

Religion et Magie des Bayaka. *L. De Beir, S. J.* Collectanea Instituti Anthropos, No. 4. St. Augustin, Germany: Anthropos Institut, 1975. 191 pp. n.p. (paper).

The Biography of an African Society, Rwanda 1900-1960 Based on Forty-Eight Rwandan Autobiographies. *Helen Codere.* Sciences Humaines No. 79. Tervuren, Belgique: Musée Royal De L'Afrique Centrale, 1973. xv + 399 pp. n. p. (paper).

An African World: The Basongye Village of Lupupa Ngye. *Alan P. Merriam.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974. xxiii + 347 pp. \$12.50 (cloth).

L'Angola traditionnel: une introduction aux problemes magico-religieux. *M. L. Rodrigues De Azeite.* Coimbra, Portugal: Tipografia da Atlântida, 1974. 92 pp. n.p. (paper).

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Written by students of African culture with highly different backgrounds and experiences, these four works, each in its unique way, make significant contributions to the understanding of cultures in Zaïre and Rwanda.

De Beir spent a long time as a missionary in southwestern Zaïre. His monograph on religion and magic, which is complemented by another more general work (*Les Bayaka de M'nene N'toombo-Lengelenge*, 1975), was written between 1938 and 1946 and finally published in 1975. It deals with the matrilineal Yaka of Chief Munene Mutombo in southwestern Zaïre. This unpretentious and straightforward descriptive work, based on an admirable knowledge of the language and the analysis of many cases, is a substantial addition to the ethnography of the inadequately known Yaka, in particular to their systems of religion and magic.

merit for serious students of African art because of new insights it offers into the uses, functions, modes of acquisition and transmission of Yaka art and the insufficiently known relationships between sculpture and oral literature.

Codere's work is a much more ambitious attempt to write the biography of Rwanda society from about 1900 to its complete transformation in 1960-61. The larger part of the book centers on the actual autobiographies of 48 Rwanda individuals of different caste (Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa), age, sex, occupation, and economic and educational backgrounds. These autobiographies range from a disappointing one page to 15 pages; they are presented in English translations, which are themselves made from French versions (interlaced with Rwanda words) and prepared from Kinyarwanda texts by Codere's assistants. Needless to say, these translations have no significance for the student of oral literary forms, and there seem to be some questions about the methodology involved in collecting these texts. The author stresses the fact that the importance of the autobiographies lies in their content. And definitely, they contain much new material and nuances about the ethnography of Rwanda, e.g., on children, women, the vassalage system, human relations, and individual variations in experience and belief (p. 7). The interpretation of the materials is based on a problem-centered view of society, especially on a method "to treat problems as the central fact of society" (p. 317). Social and cultural changes are explained in terms of changes in the physical, social, and ideological problems encountered by individuals and the means by which they are resolved over a period of time. Of central interest is the analysis of the system of political power in ancient (before 1931) and modern Rwanda.

Merriam's study of the Lupupa Ngye village among the Basongye ethnic group (Zaire) is "an essentially descriptive sketch of the way of life of the people" (p. xxi) of that village. It is a wide-ranging, careful ethnographical treatise on a little-known group, based on fieldwork and judicious use of published and unpublished sources. The work is intended as a background for two more volumes that will examine music and the other arts "as an integral part of society and culture" (p. xx). The discussion of the metaphysical surroundings (Chapters 3 and 4), in which are most of the preliminary data on Basongye sculpture, is particularly illuminating for a more precise appreciation of the previ-

dures. The discussion of family, lineage, and larger social groupings (Chapter 5) is less convincing, especially with reference to the hierarchy of named groups into which the Basongye are subdivided. Such questions could probably be answered only through a more comprehensive study of Basongye social organization that would transcend the confines of the village. In discussing (Chapter 8) some dominant themes and principles in the life style of the villagers, the author presents interesting data on concepts of normalcy and deviant roles.

Under an unassuming title, Rodrigues de Areia makes a well documented comparative study on the triangular relationships between diviners, healers, and sorcerers existing in three major Bantu-speaking zones of Angola (represented, respectively, by the Kongo, Cokwe, and Umbundu and other related groups). The author establishes clear evidence for the basic concepts with which these three "magico-religious operators" work, the modalities of their power, their functions and social position, and the oppositions that characterize the categories of diviners and healers on the one hand and sorcerers on the other hand. Unfortunately, he does not pursue the analysis of their relationships with the power and authority of the chiefs.

The general ethnographical documentation on Zaire is very well served by Merriam's and de Beir's monographs, which achieve their goals of providing precise and admirably detailed new raw materials as a background for further in-depth research. Codere's work sets a clear example of the great potential of autobiographies for the study of sociocultural change and the variability of experience.