

Mapping Senufo: Reframing Questions, Reevaluating Sources, and Reimagining a Digital Monograph

Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi , Constantine Petridis

Abstract: *Mapping Senufo: Art, Evidence, and the Production of Knowledge* – an in-progress, collaborative, born-digital publication – will offer a model for joining theories about the construction of identities and the politics of knowledge production with research and publication practice. In this article, we examine how computational methods have led us to reframe research questions, reevaluate sources, and reimagine the form of a digital monograph. We also demonstrate how our use of digital technologies, attention to iteration, and collaborative mode of working have generated fresh insights into a corpus of arts identified as Senufo, the nature of evidence for art-historical research, and digital publication. We posit that the form of a digital publication itself can bring processes of knowledge construction to the fore and unsettle expectations of a tidy, authoritative narrative.

Résumé: *Mapping Senufo: Art, Evidence, and the Production of Knowledge*, une publication en cours, collaborative et nativement numérique, offrira un modèle pour joindre les

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théories sur la construction des identités et les politiques de production de connaissances avec la recherche et la pratique de publication. Dans cet article, nous examinons comment des questions informatiques nous ont amenés à recadrer les questions de recherche, à réévaluer les sources et à réinventer la forme d'une monographie numérique. Nous démontrons également comment notre utilisation des technologies numériques, l'attention portée à l'itération et le mode de travail collaboratif ont généré de nouvelles perspectives sur un corpus d'arts identifié comme Sénoufo, sur la nature des sources pour la recherche en histoire de l'art et sur la publication numérique. Nous postulons que la forme d'une publication numérique elle-même peut mettre en avant les processus de construction des connaissances et perturber les attentes d'un récit ordonné et faisant autorité.

Introduction¹

For decades, scholars outside the field of African art history have either explicitly or implicitly questioned African art specialists' use of sources and evidence. In 1984, historian Jan Vansina opened his book *Art History in Africa* with the assertion that "too many scholars in the field of 'African art' have been allergic to historical pursuits."² Vansina demonstrates how Africanist art historians could better scrutinize sources and situate their studies of art within historical frames. Nine years later, historian William A. Hart echoed Vansina when he characterized Africanist art historians as "often highly selective and superficial in their use of historical documentation."³ Anthropologist Wyatt MacGaffey also critiqued art historians' interpretations of meaning and their uses of sources in 2013, when he wrote, "It is a basic scholarly responsibility to provide some evidential basis for imputed

¹ We remain grateful to the many people who have contributed to this project as part of the project team or advisory board. They have enhanced and continue to enrich the project. We appreciate the generous colleagues and friends who have talked with us about the project and shared with us their insights, and we thank the various institutions and organizations that have supported, and continue to support, our efforts in critical ways. The names of people, institutions, and organizations to acknowledge are too many to list individually here, although some of their names appear in the text that follows. A Core Program Fellowship from the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France, and an NEH-Mellon Fellowship for Digital Publication from the National Endowment for the Humanities specifically supported the writing of this article during the spring of 2020. In addition, we thank the two anonymous reviewers and the journal's entire editorial team for their contributions as well as Marcia Gagliardi, Alice Matthews, and Sarah McKee for their comments on earlier versions of this text.

² Jan Vansina, *Art History in Africa: An Introduction to Method* (London: Longman, 1984), 1.

³ William A. Hart, "The 'Lawyer' of Poro?: A Sixteenth-Century West African Masquerade," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 23 (1993), 83.

meanings or to admit that they are speculative.”⁴ Africanist art historians have long acknowledged that few specific details accompany many of the objects they study, and they have long relied on indirect evidence to situate objects in time and place. But as Vansina, Hart, and MacGaffey observe, interpretations of art and its past or present contexts have often rested on glossed-over speculations rather than irrefutable information.

Our adoption of computational methods to study arts identified as Senufo – one of the most celebrated styles of so-called historical or traditional African arts since the early twentieth century – has led us to reevaluate sources, examine the nature of evidence, and reflect on the subjectivity inherent in knowledge production in productive ways.⁵ *Mapping Senufo*:

⁴ Wyatt MacGaffey, “Meaning and Aesthetics in Kongo Art,” in Cooksey, Susan, Poynor, Robin, and Vanhee, Hein (eds.), *Kongo across the Waters* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), 178.

⁵ Scholars within the discipline of art history as well as the field of African art history have long debated the concept of style and its utility for study of art. See, for example, Meyer Schapiro, “Style,” in Kroeber, Alfred L. (ed.), *Anthropology Today* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 287–312; Ernst H. Gombrich, “Style,” in Sills, David L. and Merton, Robert K. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), vol. 15, 352–361; Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, “One Tribe, One Style?: Paradigms in the Historiography of African Art,” *History in Africa* 11 (1984), 163–193; Vansina, *Art History in Africa*, 78–100; and Jaś Elsner, “Style,” in Nelson, Robert S. and Schiff, Richard (eds.), *Critical Terms for Art History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003 [2nd ed.]), 98–109. Multiple factors contribute to the creation of objects and identification of them with a single style category, and a single style group often comprises a number of subsets. Africanist art historians and other scholars who have studied objects that fall into the category of arts labeled as Senufo note diversity within the category. See, for example, Albert Maesen, “De plastiek in de kultuur van de Senufo van de Ivoorkust (Fransch West Afrika),” (unpublished PhD thesis, Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, 1946), 319ff (translated by Sam Vangheluwe for the *Mapping Senufo* team); Dolores Richter, “Senufo Mask Classification,” *African Arts* 12–3 (1979), 69; Anita J. Glaze, *Art and Death in a Senufo Village* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 13–15; Till Förster, *Die Kunst der Senufo* (Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 1988), 11–13; and idem, *Zerrissene Entfaltung: Alltag, Ritual und künstlerische Ausdrucksformen im Norden der Côte d’Ivoire* (Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe, 1997), 451–490. The writers claim that the Senufo identity of an artist, patron, or audience may have contributed to the making of objects art connoisseurs and scholars recognize as Senufo. But they also assert that other identities and ethnicities have historically existed within the broader three-corner region, an area that spans the present-day borders of Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, and Mali. And they note that other factors, including a maker’s occupation, a maker’s particular networks of personal relations, or a patron’s or user’s additions of other elements to an object, may contribute to its style. While a diversity of forms exists within the category of art labeled as Senufo, the term *Senufo* still operates as a name that art connoisseurs and scholars use to designate a particular category of art. For a discussion of the use of terms including *historical*, *classical*, and *traditional* to characterize certain kinds of

Art, Evidence, and the Production of Knowledge – an in-progress, collaborative, born-digital publication – began with an effort to map geographic locations linked to objects labeled as Senufo. We thought a relative abundance of field-based documentation from the nineteenth century to the present for the corpus would allow us to determine locations, plot points, and identify patterns. As we started to build a map, we recognized that the quality and character of recorded information vary, and certain details that seemed specific eluded verification. Questions about the field-based data we gathered abounded. Consequently, we reconfigured the project to highlight the subjective nature of field-based documentation. We now aim to underscore possibilities and limitations that such information affords art enthusiasts and other curious people who seek to know about local agency or specific histories.

The term *Senufo* and variants of it appeared in French publications by the end of the nineteenth century. In an 1887 issue of the French journal *Revue d'ethnographie*, a Dr. Tautain used a variant of the term *Senufo*. Tautain refers to “Sénéfo” farmers and town leaders. He also mentions other groups. He notes distinctions among groups as well as intermingling.⁶ During the first decade of the twentieth century, French colonial administrator Maurice Delafosse attempted to define and delimit *Senufo* as a discrete group with its own characteristics and geography.⁷ In an article that Delafosse published in two installments, the colonial administrator focuses on populations he regards as “Siéna” or “Sénoufo” and characteristics of the group. The first installment of the article, published in 1908, includes a map illustrating the extent of a so-called Senufo country (Fig. 1). The shape and scope of the geographic area Delafosse presented as Senufo endures to the present.⁸ Yet

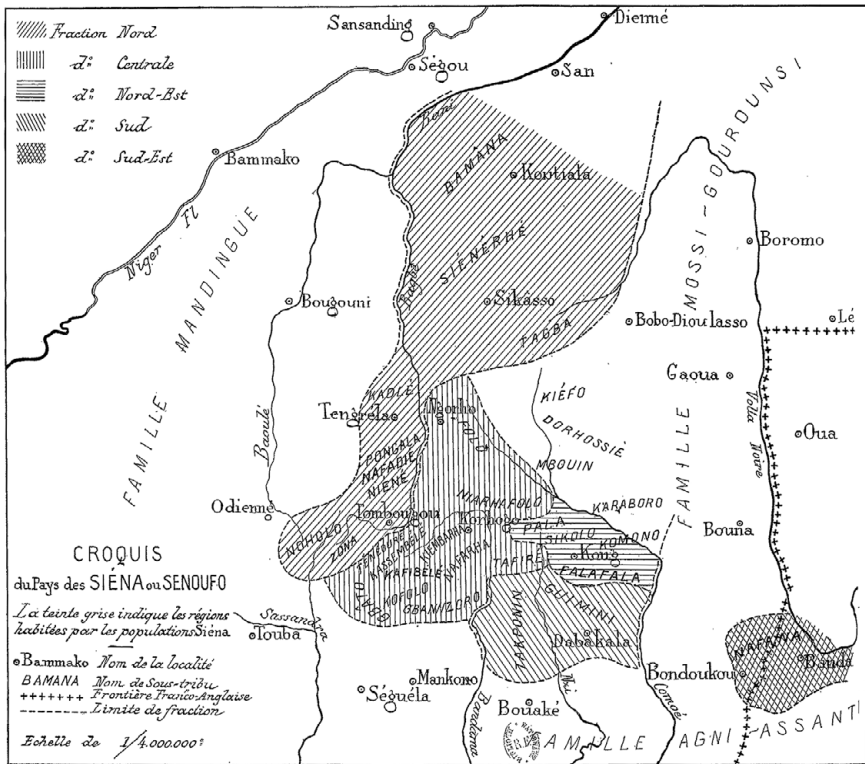
objects from Africa, see, for example, Frederick John Lamp, “Africa Centered [First Word],” *African Arts* 32–1 (1999), 1, 4, 6, 8–10; and Susan Vogel, “Whither African Art?: Emerging Scholarship at the End of an Age,” *African Arts* 38–4 (2005), 15.

⁶ The publication does not specify Tautain’s given name. He may have been Louis Frédéric Émile Tautain, a member of a French-led mission through West Africa from 1879–1881. See [Louis Frédéric Émile] Tautain, “Le Diouladougou et le Senefo,” *Revue d'ethnographie* 6 (1887), 395–399.

⁷ Maurice Delafosse, “Le cercle de Korhogo. La Côte d’Ivoire,” in *Notice publiée par le gouvernement général à l’occasion de l’Exposition Coloniale de Marseille* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1906), 312–340; Maurice Delafosse, “Le peuple siéna ou sénoufo,” *Revue des études ethnographiques et sociologiques* 1 (1908), 16–32; Maurice Delafosse, “Le peuple siéna ou sénoufo,” *Revue des études ethnographiques et sociologiques* 2 (1909), 1–21.

⁸ Scholars have long recognized that Maurice Delafosse’s definition of a distinct Senufo group locatable to a discrete geographic area persisted throughout the twentieth century. For example, see Levell Holmes, “Tieba Traore, Fama of Kenedougou: Two Decades of Political Development, 1873–1893,” (unpublished PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1977), 1; Förster, *Zerrissene Entfaltung*, 92–95; Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi, *Senufo Unbound: Dynamics of Art and Identity in West Africa* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2014), 73–75.

Figure 1. Sketch of the country of the Siéna or Senufo. From Delafosse, "Le peuple siéna ou sénoufo," pl. 1.



scholars have also increasingly examined the complex and heterogeneous nature of languages and identities in the same region.⁹

The area Delafosse designated as Senufo extends across the present-day borders of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali. Throughout this article we refer to the area as the three-corner region.¹⁰ We recognize our references to the three-corner region are at times anachronistic. The phrase nevertheless

⁹ For example, see Anita J. Glaze, *Art and Death in a Senufo Village* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981); Robert Launay, *Beyond the Stream: Islam and Society in a West African Town* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Förster, *Zerrissene Entfaltung*; Boureima Tiékoroni Diamitani, "Identities, Komo Societies, and Art among the Tagwa Senufo of Burkina Faso," (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Iowa, 1999); Jean-Paul Colleyn, *Bamana* (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2009); Gagliardi, *Senufo Unbound*.

¹⁰ See also Anita J. Glaze, "The Senufo," in Barbier, Jean Paul (ed.), *Art of Côte d'Ivoire from the Collections of the Barbier-Mueller Museum* (Geneva: Barbier-Mueller Museum, 1993), vol. 1, 30–35, 413.

designates a geographic area without insisting on its connection to a singular cultural or ethnic group.

Senufo as a term exists, and throughout the twentieth century, it was applied to a corpus of objects from West Africa that entered European and North American art collections. But understandings of the term and its meanings vary from person to person and context to context. Once we realize *Mapping Senufo* as a digital monograph, the publication will offer a model for accentuating and investigating divergent ways of knowing through digital research and publication methods. The project joins theories about the construction of identities and politics of knowledge production with actual research and publication practice.¹¹ It also reflects our commitment to taking seriously the long-established understanding that a marker of identity, like the labeling of an art style or knowledge itself, is historically constituted, fluid, and positional. The open-access, multimodal publication that the *Mapping Senufo* team will produce will exemplify the contingent nature of identities, art-style labeling, and knowledge production. It will also harness the interactivity of digital environments to make explicit readers' active participation in knowledge construction.

Digital humanities scholarship often emphasizes the iterative nature of research and foregrounds processes.¹² In this article, we examine our methods and explain how they inform the digital publication design the project team is developing. Our desire to plot geographic locations linked to objects led us to reassess different kinds of evidence. We are finding productive discrepancies between information furnished through historical sources and assumptions long shared by art historians, curators, dealers, collectors, and other enthusiasts. We are developing ways to attend to uneven collection, recording, suppression, and interpretation of evidence. We are embracing gaps and messiness instead of aiming to weave disparate details into a generalizing single story.¹³ We are also encouraging reflection on the ways in which various individuals have asserted expertise through the production and codification of observations and assessments often viewed as facts. We

¹¹ For a discussion of the term *Senufo* as it relates to theories about the construction of identities and politics of knowledge construction, see Gagliardi, *Senufo Unbound*, 41–49.

¹² See Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi and Joanna Gardner-Huggett, "Introduction to the Special Issue: Spatial Art History in the Digital Realm," *Historical Geography* 45 (2017), 17–36; and Paul B. Jaskot, "Digital Methods and the Historiography of Art," in Brown, Kathryn (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Digital Humanities and Art History* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 12.

¹³ Here we specifically reference Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's concept of the "single story." See Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story," TEDGlobal 2009 talk (July 2009), https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story (accessed 4 May 2020).

posit that the form of a digital publication itself can bring processes of knowledge construction to the fore and unsettle expectations of a tidy, authoritative narrative account. As an alternate mode of scholarly publication, one that relies on the interactivity of the digital environment, *Mapping Senufo* in its final, version-of-record configuration will invite readers to enact our argument about the subjectivity and contingencies inherent in knowledge production.

The project requires us to reexamine familiar historical sources and to consider ever-changing approaches to intellectual inquiry. We are also working to identify and assess less familiar sources in order to rethink what we think we know, raise fresh queries, and point towards future avenues of study. Our approach coincides with the calls of historian David Newbury, who argues that historiography must remain central to historical analysis and that scholars of the past should return again and again to available sources and writing about them in order to re-evaluate understandings. He further asserts that scholars should resist selective histories and instead search for a range of perspectives, including assessments that come from their counterparts in other fields and disciplines.¹⁴ For historians, including art historians, embrace of an historiographic approach requires willingness to set aside prior assumptions, and to accept that we may not know as much as we would like to know, or what we thought we knew. Newbury further makes clear that selective reading and reasoning in the telling of the past can translate into real political consequences with significant life-and-death outcomes.¹⁵ The Rwandan case at the center of Newbury's research may provide a particularly stark example of the political consequences of selective historical narratives, but it should also serve as a caution.

Reframing Research Questions

Mapping Senufo emerges from our prior work together on *Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa* (2015), a major international exhibition organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA). Gagliardi wrote the book *Senufo Unbound: Dynamics of Art and Identity in West Africa* (2014) that accompanied the exhibition.¹⁶ Petridis, then curator of African art at the CMA, selected objects for the show and installed them to present Gagliardi's thesis within a

¹⁴ David Newbury, "Canonical Conventions in Rwanda: Four Myths of Recent Historiography in Central Africa," *History in Africa* 39 (2012), 41–76.

¹⁵ Compare Sarah Van Beurden, *Authentically African: Arts and the Transnational Politics of Congolese Culture* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015); and Maxime de Formanoir, "Response to Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi and Yaëlle Biro, 'Beyond Single Stories: Addressing Dynamism, Specificity, and Agency in Arts of Africa [First Word]'," *African Arts* 53-3 (2020), 18–19.

¹⁶ See Gagliardi, *Senufo Unbound*.

three-dimensional space.¹⁷ Through Gagliardi's book and the exhibition it informed, we deconstructed the term *Senufo* and its limited usefulness in providing an all-encompassing, definitive explanation for a category of art. We investigated the colonial context in which the term first appeared in French publications at the end of the nineteenth century. We examined how art connoisseurs and other enthusiasts applied the Senufo label to a growing number of objects from Africa arriving in Europe and North America in the early twentieth century. The project contributed to discussions about the constructed nature of identities, assumptions embedded in them, and the relevance of classifying or assessing arts within certain groups. The endeavor left us with unresolved questions about the specificity of individual objects, their trajectories, and firsthand knowledge about them. The questions became fodder for continued collaboration.

The Legacy of Robert Goldwater's Senufo Sculpture from West Africa

The 1963 exhibition *Senufo Sculpture from West Africa* has served as a starting point for our second project. The exhibition and its companion publication of the same name consolidated understandings of Senufo arts based primarily on foreigners' observations during the first half of the twentieth century, and the show and book have served as foundations for subsequent studies. When the exhibition opened in New York at the now-defunct Museum of Primitive Art (MPA) on 20 February 1963, it presented art enthusiasts with parameters for evaluating formal qualities of objects and classifying them as Senufo. The exhibition also marked the second time ever that the MPA or any art museum in North America or Europe devoted an exhibition to a single style of African art. *Senufo Sculpture* followed the MPA's 1960 show *Antelopes and Queens: Bambara Sculpture from the Western Sudan*, its first exhibition dedicated to a single style of African art.

Robert Goldwater, who served as the MPA's director when the exhibitions opened, published a book in conjunction with each show.¹⁸ In the two books, Goldwater sought to examine the cultural contexts for arts he recognized respectively as Bambara, or Bamana – the latter term now more commonly used in English – and Senufo. Goldwater located populations he regarded as Bamana and the arts he attributed to them to a central area of present-day Mali, and a northern part of present-day Guinea. He located populations he considered as Senufo and the arts he attached to them in an adjacent area that extends across the three-corner region.

¹⁷ See also Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi and Constantine Petridis, "Senufo Unbound: Dynamics of Art and Identity in West Africa," *African Arts* 48–1 (2015), 6–23.

¹⁸ Robert Goldwater, *Bambara Sculpture from the Western Sudan* (New York: Museum of Primitive Art, 1960); and idem, *Senufo Sculpture from West Africa* (New York: Museum of Primitive Art, 1964).

Goldwater opened his book *Senufo Sculpture from West Africa* with the phrase “the Senufo people” and seemed throughout the text to try to supply a comprehensive view of what he called “the Senufo.” His language subtly implies that each person and town identified, or identifying as Senufo, were nearly the same as all other people and towns regarded as Senufo.¹⁹ He similarly attempted to describe “the Bambara” in the earlier book.²⁰ Goldwater’s approach reflects then-common assumptions about the African continent south of the Sahara, namely that the distribution of art styles coincided with the distribution of cultural or ethnic groups and that group characteristics superseded individual particularities.²¹

Goldwater did not conduct his own research in West Africa and instead relied on other observers’ accounts to inform his analyses. While Goldwater supplied broad descriptions of Senufo and Bamana arts and cultures based on the sources he consulted, he also endeavored to account for specificities of place within the areas he recognized as Senufo and Bamana as well as the variable nature of sources he used to make place-based assessments. His attention to such details evinces a desire for more nuanced understandings of objects’ origins, as well as concern for the quality of evidence used to make a claim. A legend Goldwater reproduced in each publication indicates that an *F* next to a place-based attribution for an object designates “direct information from field collectors;” *A* refers to “indirect information and attributions by other collectors;” and *S* applies to “attributions on stylistic grounds by the Museum of Primitive Art.”²²

The attributions Goldwater printed in his books feature varying amounts of place-based data. The broadest attributions in *Senufo Sculpture from West Africa* identify objects with particular areas – northern, central, southern, southeastern, or western – within the larger three-corner region. At times, the designations link objects to certain districts within one of the areas in the larger region. On occasion, the assignments even locate objects to particular settlements. And in some cases, Goldwater’s attributions link an object with a particular “fraction,” or subgroup, of the larger Senufo group. For example, Goldwater offers “Central region, Korhogo district, Lataha village, Kiembara fraction” as specific information for a nearly four-foot-tall male figurative

¹⁹ Goldwater, *Senufo Sculpture*.

²⁰ Goldwater, *Bambara Sculpture*.

²¹ See, for example, Carl Kjörsmeier, *Centres de style de la sculpture nègre africaine* (Paris: Albert Morancé, 1935), vol. 1; and Roy Sieber, “African Tribal Sculpture,” (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Iowa, 1957). Compare Kasfir, “One Tribe, One Style?;” and Jan Vansina, *Art History in Africa*. See also Roy Sieber and Arnold Rubin, *Sculpture of Black Africa: The Paul Tishman Collection* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1968); and Constantine Petridis, “Olbrechts and the Morphological Approach to African Sculptural Art,” in idem (ed.), *Frans M. Olbrechts (1899–1958): In Search of Art in Africa* (Antwerp: Ethnographic Museum, 2001), 119–140.

²² Goldwater, *Bambara Sculpture*, 19; and Goldwater, *Senufo Sculpture*, 8.

Figure 2. Unrecorded maker. Male figure. Wood, h. 108 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1965 (1978.412.315). Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.



sculpture that politician and MPA founder Nelson A. Rockefeller acquired in 1958 and subsequently loaned to the museum (Fig. 2). An *F* next to the attribution indicates that it reflects “direct information from field collectors.” A note following the *F* reads, “collected by Emil Storrer,” thus suggesting that Storrer, then an art dealer based in Zurich, Switzerland, provided Goldwater with the information that Storrer had obtained during his own travels in northern Côte d’Ivoire.²³

As scholars know well, the ability to situate an object, or any other historical source, within a particular place and time makes historical analysis

²³ Goldwater, *Senoufo Sculpture*, no. 95. See also Glaze, *Art and Death*, 17, pl. 6.

possible.²⁴ More precise information about when, where, why, how, and through what individual's or organization's actions a source came into being seems to portend the possibility for greater insight. Yet information that seems precise could actually reflect speculation disconnected with historical and geographic verities. When an object's style is identified as Senufo, the label suggests but does not on its own confirm that the object is locatable to the three-corner region. The same label points at but does not prove that the work's original maker, patron, or audience identified as Senufo.

Mapping Goldwater's Place-Based Attributions

Goldwater's geographic attributions for 132 of 161 objects illustrated in his book may appear to provide additional place-based details as well as suggest opportunities for more extensive investigations of individual objects and the history of each object. However, Goldwater's assessments of distinct areas linked to particular objects and the rationale for his evaluations demand more attention.²⁵ In fact, an urge to investigate the sources Goldwater used, and to find independent, corroborating evidence for Goldwater's place-based attributions, sparked our initial development of *Mapping Senufo*. We imagined using information from a number of different sources to create a multilayered map that would permit us to confirm or revise the geographic distribution of forms proposed by Goldwater.

At first glance, Goldwater's indication that place-based attribution for the male figurative sculpture Rockefeller purchased from Storrer reflects "direct information from field collectors" could imply for some readers a reliability and completeness of information (Fig. 2). American art historian Anita J. Glaze's subsequent enthusiasm for a photograph reportedly taken in the same locale hints at a possible impulse to uphold any observer's field-based

²⁴ See, for example, Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 36.

²⁵ For an early-twentieth-century discussion of assumptions embedded in understandings of African arts and their geographic distribution, see, for example, Carl Einstein, "À propos de l'exposition de la Galerie Pigalle," *Documents* 2–2 (1991 [1st pub. 1930]), 104–112. For more recent discussions of such assumptions and their tenacity, see, for example, Kasfir, "One Tribe, One Style?"; Susan Mullin Vogel, "'The Sheep Wears His Spots Where He Pleases' or the Question of Regional Style in Baule Sculpture," *Iowa Studies in African Art* 1 (1984), 29–44; Christopher Steiner, "Discovering African Art... Again? [First Word]," *African Arts* 29–4 (1996), 1, 4, 6, 8, 93; Mbongiseni Buthelezi, "We Need New Names Too," in Hamilton, Carolyn and Leibhammer, Nessa (eds.), *Tribing and Untribing the Archive: Identity and Material Record in Southern KwaZulu-Natal in the Late Independent and Colonial Periods* (Portland: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016), vol. 2, 587–599; and Maxime de Formanoir, "Pour une approche de la statuaire du sud-ouest du Gabon et de la République du Congo sous l'angle des sociétés initiatiques," *Anthropos* 113 (2018), 1–16.

information as accurate and important. Yet the phrase *field collector*, in this context, could refer to any person who reportedly acquired an object from the three-corner region. The phrase does not specify a person's interests, investments, or expertise in accurate documentation or the subject matter. And even if we accept reports that Storrer or any other foreigners viewed the male figurative sculpture in Lataha or photographed sculptures in the town, a location yields only a sliver of information and requires more investigation into the production, use, and circulation of the works at a particular moment.

While *F*, meaning "direct information from field collectors," in Goldwater's book may imply the most reliable sources for the author's place-based assessments, the information Goldwater supplies under this banner does not appear solid when subject to further scrutiny. Furthermore, Goldwater relies on "direct information from field collectors" to make only 26 of the 132 place-based attributions in the book. For the sources he used to make 21 of the 132 attributions, Goldwater assigns an *A*, signaling that some other collector provided place-based information for an object. Goldwater does not clearly name the sources for the assessments. In a few instances, he specifies details in conjunction with the designation that we have not yet been able to crosscheck. For example, Goldwater indicates that a staff in the collection of Paris's Galerie Le Corneur-Roudillon in 1964 "belonged to King Babemba of Sikasso," and was "collected in 1898," the year that the French government seized control of the city of Sikasso in present-day Mali.²⁶ If the staff did indeed ever belong to the ruler of Sikasso, then the object would have singular historical significance. But we need to locate more information to substantiate this claim.

The rest of Goldwater's place-based attributions depend on stylistic comparison, a method art historians and art enthusiasts employed throughout the twentieth century to find similar qualities among objects and then assign a geographic origin to the set.²⁷ The method has facilitated analysis of objects from around the world for which we have little, if any, specific documentation about their creation or use. It is also subjective and not infallible. With scant detail to assess objects Goldwater or his colleagues at the MPA labeled as Senufo, the museum's staff used the method to identify 85 of 161 objects with a particular region, district, or smaller locale within the larger three-corner region. Goldwater occasionally identifies specific field-based information that served as a basis for a particular stylistic comparison. In one instance, he links two face masks with beak-like elongations to the northern region due to their formal similarities to a face mask that a man known as F.-H. Lem wrote he acquired in the Folona, an area in the southeastern part of present-day Mali (Fig. 3).²⁸ No other evidence appears to buttress the claim.

²⁶ Goldwater, *Senufo Sculpture*, no. 135.

²⁷ See also Vansina, *Art History in Africa*, 78–100.

²⁸ Goldwater, *Senufo Sculpture*, nos. 32, 33; see also F.-H. Lem, *Sculptures soudanaises* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1948), 44, 96, pl. 50.

Figure 3. Unrecorded maker. Face mask comparable in form to an example that F.-H. Lem reportedly acquired in the Folona, an area in the southeastern part of present-day Mali. Wood, pigment, 40.6 × 15.2 × 8.9 cm. The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1969. Accession Number: 1978.412.365. Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.



Goldwater's sources for stylistic comparison vary significantly. He indicates that an unidentified collector attributed a pair of nearly four-foot-tall figurative sculptures to the northern region. Goldwater's place-based designation also includes a question mark to suggest the pair may or may not be located more specifically to the San district within the northern region.²⁹ Based on stylistic comparison, someone at the MPA linked three other tall

²⁹ Goldwater, *Senufo Sculpture*, no. 91.

figurative sculptures of somewhat comparable height to the same region and possible district.³⁰ In other instances, Goldwater does not specify the bases for stylistic comparisons, thereby making it difficult to evaluate the credibility of the assertions. And Goldwater indicates no localized geographic attributions for another 29 of the 161 illustrated objects.

The few examples we have highlighted here show that Goldwater's designations serve as starting points rather than end points for analysis. They also prompt us to consider whether recovery of details about who exactly made objects in the Senufo corpus or where, when, why, how, or for whom the makers did so will ever be possible. Available records may never lead to such disclosures. But we may strive to acknowledge unrecorded or otherwise unavailable specificities of individual objects and their histories when we write about the arts rather than presenting them with certainty that our sources cannot uphold. And we may sit with the partiality and incompleteness of any knowledge instead of trying to resolve all gaps.³¹

With the aim of producing a multilayered map in mind, we gathered data from other observers of Senufo arts who linked individual objects with specific locales in their notes and publications. We also worked with members of the project team to create a relational database and plot points.³² As we added points to the map, we noticed that they seemed to imply certainty. Yet for many of the points we plotted, we found we had more ambiguous than steadfast information for determining locations. The character of place-based information also varied from object to object. A place linked to an object could designate a reported location of documentation or reported site of acquisition. Or it could name a locale reportedly associated with the life or work of a person credited with making the object.³³ We sought methods to

³⁰ Goldwater, *Senufo Sculpture*, nos. 92, 93, 93a.

³¹ Compare Emmanuelle Andrews, "Listening to Images, Troubling the Archive," in Basu, Paul (ed.), *[Re:]Entanglements* (London: SOAS University, 2020), <https://re-entanglements.net/emmanuelle-andrews/>, (accessed 4 May 2020); Johanna Drucker, "Humanistic Theory and Digital Scholarship," in Gold, Matthew K. (ed.), *Debates in the Digital Humanities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), <https://dhde Bates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-88c11800-9446-469b-a3be-3fdb36bfbfd1e/section/0b495250-97af-4046-91ff-98b6ea9f83c0>, (accessed 4 May 2020); and Leslie Wilson, "Response to Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi and Yaëlle Biro, 'Beyond Single Stories: Addressing Dynamism, Specificity, and Agency in Arts of Africa [First Word]'," *African Arts* 53–3 (2020), 16.

³² Joanna Mundy and Sara Palmer, "About Database Design," in Gagliardi, Susan Elizabeth and Petridis, Constantine, *Mapping Senufo Beta* (Atlanta: Emory Center for Digital Scholarship, 2016), <http://www.mappingsenufo.org/database-design>, (accessed 3 May 2020).

³³ See also Gagliardi and Gardner-Huggett, "Introduction to the Special Issue"; and Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi, "Mapping Senufo: Mapping as a Method to Transcend Colonial Assumptions," in Brown, Kathryn (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Digital*

render the ambiguity visible to our readers. We also realized that we needed to take a closer look at our sources.

Reevaluating Sources

The variability and inconsistency of field-based data highlighted through our digital methods propelled us to reexamine the nature of our evidence and shift the project's focus to a study of the quality and character of information about Senufo arts. One part of the ongoing effort returns us to Goldwater's landmark study and the key he provided to distinguish among different types of place-based information. An examination of Goldwater's evaluations and evidence he offers to support his assertions demonstrates the instability of information that art enthusiasts have often regarded as stable because it derives from an observer's time in "the field." As Vansina noted nearly four decades ago, observers' statements vary in reliability.³⁴ With *Mapping Senufo*, we seek to demonstrate that scholars may present variability rather than attempt to resolve it. Study of Goldwater's assessments also points at the need to return to familiar sources and uncover unfamiliar ones in order to refine and expand our knowledge about the arts and complex histories connected to the making, use, and circulation of objects in disparate times and places.

Looking Back at and Beyond a Photo from a Clearing in Lataha

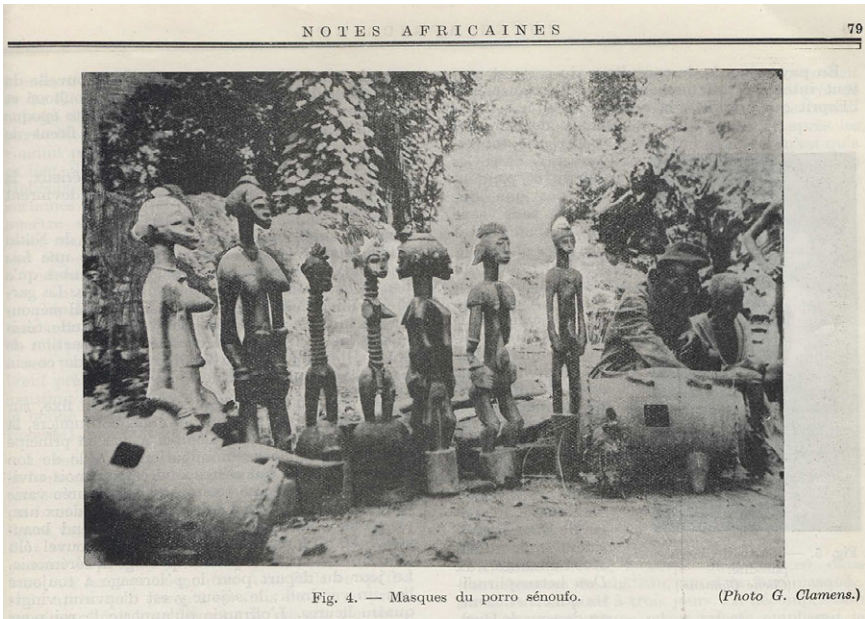
Sources apparently from a town known as Lataha offer a case in point. Goldwater locates 21 of 161 objects published in *Senufo Sculpture from West Africa* to specific towns in the three-corner region. Two of the 21 objects he identifies with Lataha. Since the mid-twentieth century, art scholars, dealers, collectors and other art enthusiasts have connected Lataha with a number of significant sculptures in the Senufo corpus. Several authors have also referred to makers of sculptures linked to the town as the Master of Lataha or as the Master of Lataha I and Master of Lataha II.³⁵ A photograph published in July 1953 showing sculptures in a clearing among trees as well as other photographs that the French Catholic missionary Gabriel Clamens and his colleague Michel Convers presumably took during the same visit have

Humanities and Art History (New York: Routledge, 2020), 135–154. Compare Vansina, *Art History in Africa*, 27–33.

³⁴ Vansina, *Art History in Africa*, 53–55.

³⁵ See, for example, Burkhard Gottschalk, *Madebele. Buschgeister im Land der Senufo (Les génies de brousse au pays des Senoufos)* (Dusseldorf: Ursula Gottschalk, 1988), 4; and Lorenz Homberger, "Künstler in Werkstätten der Senufo," in Fischer, Eberhard and Homberger, Lorenz, *Afrikanische Meister: Kunst der Elfenbeinküste* (Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 2014), 157–162; see also Förster, *Die Kunst der Senufo*, 93, fig. 26 and cat. 82. Compare Michel Convers, "L'Aventure de Massa en pays Sénoufo," *Primitifs: art tribal, art moderne* 6 (1991), 33.

Figure 4. “Masques du porro sénoufo. (Photo: G. Clamens.)” From Clamens, “Notes d’ethnologie sénoufo,” 79, fig. 4. Courtesy of the Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar.



at times been taken as evidence of some of the sculptures’ location in Lataha (Fig. 4).³⁶ But the name of the town has not always accompanied the photographs.

When Clamens’s photograph of sculptures in the clearing appeared in print in 1953, the missionary explained he decided not to reveal the name of the site where the men captured the image. Thirty years after Clamens published the photograph, the American scholar Glaze praised the missionary for the image as well as his prudence in not disclosing its exact location. She described the author as “perhaps the most able and conscientious of early sources on the Senufo.”³⁷ Based on a comparison of a single sculpture in the photograph with another sculpture linked to Lataha but not present in the image as well as her own research on Senufo arts, including extended

³⁶ Gabriel Clamens, “Notes d’ethnologie sénoufo,” *Notes Africaines* 59 (July 1953), 79, fig. 4. See also, for example, Gottschalk, *Madebele*, 2–4; and Homberger, “Künstler in Werkstätten der Senufo,” 157, fig. 199.

³⁷ Anita J. Glaze, “‘The Children of Poro’: A Re-examination of the Rhythm Pounder in Senufo Art, its Form and Meaning,” *Connaissance des Arts Tribaux* 20 (1983), 5. See also Anita J. Glaze, “Call and Response: A Senufo Female Caryatid Drum,” *The Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 19–2 (1993b), 127, 197n14.

fieldwork in northern Côte d'Ivoire, Glaze concludes that the sculpture may have come from a locale "near the Korhogo / Sinematiali axis, either Lataha itself or one of its sister villages such as Serijakaha or Warinyene."³⁸ Glaze's statement suggests that by 1983, art scholars and enthusiasts had not yet determined a location for the photograph. The connection of the photograph with Lataha seems to have become more fixed later in the decade, and in 1991, Clamens's colleague Convers explicitly connected the photograph published in 1953 to Lataha.³⁹

Other evidence suggests foreigners regarded Lataha as a town that housed compelling sculptures in the early 1950s. The missionaries' photograph published in 1953 does not show the male sculpture that Rockefeller acquired from Storrer (Fig. 2). In 1991, Convers linked the sculpture to Lataha.⁴⁰ Art enthusiast and self-published author Burkhard Gottschalk reinforces the idea of the sculpture's connection to Lataha in a book on a movement known as Massa. Gottschalk also publishes a photograph of the sculpture standing between two other objects. He attributes the image to Louis Morla and asserts that Morla photographed the three objects in Lataha.⁴¹ Storrer also reportedly traveled to the town at some point in the mid-twentieth century. In a 1 November 1957 letter addressed to Goldwater, who consulted with Rockefeller on the politician's African art purchases as well as on acquisitions for the MPA, the Swiss art dealer notes that he had previously visited Lataha. Storrer further explains that he had seen the male figurative sculpture in the town but actually acquired it in Korhogo, a city located about ten miles south-southwest of Lataha. Storrer adds that he obtained the object at a time when people across the three-corner region and beyond sought to transform their practices as part of the movement often referred to as Massa.⁴²

In some places in the three-corner region, people who turned to Massa in the late 1940s and early 1950s discarded objects or replaced them with new ones.⁴³ However, the coincidence of the movement and acquisition of objects in northern Côte d'Ivoire does not prove that people in the area had

³⁸ Glaze, "'The Children of Poro,'" 6.

³⁹ Convers, "L'Aventure de Massa," 33–34. See also idem, "In the Wake of the Massa Movement Among the Senufo," *Tribal Arts* 3–4 (1997).

⁴⁰ Convers, "L'Aventure de Massa," 33.

⁴¹ Burkhard Gottschalk, *Sénoufo. Massa et les statues du poro* (Dusseldorf: Ursula Gottschalk, 2002), 104.

⁴² Visual Resource Archive, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, E. Storrer et Co. to Rockefeller, 1 November 1957, Collection Documents–Purchases, Purchase, Storrer, Emile, AR.1999.4.41, box 8, folder 7.

⁴³ See, for example, Hans Himmelheber, "Massa: Fetisch der Rechtschaffenheit," *Tribus* 4/5 (1954/55), 56–62; Patrick Royer, "Le Massa et l'eau de Moussa. Cultes régionaux, 'traditions' locales et sorcellerie en Afrique de l'Ouest,"

discarded the acquired objects as a result of the movement.⁴⁴ A variety of other motivations or actions could have precipitated the objects' transit from northern Côte d'Ivoire. Questions about the movement, the strength of its presence in Lataha, and its connection with objects that Storrer, the French Catholic missionaries, and other foreigners in northern Côte d'Ivoire documented or acquired demand attention. Additional uncertainty about the specific political, economic, and artistic contexts within Lataha and among towns in the area at the time also require consideration in order to gain greater historical understanding.

A set of some two-dozen images from the clearing, many of them unpublished, includes the photograph the missionary Clamens published in July 1953. The photographs seem to relate to the same moment and hint at happenings in the clearing when Clamens and his colleague Convers visited it with a camera.⁴⁵ Images in the set show sculptures standing in a line within a restricted space. As Gagliardi has addressed elsewhere, the images differ from other photographs of objects tossed into heaps within wide-open spaces from northern Côte d'Ivoire taken around the same time.⁴⁶ Observers, including Clamens and Convers, have more directly linked the latter photos to Massa.⁴⁷ While Clamens refers to Massa in his 1953 article, he limits his discussion of it to the first part of the article. He refers to the images from the clearing only in the second part of the article, which he does not explicitly link to Massa. The visual and textual mismatches suggest that the events in the clearing differed at least in some ways from the events related to the disposal of objects as a result of Massa.

We may never be able to recover accounts from everyone who gathered in the clearing when the missionaries captured photographs of sculptures standing there, but we can still show that a number of people contributed to what happened there. One photograph in the missionaries' set shows Convers in the center of the frame, towering over the aligned sculptures. A fuller account of events that unfolded in Lataha on a single day and over time would

Cahiers d'Études africaines 39/2–154 (1999), 337–366; Convers, “L’Aventure de Massa”; Gottschalk, *Sénoufo*, 51–81; and Gagliardi, *Senoufo Unbound*, 105–119.

⁴⁴ Compare Z. S. Strother, “Iconoclasm as Sites for the Production of Knowledge,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10–3 (2020), 985.

⁴⁵ The set appears in a larger collection of images that Convers transferred to the archives of Paris's musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in 2000, shortly before his death, with the assistance of Pierre Messmer. See musée du quai Branly numéro de gestion 70.2000.8.

⁴⁶ Gagliardi, *Senoufo Unbound*, 105–119.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Clamens, “Notes d’ethnologie,” 77, 78, figs. 1, 2; Koulaseli [alias Michel Convers], “Le Processus de la vie dans la symbolique des motifs d’une porte sénoufo,” *Bulletin annuel du Musée d’ethnographie de Genève* 23/24 (1980/1981), 97, fig. 4; Convers, “L’Aventure de Massa,” 34; idem, “In the Wake of the Massa Movement,” 54, figs. 6, 7.

identify the other men in the images as well as assess why a group of sculptures standing in Lataha but not in another town in northern Côte d'Ivoire attracted the attention of a number of foreigners, including the Swiss art dealer and the two French Catholic missionaries. *Mapping Senufo* will make visible absences in documentation we have consulted and highlight untold stories we do not yet have evidence to elucidate in detail.

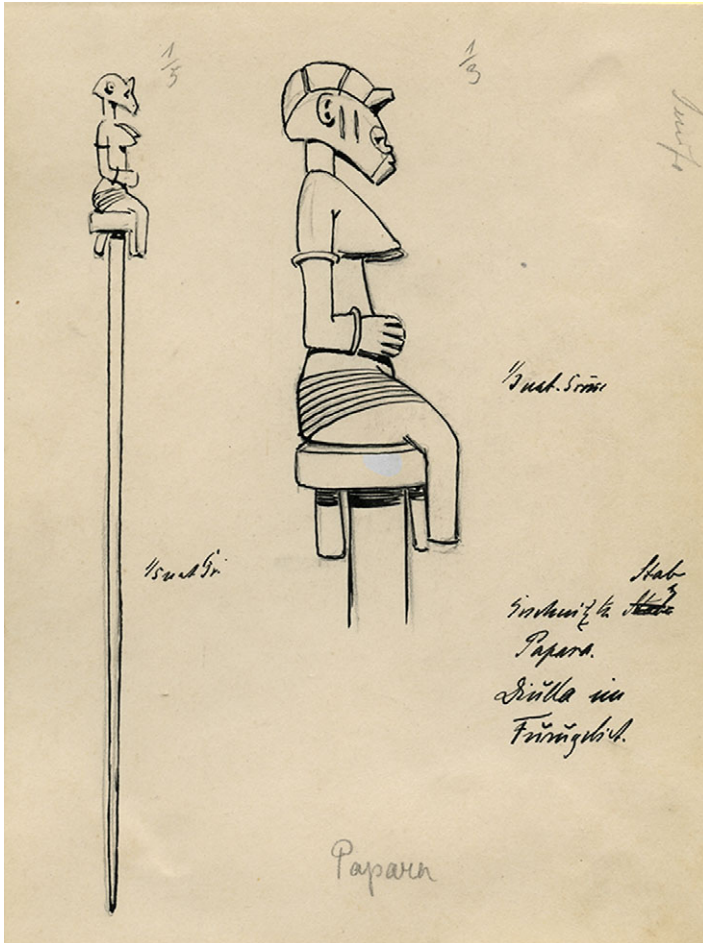
1907–1909 German Inner-African Research Expedition

Records from the German Inner-African Research Expedition [Deutsche Inner-Afrikanische Forschungs-Expedition] that German traveler, collector, and ethnologist Leo Frobenius led through West Africa from 1907–1909 provide additional depth to our knowledge of arts from the three-corner region. Few European or North American scholars who have published on three-corner-region arts have examined documents from the early-twentieth-century expedition, a mission that is contemporaneous with Delafosse's efforts to define the parameters of a Senufo country. When we compare information that members of Frobenius's team recorded with other writings about communities and arts regarded as Senufo, we find unanticipated resonances and discrepancies. Notes and images identified with the 1907–1909 expedition currently reside at the Frobenius-Institut für kulturanthropologische Forschung an der Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Several illustrations in the collection depict objects that formally resemble works Goldwater included in his 1963 show.⁴⁸ For example, one drawing presents a staff topped with a seated female figure (Fig. 5). An annotation in darker ink on the illustration reads, "Papara. Diulla [Jula] in area of Furu [probably Fourou, Mali]." *Senufo* written more lightly on the paper's edge suggests a different label. A gloss accompanying another drawing of a lidded vessel reads, "Carved paint box of the Senufo in 1/5 of actual size. Insert cover." The note links the object to "the Senufo" (Fig. 6). Yet lighter writing in pencil offers, "Papara – old Diulla settlement," suggesting the vessel may also have some connection to a "Diulla," probably Jula, neighborhood. The annotations on the two images appear to deliver conflicting information about the objects' status as Senufo or Jula.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Lucas Hafner transcribed and Sam Vangheluwe translated select notes we photographed during a November 2018 visit to the Frobenius-Institut für kulturanthropologische Forschung an der Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Manuela Husemann previously provided us with translations of information available on the Frobenius-Institut website. We thank Hafner, Vangheluwe, and Husemann for their contributions.

⁴⁹ Throughout the twentieth century, observers sought to explain bases for Senufo and Jula identities in the three-corner region as well as the presence of Senufo and Jula populations within one town and across the region. See, for example, Maesen, "De plastiek in de kultuur van de Senufo," 33–34, 37; Tiona Ouattara, "Les

Figure 5. Illustration of a wooden staff with “Papara. Diulla [Jula] in area of Furu [probably Fourou, Mali]” written in an annotation. Ink drawing on paper possibly by Reinhard Hegershoff, 12.7 × 16.8 cm. Frobenius-Institut für kulturanthropologische Forschung an der Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, KBA 10416.



Documentation related to the 1907–1909 expedition also suggests that members of the team already had ideas about the kinds of objects that constituted Senufo arts. The finding captures our attention because it undermines the

Tiembara de Korhogo, des origines à Péléforo Gbon Coulibaly (1962),” (unpublished PhD thesis, Université de Paris I - Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1977), 26–32; Pierre Knops, *Les Anciens Senufo, 1923–1935* (Berg en Dal: Afrika Museum, 1980), 9; Glaze, *Art and Death*, 6; and Förster, *Zerrissene Entfaltung*, 114–118.

Figure 6. Illustration of a lidded container with annotations that read “Carved paint box of the Senufo in 1/5 of actual size. Insert cover” and “Papara – old Diulla settlement.” Ink drawing on paper possibly by Leo Frobenius; 7.7 × 12.7 cm. Frobenius-Institut für kulturalanthropologische Forschung an der Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, KBA 04237.



idea that Europeans began defining parameters of a Senufo style or recognizing objects as Senufo in the 1930s.⁵⁰ When French colonial administrator

⁵⁰ In 1946, Albert Maesen received his PhD in African art history from the Universiteit Gent, where he studied with Frans Olbrechts. Maesen and his colleague Pieter Jan Vandenhoute were the first two people ever to earn doctorates in the field. As part of their doctoral research, they completed nearly a year of fieldwork in northern Côte d'Ivoire before receiving instructions to return to Belgium due to

Delafosse published the two installments of his article on populations he classified as Senufo in 1908 and 1909, he included a few hand-drawn illustrations of objects that do not fit within understandings of a style that art enthusiasts regarded as a core Senufo style later in the twentieth century. But in a notebook from the early-twentieth-century expedition signed by engineer Reinhard Hugershoff, the member of Frobenius's team indicates he expected to see certain forms in places he regarded as Senufo. The engineer explains, "Wooden masks I have not discovered anywhere in the area, at least not such as are really identifiable as Senufo-works." The statement suggests that Hugershoff had previously seen actual wooden face masks or helmet masks that someone had designated as Senufo or images of such objects. Hugershoff continues, "On the other hand, one finds rattles for the circumcision festivities (wosamba) with horsehead-like carving, and flanges [probably heddle pulleys] from the looms with original heads." Thus, at least some of Hugershoff's findings seemed to correspond with what he imagined he would see.

As we have seen, some illustrations of objects from the expedition match later twentieth-century ideas about a core Senufo style even if classificatory terms on the drawings raise the possibility of different attributions. The information from the early-twentieth-century expedition further intrigues when we consider that members of the expedition apparently did not travel to Korhogo, the city that Delafosse and many subsequent observers have regarded as the center of Senufo-ness. Hugershoff does note geographic differences in the production of objects. He writes, "The native carpentry and woodcraft, in the whole northern part of the region and in Sikasso, is quite primitive, even though now and again original forms make an appearance." He adds, "In general, a development of woodcarving is unmistakable towards the south, compare the small wooden figures and pot-like lidded vessels with figures, to the south of Furu [Fourou]."⁵¹ Hugershoff may or may not have had the previously mentioned vessel in mind when he referred in his notebook to pot-like lidded vessels with figures to the south of Fourou. We are

the start of the Second World War. See also Anja Veirman, "In Search of Not Gold and Ivory, but Art and Artists': Olbrechts and the Expeditions to West Africa (1933 and 1938–39)," in Petridis, Constantine (ed.), *Frans M. Olbrechts (1899–1958): In Search of Art in Africa* (Antwerp: Ethnographic Museum, 2001), 234–253. Maesen's study focused on Senufo arts. He writes, "To my knowledge the first to treat the sculpture of the Senufo as a whole, as a style complex, is L. Szecsi [Ladislav Segy] in his *Stilgebiete der Elfenbeinküste*, which appeared in 1933." Maesen indicates the 1933 treatment of the topic is cursory, and the Belgian scholar identifies Danish collector Carl Kjersmeier's publication of 1935 as a more extensive source. See Maesen, "De plastiek in de kultuur van de Senufo," 23; Ladislav Szecsi, "Stilgebiete der Elfenbeinküste," *Ethnologischer Anzeiger* 3 (1933), 140–142, pls. IX–XI; and Kjersmeier, *Centres de style*.

⁵¹ Frobenius-Institut für kulturalanthropologische Forschung an der Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (Frobenius-Institut) Folder LF87, "Reg. Nr. 85, II. West-Sudan 1907/08, L. Frobenius: Ethn. Ergänzung I (Orig.), Senufo," p. 42.

finding that our examinations of additional documentation complicate rather than corroborate prior knowledge of Senufo-labeled arts.

Scales of Analysis

Our study of notes and drawings from the 1907–1909 expedition has further led us to assert that the concept of scale offers a useful frame for thinking about historical analysis as well as the disparate perspectives and fragmentary evidence upon which analysis relies. Art historians as well as scholars situated within other disciplines often think in terms of scale. Focused primarily on the concept of scale in the making and experience of art and architecture, especially in Inca contexts, art historian Andrew James Hamilton emphasizes scale as relational and not absolute. He further underscores the relative and subjective dimensions of the concept.⁵²

Scale shapes thinking about digital humanities. In an essay on productive possibilities for joining computational approaches with art-historical inquiry, art and architectural historian Paul Jaskot argues that “digital methods favor large scalable questions that require big data.”⁵³ Jaskot focuses on what he calls the “scale of evidence” and highlights potential in study of “thousands or even millions” of images or other records.⁵⁴ Computers certainly enable scholars to analyze enormous numbers of records. The approach hinges on construction of databases, an intellectual activity too often viewed as mere data entry.⁵⁵ But the idea that “big data” are a requirement for significant computational analysis in the humanities or in any other area of inquiry unsettles given longstanding disparities in the recording and digitization of information. Fields of inquiry as well as institutions that historically have benefitted from greater resources may have more “big data” sets ripe for digital analysis. If scholars insist on “big data” as a prerequisite for digital scholarship, then they risk promoting and exacerbating power-based inequalities at odds with conceptions of digital humanities as a means for addressing structural problems and democratizing knowledge production.⁵⁶

⁵² Andrew James Hamilton, *Scale & the Incas* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018).

⁵³ Jaskot, “Digital Methods,” 12.

⁵⁴ Jaskot, “Digital Methods,” 11, 12.

⁵⁵ For example, see Claire Bishop in Drucker, Johanna and Bishop, Claire, “A Conversation on Digital Art History,” in Gold, Matthew K. and Klein, Lauren F. (eds.), *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2019* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), <https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-f2acf72c-a469-49d8-be35-67f9ac1e3a60/section/3aedfd2c-280f4029-b3f1-3e9a11794c01#ch27>, (accessed 16 October 2020).

⁵⁶ For a discussion of ethical and intellectual imperatives of digital humanities, see Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein, “Introduction: A DH That Matters,” in Gold and Klein, *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2019*, <https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/>

When we began working on *Mapping Senuso*, we estimated that we might locate hundreds of Senuso-labeled objects with specific place-based information attached to them. Members of the project team devoted significant thought and energy during the first several years of the project's development to creation of a relational database. Digital scholarship specialists Joanna Mundy and Sara Palmer worked with us to design a database for the project that accommodates geographic data linked to objects as well as other details we have sought to organize and trace.⁵⁷ Uncertainties that became apparent as members of the team worked on building the database and analyzing the first large set of data entered into it plunged us into discussions of evidence at the micro rather than macro level.⁵⁸ Thus, our use of computational methods led us away from "big data."

As we continue to work on *Mapping Senuso*, we have found the cartographic concept of scale especially helpful for assessing different approaches to understanding cultural and historical phenomena. In *How to Lie with Maps*, geographer Mark Monmonier examines how key elements of maps – scale, projection, and symbolization – serve as sources for misinterpretation.⁵⁹ A cartographic scale shows the size of a feature on a map compared to the feature's actual size on earth. A map with a larger scale created on a single sheet of paper covers a smaller proportion of the Earth's surface than a map with smaller scale produced on the same size paper does. Consequently, a map's scale makes possible or denies a cartographer's inclusion of certain details in a geographic rendering.

An observer working at a larger scale may cover less geographic area in a study but document more specific details about particular places and individual people operating within them. By contrast, a person working at a smaller scale may cover more geographic area and see broader features. Each scale facilitates understanding of geographic space, but disparate concerns require maps at different scales to generate productive insights. A map reader must remain attentive to each map's scale in order to calibrate questions with regard to each particular scale and to consider different maps, and thus their divergent scales, in relation to each other. Historians and other scholars have debated the relative merits of *splitters* and *lumpers*, terms that refer respectively to thinkers who work at larger and smaller scales.⁶⁰ We have found that framing discussion

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⁵⁷ Mundy and Palmer, "About Database Design."

⁵⁸ Gagliardi, "Mapping Senuso." We thank Caitlin Glosser for her work with and analysis of records from the now-defunct Musée Africain in Lyon.

⁵⁹ Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996 [2nd ed.]).

⁶⁰ Historian and *Mapping Senuso* project collaborator Christopher Sawula directed our attention to discussions of splitters and lumpers within the discipline of history during a project workshop in August 2018. See, for example, Alan Taylor,

in terms of scales of analysis instead of in terms of splitters and lumpers enables one to see more clearly how various perspectives reveal different aspects of the same phenomenon and thus interrelate rather than compete with each other.

A comparison of illustrations and notes produced as part of the 1907–1909 expedition with Gagliardi’s field-based research nearly a century later demonstrates how observers may operate at different scales and how findings may vary as a result.⁶¹ Communities identified as Senufo and referenced in the notes from 1907–1909 are located a few hundred miles west of the communities of western Burkina Faso where Gagliardi based her own research. Each set of data shows how the term *Senufo* is applied to certain arts that Goldwater and other twentieth-century art enthusiasts have not commonly labeled as Senufo. Each observer also sought differing amounts of detail depending on the observer’s scale of analysis.

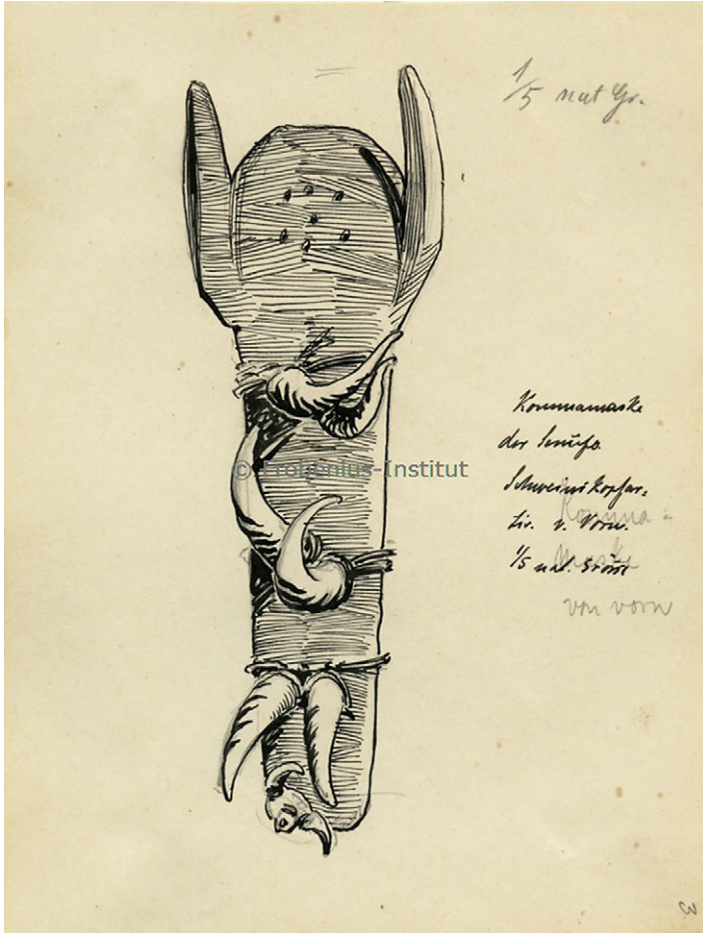
An illustration from the early-twentieth-century expedition shows a helmet mask. A handwritten gloss accompanying the image describes the object as “Mask of Komma of the Senufo, Pig’s Head” (Fig. 7). *Komma* [Koma], likely another name for Komo, designates a power association in and beyond the three-corner region. Power associations work to effect change in people’s lives through the association leaders’ guarded knowledge of potent matter and intangible energies. The organizations’ leaders heal, but they also have the capacity to cause harm. Power associations have served as the great patrons for the arts in western West Africa since at least the nineteenth century, when European travelers began collecting and documenting the organizations’ arts. The organizations invest in and maintain accumulative sculptures and installations, and they stage vibrant performances.⁶²

“Unnatural Inequalities: Social and Environmental Histories,” *Environmental History* 1–4 (1996), 6–19; David Meskill, “Splitting or Lumping - *de gustibus non est disputandum?*,” *The Historical Society* (Thursday, 6 August 2009), <http://histsociety.blogspot.com/2009/08/splitting-or-lumping-de-gustibus-non.html>, (accessed 4 May 2020); and William Cronon, “Breaking Apart, Putting Together,” *Perspectives on History* (1 May 2012), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2012/breaking-apart-putting-together>, (accessed 4 May 2020).

⁶¹ Gagliardi developed the “Scales of Analysis” idea and presented a version of it during the Reconnecting African Art and Artefacts session organized by David Gordon and Lawrence Dristas for the European Conference on African Studies in Edinburgh, Scotland, in June 2019.

⁶² See, for example, Joseph Henry, *L’Âme d’un peuple africain. Les Bambara, leur vie psychique, éthique, sociale, religieuse* (Münster, Germany: Aschendorffschen Buchhandlung, 1910); Patrick R. McNaughton, *The Mande Blacksmiths: Knowledge, Power, and Art in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Sarah C. Brett-Smith, “The Mouth of the Komo,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 31 (1997), 71–96; Diamiani, “Identities, Komo Societies, and Art”; Colleyn, *Bamana*; Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi, “Crossing Borders, Pushing Boundaries: Arts of Power Associations on the Senufo-Mande Cultural Frontier,” (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Califor

Figure 7. Illustration of a helmet mask with an annotation that reads “Mask of Komma [probably Komo] of the Senufo, Pig’s Head.” Ink drawing on paper by an unidentified artist; 12.7 × 16.7 cm. Frobenius-Institut für kulturanthropologische Forschung an der Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, KBA 10183.



When Goldwater organized *Antelopes and Queens: Bambara Sculpture from the Western Sudan* at the MPA in 1960, he included in the show arts attributed to Komo and other similar organizations, including Kono. Other scholars and art enthusiasts at the time identified Komo, Kono, and other power associations as distinctly Bamana or Mande institutions, with *Mande* serving as an umbrella

nia, 2010); and Philippe Jaspers, “L’Ouverture des yeux au Komo,” *Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities* 176 (2013), 37–66.

term for a larger group that includes the Bamana group but not the Senufo group. The scholars and art enthusiasts considered Komo and Kono helmet masks as Bamana, a category of arts they viewed as separate from arts they labeled as Senufo. But the gloss accompanying the drawing of a Komo helmet mask from the 1907–1909 expedition links the object to “the Senufo.”

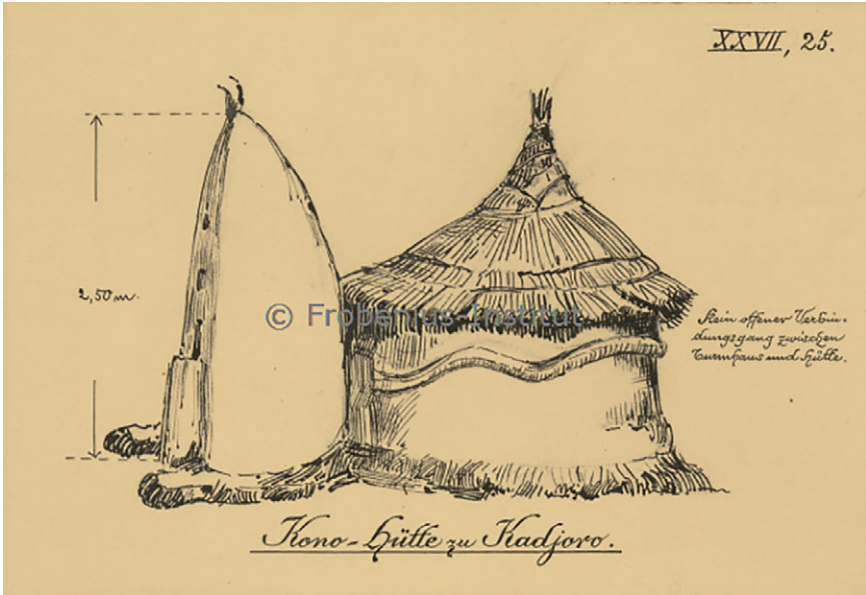
Hugershoff’s notebook entitled “The Senufo” makes additional references to Komo and Kono.⁶³ Even if notes from the expedition specify that Komo’s presence in Senufo communities was rare, Hugerhoff’s writings signal that communities Europeans regarded as Senufo in the early twentieth century did at times support the organization. Other sources from the late nineteenth century to the present refer to Komo and other power associations in communities that observers recognized as Senufo, thus further indicating that clear-cut characterizations of the organizations as specific to Bamana or Mande cultural or ethnic groups separate from a Senufo cultural or ethnic group are difficult to maintain.⁶⁴ A chapter of *Mapping Senufo* devoted to the 1907–1909 expedition will include information about Komo and Kono to show that the associations have at times fallen within the Senufo rubric.

While European and North American observers have noted the existence of power associations in the three-corner region and recorded information about their activities for more than a century, we unfortunately have few detailed histories specific to particular locales. But lack of documentation does not necessarily signal the unimportance of local-level histories to the communities that have supported or continue to support the organizations. A return to earlier sources and explications in an effort to recover details requires careful attention to the scales of analysis each observer or researcher employed. A particular observer’s scale of analysis could not match a contemporary researcher’s scale of analysis, and a contemporary researcher may never be able to access records to make possible recovery of exact details of local agency or examination of specific local histories. Still, we can look for references to specific individuals or histories, however cursory references may be, and we can develop language in our presentations to acknowledge the considerable gaps between what we would like to know and what sources we have consulted allow us to know. As we develop *Mapping Senufo*, we are working to recognize such local-level histories even if we have not yet been

⁶³ Frobenius-Institut Folder LF87, “Reg. Nr. 85, II. West-Sudan 1907/08, L. Frobenius: Ethn. Ergänzung I (Orig.), Senuffo.”

⁶⁴ For additional information about sources recognizing power associations in communities identified as Senufo and the organizations more generally, see Gagliardi, *Senufo Unbound*, 198–199, 229–241. Compare Philippe Jaspers, “Masks and Utterance: The Analysis of an Auditory Mask in the Initiation Society of the Komo (Minyanka, Mali),” in de Heusch, Luc (ed.), *Objects: Signs of Africa* (Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1995), 37; and Colleyn, *Bamana*, 12–15.

Figure 8. “Konohütte zu Kadjoro [Kono Hut of Kadjoro],” shown at 2.5 meters in height and classified as Senufo in the Frobenius-Institut database. Ink drawing on paper by Reinhard Hugerhoff, dated probably 1908; 21.5 × 15 cm. Frobenius-Institut für kulturanthropologische Forschung an der Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, EBA-B 00232.

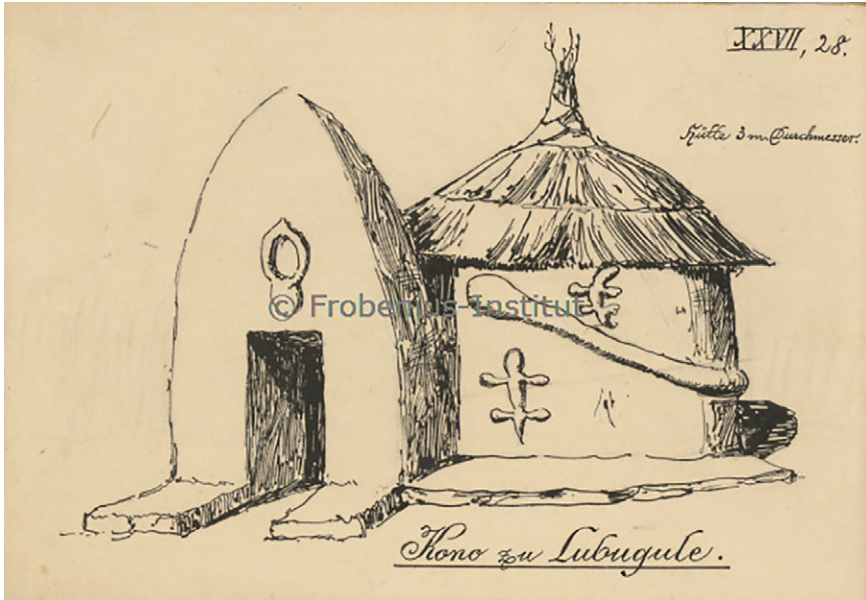


able to uncover details and to develop language that foregrounds knowledge gaps rather than glossing over them.

Statements about power associations in the notes from the 1907–1909 expedition we have consulted are often broad. For example, the writer of one notebook, probably Hugerhoff, asserts that “Kono ... is the first well-preserved secret association...It is considered weaker than the [Nya] society. But that is not to say that it is older or younger than this institution.”⁶⁵ Based on the comments the author committed to paper, we cannot know if the statement reflects information he gathered from people in the three-corner region about distinct association chapters in a single location or the institutions in a particular area or the institutions more generally. While we search for additional details to help us better understand the assertion, we view the statement as a clue that when combined with other information, may direct us to greater insight in the future.

⁶⁵ Frobenius-Institut Folder LF91, “Reg. Nr. 89, II. West-Sudan 1907/08, L. Frobenius: Ethn. Ergänzung V (Orig.), Senufo-Stämme, Bobo- Bariba-Kurastämme,” pp. 18–19.

Figure 9. “Kono zu Lubugule [Kono of Lobougoula],” described as 3 meters in diameter and classified as Senufo in the Frobenius-Institut database. Ink drawing on paper by Reinhard Hugerhoff, dated probably 1908; 21.5 × 15 cm. Frobenius-Institut für kulturanthropologische Forschung an der Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, EBA-B 00233.



Other documentation from the expedition yields specific instead of general information that we will highlight in *Mapping Senufo*. Drawings of power association houses include glosses with place names (Figs. 8 and 9). We can imagine that the illustrator, again probably Hugerhoff, appears to have seen a Kono house similar to one shown in a drawing located to the town of “Kadjoro” (probably Katiolo) in July 1908, and another Kono house similar to the one shown in another drawing located to the town of “Lubugule” (probably Lobougoula) during the same month.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, documentation from the expedition we have consulted provides no information about who the leaders of the Kono chapters in “Kadjoro” and “Lubugule” were in July 1908, how they acquired their knowledge, or who their collaborators, rivals, or clients were. In order to recover local agency, we would need records from a local community member or another observer who worked within a larger scale of analysis and documented more details within a more confined

⁶⁶ See “DIAFE 002 Westsudan,” an outline of the team’s itinerary provided to us by historian Richard Kuba on 20 November 2018, when we met with him at the Frobenius-Institut für kulturanthropologische Forschung an der Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main.

geographic area. We would then need to assess the information within specific local economic, interpersonal, and political contexts.

Older and more recent accounts of power associations lead us to infer that between 1907 and 1909, the specificity of individual chapters of the organizations and their leaders mattered. Since 2004, Gagliardi has spent nearly 22 months in western Burkina Faso, where she has interviewed power association leaders and other specialists. Her field-based research shows that power association leaders compete for status and authority and that they leverage the arts to distinguish themselves from their colleagues and competitors. Within a town and from town to town, specialists compete with each other for clients and prestige. An action one specialist considers aggressive, another may consider defensive.

People Gagliardi interviewed frequently described contests between or among specialists. Several people explicitly recalled the deadly August 1986 contest between two men who had worked together closely in conjunction with a Komo chapter in the town of Sokouraba. People said the close collaboration led to jealousy because one man earned a reputation that surpassed that of the other. Armed with knowledge of his colleague's skill, the man of lesser renown reportedly hurled an invisible missile at his more distinguished colleague. The Komo leader of greater fame died, but, before he did, he reportedly retaliated with another lethal invisible missile. His former collaborator-turned-rival also died. The smaller scale of analysis prevalent in documentation from the 1907–1909 expedition does not permit us to pinpoint such exact stories people may have told at the time. Perhaps the early-twentieth-century documenters on Frobenius's team did not find such particulars important. But the absence may not mean the details were unimportant to people in and around "Kadjoro," "Lubugule," or the other towns visited by at least one member of the expedition team. In *Mapping Senúfo*, we will urge readers to consider how observers may at times overlook details they are not primed to see as significant.

Documentation from the 1907–1909 expedition allows only a few glimpses into the knowledge and activities of power association leaders. However, certain information in the early-twentieth-century records resonate with reports of other observers. For example, notes from the German team hint at knowledge of plants promoted by power associations. In a section of notes dedicated to the Nya power association, the author, probably Hegershoff, indicates that the organization, by which he may mean each chapter, maintains "three pouches filled with medicines."⁶⁷ He explains that a person who joins Nya, "receives some of the medicinal content of the pouches, which

⁶⁷ Frobenius-Institut Folder LF91, "Reg. Nr. 89, II. West-Sudan 1907/08, L. Frobenius: Ethn. Ergänzung V (Orig.), Senuffo-Stämme, Bobo- Bariba-Kurastämme," p. 25.

allegedly consists of crushed, pulverized tree bark.”⁶⁸ He also highlights the medicine’s protective and poisonous qualities.⁶⁹

Nya, like Komo and Kono, continues to exist in western West Africa, including but not only in communities regarded as Senufo, and knowledge of plants remains important to the organizations’ activities. When French photographer Agnès Pataux visited a Nya specialist in Mali in 2006, she photographed him with three bags. Pataux interviewed a Nya leader in another town the following year. He referred to three bags filled with objects created from the roots of certain trees.⁷⁰ Indeed, plant knowledge has appeared for more than a century as a central feature of power associations in documentation of the organizations’ activities.⁷¹ Power association leaders develop expert knowledge of plants, and vegetal matter constitutes some of the most important material incorporated into their objects.

Members of the German expedition in the early twentieth century and Gagliardi, who conducted research in a different area almost a century later, appear to have relied on different scales of analysis. Scholars operating at the same moment may also favor different scales. The collaborative nature of our project has forced the two of us to grapple with our different proclivities toward emphasizing broad views or specific details in our solo studies and presentations of African arts. In addition, our intellectual partnership has required us to wrestle with our disparate intellectual genealogies, professional investments, and personal attachments. We repeatedly find that we must negotiate our different points of view and understandings as we develop the project. The experience further contributes to our recognition that any knowledge is partial and contingent.

Our efforts to bring together our own overlapping, but at times, conflicting, perspectives within a single publication have led us to realize through experience that no single position captures a full view and that we cannot always reconcile our disparate viewpoints. The realizations have ceased to

⁶⁸ Frobenius-Institut Folder LF91, “Reg. Nr. 89, II. West-Sudan 1907/08, L. Frobenius: Ethn. Ergänzung V (Orig.), Senuffo-Stämme, Bobo- Bariba-Kurastämme,” p. 25.

⁶⁹ Frobenius-Institut Folder LF91, “Reg. Nr. 89, II. West-Sudan 1907/08, L. Frobenius: Ethn. Ergänzung V (Orig.), Senuffo-Stämme, Bobo- Bariba-Kurastämme,” pp. 25–26.

⁷⁰ Agnès Pataux, *Cœur blanc, ventre blanc. Fétiches et féticheurs* (Montreuil: Gourcuff Gradenigo, 2010), 164–165.

⁷¹ Karfa Coulibaly (interview by Gagliardi, 31 January 2007); Yaya Bangali (interview by Gagliardi, 22 March 2007); Ibrahim Traoré Banakourou (personal communication with Gagliardi, 17 March 2018, and 16 September 2018). See also, for example, Henry, *L’Âme d’un peuple*; Patrick McNaughton, *Secret Sculptures of Komo: Art and Power in Bamana (Bambara) Initiation Associations* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1979); and Sarah C. Brett-Smith, *The Making of Bamana Sculpture: Creativity and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

exist merely as theoretical statements about the partiality of any knowledge production. We have had to think about how to manifest our divergent understandings in our research and writing practices. Our different emphases also inform our intentions to reimagine the form of a born-digital scholarly publication designed to engage scholars, as well as broader audiences. We seek to create a publication that through its very form argues against a single, narrative account of what Senufo arts are or what they mean.

Reimagining a Digital Monograph

In the final form of *Mapping Senufo*, we will aim to direct readers to various firsthand accounts and lead them to arrive at their own conclusions. We will invite readers to look closely at extant evidence as well as details the sources provide, silences the documents elide, and questions they evoke. For instance, an interactive section of *Mapping Senufo* that the project team is currently designing will further remind readers that photographs are not neutral documents. They and metadata about them present partial accounts (Figs. 10 and 11).⁷²

A digital monograph creates opportunities to demonstrate the contradictory nature of select observers' documentation and other enthusiasts' analyses of arts identified as Senufo through interactive features. Our goal is to show and investigate fragmentary and divergent details instead of weaving together disparate perspectives and information in order to present a singular, authoritative view. Our vision departs from common practices for realizing scholarly monographs.⁷³ Rather than attempt to account for every perspective past and present as if such an approach were even possible, we will focus on people who have repeatedly garnered recognition for contributing to the shaping of the corpus or knowledge about it. The records we have are lopsided. Unfortunately, many Europeans and North Americans who traveled to the three-corner region in the twentieth century and wrote about Senufo arts did not record the names of specific people in the area with whom they interacted. European and North American names dominate many publications and records. Yet the people whose names do not appear on paper were still integral to shaping the corpus and stories told about it. We will thus seek to draw attention to lost voices and perspectives.

⁷² See, for example, Christraud M. Geary, "Photographic Practice in Africa and its Implications for the Use of Historical Photographs as Contextual Evidence," in Triulzi, Alessandro (ed.), *Fotografia e Storia dell'Africa* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1995), 103–130; and Carolyn Keyes Adenaike, "Contextualizing and Decontextualizing African Historical Photographs," *History in Africa* 23 (1996), 429–437.

⁷³ Compare Jean-Loup Amselle and Emmanuelle Sibeud, *Maurice Delafosse. Entre orientalisme et ethnographie: l'itinéraire d'un africaniste (1870–1926)* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1998), 14.

Figure 10. Mark Addison Smith. Page showing a possible design that combines hand-rendered text with images created after photographs in the Michel Convers photographic collection now at the musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in Paris, from Mood Boards + Design Experiments for *Mapping Senoufo*, 31 January 2020.



Figure 11. Mark Addison Smith. Page showing a hand-rendered drawing after a photograph from the Michel Convers photographic collection now at the musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in Paris, from Mood Boards + Design Experiments for *Mapping Senufo*, 31 January 2020.



Enacting the Argument

The interactivity of digital environments makes it possible to render readers active participants in their own knowledge construction and experience different modes of argumentation. As digital publication specialist and scholar of rhetoric Cheryl E. Ball asserts, multimodal formats support non-linear arguments presented as “a persuasion, a juxtaposition of modal elements from which readers infer meaning.”⁷⁴ Readers of our digital monograph will isolate and investigate particular objects, people, places, and events integral to the ongoing recognition of a single corpus of art as Senufo and also create connections among elements. Through this process, readers will become authors of their own contingent understandings, enacting our argument that a category of art and knowledge about it are always circumstantial and incomplete.

⁷⁴ Cheryl E. Ball, “Show, Not Tell: The Value of New Media Scholarship,” *Computers and Composition* 21 (2004), 405.

Figure 12. Unrecorded maker. Detail of staff. Wood, iron, reptile skin, h. 139 cm. Mercedes and David Serra Collection, Barcelona. Photo © Galeria David Serra.



As we currently conceive it, the final version of *Mapping Senufo* will feature image- and text-based sections that present readers with disparate, uneven, and often irreconcilable documentation from various observers who recorded information about Senufo arts in different places and at particular moments. It will demonstrate to readers the fragmentary nature of any record. For example, a reader who considers Goldwater's analyses alongside documentation from the 1907–1909 expedition may see productive differences in thinking about Senufo arts and identity. When Goldwater published photographs of a staff topped with a seated female figure then in the collection of Eric Peters of New York, Goldwater attributed the object to the central region based on his evaluation of the object's style (Fig. 12). Goldwater provided no other information to support the attribution.⁷⁵ He located two other staffs illustrated in his book on Senufo arts to the northern region and more specifically to the Sikasso district.⁷⁶ A look at illustrations

⁷⁵ Goldwater, *Senufo Sculpture*, nos. 128, 128a.

⁷⁶ Goldwater, *Senufo Sculpture*, nos. 134, 135.

from the 1907–1909 expedition that Goldwater does not clearly cite, thus suggesting he may never have consulted them, complicates Goldwater's assessments of form as well as assumptions undergirding his conclusions. The early-twentieth-century drawings show staffs located to the Sikasso region. The forms in the illustrations appear quite different from the objects Goldwater identifies with Sikasso and its environs. The comparison may prompt a reader to interrogate evidence available for linking historical arts of Africa to more or less circumscribed geographic areas. Or it may generate other inquiries or determinations we cannot anticipate.

Another reader may select a different point of entry into the monograph. A reader interested in sculptures linked to the town of Lataha might choose to follow a visual essay, clicking through a series of frames that combine images and minimal text to probe the extent of extant evidence as well as limitations of that evidence. Or a reader might decide to devote attention to a textual essay on the topic of mid-twentieth-century photographs of objects standing in a clearing, presumably in Lataha. The visual and textual essays will stand alone, but they will also cross-reference and complement each other. Other visual and textual essays in the digital monograph will address other objects, people, places, and events related to the construction of present-day knowledge of Senufo-labeled arts. Readers will pick and choose what to view and read, creating and revising their understandings as they make additional choices.

Performative, nonlinear modes of argumentation have featured in the generation and circulation of art-historical knowledge in Europe and North America since the late nineteenth century in the form of the slide lecture.⁷⁷ Art historian and digital humanist Alison Langmead reflects on the discipline's history and argues that the “engaged performance rather than ... recitation of a linear, written text” common to slide lectures “can find an easy home in, and a deep connection to, the world of digital interactivity.”⁷⁸ Digital technologies grant scholars opportunities to experiment with performative, nonlinear possibilities for producing and sharing knowledge. We are working with project team members to realize this potential.

In addition, the nonlinear, embodied mode of presentation we are developing in *Mapping Senufo* parallels aspects of knowledge transmission prevalent in the three-corner region. As Burkina-born scholar Ibrahim Traoré Banakourou explained, his elders in Burkina Faso and Mali instructed

⁷⁷ Alison Langmead, “Art and Architectural History and the Performative, Mindful Practice of the Digital Humanities,” *The Journal of Interactive Technology & Pedagogy* (21 February 2018), <https://jitp.commons.gc.cuny.edu/art-and-architectural-history-and-the-performative-mindful-practice-of-the-digital-humanities/>, (accessed 17 October 2020). See also Dan Karlholm, “Developing the Picture: Wölfflin's Performance Art,” *Photography & Culture* 3-2 (2010), 207–216; and Robert S. Nelson, “The Slide Lecture, or the Work of Art ‘History’ in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Critical Inquiry* 26–3 (2000), 414–434.

⁷⁸ Langmead, “Art and Architectural History.”

him in local knowledge.⁷⁹ Rather than articulating clear arguments at the outset of a lesson and supplying evidence to support their assertions, the elders often presented the younger learner with riddles, directed him to certain evidence, and allowed him to arrive at his own conclusions. The approaches to learning and knowing that Traoré described, like the publication design our project team is developing, encourages investigation. It also emphasizes the time-based and subjective nature of knowledge acquisition. As we continue to work on the design for *Mapping Senufo*, we remain committed to developing deeper understanding of forms of knowledge production and dissemination in the three-corner region and to drawing upon them in the digital monograph.

Expanding the Audience

The online accessibility of digital publications raises the possibility of engaging larger audiences. In their introduction to *Debates in Digital Humanities 2019*, Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein argue that current scholars positioned within the field of digital humanities endeavor to extend their intellectual work beyond the confines of the academy. Gold and Klein also insist upon an urgent need to marshal digital tools and methods in order to examine power structures in wide-ranging contexts and to involve broad publics in exchanges with scholars.⁸⁰ We similarly seek to identify and investigate power structures in the circulation of and knowledge about Senufo-labeled arts throughout the twentieth century, and we also aim to reach a variety of readers. We have already discussed the project with scholars based in universities and museums as well as with people in other positions in Africa, Europe, and North America.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ibrahim Traoré Banakourou (personal communication with Gagliardi, 17 March 2018, and 16 September 2018).

⁸⁰ Gold and Klein, "Introduction: A DH That Matters."

⁸¹ We have discussed *Mapping Senufo* at different stages of its development with a variety of colleagues at our respective institutions as well as with colleagues who have wide-ranging intellectual interests and are based at other institutions. Since 2016, we have delivered singly or together formal presentations on "Mapping Senufo" at the Africa Table at Stanford University, Camargo Foundation, Center for Humanities Research and Department of History at the University of the Western Cape, Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis at Stanford University, Clark Art Institute, Department of Art History at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Musée des Civilisations de Côte d'Ivoire in Abidjan, School of Art History at the University of St Andrews, and Wits City Institute at the University of the Witwatersrand. We have contributed papers on the project to the Beyond the Algorithm: Art Historians, Librarians, and Archivists in Collaboration on Digital Humanities Initiatives session at the 2020 College Art Association annual conference; Destabilizing the Geographic in Modern and Contemporary Art session at the 2018 College Art Association annual conference; Meaningful Objects: Analyzing Contemporary West

Our ambitions to make knowledge about African arts and history accessible to diverse scholarly and non-scholarly audiences find precedent in exhibitions within the field of African art history. Exhibitions produced in the 1980s and 1990s nourished scholarship within the field and continue to serve as touchstones for analyses. The same exhibitions also demonstrated that groundbreaking intellectual work can captivate museum-going publics without specialized knowledge of a topic as well as endure for future scholarly engagement through publications created in conjunction with the shows.⁸² As we develop *Mapping Senuso*, we return to models for public scholarship within and beyond our field. We also benefit from project team members who have not previously studied Senuso-labeled arts specifically or historical arts of Africa more generally and who caution us if we become mired in details that seem uninteresting or insignificant to curious but previously uninformed audiences.

Our aims further reflect separate, longstanding commitments to public scholarship and histories of knowledge production in public fora.⁸³ As a university-based scholar, Gagliardi has continually sought to develop ways of writing about her research that communicate nuanced information and complicated concepts in clear language comprehensible to academic and

African Material Cultures session at the 2017 African Studies Association annual conference; 2016 Art & Science: Conference on Empirical Methods hosted by the Universität Wien; and Cultural Forgetting and Recovery: Using Historical GIS to Restore the Material Past session at the 2016 American Association of Geographers annual meeting. *Mapping Senuso* graduate research assistant Caitlin Glosser presented her generative work on the project at the 2018 Network Detroit conference. In addition, Gagliardi and several *Mapping Senuso* graduate research assistants worked on the project during the 2014 Kress Summer Institute of Digital Mapping and Art History as well as the 2018 From Prototype to Published, KairosCamp, an Institute for Advanced Topics in the Digital Humanities funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and hosted by the Digital Publishing Institute at West Virginia University.

⁸² See, for example, Robert Farris Thompson and Joseph Cornet, *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1981); Ezio Bassani and William B. Fagg, *Africa and the Renaissance: Art in Ivory* (New York: Center for African Art, 1988); Mary H. Nooter (ed.), *Secrecy: African Art That Conceals and Reveals* (New York: Museum for African Art, 1993); Frederick Lamp, *Art of the Baga: A Drama of Cultural Reinvention* (New York: Museum for African Art, 1996); Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts (eds.), *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History* (New York: Museum for African Art, 1996); and Susan Mullin Vogel, *Baule: African Art, Western Eyes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1997).

⁸³ See, for example, Petridis, *Frans M. Olbrechts*; and Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi, "Mining the Rubin Archive: Mid-Twentieth Century Documentation of Two Mumuye Masquerades," in Berns, Marla, Fardon, Richard, and Kasfir, Sidney Littlefield (eds.), *Central Nigeria Unmasked: Arts of the Benue River Valley* (Los Angeles: Fowler Museum, 2011).

non-academic audiences. She eschews the notion that her first-year undergraduate students or any other non-specialist crowd cannot grasp subtleties or intricacies.⁸⁴ And in projects he pursues as a museum-based scholar and curator, Petridis installs objects within three-dimensional spaces as well as develops content about the works designed to attract general publics and offer informed insights. We bring the same concerns to the development of *Mapping Senufo*.

While our in-progress, born-digital publication project centers on a single corpus of art located to West Africa and knowledge about it, our efforts address a more fundamental and urgent present-day concern, namely how people evaluate evidence and present findings. We seek to assess the nature of evidence for making certain claims and to invite readers to think about how any of us knows what we know. The imperative to attend to the nature of evidence, whether verbal or visual, reflects more than academic pursuits.

As studies published by Stanford History Education Group in 2016 and 2019 show, students in American middle schools, high schools, and universities, including students at the nation's top universities, lack the ability to distinguish credible information from unreliable assertions presented online.⁸⁵ The group implores action. While scholars must remain attentive to the sources we use and advance knowledge, we must also find alternate modes for presenting our findings to different publics if we want to try to address an alarming trend in how people assess information in the digital age. As the project team works on the design of *Mapping Senufo*, we endeavor to use digital tools and methods in order to help combat a problem proliferating in the digital realm. We are creating a born-digital, open-access scholarly publication to invite readers from within and beyond the academy to think more critically about how we know what we know.

Conclusion

While Vansina, Hart, and MacGaffey have asserted that studies of so-called historical or classical African arts have often lacked reliable data to support interpretations, scholars of African arts need not settle for speculation. Our efforts to use digital methods led us to reconsider familiar claims, parse disparate sources, and fracture all-encompassing accounts in ways we had not previously. As we worked with the project team to create a multilayered

⁸⁴ Compare Meskill, "Splitting or Lumping"; and Cronon, "Breaking Apart, Putting Together."

⁸⁵ Stanford History Education Group, *Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning* [Executive Summary] (Stanford: Stanford History Education Group, 22 November 2016); and Joel Breakstone, Mark Smith, and Sam Wineburg with Amie Rapaport, Jill Carle, Marshall Garland, and Anna Saaverda, *Students' Civic Online Reasoning: A National Portrait* (Stanford: Stanford History Education Group, 14 November 2019).

digital map and underlying relational database, we determined we needed to evaluate the quality and character of our data instead of confirming locations for which evidence about the places and their links to particular objects seemed vague. Possible conclusions that followed from the assignment of a place name to an object also varied in their potential to yield significant insights into the making, meaning, circulation, or use of an object. The at times overlapping and at times incongruous nature of our individual understandings further led the two of us and the entire project team to reflect on the subjectivity inherent in knowledge production as well as the different scales of analysis observers apply to their pursuits.

We concluded that the interactivity of digital environments offers novel opportunities to reimagine the form of a scholarly monograph using alternate modes of argumentation. Through the final, version-of-record instance of *Mapping Senugo*, we will demonstrate the subjective nature of knowledge. We will present underlying structures and reveal gaps. We will invite readers to investigate their own questions and arrive at their own conclusions. The form of the publication itself will manifest our argument. We are also working with the project team to design a born-digital, open-access publication that will engage broad audiences as well as respond to a pressing need to foster more robust skepticism about any claim and the evidence used to support it.

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