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WILLIAM H. SHEPPARD: MISSIONARY TO THE CONGO, AND COLLECTOR OF AFRICAN ART

Harold G. Cureau*

The Reverend Dr. William Henry Sheppard was an Afro-American missionary of the Presbyterian Church, South. He distinguished himself, and the Church, through service in the Congo Free State (now Zaire), Africa, from 1890 to 1910. During the first decade of the twentieth century his public image was substantially defined by his militant opposition to cruel and exploitative treatment of peoples in the Kasai District of the Congo by the Kasai Rubber Company (*Compagnie du Kasai*) during the reign (1865–1909) of King Leopold II of Belgium.¹ Thus, he emerged, and is still regarded, as an early fighter for African rights.² However, while in Africa, Sheppard availed himself of opportunities to collect extensively and consistently African art. More specifically, Sheppard collected the art of the Kuba (formerly Bakuba). Thus, he also emerged as a pioneer collector of this art form. Jan Vansina, historian and anthropologist, in 1978 reinforced Sheppard's pioneer status with this comment: "The three great early collections of Kuba art are those of Sheppard (1892), Frobenius (1905), and Torday (1908)."⁴ Although Sheppard achieved national and international repute because of other accomplishments during the 1900s, at that time only peripheral references were made about his extensive collection of Kuba art and artifacts. Throughout the decade, 1900–1910, Sheppard's collection was, then, impressive in terms of size and quality but was rarely mentioned publicly. For many years it was generally unnoticed by most except as an accumulation of souvenirs and curiosities.

This essay presents summarily Sheppard's life and missionary activities as these subsume his religious, societal, and political involvements in Africa. These aspects have been chronicled most adequately in other available sources.⁵ Yet something of these facets of his experiences must be noted, however briefly, because it is difficult to separate the person, the missionary, and his collective African experiences from his role as a collector of African art and artifacts. It is essentially because of the three factors comprising the former that he was able to accomplish the latter. Thus, Sheppard emerged perhaps as one of the earliest known Afro-American collectors of African art. Apart from the historical significance of this activity of Sheppard, the collection, because of its extensiveness and quality, achieved importance also as a substantial cultural and educational resource at a predominantly black American college, Hampton Institute, Virginia.⁶

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The central purposes of this work are: (a) to emphasize Sheppard's role as an early collector of African art and artifacts, primarily that of the Kuba; (b) to underscore recognition of this role by others; and (c) to cite the uniqueness of this achievement in terms of his times, ethnic origins, and other circumstances. There is evidence the genesis of Sheppard's collection occurred soon after his arrival in Africa. A Report of the College Museum of Hampton Institute for 1966, included this statement:

It was on the first of September, 1890 that William H. Sheppard addressed a letter to General Samuel Armstrong, Hampton, From Stanley Pool, Africa, that he had many artifacts, spears, idols, etc., and he was ' . . . saving them for the Curiosity Room at Hampton.'⁷

This activity continued throughout a twenty-year period interrupted only by two furloughs to the United States.⁸

Sheppard was born March 28, 1865, to William H. and Fannie Sheppard at Waynesboro, Virginia.⁹ His father served as sexton of First Presbyterian Church at Waynesboro, and eventually worked as a barber when the family relocated in Staunton, Virginia.¹⁰ The younger Sheppard worked as a child, and his first regular employer was Dr. S. H. Henkel, a dentist, who also became a lifelong and supportive friend.¹¹ Dr. Henkel was also among the early recipients of African art and artifacts from Sheppard.¹²

The formal educational experiences of Sheppard included his enrollment at Hampton Institute from 1880 through part of the academic year 1882–1883.¹³ Immediately afterwards he began, and completed, his studies for the ministry at Presbyterian Theological Institute (now Stillman College), Tuscaloosa, Alabama.¹⁴ After graduation from the Theological Institute, Sheppard was assigned to a church in Montgomery, Alabama, and in May of 1887, to a pastorate in Atlanta, Georgia.¹⁵

Early, during his ministry, Sheppard requested an African assignment from the Foreign Missions Committee, then located in Baltimore, Maryland. Initially, the Committee advanced no encouragement to his request for such service.¹⁶ However, Sheppard augmented two years of correspondence by a personal visit to the Committee in Baltimore, and on December 9, 1889, he learned of his acceptance for an African assignment.¹⁷ As a missionary of the Presbyterian Church, Sheppard, along with Reverend Samuel Norvell Lapsley (b. 1866–d. 1892), of Anniston, Alabama, was the co-founder of this denomination's first mission in the Congo.¹⁸ This was the first time the Presbyterian Church, South, sent an Afro-American missionary to Africa, and for the expressed purpose of establishing a mission.¹⁹

On February 26, 1890, Sheppard and Lapsley sailed from New York City on the *Adriatic*, and eventually arrived at Banana "Sharks" Point on the delta of the Congo River, Africa, May 10, 1890.²⁰ After a 1200 mile journey they founded the mission at Luebo, Kasai District, on April 18, 1891, and it became known officially as The American Presbyterian Congo Mission (hereafter, APCM).²¹ Unfortunately, Lapsley died March 26, 1892, at Matadi, Congo Free State, Africa, and Sheppard was forced to assume leadership responsibilities of APCM alone.²² Because of this circumstance he successfully alleviated most of the, then current, apprehensions about his ability to lead. Thus, Sheppard modified racially pre-conceived notions about black leadership capability under complex and harsh conditions in a physically dangerous environment.²³

Sheppard left APCM in the Spring of 1910 because of poor health, and his resignation was formally accepted December 2, 1909.²⁴ The Sheppards returned to their home in Staunton, Virginia, in 1910, but moved after approximately two years to Louisville,

Kentucky.²⁵ On September 15, 1912, The Reverend Dr. Sheppard was formally installed as pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church.²⁶ In spite of immediate professional commitments, he honored many requests for his services as lecturer, guest minister; and, also continued to write religious tracts, books, and articles.²⁷ Thus, Sheppard remained active until almost a year before his death, November 25, 1927, in Louisville.²⁸

In Africa Sheppard was noted for his ability to relate effectively and intelligently as leader, and a personality, to peoples of the Kasai District in the Congo. However, he was eventually regarded as a controversial figure by the political and economic power structures of the Congo Free State.²⁹ Success in his work was, in part, facilitated by his ability to learn several languages and dialects, among them, *Tshiluba* and *Tshikuba*, easily and well.³⁰ This accomplishment enabled him to communicate with various ethnic groups in the Kasai District such as the Kete, Luba, and Lulua.

Fortunately for interested persons, Sheppard recorded many aspects of his experiences in Africa, and extant documents suggest that he enjoyed most opportunities to write.³¹ The Presbyterian Church has always been generous in its praise of Sheppard's contributions to the missionary enterprise, and his other accomplishments. The archives of this Church have served as repository for some of his manuscripts, other papers, African *objets d'art*, and memorabilia.³² Sheppard is frequently mentioned by Vansina in regard to the value of his observations of various aspects of Kuba society such as history, population, ritual, agriculture; and among others, his art collection.³³ Hampton Institute is, and has long been, a repository for some of his papers and is the site of the Sheppard Collection of African art and artifacts.

The conditions essential to becoming a successful art collector during Sheppard's time were those few Afro-Americans could fulfill. As a class, art collectors in the Western World were: (a) white Americans, and Europeans; (b) persons of high socio-economic status; and (c) persons with sufficient leisure and wealth to travel at will. Yet Sheppard, in spite of the foregoing, along with his spouse, amassed through circumstances of their work in the Congo a significant collection of African art of considerable artistic merit.

Dr. Sheppard's art collection is noteworthy from these perspectives among others: (a) as an Afro-American, his disadvantages were varied and accentuated by race in an era of acute racial hostility; (b) his financial resources were below average; (c) the Sheppards acquired the art objects in Africa, from Africans at all levels of their society, and in the context of their daily existence and relationships with these peoples; (d) most of the art objects were obtained from the Kuba, a people whose art is credited as one of the most highly developed of African visual art forms; and (e) a substantial number of these works of art found an early, safe and welcome repository in an historically black institution of higher learning, Hampton Institute. Of the foregoing, the latter is especially significant because the Collection is *extant, visible and physically available* for students, scholars and others to see, study and enjoy. The presence of this collection, through the years, has stimulated donors to contribute art objects, and money. Such funds have been used to purchase works of art, and to help provide for some adequate conservation and maintenance. Through this collection of African art, Sheppard emerges as a person who contributed a major resource to a vital aspect of black higher education in America, the visual arts. This is significant because, historically, this class of institutions has been deficient in such resources, particularly facilities for housing and display.³⁴

Sheppard's collection of art was acquired during a pivotal era in Western art, and this condition further reinforces its importance. The decades of 1890 to 1910 are crucial in the history of the visual arts in the West because much occurred in those years that influenced future currents and developments within this discipline in Europe and America. Western Europe experienced *Post-Impressionism*, *Fauvism*, *Expressionism*, among others, and the invention and emergence of *Cubism* as a distinct and definitive style. In short, the latter was the most complete cleavage, at the time, with the representative tradition in Western art, as defined and influenced for several centuries by the Italian High Renaissance.³⁵ This was an era when African art forms, according to Western norms, were not recognized as valid entities among the visual art traditions of the world. The awareness, and limited acceptance of African art forms as art were extended by few persons in the West, and among these were some artists.³⁶ However, the eventual drift toward study and recognition of African works as art forms experienced its genesis perhaps during this period. Thus, Sheppard inadvertently became a pioneer collector of African art objects through a fate which destined him to work among the Kuba of Central Zaire. These peoples are credited with the development of some of Africa's most sophisticated art forms. In reference to the Kuba, Sheppard, in an article, was moved to remark: "The natives of Africa have a decided taste for the beautiful, they decorate everything."³⁷ After a span of almost sixty years later, Vansina would comment thusly: "No introduction to the visual arts of Africa omits the Kuba, for theirs is no doubt one of the great artistic traditions on the continent The Kuba lavished their creative talents on nearly all objects used in their culture."³⁸ Vansina also suggests that Kuba wood carving became known to the outside world as early as 1892, through Sheppard's early collection of this art form.³⁹ It is noteworthy, in Kuba society, that women were encouraged within limitations to produce sculpture, hence, this craft was not dominated exclusively by men.⁴⁰

Sheppard recognized the Kuba as a highly gifted people who were capable of expressing themselves, visually, through sensitive refinement of their objects for daily use.⁴¹ He observed the Kuba at work on an extensive range of products from house construction, wood carving and cloth making to metal work. Sheppard was impressed with their high level of craftsmanship in spite of limited tools, and technology. In his descriptions of processes, he underscored their resourcefulness with tools, and inventiveness.⁴² Products created by the Kuba for daily use were effectively conceptualized from design perspectives, and invested with artfully executed surface patterns for overall interest and enrichment. These factors intensified the visual and tactile appeal of most objects they created. Their three-dimensional utilitarian objects, such as cups, pipes and rubbing oracles, express a strong sculptural quality. Knives are among their most commonplace artifacts, and these might be generally categorized as household, hunting, and wood work. Other examples include the ceremonial knife (*Ikul*) and the throwing knife (*Mpengdy*). Other utilitarian objects are clay pots, storage and work boxes, baskets, mats, and cloth. However, these were removed from the realm of the "commonplace" by virtue of design and methods of surface enrichment. The surfaces of almost everything were decorated by utilizing a variety of techniques (i.e. carving, modeling, applique, embroidery, weaving, chasing and incising). Many of the patterns are geometric in character, and were influenced by a variety of natural and man-made forms such as animals, plants, houses, basketry, and flowing water. In regard to the Kuba's flair for decoration it is reported that: "In the decorative arts the Kuba position

is unique: their art exhibits the greatest variety of decorative patterns found south of the Sahara."⁴³

In regard to the foregoing, the Kuba have an extensive repertoire of decorative motifs, and they utilize over two-hundred distinct patterns.⁴⁴ Many of their patterns are usually non-representational, and are not only visually satisfying but also symbolic.⁴⁵ Included are ceremonial objects and tools used by "witch doctors," and others who participate in magic rituals.⁴⁶ In short, the extensive range of their productivity notwithstanding, the Kuba demonstrated great sensitivity and vitality in creating, for themselves, a visually satisfying total environment. This environment was also functional and useful in terms of service for their physical needs. In addition, the Kuba's creative efforts expressed their prestige values from political, social and religious perspectives through a strong and complicated symbolism.

Initially, Sheppard shared Caucasian, American and European, cultural biases against black Africans. He arrived in Africa armed with the usual clichés of the time (i.e. "heathen," "uncivilized," "savages," etc.), frequently used to characterize Africans, and others, simply because they were different, and non-Christian. In view of the foregoing these questions are raised: (a) why did Sheppard not dismiss their artifacts as simply the work of "uncivilized savages," and "heathens"? and (b) what encouraged him to collect consistently an extensive range of art objects by the Kuba over such a long period? In reference to the former, Sheppard, in time, modified his prejudices against Africans as he worked among them, and commenced to accept and respect their intrinsic integrity as peoples, and their cultures. Apparently he was able gradually to perceive Africans as peoples who shared the total human condition with himself and others. Sheppard eventually made these comments about the Kuba:

I grew very fond of the Bakuba and it was reciprocated. They were the finest looking race I had seen in Africa, dignified, graceful, courageous, honest, with an open smiling countenance and really hospitable. Their knowledge of weaving, embroidering, wood carving, and smelting was the highest in equatorial Africa.⁴⁷

It is possible that Sheppard's admiration for the creative works of the Kuba existed apart from his early cultural biases against them as a people. In support of this, and as previously cited, Sheppard began acquiring African art and artifacts almost immediately upon his arrival in the Congo Free State.⁴⁸

In Africa, Sheppard was further motivated to collect the art and artifacts of Africans from these perspectives: (a) his on-the-spot observations, and fascination, with what he saw; (b) his exposure to artist-craftsmen producing these works; (c) the ubiquitousness of the works; (d) the works were visually impressive, and utilitarian; (e) he observed an apparent integration and synthesis of visual art forms, and accompanying symbolism, with their total life; and (f) so much of this work was freely shared with him by Africans representing many levels of Kuba society from ruler to average person.

Sheppard as a student at Hampton was exposed to collections of art and artifacts of the American Indians, and various ethnic groups of the islands of the Pacific, especially Hawaii and Micronesia. These were collected by and under the auspices of General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, Principal and founder, and made available to students through exhibitions.⁴⁹ Thus, Sheppard's Hampton experiences were not devoid of exposure to visual art forms of alien cultures. The study and enjoyment of these art objects were not isolated from classroom experiences.⁵⁰ This early cultural encounter

might have facilitated some appreciation, and understanding, of art created by other cultures. However, beyond Sheppard's fascination with African art, other reasons, if any, perhaps will remain unknown. Also, because of his unwavering loyalty to Hampton, it could be assumed in part that collecting might have been rooted in a desire to strengthen, through contributions, an area, "The Curiosity Room," that strongly appealed to him as a student.

Dr. Sheppard and his wife obtained many art objects as gifts. The peoples among whom they worked often expressed their gratitude, or good will, by sharing something of personal value (i.e., comb, weapon, tool, cup, basket or other objects). Barter was commonplace and acceptable, and through this practice and custom both acquired many art objects. Sheppard was always adequately supplied with trade goods then in demand by the Kuba, and others of the Kasai District. The most frequently used items were lengths of copper and brass (1 foot), salt, and cowrie shells. The latter were not only valued as objects for decoration, but used by the peoples of the region as money.

The most fortuitous source from which Sheppard acquired a large number of significant gifts of exceptionally high quality in terms of design and craftsmanship centers around his now legendary discovery, and safe entry into *Mushenge*, and meeting the *Lukenga* who elected to recognize him as a lost relative.⁵¹ The latter earned him protection, royal favor, and free and safe access to the capital, and the Kuba kingdom in its entirety. The gifts initially presented to Sheppard by the *Lukenga*, Kot á Mbwééký II, and cited in several documents, include *Royal Cups* made of ebony and mahogany; a *Royal Sceptre*; and, a *Ceremonial Knife (Ikul)*.⁵² In his letters Sheppard mentions specific gifts made to him, and of those he presented to others. As an example, in a letter to Dr. Henkel, Sheppard made this comment:

We have received many nice and useful presents from different kings. . . . Today I received a nice battle ax from a wealthy 'Zappo-Zap' it is a beauty and if you should like it, I will bring it for you.⁵³

Sheppard habitually gave art objects to individuals who expressed interest in his mission work and in his collections. It is reported that he presented African art objects to President Theodore Roosevelt when he visited the White House on January 14, 1905.⁵⁴ Dr. Henkel of Staunton, received gifts of African art and artifacts from Sheppard.⁵⁵ Among items he gave to the Henkels are: *African Gold Ring*, from Accra (possibly Accra), West Coast; *Porcupine Pins*, Interior of Africa; *Native Wood Comb*; *Copper Coins* (denominations two, one, and one-half cents), lower Congo; *Pillow*, native cloth, Bakuba; *Bakongo Spoon*, wood, Kongo.⁵⁶ It is reported that Sheppard gave small items such as whistles, bells, toys, dolls (wood), "bugaboos," games, tools and other objects of interest to children who visited his son, Maximalinge, and daughter, Wilhelmina, as playmates. The Reverend Sheppard was generous almost to a fault. The exact number of African art objects collected by the Sheppards throughout the twenty year period in Africa is not, and perhaps will never be accurately, known. Despite his reputed generosity through the years, his collection remained impressive in terms of comprehensiveness, size and quality.

In 1911, Hampton Institute purchased four hundred pieces of African art from Sheppard, and these became the substantial basis of the William H. Sheppard Collection.⁵⁷ Cora M. Folsom, Curator, of the College Museum (at the time, Blake Museum) at Hampton, in 1925 referred to Sheppard in this manner: ". . . he brought back a large

collection acquired through much discrimination and labor. . . .⁵⁸ In 1915, Hampton acquired another group of African art objects from Sheppard, and still another undisclosed number of similar items from his estate after his death in 1927. Other than outright gifts, the works of art were sold for a very modest sum. Thus, self-gain could hardly have been a motive for these transactions. His basic reason for selling African art was to obtain funds for projects related to his mission work here and abroad. As an example, the original four hundred items were purchased for the sum of \$5,000, averaging approximately \$12.50 for each art object.⁵⁹

The Sheppard Collection is comprehensive. It contains multiple examples of almost every category of art objects, that could be transported without great difficulty, created by the Kuba. However, despite attrition due to: (a) gifts to persons in all walks of life;⁶⁰ (b) losses and damage through occasional mishandling, poor storage facilities, and misplacements; and (c) losses in transit here, and in Africa, this collection is still large and impressive. The overall physical condition of many facets of this collection at Hampton Institute is very good to excellent. It must be borne in mind that many art objects were old when Sheppard acquired many of them over ninety years ago. As examples, fabrics and other woven materials, inclusive of basketry, that are vulnerable to various forms of deterioration are, despite age, in excellent condition, and can be handled without fear of damage from this source.

Sheppard was familiar with the well developed court art of the Kuba. He saw the gallery of commemorative figures (*ndop*) of *Lukengas* of the past. In reference to this experience, according to Dr. Sheppard "there were many sacred carvings, portraits of royalty at the Lukenga's Court. . . ."⁶¹ In his writings, Sheppard also describes the prevalence of votive, and charm statues. These ranged from small figures (*nnoon*), for guarding households; divination objects (*itoom*); and, to unusually large figures, larger than life size, employed by the Kete to guard villages. The latter, and commemorative figures (*ndop*) are not represented in the Sheppard Collection. The *nnoon* has a pointed end, could be stuck in the soil, were fairly common, and could be found generally in the Southern part of the Kuba Kingdom.⁶²

In *Presbyterian Pioneers* Sheppard commented about his observations of carved figures in this manner:

Indoors and out were numerous idols. Those inside guarded and cared for the occupants by night, and those outside kept their eyes on common enemies and saw that no one with an evil spirit entered the door . . . these idols are carved into an image having eyes, nose, mouth and hands. . . . About 300 yards from the town where the paths part a very large idol seven or eight feet high is planted to break the powers of anyone entering the town with evil intent.⁶³

Sheppard experienced this type of sculpture in the Kete village of N'gallicoco; and Vansina confirms Sheppard's observations, and describes such images as: ". . . anthropomorphic poles with single or Janus-like heads as charms to protect . . . villages."⁶⁴ Yet Sheppard collected relatively few examples of this category (statues) of African art forms, in contrast to others. Among his collected objects are weapons, inclusive of the famed throwing knives (*Mpengdy*), and those for ceremony (*Ikul*). There are fabrics, including examples of "Kasai Velvet;" headgear; masks, costumes; mats; basketry; storage containers; ceremonial cups, with carved human faces and geometric patterns; farm implements; household utensils, toys, bells, whistles; and carved pipes along with other accessories. In addition to the foregoing categories, there

are sculptured and carved images used in magico-religious rituals, and the mask identified as the *Mwaash a Mbooy*.⁶⁵ As previously mentioned, other carved images were divination objects (*itoom*) usually shaped as a male crocodile, dog, iguana, and these were flat-backed because they were used as rubbing oracles.⁶⁶

The opportunities to collect carved figures of human beings in significant numbers from ethnic groups other than the Kuba were always available to Sheppard. Under the circumstances, subsuming time and region, it was perhaps much easier for Sheppard to acquire this class of art objects than perhaps any other person. One might ask: Why did Sheppard not collect more carved statues? A plausible response is the fact the Kuba did not have personal ancestor figures, or gods. Thus, this circumstance limited the output of this class of imagery. Other satisfactory explanations, at this time, have not been found. As a Christian missionary, Sheppard might have confiscated existing statuary, or encouraged the Africans through exhortations to destroy such. There is no evidence that Sheppard would resort to either course of action, and there are substantial reasons to question his chances for success had he elected to do so. Sheppard was in time sensitized to the deep social, symbolic, and magico-religious values the Kuba attached to their carved human and animal forms. This might partially account for his reluctance to interfere with these aspects of their reality, though he was in complete disagreement with most of their beliefs, practices and superstitions.⁶⁷ Yet these same values, in varying degrees, were attached to other objects collected by Sheppard. As an example, in Kuba society, social status is reinforced by possession of high quality art objects.⁶⁸

As early as 1921, Jane E. Davis, editor of the *Southern Workman* commented:

That he and his able wife could have made such an exhaustive collection is nothing short of miraculous, for it meets not only the requirements of the ethnologists, but those of the artist as well. Already it has been used by scientists to establish the origin of the culture of the Bakuba tribe. . . .⁶⁹

Sheppard's work, including his observations and art collecting activities in the Kasai District, was partially helpful to Vansina's reconstruction of Kuba society as it might have existed in 1892.⁷⁰

The African art objects collected by Sheppard, and housed in the College Museum at Hampton Institute, are highly valued, and appreciated. These art objects created by the Kuba, along with others, have been and are utilized as integral and active parts of the total cultural and educational program to benefit constituencies of this college community.⁷¹ The African art and artifacts from the Collection are periodically rotated for exhibition purposes at the Museum. Because of its size and comprehensiveness, only a small part of this Collection can be on view at a given time. Occasionally, photos of works from Sheppard's Collection have been made available for use in reference works such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.⁷² A limited number of art objects created by the Kuba have been loaned to institutions such as the Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia, for exhibition purposes.⁷³ Illustrations of several works appear in a book by Silber entitled: *African Textiles and Decorative Arts*.⁷⁴ The art objects from the Sheppard Collection included in this volume are: *A Beaded Hat* (9½"); *A Ceremonial Knife (Ikul)*; *A Copper Comb* (8½"), Sheppard received comb in 1900; and, a woman's *Raffia Wrap-A Round* (17' - 3" × 24'), applique.⁷⁵

The foregoing is essentially intended to present a limited profile of the Reverend Dr. Sheppard's career, and focus on his role as a collector of African art and artifacts. This effort has been extended to cite: (a) extensiveness, limitations and uses of the Collection; (b) the consistent dedication of Sheppard in his acquisition of African art, along with his apparent generosity; and (c) the institutions, and some individuals who were beneficiaries of some of his collected art objects. Many of the latter will unequivocally remain anonymous.⁷⁶ Again, Sheppard's Collection of African art is notable because: (a) its genesis and development occurred during a crucial period in Western art; (b) as an Afro-American, at the time, he would have been deemed most unlikely to collect any kind of art, yet Sheppard acquired a significant collection of art; and (c) this Collection of African art was perhaps among the earliest of its kind at any college in the United States.

Whether or not Hampton Institute provided a stimulus to other historically black colleges to initiate at least the nucleus of an African art collection, is unknown. However, as the twentieth century progressed, institutions such as Tuskegee Institute, Alabama; Howard University, Washington, D.C., and others, acquired collections of African art.⁷⁷ As an example, Howard University was beneficiary to the African Art Collection of Dr. Alain L. Locke, which was a substantial addition to its other collections. Black colleges, especially some in the private and church related sector, received African art and artifacts as gifts from friends, and missionaries who visited Africa.

Hampton Institute, as a major beneficiary of Sheppard's art collecting efforts, has been successful in maintaining and housing this resource adequately. It has progressively facilitated its effective use as an active educational and cultural resource on campus. Those persons, past and present, who were charged with the directorship of the College Museum knew that more must be done on a continuing basis in terms of cataloguing, conservation, display, storage and security, in addition to discovering fresh and creative uses of the Collection. The painstaking care, and sensitivity, with which the Collection has been managed, utilized, and protected is a tribute to those at Hampton who, through the years, preserved the Collection and reaffirmed its value as heritage, and a valuable cultural resource.⁷⁸

Thus Sheppard's Collection of African art through time and historical circumstances has transcended: (a) early attitudes about the creative abilities and efforts of Africans; (b) the times of its acquisition; (c) the then prevalent ignorance of Africa and its peoples; and, (d) probably, Sheppard the man. Yet this historic and monumental achievement cannot be realistically separated from the personality responsible for its existence. The pioneer status of his Collection invests this accomplishment with historic significance. Now it is an important benchmark among African art collections in general, and of the visual arts of the Kuba in particular. Even if it were possible to separate Sheppard's art collecting efforts from his other African experiences, this activity alone would suffice to reinforce whatever place that might be either created, or reserved, for him in history.

⁷⁶The Presbyterian Church, South is now Presbyterian Church in the United States. See also, William H. Sheppard, "Report of 1899," Typescript, The William H. Sheppard Manuscript Collection (hereafter, Sheppard Papers), The Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and reformed Churches, Inc., (hereafter, The Historical Foundation), Montreat, North Carolina; C. T. Vinson, *William McCutchan Morrison: Twenty*

Years in Central Africa (Richmond, Virginia: Presbyterian Committee for Publication, 1921); Stanley Shaloff, "The American Presbyterian Mission: A Study in Conflict, 1890-1921," (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, June 1967); U. S. Department of State, Numerical File No. 792, 1906-1910, Cases 12014-53 (Microfilm), Bureau of Indexes and Archives, National Archives and Record Service, Washington, D.C.; Booker T. Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo Country," *Outlook* 78 (October, 1904), pp. 375-77.

²Sheppard's role as a freedom fighter is partially developed in Lorryetta L. Schall, "William H. Sheppard: Fighter for African Rights," in Keith L. Schall, ed., *Stony the Road: Chapters in the History of Hampton Institute* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1977).

³The *Kuba* live in Central Zaire, Africa, in the fork formed by the Kasai and Sankuru Rivers. They constitute a loosely organized federation of about seventeen ethnic groups (i.e. Mbala, Kete, Lele, and Pianga among others).

Their Southern neighbors the *Luba* (formerly *Baluba*) named them *Kuba*, which means "People of the throwing knife," and also "People of the lightning." They are also known as *Bushongo*, and *shongo* means the same as *Kuba*. The term *Bushongo* refers specifically to the dominate *Mbala* (population about 20,000) in whose territory the capital *Mushenge* sometimes spelled, *Nysheeng* is located. According to Vansina, the *Kuba* refer to themselves as "People of the King" (*baat banyim*).

The *Kuba* are united in a kingdom ruled by the central *Bushongo* tribe (*Mbala*) which emerged around 1600 A.D. The *Lukenga* (King) rules by divine right. Family lineages are established through matrilineal descent. However, among the *Kete*, and *Lulua*, descent is patrilineal. In marriage, monogamy is the rule except for the *Lukenga*, and Chiefs. Their religion is dominated by nature spirits and witch craft. The Kingdom is unified through bonds of common culture, group feeling, and a royal army. See also William H. Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo* (Richmond, Virginia: Richmond Press, 1917); Jan Vansina, *The Children of Woot: A History of the Kuba Peoples* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978); Jan Vansina, "Kuba Art and Its Cultural Context," *African Forum*, 3/4 (Spring/Summer, 1968) 4/1: 13-27. Also consult program entitled: *African Art: The Fisk University Collection* (Nashville, Tennessee: The Art Gallery, Fisk University, April 19 through May 16, 1970), pages not numbered, see "Congo,"; William Bascom, *African Art in Cultural Perspectives: An Introduction* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1973). NOTE: *Kuba* words used and presented in this manner, throwing knife *Mpengdy* are those from "Appendix B, Lexical Comparisons," in Vansina's *Children of Woot*, pp. 249-318.

⁴Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 211. The complete names are Leo (Viktor) Frobenius, and Emil Torday.

⁵See "The Case of Dr. Morrison and Dr. Sheppard," in Vinson, *Twenty Years in Central Africa*, Appendix B, pp. 193-201; and, U.S. Department of State, File No. 792, 1906-1910, National Archives. These sources document: (a) the involvement of Sheppard and Morrison in a libel suit initiated against them by the Kasai Rubber Company; and (b) the official intervention, in their behalf, by the U.S. State Department, and the Congo Reform Association of Boston, Massachusetts.

Sheppard's early life, and early African experiences (1890-1893) are narrated in *Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1917), which was reprinted in 1919, and reprinted again (Louisville, Kentucky: Pentecostal Publishing Company, n.d.). For a summary of his relations with the *Kuba*, and some emphasis on his involvement with the Kasai Rubber Company, consult Stanley Shaloff, "William Henry Sheppard: Congo Pioneer," in Albert Berrian, ed., *Education for Life in a Multicultural Society* (Hampton, Virginia: Hampton Institute Press, 1968).

⁶Harold G. Cureau, "The Art Gallery, Museum: Their Availability as Educational Resources in the Historically Negro College," *The Journal of Negro Education* 42 (Fall, 1973) 4: 452-61. Also, Cora M. Folsom, "Historical Notes on the Museum," 1920 (?), Archives, College Museum (hereafter, College Museum), Hampton Institute, Virginia, pp. 1-2.

⁷"Museum Report of 1966," College Museum, Hampton Institute.

⁸Sheppard's first furlough was from Spring 1893 to May 1894. He was elected June 26, 1893, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (F.R.G.S.) in recognition of his explorations in the Congo. C. Keller, Archivist, Royal Geographical Society to Cureau, December 10, 1979; and, Arthur B. Hinks, Secretary, Royal Geographical Society to the Historical Foundation, April 6, 1934, Sheppard Papers. Sheppard married Lucy Gantt, Tuscaloosa, February 21, 1894, in Jacksonville, Florida. S. H. Chester, "In Memoriam Sketch: Rev. William H. Sheppard, D.D." Sheppard Papers, College Archives, Sheppard Memorial Library, Stillman College, Tuscaloosa.

⁹Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers*, p. 15. The birthdate of Sheppard is recorded as March 28, 1865 in his brief autobiographical sketch entitled *Pioneer Missionary to the Congo* (Nashville: Executive Committee of

Foreign Missions, Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1924). p. 3, Sheppard Papers, The Historical Foundation. The programs of 1972 and 1973 printed in celebration of the Annual William H. Sheppard Memorial Lecture Series at Stillman College, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, record May 28, 1865 as his birthdate. The 116th General Assembly meeting at Stillman College proclaimed March 8 as a special day in commemoration of Sheppard's birthday. The source for the latter is a biographical sketch "William Henry Sheppard: Pioneer in Africa," prepared by the Division of International Mission, January 1977, College Archives, Stillman College. Sheppard's Certificate of Death records March 8, 1865, File No. 25478, Office of Vital Statistics, State of Kentucky, Frankfort. A search by the Bureau of Vital Records, State of Virginia, Richmond, was unable to locate his Certificate of Birth.

Sheppard's second furlough was from March 1904 to October 1906. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree (D.D.), by Biddle University (now Johnson C. Smith University), Charlotte, North Carolina; D. J. Sanders, President, Biddle University to William Sheppard, July 7, 1905, from Schall, "Fighter for African Rights."

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²William H. Sheppard to S. H. Henkel, January 5, 1892, Sheppard Papers, The Historical Foundation.

¹³Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers*, pp. 16–17; and, also see Schall, "Fighter for African Rights," p. 118.

¹⁴James Sprunt, "Augusta County's Pioneer Missionary to the Dark Continent," *Augusta Historical Bulletin* 6 (Fall, 1970), p. 22.

¹⁵William H. Sheppard, *Pioneer Missionary to the Congo* (Nashville, Tennessee: Executive Committee of Foreign Missions, Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1924), p. 9. In Montgomery, Sheppard served at the Calvary Presbyterian Church which was founded in April of 1880.

¹⁶Shaloff, "The American Presbyterian Mission," p. 10; and, Thomas C. Johnson, *History of the Southern Presbyterian Church* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1894), p. 418.

¹⁷Samuel Norvell Lapsley, James Woods Lapsley, ed., *Life and Letters of Samuel Norvell Lapsley: Missionary to the Congo Valley, West Africa: 1866–1892* (Richmond, Virginia: Whittet and Sheppardson Printers, 1893), pp. 21–28.

¹⁸Shaloff, "Congo Pioneer," pp. 17–18; and John R. Crawford, "the Instructive Missionary Career of Samuel Phillips Verner." This paper was delivered at a meeting of the Historical Foundation, August 1, 1972, Montreat, North Carolina, p. 5.

¹⁹Eric Trice Thompson, "Afro-American Presbyterians," in *Presbyterians in the South: 1861–1890*, 3 vols. (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1973) 2: 311. Also consult "Presbyterian Church South, USA: Africa Mission," in Edwin Munsell Bliss, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Missions*, 2 vols. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1891), 2: 257–58. The article in the latter cites some rationales for the Presbyterian Church's interest in establishing an African mission, and the selection of William H. Sheppard to help initiate such a venture.

²⁰Shaloff, "Congo Pioneer," p. 17; and, also Lapsley, *Life and Letters*, p. 28.

²¹Shaloff, "Congo Pioneer," p. 18.

²²Sprunt, "Augusta County's Pioneer Missionary," p. 26.

²³Johnson, *Southern Presbyterian Church*, p. 418; and, Shaloff, "The American Presbyterian Mission," p. 10.

²⁴APCM Committee to Sheppard, December 2, 1909; Sheppard to Henkel, February 4, 1910, Sheppard Papers, The Historical Foundation.

²⁵Sheppard, *Pioneer Missionary*, pp. 10–11.

²⁶Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers*, p. 12.

²⁷Sheppard's article "Into the Heart of Africa," *Southern Workman* (1893), materialized from his lectures at Hampton, and various churches while on furlough (1893–1894). The notes which formed the basis of his lectures, along with the article, facilitated development of his work *Presbyterian Pioneers*. Some of his writings have been cited, or identified in this paper.

²⁸"Memorial: Rev. William H. Sheppard, D.D.," *The Minutes of the Synod of Kentucky, Presbyterian Church in the United States: 127th Annual Meeting* (Louisville, Kentucky: Printed by Frank M. Carothers, 1928), pp. 46–47; Shaloff, "Congo Pioneer," p. 27.

²⁹Vinson, *Twenty Years in Central Africa*, "Appendix B," pp. 193–201; and, Sheppard, "From the Bakuba Country," *The Kasai Herald*, January 1, 1908, pp. 12–13, Sheppard's Papers, The Historical Foundation.

³⁰Crawford, "Samuel Phillips Verner," pp. 28–29; also consult Shaloff, "Congo Pioneer," p. 18; and, Louis B. Weeks, "Overseas Missions," *Presbyterian Survey* 66 (February, 1976), p. 13.

³¹Some of his published articles are: "The Bakuba Missions," *Southern Workman* (1904); "Light in Darkest Africa," *Southern Workman* (1905); "Give Me Thine Hand," *Southern Workman* (1915); and, "African Handicrafts and Superstitions," *Southern Workman* (1921). Among his works written primarily for young people are "The Story of the Girl Who Ate Her Mother," "A Young Hunter," "A Little Robber Who Found a Treasure," and, "African Daniel." These were reportedly published in 1915 by Hampton Institute Press. However the exact date of publication is uncertain.

³²Lucy Gantt Sheppard presented gifts to the Historical Foundation in all categories mentioned. References to these were made by S. M. Tenny, Curator, The Historical Foundation to Hallie Henkel, January 9, 1936, Sheppard Papers.

³³Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 392. These are listed in the Index in this order: Sheppard, William. On Kuba history, 3, 43, 49, 50; described the Kuba, 79, 197, 235; . . . on ritual 181, 208; Kuba art collection of, 211, 218; on dynastic statues, 213, 214-15.

³⁴Harold G. Cureau, "The Art Gallery in the Negro College: Neglect, Half Measures and Progress," *Art Journal* 33 (Winter, 1972-73), pp. 172-74. Also consult Cureau, "The Art Gallery, Museum," pp. 452-53; and Harold G. Cureau, "The Visual Arts in the Historic Black Colleges," *The Journal of Negro History* 58 (October, 1973) 4 : 441-51.

³⁵John Canaday, *Mainstreams of Modern Art* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1959), p. 456. Also see, Michael Batterberry, *Twentieth Century Art* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1973).

³⁶The painters Pablo Picasso (b. 1881, d. 1973), and, Georges Braque (b. 1882, d. 1963), are generally credited as being the chief innovators of *Cubism*. They, among others, at times implemented African art forms in some of their paintings. Picasso experienced, according to Canaday, a "Negro" period in 1908 which closely paralleled African prototypes. See, *Mainstreams*, p. 456. Some Europeans published pioneering works about African art, and, some examples are: Augustus Pitts-Rivers, *Antique Works of Art From Benin* published privately in 1900; and, H. Ling Roth, *Great Benin* published in 1903.

³⁷William H. Sheppard, "African Handicrafts and Superstitions," *Southern Workman* (September, 1921), p. 401.

³⁸Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 211; and, Vansina, "Kuba Art," pp. 16-17.

³⁹Vansina, "Kuba Art," p. 15.

⁴⁰Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 218.

⁴¹Sheppard, "African Handicrafts," pp. 401-02.

⁴²*Ibid.*, pp. 402-07.

⁴³Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 211.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵Sheppard, "African Handicrafts," p. 408. Some examples are : *N' Jessent* (lightning); *Tooln* (snake); *N' Co* (leopard skin); and, *Mbule* (sides and ends of houses). For more commentary on decorative patterns in terms of sources, motifs and styles compare Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, pp. 219-22; and, Vansina, "Kuba Art," pp. 21-25.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 406-07, Sheppard discusses the use of the "witch doctor's" test board to determine "guilt," or "innocence." Vansina in *The Children of Woot*, pp. 202-08, 219, describes use of rubbing oracles and other charms for rituals made of wood in shape of dog, crocodile, and other natural objects.

⁴⁷Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers*, p. 13.

⁴⁸"Museum Report of 1966," College Museum, Hampton Institute, p. 1.

⁴⁹Cora M. Folsom, "Historical Notes on the Museum," 1920 (?), College Museum, Hampton Institute, pp. 1-4; and, "The Museum, and Report for Interracial Conference," 1930, College Museum, pp. 1-3.

⁵⁰Folsom, "Historical Notes," p. 4.

⁵¹Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers*, pp. 101-02.

⁵²Sheppard, "African Handicrafts," p. 403.

⁵³Sheppard to Henkel, January 5, 1892; Myrtila Sherman to Sheppard, April 7, 1927, Sheppard Papers, The Historical Foundation.

⁵⁴William H. Sheppard, "1966, College Museum, Hampton Institute; Theodore Roosevelt, President, United States to Sheppard, January 14, 1905, Sheppard Papers, The Historical Foundation.

⁵⁵This receipt was dated July 1893, and listed were gifts from Sheppard to the S. H. Henkel family of Staunton, Virginia, Sheppard Papers, The Historical Foundation.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷Julia R. Vodicka, Director, College Museum to Cureau, December 6, 1977, and *Ibid.*, November 15, 1979. Also see Folsom, "Historical Notes," p. 2.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰Mary A. Jackson to Sheppard, January 9, 1906, Sheppard Papers, The Historical Foundation.

⁶¹"Information Concerning, Collections and Dr. Sheppard," Report, n.d., College Museum, Hampton Institute, p. 2.

⁶²Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 212.

⁶³Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers*, pp. 69-70, 90.

⁶⁴"William H. Sheppard," College Museum, p. 2; and also Sheppard, "Heart of Africa," *Southern Workman* (1893), p. 186b.

⁶⁵Sheppard, "African Handicrafts," pp. 406-07.

⁶⁶Vansina, "Kuba Art," p. 19.

⁶⁷William H. Sheppard, "Give Me Thine Hand," 44 (March, 1915), p. 169.

⁶⁸Sheppard, "African Handicrafts," pp. 406, 408; and Vansina, "Kuba Art," pp. 19-24.

⁶⁹"Hampton's African Collection," *Southern Workman* 50 (September, 1921), p. 388. Authorship of this article was attributed to Jane E. Davis, Editor at the time of this issue.

⁷⁰Vansina, *The Children of Woot*, p. 325.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, p. 211; and, Vodicka to Cureau, August 7, 1980.

⁷²*Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Macropaedia) 15th ed., s.v. "Arts of African Peoples," 1 : 274-75.

⁷³A visit to the College Museum, Hampton Institute, and an interview with Julia R. Vodicka, Director, on November 15, 1979, revealed works of art from the Sheppard Collection were being prepared for shipment to Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond for exhibition purposes.

⁷⁴Roy Silber, *African Textiles and Decorative Arts* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972).

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 64, 88, 116.

⁷⁶In considering the personal nature of many of these gifts, Sheppard perhaps felt it was unnecessary to document each generous impulse.

⁷⁷In addition to other acquisitions of works of art, Fisk and Atlanta Universities eventually acquired relatively modest collections of African art. Paine College, Augusta, Georgia, once owned a large collection of African art and artifacts contributed by missionaries, and other friends of the College. Regrettably, this collection was lost during the late 1960s in a fire that destroyed the Administration Building which housed these works of art.

⁷⁸Amongst the directors who have made significant contributions toward that end are the following: Richard A. Long, Director from October 1966 to June 1968. Long is responsible for bringing The Sheppard Collection back to the attention of the African Art public by mounting an exhibition entitled "Primitive Art from the College Museum at Hampton Institute," held at the Union Carbide Exhibition space on Park Avenue in New York City, October 1967. The special issue of *African Forum* cited earlier in this work was an outgrowth of this and other activities. Julia R. Vodicka, who during her tenure from June, 1969 to June, 1980 obtained major grants which helped to facilitate the following: appraisal of the collection; increased security for the Collections; climate control; and, conservation, educational and exhibition programs for the museum. Vodicka to Cureau, May 26, 1981. See also Richard A. Long to Cureau, April 29, 1981.