




3a i • Male Chamba mask

collected by Hans Glauning in 1903 from Lengdo (near Mapeo)

© Staatliches Museen zur Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum, III C 17615

Photograph: Martin Franken, 2003

3 | Accenting the masquerade – template and variety



The ethnographer's account of Chamba masquerade foregrounds local questions of meaning, ownership and performance. Knowing what, or more accurately how, the masquerade is motivated in particular performance goes some way towards explaining its more or less pan Chamba distribution. But it doesn't answer all the questions we might like solved about that distribution. Doing so will involve a more precise account of the 'more or less' about the mask's pan Chamba distribution, and attention to a variety of kinds of comparative information on Chamba masks deriving particularly, from museum collections and illustrations taken *in situ*.

A few generalisations about the ownership of masquerades: although there were several masquerades in the communities of Mapeo and Yeli, these belonged not to either community collectively but to their constituent clans. In Mapeo, masquerades formed part of patriclan culture. But patrimonies differed, so that some patriclans had masquerades while others did not but were no less Chamba for that. The various branches of the Yambu patriclan, for instance, insisted that masquerade formed no part of their ritual or performative culture (*langsi*), a culture exemplified instead by enactments of their patriclan cult called *yaagumani*. No one felt this was a matter requiring explanation, clans simply differed in their cultures. In Yeli, unlike Mapeo, masquerades were predominantly owned by matrilineal clans; but here again, some clans did and others did not own masquerades. They were not more or less Chamba in consequence. First generalisation then: your clan does not have to own a masquerade for you to be considered Chamba. However, and second generalisation, clans not considered Chamba can never own Chamba masquerades. Around Mapeo there were small groups of people of relatively recent Verre *Moomi* or Koma *Koomi* origin. These are peoples living respectively north and east of Mapeo Chamba and they particularly Koma tend to be disparaged by Chamba. However, to the extent that such people Chambaise linguistically,