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LOST AMONG THE CANNIBALS: KEYSTONE'S MISREPRESENTATION OF A NGUNI MUSICIAN

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Abstract

"Lost Among the Cannibals: Keystone's Misrepresentation of a Nguni Musician" demonstrates that the Keystone View Company deliberately mislabeled and printed a misleading legend for a stereograph in their 1936 *Tour of the World*. This stereograph, *The Finery of a Native Hunter in the Belgian Congo,* is a portrait of a Nguni man, likely Swazi, from South Africa, photographed in 1931 by George K. Lewis for the company. This paper establishes a correct attribution for the portrait through the musical bow that the subject holds, his beadwork, dress, documents of Lewis' presence in KwaZulu-Natal and Eswatini, and two sister views of the subject. Employing hybridity theory from Homi K. Bhabha, the paper demonstrates that the Keystone company in its deliberate mistitling and racialized characterizing performed a colonialist act of disavowal, which the portrait counters. The stereograph provides a hybrid subject for the viewer that challenges the imperialist program of the Keystone company in its *Tour of the World* series.

Keywords: *Stereograph; South Africa; Keystone Company; George K. Lewis; Musical bows; Eswatini; Hybridity*

The Keystone View Company's *The Finery of a Native Hunter in the Belgian Congo, Africa* [1931] is a stereograph that the reader may find for a nominal sum on the internet. (Fig. 1) It has always been one of my favorite views, not because of its title—which I will demonstrate is false—but because of its visual subjecthood. As a researcher of racialized depictions in historical stereography from the 1850s into the twentieth century, I have countless examples of demeaning portrayals of Black persons. However, a slim but significant minority stand in opposition to stereotype, and it is these that I have come to love as one would a life raft in perilous waters. I found that all do not share this sentiment when a scan of this stereoview that I placed on a Call-for-Papers (National Stereoscopic Association, 2023) was posted on Facebook only to be taken down because of a scurrilously racist comment. Unfortunately, I did not see the comment, so the opportunity for discourse was lost, but the event underscored the need for further research. I am very unlikely to know the gentleman's name whose portrait we see in figure one. Still, his ethnic identity, the date and circumstance of the stereograph, the photographer, and the aims of the Keystone company for their boxed travel editions, of which the view was a part, this essay will establish. I will also show that the Keystone company's discourse, demonstrated in the title and the extended legend on verso of this stereo view, had virtually no correspondence to the portrait but was an imperialist

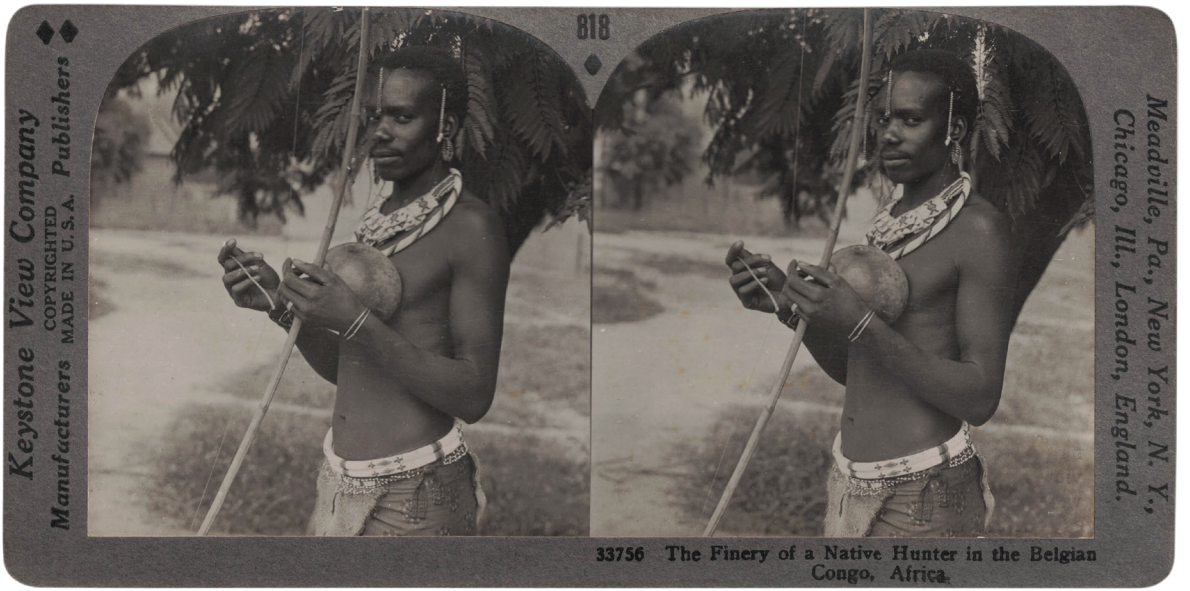


Fig. 1 Keystone View Company, *The Finery of a Native Hunter in the Belgian Congo*, 1931. Published in 1936.

construct to contain the hybridity of this colonial subject, whose direct gaze and self-possession were a threat in Jim Crow America.

Homi Bhabha's (1985) theory of hybridity in his now classic essay, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817," offers a method that facilitates a presentation of the three parts of the stereograph under discussion: the subject of the portrait, the photographer, and the use of the negative by the staff of the Keystone company's home office. All three parties occupied radically different positions; two—the subject and Keystone's discourse--cannot be reconciled, creating an evident break between the image and the text, where we can locate what Bhabha calls "hybridity." The hybrid subject is neither a graft of two positions nor multiculturalism. The term according to the author is "agonistic," and has the potential for a subversion of colonialist power.

Bhabha begins his essay by introducing the English book into the literature of empire, his first example being the Bible, which was read aloud under the titular tree outside of Delhi. No mention is made of another famous tree, the Bodhi tree under which the Buddha became enlightened, yet its presence, to this reader at least, ghosts the essay, for the English book (like the Bible) is among the first wave of colonialist domination, supplanting native beliefs by usurping their associations. For Bhabha, the English book is the bearer of colonialist authority with its empiricism, idealism, monoculturalism, and imperialism. (Bhabha, pp. 145-147) The Bible does not accomplish this alone. To the author's analysis of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, we can also add Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan*, a once immensely popular novel, in which the protagonist (née Lord Graystoke) stumbles upon the shack of his murdered parents and teaches himself to read from the books therein, whereupon, armed with reason, he is suddenly superior to his ape kindred and the other simian-human denizens of his jungle home. (Burroughs, 1990) The novel encapsulates the rhetoric of white-supremacist imperialism, which is but a thin veil over depths of exploitation.

"Signs Taken for Wonders" is an essay as rich as it is challenging. What follows is a distillation of its theory that aims to respect both Bhabha's terms and his complexity. The author uses the German, *Enstellung* (distortion) to signify how a colonialist regime distorts, displaces, and dislocates its subjects through repetition, with the aid of the English book, whose effect he summarizes in one pithy sentence--"The dazzling light of literature sheds only areas of darkness." (Bhabha, p. 147) This darkness is also *Enstellung*, which functions by disavowal, "a process of splitting as the condition of subjection." (Bhabha, p. 153). Splitting engenders an "exorbitant" process of discrimination which results in a conceptualized sameness, wherein a part is considered the whole. This produces mutations or hybrids, which are "less than one and double." (Bhabha, pp. 153-154, 158) The term I used above to describe the racialized concept, "simian-human," is an example of this process: reduction, split signifier (human-ape) and doubling. The engine of disavowal is compromised, however, by its own "production of hybridization." (Bhabha, 154)

Hybridity challenges colonialist motives by revealing the inner ambivalence of a system which is dependent upon mimetic

repetition to maintain power. The potential for subversion occurs not through open revolt but upon the uncertainty or doubt that the hybrid subject presents. (Bhabha, p. 154) Of this hybridity, Bhabha asserts, "…it is now possible to identify 'the cultural' as a disposal of power, a *negative transparency* [my emphasis] that comes to be agonistically constructed on the boundary between frame of reference/frame of mind." (Bhabha, p. 156) Even as it mimics the colonizer, the hybrid reveals his dynamics by bringing in denied knowledge that estranges the authority of colonialism and lays bare the subjugating discourse. (Bhabha, p. 156). In Bhabha's terms, hybridity is "uncontainable," for it breaks down the binarisms central to Western ideological certainty, self and other, inside and outside. (Bhabha, p. 158) To extend my aforementioned example, the Bodhi tree as neither binary reduction nor mimesis machine remains an unassimilable part of the colonial subject.

In the above paragraph, I wish to draw attention to the term "negative transparency," which for Bhabha means the opaque and the darkness of *Enstellung.* Its antonym is transparency, which allows a double vision (like the hybrid) where the true can emerge as a "visible effect of knowledge/power." Synonymous with this concept are his terms "photographic sense" and "re-source of light" (Bhabha, p. 152). Metaphors with photography are casually dropped in the essay, and we may be justified in faulting their lack of precision. Nevertheless, I introduce them to indicate that transparency in Bhabha's theory is photograph-like, allowing us to see the hybridity of the colonial subject. *The Finery of a Native Hunter* is an example of this dynamic.

A Nguni musician and his photographer

The man in figure one stands with self-possession and dignity. An artful precision in his hands captures attention, speaking for confidence and skill. Most engaging is his direct and scrutinizing gaze at the photographer, and us, a play between subject and object that lends indeterminacy to the scene. Perhaps because he is glancing to the side, his gaze seems wary. The short depth of field of the stereograph allows his body to detach from the less-focused background of road, tree, and buildings, so that, seen stereoscopically, the man pulls forward in viewing. The three-quarter portrait in full-length provides ample contrast of gleaming skin with white beadwork, hair ornaments, earrings and bracelets. Still, it is his eyes that anchor ours, questioning, perhaps, the photographer's motive. There is something here of Bhabha's often quoted statement about hybridity, "It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power…in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power." (Bhabha, p. 154) Our gentleman is ambivalent, poised between cooperation with the photographer and holding back. His dress and the object he carefully holds offer forms of knowledge that the Western mind may not comprehend. From this perspective, he may be a "problem" to investigate or an uncertainty to question since he proudly stands with the signs that speak for tradition outside of imperialist discourse. He poses with straight back and a self-assured glance at a crossroads, which naturally offers more than one direction.

In one corner is the Keystone View Company, whose influence and international reach are difficult to overestimate. Keystone, established in 1892, was the last major stereoscopic

company to be founded in the U.S. during the prolific decades of stereo publishing (1880-1906), and it was also the last the leave the industry. During the heyday of narrative stereo views in the 1890s, Keystone published their titles in English and five other languages for world-wide marketing. The company used a door-to-door canvassing model in the U.S. and Britain, as salesmen combed through rural towns and hamlets drumming up sales. (Davis, 2015, 76; Plunkett, 2008). After absorbing their competitors' stock by 1920, Keystone alone remained, concentrating on travel and educational views, which, along with ophthalmological testing equipment, kept them in business until 1963. Today, a vast store of Keystone stereographs can be found in institutional repositories, and they remain widely available to private collectors.

Although Keystone did not give attribution to photographers on published stereographs, and no dates appear on the views in its travel sets, we can establish that George K. Lewis took this stereograph and two sister views (taken of the same subject at the same time) in 1931. The company credited the photographer with a stamp, "George Lewis Negative," on the back of all file prints from his negatives (Keystone Mast Collection). Dubbed "Keystone's last photographer," Lewis was the last to embark upon a world tour for the declining company. He was hired in August, 1929, by Keystone President, George Hamilton, who was impressed by his intrepid skill while driving over dirt roads and high mountain passes in Utah and Arizona on a tour of the national parks. Lewis had no formal training as a photographer but was tutored by his mother in art when he was a child. (Lewis, 1993) The Keystone company placed a high value on the character of their employees, favoring those who could fit the mold of the self-made, industrious man in possession of an upright character, which the company projected to win the confidence of its clientele (Gleason, 2018, p. 89). Lewis fit the mold, and he delivered, beginning in January, 1930, traveling solo with his cameras and development equipment through the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia, taking thousands of stereographs. He sent these to Meadville, Pennsylvania, for printing and inclusion in the prolific sets of the *Keystone View Company Collection Tour of the World.* The multi-edition series of boxed sets began in 1899 with 72 cards. (Gleason, 2018, p. 45) By the time Lewis contributed, the *Tour of the World* had grown to a deluxe 1200 stereographs. (Keystone View Co., 1936, 1942)

The company habitually recycled elements from previous editions, such as the imprimatur of the famous travelogue performer, Burton Holmes, as "editor," a guidebook containing a title list, geographic index and reference guides, and testimonials from eminent persons, such as the Charles W. Eliot, President of Harvard, and the poet Carl Sandberg. Also included was the much-touted telebinocular, a stereoscopic viewer in a binocular-style housing. The package was replete with the selling points that Keystone used to market its editions to schools, libraries, and individuals, with commercial success sufficient to generate editions for 43 years. (Babbits, 2005, p.143) *The Finery of a Native Hunter in the Belgian Congo, Africa* appeared as number 818 or 819 in the 1936 and 1942 editions.

It is important to note that he lost control of the image once Lewis sent the negative back to the company headquarters in Meadville. As Leigh Gleason has noted, Keystone had a strictly business model and completely separated the production

of images and sales. The negative department handled all processing, copyright filing, the selection of stereographs, titling, and the extended legends printed on verso of each card. (Gleason, 2018, p. 8) It also dictated where the photographer was to travel and what to photograph, stipulations that irked Lewis as revealed in his correspondence with Keystone President, George Hamilton (G. Lewis).

In January 1931, Lewis arrived in Cape Town, South Africa, following James Ricalton's famous "Cape to Cairo" tour in 1909, which the Underwood and Underwood photographer is reportedly to have trekked on foot. Lewis, sensibly, employed modern transport. After photographing at Fort Eshowe and crashing a nearby Zulu wedding for shots of village life (G. Lewis), he passed shortly thereafter into Eswatini (then Swaziland), where he took several stereographs of boy goatherders. An example is the unpublished file print at the Keystone Mast collection, *A Goatherd, Swaziland, Africa* (Fig. 2). We can see evidence of Lewis' ability to broach cultural and language barriers in this stereo—the boy is delighted in being photographed, or maybe by Lewis' knack for clowning.

Fig. 2 Keystone View Company, *A Goatherd in Swaziland, Africa*, unpublished file print. Courtesy of the Keystone Mast Collection, UCR-Arts.

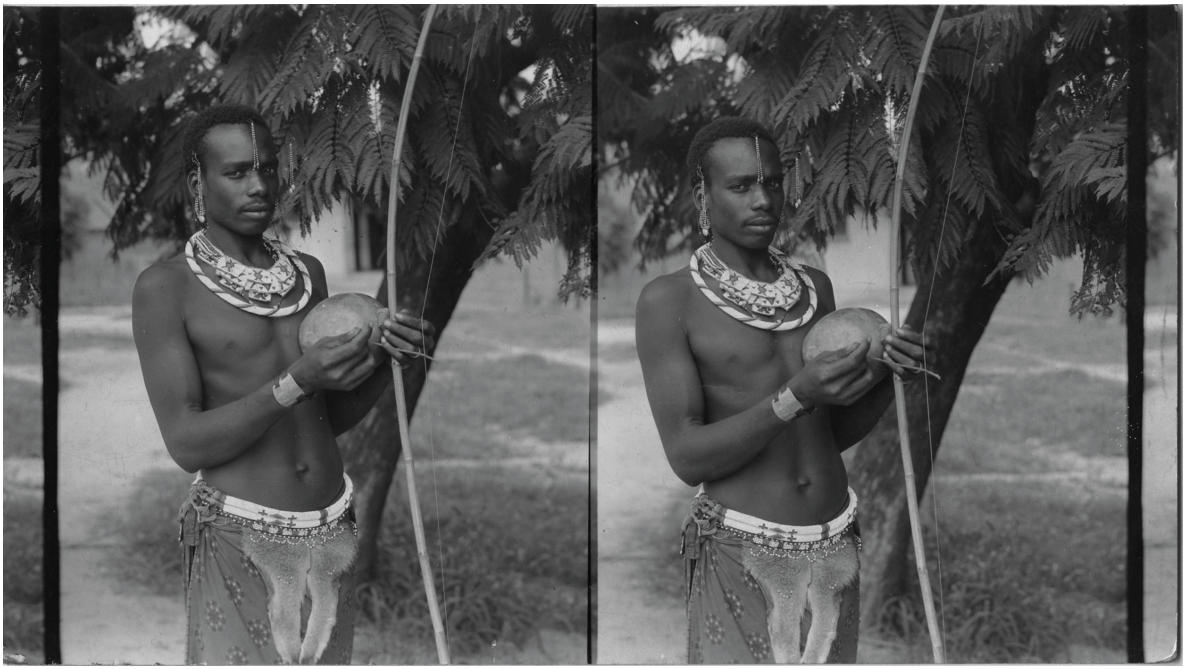


Fig. 3 Keystone View Company, *The Finery of a Native Hunter in the Belgian Congo*, sister view 1 Courtesy of the Keystone Mast Collection, UCR-Arts.

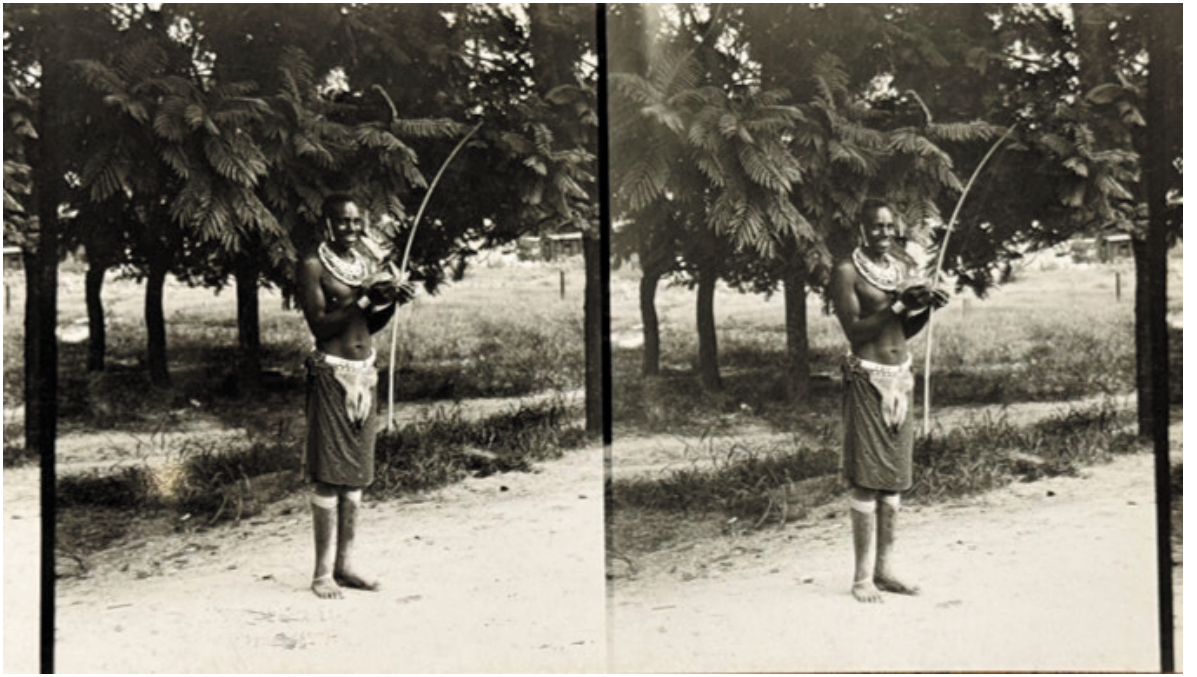


Fig. 4 Keystone View Company, *The Finery of a Native Hunter in the Belgian Congo*, sister view 2. Courtesy of the Keystone Mast Collection, UCR-Arts.

I believe it is in this region, perhaps at a crossroads, where Lewis met a man with an instrument that was no doubt unusual to him. He took at least three stereographs (Figs. 1, 3 and 4). On a Keystone ledger page for copyright filing, which may be found in the Keystone Mast Collection (Fig. 5), we see that immediately following seven entries of the goatherders (Lewis photographed a group of them), we find the entry for our subject, "*The Finery of a Native Hunter in the Belgian Congo, Africa."* Then follow seven entries of KU numbers (Keystone's negative filing system) for the same title. The corresponding negative numbers for the illustrations in this essay are figure 1—KU 95610 (overwritten in the ledger with the print number); figure 2—KU 95612; figure 3—KU 95614. I have studied the ledger and concluded that its organization was simply that of KU numbers in sequence as they were registered for copyright at the Library of Congress. This was not an archival classificatory process, so the proximity of the 3 views of our subject to the Swazi goatherders may be circumstantial. The reader can notice stereos from the Congo and Egypt at the top and bottom of the page. The entire ledger follows a stochastic pattern of small groups from similar places adjacent to groups with no necessary relationship to them. Though the Swazi kids and ersatz Congo native may be adjacent by coincidence, they could just as well be photographs in the same temporal cluster.

Stronger evidence of our gentleman's ethnicity lies in his instrument and the impressive beadwork he wears. The Central African scholar, Christaud Geary, was the first to recognize that he was mislabeled as Congolese and took the appropriate step to relabel him, "South African musician with bow harp, described as 'a hunter from the Belgian Congo' c. 1920" (Geary, 2002, p. 41). Lewis took field notes, which are lost, but, notably, someone at the home office knew that here was no hunter but a musician and attempted to pass this information along via a hand-written note on the verso of the file print for KU 95012 (Fig. 2): "Native type Belgian Congo A Pianist of Central Africa The sounding box is a gourd. P. 709 June 1926 nol Geog." I confess that the words, "June 1926 nol Geog" seriously troubled me, but after turning over every piece of evidence I could find, there was nothing to substantiate this. Neither *The Finery of a Native Hunter* nor its two sister views were included in the 1929 edition, which was the one that followed upon the penciled date of 1926, and the card numbers in that edition did not reach to the 800s. We find it first in the 1936 edition among the other records that establish the attribution to George K. Lewis. What is more significant in this hand-written note is that the writer knew that here was a musician holding a "piano" with a gourd "sounding box." Also relevant is the small correction that occurred with the print filed for copyright at the Library of Congress. The title of the print has been crossed out and over-written in pen to read, "The Finery of a Belgian Congo Native, Africa." (Fig. 6) The word "hunter" is removed. Unfortunately, Keystone did not remove it from the untold number of prints of this stereoview that circulated in the boxed sets and now are individually sold. The Keystone company chose to ignore accurate information that likely came from Lewis himself.

A cursory glance will tell the viewer that our gentleman holds no archery bow. He cradles a calabash to his chest and balances his left fingers under a wire held in tension, with his left thumb resting on a brace, while his right hand gently holds a stick that touches the wire. According to Sazi Dlamini, he

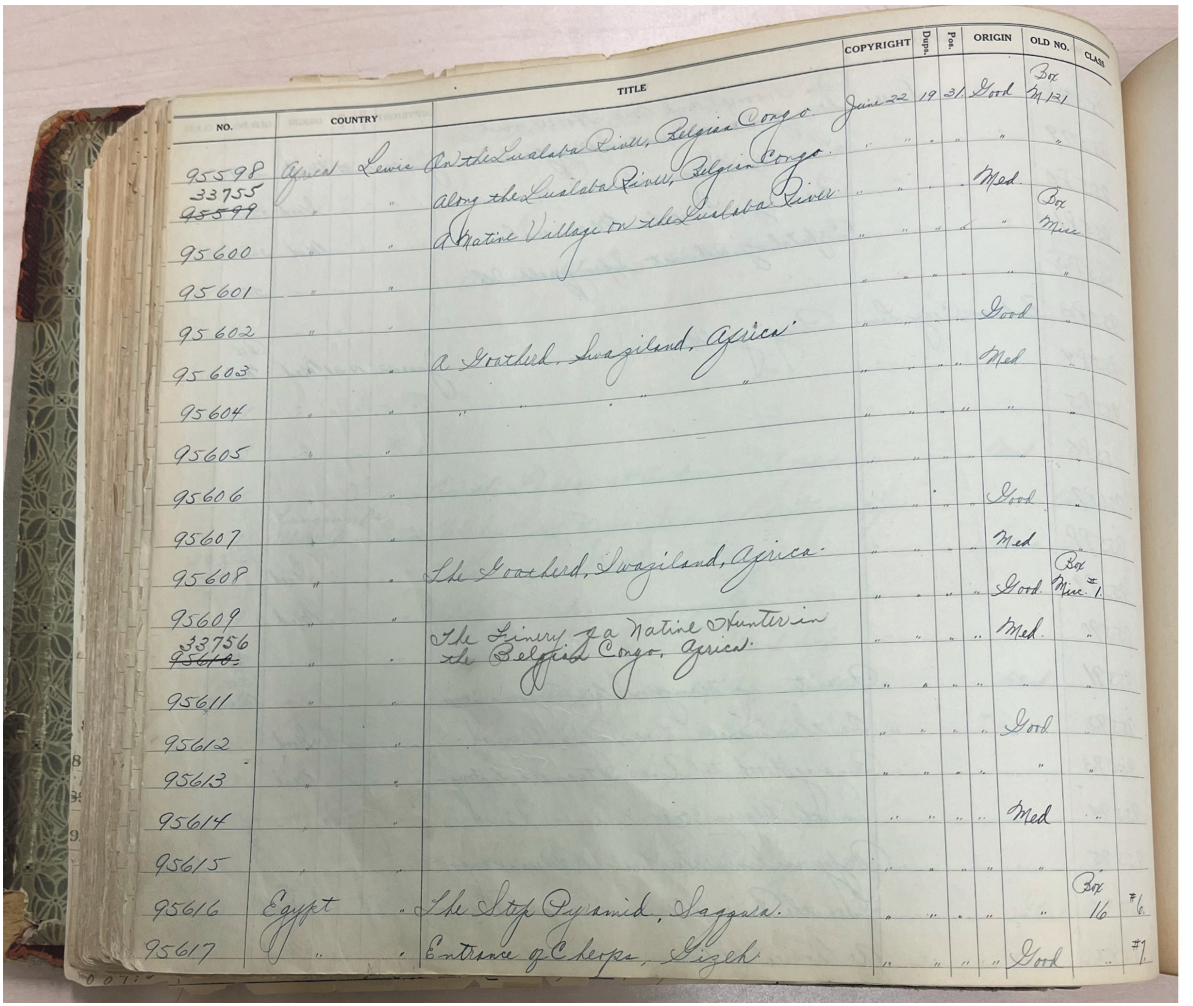


Fig. 5 Keystone View Company, Copyright ledger page, 1931. Courtesy of the Keystone Mast Collection, UCR-Arts.

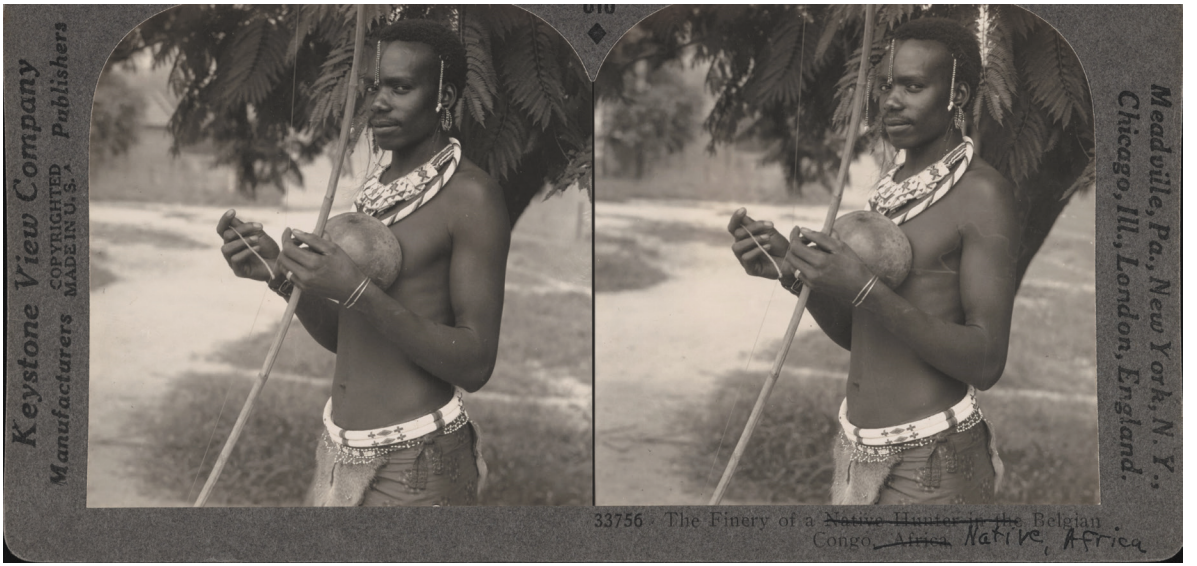


Fig. 6 Keystone View Company, "The Finery of a Belgian Congo Native, Africa." Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

holds in a correct finger position an umakhweyane or makhweyana, a single-stringed chordophone from Southern Africa that employs a gourd as a resonator. (Dlamini, 2023) A traditional instrument among the Nguni linguistic group, which includes the neighboring Zulu and Swazi, it is called in isiZulu an umakhweyane/a, while in siSwazi it is a makhweyane/a, or makhoyane/a. The "e" or "a" endings are equally correct (Dlamini, 2021, p. 115). For convenience sake, I will use the siSwazi term, makhweyana. Instrumentalists play the makhweyana by moving the bow and attached calabash between open (away from the body) and closed (against the body) positions, creating four possible tones as they strike the wire above and below the central brace. Another tone is created by trapping the wire with the knuckle. (Dlamini, 2021, p. 148) The makhweyana is accompanied by the voice, and the Nguni have repertoires of songs, as well as personal compositions. Men craft the bows (Dlamini, 2021, p. 152), and in the Swazi tradition, both men and women play the instrument. (Stacey & Sibandze, 2021, p. 185) For the Zulu, the instrument is associated with unmarried girls and older women. (Dlamini, 2023) Dlamini suggests that the background in the stereograph may be a roadside location, perhaps a place for vending the instrument to tourists. (Dlamini, 2023) The fact the makhweyana is played by both sexes in the Swazi tradition, coupled with the roadside setting and placement of the negative number adjacent to the Swazi goatherders in the ledger, gives an indication that Lewis photographed this gentleman in Eswatini, and he may be Swazi.

Other factors supporting a Nguni/Swazi identity lie in his dress and adornment. The portrait's subject wears traditional Swazi dress for men, a triangular loin piece of antelope skin worn over a print wrap that reaches to the knees, as seen in figure three. (Kuper, 1963, p. 3) The beadwork is Nguni, possibly a mixture of Zulu and Swazi traditions (Nettleton, 2023), since beadwork patterns were freely shared between the groups. (Nettleton, 2017, p. 31) The man in the portrait wears a waistband called *umbijo* in isiZulu, which is made by taking a grass or cloth core and winding it with strings of glass beads then securing them at intervals to make beaded tubes. Peoples along the Eastern coast of South Africa used this technique for adornment. (Nettleton, 2015, p.12) Around his neck, he wears panels with shield designs associated with the Swazi. (Nettleton, 2023) According to Anitra Nettleton, women labored over beadwork, which they wore themselves and gifted to sons, husbands, lovers or boyfriends. Men sported these time-consuming gifts proudly as a proclamation of female affection. (Nettleton 2014, pp. 352-53) Gleaming white against dark skin, the beadwork articulated the male body, expressing manliness and sexual allure. (Nettleton, 2014, p. 355) Against the delimitations of life in a colonized homeland, here is a proud man.

Nettleton's scholarship also informs us that beadwork grew as a practice in South Africa when imported glass seed beads arrived in the nineteenth century with colonialism. The art became a form of identity marking that spoke for the newer cash economy and expressed tradition, history and community. (Nettleton, 2014, pp. 342, 351) "As it is in the rural areas that this ancestral, pre-colonial home is located, the arts of beadwork developed there as a means of adorning bodies that were neither colonized nor consistently traditional, but modern and, to some extent, resistant," claims the author. (Nettleton, 2017, p. 26) Against the hut taxes that forced men into the mines, beadwork and the intensive female labor it entailed became a form of quiet defiance that doubly signaled a resistance to the obsolescence of tradition and the inevitable adoption of a newer system of commodification with its signs of excess, since beads in higher quantities indicated wealth. Nguni beadwork can be considered a form of hybridity in its resistance and conservation.

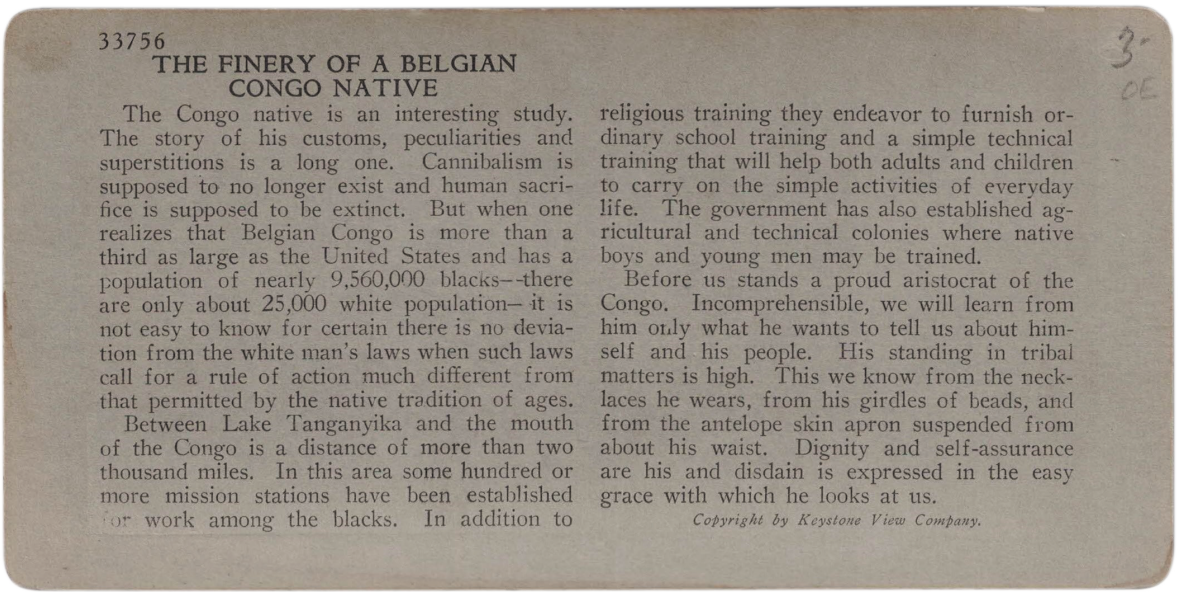
Disavowals

Suppose we examine the discourse printed on the published stereo view by way of the title and extended legend on verso. In that case, we see none of the complex, hybrid signage that speaks for the musician as a proud bearer of Nguni identity. All is disavowed by language that displaces him to the Congo. Stereotyped subject matter was the organizing principle of companies like Keystone, and a number of different negatives could be housed under one title that functioned as a concept. Once the market for narrative views sold crashed at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century (Davis, 2015, p. 79), surviving companies like Keystone applied their method of categorization and repeat sales to the educational market. The Tour of the World was in packages of 100, 300, and 600 subjects through canvassers to institutions or individuals. This piecemeal sales technique was effective, as agents encouraged clients to buy a smaller set and add other quantities later to achieve the full world tour. The musician, packaged as a Congo native, featured the 300 and 600 sets and the full editions of 1936 and 1942.

Samueli Batzli discovered that stereoscopic companies not only substituted newer images for the same title but swapped texts between different images, so that the text governed the image, whose meanings were unfixed. (Batzli, 1997, pp. 94, 141-42, 164). In studying the company's educational series, Judith Babbits observed that "stripped of their context, the images represented…'general truths,' sparse abstractions that erased the differences or similarities among cultures." (Babbits, 2005, p. 139). Thus, generalities aggregate to a conceptualized sameness, "productivity as a sign of difference." (Bhabha, 1984, p. 150).

Babbits' research reveals that both the Underwood and Underwood and Keystone companies aimed for "a national collective vision of the world," based on the tenants of social Darwinism, which ranked people on a ladder of "progress" from primitive to civilized. (Babbits, 141-142, 145). Keystone acquired the stock of Underwood and Underwood in 1920 and began to issue from it (the cards are generally marked with a "V"), then added from their corps of stereographers, creating a positivistic system of the general in support of the belief, unfortunately widely held at the time, that American whiteness represented the pinnacle of progress and civilization. Underwood and Underwood and Keystone aimed to advance the homogenization of the diverse population of American school children in the early twentieth century through a visual education program. (Babbits, 2005, p. 140) By 1922, the Keystone company boasted that their education system was in "every American city with a population of fifty thousand of more." (Babbits, 2005, p. 143)

Central to messaging for Keystone was the extended legend on verso of every card. Drafted by the home office, it typically offered statistics gleaned from the encyclopedia and interpretations of foreign peoples that fed into the program of American technical and moral superiority. Looking at the verso of *The Finery of a Native Hunter,* we read, in the second sentence: "The story of his customs, peculiarities and superstitions is a long one. Cannibalism is supposed to no longer exist, and human sacrifice is supposed to be extinct." (Fig. 7). The text suggests that this pleasant looking man may be the representative of lurid practices. Such sensationalist fantasies were engendered by explorer tales such as those of Henry Mortan Stanley's search for Dr. David Livingstone, a missionary in Central Africa who had dropped out of communication. Financed by the *New York Herald* in 1869, Stanley's travels were calculated as a boost in revenue, since copy about Central Africa, conceived of as a mysterious place full of dangerous "natives," sold papers. World expos also catered to such fantasy. The 1895 Atlanta Cotton States Exhibition offered a titillating "Dahomey village" exhibition with "canibals" [sic] and amazons. (Purdue, 2010, p. 133) Capitalizing on this was Joseph Conrad's 1899 novella, *Heart of Darkness,* where the cannibal characters tend to upstage the more sober message about the Congo Free state, the private domain of Belgium's King Leopold II. As the public justification for Leopold's conquest, which Henry Mortan Stanley assisted, the reported practice of cannibalism allowed Europeans to look the other way from atrocities, which they considered a necessary price for civilization. (Schildkrout and Keim, 1998, 10-14). The brutality of Leopold and his terrorizing Force Publique were responsible for the genocide of up to 10 million Congolese people by 1908.



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THE FINERY OF A BELGIAN CONGO NATIVE

The Congo native is an interesting study. The story of his customs, peculiarities and superstitions is a long one. Cannibalism is supposed to no longer exist and human sacrifice is supposed to be extinct. But when one realizes that Belgian Congo is more than a third as large as the United States and has a population of nearly 9,560,000 blacks--there are only about 25,000 white population— it is not easy to know for certain there is no deviation from the white man's laws when such laws call for a rule of action much different from that permitted by the native tradition of ages.

Between Lake Tanganyika and the mouth of the Congo is a distance of more than two thousand miles. In this area some hundred or more mission stations have been established for work among the blacks. In addition to religious training they endeavor to furnish ordinary school training and a simple technical training that will help both adults and children to carry on the simple activities of everyday life. The government has also established agricultural and technical colonies where native boys and young men may be trained.

Before us stands a proud aristocrat of the Congo. Incomprehensible, we will learn from him only what he wants to tell us about himself and his people. His standing in tribal matters is high. This we know from the necklaces he wears, from his girdles of beads, and from the antelope skin apron suspended from about his waist. Dignity and self-assurance are his and disdain is expressed in the easy grace with which he looks at us.

Copyright by Keystone View Company.

Fig. 7. Keystone View Company, *The Finery of a Native Hunter in the Belgian Congo,* verso.

After dropping the cannibalism bomb, the Keystone text emphasizes the size of the Congo and its high ratio of Blacks to whites, commenting that "...it is not easy to know for certain there is no deviation from the white man's laws when such laws call for a rule of action much different from that permitted by the native tradition of the ages." This prevarication suggests that the image the viewer holds in their hands and peers at from a distance of four to six inches may present a real cannibal. Placed in the position of the colonizer with a threat literally in their face, the viewer may feel that "bringing discipline, control and civilization to a benighted people" was the best course. (Pieterse, 1990, p. 117) Here, the telebinocular served was an instrument of discipline in a binary system of imperialism that positioned black and white as antipodes.

Neal Sobania has noted that Keystone presented "the backwardness of native peoples in the thick of imperial conquest." (Sobania, 2002, 320) We can see this as the text continues, assuring the reader that mission stations administer religion and "simple technical training that will help... the simple activities of everyday life." The repetition of the word "simple" in one sentence reinforces the assumption of an inferior status for people thought to need "white man's laws" and institutions.

The extended legend concludes:

> Before us stands a proud aristocrat of Congo. Incomprehensible, we will learn from him only what he wants to tell us about himself and his people. His standing in tribal matters is high. This we know from the necklaces he wears, from his girdles of beads, and the antelope skin apron suspended from his waist. Dignity and self-assurance are his and disdain is expressed in the easy grace with which he looks at us.

The writer/s present a fantastic, racialized progression--lawless cannibal, tamed colonial subject, and now "aristocrat" who dares to stare at us with "easy grace." This is a language out of control and struggling for a place to land. Is the reader to fear, pity, or resent the fellow? The writer/s uneasily leap from disavowal to disavowal, mixing signifiers--"incomprehensible," "his standing in tribal matters is high." How could they be both? The suggestion of mystery and hauteur signals the power of the sublime, which to the colonialist is insupportable in those subjected to its discriminatory law. Returning to the insinuation that cannibalism may escape the surveillance of white authority, the reader is left to connect the man's ostensible high status with fantasies of the taboo.

As Rick VanderKnyff relates, "thinking about Africans helped to justify the racist institutions in this country." The signifier "Africa" meant uncivilized to Americans and served as a counterpart to how they felt about their Black citizens at this time. (VanderKnyff, 2007, p. 57) During a period of nearly a century (1870-1964), commonly called the Jim Crow era, two sets of laws and customs existed primarily in the Southern states, one for whites and the other for Blacks. The Black population was subject to discriminatory regulation and an enforced expectation of submissiveness toward whites, both of which limited access to education, employment, housing, public spaces, and simple dignity. Regularly the victims of incarceration, violence and murder, Black citizens suffered when whites perceived their actions as non-compliant with regulation or custom. Given this climate of inequality and fear, judgements could turn on a glance, and the makhweyana in the stereo view might appear to be a weapon, especially with the word "hunter" in the title. Though the home office knew better, they played up clichés of danger, adding arrogance to enflame the reader. Expressions that could be interpreted as "dignity," "self-assurance," and "disdain" were dangerous for a Black man in Jim Crow America of the 1930s. They could get him killed. If such language is to educate school children, we can conclude that the lesson taught is white supremacism, where violence lurks around authoritative statistics, e.g. Lake Tanganyika. A lot of linguistic effort is displayed to contain the hybridity of one Nguni musician.

Conclusion

We have learned from Anitra Nettleton's scholarship on beadwork that Nguni women spend extraordinary time crafting beaded gifts for the men and boys they love. This newer tradition was a hybrid of colonial products, traditional and evolving themes, and a quiet defiance in the face of the hardships that the government placed on the people of the Bantustans (homelands). On recto, apart from the discourse meant to compromise him, the gentleman stands, adorned and adored

with women's devotion, the beads shimmering like a magical aura of protection.

Sazi Dlamini and Cara Stacey's scholarship on the makhweyana allow us to glimpse his culture, with the makhweyana, little known outside of Southern Africa. Though the Keystone company's home office disavows this, the construction breaks down, for anyone may see that here is no archer's bow. Image and text contradict, and the visual evidence puts up the better part of the fight. It bears restating that Lewis took no part in the constructions of the home office. He had no say in its usage once he shipped the negative to the company's offices. The question remains how much Lewis knew and willfully participated in Keystone's program of visual indoctrination. That is a relevant question which cannot be fully answered within the scope of this paper. We can say that Lewis took stereographs that did not participate in white supremacist messaging but on the contrary affirmed the dignity of his subjects. Is it possible to separate the images from their discourse? If a case can be made for this, it lies in Keystone's compartmentalized business model, with no congress between the solo photographer in the field, continents away, and the negative department cranking out shop-worn clichés that appealed to entrenched prejudice. It is impossible to imagine this today as repletely connected as we are. To understand the period, with its struggle for hybridity and potential for subversion, it is necessary to separate the elements and to regard each singly, an act which can throw coercion into relief.

Let us turn to the file negative of our subject from the Keystone Mast collection to consider the stereoscopic image sans discourse (Fig. 8). In January 1931, George Lewis stepped off script, as he was wont to do. He photographed some goatherders in Eswatini because he liked children; perhaps they reminded him of growing up in rural Utah, where he raised cougars (Lewis, 1993). Around this time, he encountered a man at roadside who sported beautiful beadwork. Lewis' mission was to stereogaph from a large list of notable sites, and at his discretion, natives and customs. How he knew that the man held a musical instrument is uncertain, but that information found its way to the home office.

Lewis took at least three dignified, respectful, and beautiful stereographs of the obliging gent. A musician or a craftsman, he wears an adult Swazi males' knee-length apron and covered with an antelope skin. Possibly, he was demonstrating or selling the makhweyana to tourists and wore the beadwork and traditional dress to catch the interest of passers-by, for this was attire reserved for special occasions. What can be said affirmatively is that here is a Nguni man, possibly of Swazi descent, in identifiable beadwork, who poses at a roadside with self-assurance and correct hand positions on a traditional makhweyana for a foreign stereographer. Seen stereoscopically, the man detaches from the less-focused background, a technique for portraits to make the body more prominent. This aggrandizes the body. In sharp focus are his poised fingers, holding the wire in tension, and he regards Lewis as though to say, *I am ready to play.* Together, they negotiate a visual record. With confidence and presence, he stands, locking the viewer's gaze, as the white beadwork articulates his body and resonates against his skin, where the calabash rests, awaiting. A colonial subject, he returns a gaze of self-assurance and pride with his ceremonial dress and

makhweyana, offering a situation of hybridity to imperialist splitting and mimesis. He invites us to discover Other types of knowledge and mastery, which Bhabha would call *transparent*. The participation between Lewis and the musician makes this possible, so that a Western audience can experience an uncharacteristic moment of equalising power in the balance of regard.

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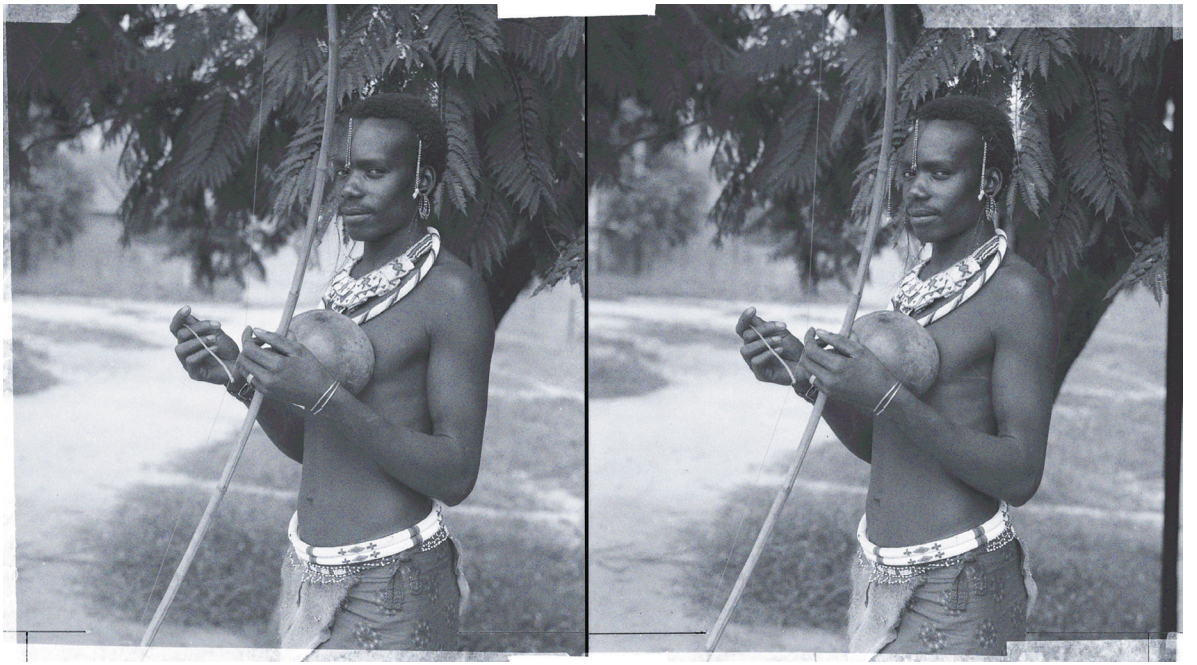

Fig. 8 Keystone View Company, *The Finery of a Native Hunter in the Belgian Congo,* file negative.
Courtesy of the Keystone Mast Collection, UCR-Arts.

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