

Lemba, 1650–1930

**A Drum of Affliction in
Africa and the New World**

Volume 11

**Critical Studies on
Black Life and Culture**

Advisory Editor

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Lemba, 1650–1930

A Drum of Affliction in
Africa and the New World



Garland Publishing, Inc. New York and London
1982

R00074 59014

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Janzen, John M.
Lemba, 1650–1930.

(Critical studies on Black life and culture ; v. 11)

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Lemba (Cult) I. Title. II. Series.

BL2470.C6J36 967 80-9044

ISBN 0-8240-9306-2 AACR2

Printed on acid-free, 250-year-life paper
Manufactured in the United States of America

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Preface

Friends and colleagues alike have encouraged me to declare openly that I have written a book about a seventeenth-century “cure for capitalism,” created by insightful Congo coast people who perceived that the great trade was destroying their society. I have tried to avoid the faddish language of contemporary social analysis, both of the value-neutral school and of the critical Marxists, and have instead tried to marshal the evidence needed to show how one segment of coastal African society tried, in its own idiom—that of the *ngoma*, the “drum of affliction”—imaginatively to cope with a force that transformed African society, like many others, from what it must have been in earlier centuries into what it was when colonial flag-planters claimed the coastal Congo region in the late nineteenth century. We see, in accounts like those of Cabinda story teller Solomo Nitu, how the wealth to be earned at the coast is characterized in images of a siren woman who lures a young man to her, exacting from him the terrible price of forever giving up relations with his father. How the coastal culture came to terms with this force, over three centuries, is the story told in this book.

As I have worked on different manifestations of *Lemba*—the myth narratives, the initiation reports, the regional economic and political history—I have gradually perceived the scale of the system—truly a “world system”—to which *Lemba*’s adherents were responding, namely the expanding imperium of European trade and influence. In North Africa, more specifically in Egypt, there are examples of seventeenth-century Islamic brotherhoods which organized merchants and businessmen into tight, ethically-conservative groups to protect their interests in an enhanced economic status while, at the same time, preserving their Islamic social and religious identity. In North American Indian societies there are similar examples. The eastern Calumet system organized trading relationships prior to the French usurpation of this system, and on the Plains the Hako ceremonial trading society of the Pawnee brought trade relations under an umbrella of ritual kinship adoptions, again, seemingly for the protection of trade interests and also for the protection of the social fabric. This is the larger, world-wide, context of *Lemba*, beyond the “world system” of recent scholarship.

A work such as this, begun more than a decade ago when I pursued my own curiosity in a north-Kongo field study, also becomes a scholarly pilgrimage. It offers the opportunity—a danger to clarity, perhaps—of adding paradigm upon paradigm to a subject matter requiring explanation from several sides. The pilgrimage's steps will be evident in the orientations taken in the book's three sections: first, a political-economic study of a region; second, a symbolist-structuralist study of myths and rituals; third, a humanistic interpretation of Kongo's therapeutic effectiveness, especially that of *Lemba*.

I owe my scholarly journey in part to generous benefactors who have permitted travel and study resources. My original field studies in Equatorial Africa were sponsored by the Foreign Area Fellowship Program and the Social Science Research Council (United States). The Canada Council provided funds for a summer's exploration in 1971 in Sweden where I discovered (for myself) the Congo catechists' notebooks of the Laman collection which became the primary texts for the reconstruction of the *Lemba* inauguration rites. I am also indebted to the University of Kansas Graduate Research Fund for the means to microfilm these notebooks and to prepare them for further analysis and publication here and elsewhere.

I am deeply appreciative to the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung of the Federal Republic of Germany for granting me a research fellowship in 1977 to pursue work in Central-European archival and museum sources pertaining to *Lemba*, especially those of the German Loango Expedition of the 1870's found in Berlin, and those of numerous Belgian collectors found in the Royal African Museum in Tervuren, Belgium.

I am also indebted to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a six-month research fellowship in spring 1978, which permitted further work on the *Lemba* manuscript and the exploration of *Lemba's* New-World distribution.

I wish to thank staff members of museums and archives who have helped identify collections pertaining to *Lemba*, especially Drs. Maesen and Van der Gelwe of the Central Africa Museum of Tervuren, Belgium; Drs. Zwerneman and Lohse of the Hamburg Völkerkunde Museum; Dr. J.F. Thiel and others of the Anthropos Institute of St. Augustine, Germany; Dr. Krieger of the Berlin-Dahlem Museum für Völkerkunde; Dr. Koloss of the Linden Museum, Stuttgart; Dr. H. Witte of the Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal, The Netherlands; Mme. N'diaye of the Musée de l'Homme, Paris; staff members of the Göteborg and Stockholm Ethnographic Museums in Sweden; R. Widman of the Svenska Missionsförbundet,

Stockholm and Lidingö; and the personnel of the Jesuit Institute of Bonn. I am also grateful to Eugenia Herbert, who looked for *Lemba*-related articles at the British Museum, and Stanley Yoder, who examined collections of the National Museum of Zaire in this connection. This museum research has been extensive but not exhaustive, so I expect other *Lemba*-related objects to be identified once this book appears.

I am grateful to several talented persons for assisting me with the translation of enigmatic KiKongo songs found in the *Lemba* inaugurations. I mention especially Milembamani, Wamba dia Wamba, and Fukiau, all of whom cherish their language and know it far better than an outside student like myself ever will. Responsibility for lingering errors is mine.

I acknowledge those who read earlier versions of the manuscript and offered corrections and revisions, in particular Jan Vansina, Victor Turner, Wyatt MacGaffey, and Robert F. Thompson, as well as several anonymous readers.

I must acknowledge my wife Reinhild's continued encouragement and criticism and the gracious forbearance of my children, Bernd, Gesine, and Marike, during the years of my preoccupation with "*Lemba*-kinship-medical-systems" as they once succinctly parodied it.

Lastly, I acknowledge an intellectual indebtedness to my teacher, the late Professor Lloyd A. Fallers of the University of Chicago, who led me to see anthropology as a discipline broad enough to allow one to perceive the unexpected and to interpret it without destroying it.

J M J
Heubuden
January 1981



Plate 1. Loango, mid-seventeenth century, at the time *Lemba* is first recorded as a medicine of the king and the nobility. This print, taken from the 1670 French edition of O. Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique*, bears inscriptions of the original 1668 Dutch edition, indicating the following details: (a) king's palace; (b) wives' compound; (c) crier's tower;



(d) royal wine house; (e) royal dining house; (f) public audience court; (g) royal garden; (h) wives' garden; (i,k) two fetishes; (l) road criminals are taken to capital punishment. (Courtesy of Department of Special Collections, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.)



Plate 2. Market scene in *Lemba* country, late nineteenth or early twentieth century, showing pigs and goats of the kind used in *Lemba* feasts. (Svenska Missionsförbundet Archives, Lidingö)



Plate 3. Market entrance (*fula dia zandu*), scene of drinking and social intercourse, often actual place of trading. In *Lemba* symbolism, it is the basis of the idea of "trading with ancestors at the entrance from whence comes wealth" (text 9, line 17; Chapter 7). (Svenska Missionsförbundet Archives, Lidingö)



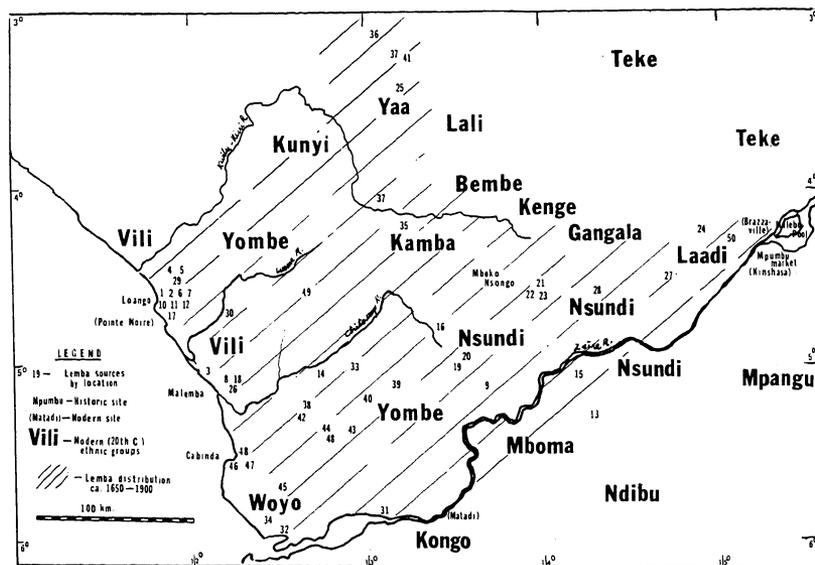
Plate 4. Lemba medicine chest (*n'kobe* Lemba) from N'goyo bearing characteristic petal motif. Collected by L. Bittremieux prior to 1933. (Musée royale de l'Afrique centrale, Tervuren, 35191.) Contents depicted in Figure 20.

Lemba, 1650–1930

A Drum of Affliction in
Africa and the New World

Figure 1

Distribution of *Lemba*, based on territorially-designated ethnographic, textual, and artifactual sources (see key to numbers)



Key

E = Ethnography
T = Text
A = Artifact

B-D = Berliin-Dahlem Museum für Völkerkunde
GEM = Göteborg Ethnographic Museum
LMS = Linden Museum Stuttgart
LRM = Leiden Rijksmuseum
MAC = Musée d'Afrique Central (Tervuren)
SEM = Stockholm Ethnographic Museum

1. (E) Dapper, 1670, p. 536
2. (E) Bastian, 1874, pp. 170-3
3. (A) Loango Expedition, 1875, B-D III C 347, engraved copper bracelet
4. (A) Visser, n.d., B-D III C 8136, "BaVili," balsa wood bracelet model template
5. (A) Visser, n.d., B-D III C 13810a-f, "BaVili," clay mold for bracelets
6. (A) Bastian, 1874, B-D Catalogue § 372, Lemba pipe
7. (A) Bastian, 1875, B-D III C 423, engraved copper bracelet
8. (A) Visser, 1900, B-D III C 13871, Lemba sack charm
9. (A) Hammar, 1910, GEM 68.11.241, "Nganda," drum
10. (E) Dennett, 1907, pp. 11, 89, 91, 133
11. (E) Güssfeldt, Falkenstein, Pechuel-Loesche, 1879, p. 71
12. (E/A) Bastian, 1874, B-D
13. (E) Cuvellier, 1946, p. 326
14. (E) Deleval, 1912
15. (E/A) Laman, SEM 1919.1.583, "Mukimbungu" Lemba *n'kobe*
16. (A) Hammar, 1906, GEM 68.11.171, "Bawende-BaYombe," drum
17. (A) Loango Expedition, 1875, B-D III C 710b, brass bracelet
18. (A) Visser, 1901, B-D III C 13743, "Kayo," Lemba sack charm
19. (E/T) Konda, "Mamundi" near Kinkenge, ca. 1918
20. (E/T) Babutidi, "Mamundi" near Kinkenge, ca. 1918
21. (E/T) Kwamba, "Mongo-Luala" near Kingoyi, ca. 1918
22. (A) Hammar, Kingoyi, GEM 68.11.241, drum, ca. 1910
23. (E/T) Kionga, Kingoyi, ca. 1916-18
24. (E/T) Kimbembe, "Madzia," ca. 1918
25. (E/T) Lunungu, "BaYaka," Indo, ca. 1918
26. (A) Visser, "Kayo," 1904, B-D III C 13744, Lemba sack charm
27. (E/T) Stenström, 1969, pp. 37-57; Andersson, 1953, fig. 22, Musana
28. (E/T) Fukiau, "Nseke-Mbanza," 1969, pp. 41-56, figs. 37-39
29. (A) Visser, "BaVili," 1904, B-D III C 18921, drum
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31. (A) Anon., "Boma," LRM 1032/136, casting mold for bracelet
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33. (A) Maesen, "Tshela," 1954, MAC 53.74.1333, Lemba bracelet
34. (A) Lagergren, "Kitona," n.d., GEM 1966.15.3, Lemba bracelet
35. (A) Andersson, "Kinzaba," "BaKamba," n.d., GEM 1938.28.16a, Lemba drum
36. (A) Hammar, "BaKuta-BaTeke," GEM 1968.11.208, rattle, and 1968.11.241, Lemba drum
37. (A) Andersson, "BaKuta-BaYaka," "Ntele," GEM 1938.31.11-12, Lemba bracelets
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42. (A) Maesen, "Tsanga," 1954, MAC 54.74.1335, Lemba bracelet
43. (E/A) Bittremieux, "Mayombe," 1937, MAC 37972, Lemba *n'kobe*
44. (E/A) Bittremieux, "Kangu," 1937, MAC 43040, Lemba *n'kobe*
45. (A) Bittremieux, "BaWoyo," 1933, MAC 35191, 35192, 2 *n'kobe* Lemba
46. (T/E) Tastevin, Cabinda, 1935, pp. 105-111, 191-7, 257-73
47. (A/T/E) Vaz, 1969, pp. 116f, 320f, 413f, 420f, pot lids
48. (E) Bittremieux, 1925, "Kangu"
49. (T) Nitu, "Masala, Luadi river, Zala area, Cabinda," 1961, MS.
50. (T/E) Malonga, "Lari," 1958, pp. 45-9, 51-61

Chapter 1

Introduction to *Lemba*

Lemba: Historic Equatorial African Drum of Affliction

Lemba, a major historic cult of healing, trade, and marriage relations, came into being in the seventeenth century in a triangular region extending from the Atlantic coast to Malebo Pool between today's cities of Kinshasa and Brazzaville, and from the Congo (Zaire) River northward to the Kwilu-Niari River valley (figure 1). Mpumbu market, situated on a hilltop overlooking Malebo Pool, was the western end point of the vast riverain trade network which covered the Congo Basin. From Mpumbu westward, rapids on the Congo River required trade to the coast to follow land routes. Until railroads were built from Malebo Pool to Pointe Noire and Matadi three centuries later, caravans of porters brought ivory, copper, slaves, and other products to the coast, and European wares such as cloth, guns, liquor, and beads back inland over the same routes. *Lemba* controlled this trade on the north bank, keeping the routes open, regulating local markets, and assuring that the massive international trade did not destroy local communities. In the mid-eighteenth century, for example, fifteen thousand slaves were being shipped annually from the ports of Loango, Cabinda, and Malemba. These slaves were drawn from inland societies which tended to see the trade, despite its economic advantages, as disruptive. Conflicts of interest between the trade and social order may explain why *Lemba*—a word meaning “to calm” (*lembikisa*)—took the form of a therapeutic association, a “drum of affliction” (*ngoma* or *nkonko*).

Lemba's illness is described in a variety of ways: as possession by *Lemba*'s ancestors, common in drums as a mode of affliction; as any illness affecting head, heart, abdomen, and sides, that is, the key organs of the person; as difficulty breathing, a typical witchcraft symptom; as miraculous recovery from a deadly disease, and more. However this erratic list of *Lemba* symptoms and causes tells less about it than does identification of the types of individuals afflicted and directed toward membership in *Lemba*. They normally were the region's elite, prominent healers, chiefs, and judges, especially those

engaged in mercantile work. Their ability to succeed in commerce and their aspirations to wealth made them vulnerable to the envy of their kinsmen, thus in a sense marginal in the society and “sick” with the *Lemba* affliction.

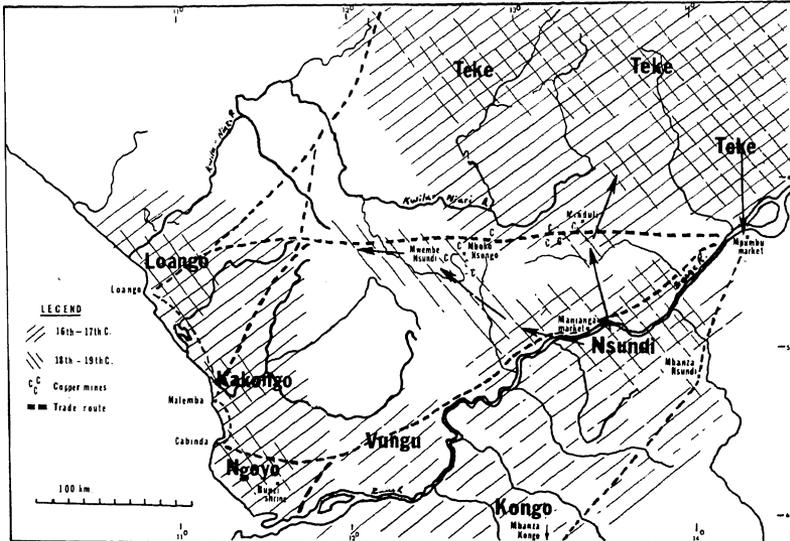
In typical drum of affliction manner, *Lemba* doctor-priests took the “sufferer” in hand and administered the initial purification. If he could muster further sponsorship, he would undergo full therapeutic initiation before the priests and priestesses of the locality. A ceremonial *Lemba* marriage with his leading wife, a lavish feast for *Lemba* priests and priestesses as well as for the public, and extensive instructions made up part of the initiatory ritual, before the priestly couple were qualified to themselves perform *Lemba*’s therapy.

Given such characteristics among many more to be explained in this book, it is not surprising that *Lemba* is considered by those who saw it in full bloom as an extraordinary institution, the most important of the consecrated medicines (*min’kisi*) among those that achieved corporate status. It is described as having been “a medicine of the village”; “a medicine of the family and its perpetuation”; “fertility medicine”; “the sacred medicine of governing” (*Lemba i n’kisi wangyaadila*) according to one clan head; “the government of multiplication and reproduction” (*luyaalu lua niekisa*), by a former *Lemba* wife; and “sacred medicine integrating people, villages and markets” (*n’kisi wabundisa bantu, mavata ye mazandu*), by a contemporary merchant and clan head who wrote a local history. In effect, although couched in the mold of a drum of affliction, *Lemba* was the governing order in a region much of which had no centralized institutions.

The *Lemba* region was bordered by prominent historical states—centralized kingdoms—which predate the international trade that began from the Congo coast in the sixteenth century (figure 2). South of the Zaire/Congo River stretched the great Kongo kingdom with its capital at Mbanza Kongo. Its northern province, Nsundi, extended from the southern bank of the river across to the north, although probably not as far as some early maps indicate. Smaller kingdoms and chiefdoms such as Vungu, Mbanza Mwembe, and Mwembe Nsundi existed along the river and northward into what became the *Lemba* region. On the coast were situated the famous old states of Loango, Kakongo, and Ngoyo, well documented by five centuries of European explorers, traders, and missionaries. To the north and east of the *Lemba* region could be found the great Teke (or Tio) complex of federated lords around their king Makoko of Mbé.

Figure 2

Political and economic map of *Lemba* region, 1600–1930 (Based on maps in Vansina's *The Tio*)



The distinctiveness of the *Lemba* system of government compared to that of the surrounding kingdoms can be illustrated by briefly noting different approaches to justice, the use of force, and the structure of economic resources. In the kingdoms, judicial order was maintained by courts of the principal chiefs or kings, which became courts of appeal in specific cases. The instrument for enforcing order at the disposal of some of the kingdoms included a hastily assembled army, most fully developed in the riverain polities, to defend the capital when it was under attack and to exert control over recalcitrant subordinate chiefs. A third expression of state order in the kingdoms was the levying of tribute by the center upon subordinate levels. At the zenith of each of these kingdoms tribute networks were widespread. Finally, the kingdoms were characterized by the symbolism of sacred and semidivine kingship, which was passed out along the tribute routes to extend the cloak of royal identity to outlying areas of the kingdom.

Under *Lemba*'s influence, justice, the exercise of force, and economics were institutionalized in "horizontal" mechanisms, most important of which was, beside *Lemba*'s ceremonial exchange

system, the market and trade network. Local markets, sponsored and owned by adjacent villages, were organized into cycles, or weeks, of four days. A code of market laws prescribed the details of trade, justice, capital punishment, and peacemaking. Although markets existed in the kingdoms, these market laws took on greater prominence in the acephalous regions of the Lower Zaire. Feuds between local groups could not, as in the kingdoms, be arbitrated by a central regent or his army. Conflict had to be absorbed by communities adjoining those of the antagonists through mechanisms spelled out in the market laws. The vertical exchange of tribute for symbols of kingship found its acephalous equivalent in the way *Lemba's* protection of the markets acted, in effect, as a consecrated commodity to be exchanged against significant goods. *Lemba's* priests enhanced regional trade by maintaining peace in the marketplace. The effect of *Lemba's* high initiation fees and its encouragement of redistribution and consumption of locally-produced and trade-produced goods in the séances, stimulated exchange. The regional network of kinship ties established in the special *Lemba* marriages strengthened alliances between prominent local clans. By making prominent judges, clan heads, and reputable healers, along with their principal wives, priests and priestesses of *Lemba*, a regional integration was achieved as well suited, perhaps even better suited, to the conditions of the international trade as that which existed in the localized chiefdoms and kingdoms.

Although *Lemba* disappeared from the scene as an active institution in the first decades of this century in the face of Belgian, French, and Portuguese colonial rule, mission activity, European commercial hegemony, and mechanized transport, its three-century presence across the north-bank Lower Congo/Zaire region, and its move with slave-emigrants to the New World where it still survives, make it not only one of the longest-enduring Bantu drums of affliction on record but one which has not heretofore received its due attention in scholarship. Its significance is comparable to that of major West-African cults such as *Poró* and *Sande* on the Guinea coast, *Ikenga*, the cult of the hand in Eastern Nigeria, *Bwiti* in Gabon, *Nzila* in Western Zambia, as well as *Beni-Ngoma* and the *Kalela* Dance in East Africa, and the Copper Belt, or the *Isangoma* diviners association in South Africa.

Going beyond the concerns of historical social research in Africa, a study of a major therapeutic society has a special modern appeal arising from our postindustrial concerns with the nature of organiza-

tion in handling chronic afflictions not dealt with by biomedical professionals. At a time when noncentralized therapies of the "anonymous" variety are scoring successes in such areas as alcoholism, drug addiction, child abuse, cardiac rehabilitation, and a myriad of other cultural illnesses, research into alternative modes of conceptualizing and organizing health is in order. Planners in Africa itself may find the study of a highly developed example of a drum of affliction helpful in drafting present health care policies toward traditional therapies, or in the development of secular therapies based upon indigenous genres of care and organization. The present study will, we hope, illuminate the implications of a radically broadened definition of health, and of illness, going beyond the strictly personal, physical, realm of modern medicine.

Issues in the Study of Lemba of Theoretical Significance

The study of a major historical drum of affliction of Equatorial Africa abounds with issues of theoretical significance. Perhaps the most pressing need is to bring this discussion into closer congruence with sophisticated indigenous theories on the subject. Scholarly analyses have frequently made distinctions where none exist in indigenous thought, or have failed to take note of important cues in indigenous expressions. This problem is particularly acute in the interpretation of the corporate, therapeutic institutions which controlled major social and economic resources, thus combining functions normally kept discrete in Western thought. A more accurate understanding is required of the complex of cults, shrines, movements, and political structures in relation to therapeutics as a type of social process. The historical perspective of this study implies a concern for the rise, persistence, and decline of particular institutions, that is, the "waxing and waning" characteristic of cultic and therapeutic institutions in Bantu Africa. Scholars are divided over whether cults, drums, and shrines are to be seen as merely reactive barometers of social processes, or as creative efforts actually to construct social orders. The fundamental question behind both views, and the one which must be asked before embarking on this venture, is: what, in effect, are the independent and dependent variables of Central-African social and cultural change? And, necessarily, what theories are best suited for answering this question?

The present volume brings several analytic perspectives to the task of understanding *Lemba* and institutions like it. One perspective, developed in Part I, reconstructs the societies of the *Lemba* region in terms of political and economic structures over the past three centuries, roughly the period of *Lemba*'s rise, its domination, and its demise. This is essentially a history of corporate institutions and the control of public resources—people, food production, symbols of prestige, strategic locations, and key political roles. Although conventional history rarely views therapeutics together with corporate politics, this juxtaposition is necessary to an understanding of the role of consecrated medicines and their clientele in the public life of the seventeenth- to the early twentieth-century Western Congo.

Another perspective, developed in Part II, uses a more precise, closer-range, analytic language for the understanding of rituals and myths of *Lemba* initiatory and therapeutic séances. This perspective draws from structuralism, symbolic anthropology, and semiotics in an effort to order and draw maximum understanding from the diverse and uneven sources available for a project such as this: fieldwork notes, historic indigenous accounts, colonial archives, travelers accounts, and museum collections. (A fuller discussion of the particular theories used here may be found in the introduction to Part II.)

A further perspective, developed in Part III, uses the combined analytic tools of structuralism, symbolic anthropology, and semiotics to grasp self-conscious ideas of illness causation and classification in *Lemba* thought, the nature of therapies, and the rather explicit *Lemba* image of the healthy—or virtuous—society.

These approaches move sequentially from an historical analysis of the organization of public resources, to a closer-range study of symbols and meanings in ceremonial events, to an understanding of a self-conscious *Lemba* therapeutics found among a limited segment of the populace—the elite faced with problems of wealth and power in a redistributive, community-based society. All of these approaches are needed to account for the forces, consequences, and internal views of social change.

Understandably, there has not been general agreement among scholars regarding the character and purpose of African therapeutic cults. Indeed, the history of scholarship on them in the Lower Congo and in Africa as a whole reads much like a history of social science in the twentieth century, reflecting many trends and perspectives. Because many of these perspectives continue to maintain credence in one circle or another of scholarship, a detailed review of their

applications to Lower-Congo and Equatorial-African societies seems warranted.

During the early colonial years African therapeutic cults aroused lively scholarly attention in Europe under the rubric of “secret societies,” with the Lower Congo being in the forefront. *Lemba*, however, due perhaps to its practitioners’ extreme skill in eluding investigation or to the relative absence of masks and exotic displays in its ritual, rarely figured in the discussions. A summary of the views of Belgian ethnologist Edward DeJonghe from the turn of the century until World War II offers an understanding of prevailing scholarly approaches to secret societies.¹

Psychological interpretations of secret societies were led by Heinrich Schurtz whose *Altersklassen und Männerbünde* (1902)² postulated that secret societies constitute a synthesis between puberty rites and adult social groupings, in turn reflections of the two dominant instincts of human life: a natural sexual instinct governing puberty rites, and an artificial instinct (or need) for gregariousness leading to age grades and other ties across local communities. Accordingly, women, possessing an abundance of the sexual instinct, belonged in the home with children, whereas men, possessing an abundance of the social instinct, belonged in public life. Despite their patent Victorian ethnocentricity, these theories were influential, finding their way into the work of Meyer, Meinhof, Weule, Lasch, Freud (see his *Totem and Taboo*),³ and Wundt, whose *Folk Psychology*⁴ had a strong influence on Makinowski.⁵ DeJonghe recognized the wide appeal of the psychological approach, but doubted the applicability of such a universal explanation to an institutional type whose forms varied so extremely from place to place.

Religious studies of secret societies were heavily influenced by the work of James Frazer, including his well-known *Golden Bough* (1890) and *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910ff.).⁶ In these works Frazer linked rites of puberty and rituals of death and resurrection—whether simulated or real—to the social process of assimilating a youth to his clan or totemic group. Although Lower-Congo ritual symbolism used death and resurrection symbolism in initiations to secret societies, DeJonghe rejected the full application of Frazer’s totemic theories on the basis that totemism was not worldwide, hence could not be applied naively everywhere, especially where it was barely represented as in the Lower Congo. Of more validity in the study of secret societies DeJonghe found the work of Durkheim’s sociological school and the new field of European folklore, especially Van Gennep’s *Les rites de*

passage (1909).⁷ Addressing the same issues as Frazer, Van Gennep postulated his now well-known stages of ritual not only in initiation to special associations but in most social transitions, groups, and activities. Separation from the old status or role, a threshold, “liminal” stage of transition, and reincorporation in a new position marked all status changes, however varied the form. Van Gennep’s research model was praised for its insight, but judged too subtle for work with most sources available to scholars of the time. Although Van Gennep himself used examples from the Loango coast in his famous book, full-scale application of his analytic ideas to Central-African ritual would need to wait decades until Victor Turner would use them in studies of Ndembu drums of affliction, a subject taken up later in this chapter.

The culture-historical tradition of research under the inspiration of Leo Frobenius and Fritz Gräbener was DeJonghe’s own theoretical preference for the study of secret societies. Great praise had been lavished on Frobenius’ magnificently illustrated work *Masks and Secret Societies* (1898).⁸ Masks from Loango and Cabinda figured prominently in the volume, and although *Lemba* was ignored—because it had developed few masks?—other Kongo societies such as the puberty initiation activities of *Khimba*, and a parallel society, *Ndembo*, were featured. Frobenius had given West-African secret societies his attention under the rubric of “culture areas” and “culture complexes.” Masking in this part of the world had a Malaysian origin, he believed, with close associations to sun and nature worship and other elements of the African worldview. Central to this worldview was its “manism,” whereby ancestors over the course of time underwent a gradual “spiritization” (*Vergeisterung*), in the process becoming deities, abstract ideas, masks, and cults. Although the ancestor cult of a particular social group might be central to this local world view, other levels of collective spirit symbolism could be interpreted as having grown from it. Masks represented the effort to consolidate disparate elements in spiritization, whence arose two-, three-, and four-faced masks throughout the secret-society culture area of Africa. This notion had a direct impact on many Africanists, including Karl Laman whose interpretation of Kongo consecrated medicines is that they are the representation of ancestors whose individual identities have been lost in time.⁹

According to DeJonghe, the foregoing theoretical approaches to Africa’s and especially the Lower Congo’s secret societies were all either too reductionist, prone to explain all in terms of individual

needs and instincts, or too nominalist, forcing data into abstract categories. He advocated an inductive approach based on the ethnographic material itself. In this vein he recommended the use of Fritz Gräbener's special application of Frobenius' culture-area method, finding ideal Gräbener's study of Oceania's "patriarchial totemic cycle," a complex of elements including the puberty rite, death and resurrection symbolism, the boomerang, lunar mythology, the breaking out of teeth, and so on.¹⁰ Just as analysis of these elements as parts of a complex had clarified Oceanic cultural history, so the institutional complex of Africa's secret societies would be clarified by a similar analysis.

Because African cultural complexes were, however, mixed together in a tangle of cross-cutting influences, noted DeJonghe, it would be necessary to begin with inductive studies, shorn of preconceived ideas, in the comparison of peoples and their characteristic complexes and in the geographic distributions of the latter. DeJonghe identified twelve elements which, taken as a complex, characterized Lower-Congo secret societies. These were: the extension in space and time of a name for the society; a normative age for adepts; criteria and procedures for admission of adepts; duration of ordeals; place of ordeals relative to other significant locations; the entrance ceremony; special names for the cult and its various features; deformations or special identifying decorations donned by participants such as tattoos and costumes; instructions given the adepts; prescriptions and prohibitions; exit ceremonies; and activities related to, but outside, the direct initiation.¹¹ *Khimba*, *Longo*, *Kimpassi*, and *Ndembo* were analyzed in terms of this grid; *Lemba* was again overlooked.

In the conclusion of a lecture given in 1923 to the Semaine d'Ethnologie Religieuse DeJonghe departed from his well-reasoned, academic survey to give a more visceral summation of African secret societies. They are a "threat to the colonial order," he began. Although they are "a very old type of organization, new versions arise under your eyes in opposition to the European." Although they are often "tribal in their boundaries, they can become intertribal," like the notorious Aniota leopard cult which utilized violence on its opponents. DeJonghe characterized the institution "from Senegal to Congo" as a "secret religious fraternity whose eponymous tutelary spirit, often a forest spirit, appears in the village 'speaking' with a bull roarer, not out of love of music but with an aim of tyrannizing and dominating. They are successful in convincing the populace, for everywhere there has been resistance to colonial government. They

are, in short, a *significant political force*, regulating justice, policing markets, establishing the price of merchandise, issuing boycotts, even killing to get their wishes fulfilled. Their front is extremely varied; some resemble castes, others cults to certain spirits. Yet others are grafted onto initiations; others pursue social and political aims." Concluded DeJonghe, "it is no exaggeration to say that secret societies are one of the largest and most serious infections (*plaies*) on Africa!"¹²

DeJonghe's impassioned remarks on secret societies, despite their partisan procolonial sound, were better than received scientific theories in one important sense. They acknowledged the substantial political character of these institutions. Unlike kingdoms and chiefdoms of Africa which had been early acknowledged by colonialists to be political entities and had been incorporated where possible into the colonial structure, the horizontally-organized "drums" were not understood in political terms at all, and even when they were, they could not easily be accommodated. Therefore, in the years surrounding DeJonghe's 1923 lecture, which was itself two years after the massive disturbances accompanying the appearance of the Kongo prophet Kimbangu, secret societies of the Congo coast, including *Lemba*, were banned for resisting colonial "progress," and for diverting economic and labor resources away from colonial goals into lavish feasts and resistance. With this redefinition of the "secret society" from object of general scholarly curiosity to mechanism for resistance to colonialism, went the gradual decline of "secret society" as a research paradigm. And, although writers like DeJonghe,¹³ Van Wing,¹⁴ and Bittremieux¹⁵ continued to find and describe new secret societies in the twenties and thirties, for all intents and purposes this paradigm had been exhausted in serious ethnological scholarship by World War II.

Social research in Africa since World War II has inserted institutions such as *Lemba* into a more diversified rubric of movements, social and political organizations, cults, and ritual idioms, especially the therapeutic. Among the most important of the postwar scholars in this field has been Victor Turner whose fieldwork in the fifties on the ritual process among the Ndembu of Zambia has set the pace for a generation of scholarship. In particular, Turner has defined precisely the nature of drums of affliction—based on the Bantu cognate term *ngoma*—or, as they are more widely known, "cults of affliction." Turner's portrayal of the cult of affliction begins with a cultural interpretation of misfortune (for example, bodily disorders, accidents) in terms of domination by a specific nonhuman agent, and

proceeds with an attempt to remove the source of misfortune by bringing the sufferer into closer association with a cult group venerating that specific agent.¹⁶ Turner's carefully conducted work among the Ndembu revealed a range of such drums devoted to specific problem idioms in areas such as hunting, reproduction, and sickness, as well as in growing dislocations resulting from colonialism and labor migration.

Turner's work on the ritual processes giving rise to drums of affliction stresses the presence of a system of thought about misfortune and its treatment which may well be as widespread as the Bantu-speaking societies of Central and Southern Africa. A number of excellent field studies have identified common elements of this system, from Equatorial Africa to East Africa, and from the rain forests to the mountains of the south.¹⁷

The causal premises behind health and disease in this "Bantu" cosmology trace all of life to a central source of power, often named God or some spirit immanent in nature. This power is mediated by middle-range spirits and consecrated human priests or visionary prophets who maintain contact with, or derive inspiration from, the source of power and life. Misfortune, including disease, is any condition whether social, personal, physical, or mystical which falls short of the ordered universe of life—in other words, chaos. Balance between the universe's elements is a subordinate theme, as is purity.

A crucial cosmological notion, therefore, is the distinction drawn in many Bantu societies between "naturally-caused" (God-caused) diseases or misfortunes and those attributed to "human cause." The former misfortunes "just happen" or are "in the order of things,"¹⁸ as, for example, in the death of a very old person or in an affliction with readily recognized symptoms and signs which respond to treatment as expected. A widespread range of treatments such as plant preparations, massages, and manipulative techniques are appropriate for afflictions of this type, as are nowadays techniques of modern biomedicine practiced by Western-trained doctors and nurses in hospitals and dispensaries.

In contrast to natural misfortunes and diseases are those caused by chaos in the human world or in the relationship of humans to their environment. An individual may bring disease and suffering upon himself by disregarding social etiquette, ignoring good eating habits, or by turning his back on kinsmen, elders, ancestors, and spirits. An aura of ritual pollution frequently accompanies sickness by "human cause," requiring the sufferer and his fellows to seek ritual purification

through sacrifices and confessions so as to achieve reintegration with the good graces of society. Most human-caused affliction in Bantu thought is attributed to the evil intentions of others, or situations of contradiction in which persons are at odds or cross-purposes with one another, as, for example, in the struggle to distribute land equitably from a limited estate at a time when the dependent population is increasing or in launching an enterprise for profit in the face of a strong ethic of the redistribution of goods. Such situations are believed to incur the ill will or envy of others and to lead directly to the breakdown of health in a person, to visible physical sickness, or even to the person's death. This belief in mystically channelled ill wishing operates to reinforce the morality of social redistribution and loyalty to family and kin.

Bantu therapeutic systems follow from these assumptions about the nature of the world and the causes of misfortune, articulating techniques—empirical, social, symbolical—and their specialized experts. Not all medicines are highly specialized. Many are household techniques practiced by parents on children, or by anyone on himself. Yet in areas of life where there is crisis, transition, danger, recurrent accident, high responsibility, or a focus on core social values, consecrated medicines appear, complete with origin charters, exact codes for their use, and the dangers of their misuse. These consecrated medicines may be techniques, chemotherapeutic treatments, behavioral procedures, or highly magical and esoteric affairs. The emergence of a consecrated medicine in an area of life probably derives from the perception that the technique so consecrated, or the ingredient, is powerful, effective, and in need of legitimate control. It is said that “a medicine that can kill, can also heal,” and therefore must be carefully used and authorized, the same as in other therapeutic traditions.¹⁹

A Bantu therapeutic system is commonly, then, organized into a series of specialist types (for example, *nganga*, pl. *banganga*) each of which has knowledge in one or more specialized and consecrated medicines.²⁰ Among the Kongo, classically, the *nganga mbuki* (from *buka*, to heal) is the local doctor who uses herbs; the *nganga n'kisi* is a more advanced or powerful doctor competent in numerous consecrated medicines, especially those pertaining to anger and magically caused afflictions; the *nganga ngombo* (named for the basket he uses) is a diviner. The diviner's specialty is the sorting out of particular details of cases brought to him or her and the offering of an expert diagnosis of the affliction or misfortune's cause, whether it be of

natural or human cause, or another, spirit-related, cause. Because of its integral place in the analysis and interpretation of human misfortune in Bantu society, divination has responded sensitively to social change. Particular perspectives in divination have come and gone; inspirational diviners and prophet-seers, even mission-trained pastors and priests, have taken on the role in the past century. And where the divination specialist has disappeared as a consecrated role specialty, kinsmen of sufferers do this work in the form of a "therapy managing group."²¹ The institution of divination—analysis and diagnosis—has permitted Bantu therapeutics to generate new consecrated medicines, like surface transformations, without violating or changing basic premises.

In most local Bantu therapeutic systems a few of the consecrated medicines take on the public stature of corporate drums of affliction. As Turner has noted for the Ndembu, sickness is seen as a sacred calling, manifested in the form of a possession. In a consecrated medicine that becomes a drum, those afflicted and initiated to the cure or stabilized in their relationship to the sickness are the best suited to become doctors of the ailment. It is a form of religious immunization such that as the disease is conquered, the possessing spirit is placated; the ordeal purifies and energizes the sufferer, placing him in debt to society so that he is henceforth expected to devote his newly acquired gift of mediumship in a specialized idiom to the service of others.

Reference in the foregoing sentences to social change, the divinatory "reading" of current events, the interpretation of new kinds of misfortune, and the generation of new consecrated medicines with the creation of major drums of affliction that wax and then wane call to mind the fact that any standardized picture of Bantu therapeutics is only as good as its depiction of local variance and historical vicissitude. The perspective must be historical. The waxing and waning phenomenon of consecrated medicines and therapeutic movements, linked as they are to a close reading of misfortune in individuals' lives, can be used to understand the nature of social instability, the sources of stress and chronic affliction in a society. Read longitudinally, that is historically, these taxonomies, as they unfold, become barometers of the local human condition. (In Chapter 2 such an historical reading will be done of consecrated medicines in Loango over three centuries to detail the background against which *Lemba* emerged and endured, Loango being the only region of Equatorial Africa known to have this depth of documentation.²²) Read latitudinally, that is synchronically at a given moment, medical

taxonomies indicate the contours of the system of dealing with adversity and the lines of shifting orientation. Such a slice of medical taxonomy is offered here from the *Lemba* region to situate the theoretical discussion more fully in evidence pertinent to the subject of the book.

In about 1900 a Lower-Congo/Zaire writer sketched the then current array of consecrated medicines (*min'kisi*) in the north-bank region, noting those that were of major status, that is "those drummed up with *ngoma*." The inventory included such areas as "personal physical growth," "a child's upbringing," "spirit children and how to deal with them," "twinship and the parenting of twins," "headache," "purification with the cupping horn," numerous approaches to "divination," "origin, residence, identity," a variety of women's troubles, and at least five drums of affliction: *Kinkita*, devoted to "clan leadership," *Bunzi* and *Matinu* for "chiefship," *Mbola* for "water spirits," *N'kondi* for "judicial affairs," and *Lemba* for "order in markets and public sites."²³ A static taxonomy such as this may be studied in terms of analytical questions that indicate points of change. Thus, the inventory of consecrated medicines may indicate a change of particular items within consistent categories like divination, or it may indicate the emergence of new categories and new medicines. In line with this, the categories which contain major public medicines—drums, cults—may demonstrate either a waxing and waning of particular organizations within them, or the emergence of innovative categories and public organizations.

Considerable scholarship in recent years has gone into the discernment in Central- and Equatorial-African cult history of the rise of large-scale, regional units in conjunction with historical forces such as trade networks, colonial empires, labor migration, and the modern nation-state.²⁴ A crucial analytical distinction has been drawn, once more by Turner, between areas of ritual organization that represent local "ancestral" identities and those which represent "earth" identities.²⁵ The former are maintained by political rituals and divisive polarities such as lineage segmentation, whereas the latter are maintained by fertility rituals and nonsectarian religious specialists. Often political conquerers are aligned in opposition or in contrast to indigenous priests. Citing examples from the Shilluk of the Sudan, the Tallensi of Ghana, and the Shona of Zimbabwe, thus from three widely differing cultures across Africa, Turner suggests that this distinction between "exclusive" sectional ritual identities and "inclusive" ritual identities creates a system of shrines or medicines which is

characterized by overlapping and interpenetrating fields of ritual relations: the first type of identity representing power divisions and classificatory distinctions, including factional conflict, and giving rise to homicide; the second type representing ritual bonds between groups, common ideals, and values, such as are needed in the purification of the land by earth priests in the event of fratricidal murder in some societies.²⁶ Although the former ritual levels are not displaced, they are overlaid, as it were, with universalistic ideas of ethics and morality such as brotherhood, purity, love, the "kinship of all people," and related notions found in world religions.

The important distinction drawn by Turner, and others, between "exclusive" and "inclusive" ritual orders may readily be discerned in the taxonomy of sacred medicines and drums from Lower Zaire given above. Those pertaining to chiefship (*Matinu*, (*Ma*)*Bunzi*) and to clan leadership (*Kinkita*) are exclusive, whereas those pertaining to water spirits (*Mbola*), judicial affairs (*N'kondi*) and order in markets and public places (*Lemba*) are inclusive. Particularly *N'kondi*, the well-known nail-and-blade charm used in the regulation of feuds between local groups, and *Lemba* were the most explicit articulations of regionalism.

More work has been done recently on "regional cults" as reported in a volume of this same title recording the 1976 Association of Social Anthropology (ASA) conference. Regional cults are defined as cults "in the middle" between the "parochial cult of the little community" and the world religion with its universal form. The central places of these regional cults are shrines in towns and villages, at crossroads or even in the wild, "where great populations from various communities or their representatives come to supplicate, sacrifice, or simply make pilgrimage."²⁷ Such cults have a topography of their own, conceptually defined by the people themselves and marked apart from other features of cultural landscapes and ritual activities. This group of scholars emphasizes the fixed central shrine as a key feature in regional cults. Contributions from the Islamic north to the Bantu southeast of Africa are used to illustrate this. Van Binsbergen, writing on regional drums of affliction in Western Zambia, emphasizes as criteria the specific healing idiom, representation in congregations over a vast area, overarching organizational ties binding local chapters into a region, further identified by controlled information and communication within the organizational structure. *Nzila* and *Bituma*, the major Western Zambian regional cults of affliction, have central shrines and headquarters for a centralized staff.²⁸ Schof-

feleers' study of the *Mbona* cult of Malawi also emphasizes these points.²⁹

The criteria of regional cults developed by the ASA group, which are largely built upon earlier work by Turner, suggest that Lower-Zaire historical developments in this area may be somewhat anomalous in one respect. The cults or ritual orders most readily expressing general values and identities, namely *Mbola*, *Nkondi*, and *Lemba*, lack centralized shrines. Of those expressing exclusive values, only *Bunzi* has (or had) a central shrine (in Ngoyo kingdom near the Congo River at the Atlantic Coast) and thus meets the criteria for a regional cult. As more detailed accounts in Chapter 2 will show, already by the sixteenth century *Bunzi*'s priests were consecrating the kings of Loango, Kakongo, and Ngoyo on the coast. In time, apparently, *Bunzi* spawned secondary "*MaBunzi*" throughout the Mayombe, with their subsidiary territorial shrines. This may have been the result of a regional consciousness. But what is even clearer about cultic changes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is the emergence of movable shrines such as those kept by *Lemba* priests, their *tukobe*. Comparable developments characterize the rise of movable shrines in the hands of Tio lords, vis-à-vis the fixed earth shrine of the Tio king to earth spirit N'kwe Mbali.³⁰

I mention these details only to suggest that the fixed shrine center, and a centralized organization with a recognizable leader, may not be as instrumental to the creation of a regional consciousness as the ASA group suggests.³¹ In some cases, such cultic centers as *Bunzi* may actually lose out at the expense of other, moving, ritual varieties of the kind that *Lemba* characterizes. *Bunzi* will receive fuller comment in later chapters, for it is apparent that it consecrated not only the three coastal kingdoms but a number of horizontal cults such as *Lemba* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The characterization of regional cults is no more important in scholarship, however, than the question of what forces bring them about. How are the transformations to be explained? As suggested earlier, analytic distinctions such as that drawn by Turner between inclusive and exclusive ritual orders and by the ASA group between cults with regional organization and those with localized small-scale organization are made so that the student may obtain a grasp of the phenomenon of social change. As Werbner, in his introduction to the ASA volume, points out, much of the work on African history in the therapeutic and religious arena is grounded in the correspondence theory of religion, propounded by Durkheim, and before him

Robertson-Smith.³² The theory states that religious consciousness, cult forms, and the deities worshipped or evoked are a function of the social system, its contours, and its changes. The emergence of regional cults, and the waxing and waning of drums of affliction, religious movements, and shrines and therapeutic systems, are readily explained in terms of social change. Thus, Van Binsbergen, writing about the three major cults of affliction in Western Zambia—*Nzila*, *Bituma*, *Moya*—states that the political and economic changes of recent decades constitute the “motor” behind religious transformation. The cults and the way they draw differently from the populace express “the emergence of interlocal structures and movements of peoples, due to precolonial and colonial state formation, raiding, long distance trade, labour migration, all of which calls for new religious and social forms to legitimate new structures and meet existential and interpretive needs of people.”³³

In a comparable line of explanation, Van Velzen offers an explicitly materialist interpretation of the emergence of the *Gaan Tata*, high-God, cult among Bush Negro and Maroon tribes of Surinam and French Guiana, who from 1880 to 1920 and decreasingly thereafter controlled the river traffic in connection with the exploitation of gold in the interior.³⁴ The cult emerged in several locations along the transportation network and then coalesced into a regional cult with a central shrine and a hierarchic structure in its heyday in the 1890’s, monopolizing river transport and maintaining high wages and freight prices for the Bush Negro and Maroon workers. The resemblances of *Gaan Tata* to *Lemba* are so striking that I shall develop in fuller detail Van Velzen’s approach.

Van Velzen calls the independent variable in his analysis of regional cults the “alteration in the mode of production.”³⁵ In the case of *Gaan Tata* this was the introduction into Bush Negro and Maroon society of a massive new resource from the outside—the discovery of gold, and the consequent need of transport by outside prospecting and mining interests—resulting in a sudden influx of wealth and setting off a polarization of the society. The centrifugal effects of this polarization created a powerful need to allay anxiety about witchcraft on the part of those benefitting from the wealth. Simultaneously, there emerged an increased vigilance for a stonger morality, a more generalized, even universal, ethic, supported by a new and centralized high-God cosmology at odds with the traditional one. Van Velzen argues that the universalizing ethic in *Gaan Tata* was an outcome of the cult’s oracle to protect the entrepreneurs from kin envy, to uphold their reputation, and to establish antiwitchcraft standards of social

life. Thirty to forty percent of goods received were channeled to kinsmen; another substantial portion was dumped at *Gaan Tata's* shrines. Only a minimal portion was "used" by an elite. In effect, the cult managed to thwart the more exaggerated forms of elitism. How *Lemba* resolved this problem will be a major discussion in the present work.

In some writing on cults, drums, and therapeutics, there is an undertone of criticism toward the correspondence theory, which tends, it is argued, to represent these ritual orders as tails that are wagged by the dog of the socioeconomic order. Such explanation, it is asserted, often neglects the generic qualities of heightened concern with ethics and morality; the development of sophisticated concepts of redemption such as grace, purity, and balance; the methods of sacrifice, prayer, and devotion before deities worshipped; or, above all, the manner in which individuals seek redemption in the midst of chaos, suffering, and evil. This criticism echoes a point made by Burridge about the explanation of millenarian movements in the social sciences,³⁶ or by Geertz on the general study of religion.³⁷ Turner cleverly addresses these issues without abandoning the socioeconomic correspondence theory altogether by locating most religious activity in the "liminal" mode of human life, that apparently universal aspiration to escape, periodically, the structures of social life with their deadening formalism and routine.

But surely, the challenge in theory-building is to offer a sound basis for interpretation of intrinsic characteristics of regional cults, cults or drums of affliction, consecrated medicines, independent churches, and related rituals; and not to pass them off as mere dependent variables—mirrors—of socioeconomic forces, or unpredictable, inverse occurrences in the cracks of society's structures. Put another way, the theoretical question most acutely in need of attention is: do these institutions creatively shape society? Or are they a reaction to it? What is the most sophisticated way of measuring the mixture of the two possibilities?

Lemba offers new and important information about the subject under discussion. It provides evidence from the study of a more substantial therapeutic order than has been documented heretofore of the way cults can act as a creative impulse to shape a region's society. Certainly it reacted in some senses to the external pressures of the international trade. But several alternative responses would have been possible, among them doing nothing. Ranger argues that choosing the institutional form of the drum of affliction made the

response a creative, positive effort in the formation of a "new society." Just as kinship has been seen in some social theories as a metaphor for the construction of the social order, so here, and in other drums of affliction, sickness and healing provided a metaphor for the construction of a new social order.³⁸ The concept of a new society ordered in terms of cults of affliction is frequently idiomatic and partial, dealing with such areas as twinship, hunting, purity, witchcraft eradication, or fecundity. But potentially, therapeutics may be the metaphor serving to facilitate consolidation of substantial resources, material and human, and to aid long-term re-ordering of institutions of redress, economic redistribution, and ideological change.

Theoretical discussion of the conditions giving rise to new cults should, therefore, compare ritual and institutional phenomena across a broad spectrum, including the formation of states. Once this is done it is immediately apparent that the various theories of cult emergence are the same ones used in accounting for the rise of traditional states, at least in Africa. Most are "correspondence" theories, such as that which makes economic surpluses a precondition of state emergence, or that which links the rise of the centralized state to an expanding regional sphere of activity in trade, warfare, or the movement of peoples. I cannot here survey in any detail the voluminous literature on state formation skillfully handled or reviewed by such scholars as Vansina,³⁹ Goody,⁴⁰ Miller,⁴¹ de Heusch,⁴² and others. My concern is rather with the apparent lack of discussion between those who study state formation and those who study cult cycles, and the failure of these persons to address the question of why such similar preconditions as both groups often consider give rise in the one case to a "state," and in the other to a "cult."

A theoretical framework is called for which bridges organizational gradations from centralized to decentralized; from an institution with multiple idioms to one with a specific idiom; from collegial forms of authority to serially-occupied offices of solitary authority, and so on. Much writing on "states" is couched in assumptions of nineteenth-century teleology by which less centralized social forms become transformed, through economic, social, or ideational impetus, into centralized forms. The present work will interpret the divergent institutions such as centralized shrines (*Bunzi*, *N'kwe Mbali*), kingdoms (Loango, Kakongo, Ngoyo, Tio), movable shrines or major drums (*Lemba*, the Tio *n'kobi*), local horizontal specialists' medicines (*N'kondi* feud resolution techniques), and other institu-

tions in terms of corporation theory as developed by Maine,⁴³ Smith,⁴⁴ and for Central Africa by MacGaffey.⁴⁵ Corporate theory acknowledges authority and power of both centralized and decentralized polities in terms of corporateness: that is, a presumptive perpetual aggregate with a unique identity; having determinate social boundaries and membership; possessing the autonomy, organization, and agreed upon procedures to regulate exclusive collective affairs. In other words, a corporate group forms a social structure around a set of diverse issues. In *Lemba*, this would include the maintenance of order in market places, regulating trade over long distances, establishing marriage alliances between local lineages, and healing the personality disorders of the "marginal" mercantile elite.

Corporate theory goes on to elaborate the measure of a group's corporate strength by the manner in which it develops leadership roles (or commissions, consecrated leadership roles); how this authority is delegated, and administratively coordinated; how a constitution making explicit the premises and understandings of the corporation is articulated. In *Lemba*, this would include the adaptation of regional cosmologies to unique *Lemba* values, and the development of codes of behavior, purity laws, and levels of morality for the *Lemba* membership and for public society under its influence.

Corporate theory makes a further distinction between the *corporation sole* and the *corporation aggregate*, the former a leadership role or commission standing for the group in which a series of individual officeholders move through an office in succession; the latter an office occupied by multiple officeholders simultaneously. The distinction, in theory, readily clarifies the nuances of difference between a centralized kingdom, chiefdom, or shrine, and a network-like aggregate of figures in a major drum of affliction such as *Lemba*. That this is a distinction of degree and not of kind might be suggested from the fact that drum symbolism, denoting consecrated leadership, exists across the set of political types.

Corporate theory, furthermore, offers a theoretical avenue for an understanding of the phenomenon of "waxing and waning" of kingdoms, drums of affliction, and shrines, as well as the transformation of the one into the other. Corporations sole may be based upon the consolidation of corporations aggregate. One suspects that this is the way kings emerged in some African states. It is clear however that transformations can go the other way. The proliferation of *Bunzi*'s "daughters" in the cults *Lemba*, *Pfemba*, and *Lunga* (see figure 26 below) and into chiefdoms inland represents a case in point.

Corporate theory, finally, distinguishes between corporate groups, discussed in the foregoing lines, and corporate categories. These latter lack the power and authority of the corporate group, because they lack the organization, internal hierarchy, and command of resources. However, a corporate category meets criteria of presumptive perpetuity, determinate social boundaries, identity, and membership. In the Lower Congo, for example, a matrilineal clan is a corporate category because of the putative descent of its members from a common ancestor. It is distinguished from the local clan, or set of related lineages, in that these have internal organization, leadership, common affairs, property relations, and a command of resources. The distinction between corporate category and corporate group would also, at the level of theory, explain the difference between adepts of a simple consecrated medicine whose only common experience would be their individual interaction with a given medicine and its priests, and adepts of a powerful corporate medicine, a public "drum of affliction," whose common affairs, command of resources, and coordination would give them greater power and authority in public affairs.

Once spelled out in this wise, it is apparent that the waxing and waning of kingdoms, centralized shrines, diffuse cults, drums of affliction, ephemeral movements, and consecrated medicines can best be accounted for in terms of a unified theory of differential corporateness. This I attempt in the next two chapters for the *Lemba* region: the Malebo Pool (Mpumbu)-Cabinda-Loango triangle north of the Congo River, from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.