1. Description - ISO 639-3: lea

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:
- Igonzabale, Ileka-Igonzabale, Kilega, Kirega, Lega, Leka-Igonzabale, Rega (1)

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): lea (1)

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 02°57'S 25°57'E. Sud-Kivu and Maniema provinces, Democratic Republic of Congo. (1)

1.4 Brief history:
The Rega people migrated from Uganda to their current location in the 16th century. The Rega spread their customs to those they came in contact with through their fierceness and warlike culture. The Rega conquered Rutshuru and Maniema in the 17th century, taking control of the region. (2)

In 1884, Belgium began colonization of the Congo Basin to exploit its resources. They enacted decrees, which limited trade, and ownership of land within the colony’s borders. The Belgians brutalized natives in order to harvest resources, and violently put down resistance led by local chiefs. This continued until June 30, 1960, when modern day Kinshasa, in the west, overthrew the weakened control of the colonizers, and established the Democratic Republic of the Congo. (3)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:
Missionaries: “The first Protestant mission, the Evangelization Society Africa Mission, was established in Shabunda in 1922” (5p13). Governments: The Belgian colonizers during the first half of the 20th century began to document the Rega in order to exploit them for labor (4p2). The Rega were essentially slaves for the duration of Belgian control of the Congo Basin. Belgian officials held the families of the Rega men hostage to keep them working, and murdered or cut off the hands of those who resisted (3). Powerful Neighbors: The Rega have close cultural ties with the Bembe, and, in many areas, the line between the two groups is blurred. The Rega have similar ties with the Mitoko, who have a system similar to the bwami association of the Rega (5p17-18).

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):
“The Lega live in dense equatorial or tropical rain forest in the eastern Congo. The region is one of luxuriant vegetation, characterized by giant and smaller trees, stranglers, woody lianas, shrubs, ground herbs, and many varieties of epiphytes. Several strata of vegetation provide a thick undergrowth. Numerous species of trees are intermingled in the forest, but in some areas Macrolobium dewevrei, Cynometra alexandri, and Brachystegia laurentii predominate” (5p14). To the east, toward the western extension of the rift valley, there are plateaus with peaks of 6,000 feet and higher. “Here there are large patches of montane forest and grasslands and moist woodlands.” “Most of Legaland falls within the zone of the equatorial rain forest climate, characterized by few seasonal changes, constant heat and humidity and morning mist. The average temperature is 75 or 80 degrees Fahrenheit; it is somewhat cooler as one moves eastward toward the adjacent plateau of the western rift. The average annual rainfall is 60 to 80 inches, but variation occur with changes in latitude, altitude, and vegetation cover. Thus, in a few pockets of Legaland, the average annual rainfall is 80 to 100 inches, one of the heaviest in Africa. A short dry season lasting two or three months between June and August occurs in the summer.” “The fauna is incredibly rich and variegated, including many species of monkeys, antelopes, and rodents, as well as elephants, buffaloes, leopards, and chimpanzees. These animals play a predominant role in Lega diet and symbolism. (5p15)”

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density
- Population 400,000. (1)
- Mostly small rural villages. (5p16)
- Home range size: Mwenga 11,172 km^2. Shabunda 25,216 km^2. Pangi 13,635 km^2. (5p16)
- Density: Mwenga 8.95 per km^2. Shabunda 3.14 per km^2. Pangi 7.1 per km^2.

2. Economy
2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):
- Porridge (flour from bananas and corn), manioc, rice (5p31-32, 109-110), cassava, pumpkins, yams, taro, haricot beans, sweet potatoes (5p29).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:
- Game meat (somewhat putrefied from antelopes, and sometimes monkeys, elephants, buffalo, and wild pig), goats, sheep, chickens, fish, peanuts. (5p31-32, 109-110)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:
- Shields, spears, bows and arrows, sharp sticks, axes, knives. (5p50,122)

2.4 Food storage:
- Dried meats and smoked meats (5p28,110). Foods stored in a lutangu, a loft used for storage over a stable-like building (5p36).

2.5 Sexual division of production:
- Men: Responsible for most of the hunting, carry out hunting rituals, gathering building materials, plait baskets, fish traps, mats, hats, raffles, and plates, make ropes, nets, belts, bags, loincloths, wood carving, creating some art and cultural items including masks, making weapons, blacksmithing, mining. (5p26-34)
- Women: Some assist male hunters, some older women take part in hunting rituals, gathering red powder and white clay, meal preparation, collecting firewood, drawing water, collection of phrynium leaves, other fishing nets, extract oils, make pottery. (5p26-34)
- Both: Fishing, gathering of fruit, plants, insects, and shell money, honey harvesting, agriculture, crafting torches, beer brewing. (5p26-34)

2.6 Land tenure:
“The principles of inheritance also follow the patrilineal line. A man’s sons and brothers are preferred heirs to most of his movable and immovable property. In the absence of direct and close collateral heirs, a man’s uterine sister’s sons are preferred beneficiaries, but their claim has to be confirmed by the more distantly related members of the dead man’s lineage” (5p37-38).

2.7 Ceramics:
- The women make pottery, including jars for oil and water, cups, and cooking pots. (5p3)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:
“Every initiation is preceded by a period of preparation, whose duration varies with the importance of the grade sought and with the success of the candidate in eliciting support from kinsmen and initiates. During this period the candidate must make a tremendous effort to bring together all resources needed and to prove himself acceptable to the initiates. In other words, he must accumulate the goods necessary for feasts, initiation fees, and gifts. In addition, if he is seeking initiation into a higher grade, he must construct houses and other buildings for accommodation of participants and for holding the rites. The candidate must gain the confidence of and win favors from the members of his own agnatic group, of groups that are ritually linked to his own, and of groups with which he has affinal and cognatic ties. Every cycle and every rite demands the distribution of varied quantities of goods, sometimes strictly specified as to type, amount, and combinations, sometimes more loosely defined.” (5p107)

2.9 Food taboos:
“Men eat together in the men’s house; women eat with young children and occasional female guests in, or in front of, the kitchen.” (5p32)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?
- Dugout canoes. (5p147)

3. Anthropometry
3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):
None found
3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):
None found

4. Life History, mating, marriage
4.1 Age at menarche (f):
Not found
4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):
Not found
4.3 Completed family size (m and f):
- Varies according to wealth and status. (5p43)
4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):
Not found
4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):
Not found
4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:
- A woman who has achieved the highest female grade of bwami is perpetually married to her husband; she can be neither divorced nor inherited.” (5p43)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:
- “Lega men want to have many children, and for that reason they like to be linked with many wives in stable unions.” (5p57)
- “Wealthy men with many wives sometimes give one of their recently married junior wives to a favorite son.” (5p43)
- “Sororate and sororal polygyny in the strict sense are not practiced (except in very special circumstances), but relationships with one’s wife’s junior sister are very close and are expressed in mild joking.” (5p43)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:
- “Lega marriages are based on the transfer of matrimonial goods (iron tools, goats, dogs, shell money, bark cloth, bracelets).” (5p42)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:
- “The Lega practice widow inheritance. A man may inherit the widow of his father (other than, and junior to, his mother), of his senior brother, of his little father (father’s junior brother), and eventually of his mother’s brother.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:
- Parent-offspring relations are controlled by the Bwami system as with most relations. Different levels of respect are expected depending on seniority and rank. (5p44-45)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
Not found

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
- “Lega clans are not exogamous. The prevailing principle is that individuals who are agnatic descendants in the fifth generation from a common male ancestor cannot intermarry. Beyond this point, kinship (i.e., close kinship) is finished (mubuto uizinda), and marriage becomes theoretically possible.” (5p46)

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?
- “In parental generation, the term for father (tatagii) is extended to his junior brothers and unior male parallel cousins.” (5p39)

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)
No evidence of any differences
4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
Not found
4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
Not found
4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
  - “Marriages between individuals linked as cross cousins are excluded.” (5p43)
4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
  - Any children born out of marriage would be disadvantaged as Lega descent is traced paternally. (5p37)
4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
  - “A child born of an unmarried or a not fully married woman (a woman for whom the minimal transfer of matrimonial goods has not been completed), however, belongs to the agnatic group of its mother, unless a special payment made by the later husband of the mother has regularized the situation.” (5p37)
4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
A strong system of patrilineal descent would probably result in the father’s other wives, or family members raising the children.
4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
Not found
4.22 Evidence for couvades
Not found
4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
  - “In parental generation, the term for father (tatagi) is extended to his junior brothers and junior male parallel cousins.” (5p39)
4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
  - “Seniors are spoken of as ye ya (honorific term). The Lega distinguish between two types of seniority – Bukulu (greatness) and kubuto (to be born; age) – which they insist must never be confused.” (5p39)
  - “A senior by birth (ye ya) is entitled to respect; he is sure to receive a wife before his junior by birth. It is likely that he will achieve access to the lower grades of bwami before his junior.” (5p39)
  - “Authority in the family, however, is a function of bukulu, of one’s structural position in the group. In other words, in a given polygynous household, it is the oldest son of a man’s most senior wife (mwiku lu muku lu) who is entitled to succeed to that man’s position as head of the family.” (5p39)
  - “The senior-junior terminology cannot be applied to persons of different generations. The members of lower genealogical generations, if they are older by birth, owe respect to those of higher genealogical position, who are in the position of authority. It would therefore be unthinkable for a man to exercise authority in the family if his kibuti is still alive, unless the arrangement is publicly and mutually agreed upon. If a man of lower generation achieves a bwami grade that is higher than that of his kibuti, which rarely happens, he must recognize, with special gifts, the social priority of the latter.” (5p39)
  - “The brother of one’s mother is to be respected and honored as one’s own mother. Because he is neither mother nor father, however, the element of authority and restraints is less strongly felt.”
  - “The first wife (wa kilanga) is in a position of authority within a polygynous household; as long as she remains with her husband, and particularly if she continues to please the elders of the village, her position is unalterable, no matter what the feelings of her husband might be. Her standing is considerably enhanced if she achieves high female rank in bwami.” (5p41)
  - “In-laws must observe a number of restrictions while at the same time maintaining maximum communication. One must eliminate all sources of possible dispute and injury with a brother-in-law, such as playing ball or trapping certain animals. One must never publicly criticize one’s son-in-law; the criticism should rather be addressed to one’s own daughter.” (5p42)
4.24 Joking relationships?
  - “Joking is permitted [between grandparents and grandchildren] except with grandmothers in one’s father’s and mother’s generation.” (5p41)
  - “[R]elationships with one’s wife’s junior sister are very close and are expressed in mild joking.” (5p43)
4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
  - “Descent linkages among the Lega are patrilineal or agnatic.” (5p37)
4.26 Incest avoidance rules
  - “Marriages between individuals linked as cross cousins are excluded.” (5p43)
  - “The prevailing principle is that individuals who are agnatic descendants in the fifth generation from a common male ancestor cannot intermarry. Beyond this point, kinship (i.e., close kinship) is finished (mubuto uzinda), and marriage becomes theoretically possible.” (5p46)
4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
  - “A special bond of solidarity, expressed in ritual, in marriage, and in economic cooperation, may exist between lineages.” (5p45)
4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
Not found
4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
  - “The Lega like to marry within their clans and are proud when they can boast of being kitutuma or mubake, that is, when they have several categories of male mothers in their own clan.” (5p43)
4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
• “Lega marriages are based on the transfer of matrimonial goods.” (5p42)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:
Not found

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
None found

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
• Failure to give generously, and invite the proper initiates during bwami initiation may lead to retaliation. (5p122)

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:
• “Strife, violence, disruption, and warfare can never be reconciled with bwami. Initiations must never lead to inter- or intragroup tensions. Bwami presents a powerful threat to those who create conflict.” (5p127)
• “Bwami keeps violence inside the clans, and between clans, to a minimum. (5p127)

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):
• “The Lega are surrounded by a rather bewildering diversity of ethnic units. Immediately to the north are Komo, Kwame, Konjo, and Tembo, and beyond them the Nyanga. To the northwest and west are Songola (Ombo and Binja); to the south, Zimba (or Binja), Bangubangu (including the Tali, a transitional group), and Bembe. To the southeast are Bembe, and to the east, Nyindu (and beyond them, Furiiuru and Vira) and various offshoots of the Shi. The Lega thus live in the midst of a vast array of different cultural groups, forming a center around which constituent elements and offshoots of different culture clusters meet: Komo-Bira, Nyanga-Hunde, Havu-Shi, Bembe, Luba, Songye, Mongo-Mbole-Tetela, Furiiuru-Vira, and Nyindu.” (5p17)
• “The Lega trace very close links with the Bembe, most of whom also acknowledge their Lega origin. The ties between Basimwenda, or eastern Lega, and Bembe are so close that many identical clan names are found in both. The boundary between Bembe and Lega is soft, with numerous transitional villages inhabited by individuals from both groups, which reveal similarities in language and culture.” (5p17)
• “The next closest link of the Lega is with the Mitoko (Balega-Mituku), who are territorially separated from the Lega by Songola and Lengola.” (5p17)
• “The western and southern Lega stand in an unusual joking relationship to the Bangubangu, their southern neighbors.” (5p18)
• “Relationships with the Zimba, also called southern Binja, are more distant, yet the Lega classify them as grandchildren or as the descendants of the Bangubangu.” (5p18)
• “The Songola are the northwestern and western neighbors of the Lega, who refer to them as Babile. They are divided into the Ombo and Binja linguistic communities. The Binja or eastern Songola have close relationships with the Lega.” (5p19)
• “The Komo, northern neighbors of the Lega, stretch northward over a huge forest area as far as Kisangani.” “They form a cultural buffer zone between the Lega and other types of culture.” (5p19)
• “The Babila and the Bakwame claim autonomous origins, yet they are keenly aware that they share many characteristics with the Lega.” (5p20)
• The Kanu and the Konjo share many cultural traits with the Rega, including bwami. (5p20)

4.18 Cannibalism?
• No evidence found.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:
Not found

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):
Not found

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):
• “The Lega form a stateless society. There are no hereditary chiefs. The relatively simple segmentary lineage system, however, is strangely complicated by the hierarchically organized bwami association, whose power and authority are widespread.” (5p46)
• The mukota is the head of the entire family. (5p47)
• “The head of the village (nenekisi or mwizakyumo, sometimes ntunda) is, in principle, the most senior person in the older generation (kibuti position).” (5p47)
• “The village headman is flanked by a sakazindu (junior kinsman) who acts as his counselor and substitute.” (5p47)
• “There is no established authority beyond that of the nenekisi in Legaland. There are no clan chiefs. When ingroup conflicts create opposition to the nenekisi and his sakanta, or when disputes arise between primary lineages, several nenekisi get together and summon representatives of lineages within the clan and of other lineages to a musumbili meeting.” (5p49)
• “Power and authority are diffused over a large number of individuals within any single group because of the interlocking of kinship principles with bwami hierarchies and special ritual privileges, such as ownership of the right of the pangolin knife and control over circumcision ceremonies.” (5p49)

5.4 Post marital residence:
• The wife will live with the husband, and any of his other wives or children. (5p43)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):
• “The Lega live in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo/Kinshasa. Broadly speaking, they inhabit an area of irregular polygonal shape, lying roughly between 2 and 4 degrees south latitude and between 26 and 28.5 degrees east longitude.” (5p2-3)
• Some villages blend in with neighboring groups, such as the Bembe, and it can be difficult to know where the border between groups exactly is. (5p17)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):
• Village women, children, and any female visitors must eat in front of the kitchen, and the men eat in the men’s house. (5p32)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:
See 4.24

5.8 Village and house organization:
• “The Lega village (kyumo) is traditionally built on a hill in a more or less natural clearing (kilungubalo) of primary rain forest. Trees and branches are cut down so that the part of the forest left standing forms a natural fence (mukingo) that will be close behind the two parallel rows of houses to be constructed. Both downstream and upstream sides (isula) of a village, from which trails depart into the forest, are fortified with a high fence of poles placed together.” (5p34)
• “A village consists of two parallel rows (mikeke) of contiguous huts, a plan that creates an impression of longhouses. The open space (mulungu) between the two rows of houses serves as a main street, a dance floor, and a public place. At one end of it is the men’s house.”

5.9 Specialized village structures (men’s houses):
• Men’s house, Separate houses for the elderly, initiation hut. (5p36)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?
• “Each bedroom contains one or more beds made of layers of poles covered with mats.” (5p35)

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:
See 5.3

5.12 Trade:
• “Musanga, a form of money used by the Lega, consists of small fragments of achatina shells which are usually perforated and strung on raffia fibers; the value is determined by the length of double rows of shells.” (5p32)
• “Shell money is used in internal exchanges, in matrimonial payments, and as gifts and payments in bwami initiations.” (5p32)
• “The Lega engage in external trade, though only to a limited extent, with the Songola.” (5p32)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?
• “The [bwami] grades are invariably structured into a fixed, irreversible hierarchy. Privileges, duties, status, prestige, authority, and power are linked with the different grades.” (5p93)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:
Not found

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):
• Sorcerers and witches (5p53)
• Oracles (5p53)

6.2 Stimulants:
Not found

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):
• “Circumcision (bwali) rites, as a preliminary to bwami initiations, are extremely important to the Lega. A male who has not gone through circumcision rites cannot aspire even to the lowest bwami grades.” (5p50)

6.4 Other rituals:
• “Divination – a male technique for locating the sources of evil.” (5p53)
• “If the collective hunting parties that are organized before bwami initiations are unsuccessful, the candidate and his helpers clear a patch in the forest, construct a small offering table, and place a small termite nest on it. Offerings of bananas and peanuts are deposited, and the dead are invoked for hunting success.” (5p53)

6.5 Myths (Creation):
• “The Lega have no elaborate myths or cosmology.” (5p52)
• “A trinity of beings ultimately rules over the world and men’s affairs: Kinkunga, Kalaga, and Kaginga.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):
• “The ivory statues used by the bwami association contain a force of their own, and their owners consume some of the dirt rubbed from the surface as the ultimate means of warding off disease.” (5p53)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:
• Sorcerers and witches are thought to be female. (5p53)

6.8 Missionary effect:
• Cult activity increased with the Rega as missionaries forced bwami into decline. (5p52)

6.9 RCR revival:
Not found

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:
“The ancestors (basumbu, or sometimes simply bakwa, the dead, or bakule, those who have died) are the center of the religious system. They possess a mediating power that can influence, for better or worse, the conflict between good and evil.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?
Not found
6.12 Is there teknonymy?
Not found
6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)
- Rega religion is focused mainly on the effects of the dead on the living, and the forces of magic performed by witches and sorcerers. (5p53)

7. Adornment
7.1 Body paint:
Not found
7.2 Piercings:
Not found
7.3 Haircut:
Not found
7.4 Scarification:
Not found
7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):
- “Aprons made from genet and wildcat hides, bracelets, anklets, and beaded necklaces made of small, round, delicately polished achatina shells.” (5p112)
7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:
- Feathers, hides, and leaves worn around the waste. (5p56)
7.7 Sex differences in adornment:
Not found
7.8 Missionary effect:
Not found
7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:
Not found

8. Kinship systems
8.1 Sibling classification system:
- “Siblings and parallel cousins are classified under one term (mubitu). All juniors, however, are explicitly grouped as muto (junior), whereas seniors are spoken of as yeya (honorific term).” (5p39)
8.2 Sororate, levirate:
- “Sororate and sororal polygyny in the strict sense are not practiced (except in very special circumstances).” (5p43)
- “The Lega practice widow inheritance. A man may inherit the widow of his father (other than, and junior to, his mother), of his senior brother, of his little father (father’s junior brother), and eventually his mother’s brother.” (5p43)
8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):
- “There are twenty-four basic kinship terms to designate father, mother, female grandparents, male grandparents, siblings and parallel cousins, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, mother’s brothers, cross-cousins, sister’s children (male speaker), husband, wife, spouse’s juniors sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, wife’s senior brothers, husband’s senior sisters, other in-laws, and parents-in-law (among themselves).” (5p39)

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):
- Bwami is an association within the Lega that shapes almost every aspect of their culture. (5p66-67)
- “Bwami is many things in one. It has the structure and some of the functions of a voluntary association, but it also maintains and reinforces kinship, lineage, and clan bonds. Access to and advancement in bwami are conditioned by a number of factors: character kinship support, wealth, initiation. The initiations aim at moral perfection, the principles of which are elaborately explained in proverbs, dances, and objects. Bwami is therefore a moral philosophy. It is also an arts club, for it enjoys and patronizes the fine arts. It is a school of art because it creates, produces, uses, and explains thousands of pieces of sculpture. Bwami has developed its own literary arts, its dances and musical styles, dramatic performances, choreographies, and architectural styles. It is like a big corporation that produces wealth, distributes and redistributes it, invests and reinvests it, and provides economic incentive. Bwami is a religion, a religion without gods, pretending to have a power of its own and to master the secrets of making life good. Bwami is a tremendous and exclusive social force.” (5p67)

Numbered references
1. www.ethnologue.com
2. www.lusulega.co.uk
3. www.yale.edu/gsp/colonial/belgian_congo/index.html