Surviving Works: context in Verre arts

Part Two, Chapter Five: Towards a Verre catalogue raisonnée

5.1: Percussive metals: bells, gongs, rattles

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Chapter 5 Towards a Verre *catalogue raisonnée*

5.1 Percussive metals: bells, gongs, rattles

Verre has distinct terms for at least four metal percussion instruments that might be called bells in English. In the singular these are: clapper bell (*kerumd*), single clapperless bell (*buruk*), double clapperless bell (*dengkongkas*), crotal bell (*sa'sol*). Verre draw further distinctions within the first three of these categories on the basis of some or all of their material, whether iron or brass, their decoration and size. There may be some finer discriminations among crotals of which we are unaware given they also vary in size and form, some but not all, for instance, having a stem section so that they hang as pendants.

In the discussion below, bells belonging to the 1966 collection made by Chappel (**66.J11.NNN**) are referenced simply by their last three numbers.

Brass bells with clappers

To begin with the first category: we know of no iron 'original' for bells with internal clappers among Verre and so, while they may be specified as brass, *kerumd suktundal* (s), *kerumi suktini* (pl), it is unnecessary to do so: clapper bells, *kerumd* (s), *kerumi* (pl), were made only in brass. They share this non-skeuomorphic character with few other items, most obviously crotal bells. As we noted earlier, miniature crotals are used to ornament some brass clapper bells, as well as some brass arm cuffs and brass-handled daggers. Like brass bells, arm cuffs have no iron original; if they are skeuomorphs then their prototype might be a kind of arm sheath, or protector in leather, but we are not aware of any such object among Verre. So, even if the brass arm cuff was a skeuomorph of a leather original in historical terms, Verre could not appreciate it as such if they knew it only in the form of an ornament in brass. While brass-handled knives share their blades with everyday knives, ornamented handles are original brass objects rather than copies. We may be dealing with a small, historic, sub-set of brass objects – bells, arm cuffs and knives – which all share an association with crotal decoration while lacking familiar 'originals' in materials other than brass. Malachi Cullen's remark (see Chapter 2) on his donation to the future Lagos museum, that arm cuffs had long been out of fashion in Mapeo, supports this judgement of relative antiquity.

Chappel's informants drew various distinctions between the bells he collected. The larger and more decorated were described to be for smiths, *Tibaai*, while those that were either smaller and/or less decorated were for the use of non-smiths, *Gazabi*. Because these characteristics do not inevitably go together, Chappel found that different informants were not entirely consistent in allocating bells to one set of users or the other. Our initial analysis suggested that the TYPES 1 and 2, which we shall distinguish shortly by their decoration, corresponded to the distinction between *Tibaai* and *Gazabi* users. A second look at some contradictory judgements by informants recorded in Chappel's fieldnotes demonstrated that while there was something to this, it was too neat. The two distinctions map onto one another for the most part, but not entirely; while informants indeed seem to have been guided by the

degree of decoration and size of bells, they did not always propose the same identification in the less clearcut cases.

Chappel's informants frequently provided descriptive phrases for his fieldnotes: *kerumd bix Tibaai*, a bell used by smiths with a decorative pattern resembling snakeskin; *kerumd mulɛ Tibaai*, a bell used by smiths with a row of bead-like decoration around its shoulder; or *kerumd ga Gazabi*, a bell for use by non-smiths with spiral decorations. Chappel also recorded a term for horizontal bands of decoration on crooks and hoes, consisting of raised seams often connected vertically with diagonals or other devices, *nengtabungs*, which may also be applied to bells, although we do not have a specific instance of this.

In purely formal terms, we find Verre bells, with very few exceptions, fit into four types, of which the first two are the most prestigious and TYPE 3 the least coherent formally and the most likely subject for future revision.

TYPE 1 – Formal characteristics include most, but not necessarily all, of: a large decorated loop, and decorated dome or top surface; a pronounced shoulder, usually with knobs or, particularly in older-looking examples, crotal bells; a waisted body with a band of decoration at the top and, commonly, also at the bottom, the lip of which has a rolled rim; the diameter of the mouth is equal to, or narrower than, the shoulders. A two part iron clapper mechanism that consists of the clapper itself and the iron loop from which it is suspended that protrudes through the dome of the bell and is bifurcated over its top surface; this is now missing in several examples. When informants identified users, bells of this type were said to be for *Tibaai* or smiths.

The photographic illustrations below are not to scale, but we list the dimensions where they are available. Most examples have a height in the range of 14-20cm and a diameter at the mouth between 8-10cm; the earliest bells collected by Frobenius in 1911, now in Dresden, and Cullen in 1946, now in Lagos **46.29.8**, are slight outliers in their larger size. Both of these bells were acquired in new or nearly-new condition, so they may not be the oldest to have entered a museum. Bell **586** is a slight outlier in its proportions.

Only a few bells of TYPE 1 have a band of crotal ornaments around the shoulder, including that acquired by the Frobenius expedition in 1911 when it was in little used, or un-used, condition. Now in the Dresden museum, this bell has a recorded height of 22cm, which allows us to estimate an 8.75cm width based on the proportions of the photographed object. Just over half a century later, it is notable that Chappel collected only three more bells that we know to have been ornmented with crotal beads, all of which show evidence of wear, suggesting this form is longstanding and probably dates back to the Emirate period. The decorative shoulder pattern for **602** and **638** is specified in Chappel's fieldnotes as *sa'sol*, the term for crotal bells. **543**, with a relatively flat dome, was acquired from Wom, who are considered ethnically Verre but are not speakers of a Verre language, and so might be considered as an outlier. All three of Chappel's bells with crotals are smaller than that collected in 1911: **543** 17.5x11.3; **638** 14.4x9.8; **602** 15.6x8.8. Of the three, **602** formally resembles the Frobenius bell most closely. While it is probable that crotals were added around the shoulders of bells after an initial casting, similar ornamentation with globular

beads is likely to have been part of the initial single casting. This would need to be checked against the evidence of the bells themselves, but if true would imply that crotal decoration required a more complex production process.

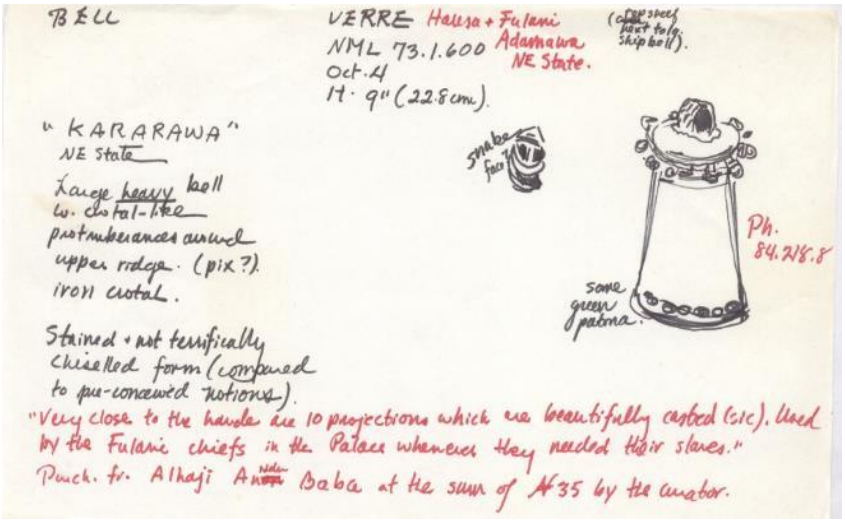
Dresden/Frobenius **602**

543

638 (with 672)

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

A later accession to the Lagos Museum (**NML.73.1.600**), which we know only from Nancy Maas's sketch, bears a strong formal resemblance to **543**. At nearly 23cm it is the height of the Frobenius bell, and 5cm taller than **543**, but the flattened crown, the top loop and particularly the ten crotal ornaments, described by Maas as 'snake face', at the shoulder all look similar. If we accepted at face value the claim of the dealer who sold this bell to the museum – that it had been used by Fulani to summon palace slaves – then it would provide significant evidence of the importance of Verre brass in a regional trade that included the Fulani ruling stratum.



73.1.600

(Clicking on the image will open a higher quality version)

A more numerous group of bells resembles these except that the shoulder decoration consists not of crotal bells but of a band of smaller and more numerous balls, a pattern informants identified as *mulɛ*, copying a characteristic of women's beads. We have no testimony whether informants might find similarities in form between crotals and cowries, although it would seem possible and was remarked in relation to **637**. This group includes the bell that Cullen collected from the Mapeo Chamba among whom he served as a Roman Catholic missionary, and which he recorded to have been cast by Verre in the village of Lainde. In some instances (like **672** illustrated both above below) the decorative balls are slightly split horizontally which might evoke the shape of crotals, cowries or both. The dimensions of these bells are comparable to those of the bells with crotal decorations, and we again find the earliest bell collected also to have been the largest. Available dimensions (n/a = not available): **46.29.8** height specified as 20.3, so proportions suggest width is 11.6; **518** 14.2x8.2; **603** 14.1x8; **643** 17.6x9.6; **252** n/a; **110** 18.6x9.6 (note a single piece clapper); **672** 14.5x7.5; **529** 14.9x9.9; **637** n/a, described as having 'cowry' protrusions; **586** 13.1x9.6.


NM Lagos 46.29.8


518


603


643


252


110


672 (also with 638 above)


529


637


586

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

Where Chappel's accession notes specify a user, such bells are allocated to *Tibaai*: **518**, **603**, **643**, **110**, **529**, **637**, **486**, **602**, **638** of those illustrated above; as well as **259**, **543**, **668** (**252** for both *Tibaai* and *Gazabi*) for which we lack illustrations. The decoration is explicitly noted as *mulɛ* for examples **643**, **637**, **672**, **732**.

This type of bell, *kerumd mulɛ Tibaai*, is the most common in later collections. Five examples subsequently accessioned to the Jos Museum are noted in Nancy Maas's 1974 sketch of **663**. There are further examples in major museums: the Metropolitan Museum, New York (20x10.9) as well as the Tropen Museum Amsterdam.[1] Maas illustrates another

[1]https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/503760?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=Clara+Louise+Bell&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=4 Credit 'Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel Rayes Gift, in honor of Dr. J. M. Rasmussen, Clara Mertens Bequest, in memory of André Mertens, Bequest of Olive Huber, and funds from various donors, by exchange, 2002'

https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/527655 Credit 'Bruikleen van de Nederlandse Provincie van de Congregatie van de Heilige Geest (CSSp.)'

example, collected by Arnold Rubin in 1969, now in the Fowler Museum UCLA in her survey of brass casting along the Benue (2011: 196, fig. 6.19).


Metropolitan Museum New York 2002.24

Tropen Museum Amsterdam AM-292-3

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

Two more likely examples of this type, with their heights, can be illustrated from the Mark Clayton.

Collection Mark Clayton – Heights: 17.8, 17.5, 16.3cm

TYPE 2 bells might alternatively be treated as variants of TYPE 1 with which they share an overall form: they are of similar size, or slightly smaller, and have the same clapper mechanism. They differ primarily from TYPE 1 in their ornamentation, with neither crotal bells nor bead ornaments on their shoulders, which instead bear a flatter *bix*, 'snake(skin)', pattern. Several of the bells with this decoration are also less waisted, with straighter sides. When TYPE 2 bells are both relatively undecorated and of smaller size, they were more likely to have been identified by Chappel's key informants to be for the use of non-smiths, *Gazabi*. Available dimensions: **525**, **629**, **526**, **691** n/a; **732** 14.5x7.5; **630** 12.1x6.4; **613** n/a; **646** 10.2x6.2; **607** 11.7x7.4.

While the prices paid for TYPE 1 and TYPE 2 bells overlapped, the average of the prices we know Chappel paid for TYPE 1 is £1, and for TYPE 2 just over half that, 11/-. The most expensive TYPE 2 bell, **607** costing £1, was identified to be for *Tibaai*. Although its proportions are slightly unusual, the overall size and decoration do not provide obvious grounds for this expense, so it may have been a particularly fine casting.

525

629

526

691

732

630

613

646

607

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

In addition to **607**, bells **629** and **691**, as well as **668** for which we have no photograph, are described by Chappel's informants in accession notes as *bix Tibaai*. This is probably on account of their size, which gains some support from Nancy Maas's sketch of **668** which provides dimensions 20x8cm, as well as confirming the *bix*, or snakeskin, pattern noted by Chappel. **732**, the most extensively decorated of the Jos bells of this type, is also larger than the other three for which we have dimensions, supporting a correlation between size, extent of decoration and *Tibaai* status, although this fails to account for **607** also being a blacksmith's bell despite its overall small size and slight decoration.

To judge by the relative size of the bells for which overall height has been indicated below, the smallest TYPE 2 bell in the Mark Clayton collection, on the right, would be around 13.6cm.

Collection Mark Clayton – Heights: 14.5, 14.8, 17.6, 17.6, 14.5cm

(Clicking on the image will open a higher quality version)

We are not aware of a term in Verre language to cover all the bells we are calling **TYPE 3**. While sharing a pyramidal shape, they differ in size and decoration. Whether this variety is best treated as a spectrum or two types cannot be settled on the basis of the evidence we have, so we are provisionally proposing two overlapping sub-types, while admitting that allocation to one or the other is not always clearcut. These bell forms may also be less characteristically Verre, since similar bells have been attributed to casters of the Mandara Mountains.

Pyramidal bells of **TYPE 3a** have a broad, tubular, top loop. Most examples are extensively decorated with coiled spirals and circling threads. **604** and **649** are described as *ga Gazabi*, where *ga* names the spiral decoration such as that shared by the first six examples, and *Gazabi*

references use by non-smiths; **700, 639**, **662**, and **570** were also described to be for *Gazabi*. **662** differs in its proportions from most of the bells in having a wider mouth. TYPE 3a bells, with a single exception, were designed to have internal clappers. Chappel notes that the clapper of **662** was suspended from an iron cross-piece which had been brass welded internally. Where we know their dimensions, the overall height of bells in TYPE 3a is similar to that of those in TYPE 2: **568** 15x8; **604** 13.1x7.8; **639 649 682 700** n/a; **662** 12.7x13.75. With a couple of exceptions, Chappel's informants gave these bells a traditional value of two cockerels (**604** & **662** were being valued at a goat, which in turn was considered equivalent to four cockerels).

As well as being slightly smaller, 11.5x6.4, **570** differs from the others in TYPE 3a both in its more rounded form and because it is clapperless by design. It was not terminologically included by Verre informants in the class of *kerumd*, or clapper bells, but rather in that of *buruk*, which includes iron single clapperless bells or handgongs. Its use was restricted to esoteric settings when it could, 'be struck with anything made of metal - used during *Do'os* ceremonies'. In terms of our typologies, strictly it should be in a class by itself: in overall form it resembles TYPE 3 bells more than it does any of the others, while in terms of use and name, it is a single brass clapperless bell.


604


649


682


700


639


568


662


570

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

TYPE 3b consists of smaller, pyramidal bells with a relatively plain top loop and varying, restrained, degrees of decoration. Clappers are attached to a small bar welded internally (rather than to a loop projecting through the top of the bell) as Chappel described for **662** above, a mechanism we can illustrate from Mark Clayton's collection.

Collection Mark Clayton

Where users were identified, like TYPE 3a these were said to be for *Gazabi*, non-smiths or farmers. Such small bells may also have been used to ornament such trappings as saddle bags. No dimensions are available from the Jos collection, but all are described as 'small'. **701**, **704** and **707**, were specifically identified by informants as for *Gazabi*. TYPE 3b bells were also relatively inexpensive, between 2/6 and 6/- where known. It may transpire that first-hand inspection and knowledge of their dimensions would reallocate some bells between our two sub-types; or alternatively it might confirm that they shade into one another without any basis to draw a twofold distinction, in which case we would, as noted above, want to treat TYPE 3 as a broad spectrum.

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

Similar examples in the Clayton collection provide a helpful impression of scale: between 5 to 7.5cm in height.

Collection Mark Clayton – heights: 5.5, 5.7, 7.3, 9.9, 8.8, 6.0, 6.1cm

TYPE 4 bells are in what would be considered a conventional 'bell' shape in European terms. Bands of decoration, mostly consisting of spirals, are added below the shoulder and above the rim. The only Jos example for which we know dimensions, **550**, is noted as 'small'; **253** and **255**, collected before this, are described as 'larger' in accession notes without the basis of comparison being obvious. Available dimensions: **550** 7x5.6 (also noted to be for *Gazabi*) has a single-piece clapper, which may well be the common clapper mechanism. **253** has a makeshift external replacement clapper. The examples for which we know prices show these to be less expensive than TYPES 1-3a, around the level of TYPE 3b (**550** 6/-, **573** 5/-).

253

255

550

573

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

Given that bells in this form are common, attributing unprovenanced examples to the Verre is evidentially insecure. Two examples in the Clayton collection are similar in shape and also patterned with spirals or demi-spirals. Both are larger than the one Jos example for which we have a height, in one case considerably so. On balance, attribution to Verre would seem only possible.

Collection Mark Clayton – heights: 9.5, 15.4cm

OUTLIERS – Two bells that Chappel collected from Verre appear to be one-offs rather than examples of further types. Both are large, relatively tubular, bells with parallel sides in one case and a slightly flared body in the other. The clapper of **654** is, unusually, cast in a single piece, and its decoration is not typical of Verre bells and resembles that further north in the Highlands. While we cannot discount the possibility of a Verre caster experimenting with a new form, the more likely explanation would seem to be that one or both bells came into Verre hands through regional trade.

733

654

Available Dimensions: **733** 14.6x7.2 (for Gazabi) cost 8/-; **654** 14.5x7.5, cost 3/-

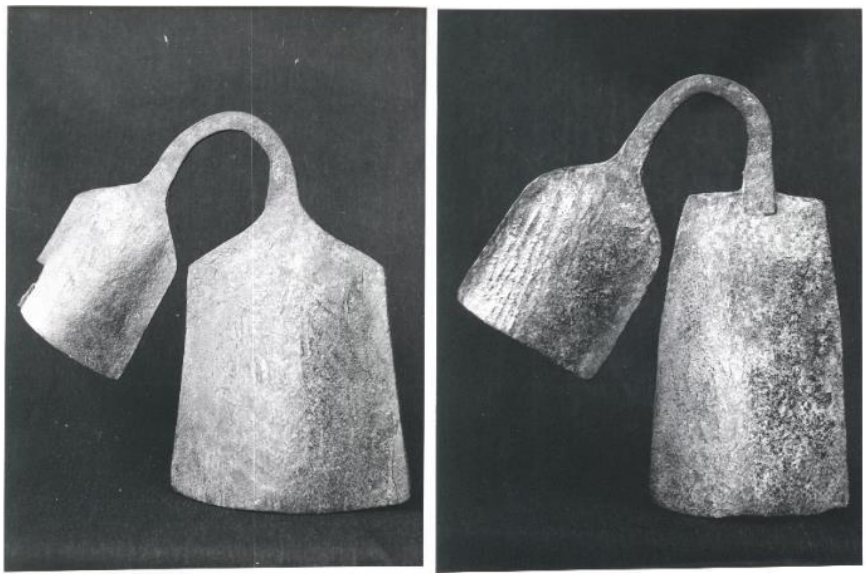
(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

Finally, for future research on the collection itself, we should add that there are a few bells Chappel acquired for Jos Museum of which we have no description beyond that they are in brass; these include **407**, **497**, **586**.

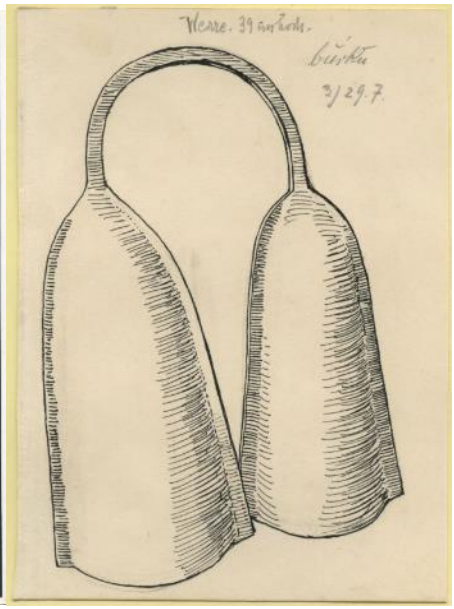
Clapperless bells or handgongs

Brass clapper bells (*kerumd* (s), *kerumi* (pl)) like those we have just examined are not named by Verre together either with single clapperless bells, (*buruk* (s), *burum* (pl), or with double hand-held gongs, (*dengkongkas* (s), *dengkongki* (pl). Brass clapper bells are not copies of an iron 'original', whereas both single and double hand-held brass clapperless bells are skeuomorphs of their iron counterparts and are identified as such by adding the descriptor for brass to the respective nouns, *buruk suktunkak* (s), *dengkongkas suktunjas* (s). Whereas brass clapper bells were worn for display, particularly for dancing, by women or by youths before initiation, hand-held gongs were beaten by adult men in more esoteric circumstances. A single clapperless bell used in a cult setting is called *buruk doi'yaaks*, where *doi'* is presumably a form of the noun *Do'os*, cult, and *yaaks* is related to the term for an initiate to such ceremonies. A cult rattle – consisting of an iron ring from which are suspended iron clappers and, in some cases, an iron clapperless bell – is referred to simply as *doi' yaaks* (see below, **334**, **385**, **386**, **397**). We use terms like handgong, which is wrong in musicological terms, and rattle periodically as a reminder that we are not dealing with objects Verre name together with what we translate as bells. Clapperless bells are not a sub-set of bells in terms of Verre cultural practice but a category of their own.

Iron double handgongs were used by all the neighbours of the Verre. Chappel collected three such from Bata (below) shortly before he began to make acquisitions from Verre, one of which is particularly close in appearance to an example collected from the Verre by the Frobenius expedition in 1911. We can illustrate only one iron double handgong collected by Chappel in 1966 from the Verre. It has more rounded lines than its Bata or Frobenius counterparts and is similar to those Fardon saw in use by Chamba in Mapeo, which were probably made by Verre for them, and it corresponds closely to a sketch of an example collected by the Frobenius expedition from the Koma that was annotated as having been made by Verre smiths.



65.J306.210a Bata **65.J306.210b Bata**



65.J306.446 Bata **KBA 09372 – Verre 'burku'**

66.J11.734 Verre **KBA 09371 – Verre, made for Koma**

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

No single iron clapperless bells are listed among Chappel's Verre acquisitions, but they do occur as the central element of iron cult rattle sets (**334** not illustrated, **385**, **386**, **397**). These resemble our example of a Verre iron double handgong (**734**) more than they do its Bata equivalent, and much more than they do Verre brass clapper bells.

The earliest brass double handgong collected from Verre was acquired by the Frobenius expedition in 1911 and is now in the Dresden Museum (accession number 33679). Its handle covering is noted as 'lizard' (*Eidechse*), a more decorative option than the cord whipping usually often found on iron counterparts. A later photograph shows one chamber has detached from its handle; this appears to be a common fault of the brass skeuomorph.

KBA 03275 **Dresden 33679**

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

Six further examples entered the Jos Museum with Chappel's 1966 collection. These were expensive items (both originally and when Chappel acquired them) and the handle connecting the two chambers, notwithstanding using an iron prong inserted from the smaller into the larger chamber, was fragile, since so many collected examples are broken at that joint (as well as the Dresden example, see **442**, **532-3**; the handle of **558** appears intact but the acquisition note records a second casting to reinforce it, and one chamber has cracked; **614** has a leather reinforcement over the handle). The handgong accessioned as **677** has suffered a crack to one chamber; without being able to compare the original objects, it seems most to resemble that collected in 1911, as do the now separated chambers of **532-3**. Examples **442** and **558** resemble one another in both overall form and the use of spiral decoration. (We lack an image of **445**.) The relatively plain **766** was identified as being for *Gazabi***.**

66.J11.532-3

66.J11.614

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

66.J11.677

66.J11.442

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

66.J11.558

A very similar example to **558** in the Sudan United Mission collection (below) has a scaly skin binding around the handle which might be crocodile or water monitor, in which respect it resembles the 'lizard' skin covered handle of the example collected by the Frobenius expedition.

SUM

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

An outlier in formal terms is the more rounded double handgong **766** that might be construed as a skeuomorph of the taller of its iron counterparts. Chappel's accession note describes it as heavier than other double clapperless bells, and his informants stated it was for the use of *Gazabi*, and hence less prestigious than those with more elaborate decoration.

66.J11.766

Single brass clapperless bells, or handgongs, generally resemble the larger chamber of a brass double handgong more than they do the single iron gongs included in sets of iron cult rattles (see above), which have loops for attachment to a ring whereas these have curved handles, not unlike the connecting prongs of double handgongs. The form is consistent with Chappel's informants' view that the single brass gong was bought by those who could not afford a double gong. They added that the angle of the handles differed according to user, those for *Tibaai* pointing upwards compared to those for *Gazabi*. This is not readily apparent from extant examples, the handles of which seem relatively crude compared to the fine casting of the bell chambers, more like half a double handgong than an article designed independently. The three single handgongs in this style collected by Chappel are similar in shape and decoration to the first group of double gongs with bands of decoration at their edges supplemented by spirals (compare Frobenius/Dresden, **532-3**, **614**, **677**); all three have the small side loops characteristic of the larger chamber of a double handgong.

66.J11.465 **66.J11.515** **66.J11.591**

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

The single exception to the generalization that single gongs, or clapperless bells, were skeuomorphs of an iron 'original', **570**, was discussed earlier. Its spiral decoration would argue a Verre maker, but the possibility of having moved in a regional trade network cannot be discounted given its unique form, which is most similar to that of a clapper bell but has never had a clapper mechanism.

66.J11.570 (both faces)

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

Cult rattles

Cult rattles were invariably made of iron, not brass, and consisted of clappers hung from a metal ring, in some cases with a central clapperless bell. These were esoteric objects seen and held only by initiates to the *Do'os* institutions. They appear formally identical to those that occur in Chamba cults, which is unsurprising given that at least Mapeo Chamba would have bought such rattles from Verre. It appears that the clappers of rattles for the Verre's own use suspended from closed rings. Those we know to have come from Chamba, and particularly Mapeo Chamba, invariably had open rings, which facilitated the removal of clappers for burial with senior adepts when they died, and their subsequent retrieval and reinstatement.

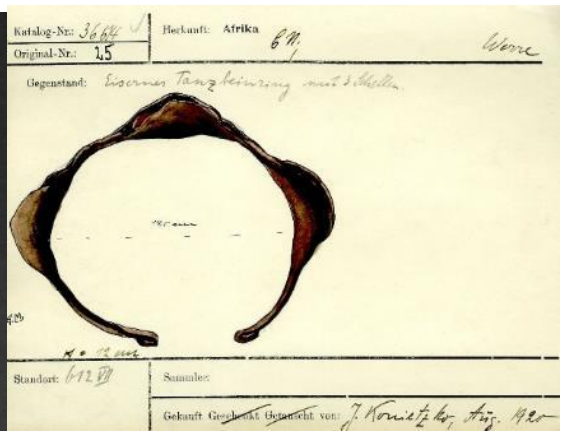
385

386

397

Ankle rattles and rattle spears

In addition to bells with internal or external clappers, other metal percussion instruments share with crotal bells a pellet mechanism. One of the most important performatively is the humble, and often unremarked, iron leg rattle worn for dancing, typically in multiples. An example from the Frobenius expedition that found its way to the Dresden Museum via the dealer Konietzko, is almost identical to those Olga Grening acquired probably a half century later.

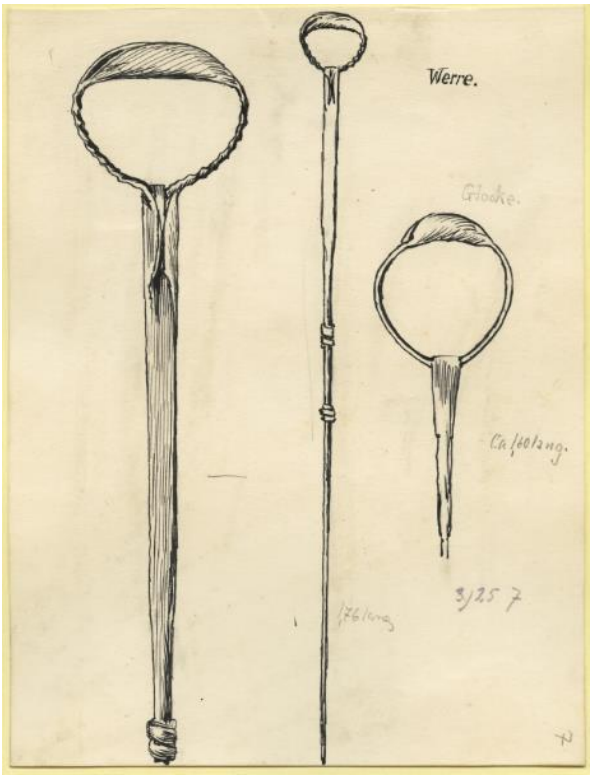


Dresden 36614

(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

SUM – Olga Grening 1950-78

Around the same time as Grening, Chappel collected four examples at the modest cost of 7/6 in total (**387-90**) and recorded the Verre term for them to be *bogarus* (s), *bogari* (pl). The same term appears in the composite *tɔɔma bogarus* (s), *tɔɔma bogari* (pl), which combines the term for an iron leg rattle with that for a spear. Chappel bought one of these at considerably greater expense than a leg rattle, for £1, recording that such rattle spears might be owned only by the senior of elders, *dɔnda gbijaas*. Several similar spears formed part of earlier collections. Photographed in their entirety, they are rather inscrutable objects, so the most effective representation remains that of Frobenius's artist. The piece portrayed might well be one of the two that was acquired by the Berlin Museum (Berlin III C 29355 & 6), the first of which was noted to be 172cm long.



KBA 09384

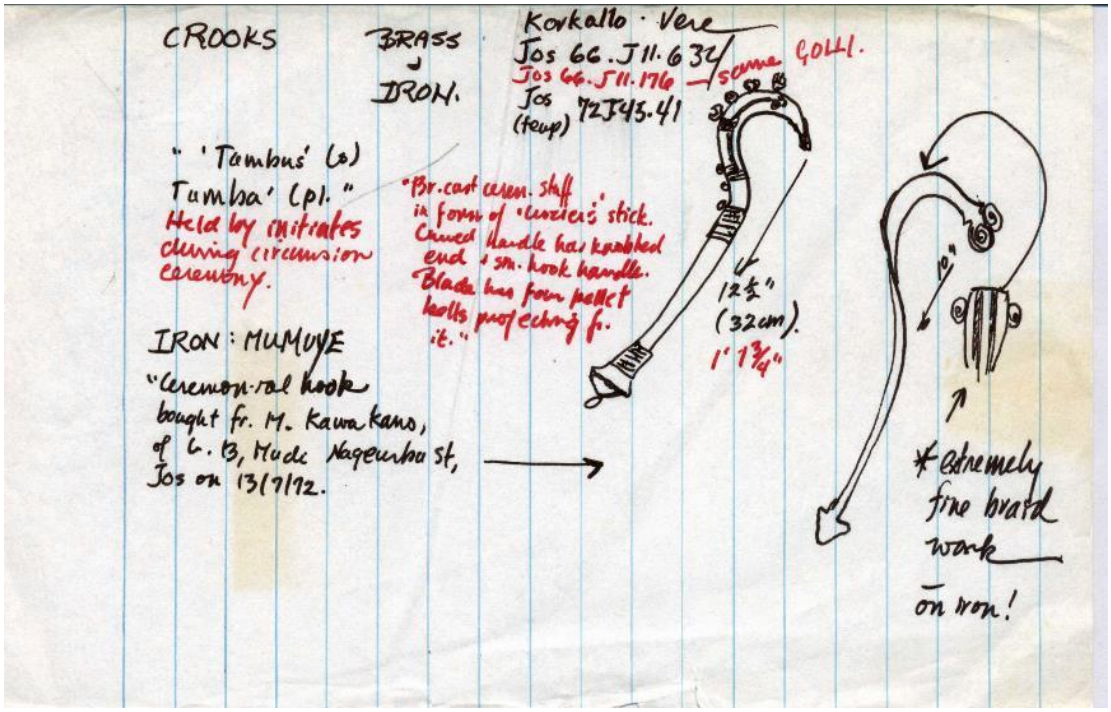
(Clicking on the images will open a higher quality version)

At the same time, Olive McLeod acquired two similar rattle spears, though they lack the same banding to their shafts (Af1913,1013.105 & 106). They were around 10cm longer than that collected by Frobenius: the first 183.5cm in length, and the second 184.8. An accession note for the British Museum seen by Nancy Maas records this staff as an 'iron palaver stick', continuing that, men walk around the town shaking the rattle, until they 'enter an open meeting place, stab the staff in the ground, and sit around talking' (a similar comment can be found in Temple 1919: 357, reporting the use of such iron rods by 'donda' to summon the elders). Chappel witnessed precisely this action on the part of his vendor and informant Ardo Sambo of Cholli. The self-same type of staff is found among Chamba, both those who are the Verre's neighbours at Mapeo, and the more westerly Chamba chiefdoms of the Shebshi Mountains. They call it *səəm sakɛn*, which was explained to Fardon to mean a spear for sticking in the ground. It was said to have been taken into battles and planted. Both object and idea are practically identical.

The connections of this composite object of iron spear shaft and leg rattle do not end there, since we shall see later that ceremonial pot stands, called *tɔɔma gbaas* (s), *tɔɔma gba* (pl), are made from the same spear or staff with the same name, and frequently include what look like iron pellet rattles as supports.

The versatile crotal bell

The final type of pellet rattle we need to consider here is the crotal, or crotal bell. These are of great antiquity in Africa, although there is dispute whether their earliest introduction was by Europeans in the late sixteenth century (Williams 1974: 269-76; Posnansky 1977; Herbert 1984: 90-94). Crotals are both varied and versatile. The Verre term, *sa'a* or *sa'sol* (s), *sa'sai* (pl), is applied to crotals that vary in size, irrespective of whether they are independent objects or ornaments of larger pieces. Relatively large crotals were strung in sets as anklets for children which Chappel was told encouraged them to walk. As ornaments, crotal bells might be attached to other objects by ties. In colonial Mapeo, ceremonial iron crooks at initiation might have small coins with hollow centres attached to them with thongs so that they jangled as the initiates danced; these were said to have replaced crotals. Maas illustrates a Verre brass crook collected by Chappel (**176**) with small crotals welded to it, which demonstrate a similar conception, although this must have been an uncommon variety since we have not yet found a photographed example of it.



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Crotal ornamentation, as already mentioned, is characteristic of a number of other apparently longstanding items of the Verre brass casting repertoire, notably some of the TYPE1 bells, discussed above, as well as brass-handled daggers, and arm cuffs. In all instances, the pieces with crotal decoration were either collected in the early colonial period, or else had signs of age if collected in the early post-colonial period. Whether Verre cast their own crotals or acquired them through trade we do not know. This might have varied according to their size. The smallest crotal bells are made by winding pulled brass threads into pod-like shapes; larger examples are in part solid. Chappel accessioned one set of crotal ankle bells (**658**), and it is likely to be these that we see displayed on the plinth to the viewer's left in the 1967 Jos Cabinet (see Interleaf). For closer views of independent pieces we need to turn to other collections. Two relatively large crotals were acquired by the Sudan United Mission as baby ornaments with vertically attached rings, and another threaded set of four with horizontal tubular attachments. We do not know what Verre terms might have distinguished these different types of attachment.

The example on the left appears to have been solid cast, whereas that on the right may have been wound. Both pieces could have been made in sections and welded subsequently. (For other examples, see the Interleaf.) Neither approaches the delicacy of the workmanship of the shoulder crotals of the Frobenius bell now in the Dresden Museum.

Dresden 33678 – detail

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