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## PUNU

*Louis Perrois, and Charlotte Grand-Dufay*

**The mysterious beauty of Punu masks and the artistic culture of Gabon in a detailed and engaging book accompanied by numerous full-color illustrations**

Situated in the south-west of Gabon, the Punu are part of a group of people known essentially for their white masks. These objects, which continue to impress collectors and enthusiasts of African art, had already fascinated Western artists at the start of the 20th century. The idealized realism of the face covered with white clay, the slightly narrowed eyes, the mouth with finely-edged red lips and the sophisticated head-dress composed of several locks of plaited hair are some of the stylistic features of these masks. The volume studies the context of ritual use of these important objects, which the Punu and related peoples would bring out for their dances. This study of the Punu traditions and their overlap with those of other peoples in southern Gabon is also pursued through an examination of other, far less well-known objects, such as the guardian statues of the bones of the deceased, amulets, musical instruments and some other elements of their material culture.

**Louis Perrois** is an ethnologist and art historian. He spent nearly twenty years in Gabon and then in Cameroon (1965-84), where he was able to conduct a great deal of fieldwork on the tradition and the ritual arts of the different populations of the region. He is the author of several books on the arts of Atlantic Equatorial Africa, including *Fang* in the Visions of Africa series.