



KUBA (BACOUBA, BAKUBA, BUSHONGO)

Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Over twenty types of masks are used among the Kuba, with meanings and functions that vary from group to group. Hide, animal hair, fur, beads, cowrie shells, and feathers ornament the masks, along with costumes of bark-cloth, raffia fiber fabric, and beaded elements. One context for masking is initiation, another is funerals. This mask is called Bwoom. Bwoom has been interpreted variously as a prince, a commoner, a pygmy, even a subversive element at the royal court – the form's most pronounced features are its bulging forehead and broad nose.

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