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craft horizons

OCTOBER 1972

\$3



October 1972

Vol. XXXII

No. 5

- The Cover:** Glass composition, 4¾" high, by Erik Höglund of Sweden, exhibited in "*Glas heute*," at the Museum Bellerive, Zurich, Switzerland (June 4-August 13). In connection with the exhibition, the museum organized the first International Glass Symposium (June 4-9), and our reportage begins on page 12.

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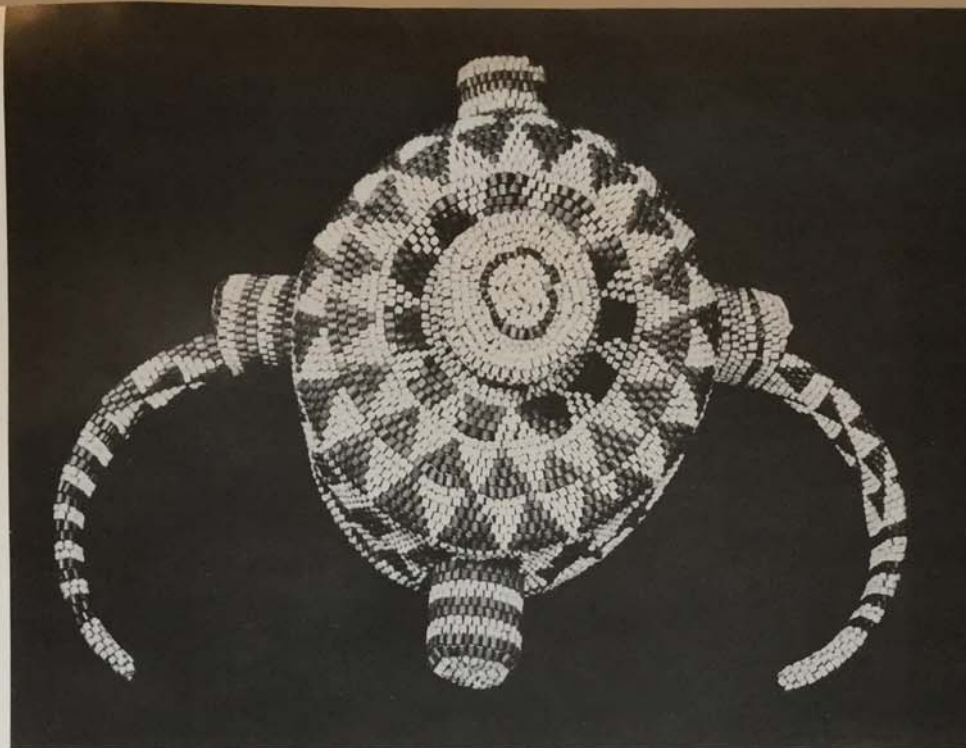
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Crocheted cotton chief's hat with feathers, 16" high, from Tikar, Cameroon, collected in 1934 by Dr. Paul Gebauer.



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Beaded chief's hat, 16" wide, from Pende, Republic of Zaire, collected in 1954, collection Dr. Daniel Biebuyck.

African Arts at the Museum of Modern Art

by Katherine White Reswick

Since 1935, when it presented "African Negro Art," the Museum of Modern Art, New York, has had continued interest in the arts of Africa. Now it has mounted "African Textiles and Decorative Arts" (October 11-January 31, 1973), containing two hundred fifty examples of textiles, jewelry, and ornamental objects, as well as complete costumes, from areas ranging from Senegal to Nigeria, the Cameroons to South Africa, and the Republic of Zaire to Ghana, all gleaned from public and private collections in the US. The earliest strip-weave cloths are from the Peabody Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, and date back to 1849. Much of the recent work comes from the influx of interest in Africa that happened after World War II, with the emphasis of "Black is Beautiful," the Peace Corps, and the wave of African independence. Young people, teachers swarmed to Africa, experiencing for the first time the vivid energy, the heat, the vastness of the land. Local markets there are fascinating places. The cloth stalls, with their pungent smells of indigo, drown the senses with patterns, and it is impossible not to be drawn in by the merchant opening his fabrics and flashing them at you in a torrent of persuasive language. When something costs \$3 and is beautiful, why not buy?

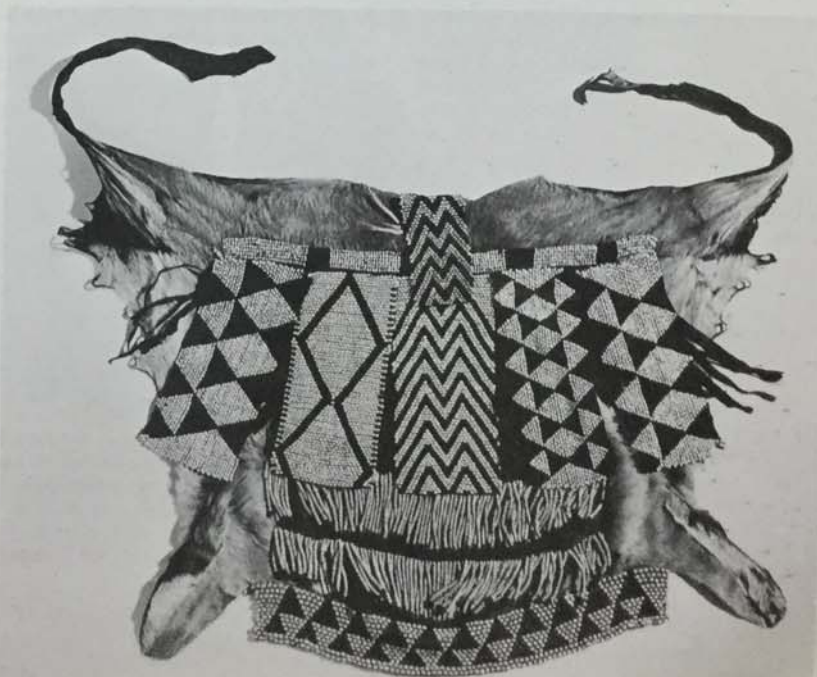
The competition is heavy. Foreign made yardage invades the markets in bales. Local artists, using their traditional methods of cloth manufacture, have a hard time matching the easy prices of factory goods. The young want school, bikes, and transistor radios, not long hot weeks spinning, weaving, gathering plant dyes, much less training their eyes

in the subtle elegant nuances of design, learning the poetic names of patterns, getting in deep enough to create new variations as handsome as the old. So much has happened. European dyes have come, exploding the old color ranges into whole new palettes. And some have learned to use wax for batiks, not the delicate cassava resist put on with a feather and agile fingers. The cloths of Africa respond to fashion nowadays with the temperament of the New York clothing market, pieces are datable at a glance—that is last year's pattern, this one is five years old. The swiftness of movement sometimes loses in depth or takes on a briefer, less local flavor.

This is why the museum chose the show deliberately from the near past, with a few magnificent old textiles as resonance. The Liberian man's robe is thick creamy country cloth, short staple cotton spun and woven on the narrow men's looms found everywhere in West Africa. The garment is a harmony of five different patterns, two stripes, a solid blue, a tie-dye blue, and plain, all juxtaposed with a visual skill as smooth and witty as jazz, or a Brigitte Riley painting. The pocket on the front shifts emphasis like an enharmonic chord. The woman's work from Owo, Nigeria, is done on an upright loom much like those found in our own Southwest. Almost without exception wide pieces (up to twenty-eight inches) are designed and woven by women in their compounds. This is a dense silky cloth with a gleam to it, the beauty of the textile depending on the delicate scale of narrow blues, dim whites, the bite of green, and the (continued on page 69)

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Right: Appliquéd leather riding boots, 45" high, probably from northern Nigeria, collection UCLA Museum of Cultural History, Los Angeles, gift of the Wellcome trust. This technique is known from North Africa southward through the western Sudan into the northern forest region from Ghana to Nigeria. Below: Woman's waist or buttocks ornament of woven raffia and beadwork, 9" diameter, from Jaba, Nigeria, collected in 1958, collection Dr. and Mrs. Roy Sieber. Ornament serves as a modesty protector when the woman bends over to work in the fields. Bottom: Woman's apron of beadwork on leather, 26" long, from Tswana or Sotho, Botswana.

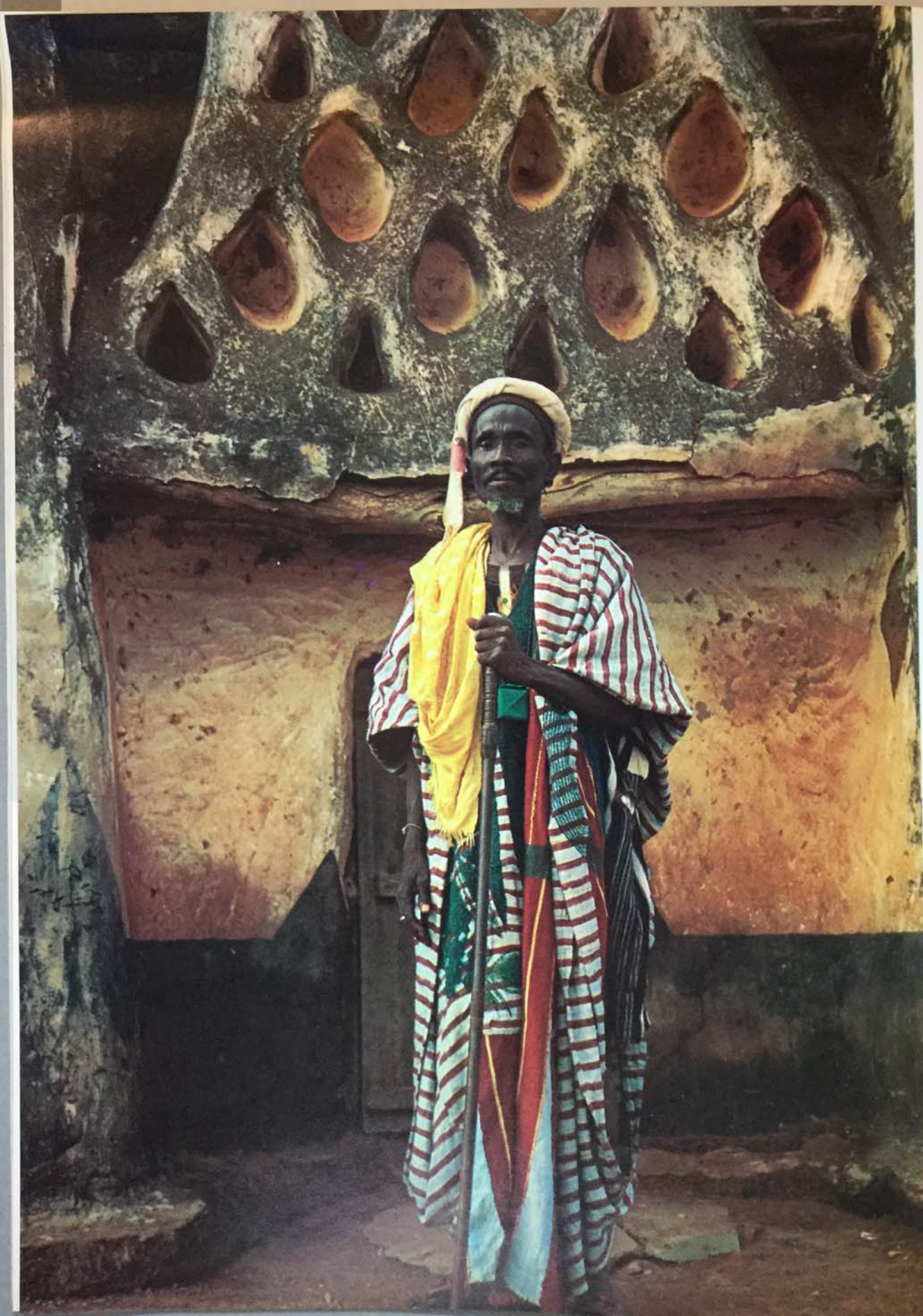


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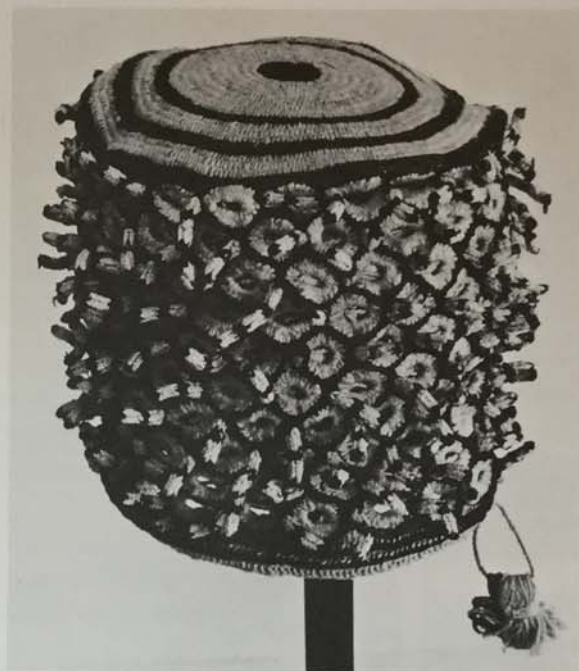
Opposite page: Detail of appliquéd felt chief's robe, 75" x 47", from Akan, Ghana, collection Katherine White Reswick. Reprinted from African Arts, Volume V, Number 3.



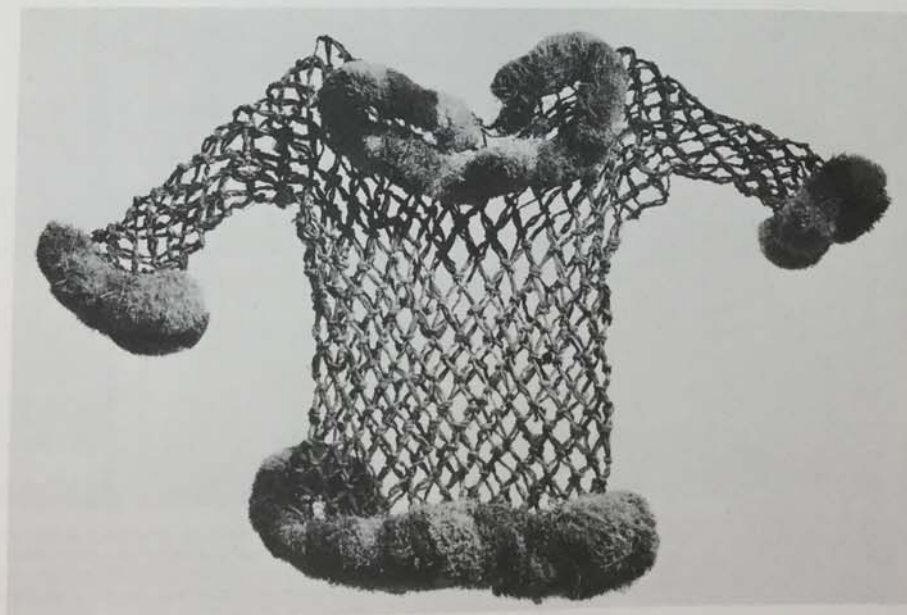
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Above: Crocheted cotton hat, 6 1/2" high,
from Cameroon, collected by Dr. Paul Gebauer.
Left: Appliquéd cotton chief's hat, 14" high,
from Cameroon, collected by Dr. Paul Gebauer.
Below: Dance shirt of knotted netting with
cut pile edging, 17" long, from Liberia,
collected in 1926, collection Milwaukee Public Museum.
Opposite page: Limam (keeper) of Larabanga Mosque,
Ghana, dressed in typical northern fashion.
Fabric is strip cotton woven by men on a horizontal loom.



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Above: Detail of cotton men's weave, 95" x 32", probably from Akan, Ghana, collection Jack Lenor Larsen. A brilliant textile unusual for either Ghana or Nigeria, it closely resembles Kente cloth, although the asymmetrical striping of the narrow strips is unexpected.

Opposite page: Appliquéd and embroidered cotton costume, collection The Brooklyn Museum, New York. Garment might have belonged to Behanzin, King of Dahomey (1889-94), whose symbol was the shark (see motif on trousers).

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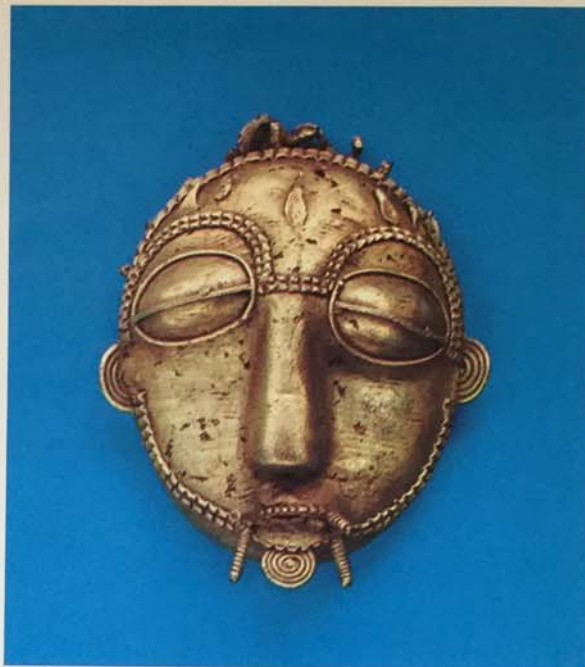


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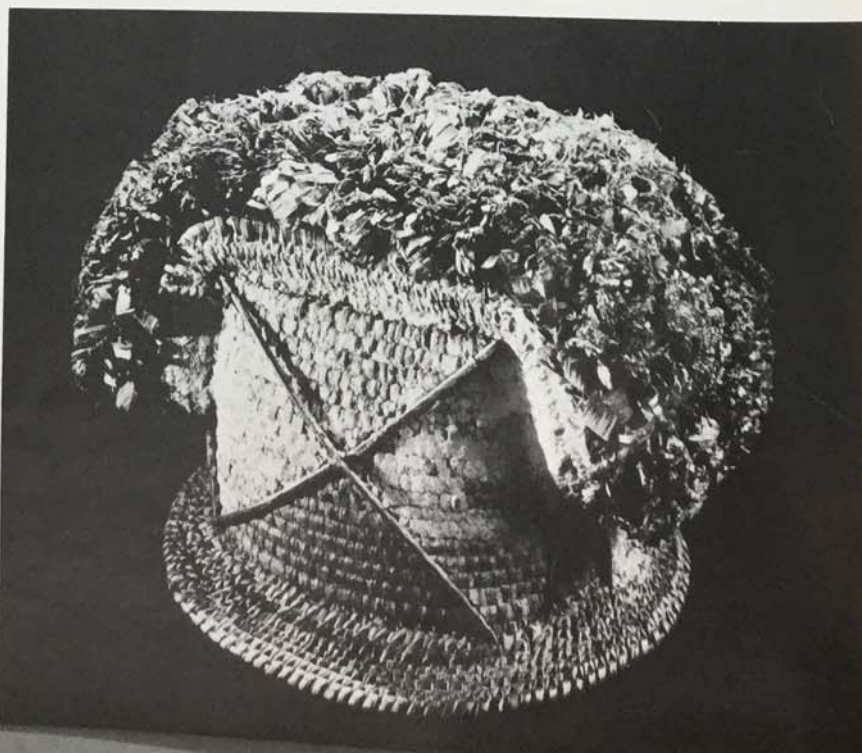
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Above: Gold pendant, 3 1/2" high, from Akan/Baule, Ivory Coast, collection The Museum of Primitive Art, New York.
Left: Snuff bottle of carved horn with wood stopper, 3" high, from Swazi, South Africa, collected before 1912, collection University Museum, Philadelphia.
Below: Coiled raffia hat, rim 9" diameter, from Liberia, collected in 1927, collection Peabody Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
Opposite page: Beaded king's crown, 36 1/2" high, from Yoruba, Nigeria, collection The Brooklyn Museum, New York.
Veil of beads at front of crown protects the king's subjects from the danger of staring at his face. The bird at the top is perhaps a symbol of the king's communication with the gods and the spirits of departed kings.



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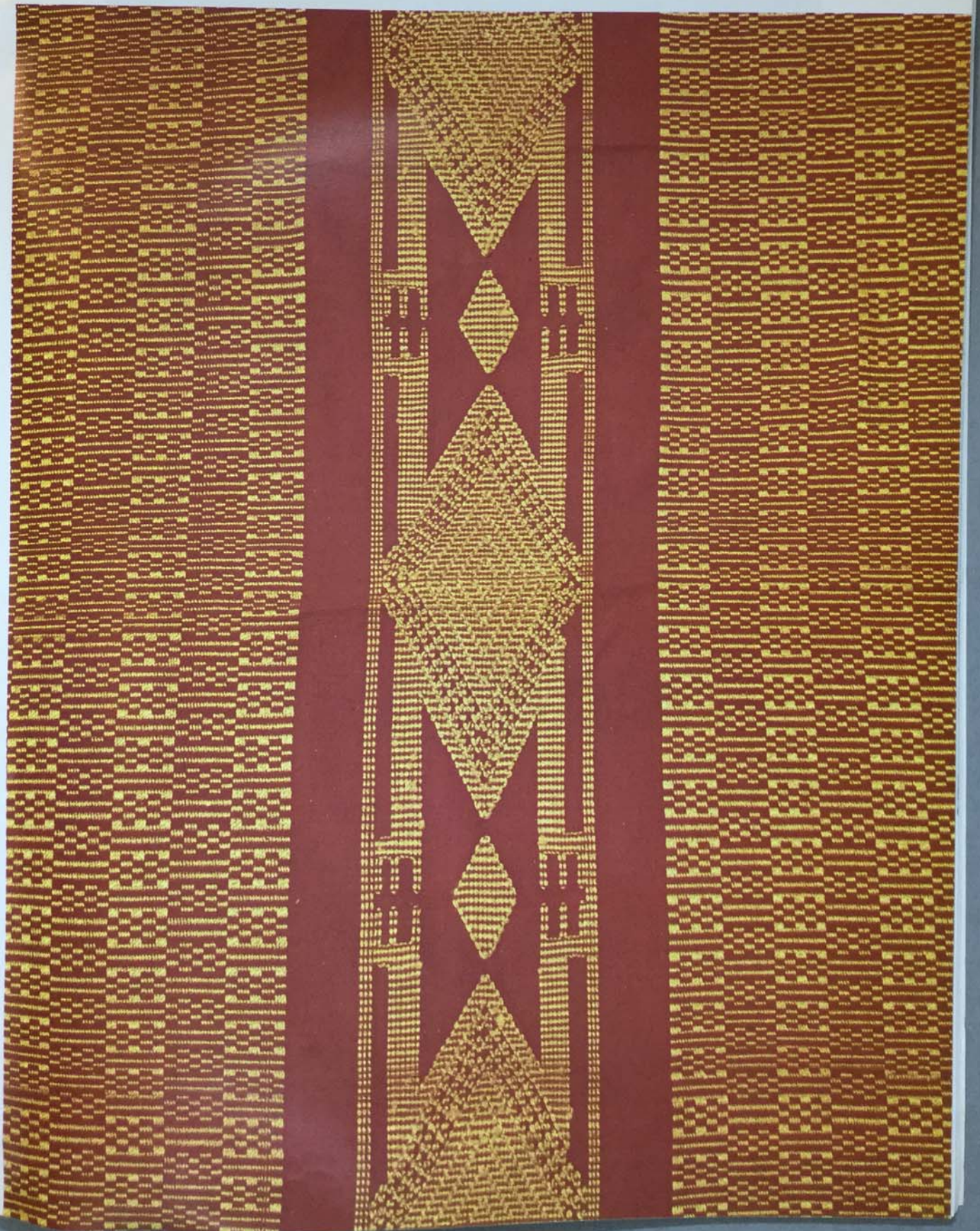


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Above: Resist-dyed cotton fabric, 67" x 47", from Ivory Coast.
Opposite page: Detail of cotton and silk women's weave, 72" x 60",
from Ibo, Akwete, Nigeria, collection Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Cole.

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To:

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11 West 5

Date:

Subject:

Department of Architecture and Design

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(Mrs. David Aradeon)

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Dear Mrs. Aradeon:

Herewith two checks totalling \$280.00 for the 14 slides of your husband's which we are using for the AFRICAN TEXTILES AND DECORATIVE ARTS Exhibition.

With many thanks for your patience,

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TAMBARI (design)

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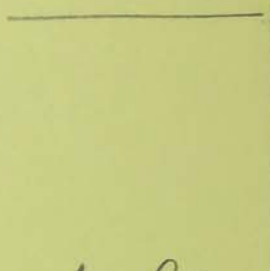
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KANURI woman in

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