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Mrs. Tatum

Humanities – AP Art history

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Title: Female (Pwo) Mask  
Chokwe People (Congo)  
Late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> C.E

Background: The Chokwe people were a matriarchal society (descent was traced through the mother).

Materials: The ritual mask is made of wood, fibers, pigment and metal.

The earrings and gold around the eyes most likely represent wealth and status of the individual woman or women in society as a whole

Themes: Matriarchal society, feminism, female beauty, female importance in society.

The scarification/ motifs on the mask represents beauty in African culture, similar to tattoos.



The masks were small like other African artworks as most cultures moved around/ were nomadic tribes.

African art was generally made of wood, which is biodegradable and deteriorates very quickly. This a main reason why there is a lack of African art history and works remaining today.

Content: Worn at celebrations and initiations into adulthood by males to act as females. It is also used to honor female ancestors.

Form: The make is realistic and symmetrical like a real female face. The face looks smooth except for the bumpy texture of the scarification. The fibers are braided/ weaved and also looks realistic.

Technique: The masks were made by men and worn by men, but represented the beauty and power of women.

Sources: Notes from class and:

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-africa/central-africa/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/v/female-pwo-mask#!>

