INTRODUCTION

The African continent offers a bewildering array of names: names of distinctive populations and their subdivisions, their languages and dialects; names of countries, geographical places, and archaeological sites; names of empires, kingdoms, chiefdoms, and villages; terms for territorial and administrative divisions; and names of kinship groups, cults, and associations. This terminological profusion permeates all aspects of life, from personal name giving to the as yet insufficiently known artistic and technical taxonomies. Among the Nyanga of Zaire, for example, a full-fledged adult married man with children has at least five to six personal names: a birthname, a “youth name” received at his circumcision rites, a tutelary spirit name, a nickname, a teknonymic name, and eventually a name referring to a status or a skill. Married women with children have an equally large number of personal names. All of these names are kept for life, although each is used only by certain categories of kin and nonkin and only in prescribed types of relationships.

The abundance of African language terms (and their translations or equivalencies in a European language) occurring in studies on African art is no less impressive. An artwork is attributed not merely to a particular ethnic group such as the Bamana (Bambara of Mali) and its numerous territorial, political, social, and ritual divisions, but also to the particular institutional setting within which it is made and functions. Authors on Bamana art typically specify that a certain mask is of the komo, kore, ndomo, kono, namakoroku (tyiwara; planpeu) or nama association or initiation system.

Artworks linked with hierarchically structured associations or age classes, different grades, and initiation phases, must be placed in their proper socio-ritual settings and systems of meaning. For example, in order to situate fully a Lega anthropomorphic figurine carved in elephant ivory or bone, the object must be linked with initiations of the “bwami” voluntary association. This association is intricately structured into grades, subgrades and cycles, has male
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and female membership, and recognizes among its members certain special statuses (such as most senior by birth or by initiation, master preceptor, or most recent initiate). The figurine must be placed within the framework of initiations into the highest grade of “kindi,” because all ivory carvings are associated with that grade. The kindi grade itself comprises three subgrades (kyogoka kindi, musagi wa kindi and lutumbo lwa kindi), the membership of which uses different types of artworks of diverse shapes and materials, many of them carved in elephant ivory or bone. The male initiations into the three levels of the kindi grade are inseparable from those achieved by a senior wife to the complementary female grade of “buyamwa.” It is therefore necessary to indicate to which subgrade the particular ivory figurine belongs and whether it is associated with the male or the female initiations at the highest grade level. In addition, every ivory figurine has, apart from its generic term, at least one individual name that generally indicates, but in a covert manner, a set of meanings linked with it.

Thus, a Lega anthropomorphic ivory figurine would have to be identified as an object exclusively controlled by members of the “Bwami” association, in individual male ownership by an initiate of the highest lutumbo lwa kindi grade, and used in the bele muno initiatory phase, generally classified as inginga, and specifically known as Sakematwematwe. This profusion of terms associated with a single object illustrates the incredibly rich nomenclature typically found in the study of African art—nomenclature not easily translatable into European languages and consequently the source of numerous difficulties of interpretation and classification.

This work concentrates on an extremely important set of terms—the ethnonyms—terms that include both autoethnonyms (names by which particular ethnic groups identify themselves) and xeno- or heteroethnonyms (names by which others designate them). The work also includes many names representing narrower terms (names by which particular ethnic groups divide themselves internally into smaller units). As the outside world began to transcribe African names into a variety of foreign languages, many different spellings began to appear in the literature. This work also contains many of the name variants resulting from such transcriptions. A correct knowledge of ethnonyms and ethnic nomenclatures is a sine qua non in the study of African art. The primary point of reference in the analysis and comparison of this art is the ethnic group or subgroup, not the time period (which is mostly unknown or just guessed), nor the atelier, the school, or the individual artist (whose name and specific place of work are rarely known).

This index only lists some of the better known and most current ethnonyms; a complete enumeration of autonomous and related groups, and their subethnic divisions, seems impossible to achieve. These limitations are due not merely to the sheer number of ethnonyms (and variant spellings), but also to the fact that Africa remains an understudied continent, whose cultural richness and diversity will never be fully understood. For a vast number of populations and
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cultures, reliable data are simply unavailable. Although the scientific study of
the continent has progressed enormously since Evans-Pritchard undertook his
Zande studies, much basic information is still lacking, and in fact may elude us
forever, because of past scholarly neglect and sweeping cultural changes.

Expressing their astonishment about my efforts to study them in 1950 and
1951, the Bembe people of eastern Zaire held up the following proverbial
truth: “Byabekyakile milengeci tamulange ngendo, musumona micumbi musu-
langa ngendo” (At the time of the dry season you did not prepare for the jour-
ney, now as you experience the rainy season you make preparations for the
journey), referring to the sad reality that efforts to penetrate deep into the
mind of the Bembe came too late, for a huge loss had already marked their
cultural memory and heritage.

In this brief introduction, I examine some of the many reasons for the emer-
gence and existence of the bewildering number of ethnic terminologies, and
present possible explanations for the real and apparent confusions and vari-
ations of names.

Outside Intervention and the Transcription of Names

At the time of the earliest contacts with the West, most African ethnic groups
(excluding the Arab, Berber, and some Ethiopian societies) had no writing sys-
tems of their own. Their cultural traditions were orally based and expressed in
a wealth of orally transmitted texts, ranging from epics to tales, legends and
historical narratives, from aphorisms to riddles, praises and prayers. The
African peoples had, obviously, developed sophisticated systems of communi-
cation reflected in the so-called drum-languages, gestural codes, body art and
paraphernalia, dance movements and theatrical performances, musical pat-
terns, sculptures, and symbolic designs, but these methods of communication
are not relevant for the present discussion. The traditional lack of writing
means that the ethnic names recorded in the earliest Western literature lacked
written precedent and were transcribed, for better or for worse, by means of
alphabetic signs.

Most early and many later observers did not have the language skills need-
ed to decipher the sometimes very difficult sound systems of African lan-
guages. Furthermore, a spoken or written symbol (a vowel, a consonant, or a
combination of them) currently used in the Western alphabet did not neces-
sarily represent the same sound values for a Dutch, English, French, German,
Italian, Portuguese, Scandinavian, Spanish or other commentator reporting on
African cultures.

Leaving aside some exceptional early observers, most persons living and
working in Africa spoke with Africans in their own European language, most-
ly with the help of ad hoc “interpreters” sometimes recruited in other ethnic
groups who understood the European language imperfectly and frequently
experienced great difficulties grasping the Western methods of inquiry and
interview. These untrained "interpreters" often had only a limited knowledge of the tribal language, the culture, and the people they were providing information about, or they might not produce "objective" translations of what they heard, in order to satisfy certain sociopolitical and other interests. Some Westerners conversed with the interested populations in one or another lingua franca and received terminologies adapted to the speech patterns of that particular lingua franca. Thus, someone speaking Kingwana (a Swahili dialect introduced into eastern Zaire during the conquest period) with Lega villagers would get answers that were pertinent to the Kingwana speech patterns and would receive terms such as (Wa)Rega instead of (Ba)Lega, (Wa)Songora instead of (Ba)Songola. The hurried and uncritical approach with which all this name giving and name receiving was done led observers who were primarily explorers or traders, or military, administrative, or missionary personnel, to record incorrect names and even invented ones.

The need for "the unification and simplification of the orthography of African languages" was felt keenly as scholarly interests in Africa began to emerge. Shortly after its creation, the International African Institute (London) prepared a memorandum on the *Practical Orthography of African Languages* (Oxford University Press, 1928, revised 1930). Although the recommendations were successful in some milieus, they were largely ignored by most authors particularly those writing in languages other than English, and had little or no impact on the systematic transcription of ethnic names in administrative and early scholarly documents. Numerous subsequent international conferences notwithstanding, the current nomenclature remains very confused, partly because of the orthographical precedents already in the literature, the unwillingness of some to depart from the established conventions, and the recent flurry of sometimes unverified ethnic denominations.

Among the many examples of the haphazard manner in which ethnic names were codified in past writings, the case of the Chokwe (Cokwe) people of southern Zaire and northern Angola is symptomatic. The Chokwe (Cokwe) are mentioned in the literature before 1879, in various German, English, French, Portuguese, and Flemish articles and books under an incredible number of spellings: A'hioko, Bachoko, Badjok, Ba-Djok, Badjoko, Bakjok, Bakioko, Basok, Batchokwe, Batchoque, Batshioko, Batshiokwe, Batshok, Battshoko, Benatuchoko, Chiboque, Kaschoko, Kibokoe, Kibokwe, Khiko, Kioke, Kiokjo, Kioko, Kioque, Makioko, Matchioko, Quioco, Tschiokwe, Tsokwe, Tutshiokwe, Utshiokwe, Va-Chioko, Watschiokwe, etc. (The enumeration is based on Maes and Boone, 1935, pp. 190–193, who adopt the spelling Batshioko; for an even longer list see Bastin, 1961, vi, p. 21, n. 1). The example of the Chokwe (Cokwe) shows some of the transcription problems that in the past and present have produced so many variations. Clear influences of the language patterns of the Portuguese, German, French, and English observers are built into the transcriptions. But there is more.

As evidenced in the Chokwe (Cokwe) example, authors have tended to
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place a plural prefix of the second class of nominal classifiers before the root, in several permutations such as A-, Ba-, Va-. Other authors have used a singular prefix of different classes, such as Ka-, Ki- and its variants (Qui- or Tshi-) inspired by the observer’s European language. They have even introduced other types of plural prefixes, such as Ma- and Tu. Since early authors generally knew little about African language structures, they took the terms they received at face value, the native speaker-interpreter tending to use the prefixes as he heard them. In addition, the name Chokwe (Cokwe) underwent a double manipulation: the ch- or c- of Chokwe (Cokwe) was spelled as tshi-, chi-, tsh-, tschi-, ki-, qui-, j- and dj; kwe, the second syllable in Cho-kwe (Cokwe) was rendered as -ke, -ko or -que.

By 1954, when the Belgian linguist Burssens prepared his introduction to The Bantu Languages of Zaire, he gave preference to the spelling Ciokwe (a transcription still favored in Boone, 1973, p. 1, although in 1961, p. 233, she selected the spelling Thshokwe). Burssens added still other variants, such as Tucikwe and Tutshikoew. Murdock (1959, p. 293, nr 25) provided even more new variants under the label Chokwe (Aioko, Atsokwe, Bachokwe, Kashioko, Katsokwe, Shioko, Tsiboko, Tsokwe, Tutshokwe, Vichioko, Watschokwe). Fortunately, the term Chokwe is now the preferred one in writings on African art. Linguists, like Mann and Dalby (1987, p. 153) and many other scholars, adopt the spelling Cokwe in accord with the rules already laid out in the 1928 documents of the International African Institute. The Chokwe case thus offers a striking example of the many orthographical confusions that produced useless complications and meaningless variations for persons coping with the organization and classification of ethnic materials.

It must be noted, however, that part of the spelling differences in the Chokwe case, as well as in numerous other instances, are reflections of the existence of diverse dialects, the Chokwe people being a widely dispersed group without central political authority. Moreover, the dispersed segments of the Chokwe population are in contact with numerous distinctive groups of Bantu speakers, such as Lunda, Luba, Pende, Songo, and Lwimbi, so that some observers have adopted the peculiar pronunciation of the contact group.

The significance of regional and dialectal variations in pronunciation and spelling is well illustrated in the case of the Manding (Mandeka, pl. Mandekalu) peoples, a very large group of historically and linguistically related populations dispersed in various countries of West Africa. They are also known in French literature as Mandingue and sometimes in English as Mandingo. According to authorities, such as Dalby, Bird and others (see Hodge, ed., 1971, passim), the designation Manding is derived from the toponym Mande, a historically significant region on the Upper Niger. Because of “fluctuations in nasalization,” the term Mande is known in such regional variants as Manden, Mandin, Mani, Mali.

The problems are compounded by other linguistic features inherent in the languages from which particular ethnonyms are derived. In the Mande case,
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some variant names, such as Mandi-nka, are the result of the suffixation of the formative elements -ka or -nka, which help in the derivation of adjectival stems from toponyms. Mandinka, a term often used to refer to the Gambian Mande, literally means “belonging/originating in the Mande/Mandin heartland.” A term such as Mandingo/Mandinka results from the fusions of the suffix -ka with the suffix -o, to form the noun Mandin-ko, meaning an individual from Mandinka. Still other forms such as Mande-kan, indicate the language. Given these examples, one understands the immense difficulties involved for so many persons not expert in African language systems.

Internal Taxonomies and Subdivisions

Regardless of the numerous transcription errors that have flawed African ethnic nomenclature by creating a large number of meaningless spelling variants, anthropological, archaeological, historical, and linguistic researches have established the irrefutable fact that the African continent is, and has been for a very long time, inhabited by a great many distinctively named human groups, frequently called tribes or clusters of tribes. Over thousands of years these ethnic groups have elaborated their own unique languages and dialects. As the historical processes of migration, scission, and fusion progressed, more and more different sociopolitical entities emerged. Each group invented its own names to demarcate its autonomy and uniqueness versus the outside world and to stress its internal cohesion and solidarity. Since every population is segmented, new subdivisions manifested themselves within more or less homogeneous populations to emphasize an internal system of segmentary oppositions and balances. Subsequent amalgamation or fission of related groups and subgroups further contributed to the emergence and proliferation of new names. For Africa as a whole, the resulting situation is incredibly complex. None of the general ethnic headings familiar to Africanists can do justice to this ethnic puzzle.

For purposes of general classification (as distinct from highly specialized and intensive local and regional studies or small-scale comparisons) it is impossible to take into account the many subdivisions and relationships. An example illustrates the complexities. Anthropologists, historians, and linguists have long recognized the existence of a fairly well delineated cluster of peoples, called Mongo, dispersed over huge distances in the western forest region of Zaire. The peoples included in this cluster exhibit common linguistic and cultural features and participate in a common historical background, but they have no centralized political system and are divided into a large number of distinctive groupings, sometimes for lack of a better descriptive term called “tribes.”

Although some of these groups are classified as Mongo because of linguistic and ethnographical comparisons devised by Western scholarship, many of them would consider such classifications to be meaningless. Groups called
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Ntomba, Nkundo, Ekonda undoubtedly exhibit a number of specialized patterns, and they recognize this fact. The Ekonda, for example, are also called Baseka Mputela or Banamputela, children of Mputela (their founding ancestor); they owe their name Ekonda (Konda) to the related Nkundo, a neighboring Mongo entity, the term Ekonda probably referring to people inhabiting the hinterland of the Lake Maindombe waters. The Ekonda have come to accept the combined terminology Ekond’Mputela, but prefer the terms Nkund’Mputela (because they consider themselves descendants from the ancestor Mputela, a junior sibling of Bongo, the founder of the prestigious Nkundo group) and Nkund’e nta, “Nkundo of the bow,” as they are still called by some of their other neighbors.

Ekonda society incorporates two population strata: the cultivators (the Ekonda, properly speaking, known as Baoto) and the hunters (Batwa or Pygmoids), who live in different hamlets but are subordinate to the Ekonda and somewhat assimilated to them. The Ekonda are politically not integrated, but each village is under the authority of a “nkumu,” a consecrated personage who stands in a special ritual relationship to the village spirit (clima). Because of this political fragmentation some authors have gone so far as to refer to the Ekonda as “a collectivity of Bantu tribes” and have listed not less than fourteen so-called subunits (some authors call these subtribes, while others speak of clans). Each of these subunits has a distinctive name, such as Besongo, Djoko, etc., and to complicate matters at least some of these fourteen subunits are grouped under the broader name Ibuyokonda (Van Everbroeck, 1974; Muller, 1957; Tonnier, 1966; Vangroenweghe, 1977). It is easy to see the difficulties involved in deciding at what level the terms should be recorded, whether from certain points of view the term Ekonda is a “catchword” and whether emphasis should be placed on the fourteen subdivisions of the Ekonda.

Autoethnonyms

The origin and meaning of the autoethnonyms are not easy to determine. They are different from the names for clans and lineages, or those for kingdoms and chiefdoms that are often modeled after the name of an eponymous ancestor (real or putative), a culture hero, a mythical or legendary figure, a king or chief, etc. In some cases an autoethnonym might refer to the uniqueness of the group, combined with a sense of pride and superiority, as occurs when the name selected entails the idea of “we the people,” or “the people of . . .” Cardona (1989, p. 351) has pointed out that many of the autoethnonyms are best understood in terms of oppositions, such as “we versus the others, the strangers, the foreigners,” “we the free versus the slaves, the captives,” “we the believers versus the infidels, the pagans,” etc. The well-known Dinka of the southern Sudan call themselves Monyjang (literally Man or Husband of Men) to indicate that “they see themselves as the standard of what is normal for the
dignity of man” and to stress “their superiority to the others or foreigners” (Deng, 1972, p. 2).

A surprisingly small number of autoethnonyms are currently used among the standard ethnic names quoted in the literature. This fact largely reflects the source and manner in which foreign agents registered names, relying more on the “hommes de confiance” that accompanied and served them, than on the people themselves. In cases where the autoethnonym does occur it may have been modified by the already mentioned inadequacy of the transcription (e.g., the Chagga of Tanzania are also known as Chaga, Jagga, Dschagga, Waschagga; see Moore and Pruritt, 1977, p. 1). In other instances, an element of differentiation based on language differences may be lacking. The Acoli who live in Uganda call themselves Log Acoli while those of the Sudan refer to themselves as Dok Acoli. Some variations in the transcription of autoethnonyms may also be due to dialect differences within the group, as was already pointed out for the Chokwe (although it is not clear whether this ethnic denomination, which seems to be related to the name of a river, is an autoethnonym). Thus the name Songhai (Songhay) may be pronounced differently in the vast area they occupy as Sonray or Songhoy (Rouch, 1954, p.3).

Xenoethnonyms and Derogatory Terms

Frequently many of the well-known ethnic names are not autoethnonyms, but xenoethnonyms or heteroethnonyms—that is, terms of reference employed by other ethnic groups, friendly or hostile, who may be closely interacting neighbors or geographically more remote populations. Reading some of the best anthropological and linguistic monographs and comparative studies, or the ethnographic surveys published by the International African Institute, one is struck by the number of classical, commonly mentioned, ethnic denominations that are of “foreign” origin. It is probably not possible, at least at this stage, to eliminate these terms from our studies, because they are so well known and so deeply entrenched in our vocabularies. The real problem, however, is that a significant number of such names seem to have pejorative implications (some milder than others), referring to what “the others” may consider to be physical, behavioral, historical, or cultural traits they do not like or consider to be signs of backwardness and ignorance. Some of these terms are not simply nicknames, but outright insults. The name Songomeno (Songomino, Basongomino), literally, “those who file teeth,” for example, already mentioned in 1887 by Wolf and in 1890 by von Wissmann, refers to a portion of the Nkutshu (a Tetela-related group of Zaire) because of their practice of filing teeth, a method apparently disliked by neighboring groups. The Bacwa Pygmies in the rainforest among the Nyanga of East Zaire call populations around them Barimi, or “Ignorant-Ones.”

This sense of superiority or drastic difference is obviously expressed not merely in the ethnonyms, but also in numerous other formulas. In his remark-
able *Memoirs, Oui Mon Commandant!* (1994, p. 85), the African scholar-author Hampate Ba notes that for the Mossi a Fulani person (Peul, as he calls them) is not a human but "a red monkey of the yellow savanna," while the Fulani speak about the Mossi as "scar-faced apes, unclean and smelling of alcohol" (terminologies that are often nothing more than expressions of amicable, reciprocal joking relationships among individuals).

These xenoethnonyms seem to have originated under various circumstances and in different situations, and their precise original meaning is not always clear. The term Bambara, until recently preferred over the current Bamana to refer to one of the major art-producing populations of Mali, is a case in point. In 1923, Delafosse made a distinction between the denominations Bambara (which he said was used by West African populations adhering to Islam to refer to non-Islamic populations as the infidels) and Banmana (a term already available in written sources of 1887 by which the people called themselves—a term meaning for some "People of the Crocodile" and for others "Those Rejecting the Master"). The Europeans followed the terminological claims of the Islamicized groups in contact with the Banmana. There was also a third term, Bamana, meaning for some writers "Precipitous Rock" (Paques, 1954, pp. 1–2). The problem seems to be that the Bamana themselves do not frequently use these terms, preferring to identify different sections of the population on the basis of geographical location (e.g., those of Kaarta, those of Segu) or by means of certain nicknames (e.g., the people of Kaarta like to call those of Segu "Tukeleu, Those of the Single Tress").

Xenoethnonyms were obviously in existence before Islamic and European interventions in Africa. Their frequency was the result of contacts between peoples, common migration, scission, neighborhood or hostility, and conquest. But it is also certain that the new concepts, organizations, and administrations that the colonial forces introduced, often arbitrarily without regard for the genuinely traditional structures, had a great influence on the invention and proliferation of heteroethnonyms. Some countries and peoples were subject in the course of time to different Western forms of control, e.g., French, British, or Belgian systems replacing German ones after W W I in parts of West and East Africa, and this also contributed to the development of more heteroethnonyms.

The literature abounds with examples of how some of the so-called ethnic names originated or spread in the early beginnings of colonialism. The term Frafra applied to a people in northern Ghana is a British invention derived from a prevailing form of greeting—fara fara—that is an expression of sympathy in certain circumstances (Smith, 1978, p. 36). Although some segments of the population in the region of Bogatang came to accept the term Frafra, the Frafra call themselves Gurensi and to the outside scholarly world these people are also known as Nankanse. This name was applied to them by Rattray (1932, p. 132) after the terminology used by their northern neighbors, the Kassena.

Western influences and interventions in ethnic affairs have often led to the
emergence and eventually to the reluctant acceptance of a common ethnic name by people who traditionally were not known by such a common name. In Nigeria the term Mbembe is given to several groups who speak related dialects, but had no common name. African traders in the nineteenth century were struck by the frequent use of the term “mbe” (I say) to begin a sentence, and began to apply the “onomatopoetic” term Mbe-mbe to a group of peoples in the middle Cross River area of Nigeria, who spoke related dialects. Disliked at first, the term Mbembe was later accepted as an expression of unity (Wente-Lukas, pp. 262–263).

According to Forde and Jones (1950, p. 9) the Igbo (Ibo) of Nigeria did not use this common name before the advent of the Europeans. The precise meaning of the term is unclear. Various sources furnish such contradictory interpretations as “the people,” “forest-dwellers,” or “slaves.” The term was applied, however, by the Oru or River Igbo to the hinterland dwelling speakers of similar dialects. The Europeans started using the term Heebo or Ibo early in the slave-trade period to refer to anyone of the Ibo-speaking groups, even to the Ibibio. Later the Ibo themselves started using the term to refer to the language and, when talking to Europeans, to refer to Ibo speakers other than themselves.

One of the most extreme examples is offered by the so-called ethnonym Bamileke, a term that refers to a large number of kingdoms in the southern Cameroun grasslands. The much used term originated with the German colonial administration in Cameroun. It is based on a modification of the expression “mbalekeo,” which in Bali-Nyonga (one of the Cameroun languages) means “les gens d’en bas” (the people from down below). Traveling in the Bambuto mountain range, a German explorer had asked his Bali-Nyonga guide for the name of the people whose villages he could see below in the savanna, and received the name “mbalekeo” (the people who live down below), which later would become Bamileke and be expanded to include about one hundred political units (large and small kingdoms and chiefdoms) in the Grassland area (Notué, 1993, pp. 35–36).

Similar distinctions between populations living upstream or downstream, in the highlands or lowlands, have led to other ethnonyms. Some early sources referred to the Lega of Zaire as Malinga (those of the lowlands) and Ntata (those of the highlands), dynamic concepts that depend on the speaker’s relative geographical position and mean very little in terms of ethnic and cultural classification. A similar distinction was applied to the Zimba of Zaire. There were Zimba wa Mulu (highlands, a relative term) culturally close to the Lega and nowadays called Binja (people of the forest), and Zimba wa Maringga (of the lowlands, a relative term) strongly influenced in the nineteenth century by the Arabicized intruders in eastern Zaire, who called themselves Basole (a term conveying the idea of superiority) and are nowadays referred to as Southern Binja (Van Riel and De Plaen, 1967).

The intensive research on Africa undertaken in recent decades has
improved the ethnonymic situation in that there is more systematization, consistency, and precision and less arbitrariness in the use of terms. However, much work still needs to be done about ethnic nomenclature, particularly in reference to the origin and meaning of terms and the systematization of correct, readable, and acceptable spellings. In the immense amount of descriptive, analytical and comparative studies available on African ethnic cultures, and more particularly on the arts of Africa, it is possible to find adequate solutions for the problems, provided a massive effort is made involving cooperation between various disciplines concerned. To achieve a real solution it is necessary not merely to produce new names and new transcriptions of ethnonyms; but to examine critically the heuristic value of numerous terms, and to clarify the scope of the cultural and artistic realities they cover.

**GUIDE TO USE**

*African Ethnonyms* is intended for those who create documentation, for those who do research, and for those who assist them. It is a reference tool for librarians, visual resources catalogers, museum scholars, and researchers in art history, anthropology, linguistics, and African studies.

Research and documentation of traditional African art begins with the accurate identification of the people responsible for its production. The primary access point is through the names not of individuals, but of ethnic groups. One common difficulty in researching ethnic names is the lack of agreement in published sources. A single name can have many variations in spelling, which typically occur when the name has been transcribed from one language to another. In addition, a single ethnic unit may be known by several quite different names, or conversely, several ethnic groups may be known by a single collective term.

**Name Identification**

The primary purpose of this index is to make name identification easier by clustering all the variant names under a single entry-form name. All names in the cluster are also listed alphabetically in the index and are cross-referenced to the entry-form name. As an aid to identification, the cluster includes the name of the country or countries where the people are located, the language affiliation, the preferred name used in the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* [on-line database, June 1996] and the *Art and Architecture Thesaurus* [version 2.1, 1996], and a coded list of sources to consult for additional information. Many entries have explanatory notes to clarify complex relationships, collective terms, *see also* references, or other information that might help in name identification.