Case 6-Afr-DR Congo-Luba-Hemba-Head Rest-King and Queen Mother-Wood-19th c

Note: The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) has been known as, in chronological order, the Congo Free State, Belgian Congo, the Republic of Congo-Léopoldville, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Zaire, before returning to its current name the DR Congo.

Note: The Kongo people (singular: Mukongo, pl. Bakongo) speak Kikongo, a Bantu language, who have lived along the Atlantic coast of Central Africa, in a region that, by the 15th century, was a centralized and well-organized Kongo Kingdom but is now a part of three countries: DR Congo, the Republic of the Congo and Angola.



Figs. 1-2. Afr-Congo-Luba-Hemba-Head Rest-Caryatid-Wood-19th c

**Case No.: 6**

**Display Description:**

Luba are one of the oldest Bantu-speaking cultures in south-central DR Congo who organized a Kingdom of Luba in the Upemba or **Kamalondo Depression** of Central Africa.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luba_people#cite_note-Falola285-3)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luba_people#cite_note-Reefe1981p67-4)

Access to a variety of mineral resources together with skills in metal smithing, ivory carving, wood carving, pottery, and jewelry established their predominance in the area by the 5th c CE.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luba_people#cite_note-Appiah2010p88-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luba_people#cite_note-bortolot-6) By the ninth c CE they had expanded their empire throughout the region. The Luba developed a governance network with a central ruler who succeeded through the mother's line.

Since the Luba venerate women, their art reflects this as in this head rest of a royal mother and her son who are distinguished by the cheek scarifications of dual lines nd dotted keloids.. This Caryatid head rest depicts the mother of a chieftain who was the female half of dual ancestral rule together with her son. When not in use Luba head rests were kept on ritual altars, wrapped in linen or cotton cloth. This headrest is very rare since the surfaces of the seat and the figures display a high patina indicating that it was in active use for generations.



Much more is known about the Luba than many of the other tribes on the African continent due to the way that they used intricate works of art called "lukasa" and other memory devices to record their history and fundamental precepts about Luba kingship in which Luban art is used to encode the complex structure of sovereign rule within their empire using memory as a dynamic, creative facility.

Their success and wealth grew in relative isolation, given their forested mountainous inland location, then attracted traders, raids and wars in second half of the 19th century.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luba_people#cite_note-Reefe1981p159-7) The Luba people were victims of the slave and ivory trade, both the Atlantic coast's Portuguese slave traders, as well as to the east African coast by Swahili-Arab slave traders, particularly during the 19th century.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luba_people#cite_note-Appiah2010p88-5)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luba_people#cite_note-Reefe1981p147-8)

**LC Classification: N1099.C6**

**Date or Time Horizon:**

**Geographical Area:**

**Map:**





Fig. 1. Map of Kongo Cultures, West Central Africa. After Walker Art Center 1967. 9 is Pende.

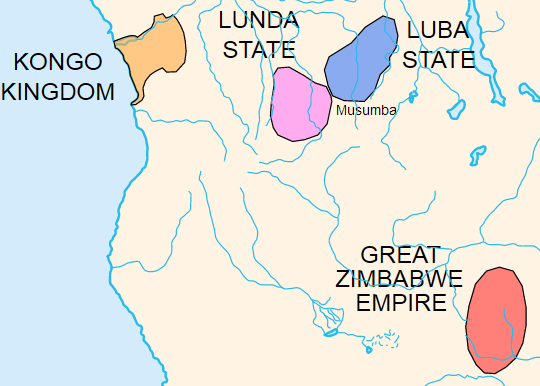


Fig. 2. Map of Luba State

**GPS coordinates:** 7° 46' 19.3" (7.772°) S, 24° 17' 44.9" (24.2958°) E

**Cultural Affiliation:** Pende, Central Bantu

**Media:** wood, raffia, kaolin, ferruginous earth

**Dimensions:** H 20.866 in

**Weight:** 2.52 pounds

**Condition: original**

**Provenance:** Kitangwa

**Discussion:**

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Appendix: