In *Lega Culture: Art, Initiation, and Moral Philosophy among a Central African People* (1973a), I briefly discussed general aspects of the Lega social and cultural system and analyzed the organization, function, and ideology of the bwami association. I also examined the significance of sculptures and other initiation objects in the bwami context in their interplay with grade levels, statuses, ritual action, and sung aphorisms. Several later publications (Biebuyck 1974a, 1976a, 1977a–b, 1979, 1981b–d) provide additional data on the rites of the bwami association and on specific artistic subjects (e.g., stools, animal figurines, spoons, bifrontal figurines, schematization). *Lega Culture*, however, is the essential background for the detailed study of Lega art undertaken in the present volume. I reemphasize, mainly in the introduction, only those intersecting aspects of bwami history, structure, ideology, and rites which are vital for comprehension of the arts in their sociocultural and conceptual framework.

Although I do supply morphological descriptions, the approach is primarily contextual. Lega art in all its manifestations is bound so intimately with the bwami association that no valid interpretation is feasible without stressing the structural and organizational principles, the philosophical outlook, and the performance contexts of bwami. The art is an essential channel through which the basic tenets of the association are illustrated and expressed, and many specific performances require the display and exegesis of prescribed artworks. Bwami is organized hierarchically into a system of complementary grades to which men and some of their wives are initiated, step by step. Initiations to all grades consist of mandatory sequential ritual enactments. Dances, gestures, dramatizations, sung aphorisms, and displays and manipulations of initiation objects are combined to communicate fundamental messages about the moral philosophy and the values, the modes of savoir vivre and etiquette, and the sociocultural and ritual principles cultivated by the members of the association. Although the framework for the interpretation of artworks is the graded bwami association with its structure, principles, and goals, the actual contexts vary widely. Artworks form only a part, albeit an indispensable one, of the initiation objects. In numerous rites, at the lowest as well as at the highest grades, no sculptures are exhibited. The primary contexts for the study of the artworks are not the bwami rites as a whole but rather particular ritual performances, mainly at the two top grades for men (yananio and kindi) and at the highest
female grade (bunyamwa). A few art objects of a certain type, however, do appear—in some Lega communities more than in others—in rites leading to the lower grades.

The artworks used in the rites are never chosen randomly. Certain ritual observances demand that all participants display wooden or ivory masks, whereas others require the presentation and revelation of collectively owned masks or figurines. In any ritual featuring prescribed artworks, the way they are used may vary. For example, a performance may begin with each participant dancing, holding his own mask in his hand, under his chin, or against his hat. The initiates may then place their masks on the ground, in a row or in a pile; some dancers in solo or duo performance may then pick up selected masks and swing them around, drag them over the ground, or simply point at them. This procedure may be allowed in one ritual context but prohibited in another; one type of mask may be used while another is excluded.

Clearly, the functions and the meanings of sculptures can be understood only through comprehensive observation and analysis of the contexts, the actual performances, the types of artworks, the social backgrounds, the interrelationships of actors and owners, and the purposes of each rite. Observation of a particular sculpture or a type of sculpture in a single rite does not necessarily convey the complete meaning of that work. An object used in more than one rite may be treated and interpreted differently in each instance. Although organized in accordance with the same principles and structured on identical themes and goals among all Lega, the bwami initiations are arranged independently by different socioritual communities. When these communities are historically, geographically, and socially close to one another, similarities will emerge; when they are more remote from one another, fewer features will be shared in common. All autonomous communities cultivate originality and uniqueness, which are particularly striking when truly gifted preceptors preside over initiations. Thus the contexts in which artworks appear may vary, either slightly or significantly, from community to community.

Initiations are exclusive and secret not only to noninitiates but also to initiates, depending on their personal status. Kindi of the highest level may, and usually do, participate in all ritual performances leading to any grade. Yananio at the top level are admitted to all initiations up to lutumbo lwa yananio. Because artworks are the prime initiation objects, they are seen only at the higher grades and levels, and their secret uses and meanings are not revealed to those in the lower echelons. Only initiates entitled to own the artworks know their contextual interpretations, and some preceptors and tutors are more knowledgeable than others. Initiates are thinkers; they have learned to find meanings in things that others take only at face value. A needle and its bone sheath are not simply useful objects; they are also symbols of the bond between a man and his wife, a tutor and his protégé. A figurine that looks like a chameleon does not necessarily represent that animal. A figurine that resembles a pregnant woman is not just any pregnant woman; nor is it a sex or fertility symbol. Many figurines superficially similar in form represent different characters; others
that vary morphologically may symbolize a single character. The revelation of hidden meanings is an intrinsic part of the initiatory experience. Because the real meaning of an object is defined by its ritual context, its symbolic interpretation varies widely. The exegesis is not limited to its general or specific form, its generic or individual name, or its overt usage; rather, it extends to materials and manufacturing processes, to structural details, to prescribed associations with persons and activities, to the object’s position in the rite, and to its complementarity to or its difference from other objects. Lega art is therefore a hidden art par excellence. Artworks are not made for display in shrines, chiefs’ palaces, men’s houses, or cemeteries. They are not meant to be acquired, owned, manipulated, seen, interpreted, or understood by all.

It is understandable, then, that few Europeans who lived and traveled among the Lega attempted to comprehend the purposes and meanings of bwami and its art. Delhaise (1909b), who lived among the Lega around 1903, was an astute observer of Lega culture but provided little information about Lega art. He repeatedly stresses the secrecy enveloping the artworks. When he was finally permitted to view kindi dances in which some figurines were handled, the performance seemed to him to be staged. In later years, when initiates agreed or were forced to reveal some of their secrets, they proved to be masters of the staged performance, interesting to observe but devoid of real content.

Books and catalogs on African art have long treated Lega sculpture in a haphazard way. Until Olbrechts’s work was published in 1946, most writers simply ignored the Lega (see, e.g., Einstein, 1920; Fuhrmann, 1923; Vatter, 1926; Hardy, 1927). Lega (incorrectly called Warega) carvings were occasionally illustrated, but no identification or interpretation was provided (e.g., Lega spoons in Clouzot and Level, n.d., pl. 36; a wooden mask ascribed to the Kasai in Locke, 1927, pl. 9; a Lega mask in Chauvet, 1930, fig. 62; figurines and an ivory mask in von Sydow, 1932a, pl. 133, 1932b, pl. 25; figurines in Frobenius, 1933, pl. 101). Maes (1924, pp. 44–46 and fig. 49) illustrates as Lega a wooden polychrome horned mask collected for Tervuren by Dargent. Using the information given by Delhaise (1909b), Maes notes that this and two other similar masks were most likely connected with the highest grade of the bwami association, but they are not representative of the Lega and possibly were made by groups such as Bakwame, Baleka, and Bakonjo, who are transitional among Lega, Komo, Nyanga, and Havu. Clarke (1929, p. 68) mentions an ancient ivory mask and two small ivory figurines “standing back to back on a common pedestal which are now at the British Museum” (Fagg and Plass, 1964, p. 144). He associates the double figurine with bwami because of the headdress and because the mask has “the mark of the mwami on its forehead.” The Museum of Modern Art exhibition organized by Sweeney in 1935 included several wooden and ivory masks, figurines, heads, ivory spoons (nos. 440, 446–447, 450, 455, 461–462, 464–465, 504–506, 509–510, 512, 514–516, some illustrated in seven plates), and a rare ivory neck rest (no. 472). The only information given relates to size, material, and collection. The description of no. 455, for example, is “Mask of the Miwami [sic] secret society.”
Kjersmeier (1937, vol. 3, pp. 33–34, pls. 54–56), finding Lega art to be “l’art le plus spontané du Congo Belge,” evokes its technical perfection and its expressive value. There were two types of ivory masks and figurines: those dominated by rounded forms and those featuring straight lines. The “ornamental tattoos” on the sculptures, when present at all, consisted of dots, circle-dots, and short lines; the eyes were often indicated with encrusted cowries. Wooden figurines were artistically less interesting than wooden masks, but there were exceptional pieces. One multifrontal figurine, which Kjersmeier identifies as a dance baton, had a “captivating effect.” Wooden masks occurred in so many different forms that division into style groups was impossible. Lega sculpture was closely linked with the rites and ceremonies of the “seven grades” of the “mwami secret society.” The ivory masks carried in the hand were symbolic insignia of high dignitaries, but no other information is supplied about their alleged “magical and religious function.”

Gaffé (1945, pp. 55–56 and unnumbered plates) reproduces three Lega ivory masks, praising them for the unique blend of simple effects and rigor (severity in some, serenity in others). He thought one mask was the “living portrait of death” (an ancestor come to life again); another depicted “a personage who serenely entered immortality.” The Lega, though “the most perfect sculptors in ivory,” were less successful in wood carving. Their masks were used as rallying signs by secret societies whose members carried them in their hands on important occasions. The extraordinary patination of the pieces was achieved because their users anointed their bodies and the sculptures with oil. Herskovits (1945, p. 53) merely notes that there was little information on the arts in northeastern and eastern Zaire. Specimens from the Lega and Mangbetu, however, suggested “that these two localities may in the future become designated as the seats of distinctive styles.” Several sculptures that had already been illustrated (e.g., the L. Carré and the A. Stoclet ivory masks) were reproduced repetitiously in the few publications that considered Lega art.

In contrast with these crude or subjective analyses, Olibrechts (1946, pp. 37, 39, 64, 84, 87, 90–91, pls. 177–179, 198, figs. 12 j–k, 17, 36) was more objective. He included Lega art in his northeastern style region at the periphery of the Luba style complex, with the Zimba (Binja) forming a gradual transition between Lega and Luba. The general sculptural poverty of the northeastern region was offset in the south by the “rich sculpture” of the Lega, who together with the Bembe had been strongly influenced by Luba styles. The “productive but not extensive” Lega center linked the realistic art of the southeast with the stylized arts of the north. Lega art (mainly in ivory) was characterized by its “consistent and impressive stylization, its patination, and its compactness.” Olibrechts divided the artistic output into two groups: ivory and rare wooden masks, and male and female anthropomorphic figurines, mostly in ivory. The oval masks of the Lega had style characteristics in common with the figurines: a convex face in which a flat or concave space was delineated by the eyebrows, the cheekbones, and the lower lip; eyes, nose, and mouth were carved in relief. The
heaviness of the swellings between hips and knees or between knees and ankles was striking in the figurines.

It was uncertain whether the morphological diversity otherwise noticeable in the figurines was owing to regional or individual differences. The face was sometimes elongated as in the masks, or lozenge-shaped; the head was occasionally round and heavy like the rest of the body; eyes were often cowrie-shaped or were fashioned of real cowries. Nowhere else in Africa could more blatant disregard for natural proportions (e.g., huge hands, thin arms) be found; fantastic human forms (e.g., huge head on one leg) were frequently seen.

Olbrechts deemed two other stylistic characteristics to have particular significance: the circle-dot motif and the "concave-face" type. The circle-dot was applied to some pieces to indicate the eyes; in other sculptures it was used for decorative (not for representational) purposes. Although widespread in the world, this characteristic motif seemed to be linked with Islamic influence in this part of eastern Zaire. The concave-face type (rendered on a spherical head or a convex mask form) was found from the Lega to the Fang in Gabon, and among the Zande, Mitoko, Ngbaka, Gobu, Togbo, and Bolia in Zaire, but it was absent from the southern Zaire style regions. A great deal of Lega ivory sculpture functioned within the "moami sect," but most of its ritual and social significance was undocumented.

Olbrechts's classification and morphological characterization were significant and innovative in the light of earlier discussions of Lega art. His work obviously dealt with only a small sample of Lega figurines and masks. He understated the importance of wood carvings, overstated the number of ivory masks, simplified the extreme diversity of forms, and ignored other types of sculptures (zoomorphic figurines, spoons, axes, billhooks, knives, hammers, dice, etc.). The most striking omissions from Olbrechts's writing (and a fortiori in those of his predecessors) are the socioritual contexts of the artworks.

Neglect of already documented information about these contexts persisted for many years after publication of Olbrechts's work, and it has not entirely subsided (e.g., Griaule, 1947; Wingert, 1947, 1950; Kochnitzky, 1948; Maesen, 1950; Olbrechts, 1951; Périer, 1952; Radin and Sweeney, 1952; Lavachery, 1954). Many recent works on African art seriously understate or misrepresent the scope, diversity, and significance of Lega sculpture and its context.

It is important to assemble the data available by 1946 about Lega art and its context. The principal published sources are Cordella (1906, pp. 974–975), Delhaise (1909b pp. 23, 94, 103, 133, 199–201, 209–210, 227–239, 245, 275, 337–343; pls. 23, 94, 103, 133), Maes (1924, 1933), and Moeller (1936). Unpublished documents include the information on collected objects at the Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale (Tervuren, Dossiers, 1930–31 by Ledoete and Corbisier, Baude, and Zographakis; 1938 by Van Hooren) and elsewhere (e.g., Stockholm, Berlin). Less readily attainable are reports written between 1916 and 1931 by colonial administrators (Corbisier, de Villenfagne de Loën, Fassin, Fível, Laurent, Marmite, Merlot, Pestiaux, Schwers, Teeuwen, Uyttebroeck,
Voukovich, Van de Chinte). The following synthesis is constructed from all these sources. In view of the paucity of data incorporated in catalogs and art books, they offer valuable information.

The central element in Lega culture and society is the bwami association (variously referred to as moami, mwami, or buami sect or secret society), which dates from the beginnings of Lega society. Through an elaborate system of initiations it spread among the component Lega units and also to fractions of neighboring groups (Bembe, Binja, Kanu, Komo). Bwami exhibits structural and organizational features in common with associations of adjoining populations (Songola, Ngengele, Binja, Komo, Nyanga). Bwami consists of a hierarchy of grades for males and females, although the sources differ on the number and the names of these grades. In principle, accession is open to all Lega males and their wives through initiations that are kept secret from outsiders and noninitiates. The rites require the participation of initiates from different villages, long preparations, and distributions of goods. Uyttebroeck (1935) was the first to note the aspects of social structure which are reflected in the bwami organization: the significant role of maternal uncles (mother's and father's mother's group; mother's mother's and father's father's mother's lineages), of the nenekisi (master of the land), and of the preceptor (whom Uyttebroeck regards as a guardian of custom and jurisprudence).

The initiations center on dances, songs, speeches, and artworks. The initiates receive paraphernalia and insignia appropriate to their rank. The most frequently mentioned artworks are wooden and ivory masks, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, ivory spoons, and phallus-shaped ivories. The figurines are male, female, or asexual; they are sometimes multifrontal or extraordinary stylizations (e.g., a large head on a single leg). Masks are worn on the face or on the forehead or are carried in the hands in a dance context. After removing the figurines from a closed initiation house in the center of the village, the initiates hold them in their hands or place them on the ground. Most sources link the manipulation of sculptures with the highest grade (kindi), but at least one author mentions masks in the context of the second-highest grade (yananio). The objects are taken to the initiation house before the dances, but they are usually guarded by initiated women on behalf of their initiated husbands.

The authors call masks kingungungu, gande, kibome, kalimu, lukungu lwa kindi, binumbi, lukwakongo lwa lubumbu (sic) lwa yananio. Generic terms for anthropomorphic figurines, such as kalimbangoma, tulimbangoma, or nyasombo (sic), are rarely cited, but specific names (often misspelled) are used: Sakasala, Keitula, Kalaga, Kasisi ya kindi (sic), Kiniembe, Kilinga, Golombe, Yinga. Most of the sources provide valuable but unexplained documentation. Merlot (1931a–b) gives the most extensive terminology and explanations. He describes figurines (probably wooden, as the author speaks about their whitened faces) used in mosagi (sic; probably musage wa kindi): Kakulu ka mpinda (an asexual figurine representing an old man); Muzumbi (a man) and Wayinda (his wife who died while pregnant); Kasongalala (a figurine with raised arm, the hand held in a protective gesture; Merlot thinks it is a divinity); Mwelwa (a man); Kabalama
and Katembo (women); Samukulusongo (a figurine with spread legs; a prostitute); Kimatemanete (a bifrontal head on a pole). Merlot also designates other objects: an ivory phallus (*katimbitimbi*), an ivory pounder (*moketo*, sic), and an elongated quadruped on short legs representing a dog (*mukukundu*, sic). One source calls the animal figurines *mugugu* or *mbwa za kindi*; another identifies twin animal figurines as *wamuse* and *musiramu*.

There is little or no information about the meaning of these terms or about the songs and dances associated with the objects. Zographakis claims that a stone head represents the kindi initiate. Delhaise does suggest some meanings: one sculpture depicts a person who sees everything, one is symbolic of evil, one is an emblem of hospitality and another of friendly understanding; a female figurine with swollen belly refers to the dangers of infidelity, while another suggests an evil and overly inquisitive woman. Although Delhaise applied the term “fetish” to the sculptures, he notes that the Lega “n’invoquent pas les fétiches, ils ne leur demandent rien et ne s’occupent d’eux que dans le mpara [initiation].” Delhaise nevertheless concludes that the fetishes exhibited during the initiations have certain magical properties: they protect fields, procure game, punish evildoers, preside over death, and oversee everything. In a similar manner, Ledocte and Corbisier note that the objects are not “fétiches” but simple insignia that enable kindi initiates to identify themselves. Only noninitiates, who never see the mysterious objects, believe they have an occult power.

Among other carvings, ivory spoons are said to be used either by kindi for eating or for administering medicines to the sick. Cordella describes phallic sculptures that women hang from their belts. Delhaise notes that the paraphernalia of a dead initiate (who was buried in the village near or on the threshold of his house) are placed on his tomb. The skull of a dead kindi is preserved as a reliquary in the house; when the dead man’s son achieves kindi, the skull is placed in a small shrine built on poles near his house. Hautmann (Tervuren, Dossier 1045 of 1940) has seen similar constructions in which the reddened skull was visible; an offering of cassava and bananas was placed before the skull in an iron pot.

Maes concludes that the bwami rites confer upon initiates the privilege of owning the highly symbolic sculptures. Moeller, however, speaks about the display of male and female figurines (with large genitalia) within the enclosure where the circumcision takes place (note that these rites are organized by members of bwami).

Much of the information given in these pre-1946 sources, although sketchy, is correct. It is surprising that so little of it was used in publications on African art.

From 1950 to 1981 Lega sculpture has received increasing attention in exhibition and sales catalogs, museum inventories, and handbooks on African art. Few of them fail to take notice of the Lega, who tend to be placed with other northeastern Zaire peoples at the end of surveys because most authors follow a geographical progression from west to east. The range of illustrated artworks has broadened, in contrast with the period when most of the objects reproduced, mainly ivory figurines and masks, belonged to a very few private and
public collections. Scholars and connoisseurs have come to recognize the diversity of forms and materials in Lega sculpture: maskettes as well as larger masks, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, and a wide range of other sculptures including spoons, billhooks, knives, ax blades, hammers, dice, pegs, pins, pounders, and phalli, some of which are miniature replicas in ivory and bone of larger objects. Lega artists have not worked primarily in ivory, as has been suggested, but also in bone, wood, stone, resin, copal, clay, elephant leather, and ntutu. As the extraordinary diversity of form and of morphological detail within each category of sculpture has been acknowledged to some extent, changes have been made in the characterizations of Lega style and its relationships to other style areas of Zaire. There has been a tendency to categorize the Lega and some related units as a distinctive style group or region. Little effort has been made, however, to place the multiple types of Lega art into morphological and thematic categories. The least progress has been made in incorporating into general works on African art the known data about socioritual and ideological contexts, and about uses, functions, and meanings of the artworks. Some of the old stereotyped generalizations and unverified simplifications continue to plague writers of treatises that include Lega art.

Some authors still prefer the Swahili term "Warega" to the correct spelling of Balega (Lega). They see no aesthetic merit in Lega art and are unable to distinguish genuine Lega art from degenerate, fake, or modernistic pseudo-Lega sculpture. Too many others are still guilty of making loose, unrelated, haphazard, and uncritical statements. In some instances an amazing trend has emerged: a Lega term, sometimes misspelled and certainly misused, is placed as a caption under a sculpture that was not identified in the field situation but was found undocumented in some collection. This feat is apparently accomplished through the method of comparative guesswork. Numerous authors (e.g., Thompson, 1974; Rosefielde, 1977; Fry [Delange], 1978; Anderson, 1979; Brain, 1980; Celenko, 1980; Sieber, 1980) fortunately have incorporated substantive Lega data in their recent works. Because the scope of Lega sculpture is so much broader than the stereotypes and generalizations about African art would suggest, because its analysis requires so many nuanced statements, some authors find it easier simply to dismiss the bulk of the evidence.
From 1949 to 1957 I did intensive anthropological field research among several ethnic groups in eastern Zaire under the sponsorship of the Institut pour la recherche scientifique en Afrique centrale (Brussels and Lwiro). Between 1956 and 1961, under the sponsorship of Lovanium University (Kinshasa) and the Land Tenure Commission for the Congo (Kinshasa), I also made extensive investigations among many ethnic groups in Zaire. In 1969 I began the systematic compilation of data pertaining to the arts of Central Africa and their cultural contexts.

The related museum, archival, and library research was carried out initially between 1971 and 1974 with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. It was pursued intermittently between 1975 and 1982 with the aid of the University of Delaware and the Samuel Kress Foundation (1977 and 1978), a Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Fellowship (1979–1980), and a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship (1980–1981). I wish to express my deep gratitude to these institutions.

The data-gathering phase was long and arduous because the heterogeneous primary visual and ethnographic sources are widely scattered. Many of the relevant published and unpublished materials were not readily available at the University of Delaware library and had to be secured either through interlibrary loans or, if that was impossible, through research in libraries and museums in Europe. I therefore visited a number of them in Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, and Sweden in order to obtain firsthand visual and written documentation. The enthusiastic cooperation received in all these places is gratefully acknowledged. Most of the overseas research, however, has been done at the Musée royal de l’Afrique centrale, Tervuren, which holds some of the finest, most diversified, and most precisely documented artworks from Zaire and which also has a richly specialized library as well as a unique archival and photographic collection. I wish to express my sincerest thanks to Ms. Huguette Van Geluwe, head of the ethnographic section, and her staff for their many contributions to this enterprise.

This volume, on the arts of southwestern Zaire, is the first in a series of works that will deal with several large regions of Zaire; it also includes an introduc-
tion on the history of Central African art studies. I analyze the arts and cultures of the following ethnic groups: Bai, Buma, Dia, Dikidiki, Dzing, Holo, Hungaan, Kwese, Lula, Lwer, Mbala, Mbeko, Mbinsa, Mbuun, Mfinu, Mpey Mput, Ngongo, Ngul, Nkanu, Nunu, Nzadi, Pende, Pindi, Sakata, Suku, Tiene, Tow, Tsaam, Tsong, Wuum, Yaka, Yansi, Zombo. They are situated in southwestern Zaire between the Mfimi and Kasai rivers and along the Kasai River in the north, and the Loange, Kasai, and Kwilu rivers in the east. Several groups in the south extend into northern Angola, while in the west others merge into the large Teke and Kongo culture clusters (see Boone, 1973, map).

The orthography of ethnic names has always been a problem because of variants that originated with colonial administrative practices, the diverging systems of transcription adopted by French, German, Portuguese, Dutch, and English authors, the use of names given by neighboring peoples, and dialect variations. The most reliable spelling of ethnic names is offered by linguists, anthropologists, and others who have studied these languages and cultures. For southwestern Zaire, precise transcriptions of ethnic names and their variants can be found in Boone (1954, 1973), Bryan (1959), Guthrie (1948, 1971), Van Bulck (1948, 1954c), Vansina (1968), and Vansina, Doutreloux, and Cuypers (1966).

In the above list no special problems arise in the orthography of the ethnic names Dikidiki, Holo, Kwese, Lula, Mbala, Mbeko, Ngongo, Nkanu, Nunu, Pende, Sakata, Suku, Yaka, and Zombo because only slight, if any, variants are used for them. For the remaining ethnic names that sometimes occur in the literature with major changes, I have followed the spellings adopted by the above authors. The only exceptions are Buma (after Hochegger, 1972c) instead of Boma, and Yansi (after Swartebroekx, 1965, and Thiel, 1973) instead of Yans or Yanzi. The names, including some variants, of most groups discussed in this volume may also be found in Murdock (1959, pp. 292–293) under the Kwango, Kasai, and Kimbundu clusters.

The visual documentation presented in this and future volumes is limited to a few samples of the arts discussed. Numerous references to published photographs, however, are provided in the text to broaden the visual range of this study.
Introduction

The sources for a synthetic study of Central African art are numerous and diverse. Enormous public and private collections of artworks have been accumulated, mainly since the late nineteenth century, throughout Europe, Canada, the United States, Angola, and Zaire. Because these objects were assembled under varying circumstances, the information compiled by museums and private collectors ranges from nothing to general ethnic and regional identifications, and from broad statements about cultural context to detailed data on place of origin, usage, function, nomenclature, and meaning. With important exceptions, the lack of documentation applies to objects acquired in the nineteenth or early twentieth century as well as to those more recently collected. Sculptures in the collections of great museums are usually accompanied by a more extensive and better scientific apparatus than those that are privately owned. The widely diversified private collections, which include rare, unique, and outstanding carvings, cannot, however, be neglected. The available visual documents thus are overwhelming in number, but because they are widely dispersed they are sometimes difficult to retrieve, especially when packed in storage rooms. It is physically impossible, and scientifically unnecessary because of repetitions and redundancies, to make a personal survey of the hundreds of thousands of objects collected among the peoples of Zaire, yet I have attempted to see as many of them as possible. For the rest one must rely upon illustrated catalogs, inventories, monographs, and books dealing with the ethnography and the art of Zaire and the surrounding areas. In addition, many objects are irretrievably lost (in the field or in museums, such as those lost by German museums); others are still in use but are unknown to the outside world, or information about them has not yet been divulged in published writings. Any synthesis then must necessarily remain a status questionis.

The scrutiny of catalog cards describing the objects is often a laborious process, owing not merely to the lack of precise data but also to frequently irretraceable modifications of the original designations, especially in the ethnic attribution of objects. The account of the "tribal" origin of a piece may leave uncertain the criteria on which the identification was based. Was the object collected in the particular ethnic group to which it is attributed or in an area where that group was thought to be the only dominant one? Was the object made there or imported? Or was it manufactured there on the basis of an extraneous carving tradition? Or was the identification founded on comparative morphological and stylistic criteria after the object had been collected? At an early stage collectors tended to situate the objects within a general (administrative) region or center. Later the reference involved mainly "tribes" or, if the group was large and productive, so-called subtribes. The precise location
within a hamlet, a village, or a political unit whence the sculpture came was usually unavailable. Instead of specific information being supplied about the usages, functions, and meanings of a single object, most sculptures were simply placed within a broad cultural or conceptual framework.

As a complement to catalogs, however, some museums own important unpublished materials, such as detailed inventories, letters, or short ethnographic studies drafted by the original collectors. These documents frequently contain highly valuable data about specific objects or groups of objects in their cultural context. In addition, the archives of museums sometimes include older photographs that illustrate, among other things, forms of architecture, layout of villages, human types and body adornment, dance sequences, and, more rarely, objects in situ. Surprisingly few of these photographs show collected objects in a context of usage; rather, they tend to represent similar or completely different pieces. Archives in Zaire (originally kept at the level of units such as territoires, districts, and provinces, and in the library of the Gouvernement Général) and in Belgium are rich in administrative and ethnographic reports, mostly compiled by agents of the former colonial government but also by missionaries. Although only a small number of these reports deal directly with art, many do offer details about rituals or about political aspects that are needed for a broad understanding of the artworks. Like most published monographs and articles, the archival ethnographies provide only indirect and general information about specific objects and art as a whole.

Heterogeneous and uneven in quality, the published sources range from travelogues to old-fashioned and modern ethnographies, catalogs, reports, inventories, and surveys. The articles are scattered in discontinued as well as in current journals, many falling outside the immediate domains of anthropology and art history. Access to published and unpublished studies alike is often difficult because they are written in different languages. Whereas many documents are available in English, the larger number, especially the older studies, appear in Flemish/Dutch, French, Portuguese, German, Italian, Danish, and Swedish. The notable failure of many surveys and syntheses to use fully the available documentation is probably due, then, to the heterogeneity and dispersal of sources rather than to other factors (such as haste and disregard for "nonprofessional" ethnographic documents). Repetitions, stereotypes, and unverified assertions mainly about the content of the artworks have all too often obscured the possibilities for genuine comprehension. The diligent and critical scrutiny of sources, and a broad cultural framework for interpretation of the artworks, can certainly make for a better understanding. Nonetheless, many art-producing groups remain inadequately described in the immense array of source materials. The essence of some arts can probably never be recaptured because they are no longer practiced, because the socioritual contexts in which they were embedded have been altered or have ceased to exist, or because their eminent native exegetes have died without leaving the full scope of their knowledge to posterity. To improve the maps of stylistic distributions and
relationships is one undertaking, but it is more difficult to construct or reconstruct the technological, artistic, sociopolitical, ritual, and ideological contexts in which artworks were made and used, and in which they functioned and communicated meaning.
Ethnographic Studies

The era of great explorations in Zaire ended about 1897. Many aspects of tribal life, including art, had become known by that time from reports by, or through the work of, explorers, travelers, scientists, missionaries, magistrates, and the military. The regions of this vast territory were documented between 1854 and 1899 in the books of Bastian, Bateman, Bentley, Burton, Büttner, Cameron, Capello and Ivens, Carvalho, Casati, Chavanne, Coquihat, Costermans, De Bas, Delcommune, Dennett, De Paiva-Manso, Dupont, Francqui, Giraud, Hore, Junker, Lemaire, le Marinel, Livingstone, Miani, Muata Cazembe, Mueller, Emin Pasha, Pechuel-Loesche, Pogge, Reichard, Schütt, Schweinfurth, Stanley, Storms, Stuhlmann, Thonner, Von François, Von Götzen, Von Wissmann, Ward, Wolf, and many others (De Jonghe, 1908; Maes, 1922). Much information on an earlier period, mainly in Dutch and Italian, was available for the extreme southwestern part of Zaire, where a long tradition of contact had existed between the Kongo ethnic group and the West (Dapper, Pigafetta, Merolla, Cavazzi, da Montesarchio, the various Documentos from 1492 to 1722, etc.).

The new documentation appeared not only in monographs and travelogues but also in many journals of broad scope, such as La Belgique coloniale, Bulletin des missions des Pères Blancs, Bulletin de la société d'anthropologie de Bruxelles, Bulletin de la société belge d'études coloniales, Bulletin de la société royale belge de géographie, Missions en Chine et au Congo, Mitteilungen der Afrikanischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland, and Le mouvement géographique. Whereas ethnographic references in the early books, with notable exceptions, were often sketchy and casual, journal articles offered systematic information on a region, a people, or a topic. Some early articles contained valuable data on topics such as fetishes, wickerwork, ceramics, coiffures, and tattoos (see, e.g., the bibliography under Anonymous, 1892 to 1898b). Rossignon (1897), for example, presents a rather comprehensive overview of material culture and social customs of the Ntumba, located near Lake Leopold II (now called Maindombe). Steenbeke (1897) gives a similarly extensive account, including descriptions of objects and techniques, for the District de l'Equateur, without reference to a particular tribe. Few writings before 1897 were inspired by questionnaires or systematic inquiries, although some writers (e.g., Cocheteux, Jacques and Storms, De Saegher, Lemaire) were stimulated by the activities of the Société d'anthropologie and the Société d'études coloniales in Brussels.

Shortly after the creation of the Congo Free State (1885), its agents were instructed to study native “dialects” (1887). An arrêté (legal decision) of 1891 stipulated that important objects confiscated by the courts or by state agents were to be transferred to state collections instead of being sold. In 1894 the Congo Free State expressed the desire to receive collections of interest after the Ant-
warp International Exhibition, which included a few selections from Zaire in its colonial section. By 1897, in view of the Congo exhibition held that year at Tervuren within the framework of the Brussels International Exposition, the collection of objects and information had intensified. After the success of the show it was decided that the Congo section at Tervuren would be maintained permanently. Its first curator was Masui, who had compiled the exhibition catalog (1897) which illustrated (pp. 4–8) a few groups (Zande, Kongo, Teke, Kuba, Kusu, Luluwa, Luba) and techniques (smithing, carving, matting) but gave inadequate documentation.

Other efforts were made to promote the study of native populations in the period after 1897. The government sent out questionnaires; the interesting reports that followed (e.g., Delhaise, Tilkens, Borms, Hanoloet) were published in La Belgique coloniale and Le Congo. The Société belge de sociologie and the Société royale de géographie in Brussels also initiated inquiries and published the responses in their bulletins. The Bureau international d'ethnographie, established in 1905, issued a number of monographs between 1907 and 1913 under the general direction of Van Overbergh. Despite their sketchiness, several of these studies (Colle, Delhaise, Schmitz) have exceptional ethnographic value. Cordella (1906) wrote on eastern Zaire; Frobenius (1905–1907) began his explorations in the Kasai-Kwango region; Torday (1905 on) researched peoples in the Kwango-Kwilu area and compiled a detailed study of the Kuba.

The early writings of Frobenius appeared as travel accounts in the Zeitschrift für Ethnologie (1905a, 1906b, 1907a). As the huge collections he assembled eventually found their way into museums, much information was available only on museum catalog cards. Frobenius, acutely aware of the intricate population mixture in the Kwango-Kwilu area (e.g., in 1905a, p. 767, he refers appropriately to territorial amalgamations of Tsam, Mbala, Pindi, Hungaan, and Yaka-Suku), was more interested in geographical distributions and historical layering than in thorough sociocultural investigation. The index cards in the Hamburg Museum show Frobenius's approach as a strange blend of carelessness and superficiality and, contrastingly, as an attempt at precise localization of objects (without differentiating between places where they were collected and places where they were made, but often indicating subgroups, restricted areas, villages, or chiefs and headmen).

Systematic surveying methods, which are hard to determine in Frobenius, were better applied in the early writings of Torday (1905) and Torday and Joyce (1905 to 1907b) published in Man and Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. In these articles on the Mbala, the Hungaan, the Yaka, and the whole Kwango-Kwilu area, consistent attempts were made to sketch the ethnography of groups and areas in terms of the questionnaire prepared by the Royal Anthropological Institute. Although superficial and sometimes confining, insofar as ethnic groups and subdivisions are concerned, these articles remain valuable ethnographical documents. The book that Torday and Joyce (1922) later devoted to the peoples of the Kasai and eastern Kwango basins, as well as the brief
Journal studies, does not reach the level of ethnographic description attained in their 1911 work on the Kuba and related peoples, which stands as a remarkable milestone.

In the meantime, members of missionary societies had also started to examine native life. Outstanding documents were published by Bittremieux in Onze Kongo (1910–1914), Weeks (1908 to 1914), Grenfell (Johnston, 1908), and others, but additional useful information remained in manuscript form or was not published until much later (e.g., the ethnographic work done by many Swedish missionaries).

A major event in the development of ethnographic surveying, collecting, and describing was the creation in 1898 of the Annales series by the then Musée du Congo (Tervuren), in which Masui (1899) published a short monograph on the early collections. It was followed by Coart and de Hauleville’s (1902) catalogue raisonné of musical instruments. From a total ethnographic documentation of 8,000 pieces assembled at the museum, 336 of 443 objects were illustrated and described. This otherwise useful work revealed a striking lack of itemized ethnographical knowledge. The objects, collected mostly by state agents, were simply dispatched with the label of one of the eleven districts or large regions where they had been found, occasionally with the name of a tribe (e.g., Teke, Yaka) or of a subregion (e.g., Stanley Falls in the north or Tanganyika in the east of the vast Eastern Region). Subsequently Coart and de Hauleville (1906 and 1907) published in the Annales two overviews of sculptures seen as religious expressions and of ceramics. Illustrating about 360 objects, the 1906 catalog showed a certain advance in general ethnographical knowledge (there were also rare contextual photographs), but the individual items remained without ethnographic validation. This omission is rather surprising in view of the fact that some ethnographic dossiers were already available at Tervuren. For example, one of the first figurines registered (no. 139) at Tervuren (see Maes, 1935b, pl. xviii no. 15) had arrived in 1902 precisely identified: it came from the Buma in the area of Lake Maindombe, was called makowu, and was applied as a healing agent to the ailing part of the body (Tervuren dossier 18). Some of the rich Luba material collected by Lemaire (Tervuren dossier 9, 1899), though lacking specific cultural information, was somewhat precisely identified as to location. Yet other sculptures of extraordinary importance (such as the famed and unique Nkanu carvings) were recorded in 1903 with no information except that they were Yaka (an identification later corrected to Nkanu).

The range and quality of primary documentation gradually began to increase through a variety of channels. Sponsored by the British Museum, Torday launched an ethnographical expedition in the Kwango-Kasai-Sankuru area (1907–1909). The large collections he assembled enriched the British Museum and other institutions. Although the items were never described and inventoried in separate catalogs, valuable data appeared in Torday and Joyce’s classic works on the Kuba (1911) and on the Kasai—Eastern Kwango areas (1922), both published in the Annales of Tervuren. The Ministry of Colonies circulated a
questionnaire among territorial administrators in the Congo in order to stimulate and orient research, but, apart from Hutereum’s (1909) comparative study on the family and law, the published results were meager. The Musée du Congo belge organized the scientific expeditions of Hutereum (1911–1912) in the northern Congo (the results published in his 1922 history of the populations of Uele and Ubangi) and of Maes (1913–1914) in the Kongo-Kasai-Lake Leopold II-Lukenie-Sankuru region (the results described in numerous short articles between 1913 and 1924, when his synthetic work on the peoples of the Kasai and Lukenie basins and Lake Leopold II appeared; see Maes, 1934, passim).

At the same time (1910–1914) the influx of items at the Musée du Congo belge was sharply increasing (from ca. 30,000 in 1910). The range and geographical spread of objects were also better described, as evidenced by the many unpublished dossiers ethnographiques kept at Tervuren, and the actual documentation on single items or groups became more extensive. From 1927 on, through the works of Coart (1927), Maes (1929 to 1939), Loir (1935), and Boone (1936), the earlier effort systematically to describe the Tervuren collections was resumed in the Annales. Some of the information contained in the published and unpublished literature was incorporated into these inventories. The Bureau de documentation ethnographique (created in 1932 and still active today) undertook in a new series the methodical publication of bibliographies relevant to Zaire and adjoining regions. Under the same auspices, Maes and Boone (1935) compiled the first comprehensive inventory of names and geographical locations of Zaire populations.

Independent of the Musée du Congo belge, many other organizations and individuals engaged in ethnographic and linguistic work and in building collections. British, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Russian, Swedish, Swiss, and some American and Zaire (Kingoy) museums had acquired outstanding collections, mainly since the late nineteenth century. Commercial enterprises such as trading and shipping companies, missionary societies, missionaries, military personnel, scientists, agents of the Congo Free State, travelers, and explorers made important contributions, indirectly or directly, to the growth of public collections. Individuals (such as Wellcome, Oldman, von der Heydt, Guillaume, Pareyn, and Blondiau) were developing private collections, many of them later incorporated into museums. The documentation on objects in such collections varied widely in both quality and quantity, as shown by catalogs and museum files of the period. Few sculptures were ethnically or regionally identified, and functional descriptions were elementary (e.g., “Bapende-Kasai ritual mask” or the more elaborate “Bayaka fetish mask, type mwelo lemba”).

A few individual efforts, however, were outstanding. From 1891 to 1919 Laman, whose monumental studies on the language and the culture of the Kongo were published only between 1936 and 1968, worked with other members of the Svenska Missionsförbundet in the large-scale collecting of objects and ethnographical data. Working in different areas, the missionaries Bittremieux (1911
on) and Van Wing (1918 on) undertook a vast publication program on western and eastern subgroups of the Kongo. Their publications remain invaluable sources for the study of southwestern Zaire. Unfortunately, too few of their data have been incorporated into general discussions on African art. For example, Bittremieux’s *Mayombsch idiotsicon* (1922, 1927), an incredibly rich document, is difficult to use because it is written mostly in a Flemish dialect and is also confusing and elliptical. It is sometimes mentioned in passing but it has rarely been seriously scrutinized.

The journal *Congo* superseded *Onze Kongo* and *La revue congolaise* in 1919. Devoted almost exclusively to the ethnography of Zaire, it published a large number of significant descriptive studies. In the twenties and thirties its monograph series, *Bibliothèque Congo*, presented many first-rate ethnographic and linguistic works by Hutereau, Tanghe, Lagae, De Clercq, Bittremieux, Van Wing, and Plancquaert.

In 1928 the Institut royal colonial belge began to participate in the ethnographic effort through a number of outstanding studies in the *Bulletin des séances*, but mainly through the *Mémoires* (1933). Works by the missionaries Plancquaert (1932), Mertens (1935, 1938, 1939a), Bittremieux (1936), Laman (1936), Struyf (1936), Hulstaert (1938), Van Caeneghem (1938), Van Wing (1938), and de Beaucorps (1941), and by the governor, A. Moeller, (1936), excel as lasting contributions to Zaire ethnography.

Between 1934 and 1940 the interest in Zaire ethnography spread to the arts. New specialized journals and series were launched in Belgium (*Kongo-Overzee, 1934; Artes africanae, 1936; Revue du Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1936*) and in Zaire (*Bulletin des juridictions indigènes, 1933; Brousse, 1935–1936; Aequatoria, 1936*). The government in Brussels established the Commission pour la protection des arts et métiers indigènes, whose mission, in part, was to safeguard, preserve, and promote the arts of Zaire. In Kinshasa, the Amis de l’art indigène founded the Musée de la vie indigène (1935) and launched the first Concours artisanal (1937). The apostolic delegate, Monsignor Dellepiane, urged the use of native elements in Catholic liturgical art (1936a). An exhibition of this new religious art was organized in Kinshasa (1936) and a special issue of *L’artisan liturgique* (Bruges, 1936) was devoted to the same topic. About the same time there was a flurry of articles on similar themes in the *Bulletin des missions* (1936) and the *Revue de l’Aucam* (1938).

Special exhibitions of Zaire art were held in Brussels (1936), Paris (1937), Liège and New York (1939). Most important was the famous Antwerp exhibition of more than 1,600 art objects from Zaire (1937–1938), organized by Olbrechts with the help of about 100 private collectors (including missionary organizations). As a result of the success achieved and the interest aroused, Olbrechts founded the Center for the Study of African Art at Ghent University (1940). The goals of the center were grandiose: coordinate research efforts, develop iconographical documentation, provide thorough descriptions and typologies of African art styles, study problems of distribution and chronology.
seek to explain the degeneration of Zaire art traditions, and find methods for new adaptations. The center also had an unusual idea: to focus on the artist himself, including his personality, motives, techniques, sources of inspiration, modes of working, tools, training, and education. Eventually several Belgian students of Central African ethnography and art at Ghent University (Maesen, Vandenhouwe, Weyns, Vanden Bossche, Claerhout, Van Geluwe, Burssens, Biebuyck) were influenced by the center's activities and Olbrechts's theories.

In Zaire itself the state of the arts was gloomy, for the great artistic traditions of many ethnic groups were virtually being eliminated. Huge quantities of artworks still existed, although more or less covertly used or simply hidden, but actual production was on the decline or had ceased. In a country so immense and so little known, with many diverse traditions, the situation obviously differed from area to area and from ethnic group to ethnic group. This state of affairs was caused not only by changing economic, social, and religious patterns and ideas, whose impact was indeed minimal in many rural sections. To a large extent the problem also stemmed from colonial and missionary policies operating at the local level within the newly imposed territorial and administrative framework.

It must be remembered that, although many areas were extensively explored before and after the creation of the Congo Free State (1885), effective administrative control was established only gradually in remote parts of the country and in areas of ethnic resistance. The development and expansion of missionary stations followed the same pattern. The extent of outside intervention and manipulation varied widely, thus accounting for different levels of continuities and discontinuities in the autochthonous ways of living. Faced by the ethnic and political fragmentation of the native population, the colonial government issued arrêtés and decrees aimed at administrative centralization. The newly formed chefferies were based on existing sociopolitical entities over which "traditional chiefs" continued to exercise authority "conformément à la coutume, pourvu qu'elle ne soit pas contraire à l'ordre public" (decree of 6 October 1891). The chefferies were incorporated into districts, zones, sectors, and posts, subdivisions of the Congo Free State (arrêté of 10 October 1894).

The reorganization created serious problems at the local level, where the so-called politique indigène was to be implemented. The structural and territorial organization of the local sociopolitical systems was inadequately understood. Continuous modification of existing legislation was thus necessary (e.g., the decree of 3 June 1906, the arrêtés of 11 April 1924 and 29 June 1933, the decree of 5 December 1938); administrative units were constantly changed, boundaries were altered, and homogeneous and heterogeneous ethnic units alike were fused or separated. The local administrators charged with implementing the politique indigène in their respective regions had to make inquiries (enquêtes préliminaires) into the native sociopolitical structures before any reorganization could be approved by the central authorities. Although the local administrators had neither the time nor the skill to conduct in-depth studies, many remarkable
ethnographic reports (preserved in Zaire and Belgian archives and also in the Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale) resulted. Although some were eventually published in journals (Congo, Bulletin des juridictions indigènes, Bulletin du Ceysi, Problemes d'Afrique centrale), most of the reports remained in manuscript form. They nevertheless attest to many misconceptions about the nature of the "tribe," the sociopolitical structures, the territorial framework, and the belief systems. The ensuing manipulation of social customs had a detrimental impact on the arts in areas where many artworks were linked with the positions of chief, ritual expert, dignitary, headman, elder, diviner, and healer. Indeed, a number of these offices were eliminated or obscured in the gradual process of administrative reorganization, as they were denied recognition or suffered erosion of their authority.

The policy of recognizing local custom only to the extent that it was not contrary to the public order had serious consequences. Public order was defined in colonial terms and promptly embodied in legislation. In Zaire many artworks were intimately associated with rituals of circumcision; with initiation and membership in voluntary associations, corporations, and cults; with various forms of magic related to healing, witchcraft, divination, detection of thieves and evildoers, general well-being (e.g., fertility), and economic activities (e.g., hunting); with burial practices; and with cults of ancestors and nature spirits. It was the obligation of territorial administrators to determine whether these institutions and their personnel were subversive of or incompatible with the new order. Thus a spectrum of disparate and eventually contradictory reactions toward local institutions was developed.

Consider, for example, the so-called secret societies. Voluntary associations engaging in more or less secret practices were a characteristic phenomenon in most regions of Zaire. Many with supratribal male or female membership ranged widely in function and purpose. Some were very ancient; others sprang up as responses to the colonial situation. As these associations, mostly labeled sectes secrètes, tended to wield great power, they became the target of early legislation (e.g., circulaire of 3 September 1917). In its Recueil à l'usage des fonctionnaires et des agents du service territorial, the Ministry of Colonies (1925) called for their careful monitoring. Administrative and legal action against them was advised only "if they aim at or favor legal infractions or immoral acts or if they have a political character that is hostile to authority" (my translation; 1925, p. 351). Secrecy, intratribal and transtribal allegiances of members, and the potential for terror and sedition were their most feared characteristics. The governor of a province hence had the authority to dissolve such associations "whenever and wherever their existence was contrary to civilisation or constituted a threat against peace and public order" (Piron and Devos, 1954, p. 875; ordinance of 25 August 1937). According to the same source, in urgent cases the district commissioners could order the dissolution of the associations, and territorial administrators could proclaim their temporary suspension. Piron and Devos (1954, pp. 875–876) note for the six provinces a number of such associations
forbidden by law, but the list is incomplete because of temporary injunctions and the classification of some as dances rather than as secret societies. As an example, for the Lega, Bembe, and Nyanga areas, with which I am directly familiar, only Bwami, Ekyengye (Kitshendye), Elanda (Kilanda), Kitawala, Pauni, Punga, and Toni-Toni are mentioned, but other associations such as Alunga, Batendamwa, Bahumbwa, Mbuntsu, and Mumbira, and the associational complex linked with circumcision rites (Butende, Bwali, Mukumo), were forbidden as well. Because of the rigidity of certain prescriptions (e.g., regarding the poison ordeal or burial practices) and the new political and legal climate, many of these institutions also lost much of their functional significance through the gradual erosion of their power. Under the circumstances, the arts functionally related to these ritual frameworks also declined in importance without finding a new raison d’être (Van Der Kerken, 1943).

The Congo Free State assigned the education of the youth to the missionaries (decree of 4 March 1892). Their role is not easy to pinpoint because of differences in attitudes, orders, congregations, and societies, and the enlightenment and scholarly vision of individual missionaries. As a rule, however, missionaries came into conflict most frequently with ideological structures and with certain practices (e.g., the prolonged circumcision rites) in which the arts were deeply embedded. Certain syncretistic movements (e.g., Kimbangism) adopted, sometimes temporarily, iconoclastic methods with devastating effects on the arts. Catechists and other fervent Christians were hardly trained to be sympathetic toward the arts and their users. As pointed out earlier, in the thirties a drive to preserve themes, motives, and patterns of the native arts by channeling them into new directions or incorporating them into liturgical art developed in many missionary circles. Monsignor Vanuiten’s report of 1936 stressed the necessity for missionaries to show a congenial interest in the native arts, even suggesting that some of them specialize in this topic (D.A.G., 1936). The results, however, were limited. Writing broadly about the role of the Catholic church vis-à-vis native art, Beckman (1945) indicates that the idea of a native Christian art came to be viewed as an element in the consolidation of religious ideas. Beckman points out that the task was difficult, for two reasons: (1) many missionaries lacked a sufficient grasp of and appreciation for native art; (2) religious traditions behind the art had to be abandoned upon acceptance of the Christian faith.

While the traditional arts declined or were being destroyed, a paradoxical situation developed: some of their themes, motives, and forms were incorporated into liturgical art (in altars, mangers, chalices, chasubles, etc.); in contrast, new forms of sculpture originated from recent religious or secular contexts. Numerous individual initiatives launched by missionaries, territorial administrators, and Western artists frequently had perplexing mediocre and stereotyped results. Gradually local “schools” and “ateliers” of sculptors and decorators sprang up in Zaire. The 1947 Concours artisanal in Kinshasa displayed ivory carvings from Bolobo in northwestern Zaire and Katako-Kombe in
east-central Zaire, ebony sculptures from the Buta-Aketi region in the northeast, and modernized drums and masks from the Cokwe in the southwest (Kahemba). In ceramics and textiles made in and around the new centers, artistic traditions were sometimes much better preserved.

Fortunately, local efforts to stem the massive outflow of Zairian artworks and ethnographical items to European and American museums and private collections were meeting with success. By 1915 the Swedish missionary Karlman had already established a small museum in Kingoye (in Mayumbe, Lower Congo) and the Scheutist Fathers were preserving collections in Kangu, and by 1938 the Musée ethnographique de la Mission du Kwango was housing important collections assembled by the Jesuits over a period of forty years. In 1936 the Musée de la vie indigène was founded in Léopoldville, and in 1942 the Musée Léopold II was started in Elisabethville. Through the efforts of Praet, Timmermans, Verly, and others, and with the sponsorship of the Ateliers sociaux d’art indigene, local museums were developed between 1955 and 1957 in Tshikapa, Paulis, and Luluaibourg (see also Anonymous, 1956). About the same time, Maquet in Astrida (Rwanda) and Biebuyck in Lwiro (near Bukavu, eastern Zaire) organized (with the help of other researchers like Vansina, Jacobs, and de Heusch) local museums in connection with the research centers of the Institut pour la recherche scientifique en Afrique centrale. Between 1958 and 1960 Biebuyck also assembled a large collection of artworks and other objects at the Université Lovanium in Léopoldville. Since independence, the work of building the national collections and ethnographically validating them has been vigorously pursued by the Institut des musées nationaux du Zaïre under the direction of Cornet.

The year 1947 was of extraordinary importance for the study of Zaire culture and art, for in that year Olbrechts became director of the Musée royal du Congo belge. He gave fresh impetus to the growth, validation, and appreciation of the rich museum collections. He was a cofounder of the Institut pour la recherche scientifique en Afrique centrale, which was soon to develop various centers for field research in Zaire. These centers gave scholars (Maquet, Biebuyck, Vansina, de Heusch, Douglas, Merriam, Doutreloux, Crine, and others) and distinguished missionaries (de Sousberghe, Hulstaert, Swartenbroeckx, and others) the opportunity to carry out long-range field research on diverse topics and in different parts of the country. Also in 1947, at Louvain University, the vigorous journal Zaïre, under the direction of Malengreau and Lecointre, replaced the older Congo; and the Institut universitaire des territoires d’Outre-Mer (Antwerp) published Problèmes d’Afrique centrale.

It is impossible to enumerate the many outstanding contributions made since 1947 to the understanding of the art and the culture of Zaire. Relevant studies are scattered in world journals and published in many books. The Mémoires series of the Académie royale des sciences d’Outre-Mer (formerly Institut royal colonial belge) and the Annales of the Musée royal de l’Afrique centrale (formerly Musée du Congo belge) deserve special mention because they con-
tinue to produce worthwhile monographs. The journal *Congo-Terrureu* (1952; later *Africa-Terrureu*), founded by the Amis du Musée royal du Congo belge and Olbrechts, added a valuable new dimension to the research. The studies took on a more international aspect through field research among populations in Zaire and peripheral areas where cultures overlap into the Central African Republic, the Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, Cabinda, and the Congo Republic (Brazzaville), as American, British, French, and Portuguese scholars broadened the ethnographic fields covered by the Belgians. Within Zaire, Douglas devoted field studies to the Lele, Merriam, to the Songye and some other groups, and Wolfe, to the Ngombe. The classic works on the periphery all have a direct bearing on the comprehension of Zaire ethnography, such as those by Evans-Pritchard on the Zande; Southall on the Aluur; Winter on the Bwamba; Middleton on the Lugbara; Maquet on Rwanda; Cunnison on the Luapula Lunda; Richards on the Bemba; White on the Luvale and the Luchazi; Turner on the Ndembu; Redinha, Felgas, Vaz, and others on Angola populations; Soret and Balandier on the Kongo; Lebeuf on the Teke; and De Dampiere on the N zakara.

A host of useful monographs and articles have been added to ethnographic inventories since the independence of Zaire (30 June 1960). Several groups of publications may be distinguished. Important works published by missionaries and others whose field data extend back to the preindependence era include, for instance, studies by Laman on the Kongo, de Beir and Planquart on the Yaka, Lamal on the Suku and Kwango area, Hulstaert on the Nkundo-Mongo, Theuws and Burton on the Luba, Van Everbroeck on the Sakata and Ekonda, Bylin and Colldén on the Sakata, and Tonnoir on the Buma. Professional anthropologists who have continued to issue publications on populations studied in preindependence days include Vansina on the Kuba; Douglas on the Lele; Merriam on the Songye; de Sousberge on the Pende and the Kwango-Kwilu; Biebuyck on the Bembe, the Lega, and the Nyanga. The postindependence work of other scholars and missionaries is gradually becoming available. Of particular importance are the many scholars, priests, government agents, and other Zairians now contributing to the development of ethnographical dossiers. Through all these efforts, already fairly well-known ethnic groups of southwestern Zaire are now better documented (e.g., the Kongo by Janzen, MacGaffey, Fukiau, Buekasa; the Teke (Tio) by Vansina; the Yaka by Devisch; the Pende by Gusimana; the Mbala by Lumbwe Mudindaambi; the Yansi by de Plaen, Thiel, and others; the Buma and Sakata by Hochegger). New information on other well-documented groups, such as Lunda or Luba, is being provided through the published and still unpublished works of other historians and anthropologists. Most significantly, recent additional knowledge about ethnic groups previously neglected is helping to expand the range of ethnographical and historical insights (e.g., de Mahieu on the Komo; Ceyens on the Ket-Binji-Lwalwa; Reefe on the Luba; Newbury and Sigwalt on the Shi; Packard on the Nande).

Linguistic studies (classifications and detailed descriptions of languages, in-
cluding dictionaries) and analyses of oral literature have been omitted from this brief survey. It must be noted, however, that for Zaire there is a long tradition of first-rate research in these two disciplines, in either or both of which writers named earlier have worked. Linguists such as Van Bulck, Burssens, Guthrie, Tucker, Meeussen, Coupez, Jacobs, Spa, and Stappers have also made outstanding contributions that are useful for the study of the arts.

Linguistic classifications help to clarify the historical relationships between ethnic groups and the occurrence of regional clusters and of cultural discontinuities and discontinuities across clusters. Increasing emphasis on dialect clusters and variations within culturally homogeneous ethnic units makes it easier to understand intratribal distinctions. Comparison of linguistic classifications with ethnographic and stylistic studies reveals that, in spite of overlappings, considerable distributional differences exist. These must be conceived in terms of local migration and admixture of populations, political autonomy and decentralization, diffusion of art-producing and art-using institutions, trading and marketing, degree of creativity and artistic inventiveness in local groups, schools and ateliers and their irradiation. Detailed dictionaries and semantic treatises clarify vital concepts (e.g., the human being and his components, the dead and the ancestors, the nature spirits and forces) with which the arts are inextricably linked.

The next section presents an overview of approaches to the arts, mainly in the domain of sculpture. Despite notable achievements, the lacunae in the analysis of certain art forms are conspicuous. Although many isolated details are available about body decoration and adornment, architecture, furniture, and general material culture (particularly the highly developed metalwork), almost no thorough and systematic comparative or descriptive studies exist. Even less is known about musical style and the all-important study of dance and choreography. A full understanding of the many artworks used in dance is impeded by the lack of critical data on choreography, rhythmic movement, and gestural symbolism. Musical instruments, many of them finely carved and decorated, are better documented, and several comparative studies cover large parts of Zaire (e.g., Maes, Boone, and particularly Laurenty). All too rare are full descriptions and analyses of the musical instruments used by different ethnic groups, with the technological and cultural implications. (See, however, Söderberg for the Kongo, Maquet for the Pende, Merriam for the Songye and the Shi; and music albums by Gansemans for the Luba and the Lunda, Ciparisse for the Kongo and the Yaka, Schmidt-Wrenenger for the Cokwe, and the Music of Africa series by Tracey).

The rich and complicated field of graphics has been seriously neglected, despite the presence of valuable hints for some groups. Graphics in the form of painted, incised, woven, or plaited designs on the body or on objects, or in the form of signs and complex drawings on the ground, were highly developed as warnings, marks of status and social identity, embellishments, and teaching methods. The failure to study the scope and content of graphics weakens our comprehension of many sculptures.
A final comment is necessary about handbooks and syntheses on Zaire ethnography. Since Chapaux (1894) and Wauters (1899), many quasi syntheses and more serious attempts at a general characterization of the peoples and cultures of Zaire have been undertaken. Some of them (e.g., Van Der Kerken, 1920, 1952; Maes, 1922; Herskovits, 1962; De Cleene, 1943) are so wide-ranging that they are practically useless for any in-depth understanding of Zaire ethnography, though they do make some interesting points. The greatly increased ethnographical knowledge has made all these works outdated. Others by Baumann (1939, 1975), Baumann and Westermann (1948), Hirschberg (1965), Merriam (1959), and Murdock (1959, 1967) offer perspectives on cultural classifications (ethnographic circles and strata, cultural provinces, clusters, and groups). Their usefulness, however, is overshadowed by historical conjectures, sketchiness, incompleteness, or imprecision. The most serious attempt to date, the introductory work by Vansina et al. (1966), is deficient on some regions and includes many generalizations that obscure the finer nuances. The few volumes published in the Ethnographic Survey of Africa dealing with particular clusters of people (in Zaire by H. Bursens, 1958b; Van Geluwe, 1956, 1957, 1960; Vansina, 1954; on peripheral groups by Baxter and Butt, 1953; Butt, 1952; Huntingford, 1953; McCulloch, 1951; Slaski, 1951; Soret, 1959; Taylor, 1962; Whiteley 1951; Willis, 1966) are somewhat more helpful. Many syntheses of earlier published and unpublished documents were prepared before the results of major field research in these clusters were known. Among the most useful contributions are the small-scale restricted or typological surveys attempted, for example, by Nicolai (1963) for the Kwilu region or Vansina (1968) for the southern Zaire kingdoms. The early synthetic documents by Johnston (1908) and Moeller (1936) on a large but restricted region of Zaire are in a class by themselves.

In conclusion, it is fair to state that a huge and steadily growing ethnographic documentation is available, but it is difficult to compile because of the many European languages in which it is written and its dispersal, unevenness, contradictions, and gaps. For a region so immense as Zaire, where scientific ethnographic studies are relatively recent, the lacunae at all levels are unavoidable. Many cultures remain almost totally unresearched, and for others information on aspects most relevant to the arts is inadequate. For example, the first-rate knowledge about the language, the oral literature, and the marriage system of the Nkundo-Mongo is in sharp contrast with the less satisfactory data about their other cultural aspects, or with the almost complete lack of information about the southern Mongo. Contrast the details on Kongo or Pende culture with the scarcity of facts on the Mbala, the Dzing, or the Nkanu. The same comparison would hold true for many other groups throughout Zaire. To make generalizations, even about specific ethnic groups, is hazardous when internal differences have frequently been obscured, particularly in earlier writings whose authors lacked appreciation for nuances and discontinuities. The comprehension of vital evidence about sociopolitical organization, religious belief, and ritual is impeded in many nonprofessional writings by their lack of a precise and consistent terminology and their failure adequately to recognize levels of orga-
nization and categories of thought. Hopeless confusions developed, for exam-
ple, around concepts such as tribes, subtribes, clans, subclans, lineages, subli-
neages, and families (extended to nuclear); about chiefs (political and chiefs of
the land), headmen of villages, and heads or elders of lineages or families (who
in the French literature all are indiscriminately called chefs); or about the
diviner-healer-herbalist, witch, sorcerer, ritual expert, and priest of a cult.