exhibition have been taken by the mammals themselves may appear hardly possible...there are instances where one animal actually has been made to take the photograph of another. Donald R. Dickey of California evidently knew the habits of a pair of foxes well enough to place the bait so as to secure a unique picture. The bait was attached by a string to the shutter and as one of the foxes seized the bait, he unwittingly took the picture of his companion contentedly sitting on a nearby rock.

(Lang 1922b:225)

6. MANZIGA, A CHIEF OF THE AZANDE, CA. 1910. HAND-TINTED LANTERN SLIDE.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

Lang thought a great deal about how to get close enough to photograph wild animals with the black-clothed tripod camera apparatus in use on most early-twentieth-century cameras. He always sought the most intimate views (why else would he get inside the cage with the puma?), and he believed that the photographer's first task was to allay the fears of the subject. Without telephoto lenses, good photographs of animals had to be taken at a distance of several yards—no mean feat when the subject was a puma, lion, or rhinoceros. Lang's strategy with these animals was to study their habits and then do what he could to make face-to-face contact.

> Many people think that a hunter, especially in Africa, is in constant danger. My experience is exactly the contrary. I have hunted rhinoceroses, lions, leopards, buffaloes, and many other species. By some of these, in my turn, I have been hotly pursued. But I have yet to meet the wild animal that will not run if a man comes up so that he can be seen.
>
> (Lang in Wisehart 1922:59)

Lang always let the animal run away unless it was a creature that was destined to become a Museum specimen.

Focusing on People

In the same 1922 interview where Lang described his caged encounter with a puma, two photographs of Pygmies were printed. The captions reveal that Lang had definite ideas, right or wrong, about the effect the camera had on his human subjects. He knew that, as with wild animals, it was important to establish rapport. One of these captions, written by the journalist interviewing Lang, reads as follows:

> These men said they had two wonderful escapes the day this picture was taken. First, they escaped death in their encounter with the great leopard shown here. Then Mr. Lang photographed them. They thought the camera was a deadly weapon, and they were overjoyed when they again came through alive.
>
> (Wisehart 1922:60)

The caption for the other photograph of Pygmies in the same article reads:

> On one occasion Mr. Lang made a model of the head of a native chief. Later, he discovered that the chief had stationed six of his men, with drawn bows and poisoned arrows, with orders to let fly at Mr. Lang if the chief seemed to be in danger. Mr. Lang got them to show him how they had stood guard and took their pictures.
>
> (Wisehart 1922:60)

Lang seems to have believed, whether justifiably or not, that the Pygmies were genuinely afraid of the camera, and he therefore tried to reassure them:

> Their superstitions were not solely concerned with the "evil eye" of the camera but had a much wider range. Once a Pygmy chief asked if it was not dangerous to expose to daylight the spirit residing within the camera. I removed both lens and ground glass and passed a stick through the instrument to give him proof of the absolute emptiness of it, yet he clung to his belief in the presence of a power for evil, adding that it was evidently harbored in the dark cloth of the bellows and could be destroyed only by fire....
>
> (Lang 1919:708)

Lang's efforts at reassurance seem to have been successful. He described how a Pygmy man was once amusing a small crowd with imitations—first of an elephant being killed, then of a white official, and finally, of Lang himself.

> When I asked him to mimic me he grinned happily. During the forenoon I had taken a number of photographs and my tripod camera was still standing in the shade. Without injury to the instrument he mimicked my every movement with just enough exaggeration to make everyone laugh. Finally he indicated that the "evil eye had seen well"—and now came the climax to the performance. The Pygmy he had pretended to photograph, instead of unconcernedly walking away, dropped to the ground, illustrating the native superstition that the "big evil eye" of the camera causes death. A block of salt laid on the "dead" man's stomach instantly resuscitated him and the two entertainers walked off joyously, but only after the clown had received a like reward.
>
> (Lang 1919:712n.)

Lang was particularly interested in the Pygmies. He photographed many of them (Figs. 1, 2), employed some of them as hunters, and later wrote a paper about them. However, they formed only one segment of the ethnographic portfolio he gathered in the course of the Congo expedition.

From Anthropometry to Portraiture

Early in the century, research in physical anthropology was conducted through the collection of skeletal material, plaster casts, measurements, and photographs, with photography being the most advanced technique in the arsenal. These pieces of "evidence" were seen as important clues that would help scientists determine a group's relative position in the evolutionary hierarchy that led from the great apes to modern homo sapiens. Races and even ethnic groups, or tribes, were each believed to occupy a step on the evolutionary ladder. Culture was thought to correspond with race, and possibly tribe, and often thought to be determined by it—certain peoples having certain innate aptitudes for music, or

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

7. LOGO PEOPLE PREPARING A GRAVE, 1912. NEG. NO. 112092.

8. MANGBETU QUEEN MATUBANI GETTING HER BODY PAINTED, 1910. NEG. NO. 111920.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

iron-working, or painting, for example. While all of this has, of course, proved to be an immense dead-end in the history of science—in the history of Western thought, for that matter—it is still of interest in the analysis of scientific photography from the turn of the century.

Lang periodically sent back photographs with his reports to New York. The longest report was the 183-page Twelfth Report sent in 1913 along with 500 carefully captioned pictures (American Museum of Natural History, Unpublished Archives, File 771). Lang's description of the anthropological photographs shows how he saw the value of this work:

> There are over one thousand photographs which by themselves tell the story of these people, as they illuminate not only every ordinary phase in their life, but also ceremonies, dances, social gatherings and warfare, and show them at work in many typical occupations, where some of them excel, such as iron-work, woodcarving, pottery, also when building their huts and making plantations. Especially noteworthy is the large series of portraits from the different tribes, usually only front and side views, but in many cases a characteristic 3/4 view, showing the men with their often decorative hats. The abundance of these portraits should enable scientists to become better acquainted with the general character, and the great variations among these tribes. The prolonged stay in these regions has enabled us to offer such a large selection as probably seldom has been presented heretofore. It would be impossible to give a fair idea of the physical characteristics of these tribes without taking a large number of individuals from all classes. The photographs of this division should be especially useful in the educational line, and should arouse the interest of the visitors of the Museum when later placed on exhibition.

Among the thousands of images Lang brought back from the six-year expedition are hundreds of photographs of the Mangbetu, Zande, Logo, Malele, Makere, and Pygmy peoples.[6] He took these photographs to satisfy the request of the Museum Director for collections in physical anthropology. In keeping with the thinking of the day, the Director requested Lang to bring back skeletal material of the different "races" of Africa. Lang found this ethically and practically impossible and decided that photography could be used to gather the necessary data. He informed the Museum that collecting skeletons would be impossible because he and Chapin relied heavily on the knowledge and prowess of local hunters for making zoological collections, and were not about to do anything to jeopardize the delicate relationships they had built up over a long period.

Lang's anthropological work ranges from aesthetically uninteresting images of people, meant to document physical types, to carefully composed photographs of great beauty, even though in the photographs of physical types, aesthetic effect was not his intent. His comments on his subjects' fear of the camera went hand in hand with his comments on their fear of being encased in plaster. Lang recognized that the procedure was frightening as well as distasteful. For one thing, the plaster became terribly hot and uncomfortable. He used a number of techniques to induce people to submit to the casting, including casting their hands before doing their faces. To Lang, the plaster casts and the photographs were an alternative to the Museum's even more objectionable request to collect skeletons.

In an article about the Pygmies, Lang described his method of ensuring that the portraits were a representative sample of this unusual "race." The explana-

tory caption under "Four Men of the Pygmy Race" (Fig. 1) reads:

> Great is the temptation for a traveler to pick and choose the subjects for his picture gallery with an eye to beauty and interest. But we were anxious that our anthropological series of portraits should not be invalidated. After carefully ascertaining the tribal status of natives, we lined them up indiscriminately and took every third, fifth, or seventh individual according to the number desired from any crowd. As a reward and to keep them in good humor, those photographed received presents of salt, gilt nails, beads, or other trinkets, and although none liked to be photographed, all were willing to take the chance braved by others.
>
> (Lang 1919:708)

Lang took pictures from the very beginning of the Congo Expedition. Early on, the subjects included many beautifully framed wide-angle views of scenery, a newsworthy photograph captioned "Congo atrocity" of a village burning (Fig. 3), and photographs of Europeans—their houses, gardens (Fig. 4), barracks, and office buildings. After Lang's return, these pictures were put in an album devoted to "general geography, scenes and places of interest on the itinerary; white officials, etc.; caravans and porters, etc." Throughout the expedition Lang took photographs of various habitats and of the animals that lived in

10. QUEEN NENZIMA OF THE MANGBETU, 1913. NEG. NO. 111806.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

9. ZANDE OKAPI HUNTER, 1910. NEG. NO. 111997.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

them. With the expectation of making dioramas and documenting the collection for research purposes, he noted details of micro-environments. He photographed live animals when possible, and animals that had been killed for the collection (Fig. 5). These pictures were later systematically arranged in albums according to category: birds, small mammals, large mammals, invertebrates, fish, reptiles, primates. There were three albums devoted to botany and three devoted to those animals on which the expedition specially focussed: the okapi, the giant eland, and the white rhinoceros.

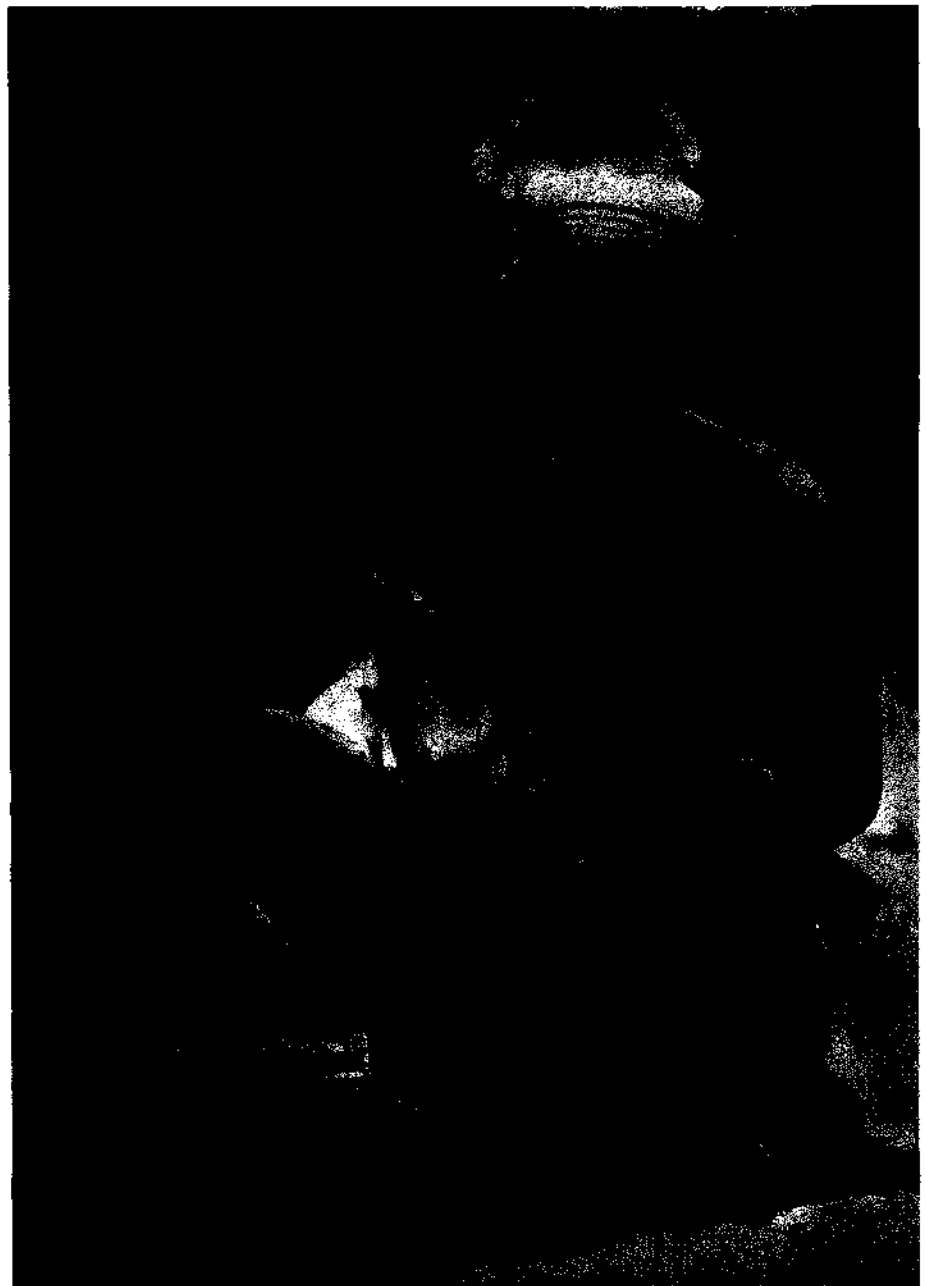
The ethnographic photographs taken at the beginning of the expedition reveal that Lang had only the barest acquaintance with his subjects. However, when viewed chronologically they reveal a growing involvement with Africans and increasingly intimate views. The earliest captions refer to the subjects by gender and ethnic group, when known, and sometimes point out materials found in clothing and objects of adornment, such as a chief's leopard-teeth necklace. Once the ethnographic work was well under way, the captions Lang wrote on the prints he made in the field provided valuable documentation not only for the images themselves, but sometimes for the objects in the collection as well. For example, two 1912 photographs of Logo people, together with a brief caption, give a

touching summary of their mortuary ceremony (Fig. 7): "Two Logo women, the same [people] as upon the photograph of the libation. Logos, leaving their village, pour some beer upon the grave of their chief, and take away the last bundle of thatching. The wife of the dead man smoked his pipe. The framework only of their huts is left behind."[7]

As the expedition progressed and Lang got to know some of his subjects quite well, the character of his ethnographic photographs changed: the portraits were no longer scientific documents to be used for calculating measurements, but rather genre portraits similar to ones that might have been taken in a Victorian portrait studio. When Lang knew an individual, the dull documentary record shots became intimate character studies. This quality distinguishes some of Lang's portraits from many others taken in Africa in the same period, and from the pictures he took of people he did not know. The degree of rapport established between Lang and his subjects in turn seems to have affected the question of whether the subject was looking at Lang (and therefore into the camera) and the degree of rigidity in the pose. By looking at a Lang portrait, one can predict with a fair degree of accuracy whether the caption names an individual or simply gives personal statistics like the ethnic identity, age, gender, and height. Even when individuals are posed, as in the picture of Queen Matubani getting her body painted (Fig. 8), the portraits of people Lang knew show the subjects as proud and confident. Lang's photographs of chiefs do not demean their authority.

Among the many formal record shots of physical types that Lang took for the anthropology department, there are images that provide intimate glimpses into his subjects' character. Occasionally the close-up portraits look as if they were shot in a Hollywood studio, like the one of Manziga, a chief of the Azande, with hand under chin (Fig. 6); the old Zande okapi hunter (Fig. 9); or the Mangbetu Queen Nenzima (Fig. 10). Lang's captions for many of the published photographs show that he himself recognized how the subject's character radiated from the images. On the portrait of Manziga (Fig. 6), Lang wrote that "Manziga is one of the most important native chiefs around Niangara, ruling a large territory. He is unusually intelligent and exhibits much tact and diplomacy in dealing with the Belgian administration" (1915a). (A full-figure photograph of Manziga was used as a model for a cast that was made for exhibition in 1916; see Figs. 12, 13.) For his photograph of the okapi hunter, Lang noted this man's lifetime accomplishments, and for his portrait of Nenzima he observed, "She is an excellent and kind woman, at least 55 years old, who still enjoys rather great authority...." He went on to describe her stool and her outfit, mentioning that it was "state attire."

It has been suggested—correctly I think—that there could have been a relationship between the large number of portraits taken by Herbert Lang in northeastern Zaire between 1909 and 1915 and the profusion of anthropomorphic art produced in that period, which Curtis Keim and I have discussed elsewhere (Schildkrout, Hellman, Keim 1988; Schildkrout & Keim 1990).[8] The interest of the peoples of northeastern Zaire in protecting and adorning the head, which included the practice of reshaping the skull, can in no way be related to Western influence. However, the representation of the head in art is another matter. We have suggested elsewhere (1990: chap. 12) that in the early years of this century, artists in northeastern Zaire recognized that Westerners were interested in acquiring objects featuring heads. Heads began to be carved in greater numbers than previously, as well as added to objects, like ceramic pots, that apparently did not have them before. Photography, the making of plaster casts, and the taking of cranial measurements—by Lang and others—all were ways in which this Western interest in heads was expressed to Africans.



11. MANGBETU MAN HOLDING A HARP, CA. 1910. HAND-TINTED LANTERN SLIDE.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

Documenting Everyday Life

In an attempt to illustrate technological processes, Lang took many series of pictures of people making things. These too were meant to serve as scientific documents, although some are wonderful images from an aesthetic point of view. Some are posed, in the sense that people are looking up, or holding still, for the camera, and in some instances whole scenes may have been set up. These pictures include images of men and women making pottery, brewing beer, plaiting hair, making cord, doing many different forms of divination, holding court, dancing, cooking, making hats and baskets, building houses, fishing, setting traps, arranging cloths, painting their bodies, serving food, carrying babies, carving ivory, playing musical instruments (Fig. 11), and playing games. Lang took many series of photographs of dance; one series, for example, was labeled "studies of a series of dances of the Makere." Other dance pictures were of various chiefs, including Senze, Okondo (Fig. 14), and Danga before their wives and court musicians—scenes that recalled the description and drawings of Georg Schweinfurth forty years earlier (Schildkrout & Keim 1990: chap. 2; Geary 1990).

In contrast to many Western expeditions in the early part of the century, the Congo Expedition was unusual in that only two men were involved. Also, instead of passing through areas on quick collecting trips, Lang and Chapin built houses and camps and stayed for months at a time in the same village, with the same small team of fifteen field assistants—a multi-ethnic group that included the men who helped hunt and prepare specimens. Lang and Chapin, who were at one point separated from one another for an entire year, relied on the local people to accomplish their work. For example, in searching for the okapi, the elusive mammal that had originally inspired the expedition, Lang waited a year until he could join the annual hunting expedition of a particular Zande chief, among whose subjects was the renowned okapi hunter (Fig. 9). A photograph taken in 1913 of the *mapingo* oracle of Chief Akenge of the Azande is extraordinary for its intimate view of this secret oracle (Fig. 16). The mural photographed in a series of images taken *inside* the shelter hut of a Makere chief is a rare close-up of interior wall painting from 1913 (Fig. 15).

Lang's ethnographic photographs can be roughly divided into a number of categories, some of which have already been discussed. There are casual photographs of Africans and Europeans that were not meant as scientific documents;

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

13. CHIEF MANZIGA, MODELED IN PLASTER BY S. J. DUNBAR FOR THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, 1916. PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN. NEG. NO. 34993.

12. CHIEF MANZIGA WITH HIS SHIELD AND SPEAR, 1913. NEG. NO. 111665.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

14. OKONDO, A MANGBETU CHIEF, BEFORE BEGINNING HIS DANCE, CA. 1913. NOTE THE ATTENDANT HOLDING A MIRROR. NEG. NO. 111887.

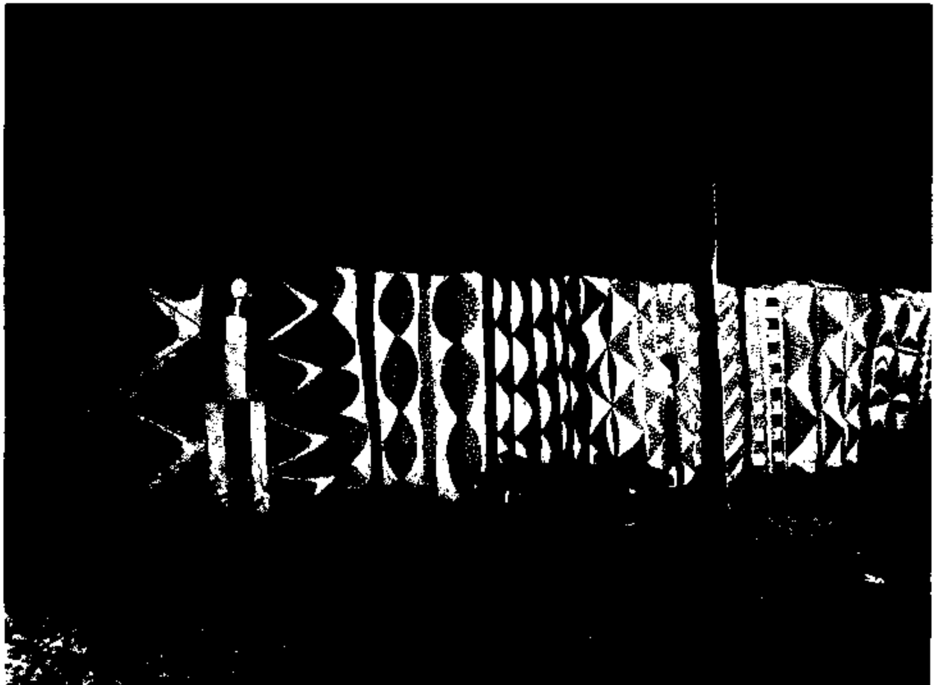


PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

15. MURAL DESIGNS IN A SHELTER OF THE MAKERE CHIEF TIMA, 1913. NEG. NO. 225312.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

16. AZANDE PERFORMING THE MAPINGO ORACLE AT AKENGE, 1913. NEG. NO. 224050.

these include stereoscopic snapshots of European visitors, occasional images of missionaries, and images of porters and expedition assistants. There are the images taken in the service of physical anthropology: frontal, side, and three-quarter views meant to be used as templates for measurements. When these images were catalogued, the number of the associated face or hand cast was often noted. These anthropometric photographs can be distinguished from the portraits of named individuals that were intended to show their individual character and their style of dress and body adornment. There were photographs of

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

17. MANGBETU PAINTED HOUSE, CA. 1910. HAND-TINTED LANTERN SLIDE.

18. A DANCE, PROBABLY AMONG THE BARAMBO, CA. 1910. HAND-TINTED LANTERN SLIDE.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

people with hand-made objects, taken to document processes of manufacture and activities of daily life; photographs of architecture and settlement patterns (Fig. 3); portraits of individuals of special rank in ceremonial dress—including chiefs, diviners, and "witchdoctors"; and photographs of public events such as dances, meetings, and what Lang called "sham battles" (Fig. 19). To some extent each type of photograph followed its own conventions of composition, although in many cases Lang did not follow these conventions, as I have already discussed with respect to the progression from anthropometric photographs to personal portraits.

In the early colonial period, many public events, like dances and military maneuvers, were performed for government officials and other visiting foreigners. They became a favorite theme for photographers from the turn of the century to the present (see Geary 1990). Lang took hundreds of photographs of these occasions, many of them in series showing the event from start to finish and from different angles. The wide-angle tripod camera allowed him to photograph huge crowds of people in a single image, and his equipment was good enough to enable him to get all but the fastest dance scenes in sharp focus—there are some amazingly clear images of people running and dancing (Figs. 2, 18, 20).

With historical photographs, particularly those taken with a stationary tri-

pod camera, the inevitable question arises as to the relative influence of photographer and subject in composing the images. In looking at them one first notices the formal composition, the symmetry, and the rigidity of some of the people's stances (Fig. 21). This formal demeanor was the result of a number of factors, including, of course, the awareness the subjects inevitably had of the camera. When one views the large numbers of photographs Lang took of the same event, however—not all of which made their way into the formal albums he assembled for the Museum—it becomes clear that wherever Lang worked for long periods, as at Okondo's village, his camera must have become as commonplace as his own presence. Lang photographed the same people over and over again, some of them over a period of several years. In studying the whole corpus of his work, it appears that the representation of the Mangbetu (and others) that emerges in his photographs was the result of a kind of dialogue in which the subjects had considerable input in determining the composition of the images. However, as I will discuss below, the image of African people that is presented in the Museum's formal albums is not necessarily the same as the one presented by an examination of the unedited corpus of work.

In situations where Lang did not know people well, the authority of the white stranger with the camera is evident. People look stiff, expressionless, and sometimes frightened. When Lang photographed those he knew, the subjects had much more control over the images. A series of photographs of a Mayogo chief, Magbata, with his two wives and his shield and lance bearers, illustrates this point. In every photograph one of the wives is covering her bare breasts and the other holds her arms straight down at her sides. Lang clearly did not tell the wives how to hold their arms.

The Mangbetu chief Okondo, like other rulers, was greatly concerned about his appearance, but not simply because he was being photographed. The demeanor of rulers, including their dress and their movements, was a sign of their status, and the camera simply captured the image these people wanted to present. Whenever Okondo was carried in a litter or whenever he performed in a formal dance—and all of his performances were, in a sense, formal—an attendant was present holding a mirror up to the chief (Fig. 22). Lang photographed the mirror many times.

Unlike some other fieldworkers of his day—Frederick Starr, for example[9]—Lang did not ask people to assume roles that were not genuinely their own. He saw his images as records of reality, however odd or peculiar that reality may have seemed. In the article about Pygmies quoted earlier, the caption text for four photographs titled "Pygmy Dwellers in the Congo Forest" described how Lang was about to photograph an "old chief whose wisdom must have been equal to his age...." The man had ragged clothing and "crinkled hair straggling from beneath tattered bits of hat":

> Mr. Petronio, in charge of the Post, in his desire to assist, thought that the slovenly Pygmy was not worth a plate in that condition and taking from an onlooking Mayogo chief his brand new hat, trimmed with a highly prized tuft of red parrot feathers, he placed it on the Pygmy's head...
>
> (Lang 1919:709)

Lang went on to describe how much trouble putting the Mayogo's hat on the Pygmy's head caused, since the chief was then unwilling to take back his hat

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

TOP: 19. WARRIORS IN BATTLE FORMATION, GETTING READY FOR A PHOTO OPPORTUNITY, 1913. NEG. NO. 111941.

BOTTOM: 20. THE "WHIRLING DANCE" OF THE BARAMBO, 1913. NEG. NO. 225154.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

21. HERBERT LANG'S CAPTION FOR THIS PHOTOGRAPH WAS "THE FIVE MANGBETU CHIEFS, WHOSE PLASTER CASTS OF FACE HAVE BEEN TAKEN, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: DANGA, DUBA, LIBANGULA, NIAPU, MAMORO, RUNGU, 1909." NEG. NO. 111794.

and the Pygmy wouldn't have it either. The "ownerless" hat ended up in the Museum collection, and the Mayogo agreed to accept two heavy brass anklets, worth together about fifty cents at the time, in payment. Lang considered the photograph worthless as a record of the Pygmy and only of value in relation to the incident with the other European.

Symmetry and the Mangbetu

The Mangbetu were favorite photographic subjects not only for Lang but also for many other visitors. The way Mangbetu royals presented themselves in photographs was an extension of deeply embedded cultural values: the importance of a regal appearance, cleanliness, and the formal ordering of space and design elements. These qualities, expressed in all of the photographs of the Mangbetu, can be said to account for why these people were so admired by Westerners and so frequently photographed.

The Mangbetu images that Lang took from 1910 onward, in particular those that involved scenes of Okondo and other chiefs holding court, are noteworthy for the high degree of symmetry in the compositions. Symmetry in Mangbetu art has been noted since the first description by Georg Schweinfurth in 1870. Did Lang, following Schweinfurth, pose people symmetrically, or did the Mangbetu order their social space in this way? Fortunately there are enough photographs by Lang of non-Mangbetu people for us to examine the images themselves with this question in mind. Lang took a revealing photograph of a "palaver" in Okon-

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

22. CHIEF OKONDO BEING CARRIED ON A LITTER TO PERFORM THE *MOBOLO* DANCE BEFORE HIS ASSEMBLED WIVES AND COURTIERS, 1910. NOTE THE ATTENDANT HOLDING A MIRROR. NEG. NO. 111892.

do's village (Fig. 23), for which the caption states:

> Palaver about the purchase of a woman, in the king's courtyard. The elevated circle is about ____ [no measurement given] in diameter. There is the edge of the king's hut but visible at the right. The king is sitting on the chair in the middle of his circle, surrounded by some of his many women. To his left [in fact to his right] is Nenzima, who takes active part in the palaver—in fact, does most of the speaking. Some of the king's women servants are sitting below. At the left are the outsiders, who are interested in the decision. The square house at the left is occupied during the day-time.

Clearly this is not a scene arranged by the photographer, except perhaps for the opening in the line of women circling Okondo, which Lang could have requested in order to get him into the picture. Yet, in contrast to Lang's hundreds of non-Mangbetu photographs, there is a striking symmetry in the scene. The women on the inside circle sit on their stools in identical poses with knees together and feet spread apart. The women on the outside sit in equidistant pairs around the circle. A similar analysis could be made of many other images of the Mangbetu court.

Lang photographed many villages in northeastern Zaire, in the Mangbetu kingdoms and elsewhere. The arrangements of houses and the mural paintings decorating the houses are strikingly symmetrical in comparison to those in non-Mangbetu villages. The same observation can be made, moreover, of many of their arts: patterns on woven mats, appliqué designs on women's fiber-back aprons (*negbe*), surface designs on pottery, and even body painting designs. Although foreigners' admiration of symmetry may have encouraged it, we cannot conclude that symmetry in Mangbetu art was introduced by Westerners. Lang's photographs of the Mangbetu reflect a dominant concept of their aesthetics: an emphasis on balance and symmetry.

The Mangbetu were intensely interested in their personal appearance and in the appearance of their villages. The hundreds of portraits that Lang and others took of Mangbetu people and villages show that personal appearance was a major preoccupation. It was, for one thing, a sign of status, and Lang recognized it as such. His captions are full of references to an individual's wealth and social position, factors that to Lang—and the Mangbetu—explained their presentation of self. The physical appearance and demeanor of rulers demonstrated their fitness for office (Schildkrout & Keim 1990: chap. 8), while at the same time setting fashion for others to emulate. Okondo's mirror, mentioned above, reflected the chief's image back to himself and reassured him that all was well as he projected his image to the audience. Okondo, and other Mangbetu, were well aware that the photograph was but one more refraction of their glittering image.

Things have not changed all that much. The Mangbetu continue to be very aware of how they present themselves to the camera. In 1989, while filming *Spirits of Defiance: The Mangbetu People of Zaire* and *Mangbetu in the Modern World* for the American Museum of Natural History's exhibition "African Reflections: Art from Northeastern Zaire," the director, Jeremy Marre, asked Chief Danga if he would assemble his people for a dance. Marre reported to me that when all of the musicians and dancers gathered, they arrived with their shields painted with the name of the local government area: Collectivité Azanga. Some of the performers had written "*danceur*" or "*musicien*" in white kaolin across their chests.

23. A "PALAVER" ABOUT THE PURCHASE OF A WOMAN IN CHIEF OKONDO'S COURTYARD, 1910. NEG. NO. 111897.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

The Organization of Photographs for the Museum Archives

When Lang returned to the American Museum of Natural History, contact prints of all of the photographs were numbered sequentially and attached to large sheets of heavy paper. Afterwards, selected prints were made for a series of forty albums that reflected the Museum's division of science into distinct disciplines. Twenty albums were devoted to ethnography, categorized by ethnic group. The groups included, and the number of albums devoted to them, were: Abarambo (1), Azande (4), Bari and Baka (1), Logo (2), Makere (1), Mangbetu (3), Mayogo and Mabuto (1), Medje, Malele, and Balika (1), Mobali, Babeyri, and Bandaka (1), Mongelima and Popoi (1), Pygmy (2). There were two other albums catalogued as "Natives—miscellaneous." One of these was devoted to arts and technology and included portraits showing head-binding, tattooing and cicatrization, musical instruments and musicians, Mangbetu artists carving ivory, carved figures, hematite implements, mural paintings, armchairs and other objects. The second album was of "miscellaneous natives" photographed at various places along the route from the Atlantic coast to northeastern Zaire.

In New York, Lang wrote extensive captions that often referred to objects in the collections, to plaster casts of individuals, and to other photographs. Although he sent captioned photographs back to the museum during his trip, those written when he was making the albums are the most interesting. They incorporate Lang's memories of people, events, and, sometimes, of the moment of taking the photograph. Lang's sense of humor is revealed in some of these captions: beside a picture taken in 1909 of three Mobali women, one scratching her head, he wrote: "Three Mobali women, one collecting invertebrates" (Fig. 24).

Partly because editing occurred between the printing and mounting of the contact prints and the construction of the ethnographic albums, the photographs in the albums appear more posed than they really are, at least when viewed sequentially within the total body of photographic work. The photographs selected for the albums were the most formal in composition and give the impression that Lang, or Lang in collaboration with the Mangbetu, posed most of his subjects. This impression is dispelled, however, if one studies any single complete sequence of contact prints; within Lang's photographic record of a dance, for example, there are images showing people arranging themselves, as well as dancing in their final orderly arrangement.

The formal ethnographic albums also omitted many of the images that show Western influence, for example, a photograph of Okondo in Western dress waving goodbye to Lang (Fig. 25; Schildkrout & Keim 1990:57, fig. 3.13) and photographs of Africans with visiting Europeans. Many of these were included in the "General geography" album. This editing reflects Lang's understanding of what constituted traditional culture. To his credit he did not ascribe all African accomplishment to the Western presence. If Lang thought a photograph showed foreign influence, he labeled it as such: in this case, a style of architecture, dress, or artifact was usually captioned "copied

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

TOP: 24. LANG DESCRIBED THIS PHOTOGRAPH AS "THREE MOBALI WOMEN, ONE COLLECTING INVERTEBRATES," 1909. NEG. NO. 227629.

BOTTOM: 25. CHIEF OKONDO AND HIS WIVES (NENZIMA ON HIS RIGHT) WAVING GOODBYE TO HERBERT LANG, 1913. FROM A STEREOSCOPE GLASS PLATE NEGATIVE, NO. 3765.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PHOTO ARCHIVES

26. CHIEF BAFUKA'S HOUSE, 1913. LANG BELIEVED THAT THE FORM OF THIS ZANDE HOUSE WAS INFLUENCED BY THE ARCHITECTURE OF EUROPEANS. NEG. NO. 111635.

from the White man" or "imitating the White man." He photographed a series of Zande houses, for example, showing the "old form" and the house "copied from the structures of White men" (Fig. 26).

By the end of his stay, Lang clearly had an ambivalent view of the effects of Western influence (see Lang 1924). He credited Europeans with pacifying African "tribes" and stamping out cannibalism (Lang 1915b:382), and he viewed the Belgian presence as, on the whole, positive. Nevertheless, Lang held onto a definite stereotype of traditional African culture, and he saw African attempts to imitate white men as intrusions and as amusing caricatures of Western culture. He commented, for example, on Okondo's wearing of shabby European clothes. Judging by the far greater number of photographs of people wearing "traditional" clothing, Lang seemed to have preferred recording Okondo and his courtiers in barkcloth, animal skin, and feathers—what he called "state attire" (Fig. 27).

Lang often took pains to communicate to museum audiences the African point of view, as he saw it. By the time he left the Congo, he had become sympathetic to African culture and had begun to think like a cultural relativist. He was aware, for example, that nudity could appear to be a sign of moral degeneration, so in one of the sets of photographs he sent back to the Museum, he thought it necessary to explain: "Though in some regions still nude, the Logo are the most moral race in any district we have traversed." Of another image, he wrote, "It is a common fact that their pudency is as highly developed as their sense of morality, nudity in some ways being esteemed...these natives have not the slightest intention to offend. They are very kindly people and not anthropophagus."

Lang's photographs should be examined in the context of an understanding of the relationships he established with Africans over the six years of the American Museum of Natural History's Congo Expedition. In some respects he always subscribed to ideas of Western superiority and never gave up some stereotypes he brought with him, like the notion that before the arrival of the whites the Bantu were all cannibals. However, in the six years they lived in northeastern Zaire, he and Chapin developed a deep appreciation for those African cultures and peoples they came to know. This intimacy is projected in some of Lang's photographs, and it transforms them from simple contextual documents for a museum collection into works of art. □

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27. CHIEF OKONDO IN STATE ATTIRE, 1910. NEG. NO. 111785.

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MACK: Notes, from page 69

1. There are two substantial archives of photographs associated with Torday. One is that held by the British Museum's Department of Ethnography (the Museum of Mankind) and covering the whole of the period of Torday's work in Central Africa in association with the Museum. The second is that of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, which appears to have been deposited there by M. W. Hilton-Simpson, who accompanied Torday only on the last of his expeditions, that between 1907 and 1909. This, and the fact that letters from Hilton-Simpson discuss the problems of photography in Central Africa, strongly suggests that he, rather than Torday himself, more or less acted in this latter period as expedition photographer. There is considerable overlap in the holdings of both institutions.
2. These letters together with original handwritten fieldnotes (which Joyce organized into publishable form) constitute part of the archive held by the British Museum. A field diary written by Hilton-Simpson and covering the 1907–1909 period is held in typescript by the Royal Anthropological Institute, London, though other versions also exist, for instance in the National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C. This typescript is the basis of Hilton-Simpson's own published account of his expedition with Torday (Hilton-Simpson 1911).
3. In addition to the British Museum collections, other collections of objects went to the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, the Neprajzi Muzeum in Budapest, and the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. The collection of Sir Henry Wellcome also included a substantial holding of Torday objects. These have subsequently gone to a wide variety of museums in Britain and elsewhere with the dispersal of the ethnographic material of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum in London from the 1950s onwards. Hilton-Simpson's personal collection was also disposed of at his death, most going to the Powell Cotton Museum at Birchington-on-Sea, Kent, England.
4. A fuller account of Torday's life and work is to be found in my *Emil Torday and the Art of the Congo, 1900–1909* (1990).
5. Norman Hardy, a painter of journalistic images for the *Illustrated London News*, only remained with the Torday expedition for the earlier part of its 1907–1909 work. He left subsequent to a visit to the Kuba Ngongo, before they visited the Bushong and before Torday returned to the Kwilu.
6. The figure was restored by the British Museum prior to its display in the Ethnography Galleries before the First World War. All subsequent illustrations of the piece show it in its restored condition, though minor differences in the coloring of the restoration of the arm—in accord with good museum practice—remain to indicate the extent of the reconstruction that took place.
7. The following few paragraphs originally prepared for inclusion in this paper are also reprinted with appropriate illustrations in J. Mack 1990.

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SCHILDKROUT: Notes, from page 85

I am grateful to the following individuals who read, commented, and in other ways helped with this paper: Christraud Geary, Curtis Keim, Sheila MacCormick, Thomas R. Miller, John Van Couvering, Andrea LaSala, Barbara Mathe, Dennis Finnin, and Jackie Beckett.

1. Leopold II, King of the Belgians, ruled the Congo Free State as a private estate from 1885 to 1908. After international protests about alleged atrocities in the Congo Free State, the Belgian government took over the administration of the Congo. Belgian colonial rule lasted until 1960. The country adopted its present name, Zaire, in 1971.
2. Herbert Lang was born in Germany in 1879 and came to the United States in 1903 after receiving training in taxidermy in Paris. He was employed by the Museum as a taxidermist in the mammalogy department when he was asked to lead the Congo Expedition, having previously accompanied a wealthy game hunter and Museum donor on an expedition to East Africa. After the Congo Expedition, Lang became an Assistant Curator of Mammalogy and went on another American Museum expedition to Angola. Lang left the Museum in the late 1920s and moved to South Africa, where he married and became a wildlife photographer.
3. We have been able to locate a reference to this particular set, but not the set itself.
4. Some prints were left behind and have surfaced in several other collections of people who visited the area later. One image, the portrait of Queen Nenzima, was used as the model for a Zairian painting of Nenzima made in the 1960s.
5. Lang and Chapin brought back tens of thousands of specimens for many departments in the American Museum of Natural History. Today these collections form a significant part of the holdings of the departments of anthropology, mammalogy, ornithology, entomology, ichthyology, and invertebrates.
6. The number of pictures Lang took is not known for certain; the number usually cited is 10,000, although in an interview with Lang (Wisehart 1922:61) the number given is 15,000.
7. Lang's native language was German, although he spoke English and French fluently. As is the case here, his word order sometimes betrays the fact that English was not his first language.
8. Esther Pasztory raised this issue when I presented a paper to the Seminar for African, Oceanic, and Native American Art at Columbia University in 1989.
9. Frederick Starr described in his fieldnotes how he posed people in costumes and positions to recreate particular roles and scenes (F. Starr, unpublished papers, Regenstern Library, University of Chicago; Schildkrout 1990).

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KRATZ: Notes, from page 88

Thanks to Robert Leopold, Mary Jo Arnoldi, and Roslyn Walker for helpful discussions while preparing this review.

1. Other versions of the show, with a different selection of photographs and different captions, have been shown at University of Tulsa, Indiana University, and Wabash College.
2. One final comment on the textual representation of paramount chiefs. Because of the exhibition's geographical organization, women chiefs of Southern and Eastern Provinces did not appear until half-way through (although they were encountered earlier through the other entrance). A final wall text in the third room discussed women as paramount chiefs, but their existence might have been noted in the introductory text and discussed briefly in the illustrated brochure. All wall texts were reproduced there except that one. Women chiefs are not only of great interest to an American audience, they are ethnographically quite unusual. This broader context might have been noted, along with the distinctiveness of this region for women's secret societies that are of equal status to men's and wear masks of equal power.
3. The chiefs' poses were another choice, apparently not debated. Nonetheless, Viditz-Ward's research on the history of photography in Sierra Leone might have illuminated postural conventions in the portraits. Only one chief breaks the formality of pose; Chief Magona of Barri Chiefdom sits askew in his wooden throne, leaning in a more relaxed posture.