The Kongo Kingdom

The Kongo kingdom, which arose in the Atlantic Coast region of West-Central Africa, is a famous emblem of Africa's past yet little is still known of its origins and early history. This book sheds new light on that all-important period and goes on to explain the significance of its cosmopolitan culture in the wider world. Bringing together different new strands of historical evidence as well as scholars from disciplines as diverse as anthropology, archaeology, art history, history and linguistics, it is the first book to approach the history of this famous Central African kingdom from a cross-disciplinary perspective. All chapters are written by distinguished and/or upcoming experts of Kongo history with a focus on political space, taking us through processes of centralisation and decentralisation, the historical politics of extraversion and internal dynamics, and the geographical distribution of aspects of material and immaterial Kongo culture.

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The Origins, Dynamics and Cosmopolitan Culture of an African Polity

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Introduction: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches to Kongo History

KOEN BOSTOEN AND INGE BRINKMAN

The Kongo kingdom is a famous emblem of Africa's past. It is an exceptionally important cultural landmark for Africans, the African diaspora and anyone interested in Africa's pre-colonial history. When Portuguese navigators reached the Lower Congo region of West Central Africa by the end of the fifteenth century, they encountered a centralised polity. In 1492, some years after the first contacts in 1483, the Portuguese chronicler Rui de Pina wrote about an encounter with the Mwene Soyo, the lord of Kongo's Soyo province, who resided south of the Congo mouth at the western edge of the kingdom:

The lord of the land, whose port we entered on 29 March 1491, is a great lord, the uncle of the king and his subject, called Manisonyo, a man of fifty years of age, good natured and wise. He was two leagues distant from the port when he was notified of the arrival of the fleet and was requested to send word of the arrival to the king. The Manisonyo gave signs and demonstrations of great joy at having to attend to the affairs of the king of Portugal, and as a token of respect placed both hands on the ground and then placed them on his face, which is the greatest sign of veneration that they make to their kings. [translation by Newitt (2010: 100–1)]

It is clear that Portuguese notions about political power were being projected in this account, but at the same time the evidence indicates that political centralisation had started well before the arrival of the Portuguese.

The Kongo kingdom was not the only centralised polity in the region, rendering West Central Africa particularly interesting for comparative research on the growth of social and political processes of hierarchisation (McIntosh 1999). The Portuguese navigators made reference to several other states apart from the Kongo kingdom: Kakongo, Vungu, Ngoyo and later Loango, north of the Congo River, in parts of present-day Cabinda, Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon. These smaller coastal

kingdoms were culturally and linguistically closely related to the
Kongo kingdom. The commercial influence of the Loango kingdom,
which over time became the most influential of the coastal polities,
stretched as far inland as Malebo Pool, where another important
state flourished at that time, i.e. the Tio kingdom (Vansina 1973).
It was situated on the Bateke plateau, close to the current-day cities
of Kinshasa and Brazzaville, and shared several social and political
institutions with the kingdoms of the Lower Congo area with which
it maintained close trade relationships. It federated speakers of Kiteke
language varieties belonging to a subgroup of West-Coastal Bantu
that is distinct from the Kikongo Language Cluster present in the
kingdoms of Kongo, Loango, Kakongo and Ngoyo (de Schryver *et al.*
2015). To the south of the Kongo kingdom in northern Angola, there
were a number of Ambundu states, which also played a key role in the
international and regional trade (Miller 1976). Although Kimbundu is
part of a separate branch of the Bantu family, i.e. South-West Bantu
(Vansina 1995; Grollemund *et al.* 2015), the Ambundu kingdoms
of Ndongo and Matamba shared deep-rooted cultural and political
traditions with the kingdoms to the north (Vansina 1990, 2004). All
these centralised societies bore numerous similarities regarding their
origin, evolution and organisation (Vansina 1966a, 1989). Trade, for
instance, played a key role in the reinforcement of political central-
isation within these states and in their mutual economic integration.
Obviously, each of them also had its historical particularities. They
constituted a mosaic of similarity and diversity.

Of all pre-colonial West-Central African states, the Kongo kingdom
was the largest and most powerful. When the first Portuguese sailors
set foot on Kongo ground in 1483, they came into contact with a state
that stretched from the Congo River in the north to Luanda Island
in the south, roughly 300 km as the crow flies, and had its capital
Mbanza Kongo 200 km inland, covering territory of what is today
Angola and Congo-Kinshasa. Soon after relations were established
with Portugal, the Kongo elite adopted Christianity and over time –
as elsewhere in the world – a specific local form of Christianity
developed, designated 'Afro-Christian syncretism' by Thornton
(2013). This Kongo form of Christianity also reached the Americas,
where it again started taking its own course. Many members of the
Kongo elite became literate and integrated elements from southern
European culture in their daily life.

While the initial aim of the Portuguese was mainly to find minerals, soon trade relations focused on the sale of slaves. The large-scale transatlantic trade of goods and people had dramatic consequences for the people sold, while it led at the same time to a further expansion and centralisation of the kingdom until the start of civil wars in the late seventeenth century. During the second half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries, at the height of their hegemony, Kongo kings ruled over an area of approximately 150,000 km², and its Christian kings maintained diplomatic relations with Western Europe and the Americas.

Right up to the present day, African leaders and intellectuals have been inspired by the history of the Kongo kingdom, taking it as an example of pre-colonial grandeur and globalised relations (de Maret 2002, 2005). It is also a key marker of identity construction for several colonial and post-colonial religious and political movements as diverse as UPNA (*União das Populações de Angola*), PDA (*Partido Democrático de Angola*), FNLA (*Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola*), ABAKO (formerly *Alliance des Bakongo*, nowadays *Alliance des Bâtisseurs du Kongo*), the Kimbanguist Church and the Bundu Dia Kongo movement (MacGaffey 1994; Verhaegen and Tshimanga 2003; Vellut 2005, 2010, 2016; Brinkman 2011, 2015; Mélice 2011; Muzalia Kihangu 2011; M'Bokolo and Sabakinu Kivilu 2014), to name only some of the best-known organisations. The kingdom's influence also spreads far beyond Africa. Kongo culture is among the most prominent Afro-American traditions across the Atlantic (Thornton 1998a; MacGaffey 2000b; Heywood and Thornton 2007; Cooksey *et al.* 2013c).

With the Lower Congo region's involvement in the transatlantic trade, its early introduction to literacy, and its interaction with Europe and the Americas, the history of the Kongo kingdom and of the wider area from 1500 onwards is better known than the pre-colonial history of most other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. A wide array of historical scholarship is available for different periods of Kongo history (e.g. Cuvelier 1946; Balandier 1965; Randles 1968; Ekholm 1972; Broadhead 1979; Thornton 1983; Hilton 1985; Heywood 2009; Batsîkama 2010; Vos 2015), together with an even larger body of ethnographical, anthropological and art-historical literature for the more recent periods (e.g. Van Wing 1921; Laman 1953, 1957, 1962, 1968; Janzen and MacGaffey 1974; Janzen and Arkinstall

1978; Farris Thompson and Cornet 1981; MacGaffey 1970b, 1983, 1986b, 1991, 2000; de Heusch 2000b; Hersak 2011). Especially in recent years renewed interest has risen for the Kongo kingdom and its involvement in world history (e.g. Heywood 2002; Heywood and Thornton 2007; Thornton 2016c), with a number of widely attractive exhibitions (Cooksey *et al.* 2013c; LaGamma 2015c) and new award-winning books (Fromont 2014).

Nonetheless, considerable uncertainty still remains about the origins and early history of the kingdom. What is more, until recently, both archaeology and historical linguistics, considered to be two crucial disciplines in the reconstruction of early African history, had only marginally been used in the reconstruction of Kongo's past. Apart from minor excavations in Mbanza Kongo, Mbanza Soyo and Ngongo Mbata (Bequaert 1940; Esteves 1989; Abranches 1991), no systematic archaeological research before 2012 had aimed at reconstructing the origins of the kingdom. Similarly, even if the oldest Bantu language sources originate from the Lower Congo region (Cardoso 1624; Van Gheel 1652; Brusciotto 1659), the Kikongo Language Cluster had until then never been the subject of any comprehensive historical-linguistic study, notwithstanding some preliminary work within the field (e.g. Daeleman 1983; Nsondé 1995; Nguimbi-Mabiala 1999). That is why the KongoKing research project (2012–16) focused on the origins and early history of the Kongo kingdom through a joint archaeological and linguistic approach. The present volume is one of the project's main outcomes.

Independently from the KongoKing project, Geoffroy Heimlich has conducted, since 2010, doctoral and post-doctoral research on Kongo rock art in the Lovo Massif situated in the Kongo-Central province of Congo-Kinshasa (Heimlich 2010, 2013, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2017; Heimlich *et al.* 2013). Furthermore, between 2011 and 2015, an international team of Angolan, Cameroonian and Portuguese archaeologists carried out archaeological fieldwork in Mbanza Kongo as part of a broader project to have the kingdom's ancient capital registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List, an enterprise which was eventually successful in 2017. The KongoKing project team did not directly participate in those excavations. However, upon an invitation from Angola's Ministry of Culture, it sent a delegation in 2015 to examine, in close collaboration with the international

team of archaeologists, the archaeological data obtained since 2011 (cf. Clist *et al.* 2015e).

The KongoKing project

The KongoKing project has been an interdisciplinary and interuniversity research project funded by Starting Grant No. 284126 (1,400,760 EUR in total), which the European Research Council granted in 2011 to Koen Bostoen (Ghent University) under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). The KongoKing project united researchers from Ghent University (UGent), Brussels University (ULB) and the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (RMCA), as well as from several partner institutions in Africa, Europe and the USA. The project's full title was 'Political centralisation, economic integration and language evolution in Central Africa: An interdisciplinary approach to the early history of the Kongo kingdom'. The project's archive is currently to be found on the www.kongoking.net website.

The stated objectives of the KongoKing project were to: (1) reconstruct the origins and early history of the kingdom of the Kongo in particular; (2) examine the growth of social and political complexity and the rise of urbanism in the Lower Congo region more generally; (3) protect and conserve the fragile material and immaterial heritage of the Kongo kingdom and raise public awareness thereof; (4) determine a refined model of the social ecology of language change in the Kongo area with special attention to the linguistic impact of political centralisation and economic integration; (5) improve interdisciplinary research strategies and methods for the reconstruction of early African history with special focus on the integration of linguistics and archaeology; and (6) reinforce scientific collaboration between Europe and Africa and strengthen mutual research capacities.

Conducted between 2012 and 2016, research from the KongoKing project team contributed to Kongo history in various important ways. First, it mainly relied on archaeology and historical linguistics, which were until recently only marginally used in the reconstruction of Kongo's past. This has led to a wide range of new sources, which are complementary to the written documents that have been used mostly so far. Secondly, the archaeological research of the KongoKing project focused on the kingdom's northernmost provinces

mainly situated in present-day Congo-Kinshasa, especially in the Inkisi valley which once hosted the capitals of the kingdom's Nsundi, Mpangu and Mbata provinces (Thornton 1977: 523, 1983: 4; Hilton 1985: 7). Admittedly, this regional focus was born out of need rather than a deliberate strategy; in spite of several attempts, the authorisation to excavate in Angola was simply never obtained. KongoKing research was nonetheless not completely off the mark, given that several historians had situated the kingdom's origins in the present-day Kongo-Central province of Congo-Kinshasa (e.g. Vansina 1963; Thornton 2001). In the end, this geographical reorientation proved fruitful and allowed a move away from earlier Kongo research, which had predominantly approached Kongo history from the kingdom's heartland, i.e. from its capital Mbanza Kongo, and from its main Atlantic port, Mbanza Soyo, both situated in present-day Angola. The view from the kingdom's northern provinces has led us to re-open and reframe debates on the processes of centralisation and decentralisation; the spread of language practices and material culture; and elite formation in relation to the politics of extraversion and appropriation. In sum, the approach of Kongo history by the KongoKing project could be considered 'decentring' in a twofold way, i.e. both methodologically and geographically.

From Missionary to Cross-disciplinary Approaches to Kongo History

Some of the written sources contemporary to the kingdom's existence can at the same time be regarded as secondary literature in that they consciously try to offer an interpretation of the past rather than forming a source 'in spite of itself' (Bloch 1953: 61). The book of Cavazzi (1687) would be a case in point, but we could also include Dapper (1668) and de Cadornega (1680) (cf. Delgado 1972b). Other contemporary records that at the same time reflect on the past would be local oral traditions, often informing written sources (cf. Thornton 2011c).

Apart from these works which straddle the boundaries between source and secondary literature, the study of the kingdom's history started with the missionary literature of the twentieth century. With their engagement in religion, many clergy focused on the early Christianity in the region as the work of Jean Cuvelier, François Bontinck and Louis

Jadin shows (e.g. Cuvelier 1941, 1946; de Bouveignes and Cuvelier 1951; Cuvelier 1953b; Cuvelier and Jadin 1954; Bontinck 1964, 1970, 1992; Jadin 1961, 1963, 1964, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1970, 1975; Jadin and Dicorato 1974). Some of the missionaries, such as Jean Cuvelier and Joseph De Munck, also showed keen interest in local historical traditions and/or Kongo rock art (e.g. Cuvelier 1930, 1934; De Munck *et al.* 1959; De Munck 1960, 1971). While the history of Christianity in the region remained an important ally of research, slowly other historical themes emerged, with trade relations as a major example (Vansina 1962; Broadhead 1971; Martin 1972; Vellut 1975; Vansina 1998).

Kongo history also broadened from a predominantly Belgian concern to a truly international field of study (e.g. Balandier 1965; Randles 1968; Broadhead 1979; Thornton 1983; Hilton 1985). Moreover, historical scholarship on the Kongo kingdom became increasingly influenced by other research within humanities, not least in anthropology (e.g. MacGaffey 1970b; de Heusch 1972; Janzen and MacGaffey 1974; Janzen and Arkinstall 1978; de Heusch 2000). This volume includes contributions from two of the leading experts on Kongo culture, religion and history who have been in the field for over forty years, Wyatt MacGaffey and John Thornton (e.g. MacGaffey 1970b, 1977, 1983, 1986b, 1991, 2000b, 2002, 2016; Thornton 1977, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1992, 1998b, 2006, 2016a).

Another expert of Kongo history whom we invited to contribute to the present volume is the late Jan Vansina. He graciously declined, because he was already struggling with his health. However, even without a direct contribution from him, this book and the KongoKing project more generally has been strongly influenced by Jan Vansina's academic legacy. Apart from the publications in which he specifically deals with the Kongo kingdom (e.g. Vansina 1963, 1966a, 1966b, 1994, 1999), his books *Paths in the Rainforest* (1990) and *How Societies Are Born* (2004) had a decisive intellectual impact on the scholars who conceived the KongoKing project and/or contributed to this book, both methodologically and content-wise. The multi-disciplinary approach of Vansina's work was a rich source of inspiration for the KongoKing project. Like him, we drew on evidence from written sources, oral tradition, historical linguistics and evidence from archaeology. As de Luna *et al.* (2012: 78) have rightly observed, 'Vansina was one of the first to propose a historical methodology, what he called

"upstreaming", to link linguistic, ethnographic, and where available, archaeological evidence, working back from the present, from the known to the unknown'. Moreover, being concerned with the genesis of political tradition among closely related Western Bantu speech communities (cf. Vansina 1989), he also developed a hypothesis on how parallel processes of political centralisation from the mid-first millennium AD onwards led to the more or less concurrent emergence of the neighbouring kingdoms of Kongo, Loango and Tio around the fourteenth century (Vansina 1990: 146–52). His theory of state formation in South-West Central Africa has deeply influenced the thinking on Kongo history of several contributors to this volume and was also one of the main guiding principles for the KongoKing project. An important difference is that Jan Vansina's work focused on political institutions, principles and ideologies together forming what he called 'political tradition', whereas the KongoKing project team sought to reconstruct how these more abstract notions were enacted in political practice and during historical events in the Kikongo-speaking region in its interaction with the wider world.

    In terms of method, the cross-disciplinary approach of the KongoKing project also distinguished itself substantially from Vansina's pioneering work in connecting streams of historical evidence from various disciplines. De Luna *et al.* (2012: 86) refer to the observation that MacGaffey (1978: 103) already made four decades ago: 'historians should learn about carbon dating, botany, dendrochronology, serology, comparative linguistics, and oral tradition. African historiography became the decathlon of social science', and wonder how it is possible to 'ensure methodological stringency and accuracy' and to respect 'the scholastic responsibility to keep up with literatures' from different disciplines when engaging today in the reconstruction of pre-colonial African history. The KongoKing project tried to cope with this methodological challenge by creating the necessary conditions for direct collaboration between scholars of different disciplines who are able not only to collect and analyse new discipline-specific data, but also to make a well-judged assessment of its historical significance. While Vansina mainly relied on existing sources from different fields and drew from them the pieces of evidence that allowed him to develop a historical narrative, the KongoKing project team tried to further his scholarship by assembling fresh data from the field, both in archaeology and linguistics.

Although the project was conceived as an interdisciplinary research programme, most of the archaeological and linguistic research was initially carried out in a mono-disciplinary way. Given the state of the art of archaeology and historical linguistics in the Lower Congo region, such an initial stage of discipline-specific accumulation of evidence and hypothesis building was absolutely necessary. Nonetheless, from the very beginning of the project, the KongoKing project team met on a regular basis. During these cross-disciplinary meetings, the results of ongoing archaeological and linguistic research were presented and explained in detail to all team members with ample attention to the particularities of discipline-specific methods, and the implications of archaeological research output for the linguists and vice-versa. These cross-disciplinary exchanges necessarily resulted in mutual influence on research agendas. The kingdom's eastern origin hypothesis, which Bostoen *et al.* (2013) brought back to the forefront on the basis of historical-comparative linguistic research, led to more extensive archaeological fieldwork east of the Inkisi River in the summer of 2014. Likewise, the historical sociolinguistic interpretation of the contact-induced dialectal diffusion of prefix reduction within the Kikongo Language Cluster by Bostoen and de Schryver (2015) shed new light on the social factors possibly underlying the spread of ceramics decorated with woven motifs, which Els Cranshof, Nicolas Nikis and Pierre de Maret interpret in this volume as being 'closely connected with the prestige of local elites'. Furthermore, the delimitation of distinct historical subgroups within the Kikongo Language Cluster by de Schryver *et al.* (2015) raised the question of whether twentieth and twentieth-first pottery within the Kongo area could also be subdivided into historical 'ceramic provinces' and if so, to what extent they coincide with language subgroups, a question which is dealt with in the upcoming PhD dissertation of Mandela Kaumba (see also Kaumba 2018). Finally, the observation of mismatches between the tentative dating of the rise and spread of the Kikongo Language Cluster and the dates available for the first villages in the wider area led to the formulation of a new hypothesis of possible multiple layers of Bantu Expansion in the Lower Congo region (see for instance Bostoen *et al.* 2015a). This hypothesis has become one of the main research questions of the new ERC-funded BantuFirst project (2018–22) dealing with 'The First Bantu Speakers South of the Rainforest: A Cross-Disciplinary Approach to Human

Migration, Language Spread, Climate Change and Early Farming in Late Holocene Central Africa' (cf. www.bantufirst.ugent.be).

The Present Volume

In line with the general approach of the KongoKing project, the present book wants to bring together different new strands of historical evidence and create the opportunity for experts from different disciplines to engage in a scholarly dialogue on Kongo history. It aims neither at proposing a new comprehensive narrative of the Kongo kingdom's history nor at dealing with all major themes in Kongo historiography. Several important topics, such as the economic underpinnings of political power, the nature of syncretic Kongo Christianity and the Atlantic slave trade, are hardly discussed.

While this book consists of multiple chapters written by different authors, it differs from a classical edited volume in several ways. First, the book has a strong regional and thematic focus as it deals exclusively with the history of the Kongo kingdom. Secondly, authors have been asked to familiarise themselves with ongoing research within the KongoKing project and to reflect upon their own research through the lens of newly obtained linguistic and archaeological data. To arrive at an integrated approach, all authors had access to the publications already realised as part of the KongoKing project: Clist (2012), (2013), (2016); De Kind *et al.* (2012); Bostoen *et al.* (2013), (2014), (2015b); Clist *et al.* (2013a), (2013b), (2014), (2015a), (2015b), (2015c), (2015d); Nikis *et al.* (2013); De Kind (2014); Kaumba (2014); Matonda *et al.* (2014); Nikis and Champion (2014); Verhaeghe *et al.* (2014); Bostoen and de Schryver (2015); Brinkman (2015), (2016); De Kind *et al.* (2015); de Schryver (2015), de Schryver *et al.* (2015); Dom and Bostoen (2015); Grollemund *et al.* (2015); Kaumba (2015); Matonda *et al.* (2015); Nikis and De Putter (2015); Brinkman and Clist (2016); Matonda (2016); Ricquier (2016); Rousaki *et al.* (2016); Coccato *et al.* (2017) and Polet *et al.* (2018). They could also consult the different BA, MA and PhD dissertations yielded by the KongoKing project: Bleyenberg (2012); De Kind (2012); De Neef (2013); Dom (2013); Drieghe (2013), (2014), (2015); Merchiers (2014); Sengeløv (2014); Vergaert (2014); Verhaeghe (2014); Wohnrath A. Campos (2014); Otto (2016); Saelens (2016); Van Acker (2016), (2018); Vandenabeele (2016); Willaert (2016); Matonda (2017) and Tsoupra (2017). Moreover, from early 2016 onwards,

preliminary versions of the book's chapters were sent out for external review and shared between the different contributors in order to enable cross-fertilisation. This intellectual dialogue was further stimulated during a two-day workshop at Ghent University in May 2016, where most of the authors met with the KongoKing project team and where each of the chapters was individually discussed by all participants. This meeting helped to create a better understanding of each other's work and sharply raised the awareness about convergences and divergences in the theories and methods underpinning them.

The result is a volume consisting of eleven chapters subdivided into two main parts: (I) the origins and dynamics of the Kongo kingdom and (II) Kongo's cosmopolitan culture and the wider world. It represents a balanced mix between KongoKing project team members (Koen Bostoen, Inge Brinkman, Bernard Clist, Els Cranshof, Pierre de Maret, Gilles-Maurice de Schryver, Igor Matonda, Nicolas Nikis) and external experts of Kongo history (Cécile Fromont, Linda Heywood, Wyatt MacGaffey, John Thornton, Jelmer Vos) as well as a rich cross-over between an anthropologist (Wyatt MacGaffey), archaeologists (Bernard Clist, Els Cranshof, Pierre de Maret, Nicolas Nikis), an art historian (Cécile Fromont), historians (Inge Brinkman, Linda Heywood, Igor Matonda, John Thornton, Jelmer Vos) and linguists (Koen Bostoen, Gilles-Maurice de Schryver). Although there is only one chapter co-authored by scholars from two different disciplines (Brinkman and Bostoen), evidence from different disciplines, including new data from the KongoKing project, is considered in many other chapters. In the chapter where he revises his view of the origins of the Kongo kingdom, John Thornton explicitly refers to the historical-comparative linguistic research by Bostoen *et al.* (2013) which gave a new impetus to the kingdom's eastern origin hypothesis. Cécile Fromont confronts historical and art-historical evidence with Kongo material culture obtained through KongoKing archaeological excavations at the sites of Kindoki and Ngongo Mbata (cf. Clist *et al.* 2015c,d) to come to a new understanding of Kongo Christian visual culture. Conversely, different contributions from KongoKing team members engage with the earlier (art) historical research of some of the external contributors. Through an advanced historical-linguistic study, Bostoen and de Schryver confirm, among other things, the linguistic division into coastal, central and eastern (South Kikongo) dialects, which Thornton (1983: 15) had proposed for the seventeenth-century Kongo

kingdom. Cranshof, de Maret and Nikis extensively refer to earlier research by Fromont (2014) on Kongo visual culture for the stylistic interpretation of the archaeological ceramics decorated with woven motifs which they analyse. Clist links the typological divide which he observes between Kongo pipes from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries and from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries with the end of a long period of civil wars (1641–1718) that ruined the Kongo kingdom, as described in Thornton (1983). The period between the late seventeenth century and the second half of the nineteenth century was one of increasing decentralisation, as discussed for instance in Heywood (2009) and Vos (2015). Clist also directly refers to the chapters of Fromont and Vos to account for the fact that Kongo pipes discovered thanks to KongoKing excavations testify to the kingdom's process of extraversion and the strongly cosmopolitan nature of Kongo material culture, just like ceramics with woven patterns discussed by Cranshof *et al.* and the important status of books as treated by Brinkman and Bostoen do. However, the contributions which speak most directly and forcefully to each other are no doubt those by Wyatt MacGaffey and John Thornton. Their respective chapters strongly reflect their fundamentally different conceptions of Kongo history and how to study it. Read one after the other, they can be considered as an intellectual dialogue synthesising over four decades of parallel research on Kongo history.

The focus of this study is on political space. Through the eleven chapters, this book discusses processes of centralisation and decentralisation, the historical politics of extraversion and the internal dynamics and geographical distribution of aspects of material and immaterial Kongo culture. In this endeavour, we have sought to collaborate across the boundaries of different disciplines. As a Kikongo proverb says, *Kumi dia nlembo, umosi ka sika ngoma ko* 'Ten fingers! One does not beat the drum' (Stenström 1999: 133).

Acknowledgements

The Origins and Dynamics of the Kongo Kingdom

1 | *The Origins of Kongo: A Revised Vision*

JOHN K. THORNTON

The antiquity of literacy in the Kingdom of Kongo, as well as the presence of many visitors who left accounts of the country, have made studying its earlier history in a greater time depth more possible than is usually feasible for much of Africa. The kingdom was already a powerful and extensive domain when the first Portuguese arrived in 1483, but only oral tradition, along with archaeological and linguistic work, would allow historians to reconstruct the history before that point. Although much of pre-colonial African history that has been written from oral tradition is based on material collected since about 1880, for Kongo, stories composed from oral traditions are embedded in written texts of the sixteenth through to the eighteenth century as well. In fact, current versions of tradition, such as those collected in the mid- to late-1920s by the missionary-scholar Jean Cuvelier (1934), differ markedly in many respects from the older ones found in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As I have argued elsewhere (Thornton 2011c), these differences result from radical changes in the country's political and economic development. Changes in the early- to mid-nineteenth century in particular have helped to create the kinds of tradition one encounters today (Thornton 2001).

The problem of more recent oral traditions underlay my decision in my first attempt to reconstruct the early history of Kongo to use only traditions recorded before 1700 (Thornton 2001). Batsîkama (2010) undertook a notable attempt to do the same thing favouring modern traditions. Furthermore, recognizing that traditions can be quite malleable over time and respond to political changes, I also opted to favour the earliest versions over later ones, or at least to approach the later ones with caution (Thornton 2001; Thornton 2011c). The problem of traditional malleability makes conclusions that I can draw on the earliest periods always provisional and less definitive, but this method at least can limit the impact of those changes. This chapter takes my earlier effort further than I was able

to go in 2001 and incorporates new insights gained from the research of the KongoKing project.

Earliest Traditions: Vungu and Mbata

The earliest statements of historical value about Kongo's traditions are the letters of Kongo's King Afonso Mvemba a Nzinga (1509–42), hereafter Afonso I. In his first extant letters, Afonso I described himself as 'King of Congo and Lord of the Ambundus, etc.' thus giving his domain a two-part constitution, in which Kongo, over which he was king, was more fully under his control than the Ambundu or the Kimbundu-speaking south of the country, over which he ruled as lord, which was not so fully integrated. The 'etc.' in his original titles supposed the existence of more areas over which he might claim to rule as lord, and he elaborated on them more fully in a formal letter to Pope Paul III in 1535, in which he styled himself: *Dom Affonso by the grace of God, King of Comguo, Jbu[m]go and Cacomgo, Emgoyo, above and below the nzary [River Congo], Lord of the Ambu[m]dos, and of Amgolla, of Quisyma and Musuru, of Matamba, and Muyullu, and of Musucu, and the Amzicos and of the conquest of Pamzualu[m] bu etc.* (Brásio 1953a: 38).

This two-part division of titles reflects differing degrees of sovereignty that Afonso I claimed to exercise, a summary of his understanding of the growth of his country up to the present. It is fairly obvious from other documentation that the regions over which he claimed to be 'lord' were areas that owed fealty, perhaps obedience, and possibly some tribute, but presumably those over which he was 'king' were more closely bound. But the title of king was itself unevenly divided, for it included the relatively small domains north of the Congo River (Vungu, Kakongo and Ngoyo), along with Kongo, which was a much larger domain with multiple provinces, many of which were as large or larger than the northern polities over which he also ruled as king.

Kongo's provinces, while not mentioned in these titles, must have included an even tighter control than either the 'king' zone or the 'lord' zone. Afonso I mentioned some of the provinces of Kongo by name in his correspondence. In a letter to João III of Portugal of 18 March 1526, he listed Nsundi, Mbamba, Mbata, Mpangu and Wembo though he specifically stated that this list was not comprehensive, since 'to name them all would be a great reading'. Another list

composed some time before 1529 added Wandu and 'Soasana', while not including Mpangu and Wembo (Brásio 1952: 460–1; 534–5). This language suggested that Vungu, Kakongo and Ngoyo were probably intermediate categories, not fully controlled as the provinces were, but the distinction between 'king' and 'lord' suggests they were more fully controlled than were 'the Ambundu' or the other territories over which he claimed power only as lord. Later documentation shows that all the areas, mostly lying to the east and south of Kongo, were manifestly areas over which the king exercised little control.

Given that seventeenth-century tradition would name Vungu (Afonso I's *Jbumgo*) as the place of origin of Kongo, it seems likely that at some point in the past, the king exercised considerable power (as king) over a federation of states that included the whole of the north bank of the Congo River, with its eastern and southern border being more or less precisely where the point of expansion was to take place. How strongly integrated the federation was in the more distant past, or even on the eve of the creation of Kongo is unclear, but it was certainly not tightly integrated in 1535 (Thornton 2001).

The province of Mbata stands out among the others in Afonso I's correspondence. When Afonso I recounted his rise to power in 1509 in a letter to Manuel I of Portugal on 5 October 1514 (Brásio 1952: 298), he noted that his enemies had appealed to the ruler of Mbata named Dom Jorge to unseat him. The Mwene (Lord of) Mbata, Afonso I noted, was 'the head of the kingdom' and moreover 'he who would be king should be his closest relative'. In the late 1520s, Afonso I wrote of him again, stating that the Mwene Mbata was the 'first voice of Congo, and no one can make a king without him, according to the custom of the country' (Brásio 1952: 521).

A half-century later, Duarte Lopes, a Portuguese New Christian (converted Jew) who served as Kongo's ambassador to Rome in 1584–9, offered a further explanation of the centrality of Mbata (cf. Pigafetta 1591). Given his position as ambassador, one can regard Lopes' comments as resting on an official tradition approved by the Kongo court. While Lopes did not write a narrative history of Kongo before its Christianization in 1491, he did provide brief historical statements embedded in a province-by-province geographical description.

Lopes' comments on Mbata provide an explanation for Afonso I's description of Mbata playing an elevated and special role in Kongo. He described Mbata as 'great and strong in ancient times, and came

to join the kingdom of Kongo spontaneously of its own free will, without war, as there were dissentions among the great men, and it was esteemed above the other provinces of the kingdom in privileges and liberty'. The king of Kongo appointed Mbata's ruler from its own royal family, choosing from among this family without regard to the specifics of birth order, so as to have no 'usurpation in succession or rebellion'. Should Kongo's royal line fail, Lopes continued, the Mwene Mbata, as the 'second person' would succeed to Kongo's throne. This throws considerable light on Afonso I's terse statement that no one can be king without Mbata's consent, and that the king of Kongo should be 'closest relative' to the ruler of Mbata. In addition, Lopes recorded that the Mwene Mbata enjoyed a number of other honours, such as sitting next to the king and eating from a table almost as high as the king, having considerable pomp in his country, and being allowed to make his own decrees which no one could alter. He alone was allowed to have his own musketeers and his army was spearheading warfare among the neighbouring regions (Pigafetta 1591: 37). Clearly, this extraordinary position explains why Afonso I feared that rebels might undermine him by enlisting these special powers of the Mwene Mbata.

Taking this in light of Afonso I's earlier statements it would appear that Kongo was virtually a co-regency between Kongo and Mbata, and at the end of the sixteenth century it was still described as the 'second lord in Congo'[1]. If Mbata was losing power in the sixteenth century as we know it did in the seventeenth century, then Afonso I's statements make great sense and suggest an even greater role for Mbata a generation or two before Afonso I's advent.

Lopes also gave historical details in describing other provinces: Nsundi on the north bank, for example, was among the earlier conquests that the kings of Kongo made, followed thereafter by Mpangu, and those two, along with Mbata, made up the provinces that lay along the valley of the Inkisi River (Pigafetta 1591: 36). Nsundi had a special place, he noted, for the king made it the seat of his heir apparent, giving as examples Afonso I who had ruled it in the late fifteenth century, and Álvaro II, who had served as Mwene Nsundi before becoming king (Pigafetta 1591: 35). The antiquity of

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[1] Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (henceforward ANTT) Inquisição de Lisboa, Liv 766, Visita a Angola, fol. 68v, Testimony of Pedro das Neves, 23 November 1596.

this role was confirmed by Afonso I himself, who had described it as the 'head of the kingdom' (*cabo de reino*) in his early correspondence (Brásio 1952: 460–1). However, as Cécile Fromont has also noted in Chapter 6, kings in the subsequent period ruled other provinces. Holding Nsundi was hardly a guarantee of succession to the throne.

Lopes also made special notice of Mpemba, which he presented as 'the heart and middle of the state of Congo and the origin of the ancient kings' and thus the 'seat and head of the other principalities' of Kongo. The capital city of all Kongo, Mbanza Kongo, was there, he said, though elsewhere he describes the capital district as having a government of its own (Pigafetta 1591: 38).

While Lopes' traditions probably represent at least a portion of the royal understanding of the kingdom and its past, they do not provide a narrative of the growth of the kingdom. Traditions collected at court in the first half of the seventeenth century present a different emphasis, both because Kongo had become more centralized in the interim and because they presented narratives of conquest and development as opposed to historical geography. When the Jesuit Mateus Cardoso visited Kongo in 1622, he was able to attend the coronation of Pedro II and was still in the capital upon the king's death and the coronation of his son Garcia I in 1624. As he noted in 1622, at that formal occasion, there was what might be considered an official statement of the country's history usually made by the Mwene Mbata (Brásio 1988: 491). As it happened, it was made by another official, the Mwene Vunda on that occasion, as the Mwene Mbata had not been able to come. This history was the likely source of his account of the origin of Kongo in his manuscript of 1624, called 'History of the Kingdom of Congo' (published in an annotated edition by Brásio 1969; for a more fully annotated French translation, see Bontinck 1972).

Cardoso's history scarcely touched on the centrality of Mbata that dominated Lopes' account, but focused its attention on 'Motino Bene', which might simply mean 'king indeed' or 'true king'. But as the text is a nineteenth-century copy of an earlier version, it is possible that the original read 'Motino Üene', in which the dots over the U (making it a 'W' sound) had become blended to make it look like a B. It perhaps refers to Ntinu Wene, meaning approximately 'king of the kingdom', the founding king whose personal name can be reconstructed as Lukeni lua Nimi. In his straightforward story, Lukeni lua Nimi crossed the Congo River from 'Bungu' (Vungu) on the north bank and conquered

what would become Kongo, assigning provinces to his supporters to supply them with revenue. To confirm the official nature of this claim, King Pedro II himself also noted that Vungu was the seat of the first kings before they ruled Kongo when bewailing its destruction by forces supported by Loango in 1624 (cf. Brásio 1956: 295, for Cardoso reporting to Francisco Rodrigues from Pedro II).

Cardoso presented Mbata's status as something of an afterthought, writing: 'It was not conquered by Motino-Bene, later the two kings made friendship and agreement that all the inheriting sons of Congo marry into the House of Bata', again elucidating Afonso I's statement about the king of Kongo and ruler of Mbata being related. The rulers of Mbata then received 'rendas [income bearing appointments] in their said province or kingdom'; however, in the course of time 'what was once agreed upon has become tribute, so that today the lords of Bata are subjects to that kingdom' (Brásio 1969: cap. 15, fol. 16). Thus from a founding co-regency in the sixteenth century, Mbata was now relegated to an event that followed the conquest, simply a voluntary surrender. It also reflected seventeenth-century reality or at least the plans of the kings of the seventeenth century.

Cavazzi's Traditions: Local Stories

While the Capuchin missionary Giovanni Cavazzi, who visited Kongo in 1664 and published his work in 1687, also paid attention to the idea of a single founder crossing the river and founding Kongo, he also provided additional information, probably from the same general sources, including the work of Jesuits (cf. Thornton 1979). However, Cavazzi was curious about history and collected information from many different informants and locations. He therefore has a distinct vision of Mbata's relationship to Kongo that he welded to the official story.

In addition to recounting a variant story of the founding king's adventure, Cavazzi also supplied Lukeni lua Nimi with a genealogy, probably drawn from different sources. In this part, he told the story of the role of Mbata through a dynastic marriage that linked a man named 'Eminia-n-zima [Nimi a Nzima], to a certain Luqueni Luasanze [Lukeni lua Sanze] daughter of Nsa-cu-clau [Nsaku Lau], and the sister of Npu-cuan-sucù [Mpuku a Nsuku] with whom he bore a child also called Luqueni [Lukeni]'. The account then went on to describe

the story of how this son, Lukeni crossed the River Congo, took control of a place called Mpemba Kasi, and then from there invaded the lands to the south and founded Kongo.

This genealogical information clarified Afonso I's and Cardoso's statements that the king of Kongo and the ruler of Mbata must be close relations. At the same time, it reintroduced Mbata into the story, for Lukeni lua Nimi was not just the founder, but had a complicated genealogy that connected him to Mbata. As Cavazzi's account had it, his father-in-law Nsaku Lau in turn 'took possession of Bata' which was 'itself a kingdom' (Cavazzi 1687: Book 2, nos. 86–9). It appeared, in other words, as if the alliance with Mbata of Afonso I's and Lopes' day was spelled out in dynastic marriages that included the father of the founder of Kongo in one place, but then returned as an afterthought in the main story of Lukeni's conquests, much as it had for Cardoso in the changed circumstances of the seventeenth century. It also clarifies Lopes' statements that Kongo and Mbata made an agreement to support one family in Mbata.

Nevertheless, while Cavazzi's story of Lukeni's founding of the country with the annexation of Mbata accords with the version of Cardoso, our knowledge of the earlier tradition allows us the freedom to see that the story of the marriage alliance fits better with Lopes' version of Mbata's connection to Kongo and Afonso I's terse early-sixteenth-century statements about Mbata and complicates the narrative of a straightforward conquest. Cavazzi, or his informants in Kongo, had apparently heard a story of the marriage alliance that defined an earlier relationship between Mbata and Kongo independently of the invasion story and tried to harmonize that story with the story of conquest.

While Cavazzi was clearly conversant with the traditions as recounted in the capital, he also knew of scraps of tradition that could be found outside the capital, probably as heard by his Capuchin colleague, Girolamo da Montesarchio. These stories told Cavazzi that in 'Essiquilu' (Nsi a Kwilu), a territory in the northern parts of Kongo's domain, 'the subjects hold a site in utmost reverence, hidden among dense forests, [that] was the place where the first kings were'. Cavazzi made personal inquiries among 'people worthy of trust' who assured him that passers-by who did not avert their eyes at this wooded site 'would surely die incontinent' (Cavazzi 1687: Book 1, paragraph 234). In addition, da Montesarchio himself recounted a visit to Mpemba

Kasi, another northern district directly across the river from where the first kings were supposed to have originated. There he was told that the female ruler there was called the 'Mother of the King of Congo', a title she bore because 'this was the first place the king ruled when he crossed from Coimba to rule Congo' (cf. Piazza 1976: f. 38, 20, original pagination as marked in the text). She may have been 'mother' simply because she was female, or because the word *ngudi* can mean both 'mother' and 'origin' in Kikongo. Cavazzi had possibly heard more of this from da Montesarchio, for he noted that the origin place of Kongo was in 'Corimba' (an editorial mistake, presumably) and not Vungu, though the two places were in fact very near each other, if not alternate names.

One way to reconcile these accounts might be to see Vungu as the centre and capital of the confederation of small polities that made up the cluster of areas over which Afonso I claimed to rule as king. When Cardoso related traditions of the founding of the country, he called its initial ruler 'Motino Bene [or Wene]', which is a title rather than a personal name, and could thus represent kingship in general as proceeding from Vungu. On the other hand, when handling the more specific traditions dealing with Lukeni lua Nimi, the origin place was Coimba, a specific place within the larger entity called Vungu, which in its day included all the lands that were mentioned in Afonso I's title as king.

Thus, while Cardoso's tradition, which was presumably the official royal tradition of 1622–4, makes the conquest of Kongo a relatively simple event, in which Motino Bene invades Kongo, pushes inland and occupies Mbanza Kongo, da Montesarchio and Cavazzi gave the invasion as two stops, an origin in Coimba, which would be a part of Vungu, and a first occupation of Mpemba Kasi. Cavazzi's account of Nsi a Kwilu suggests that this was also a royal capital of some sort. Nsi a Kwilu may not have been a province distinct from Mpemba Kasi, since in Kikongo the name means 'land of Kwilu', but was probably a geographic region through which the Kwilu River flowed and which would then include Mpemba Kasi. The relative positions of these places were studied both in documents and on the ground by Jean Cuvelier and are reflected in his notes and particularly the map that accompanied his summary (with long quotations) of da Montesarchio's manuscript (de Bouveignes and Cuvelier 1951). The term 'Nsi a Kwilu' also suggests a region rather than a formal

province or polity, since most provinces did not carry *nsi* 'country' in their name.

Cavazzi adds some more details on this early period, probably from the same local sources in the north of the country, in recounting the life of Lukeni lua Nimi, who left his father's capital of Coimba, and in order 'to engross himself he enrolled whoever he could under his flag, and went out in search of more'. One can imagine that Vungu remained the capital of a larger kingdom and Mpemba Kasi was a subordinate domain, to which Lukeni lua Nimi was dispatched to serve as governor. After 'various gains and losses from fortune', he managed to take 'the surrounding countryside into this hand and fortified himself in certain rocks, which were naturally impregnable', and controlled the commerce of a key point that everyone had to cross, to become 'the scourge of whole provinces' (Cavazzi 1687: Book 2, no. 86).

These rocks are most likely to be either the dramatic, nearly 200-metre-high escarpment about 5 kilometres north of the modern town of Kimpese, or a smaller area of cliffs and rocks some 12 kilometres south west of Kimpese, both being clearly visible on Google Earth when focused on Kimpese. Between the two is a gap of some 20 kilometres through which the Kwilu River flows and between which all traffic would naturally have to pass. It might not be unreasonable to suppose that the fearsome forest of Nsi a Kwilu was in fact also the impregnable rocks that Cavazzi spoke of, since upland areas are frequently forested. Cardoso noted that the 'Moxicongos have great forests which they call *infindas* which the elders took the trouble to make serve as fortresses, which contain considerable populations within them' and named the principle ones in the seventeenth century as being in Soyo, Mbamba and the eastern district of Ibar (Brásio 1969: cap. 1, fol. 2).

Cavazzi said that Nsi a Kwilu was where the 'the first kings [a plural, *primi Rè*]' or at least two kings had ruled, so that the invasion was far from **being** a simple one-step drive south but rather a complex expansion, starting in Vungu, going to Mpemba Kasi and then for at least two reigns remaining within Nsi a Kwilu and during that time allying with Mbata. The occupation of the Nsi a Kwilu district would also be necessary to have a common border between Vungu's domains and those of Mbata, since if one takes Cavazzi's story of the marriage between families of Coimba and Mbata literally, it would require crossing a considerable distance which neither controlled.

Cardoso's account also suggests a fairly long, multiple reign, a period in which Mpemba Kasi was the capital of Lukeni lua Nimi's ancestors, when he noted that Motino Bene's invasion began 350 years before his writing, or literally 1274, a date which seems too early for the known genealogies to span (Brásio 1969: cap. 14, fol. 15). In my earlier study, I calculated the founding date to be a bit over a century later, based on the genealogy of Lukeni lua Nimi's successors (Thornton 2001: 106–7). But if one allows that Motino Bene represents the root of the kingdom and Lukeni lua Nimi the conqueror of Mbanza Kongo (and thus founder of the kingdom) and also accepts that residents of Nsi a Kwilu knew of more than one king buried there, it is quite possible that he or his informants, using rough generational calculations, produced this estimated date.

However, the story of Kongo's origin is only partially complete by tracing the route of Lukeni lua Nimi. Thanks to the detail that clustered in the Capuchins' tradition, and their general accord with that of Mateus Cardoso, modern historians, including myself, have concluded that the primary causes of the rise of Kongo was the conquest of Mbanza Kongo by Lukeni lua Nimi. None of these reconstructions, however, have taken fully into account the story of Mbata's alliance with Nimi a Nzima, Lukeni lua Nimi's father. Given that Lopes, writing a half century earlier had paid the most attention to the alliance with Mbata, not to mention the role that Afonso I had given it a half century before Lopes, it suggests that the Mbata alliance probably needed more attention than it got in forming modern historians' reconstructions.

Cadornega and Cardoso: The Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza

Thanks to this privileging of Cavazzi's and Cardoso's story of the conquest of Kongo from Vungu, historians had also put aside another non-royal, local story of Kongo's origin, told by the soldier-chronicler of Portuguese Angola, António de Oliveira de Cadornega, which bears a relationship to the question of Mbata's role. De Cadornega came to Angola in 1639 and finished writing his manuscript in 1681, but he probably gathered these traditions in the 1640s or 1650s, when there was a large and active community of Portuguese merchants in Okanga on the extreme eastern end of Kongo, thus making it nearly

contemporary with the Capuchin versions but from an entirely different area.

De Cadornega wrote, in a section in which he described the history and geography of various African countries, that 'we learn from Moxicongo fidalgos' that there was a lord living south of the Malebo Pool in the far east of Kongo who 'sends him [the King of Kongo] presents like a feudatory and that potentate without being free, has as his name Congo de Amulaca'. Elsewhere, he went on to write, 'what I have learned from the ancient conquerors [i.e. Portuguese from Angola but surely resident in Okanga] is that the Mexicongo nation is considered to be foreign, having come from the interior to dominate from Congo de Amulaca to lord over the powerful kingdom of Congo, they being natives of another caste of Ambundus'. A marginal note on the same text added that others say they came from another part of the interior (Delgado 1972b: 186, 188).

This passage was fairly well known to modern historians, because it was published in 1877 (Paiva Manso 1877: 285), even though the whole text would wait for 1940 to be published. In the 1920s, in fact, the Jesuit missionary-anthropologist Joseph Van Wing had seized upon the account to propose an eastern origin of Kongo, explaining away the accounts of its origin as described by Cavazzi as simply confused local traditions (Van Wing 1921: 17–20), but Van Wing's methodology was weak and speculative. In the 1930s and 1940s, Jean Cuvelier, making use of newly discovered texts by Cardoso and da Montesarchio, rewrote the origin story, focusing on Lukeni lua Nimi's crossing the Congo River and founding Mbanza Kongo (cf. Cuvelier 1941: 291). By the time the systematic study of African history began in the 1960s no one took Van Wing's account seriously. Vansina (1963) consolidated Cuvelier's account when he laid the groundwork for the more recent historiography of the question. While my own reconstruction of Kongo's origin in Thornton (2001) added details and challenged some of Vansina's work, it was anchored on the idea that the conquering hero from Vungu founded the kingdom, albeit with an association with Mbata.

However, Bostoen *et al.* (2013), linguists within the KongoKing project, pointed out that the term *ngangula*, meaning blacksmith, and an important character in Kongo traditions, derived from eastern dialects of Kikongo and not from the southern dialect. In itself, there might be many ways to explain this small linguistic anomaly away, but it drew

some attention to the question of an eastern origin, and perhaps an ancient and important one. To that end, it serves to revive the question of de Cadornega's account of Kongo's origin.

One of Van Wing's awkward assumptions was his decision to take 'Congo de Amulaca', the point of origin of Kongo in de Cadornega's account, and respell it as 'Kongo dia Muyaka' and connect it with the 'Muyaka', who figured prominently in the twentieth-century traditions of eastern Kongo that he was familiar with. He then connected it to another story in Lopes' account, the invasion of the 'Jagas' in the 1570s that nearly brought Kongo to its knees (Van Wing 1921: 16–17). This speculation has not helped Van Wing's interpretation to flourish, given problems of timing and logic.

But in fact, if one assumes a missing cedilla on the <c> in 'Mulaca', to make it 'Congo de Amulaça', it is easily identified as Kongo dia Nlaza, an ancient polity in the region east of Kongo. The missing cedilla theory is reinforced when a few pages later, de Cadornega, referring to the same place, called it 'Congo Amulaza' (Delgado 1972b: 275–6). In this place, de Cadornega also mentions a Portuguese merchant active in the area, Francisco Luis de Murça, who is probably his source for both passages about the role of Kongo dia Nlaza. He travelled to the region 'some years after the restoration' of Luanda, i.e. 1648. The first documentary reference to the polity of Kongo dia Nlaza occurred in a text of around 1561 written by Sebastião de Souto, a priest in Kongo's court, who styled its ruler as an 'Emperor' (Brásio 1953a: 480). Another early account of what this empire might have been is recorded, in turn, by King Álvaro II's claiming the 'seven kingdoms of Congoria Mulazza' (as written in the Italian translation) in his titles in 1583 when writing to the pope, apparently indicating the conquest of the region (Brásio 1953b: 234). Presumably a king of kings would be an emperor, and the ruler of Kongo dia Nlaza ruled seven such kingdoms. Cavazzi noted that the 'kingdom of Congo Riaucanga', which might be glossed as 'Kongo dia Ukanga' (or Okanga), was outside of the Seven Kingdoms, though eventually integrated into Kongo, more specifically Mbata. However, the form of the name suggests a more likely interpretation that there had been a cluster of 'Kongos' in the area (Cavazzi 1687: Book 1, no. 10).

A far more important account of the significance of Kongo dia Nlaza in the origins of Kongo comes from a report written by Cardoso on a revolt in 1621 in which Afonso, one of King Álvaro III's brothers,

went to the east of Kongo to raise forces against his brother. This account, which was only published for the first time in French translation by Jadin (1968) (see Brásio 1988: 530–7, for the original language version attributed to Mateus Cardoso), was not considered in the earlier questions of Kongo origins, but is in fact highly significant. In the midst of recounting Afonso's adventure, Cardoso interrupted the narrative to describe the region of the revolt, which he said was called 'Momboares' (Brásio 1988: 533). This word, which we might respell as Mumbwadi, assuming the final <s> is a Portuguese plural to the singular Kikongo word, can be translated as 'people of the Seven' or perhaps even 'Seveners'. These seven must be the Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza, now absorbed into Kongo, but still recalled as a geographical expression.

Cardoso presented a detailed, if somewhat confusing, account of its borders: 'It begins 10 leagues east of the City of Salvador [Mbanza Kongo], and ends on the border of the Kingdom of Ocanga, having as a frontier and boundary the Oamba River, and is 70 leagues long and more than 40 wide; it borders the River Zaire on the north.' Its northern border also lay on the province of 'Fungenas', which old maps mark as laying south and east of the Malebo Pool. Included within its eastern to southeastern arc was the 'Kingdom of Congo Reamolaça', which we can assume was its ancient core and the source of its name. To the west its border was a chain of mountains now called the Serra do Canda, following the mountains, 'until it reaches the highest mountain of them beyond its origin and the head of the Ambrize River, where leaving a line up to the River Coilo, continues this division until it enters the River Zaire below Masinga next to Bamba casi' (Brásio 1988: 533–4).

In 1886, Richard Büttner crossed 'Kongo dialase' and mapped its location using modern navigational technology. It sits west of the Kwango River just south of the modern border between Congo-Kinshasa and Angola (Büttner 1890: 106–28 + attached map).

Thus, Momboares or the Seven Kingdoms included all the petty kingdoms of the Inkisi Valley as well as the headwaters and a stretch of the Kwilu River Valley, finally going northward until it bordered on the south shore of the Congo River that bordered on Masinga, whose territories, according to da Montesarchio lay north of Nsi a Kwilu (For the geography of the region, see the map in de Bouveignes and Cuvelier 1951, as established by Cuvelier by reading of da Montesarchio's text

and personal knowledge of the terrain). 'Bamba casi' in this case must be Mpemba Kasi, which was the core region of Kongo in the early days. It lends support to the idea that the mountain fortress of Nimi a Nzima was in the rough highland section south of today's Kimpese and not the massive escarpment to its north, a border for the Seven Kingdoms.

Cardoso also noted that 'within this province are the duchies of Sundi and Batta and the Marquisate of Pango and the whole province is divided between them, two parts of it are headed by the Duke of Batta ...' (Brásio 1988: 534). In short, a major part of what would be the nuclear kingdom of Kongo, including three of its major provinces, once lay within the domain of the Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza. It also had an immediate border with Mpemba Kasi, and it was there where the border between Mbata and Nimi a Nzima's domains lay and no doubt the circumstances which made the alliance and royal marriage possible.

The ancient Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza in fact constituted an empire from which Kongo would take bite after bite until it consumed the whole at the end of the sixteenth century, when Álvaro I put it into his titles. But the first bite was certainly the territory of Mbata which formed its voluntary alliance with the ruling dynasty of Mpemba Kasi/Nsi a Kwilu. From there, Lopes said, Mpangu and Nsundi were conquered, and all three thus taken from the Seven Kingdoms to be part of Kongo (Pigafetta 1591: 36).

There are hints, in fact, that initially at least, Kongo dia Nlaza, represented by Mbata, was the senior partner in the alliance. According to Cardoso, 'today the lords of Bata are subjects to that kingdom [Kongo], called by the honourable title of Encacande Amanicongo [*e nkak'andi a Mwene Kongo*], which is to say Grandfathers of the King; and the kings [of Kongo], when they want to honour the Mani-Batas, say that they are their cotecolos [*nkotekolo* or grandchildren]', a title which was also noted in 1619 by the bishop of Kongo (Brásio 1955b: 376; Brásio 1969: cap. 15, f. 16). But grandparents of Kongo were not just found in Mbata, for in the 1650s Girolamo da Montesarchio, visiting in the far northeast of Kongo, noted that the district of Lembe, quite near the Malebo Pool, was also known as the Grandfather of Kongo, so this title probably extended throughout the Seven Kingdoms (Piazza 1976: f. 38). It suggests that at least in the deepest layers of tradition, Mbata was a senior partner in the alliance

which Lukeni lua Nimi would upset as he built his own expansive domain to the south and then west, along the coast.

But if the Seven Kingdoms were an older and thus senior partner in the alliance with Kongo, it was apparently a weaker one. Both Nsundi and Mpangu were held to be independent kingdoms in Lopes' tradition, although unlike Mbata they were conquered rather than becoming voluntary partners with Kongo. Presumably, the Seven Kingdoms must have once been a large and expansive territory that was weak, or if once centralized, weakening; its western provinces had become independent. Mbata, perhaps the strongest of the newly independent kingdoms, hoped that the alliance with Mpemba Kasi/Nsi a Kwilu would strengthen it and assure continuity in its ruling family.

Mbanza Kongo and the Founding of the Kingdom

If we are to believe a genealogical dating of the reign of Lukeni lua Nimi as being a founding moment in Kongo's history at the end of the fourteenth century (*ca*. 1390), then we should suppose that the heyday of the Seven Kingdoms must have been a bit earlier, perhaps the earlier fourteenth or late thirteenth century. The recent archaeological work by the KongoKing project at the Kindoki site, identified with reasonable certainty to be Mbanza Nsundi, shows that this hilltop was settled by at least 1350, according to radiocarbon dating of two samples found several hundred metres apart within the same site (Clist *et al*. 2015c; Matonda *et al*. 2015; Clist *et al*. 2018a; Bernard Clist pers. comm.). The distribution suggests a site larger than a simple village, and the dates would presumably push its settlement back before the founding of Kongo, and hence to the days of the Seven Kingdoms.

We can now imagine that the emerging dynasty in the Kwilu Valley, having made the alliance with Mbata, was then in the position to found Mbanza Kongo. The region south of Lukeni lua Nimi's domain was controlled by another large entity, perhaps a kingdom, called Mpemba. Lopes wrote that Mpemba was the centre of Kongo and the root of its royal family (Pigafetta 1591: 38). It seems likely that Mpemba Kasi, the section of Vungu conquered from across the Congo River, was the northern domain of ancient Mpemba, since the name means 'spouse of Mpemba'. Mpemba's own core and capital lay fairly far to the south, near the headwaters of the Loze River, and Mbanza

Kongo might not have been a major settlement or a settlement at all at that time.

Understanding Mpemba Kasi as a 'spouse' of Mpemba and its ruler as the 'mother' of the King of Kongo then sets up a scenario in which the crossing of the Congo River from Vungu also set the founders-to-be of Kongo in contact with and perhaps even in conflict with the large territory of Mpemba. This contact could well have been the reason for the drive southward which would initiate the conquest of Mbanza Kongo. Cavazzi (1687: Book 2, no. 87) informs us that Lukeni lua Nimi had gathered followers and 'forced others to pay tribute to him'. One of his aunts 'the sister or cousin Nimi a Nzima' refused to pay the tribute 'saying he should respect her for her relationship to him', provoking him to stab her in 'her pregnant womb'. Gaining fame rather than infamy from this transgression, he gathered more followers, moved south to Mbanza Kongo and founded the kingdom.

While Mpemba may have been an overlord of a large territory, its northern domain had smaller entities, which were provinces of the larger polity, like Mpemba Kasi. Cavazzi's account of Lukeni lua Nimi recorded that he conquered a local lord named 'Mabambòlo Mani-Pangalla who lorded over a wide stretch of that entire region'. After forcing Mwene Mpangala to submit, Lukeni lua Nimi allowed him and his descendants to retain an estate 'with the title of investiture, or a feudal assignment' in exchange for their accepting Nimi a Lukeni as their ruler 'in perpetuity'.

Mwene Mpangala's descendants were still known in Cavazzi's day, for he noted an annual ceremony in which they confronted Nimi a Lukeni's rights to their land by sending a woman to the court to challenge the legitimacy of the king's right to rule their district. For his part, the king endured this challenge patiently and then dismissed the woman with many gifts, enjoining her courteously to bear their fate patiently (Cavazzi 1687: Book 2, no. 86).

A legal inquest conducted by King Diogo I in 1550 reveals a great deal about the connections of Cavazzi's Mwene Mpangala. The inquest concerned a treasonous plot against Diogo I by his predecessor, Pedro I, who had sought and obtained sanctuary in a church in Mbanza Kongo following his deposition, and from there he was plotting extensively. His contacts and their reactions reveal a great deal about the mid-sixteenth century political structure of Kongo and

Mwene Mpangala is mentioned several times in the inquest (Thornton and Heywood 2009: 20–1, 24–5).

Mpangala was close to Mbanza Kongo; testimony given to the Inquisition in 1596 described it as 'a place below the said city of Salvador by the country name of Pongola, which in Portuguese means market'.[2] Mpangala is the name of a day of the week in Kikongo and markets are often named after the days on which they are held. In 1624, Cardoso, retelling the story of the first Portuguese mission to Kongo, related that they stopped at 'Pângala, which is like a suburb of the city' before being allowed to enter Mbanza Kongo, and thus on the west side along the road to Soyo (Brásio 1969).

This evidence suggests that the political authority in the region of the Mongo dia Kongo, the mountain where the city was built, did not live on the mountain but at its foot and the mountain itself was possibly unoccupied. Though hardly conclusive, archaeological research in Mbanza Kongo from 2013 to 2015 has not encountered remains that predate the mid-fourteenth or early fifteenth centuries. It is thus possible that Lukeni lua Nimi occupied this natural fortress, just as his predecessors had occupied the Kovo region of Nsi a Kwilu and used it as a base.

Mpangala might have been a fairly insubstantial place at the foot of the mountain where Lukeni lua Nimi would build his city and a market town. However, it was also subject to another lord named Mwene Vunda, who was described as ruler over several other sections, including Mpangala. Judging from the testimony in Diogo I's inquest, Vunda was south of Mbanza Kongo, on the other bank of the Mbidizi River, though its exact location is elusive (Thornton and Heywood 2009: 20–1).

While Cavazzi (1687: Book 2, no. 87) did not mention Vunda in his account of Lukeni lua Nimi's conquest of Mbanza Kongo and its area, he did note that kings in Kongo were elected and that the three electors (specifically in the 1661 election) included 'Mani-Effunda' or Mwene Vunda. Vunda's role was further elaborated by Cardoso, who also did not mention it in his account of the founding of Mbanza Kongo. In his description of Pedro II's coronation in 1622, however, Cardoso reported that a detailed accounting of history, which – as we have

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[2] ANTT Inquisição de Lisboa, 766, Visita a Angola, fol. 23, Testimony of 26 August 1596.

seen – he was told was normally in the hands of the Mwene Mbata, was in fact given on that occasion by the Mwene Vunda 'who is a great dignitary'. Following this history, the Mwene Vunda announced the election and the introduction of the new king. He then placed a royal insignia, 'very ancient', which he said could only be borne by the king as well as the Mwene Mbata and the Mwene Vunda, 'his grandfathers' (Brásio 1988: 498–9).

If Mwene Vunda shared the role of grandfather of Kongo with Mbata, he did not enjoy similar prerogatives. In fact, all of Mpemba, the ultimate lord of the whole section, was fully integrated into Kongo's administrative system, unlike the near co-regency of Mbata. This is well revealed in the legal inquest of 1550, where the former king, Pedro I met with a Mwene Mpemba, who was Diogo I's godson and had been placed in office by Diogo I, but who was very frightened that he would lose his office in a judicial investigation taking place in his lands. He had, in fact, been once removed from office (*tambuquado*) and was concerned that he had no local supporters. Pedro I chided him that the king had put him in office and then removed him, and being so fickle, could not be counted on, so he should abandon Diogo I in favour of his rival (Thornton and Heywood 2009: 19–23).

One way of understanding this situation is to imagine that Lukeni lua Nimi relied on alliances with Mpangala and Vunda to buttress his conquest to the south, but was strong enough at that point, thanks to the Mbata alliance, that he could make weaker concessions for their support. Mpemba, which was probably hostile to the alliance, was ultimately conquered, Mpangala was granted special privileges and Vunda made an elector.

Cavazzi's story of the Mwene Mpangala and its annual protests perhaps reflects his interest in local history and willingness to include stories that did not fit the overall narrative. This might explain why Cardoso, who essentially repeated the official narrative of his day, both acknowledged traditions about the Mwene Vunda and failed to note the story of the Mwene Mpangala in his account that focused on the straightforward conquest of Kongo by Lukeni lua Nimi.

Cardoso did, however, add a few more details to the story of Lukeni lua Nimi's conquest of the south. In writing about the conquest of Kongo, Cardoso named the local power in the area not as either Mpangala or Vunda, but yet another regional entity, which he called 'the Supreme Pontiff (speaking in our manner) of that heathendom

called Mani-Cabunga, whose successors are and continue up to today in Congo with the same title of Cabunga, and it is a family and lineage (*geração*) very honoured among the Moxicongos, as the ruler of the place [i.e. the Mbanza Kongo region]' and beyond that, Motino Bene was said to have married his daughter (Brásio 1969: cap. 2 fol. 2v; cap. 14, fol. 15).

The Mwene Kabunga was noted as an important figure in sixteenth-century Kongo some three quarters of a century before Cardoso noted him. When Jesuit priests came to Kongo in 1548, Diogo I sent two powerful nobles to meet them, the 'Mani Cabungo and the Mani Choa' each of which, they were told, could command 10–15,000 soldiers, who would protect them from 'one of his enemies' (Brásio 1988: 154). It is reasonable to assume that this enemy was 'Chamgalla' whose lands lay along the south coast between the Loze and Mbidizi rivers, whom Diogo I had described in 1546 as 'capital enemy of the holy Catholic faith and our persecutor of Christians to destroy us' (Brásio 1953a: 147–8). The location is marked on the 1570 map of Fernão Vaz (Cortesão *et al.* 1960: volume 3, 267). Additional evidence of the importance of the Mwene Kabunga comes from the Jesuit priest Garcia Simões who noted in 1575 that three Kongo nobles, including the 'Manicabunga', came to the island of Luanda when the Portuguese were about to make war on some alleged cannibals nearby, and according to the Jesuit, 'the rights to all these lands that border on Angola belonged to him [the Manicabunga]' (Brásio 1953b: 135). Taken together, it seems as if the 'Mani Choa' represents the region of Kiowa, which in the seventeenth century was located along the south side of the Congo River inland from Soyo. Kiowa is not mentioned in the earlier sources, but it was an important territory given to Garcia II in 1632 before he became king. Kabunga must have laid south of it, so that it could face Chamgalla and have rights down to the region of Luanda, while having some control in the Mongo, a Kongo region.

Although no other source mentions the Mwene Kabunga as a religious authority, he did appear at least occasionally to have something of an outsized political role. He is mentioned again in a short summary statement of the history of Kongo since 1641, written around 1673, and relating events of the opening of the reign of Álvaro VII whose brief rule followed the death of António I at the Battle of Mbwila in 1665. The election of a successor after this king's premature death was problematic. Álvaro VII 'Tuuy Momaza' seized power and executed

the Mwene Vunda for 'not having consented to his election'; he then attacked and defeated the other elector, the Mwene Soyo, who had chosen 'another Alvaro' to be king. A civil war then ensued between the Marquis of Mpemba and the Duke of Mbamba over the legitimacy of the new king and, in the course of this, two court officials, one of which was the Mwene Kabunga, intervened and executed the Marquis of Mpemba (Brásio 1982: 244–5). This suggests that the Mwene Kabunga had at least some legal hand in the choice of kings, and seems to have been involved in it as much as the Mwene Vunda and the Mwene Soyo.

A possible reconstruction of the situation might be that as Lukeni lua Nimi advanced on Mbanza Kongo, he met two distinct regional powers. One was Mpemba, represented regionally by the Mwene Vunda and locally by the Mwene Mpangala. The other was Kabunga who held religious power in the area, but also secular power as his integration into the court included extensive rights to the south and perhaps the southwest, in addition to his descendants having hereditary control of their land until at least 1624 if not longer. It seems that Kabunga was not subordinate to Vunda or Mpemba, and thus might have been a smaller regional power. Given the geography of its appearance, it would have been west and southwest of the city.

Conclusions: The Finalizing of Kongo

We can now attempt a summary reconstruction of the earlier period of Kongo history (for maps, see Figures 1.1 a–d), starting in the period around 1280–1300 (see Figure 1.1 a). At that point we can imagine that there were several fairly extensive confederations in existence, one on the north bank of the Congo River centred on Vungu and one on the south bank of the Congo River, i.e. Mpemba Kasi, the northernmost province of a regional kingdom of Mpemba. East of Mpemba and spreading considerably to the south was the very large kingdom or empire of Kongo dia Nlaza. All three came into contact when the ruler of Vungu or one of his family or subordinates crossed the Congo River and over time took over the Kwilu Valley from Mpemba Kasi eastward to the borders of the Seven Kingdoms. This movement, like others that followed, should not be seen as a mass migration, such that it might result in substantial demographic changes, as the linguistic evidence rules out such changes (see Bostoen and de Schryver,

Figure 1.1 Growth of the Kongo kingdom: (a) 1250–1330; (b) 1330–1410; (c) 1410–1490; (d) 1490–1570.
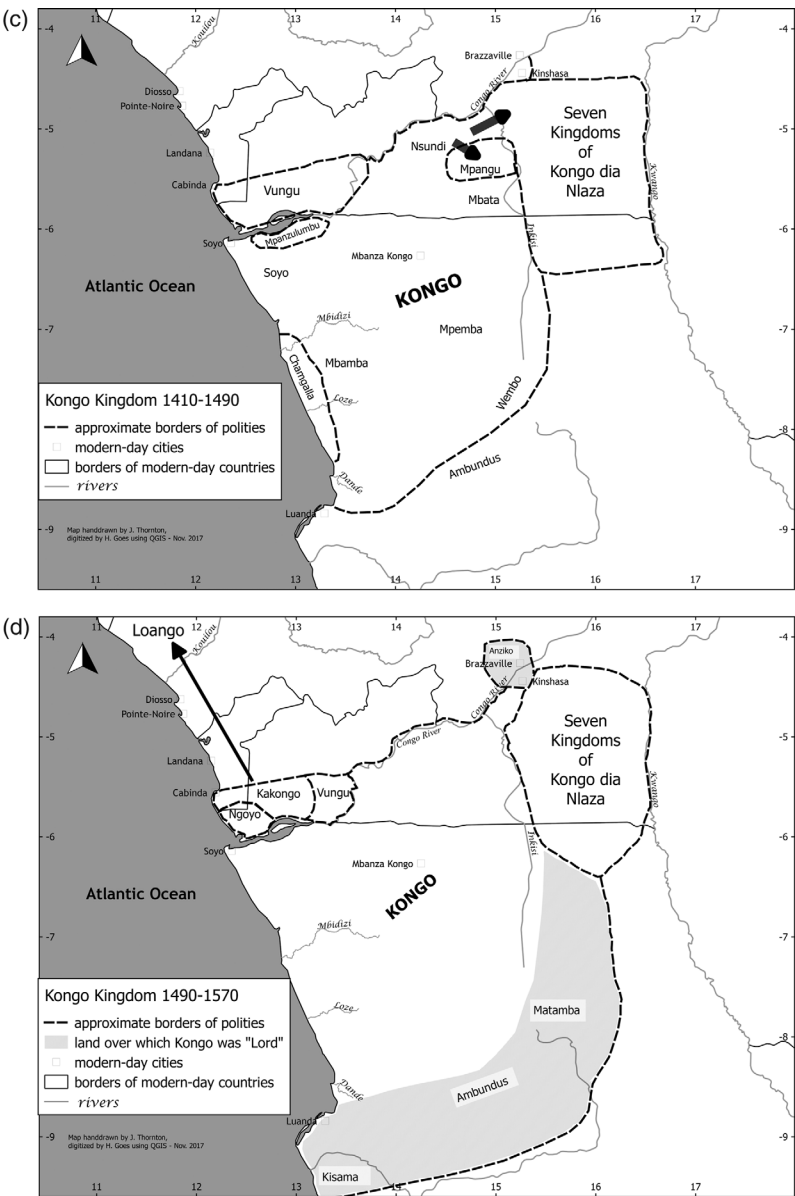
Figure 1.1 (*Cont.*)

Chapter 3). Rather they probably involved a small, armed force and perhaps their families who seized power from an existing elite.

Around 1400 (see Figure 1.1 b), the Seven Kingdoms began to weaken and its western vassals in the Inkisi Valley broke away. At that point Nzima a Nimi, the ruler of Mpemba Kasi, made an alliance with Nsaku Lau of Mbata, each to secure power for their own lineage in their domains. The offspring of this alliance, Lukeni lua Nimi, moved southward from a mountain fortress in Nsi a Kwilu, taking the (possibly unoccupied) mountain of Mbanza Kongo and moving his capital there.

During the reign of Lukeni lua Nimi or that of one of the two cousins who succeeded him, Nsundi also fell to the alliance and became the spearhead for an advance, southward down the Inkisi River to take over Mpangu and eastward along the south bank of the Congo River into the territory of the Anziko Kingdom, noted already in the earliest sources as an independent state at the Malebo Pool, and claimed as a vassal by Afonso I in 1535 (da Silva Dias 1905: 134; Brásio 1953a: 38). During this same period Mbamba and Soyo along the west coast down to Luanda were also added, though no source describes the process (see Figure 1.1 c).

In the mid-sixteenth century (see Figure 1.1 d), the period following Afonso I's reign, Kongo continued its expansion, though in this period, Loango, a powerful new kingdom, emerged on the coast north of the domains which Afonso I had ruled as king. Loango's traditions traced its origin to Kakongo, itself one of the members of the original federation of Vungu, which Kongo now claimed to rule. As it emerged, it came to regard itself as a 'brother in arms' of Kongo; Lopes noted that it had perhaps once been tributary, surely through its relationship to Vungu, but by the 1580s most decidedly was not (Pigafetta 1591: 14). Diogo I had sent missionaries to Loango before his death in 1561. Loango's substantial military presence seems to have drawn the northern provinces of Afonso I's kingship away. Later kings dropped Kakongo, Vungu and Ngoyo from their titles, Dutch sources of the 1630–40 period noted their independence, and Loango invaded and destroyed Vungu in 1624 (Dapper 1668: 555–7; Brásio 1956: 295).

However, if Kongo was losing ground in the north, it was gaining it in the east. At the end of Diogo I's reign in 1561 Kongo's province of Nsundi had occupied the whole south bank of the Congo River up to Anziko, and only the core regions of the Seven Kingdoms remained outside its control. But the Seven Kingdoms seem to have been a target, for Lopes tells us that the Mwene Mbata was a leading force

moving eastwards and it must have been directed toward the lands of its former sovereign.

A list of kings compiled by Antonio da Silva, Duke of Mbamba in 1617, noted that Henrique I, a short-lived king who ruled about 1566, died in battle against the 'Jaguas', and just a few years later, Lopes informs us that these same Jagas invaded Kongo, drove directly into the heart of the kingdom, sacked the capital and forced the new king Álvaro I to take refuge on islands in the Congo River (Pigafetta 1591: 59–60). His plea for help from Portugal ultimately brought relief but also compelled him to take the first steps to assist the Portuguese in building their colony of Angola.

The identity of these Jagas has been a long historical controversy (Plancquaert 1932; Vansina 1966b; Miller 1973; Thornton 1978; Bontinck 1980; Hilton 1981). It is enough to say that they were not from an emerging Lunda empire as was once believed and that their attack originated strictly in the lands just to the east of Mbata's frontier. Lopes tells us that they entered Kongo through Mbata. In 1584, Francisco de Medeiros, a Portuguese priest resident in Kongo, called them 'rebels'.[3] Lopes knew little about them: they came, he thought, from the far interior and were nomadic, tall, wild and eaters of human flesh. It is not entirely unlikely that they were allies of Kongo dia Nlaza and that the invasion of Kongo happened in its defence.

The stand did not work out, for in 1583, when writing to the Vatican, Álvaro I declared the Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza to be among his tributaries, and thus were integrated into Kongo, leaving only a memory of the large district known as Momboares. At this point, Kongo reached its maximum territorial extent.

Wyatt MacGaffey (in Chapter 2) proposes that in 1480 (and afterwards) Kongo was not a kingdom as Europeans would understand it, but a symbolic entity where most power rested with local groups and the king's authority was based on his perceived spiritual influence. While this situation may well have existed in the predecessor polities such as Mpemba, the Seven Kingdoms, or Vungu, all apparently federations, Kongo as seen in the earliest documents was a much more integrated polity that the earliest European visitors understood as a kingdom. Sources written by Portuguese and Kongo authors

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[3] ANTT Inquisição de Lisboa, Processo 2522, fol. 144, Testimony of Francisco de Medeiros, 4 June 1584.

before 1550 show that much of the nobility ruled territories that were under royal control and could be removed and replaced at will, as Afonso I was before 1509, and as many of the witnesses in Diogo I's legal inquest testified. Their testimony also showed that incomes were derived from those territories and that the state disposed resources in the form of money, which could be distributed on a case-by-case basis. Moreover, while positions might be given on the basis of kinship with the king, the country was governed by norms generated by the central power.

Kongo kings had substantial military resources at their command, and could and did use them to enforce royal orders. This was possible because the foundation of Mbanza Kongo was accompanied by concentration of large numbers of people in its immediate vicinity whose resources could be taxed or who could serve in royal armies, their movement there perhaps forced; in addition the circulation of the nobility through the system of appointments may also explain why South Kikongo became the language of the country (see Bostoen and de Schryver Chapter 3). While Kongo kings, both as followers of the traditional religion and Christianity, surely exercised spiritual and symbolic power, they also commanded material resources and power to generate a centralized political structure.

Acknowledgements

2 | *A Central African Kingdom: Kongo in 1480*

WYATT MACGAFFEY

The most sustained effort to reconstruct what the kingdom of Kongo was like before the arrival of Portuguese sailors in 1483 is that of Hilton (1985). Thornton (1983) covers some of the same ground, but deals with the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries only in later essays that closely interrogate the documentary sources, primarily reports by Portuguese, Italian, and other European visitors from the late fifteenth to the early eighteenth centuries that record traditions of origin current in Kongo at various times. Despite all the change occurring over five centuries, certain continuities seem beyond question, so both of these scholars make use of not only modern ethnography but seventeenth-century reports of Kongo as it was after 150 years of close commercial and political relations between Kongo and Portugal.

Rather than attempt yet another interpretation of the documentary evidence, I approach the problem from another angle. It is highly unlikely that Kongo in 1480 was very different from its Central African neighbors. What were they like? Continuity in space may be as informative as continuity in time. The results are necessarily speculative, since archaeological and other "facts" are almost entirely lacking.

Perspective and Method

My intention in referring to the modern ethnography of Central Africa is not to collect traits that might plausibly be attributable to early Kongo but to use that ethnography to correct basic scholarly habits, deeply rooted in African Studies from the beginning, that have distorted the image of the kingdom.

The first such habit, dating from colonial times but now much discredited, was that of identifying societies or tribes as singularities in isolation from one another. Vansina (1990) and, on a different scale, Ekholm (1977) are exceptional in their analyses of Congo-basin societies as versions of a single system.

A second bad habit, this one with deeper roots, set states apart from stateless societies. In the early twentieth century, anthropologists took it for granted that Negroes were incapable of government. They explained the undeniable presence of states in what they called Negro Africa as the result of invasions from elsewhere by a superior race called Hamites. This story is now recognized as an anthropological myth, though credentialed scholars took it seriously until the 1960s. In 1940, as a liberal reaction against this kind of thinking, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940) asserted that Africans were not anarchic and could govern themselves, even in the absence of political centralisation, by what the authors called segmentary lineage systems. By 1952, anthropologists had shown that lineages could occur at the core of centralized polities and that some stateless societies lacked lineages but still had governments. Nevertheless, the habit persisted of thinking of states as a special sort of political formation that required the presence of an exceptional factor lacking in stateless societies. After 1960, as African countries became independent, scholars celebrated traditional "states" and "empires" as the predecessors of modern states and neglected other kinds of government.

A third bad habit, this one dating back to the eighteenth century, was that of distinguishing rational from irrational action and dismissing the irrational as unworthy of serious attention. The Enlightenment discovered Science and with it Nature as the proper object of study by the scientific method. This development created the residual category of everything, notably religion, which did not lend itself to scientific study and therefore came under suspicion of being superfluous and morally deplorable. The debate about two kinds of truth has been going on ever since. In the mid-nineteenth century, as social studies developed, calling themselves sciences, they repeated the earlier invidious distinction by selecting seemingly rational, goal-oriented behavior to be studied by economists and political scientists, while relegating the rest to anthropology. Even in anthropology the same division occurred, so that in Africa everything that made no sense to scholars or seemed in need of interpretation was called African religion and set aside from politics as activity not to be taken seriously (Bell 1992; Landau 1999). Meanwhile, despite the modernist illusion of progressive disenchantment, "the transcendence of the state and the metaphysics of the market are foundational to modern society" (van der Veer 2016: 56). The problem, of course, is that "if we equate

rationality with understandability, then we effectively replace the actor's rationality with the sociologist's rationality" (van der Veer 2016: 50).

The last of the bad intellectual habits that have impeded our understanding of Central African history is that of assuming that social organization, in states as among the stateless, was governed by traditional rules of descent and succession that restrained the political tendencies of the individuals. In fact, like history, rules are made by the winners of political struggles, not handed down from the mountaintop.

A Cultural Tradition

A synthetic model of Central African culture can be derived from Jan Vansina's *Paths in the Rainforests* (1990), which is mainly the product of research based on the method of "Words and Things". I rely also on my own field research in the 1960s, much of which gives Vansina independent confirmation, although on some issues I disagree with him: on the considerable though uneven volume of modern ethnography of the peoples of the Congo basin, including savannah and forest groups; and on models put forward by Pierre-Philippe Rey, Luc de Heusch, and John Thornton. Although I am offering a synthetic model, my ethnographic examples will be drawn mostly from Kongo and the Kikongo language as spoken in the region of Mbanza Manteke south of the Congo River in what is today the Kongo-Central province of Congo-Kinshasa. This regional variety is also known as Kimboma today. In the phylogenetic classification of the Kikongo Language Cluster by de Schryver *et al.* (2015), it is part of the South Kikongo subgroup together with, among others, Kisikongo as spoken in Mbanza Kongo and Kisolongo as spoken in Mbanza Soyo (see also Bostoen and de Schryver, Chapter 3).

Vansina's account of the evolution of Central African society is based on the idea of a hegemonic tradition originating 4,000 years ago and diffused throughout an area now inhabited by speakers of Western Bantu languages. The geographical boundaries of this tradition are indeterminate and for present purposes do not matter; they include Zambia, but not countries east of the Great Lakes. Vansina seems to exclude savannah peoples south of the rainforests, but includes Kongo. "A tradition," he writes, "chooses its own future: the basic choices are followed by subsidiary choices, which close certain

options for the future and leave other options open." A tradition begins with a set of basic cognitive patterns and concepts that define "cognitive reality", the world as the actor sees it, and with such basic choices as agricultural techniques (Vansina 1990: 258–9). The features of the tradition most widespread in space are presumably the oldest.

A large part of the cognitive reality began with the assumption that life should be regular, without exceptional fortune good or bad. The tradition attributed exceptional success or misfortune to extra-normal techniques or forces that were necessarily occult because, if they were patent, they would be anticipated and provided for in daily life. It was generally thought that the source of occult powers was the land of the dead (*nsi a bafwa*), which though it was not part of "this world" (*nza yayi*), was not "heaven", but a place to which one could physically go and come, if one knew the way; its inhabitants were not "ghosts" but human beings translated to another place. The effects of occult power produced crises, personal or communal, which had to be resolved by experts in the occult. They initiated remedial procedures that characteristically modified normal life by temporarily forbidding certain activities and requiring others. The apparent success or failure of such procedures could lead to micro-political shifts and lower-level changes in the tradition itself.

I am using the word *occult* here in its original sense, referring to something not ordinarily visible; this sense is preserved today in medical usage. The common meaning today, "pertaining to supernatural phenomena," dates to the early seventeenth century and the great divide between the *natural* and the *supernatural* in European thinking. The absence of any such divide in Central African thought in the sixteenth century (or even today, for most people) presents an as yet unsolved epistemological problem to anthropologists and linguists. The tools, practices, cultigens, and animal species necessary to sustain life can be the objects of positive knowledge, marked by relatively unambiguous labels. To Africans brought up in the tradition, occult forces are also objects of positive knowledge, although to the outsider they cannot be. The traditional scholarly response has been to assimilate the African occult to the modern European supernatural and draw upon the vocabulary of religion to substitute for African terms and concepts. Whereas in the Western mind "magic," "possession," and "sorcery" are linked with the supernatural, the extraordinary, the

mysterious, and the fantastic, and are thus beyond comprehension, in Africa they are basic realities (Olivier de Sardan 1992: 14).

Throughout the area of Vansina's tradition, four kinds of "experts" in the occult were recognized, which I will call the *headman*, the *witch*, the *earth-chief* ("earth-priest"), and the *healer*, using English terms rather than those of the different ethnicities, with the understanding that they refer to actors better thought of as political than religious, whose activity is practical rather than spiritual. Linguistic evidence and their widespread distribution as a contrast set, according to modern ethnography, argue for their antiquity (MacGaffey 1970a). These roles were defined by the intersecting contrasts among them, rather than by their behavioral content, and were always vulnerable to political challenges. *Earth-chief* and *healer* operated in the sphere of *production*, using their power in support of prosperity and well-being; *headman* and *witch* competed for control of *social reproduction*, using both occult and real violence. On the other hand, *headman* and *earth-chief* were both *public* figures, acting for the community, whereas *witch* and *healer* were believed to pursue *individual* benefit; this opposition embodies the competing political ideologies of Central Africa, hierarchical vs. egalitarian, and expresses the pervasive vulnerability of authority to challenges (cf. Vansina 1990: 253). It also implies contrasted economic models, redistribution as opposed to market exchange. De Heusch gave an excellent analysis of *le couple magicien-sorcier* in the Congo basin, but failed to see the associated couple of chief and priest, and charged me with having imposed a Durkheimian public/private distinction (see also de Heusch 1971: 170–87; de Heusch 2000: 59).

As Kopytoff (1980) says about the Suku from Congo-Kinshasa speaking a Kikongoid language (cf. de Schryver *et al.* 2015, see also Bostoen and de Schryver, Chapter 3), if this is religion, it is not the kind that is "above" the society, knitting it together, but very much "in" it – an instrument of all its segments, divisions, conflicts, and contradictions, a sociology of the society itself. As such it translates neatly into Rey's neo-Marxist model of "the lineage mode of production," which he wrote after fieldwork among the Kunyi from Congo-Brazzaville speaking a North Kikongo language (cf. de Schryver *et al.* 2015, see also Bostoen and de Schryver, Chapter 3). The model of Rey (1975) is not in fact primarily about either lineages or production, but about social reproduction, which he calls the dominant

relation, the process that distributes both the means of production and places or roles in production. In African terms "class struggle" pits chiefs against their rivals to determine who will be free, who will be a slave, who will be in a position to arrange marriages and acquire dependents, and who will not. The weapons of the class struggle in Central Africa include divination, ritual fees requiring prestige goods, ordeals, spectacular executions, *min'kisi*, taboos, and occasional warfare (Rey 1975; Kopytoff 1980; Bonnafé 1987). In contrast, Thornton (1982) applies to Kongo Balibar's (1968) model of "the slave mode of production," which in fact is much better suited to colonial Congo than to Mbanza Kongo. Neither Marx nor his followers succeeded in defining a "mode of production" objectively, but the slave-based mode of production prevailing at Mbanza Kongo during its heyday is best seen as an enlargement to a grand scale of every village elder's ideal way of life, supported by slaves.

I follow here the set of four roles, which is not just a collection of superstitions, but a matrix of legitimate governance, an indigenous guide to political practice. Elsewhere, I refer to the two spheres as those of "maintenance" and "prestige" respectively (MacGaffey 1986b: 169–78). For other examples of the same contrast set, see Van Everbroeck (1961), Bibeau (1973), De Plaen (1974), and Turner (1975). Let us begin with the sphere of production.

Life was made possible by agriculture with hand tools, mostly the work of women, who also gathered edible fruits, small game, and fish from streams. Men assisted with forest clearing and gathered fruits that required climbing trees such as the palm, but their responsibilities included hunting large animals for food and killing predators. The hoe and the arrow came to stand for feminine and masculine, respectively. The division of labour between the sexes and the need for cooperation created the married household and the village as the basic units of production. The outcome of productive efforts was expected to be the same for everybody; better than average success or failure was attributed to witchcraft, which benefited a few at the expense of the rest, or to some other occult force. Talismans or protective devices and procedures, known as *n'kisi* (plural *min'kisi*), which were worn about the body, hung in the house, or placed near cultivations, were expected to deter secret enemies, but had to be acquired at some expense from an expert (*nganga*, "healer") and imposed behavioral taboos. Following Janzen (2015), *n'kisi* is "an untranslatable term

[…] meaning technique, knowledge, and expertise in the physical and social worlds; material artifacts; social processes surrounding the efficacious uses of these materials; and initiation into the specialized knowledge of them" (Janzen "Healing," 231). To this one should add that everything *n'kisi* is dangerous, to be treated with caution and respect. Advice as to the source of misfortune and how to deal with it could be sought from a *nganga* specialized in divination; tradition taught him that misfortune might result from witchcraft (*kindoki*), from breaking a taboo, from failure sufficiently to respect senior male family members alive or dead, or from the capriciousness of natural forces lightly personified as *bisimbi*. The diviner would base his diagnosis on his knowledge of social tensions and the likelihood that the individual, the family, and the community at large would accept the cost in time and trouble of his proposed remedy. A *nganga*'s success in prosecuting witches and solving problems was attributed to his own occult power (also *kindoki*) and his ownership of appropriate *min'kisi*.

When the community suffered from the effects of drought, disease, or other general misfortune, it turned to a superior *nganga*, the earth-chief, who was the custodian of a shrine of the earth (*n'kisi nsi*) associated with chthonic forces (*bisimbi*). He might order the collective renewal of relations with nature by requiring that selected individuals or perhaps the adolescents collectively undergo a period of seclusion in the forest with initiation into the mysteries of the occult (*Kimpasi, Na Kongo, Ndembo*). He also conducted agricultural festivals at the shrine, often located in or near a cave, a pool, a strange rock formation, or a grove believed to be the abode of exceptional natural forces manifested in the form of dangerous animals, such as bees or monitor lizards. Hilton (1985: 12–15), lumping together a miscellany of linguistic error and partially understood ethnography, refers to the sphere of production as "the *mbumba* dimension" (cf. MacGaffey 2016).

Whereas production was the common concern of a population extensive in *space* and sharing common dependence on the earth's resources, social reproduction was related to real or imagined *time*. Reference to time argued for the superiority of senior over junior, first-comer over late-comer and free over slave. Whereas the earth and its shrines had been there "forever," the social order had a beginning, marked by the story of a strange hunter or an invader, and sustained by reference to ancestors addressed at grave-side or through a box of ancestral relics. The outcome was hierarchical and intensely competitive

(*kimpala*, "jealousy"), marked by violence real and imagined. The "*nkadi a mpemba* dimension" of Hilton (1985: 16–19) approximates to the sphere of social reproduction; it is unfortunately even more of a hodgepodge of fact and fiction than her "*mbumba* dimension".

Ambition and Centralization

The "chief–priest" couple (time/space) appears in tradition everywhere. However, over much of Central and West Africa, wherever there is apparent centralization, tradition explains it as the result of conquest by a chief "from elsewhere" who relegated the leader of the subjugated aborigines to a "religious" responsibility for the earth (see MacGaffey 2000a for cultural continuities between West and Central Africa). This narrative has certain plausibility, but where no centralization developed, the same complementary roles were said to result from an amicable division of labor. The structure, that is to say, is much more general than the explanations for it offered by oral traditions, local examples of a theme that may be universal in pre-modern theory: power, the ability to effect the extra-ordinary, is always occult, always originating "elsewhere" (Sahlins 1987; MacGaffey 2005: 75–86).

In Central Africa, as in the Mosse-Dagomba kingdoms of Burkina Faso and northern Ghana, the story of conquest is promoted by those whose ambitions it supports and is at best a simplification of a long and turbulent history in which degrees of centralization were created at different times and places from a common regional resource base (Dittmer 1961; Skalník 1996; Izard 2003; MacGaffey 2013a). Kongo was formerly said by historians relying mainly on twentieth-century oral tradition to have been founded by a conqueror from Vungu, a principality north of the Congo. Recent scholarship has questioned the idea of conquest altogether and replaced it with a model of progressive political entrepreneurship, a process of voluntary and compulsory agglomeration of neighboring states around a central core (Thornton 2001, see also Thornton's chapter 1 on Kongo origins in this volume).

An ambitious headman needed as many dependants as possible: women to provide labor and future generations of dependants; men, especially young men, to provide labor in food production, warfare, and trade. The basic social unit was the House, a bilateral descending kindred several generations deep, consisting of a headman (*n'kuluntu*), his wives and resident children and grandchildren, together

with affines and clients, including slaves. The value of a slave lay not so much in his or her labor as in the fact that slaves could not choose whom to marry or where to live, and had no authority over their own offspring. "[Not land, but] slaves were the only form of private, revenue producing property recognized in African law" (Thornton 1998a: 74). The basic kinship terminology, projected on to a genealogical diagram, takes the form known as "bifurcating Hawaiian." It provided labels for all relationships, not just those Europeans think of as family; for example, the apprentice of a principal *nganga* was called his "child," i.e. *mwana nganga*, and a slave, too, could be *mwana*.

Kongo social organization in 1480 did not include matrilineal descent groups (clans, lineages). The longstanding illusion that it did was based on the lingering evolutionary assumption that matrilineality was a stage through which primitive societies necessarily passed, and on the linguistic error of supposing that, because in the twentieth century the word *kanda* could mean "matriclan," its occurrence in early Kongo was evidence of matrilineal descent. In fact, *kanda* can refer to any group or category. Hilton (1983) builds her account of Kongo social structure and political history on this error. Hilton (1985: 9), aware that modern Kongo kinship terminology responding to the presence of matrilineal descent groups is more complicated than the "Hawaiian" model, said she had found evidence of "modern" usage in the dictionary of Van Gheel (1652), but the evidence is not convincing. Vansina's assertion that matrilineality was invented in (modern) Mayombe in about 1300 CE is based on mistaken facts and an implausible argument (Vansina 1990: 152–4; MacGaffey 2013b). The ancestors were not matrilineal either; even in the twentieth century, when the social structure included matrilineages, "[t]he ancestor cult is based upon the power that is ascribed to the father in relation to his children" (Laman 1962: 44). The political importance of patrilateral relations has been consistently underrated by anthropological reification of "matrilineality" as a "structure," a set of providential and determinate rules to which all else was merely complementary. On this topic, the essay of Hilton (1983) is a valiant attempt, making the most of unreliable data, to demonstrate the flexibility of the kinship system and its openness to political opportunism. From a broader perspective, Ekholm (1977: 117) demonstrates that Congo basin societies are basically bilateral; they are never unequivocally patrilineal or matrilineal and may "oscillate" between the two.

A matrilineal descent group is in fact a corporation that retains ownership over the reproductive capacity of its female members, both freeborn and slave. But women as mothers were also the partners of men in household units of production. To obtain the services of a wife (*sompa n'kento*, "to borrow a woman"), one had to give a wife in exchange, either directly (*kimpiisa*) or in the next generation. In the fifteenth century, rights over men, and over women as mothers, could be won or lost as capital payments incidental to warfare, clientage, judgments, ordeals, and initiations. As the slave trade developed in the late seventeenth century, however, the preference for men over women in the Atlantic market generated a surplus of residual women, increasing from the interior towards the coast (Thornton 1980). As a result, wives could readily be acquired without giving others in exchange. Such women and their offspring were "slaves," that is persons who had no other relative than their owner and were reckoned as members of his "matrilineage," at least as far as outsiders were concerned. In fact, since these women traced their membership through the male owner and his successors, the group was lineally heterogeneous. Degrees of subordination and vulnerability between "wife" and "slave" included pawnship and shared "ownership." Colonial descriptions of "*le matriarcat,*" such as those of De Cleene (1937), are almost wholly fictitious. For realistic ethnography, see de Sousberghe (1963).

Matrilineal descent, from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century, was the product of patriarchal ambition, not of rules of descent and succession. Maps 4.2, 7.3, and 7.5 in Vansina (1990) show that the limits of the Atlantic trade in the Congo basin coincide very well with the distribution of matrilineal descent, although Vansina's (1990: 113–14) explanation for the boundary between the matrilineal Doko and their patrilineal neighbors to the east, at the limit of the slave trade near the junction of the Congo and Aruwimi Rivers, is entirely different from mine. Wilks (1993, chapter 2) also argues that matrilineal descent among Akan speakers arose in connection with the trade in slaves. Vansina attributes the spread of matrilineality to the diffusion of ideas rather than to the increasing availability of women.

Ambitious elders throughout the Congo basin pursued deliberate marriage strategies, "high" and "low," to increase their wealth in people and secure their control over it against the ambitions of rival leaders and their own subordinates. While giving lip service to the principle of lineage exogamy, a Kongo-Dinga chief in Kasai, for example, would

in practice resort to "centripetal endogamy," becoming "wife-giver" to himself by marrying slaves (de Sousberghe 1963; Swartenbroeckx 1966: 151–3; Marie 1972; MacGaffey 1977: 244–7; Ceyssens 1984: 369). On the other hand, reciprocal marriage arrangements among equals secured allies; repeating these exchanges in subsequent generations, the allies stood to one another as "fathers" and "sons," "grandfathers" and "grandchildren" (*batekolo*), as well as affines. Kongo kinship terminology is not reckoned genealogically; it allows for alternative designations, invoking different roles (MacGaffey 1970b: 84–100). In kinship terms, repeated exchange between equals is patrilateral cross-cousin marriage (*vutula menga* "returning the blood" or *mwele ntumbu, mwele luwusu*, "where the needle goes the thread follows"), whereas unequal exchange is matrilateral cross-cousin marriage. Such alliances created local oligarchies whose members helped each other to stay in power, but success was always precarious, since one's "allies" were also rivals (Janzen 1982: 41–3). Or following Ekholm (1977: 125), "[t]he relations between different lineages are not just 'alliances' … It is in the relations *between* groups that the dynamic of matrilineal relations is expressed." Moreover, "Kongo with its hierarchies of matrilineages is basically a patrilineal society. The matrilineages are a secondary phenomenon […] All the different societies of West Central Africa can be seen as variations of a system where human beings are exchanged for prestige articles and where economic and political success depends on accumulation of wives and slaves" (Ekholm 1977: 133).

Alliance networks spread in all directions and on several political levels (village, district, principality), allowing the ambitious to have access to multiple opportunities. Thornton's reconstruction of the political milieu in which Kongo arose clearly indicates the existence of such a network (see Chapter 1 on Kongo origins). When Afonso I, writing to the Pope in 1535, described himself as lord of much of West Central Africa, much as Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at about the same time described himself as lord of most of Europe and of "Asia and Africa" as well (as exhibited in the STAM Ghent City Museum, which we visited on May 27, 2016 as part of a KongoKing project workshop). The Mwene/Mani Kongo was presenting himself as a fellow monarch, but may also have been indicating his position as *primus inter pares* in a network of principalities. It is hard to imagine the administrative and military resources that could have enabled

Afonso I to control the transfluvial kingdoms of Ngoyo, Kakongo, and Vungu (see Chapter 1 on Kongo origins). In her stimulating hypothesis regarding the rise of the kingdom, Ekholm (1977) is mistaken in supposing that matrilineality was characteristic of Kongo at the time.

This mode of production, in which success was measured by wealth in people (*mbongo bantu*) rather than in land or labor, could be realized in small-scale, village versions controlled by headmen rather than "chiefs" or on a larger scale in principalities with a hierarchy of invested chiefs and considerable concentrations of ritual, wealth, and slave labor. Such concentrations should be regarded as emergent from the political culture of the region, rather than as special creations, and were not necessarily characterized by efficient central authority. Success in leadership and in building a following of wives, clients, and slaves was credited to control of occult forces (*kindoki*), which in Kongo is explained as "eating people" (*dia bantu*), an apt description of exploitation. A sense that the amount of exploitation was excessive might lead to rebellious accusations that the headmen and elders were abusing their power and were themselves witches. According to Vansina (1990: 253), "[r]ight from the outset [of the tradition, and still today] two ideologies existed: one that extolled and explained the success of big men and one that stressed the ideal equality of all, which underlies the suspicion of witchcraft."

The Nature of Political Leadership

Any village headman might acquire *min'kisi* to enhance his reputation for getting things done, but to reinforce his position, an ambitious man might have himself initiated by the local earth-chief to a special *n'kisi* of government empowered by one of the greater spirits. To accomplish this, the chief required the support of his allies; descriptions of nineteenth-century chieftaincy rituals in Mayombe clearly show that to qualify for initiation a candidate had to be the offspring of a marriage linking his clan to another. The allies had to be rewarded with extravagant entertainment and gifts of slaves, ivory, camwood, and other prestige goods, while at the same time they provided him with extra wives for the occasion. To complete the investiture, the candidate would be tested, often by a mock battle or a hunt, a piece of political theater to show that he had acquired extraordinary powers over life and death or, more realistically, that he had earned the support of

the investors. Chiefs everywhere were identified with nature's supreme killer, the leopard, or sometimes the lion; as the Luba hero Kalala Ilunga is supposed to have said, "I will have myself invested chief, I will kill men." The investiture centered on a shrine to the earth and the dead (*n'kisi nsi*), usually a cave, strange rock formation, or a dark and dangerous forest grove. Cavazzi mentions that in Nsi a Kwilu, in northern Kongo, a site located in deep forest was held in utmost reverence as "the place where the first kings were," thus the origin of the special powers of kingship (see Chapter 1 on Kongo origins).

The investiture united the spheres of production and reproduction, as Victor Turner explained for the Ndembu: the bracelet of human genitalia assumed by the Kanongesha at his installation symbolized the historical unity of the people; its medication by the earth-priest symbolized the unity of the land (Turner 1975: 320). The Yaka chief allocates fields, but the Tsakala, who invests him, stands for the productive and regenerative potential of the soil; as in parts of Mayombe, the Yaka chief at his investiture was likened to the palm tree, a potent source and symbol of productivity (Devisch 1988: 270). Among the Biyeng, a Kuba sub-group, the invested chief similarly acquires the combined powers of "sorcery" (*bukum*) and "vital force" (*magnon*) (Josephson 1992, chapter 6). Sometimes, as in eastern Kongo, the officiating priest was the smith, who as maker of agricultural tools was closely associated with the spirits of the earth; initiated chiefs acquired iron insignia to express their acquisition of life-giving powers, although among the Yaka and others the insignia were of copper. The earth-priest was also responsible in at least some areas for conducting the political chief's funeral.

In seventeenth-century Kongo there were many specialized priests (*kitomi* in singular) charged with initiating the political elite. In his correspondence, King Afonso I mentions a forest associated with the kingship; it appears that the officiating priest was the Mwene Kabunga/Kavunga or perhaps the Mwene Vunda, but controversy surrounds this identification. Citing Cavazzi and da Montesarchio, Thornton (2001: 113) notes that unless the rulers and the *kitomi* performed a ceremony representing the conquest of the region, they could not expect to receive any tribute or obedience. Cuvelier and Hilton, he says, make too much of the *kitomi* relationship; indeed, Hilton's transcription of da Montesarchio's account of the initiation of the Duke of Nsundi is sprinkled with the word "sacred" (Hilton

1985: 47), although in fact the original "has no religious elements of this type in it" (Thornton 2001: 113). Initiation was indeed an act of political theater, but the texts provide no hint that the rite indicated acceptance by the "conquered" of the ideology of original conquest. The ritual details can be matched from many modern accounts of initiations, such as Lemba.

Once initiated, the chief himself became a sort of human *n'kisi*, a *corps-fétiche*, as de Heusch calls him; the Kuba king was *ngesh*, a cognate term. As such, he was required to observe certain behavioral restrictions, but was also able to impose such restrictions on others as "rules of the *n'kisi*" and to collect serious fines for infractions. His real power depended on local conditions and no doubt on his own political skills. All chiefs were at least partly controlled by those who managed their initiation, and some were no more than ritual figureheads for the oligarchy itself. Some were initiated only when a crisis of public order and well-being required renewed contact with the forces of the earth; such a "chiefship" is best understood as an affliction cult, the chief a human *n'kisi* manipulated in the interests of public well-being. The theatrical ("symbolic") features of all initiations were only loosely associated with their manifest functions and tended to drift as ritual modules from one context to another; for example, some chiefs but also some earth-chiefs were strangled when they neared death, and so the procedure itself is not diagnostic, so to speak, for the role.

Unlike political leadership in Europe, realized in imperative control backed by armed force, African and specifically Central African leadership depended on manifesting the kind of power that Europeans think of as supernatural, although "the supernatural" did not exist in traditional African thought. The means of imperative control were deficient, since arms could not be stockpiled or monopolized; warfare between chiefs was a limited and ceremonial affair, an ordeal, a test of relative *kindoki* that concluded with the first casualty and the exaction of a penalty in slaves rather than a battle for territory, at least until the Portuguese alliance provided not only new weapons but new motives for conquest and capture (MacGaffey 1986b: 38; Vansina 1990: 80). Demonstrations of such power by pomp and circumstance and, on occasion, by spectacular executions, *attracted* rather than *compelled* clients and adherents, who sought to share in it by imitating court etiquette, copying its fashions, and acquiring parts of it in the form of *min'kisi* (titles, trade privileges, membership in closed associations) in

exchange for ritual payments that European chroniclers later called "tribute." They might also adopt the "clan" name (*mvila*) of their patron.

Roberts and Roberts (1996: 20, 28) have incisively critiqued the European invention of a Luba "empire," complete with a founding hero, "vassals," and "tribute," whereas in their view Luba government was based on "a constellation of chieftaincies, office-holders, societies, and sodalities that validated claims to power in relation to […] a largely mythical center". The Lunda "empire" is now regarded in much the same way. As Vansina (2004: 176) wrote, "[i]n some ways, politics and the political establishment are a theater, a make-believe world in which real power can be derived from imagined majesty". "Imagined," that is to say, from the point of view of an observer to whom *min'kisi* are symbolic or "spiritual" rather than intrinsically powerful. In the 1960s, pharmaceutical drugs were *min'kisi*, as were letters of recommendation, official papers, and certificates of all kinds, all of which had "power" (Doutreloux 1976: 261–2).

Centralization is a secondary and contingent feature of the Central African political system. In Kasai, both the Kuba and the neighboring Lele had the concept of chiefship but only the Kuba realized it. A hierarchy of hierarchies, their leading families all intermarried at every level, their chiefs strengthened by initiations in the occult, existed just south of the Congo and west of Mpumbu in 1480. Local economic opportunities offered by trade routes and mineral deposits might have contributed to the rise of such a concentration, but Vansina finds no evidence of economic determination; why a system of petty states should have given rise at Mbanza Kongo to a large, slave-based center is still unknown (Thornton 1982: 334). The most important chief was the Mwene Kongo, first encountered by Portuguese adventurers in 1483.

Kongo and the Portuguese

Thornton and Hilton have both shown how in 1483 the Kongo authorities responded to the arrival of visitors from another world in terms of their own categories of the occult. Aware of the constant threat from rivals, the Mwene Kongo and his colleague the Mwene Soyo welcomed the introduction of a new channel of access to power. In 1491 a new Portuguese team offered them baptism, which at first

they sought to keep to themselves, while launching attacks on alternative sources of power by burning *min'kisi*. Before long, however, most of the nobility insisted on sharing the new power; Kongo became a Christian kingdom, in which a Catholic missionary priest performed the part of earth-priest in installing the Mwene Kongo. The missionary himself became *nganga*, but when people regarded his activity as nefarious they might accuse him of being a witch. European priests performed all the public and private roles expected of *banganga*, from initiation ceremonies (baptism) to providing individual charms for luck (religious medals), protecting the fields with charms, performing ceremonies to appeal to earth spirits (*bisimbi*) in case of drought, and consecrating the king (Thornton 1984: 157).

All these practices were characteristic of pre-Reformation Catholicism in Europe at the time (Thomas 1971). "The missionary and the African understood each other better than most of us can understand either" (Hastings 1994: 76). On the other hand, as the Kongo elite developed a Christianity of their own, they ignored certain themes that are central to European Christianity, including the Pauline idea of Original Sin, the Immaculate Conception, and the idea of God as Creator *ex nihilo*. It is comfortable to assume, as missionaries and scholars generally do, that Nzambi Mpungu is the name of Almighty God in Kikongo, but any dead person could be called *nzambi mpungu*. In the early twentieth century, *sumuka* still meant "to break a taboo" rather than to sin; missionaries could find no word for "virgin"; and for the verb "to create," they were obliged to adopt a word that meant to renew a *n'kisi*. In Kongo Christianity, then as now, the concept of salvation was understood pragmatically as a source of solutions to this-worldly problems (Thornton 2013: 77). Whether the resulting syncretism is a "genuine" Christianity or a modified paganism is a theological question still debated in modern times (MacGaffey 1994).

Since the "religion" of Kongo was its political theory, its political system mapped on to that of early modern Portugal with similar syncretism. "Both were monarchies ruled by kings and a class of nobles in which relations of kinship, clientage, and influence dominated the political system. Although both had attained a high degree of political centralization, life in rural areas went on in a way not very different than centuries past. Productivity in neither society was high, but [...] Kongo's productivity was equal to or higher than that of most of Europe" (Thornton 1981: 186). It is impossible to say just how close

the reported resemblance was to the reality, but it was sufficient for the Kongo kings rapidly to adopt Portuguese techniques of governance. After 1491, as the Portuguese began helping Kongo to expand by incorporating marginal principalities, together with their resources in minerals and slaves, the kingdom grew much stronger and more centralized, but the heads of incorporated principalities, expressing their relations to the kingship in terms of kinship and marriage, were still known as *mpemba n'kázi*, "wives of the chalk [of investiture]." *N'kázi* can mean either "wife" or "husband." The expression referred both to the "wife of the chalk" and to the group that provided her. Similar oligarchic configurations operated at lower levels of the kingdom. European priests conferred the necessary Christian power on the king, but at lower levels the earth-priests continued as before.

In the late seventeenth century, the central power had lost most of its formerly immense administrative capacity to requisition resources in goods and labor, but retained its mystique as a ritual center and a source of prestige, ritual titles, and commercial privileges. Historians wrote of the kingdom's "decline," but Broadhead (1979) argued that in indigenous terms it had reverted to something like the structure it had had in 1480, when the Mwene Kongo was *primus inter pares* in a collection of rival principalities or "districts," and government was more a matter of ritual affiliation than of administration. A district was an unstable alliance of Houses centered on a founding House (Vansina 1990: 82); each prince was credited with occult power but owed his position to successful trading expeditions and to political management of marriage and slavery. The Atlantic demand for slaves, exchanged for new prestige goods, increased social competition and stratification, especially towards the coast. Each central place (*mbanza*) dominated a collection of lesser centers, and so on down to individual villages of perhaps 500 people. This was approximately the structure of the Kongo kingdom after the civil wars, when the central authority had been reduced to an ephemeron presiding faintly over "groupings of regional powers, each being merely the center of a group of independent potentates, and all being tied together by a system of alliances and marriages" (Thornton 1983: 114).

The last vestiges of such a "pyramidal" structure of ranked titles, and apparently also ranked earth shrines (*n'kisi nsi*), lingered in colonial Mayombe in the early twentieth century; the last remnants of oligarchic government could be observed in Kongo villages in the

1960s, where important business was managed by the *bamayaala*, the representatives of lineages allied by marriage and patrifiliation, not by the headman (MacGaffey 1970b).

Conclusion

Kongo studies have focused excessively on the state as a sovereign political power controlling a given territory, to the neglect of the underlying social system common to West Central Africa: specifically, the strategies of cross-cousin marriage employed in competition over wealth in people; the resulting patrilateral networks supporting local concentrations of power (chieftaincies); and the theatrical quality of chieftaincy itself. The abundant documentation concerning sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century Kongo has isolated a hybrid reality in which Africans and Europeans struggle with mixed success to explain themselves to each other. In the midst of this uncertainty, we can identify a remarkable number of detailed cultural correspondences between early Kongo, nineteenth-century Kongo traditions (of which hundreds of pages concerning chieftaincy and its rituals alone still remain unpublished, cf. MacGaffey 2000b), and modern ethnography of both Kongo and other parts of Central Africa that testify to the strength and depth of a common cultural tradition and justify a speculative reconstruction of Kongo in 1480.

Acknowledgments

3 | *Seventeenth-Century Kikongo Is Not the Ancestor of Present-Day Kikongo*

KOEN BOSTOEN AND GILLES-MAURICE
DE SCHRYVER

Introduction

The KongoKing project (2012–16) approached the history of the Kongo kingdom along hitherto two rather uncommon strands, i.e. archaeology and historical linguistics. While the project's archaeologists unearthed the material heritage of several sites associated with the kingdom's northernmost provincial capitals (e.g. Clist *et al.* 2015c; Clist *et al.* 2015d), the project's linguists dedicated themselves, among other things, to the study of the kingdom's linguistic legacy. Of the dozen or so works in Kikongo that were produced in the course of the seventeenth century, amongst others by Capuchins who started their Kongo mission in 1645 (Mukuna 1984: 73–6; Nsondé 1995: 14–18), only three survived the ravages of time: (1) the *Doutrina Christãa*, an interlinear Portuguese–Kikongo catechism from 1624 translated under the leadership of the Portuguese Jesuit Mateus Cardoso; (2) the *Vocabularium Latinum, Hispanicum, e Congense*, a trilingual wordlist which survived thanks to the 1652 manuscript copied by the Flemish Capuchin Joris Van Gheel; and (3) the *Regulae quaedam pro difficillimi Congensium idiomatis faciliori captu ad grammaticae normam redactae*, a grammar of Kikongo published in 1659 under the authorship of the Italian Capuchin Hyacintho Brusciotto a Vetralla. These three extant seventeenth-century sources have an exceptional scientific value. Not only do they provide us with invaluable information on the language used by early Kongo Christians and European missionaries during the heyday of the kingdom, they are also the earliest (surviving) book-length sources ever written in a Bantu language (Doke 1935). Unsurprisingly, each of these sources was republished and translated in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Guinness 1882; Van Wing and Penders 1928; Bontinck and Ndembe Nsasi 1978), even if that did not always happen with due respect for the original source. The published version

of the *Vocabularium Congense* by Van Wing and Penders (1928), for example, was so heavily reworked that the complete digitization of the original manuscript became an absolute must (cf. De Kind *et al.* 2012). That is exactly the reason why the KongoKing project team devoted considerable time and resources towards making those unique seventeenth-century as well as other early Kikongo sources accessible for modern corpus-based linguistic research. Guy Ndouli provided an electronic transcription of the entire *Vocabularium Congense*, while Ernest Nshemezimana produced an electronic transcription of a Kikongo grammar (Cuénot 1776) and Sharah Drieghe a fully digital copy of two different versions of a French–Kikongo dictionary (cf. Drieghe 2014), which French missionaries produced in the 1770s near Kinguele, the capital of the small Kakongo kingdom in present-day Cabinda (Nsondé 1995: 14, 18–25). During the digitization process, these dictionaries were also marked up using professional dictionary compilation software, i.e. TLex (Joffe and de Schryver 2002–2018).

The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Kikongo language sources have attracted considerable scholarly attention in the twentieth century (e.g. Doke 1935; Van Bulck 1954; Bontinck 1963; 1976; Vansina 1974; Mukuna 1984; Nsondé 1995; Bonvini 1996), but they have rarely been the subject of systematic historical-linguistic research despite the fact that recorded Bantu language history actually starts with them. Consisting of a diachronic phonological approach to Kikongo as documented in the *Vocabularium Congense* (1652) and the Kakongo dictionary manuscripts (1770s) respectively, the dissertations of Jasper De Kind (2012) and Eva Bleyenberg (2012) were innovative in this regard. Even if the seventeenth-century Kikongo documents are not old enough to yield significant insights on deep-time Bantu language history, they are definitely of key importance for gaining a better historical understanding of the Kikongo Language Cluster (KLC), which has been shown to constitute a discrete genealogical subclade within the wider Bantu language family (Bostoen *et al.* 2015b; de Schryver *et al.* 2015; Grollemund *et al.* 2015). Beyond historical linguistics *strictu senso*, these oldest Kikongo sources also have the potential of shedding new light on the language situation within and without the Kongo kingdom, especially if they are studied in conjunction with historical testimonies as well as more recent language sources as is done in the present chapter.

In Kongo historiography, the kingdom is commonly staged as a monolingual state. Abstracting from the European languages spoken

by the foreigners whom it hosted and to a certain extent by its own
elite as far as Portuguese is concerned, Kikongo is considered to be
the sole language spoken within the kingdom. In this capacity, it is
usually opposed to its southern neighbour Kimbundu, spoken south
of the Dande River (Hilton 1985: 1) in the kingdoms of Ndongo
and Matamba where Queen Njinga ruled between 1624 and 1663
(Thornton 1991). The shifting language frontier between Kikongo and
Kimbundu tends to be equated with the kingdom's southern border.
Thornton (1983: 70) reports how the growing influence of Portuguese
residents of Angola in the kingdom's southern borderland and the
accelerating import of slaves from the eastern parts of Angola resulted
in a language shift from Kikongo to Kimbundu along the Bengo River
and Dande River in the first part of the seventeenth century. This shift
must have been very gradual since the Jesuit missionary Pero Tavares
still used the Kikongo catechism of Cardoso (1624) in the 1630s for
his apostolic work in the vicinity of Bengo (Jadin 1967: 283). Inversely,
the foundation of the kingdom may have been the outcome of Kikongo
speakers subjugating Kimbundu speakers. According to the chron-
icle of the Portuguese historian António de Oliveira de Cadornega
from 1680 (Delgado 1972b: 188), the Kongo kingdom was founded
by foreign *Meshicongo* conquerors who defeated the autochthonous
population known as *Ambundos* (see also Paiva Manso 1877: 266).
To the north, Kikongo is seen as clearly distinct from Kiteke spoken
around Malebo Pool, notably in Kongo's neighbouring Tio states of
Makoko and Ngobila (Hilton 1985; Vansina 1994). Nonetheless,
the subjects of the king of Kongo supposedly only spoke one lan-
guage, i.e. Kikongo, whose distribution area actually stretched far
beyond the kingdom's borders, i.e. to the Kwilu and Niari rivers in the
north, the Dande River in the south, Malebo Pool and the Kwango River
in the east and the Atlantic Ocean to the west (Hilton 1985: 1, based
on Van Wing 1921: 105; Laman 1936: lxvii, lxxiv; Mertens 1942: 5;
Van Bulck 1948: 388). Therefore, according to Obenga (1970: 156),
'no barrier existed between the inhabitants of Kongo proper and those
of Dongo, Matamba, Kwimba, Kakongo, Ngoyo and Loango, because
Kikongo was spoken everywhere, although with unavoidable dialectal
differences' [our translation]. Such regional linguistic variation in the
era of the kingdom is also acknowledged by Thornton (1983: 15) who
claims that '[t]he natural barriers to travel in Kongo had much to do
with the country's linguistic division into coastal, central, and eastern

dialects, and blocked the spread of Kikongo beyond the southern mountains where Kimbundu prevailed'. In Obenga's understanding, regiolectal diversity within the country was minimal, however, since he sees Kikongo as the fundament of the cultural unity of its inhabitants throughout the kingdom (Obenga 1970: 153).

This monolithic view of things conflicts with MacGaffey's contention that the consciousness of Kikongo as the property of a social group, i.e. as the language of 'the Bakongo', is a relatively recent political construct that emerged within the very specific context of early-twentieth-century European colonialism characterized by 'both rising discontent with foreign rule and awareness of incipient competition within the colonial framework between the Bakongo and other "tribes" identified as such by the administration' (MacGaffey 2016: 163). It also clashes with de Cadornega's historical account of the kingdom's ethnolinguistic landscape around 1680. In this chronicle, known as *Pauta das Naçoens do Gentio do Reino de Congo de differente lingoa e costumes* (Delgado 1972b: 193–4), seventeenth-century Kongo is not described as a monolingual or monocultural polity, but as composed of several nations and languages: the nobility and people of the court known as *Mexicongos* (*fidalguia e gente da Corte de Congo*), the vassals of the Count of Soyo known as *Mexilongos* (*vassallos do conde de Sonho*), the *Amzicos* from Kongo's inland (*pella terra do Congo dentro*), the *Monjollos* from Kongo's hinterland (*pello sertão dentro de Congo*), the fierce and valent *Majacas* (*são como Jagas gente feroz e de valor*), the vassals of the Duke of Nsundi known as *Sundis* (*vassallos do duque de Sundi*), the vassals of the Marquis of Sonso known as *Sonsos* (*vassallos do marquez de Sonso*), the *Mumlumbos* which were another nation (*outra Nação daquelle Reino*) and finally the *Mulazas* from Kongo dia Nlaza in the backlands (*de Congo de Amulaca pello sertão dentro*).

Historical-comparative research carried out within the KongoKing project also forces one to question the assumed linguistic unity of Kikongo. In his referential classification of the Bantu languages, Guthrie (1948) singles out an H.10 group in which he gives Kikongo as a language the H.16 code. In the revised version of 1971, he considers the language to be composed of the following dialects (which are conventionally indicated with lowercase letters following the base code): 'H.16a S. Kongo [Angola, Congo-Kinshasa]', 'H.16b C. Kongo [Congo-Kinshasa]', 'H.16c Yombe [Congo-Kinshasa]', 'H.16d

W. Kongo (Fiote) [Cabinda, Congo-Kinshasa]', 'H.16e Bwende [Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa]', 'H.16f Laadi [Congo-Brazzaville]', 'H.16g E. Kongo [Congo-Kinshasa]' and 'H.16h S.E. Kongo [Angola, Congo-Kinshasa]' (Guthrie 1971). It is not a coincidence that all varieties, which Guthrie classifies as dialects of H.16 Kikongo, roughly occur within the perimeter of the ancient Kongo kingdom. The other members of his larger 'H.10 Kikongo' group, i.e. 'H.11 Bembe [Congo-Brazzaville]', 'H.12 Vili [Congo-Brazzaville]', 'H.13 Kunyi [Congo-Brazzaville]', 'H.14 Ndingi [Cabinda]' and 'H.15 Mboka [Cabinda]'[1], are all situated outside its former borders. As Guthrie (1948: 5) admits, his inventory is largely based on Laman's understanding of the early-twentieth-century language situation in the Lower Congo region, as seen in Laman's (1936) Kikongo dialect map published in his Kikongo–French dictionary. As a missionary-ethnographer and linguist, Laman collaborated closely with Kikongo-speaking intelligentsia and set up a project to collect their written accounts of Kongo history and social life (cf. MacGaffey 1986a; MacGaffey 2000b: 18–42). This collaborative work was brought together (in abbreviated and translated form) in a posthumously published ethnography (Laman 1953; Laman 1957; Laman 1962; Laman 1968). In this respect, it is not unlikely that Laman's analysis of language affiliations was influenced by the then ongoing formation of a (new) Kongo identity and the (re)interpretation of Kongo history associated with it.

In any event, the state-of-the-art phylogenetic classification by de Schryver *et al.* (2015), which relies on ninety-two items of basic vocabulary, has indicated that Guthrie's referential classification – and by extension Laman's – is not entirely in phase with genealogical language grouping within the Lower Congo. First of all, out of ninety-five different western Bantu languages forty constitute a discrete clade within the West-Coastal Bantu branch, aka 'West-Western Bantu' (Grollemund *et al.* 2015). De Schryver *et al.* (2015) have coined the term 'Kikongo Language Cluster' (KLC) for this specific West-Coastal Bantu subgroup. This vast cluster stretches from southern Gabon to northern Angola including Cabinda and covers significant parts of southern Congo-Brazzaville and western Congo-Kinshasa. Its internal classification is shown in Figure 3.1, reproduced from de Schryver *et al.* (2015: 139). In contrast to what its name suggests,

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[1] According to fieldwork carried out by Heidi Goes in 2015, no Mboka language is spoken in current Cabinda.

Figure 3.1 Internal classification of the Kikongo Language Cluster (KLC) based on twentieth- and twenty-first-century varieties.

the KLC comprises not only all of Guthrie's H.16 Kikongo language varieties, but also all the other members of his H.10 group, his entire 'B.40 Shira-Punu' and 'H.30 Yaka' groups, as well as Kihungan (H.42) from his 'H.40 Mbala-Hungana' group and Kisamba (L.12a) from his 'L.10 Pende' group (Guthrie 1971; Maho 2009). Conversely, Guthrie's 'H.20 Kimbundu' group is part of neither the KLC nor its West-Coastal Bantu superclade. It belongs to a distinct western Bantu clade, i.e. South-West Bantu (Vansina 1995; Bastin *et al.* 1999; Grollemund *et al.* 2015), which is – in contrast to the intuition of Obenga (1970: 156) – only distantly related to Kikongo and certainly not mutually intelligible. Furthermore, most of what Guthrie considers to be varieties of the same H.16 Kikongo language turn out to belong to distinct subclades within the phylogenetic classification of de Schryver *et al.* (2015).

As can be seen in Figure 3.1, 'H.16a S. Kongo', here represented by Kisikongo and Kimboma, and 'H.16h S.E. Kongo', here represented by Kizombo, are indeed part of the same South Kikongo subclade and could thus be considered as varieties of the same language. South

Kikongo clusters quite neatly with two other subgroups, i.e. Central Kikongo and East Kikongo, which correspond more or less to Guthrie's 'H.16b C. Kongo', represented here by Kindibu and Kimanyanga, and 'H.16g E. Kongo', represented here by Kintandu, Kimpangu and several other varieties spoken east of the Inkisi River. However, 'H.16c Yombe' and 'H.16d W. Kongo' on the one hand and 'H.16e Bwende' (for which Kisundi from Boko is the best fit in Figure 3.1) and 'H.16f Laadi' on the other hand clearly belong to distinct and more distant subclades, i.e. West Kikongo and North Kikongo respectively. The other members of Guthrie's H.10 group also belong to one of these subclades: H.11 Bembe and H.13 Kunyi to North Kikongo and H.12 Vili and H.14 Ndingi to West Kikongo. In other words, there is less linguistic unity within so-called 'core Kikongo (H.16)' than what is traditionally assumed.

This is confirmed by the basic vocabulary similarity rates between a selected set of present-day KLC varieties that belong to distinct subclades as presented in Table 3.1. Most (and in Table 3.1, all) correspondence rates are significantly below the 86% threshold that is conventionally used in Bantu linguistics to distinguish between separate related languages and different dialects of the same language (Bastin *et al.* 1999: vi). To compare, the lexical similarity rate between Standard Dutch and Modern Standard German is 76.8%, between Standard Dutch and Bremen Low German 81.8% (Gooskens *et al.* 2011). Few people today would consider Dutch and German as dialects of the same language. Their mutual intelligibility is not natural. It strongly depends on the speaker's degree of exposure. Experimental studies of mutual intelligibility between Kikongo varieties are not available. However, to go by the cognacy rates of about 70% between Kisikongo, Kiyombe and Cilaadi, one should certainly not consider them as just varieties of the same Kikongo language, as Laman and Guthrie did. Laman possibly overrated the proximity between Kikongo varieties because he operated from an area where Kimanyanga was predominant. As can be seen in Table 3.1, only the lexical resemblance rates observed between Kimanyanga and Kisikongo and between Kimanyanga and Cilaadi approach an 80% threshold. Also Kiyombe, Kintandu and Kiyaka are lexically more similar to Kimanyanga than to any other variety. This is not a coincidence. As de Schryver *et al.* (2015: 138, 144) argue, the Central Kikongo subgroup, to which Kimanyanga belongs, is a language convergence zone rather than a true genealogical subunit resulting from regular descent. It developed through contact between

Table 3.1 *Basic vocabulary similarity rates between selected present-day KLC varieties*

	S	SW	E	C	N	NW	KKoid
	Kisikongo	Kiyombe	Kintandu	Kimanyanga	Cilaadi	Yipunu	Kiyaka
Kisikongo		70.6%	70.6%	79.3%	68.5%	38.0%	58.7%
Kiyombe	70.6%		65.2%	75.0%	67.4%	45.6%	59.8%
Kintandu	70.6%	65.2%		73.9%	68.5%	39.1%	59.8%
Kimanyanga	79.3%	75.0%	73.9%		78.2%	43.5%	60.9%
Cilaadi	68.5%	67.4%	68.5%	78.2%		43.5%	58.7%
Yipunu	38.0%	45.6%	39.1%	43.5%	43.5%		45.6%
Kiyaka	58.7%	59.8%	59.8%	60.9%	58.7%	45.6%	

languages belonging to the other subclades. This language contact was so strong that it left a measurable effect in the phylogenetic tree.

Relatively low lexical similarity rates, as observed for instance between Yipunu or Kiyaka and other varieties in Table 3.1, led the KongoKing project team to abandon their originally chosen designation of 'Kikongo Dialect Continuum' in favour of 'Kikongo Language Cluster'. This cluster of regional varieties does indeed manifest a family resemblance structure characteristic of a dialect continuum in the sense that adjacent varieties are mutually intelligible while varieties at the extreme ends of the chain are not. But, the variation within this language cluster of the Bantu family is too significant to consider all its members as varieties of the same language. Regiolectal variation rather occurs within each of its subclades.

One could argue, as has often been done, that the divergence within the KLC is a recent phenomenon that only started during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – when the strongly centralized structure of the Kongo kingdom collapsed (Obenga 1970; Pinçon and Ngoïe-Ngalla 1990; Futi 2012) – or that it is an even later phenomenon (Ntunda Nzeza 2007). Nevertheless, as suggested in de Schryver *et al.* (2015), we believe that the major subclades of the KLC were established long before the Kongo kingdom emerged. The historical-comparative linguistic study of the seventeenth-century Kikongo sources undertaken in this chapter will help us to further substantiate this claim. We will demonstrate that the language variety used or described in these documents is predominantly the South Kikongo variety spoken at the Kongo court, which was by that time already clearly distinct from South Kikongo varieties spoken to the east and west of Mbanza Kongo and definitely from the East Kikongo, North Kikongo and West Kikongo varieties spoken in the kingdom's northern provinces. Several nineteenth- and twentieth-century missionary scholars of Kikongo and Kongo history have pondered on the exact origins of the language found in these documents. Relying on both linguistic and historical deductions, Bentley (1887: xii), Van Wing and Penders (1928: xxx–xxxi) and Bontinck (1976: 155) argue that the seventeenth-century Kikongo as found in the historical documents was the variety spoken in the kingdom's westernmost Soyo province. It would thus have been the most direct ancestor of the present-day Kisolongo variety spoken along the Atlantic Coast, both north and south of the Congo delta. This is the region where European missionaries involved in the production of the seventeenth-century Kikongo

language documents would have started their missionary work and begun their acquisition of Kikongo. In this chapter, we reconsider the linguistic evidence on which Bentley (1887: xii), Van Wing and Penders (1928: xxx–xxxi) and Bontinck (1976: 155) rely to validate their conclusion. Additionally, several other phonological features of seventeenth-century Kikongo are analyzed. This diachronic phonological approach leads to a different conclusion, which is also far more in line with common sense from a strictly historical point of view, namely that seventeenth-century Kikongo predominantly represents the variety spoken in the vicinity of the kingdom's ancient inland capital of Mbanza Kongo. That variety is the most direct ancestor of the Kisikongo variety still spoken in that area today.

A study of the phonological shape of common Bantu words in Van Gheel's (1652) dictionary manuscript led De Kind (2012) to identify the principal sound changes undergone by seventeenth-century Kikongo with regard to the sound system reconstructed for Proto-Bantu, which were then compared with the sound changes undergone by Kisikongo as described in Bentley (1887), (1895) and Ndonga Mfuwa (1995) and by Kisolongo as described in Tavares (1915). In this chapter, we also consider the two other seventeenth-century Kikongo sources as well as comparative data from other more recent Kikongo varieties spoken in northern Angola and other parts of the KLC. For reasons of space, we focus here on four characteristic phonological features of seventeenth-century Kikongo: (1) the retroflexion of *d in front of high front vowels or *d > r /V__*ɪ; (2) *p lenition in intervocalic position; (3) *b loss in intervocalic position; and (4) phonological augment merger. Earlier scholars considered the first as conclusive evidence for the closer affiliation of seventeenth-century Kikongo with present-day Kisolongo. We show that this is not the case. The other three features are more indicative of the genealogical position of seventeenth-century Kikongo within the KLC. Before considering the diachronic phonological evidence, we first discuss the position of seventeenth-century Kikongo in a diachronic lexicon-based phylogeny of the KLC, which serves as a preliminary reference framework for crosschecking sound shifts.

Position of Seventeenth-Century Kikongo in a Diachronic Lexicon-based Phylogeny

Figure 3.2 is a distribution map of the KLC's present-day subclades (cf. fig. 7.2 in Bostoen and de Schryver 2018) superimposed on the
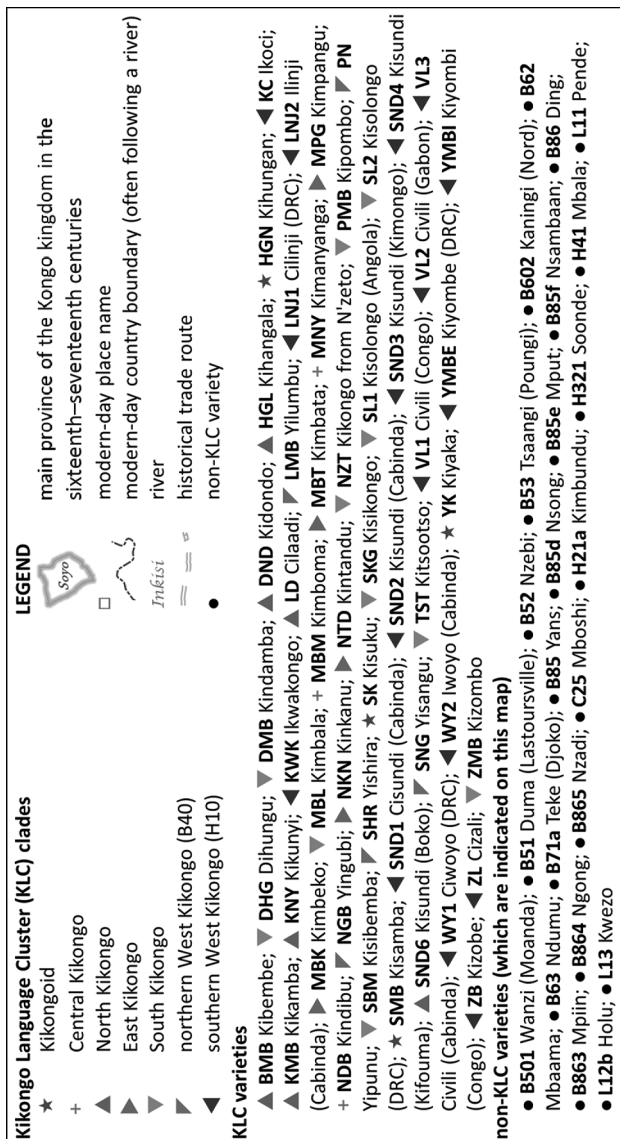
Kikongo Language Cluster (KLC) clades

★ Kikongoid

+ Central Kikongo

▲ North Kikongo

▲ East Kikongo

▶ South Kikongo

▶ northern West Kikongo (B40)

▼ southern West Kikongo (H10)

KLC varieties

▲ **BMB** Kibembe; ▼ **DHG** Dihungu; ▼ **DMB** Kindamba; ▲ **DND** Kidondo; ▲ **HGL** Kihangala; ★ **HGN** Kihungan; ▼ **KC** Ikoci; ▲ **KMB** Kikamba; ▲ **KNY** Kikunyi; ▼ **KWK** Ikwakongo; ▲ **LD** Cilaadi; ▶ **LMB** Yilumbu; ▼ **LNJ1** Cilinji (DRC); ▼ **LNJ2** Ilinji (Cabinda); ▲ **MBK** Kimbeko; ▼ **MBL** Kimbala; + **MBM** Kimboma; ▲ **MBT** Kimbata; + **MNY** Kimanyanga; ▲ **MPG** Kimpangu; + **NDB** Kindibu; ▶ **NGB** Yingubi; ▲ **NKN** Kinkanu; ▲ **NTD** Kintandu; ▼ **NZT** Kikongo from N'zeto; ▼ **PMB** Kipombo; ▶ **PN** Yipunu; ▼ **SBM** Kisibemba; ▶ **SHR** Yishira; ★ **SK** Kisuku; ▼ **SKG** Kisikongo; ▼ **SL1** Kisolongo (Angola); ▼ **SL2** Kisolongo (DRC); ★ **SMB** Kisamba; ▼ **SND1** Cisundi (Cabinda); ▼ **SND2** Kisundi (Cabinda); ▼ **SND3** Kisundi (Kimongo); ▼ **SND4** Kisundi (Kifouma); ▲ **SND6** Kisundi (Boko); ▶ **SNG** Yisangu; ▼ **TST** Kitsootso; ▼ **VL1** Civili (Congo); ▼ **VL2** Civili (Gabon); ▼ **VL3** Civili (Cabinda); ▼ **WY1** Ciwoyo (DRC); ▼ **WY2** Iwoyo (Cabinda); ★ **YK** Kiyaka; ▼ **YMBE** Kiyombe (DRC); ▼ **YMBI** Kiyombi (Congo); ▼ **ZB** Kizobe; ▼ **ZL** Cizali; ▼ **ZMB** Kizombo

non-KLC varieties (which are indicated on this map)

● **B501** Wanzi (Moanda); ● **B51** Duma (Lastoursville); ● **B52** Nzebi; ● **B53** Tsaangi (Poungi); ● **B602** Kaningi (Nord); ● **B62** Mbaama; ● **B63** Ndumu; ● **B71a** Teke (Djoko); ● **B85** Yans; ● **B85d** Nsong; ● **B85e** Mput; ● **B85f** Nsambaan; ● **B86** Ding; ● **B863** Mpiin; ● **B864** Ngong; ● **B865** Nzadi; ● **C25** Mboshi; ● **H21a** Kimbundu; ● **H321** Soonde; ● **H41** Mbala; ● **L11** Pende; ● **L12b** Holu; ● **L13** Kwezo

LEGEND

Soyo — main province of the Kongo kingdom in the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries

□ modern-day place name

modern-day country boundary (often following a river)

Inkisi river

historical trade route

● non-KLC variety

Figure 3.2 Map of the present-day KLC subclades superimposed on the approximate location of the Kongo kingdom's main provinces in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (A black and white version of this figure will appear in some formats. For the colour version, please refer to the plate section.)

approximate location of the Kongo kingdom's six main sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century provinces based on Randles (1968: 22), and trade routes shown as broken double lines (cf. Hilton 1985: 76; Vansina 1998: 264).

Although a one-to-one correspondence between the present-day distribution of Kikongo varieties and the linguistic landscape of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is impossible, one can deduce with quite some likelihood from Figure 3.2 that South Kikongo must have prevailed in the kingdom's heartland. The areas that correspond to the Mpemba and Soyo provinces, which comprise the kingdom's capital Mbanza Kongo and its main coastal settlement Mbanza Soyo respectively, are today exclusively South Kikongo speaking. Such is true for the southernmost Mbamba province located in the southern Kikongo borderland with Kimbundu. South Kikongo varieties must also have been present in the easternmost Mbata province together with East Kikongo varieties in its northern part. The western border of the East Kikongo language zone is the Inkisi River, which crosscut the kingdom's three northernmost provinces: Mbata, Mpangu and Nsundi. These three provinces straddle the present-day distribution areas of East Kikongo and Central Kikongo. Nsundi may have additionally incorporated North Kikongo speech communities in its northern borderland. As summarised in Table 3.2, in terms of distribution across the provinces as recognized by Randles (1968: 22), South Kikongo and East Kikongo were probably the principal language groups within the Kongo kingdom of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. West Kikongo was spoken in closely related polities, such as the kingdoms of Ngoyo, Kakongo and Loango, but was marginal to the Kongo kingdom. It was only present in its northwestern borderland in the vicinity of present-day Boma and Matadi, just like North Kikongo was confined to the northeastern borderland within the Nsundi province. It was contact between South Kikongo and these other KLC subclades in the kingdom's northernmost provinces that gave rise to the central convergence zone from which present-day varieties, such as Kimanyanga and Kindibu, evolved (de Schryver *et al.* 2015; Dom and Bostoen 2015; Bostoen and de Schryver 2018).

From what precedes, it is beyond any reasonable doubt that the Kikongo documented in the seventeenth-century language sources is South Kikongo of some kind. The Bayesian consensus tree in Figure 3.3 corroborates this informed deduction. This tree represents

Table 3.2 Assumed distribution of Kikongo language groups across the kingdom's provinces (and neigbouring kingdoms)

	Mpemba	Soyo	Mbamba	Mbata	Mpangu	Nsundi	(Ngoyo, Kakongo, Loango)
South							
East							
Central							
North							
West							

Figure 3.3 Bayesian consensus tree of the KLC which includes historical language varieties from the seventeenth century onwards (Courtesy of Rebecca Grollemund – Reading University/University of Missouri)

the phylogenetic relationships between 107 western Bantu varieties from the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, of which fifty-two belong to the KLC together with twenty-one historical Kikongo varieties from the seventeenth until the early twentieth centuries. The basic vocabulary of these historical varieties was compared to that of the present-day varieties as if all were contemporary. In comparison to the phylogenetic classification by de Schryver *et al.* (2015), the tree in Figure 3.3 contains new synchronic data for five additional Kikongo varieties from Northern Angola (Kipombo, Dihungu, Kisibemba, Kitsootso and Kindamba) collected with the help of Prof. Manuel Ndonga Mfuwa (Universidade Augustinho Neto) and Afonso Teca (University of Bayreuth), and five additional varieties from Cabinda (Kisundi, Ikoci, Ikwakongo, Civili and Ilinji) collected through fieldwork by Heidi Goes (UGent) in 2015. Furthermore, the datasets for two Cabindese varieties (Cisundi and Iwoyo) were also updated by Heidi Goes, as was the dataset for one variety from Congo-Brazzaville (Kidondo) thanks to fieldwork by Sebastian Dom (UGent) in 2015.

In this new phylogenetic tree, in which synchronic and diachronic data are thus considered jointly, the three seventeenth-century language sources – i.e. Cardoso's (1624) catechism represented with fifty-three basic vocabulary items, Van Gheel's (1652) dictionary with the full set of ninety-two items and Brusciotto's (1659) grammar with only thirty-seven items – cluster together as immediate relatives within the wider South Kikongo cluster, in contrast to several other historical Kikongo varieties. For example, the second-oldest collection of language sources from the KLC, i.e. Kikongo as spoken in the Kakongo area during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is clearly part of West Kikongo. Within South Kikongo, the seventeenth-century varieties seem to occupy a very specific genealogical position. They are part of the discrete subclade to which also belong early-nineteenth-century Kikongo as documented in de Cannecattim (1805), late-nineteenth-century Kikongo as recorded by Bentley (1887, 1895), twentieth-century Kikongo as found in da Silva Maia (1961) and twenty-first-century Kisikongo as spoken by José T. Kumenda, the principal consultant for the grammar of Ndonga Mfuwa (1995), whom Gilles-Maurice de Schryver and Jasper De Kind (UGent) interviewed in Verviers (Belgium) in 2013. The Kikongo variety spoken at N'zeto, as recorded by Astrid De Neef (2013), is also part of this same subclade. The data from Bentley (1887, 1895) and Kumenda (2013) represent Kikongo as spoken in

Mbanza Kongo/San Salvador itself. The exact origin of the Kikongo in the multilingual Portuguese–(Latin–)Kimbundu–Kikongo dictionaries of de Cannecattim (1805) and da Silva Maia (1961) is unknown, but just like the Kikongo in the seventeenth-century sources, it turns out to be closer to Kisikongo as spoken in the kingdom's former capital than to the two other main South Kikongo varieties, i.e. Kisolongo spoken along the Atlantic coast and associated with the kingdom's Soyo province and Kizombo spoken to the east of Mbanza Kongo and associated with the Bazombo long-distance traders at the time of the Kongo kingdom. Both Kizombo and Kisolongo are part of what seem to be two distinct subunits within South Kikongo. Kizombo clusters with a series of smaller southeastern Kikongo varieties (Kipombo, Dihungu, Kisibemba, Kitsootso and Kindamba) spoken in the current-day Uíge province situated to the east of the Zaire province, which is home to both Kisikongo and Kisolongo. Early-twentieth-century Angolan Kisolongo as represented in Tavares (1915) rather clusters with a number of varieties from the Boma-Matadi area on the other side of the Congo delta, i.e. the present-day Congolese Kisolongo and Kimbala varieties for which the KongoKing project team collected field data in 2012 and a number of historical varieties as found in Tuckey (1818), Craven and Barfield (1883) and Visseq (1889). Although the Holy Ghost missionary Alexandre Visseq, who did missionary work in the 1880s both north and south of the Congo mouth (Njami _et al._ 2014), calls the variety which he described 'Fiote', Starr (1908: 86) had already identified it as indeed being Kisolongo. In sum, the South Kikongo subclade consists of three subunits, i.e. a western one, which includes Kisolongo, situated on both sides of the Congo delta, a central one clustering around the variety spoken at Mbanza Kongo, namely Kisikongo, and an eastern one with Kizombo as main variety. From the viewpoint of their basic vocabulary, the oldest seventeenth-century Kikongo language sources are unmistakably part of the central sub-unit of the south cluster and thus most likely represent the variety that was spoken in the kingdom's capital at that time.

Retroflexion of *d in Front of High Front Vowels

The orthographic peculiarity of the seventeenth-century Kikongo sources which has drawn most scholarly attention so far is no

doubt the use of **<r>** in the *Vocabularium Congense* manuscript of Van Gheel (1652) and the grammar of Brusciotto (1659) in correspondence to **<d>** in the catechism of Cardoso (1624) and most other South Kikongo sources.[2] Following de Cannecattim (1805: 152), both Bentley (1887: xii) and Bontinck (1976: 155) cite the use of **<r>** instead of **<d>** and **<l>** as evidence for the fact that Van Gheel (1652) and Brusciotto (1659) documented the Kikongo variety spoken in the Soyo province along the Atlantic coast rather than the variety spoken at the court in Mbanza Kongo as found in the catechism of Cardoso (1624) (Ca). De Cannecattim (1805: 152) describes this supposedly dialectal variation as follows: *Por quanto os de Sonho escrevem, e pronuncião com a letra* R *assim no principio, como no meio da palavra, no que se conformão com os Abundas: os da Corte do Congo pelo contrario em lugar da dita letra* R *servem-se da letra* D *v. g., o número dous, aquelles povos escrevem* Sambuári*, e estes* Sambuádi ['Inasmuch as those from Sonho write and pronounce with the letter *R* both in the beginning and the middle of the word, they conform themselves to the Ambunda; those from the Court of Congo on the contrary instead of the above-mentioned letter *R* serve themselves of the letter *D*, e.g. the number seven, the ones write *Sambuári*, the others *Sambuádi*']. First of all, it is important to note that this variation is not observed in all contexts. As shown in (1) below, it is the reflex of Proto-Bantu ***d** before the Proto-Bantu near-close front vowel ***ɪ** which has become the close front vowel **i** in the KLC. The unconditioned, intervocalic reflex of ***d** in front of vowels such as **a** is **l** as can be observed in the reflexes of ***-dìd-** 'weep', which unites both contexts. Moreover, as the few examples in (1) illustrate, the use of **<r>** in front of **i** is systematic in neither Van Gheel (1652) (VG) nor Brusciotto (1659) (Br) in contrast to what is assumed by de Cannecattim (1805: 152), Bentley (1887: xii) and Bontinck (1976: 155). The two documents from the 1650s testify to both orthographic conventions.

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[2] According to conventions adopted within the field of linguistics, a letter written between < > represents a grapheme, the smallest unit in the spelling of a language. A phoneme, the smallest semantically distinctive unit in the sound system of a language, is written between / /, while [ ] are used to mark the phonetic transcription of speech sounds, i.e. the way they are actually pronounced.

(1)   The graphic variation between / **r** / and / **d** / in seventeenth-century
      Kikongo sources

*-**dí**- 'eat'	>	**cu-dia** (Ca), **cu-ria** '*cibus; comedo; edo; esca; praudeo*', **cu-dia** '*comedo*' (VG), **-ria** (Br)
*-**dìd**- 'weep; shout; wail'	>	**-díla** (Ca), **cu-rila** '*lamentor; ploro*' (VG, Br)
*-**díng**- 'search for; desire'	>	**-dinga** (Ca), **cu-dinga** '*qúero*' (VG)
*-**dìmbam**- 'stick to'	>	**cu-rimbama** '*adhereo*' (VG), **cu-rimbica** (Br)
*-**dìmba/ʋ** 'valley'	>	**mu-dimbu** (Ca), **marimba** '*uallis*' (VG)
*-**gʋdɪ** 'mother'	>	**ngudi** (Ca, Br), **ngúdi** '*mater*', **ngúri ecanda** '*mater familias*' (VG)

The variable notation of the same consonant as either < **r** > or < **d** >
might indicate that the very sound had maybe a pronunciation that
was intermediate between [**r**] and [**d**], as suggested by de Cannecattim
(1805: 152): *Porém examinando-se a fundo este negocio; achar-se-ha que todos eles pronuncião huma mesma letra, que não he nem D rotundo, nem R expresso; mas sim huma letra propria, e particular dos de Guiné, cuja pronunciação medeia entre o D, e R, e que proferida por hum mesmo sujeito, parece humas vezes, que pronuncia a letra D, e outras a letra R* ['However, when one examines this question in depth, one will find that all of them pronounce the same letter, which is neither a round D nor a neat R, but it is a letter of its own, and in particular to those of Guinea, whose pronunciation is in between D and R, and when uttered by a same subject, it sometimes seems that (s)he pronounces the letter D and other times the letter R']. This intermediate sound may well have been the retroflex [**ɽ**] which Hyman (2003: 55) assumes was indeed the original pronunciation of [**d**] before high vowels in both the Kongo and Sotho-Tswana groups. Within the KLC, such retroflex sounds in front of high front vowels are attested in several present-day North Kikongo varieties, such as Kibembe (Laman 1936: lxx; Jacquot 1962: 235, who calls it a 'vibrante apicale simple'; Nsayi 1984: 43; Nguimbi-Mabiala 1999: 100–1) and Kihangala (Nguimbi-Mabiala 1999: 64). In West Kikongo, ***dɪ** is most often reflected as **li** instead of **ri** or **di**. Given the scattered distribution of retroflexion before high vowels within the KLC, it could indeed be an archaism that still occurred in seventeenth-century Kikongo and was

(inconsistently) noted as < **ri** >. If so, it is a feature that was lost in South Kikongo soon after, since in all varieties from the nineteenth century onwards *****dɪ** is invariably reflected as **di**, as shown in (2) with data from early-nineteenth-century South Kikongo (de Cannecattim 1805) (dC), late-nineteenth-century Congolese South Kikongo as documented by Craven and Barfield (1883) (C&B), late-nineteenth-century Kisikongo (Bentley 1887, 1895) (Be), late-nineteenth-century northern Kisolongo as documented by Visseq (1889) (Vi), early-twentieth-century southern Kisolongo (Tavares 1915) (Ta), mid-twentieth-century South Kikongo as documented in da Silva Maia (1961) (dS), late-twentieth-century Kizombo (Carter and Makondekwa 1987) (C&M) and Kisikongo (Ndonga Mfuwa 1995) (NM), present-day Kimboma (Kisilu Meso 2001; Nkiawete Wabelua 2006) (KM; NW) and present-day Congolese Kisolongo (KongoKing fieldnotes 2012) (KK).

(2) The consistency of / **di** / in South Kikongo sources since the nineteenth century

> *****dí-** 'eat'   > **n-dia** (dC), **-dia** (C&B, Be, Vi, Ta, dS, NM, KM), **-dya** (C&M, KK)
>
> *****dìd-** 'weep; shout; wail' > **-dila** (dC, C&B, Be, Vi, Ta, dS, C&M, NM, KM, KK)

In sum, despite the importance which de Cannecattim (1805: 152), Bentley (1887: xii) and Bontinck (1976: 155) have attributed to this orthographic peculiarity in the two Kikongo sources from the 1650s, < **ri** > turns out to be totally irrelevant for a better understanding of the genealogical position of seventeenth-century Kikongo within South Kikongo. It is simply an archaism that is still attested today in other subclades of the KLC, but no longer in South Kikongo.

Intervocalic Lenition of *****p

Another striking grapheme in the *Vocabularium Congense* manuscript of Van Gheel (1652) is < **bh** >. It is also used in the grammar of Brusciotto (1659), but not in the catechism of Cardoso (1624), where it is noted as < **b** > (Bontinck and Ndembe Nsasi 1978: 53). As argued in De Kind *et al.* (2012: 169–71), this grapheme represents the voiced bilabial fricative / **β** / to be distinguished from the voiced labiodental fricative / **v** /, which is noted as < **u** > in all three seventeenth-century

Kikongo sources. In their rework of the *Vocabularium Congense*, Van Wing and Penders (1928) merged both graphemes – some inconsistencies notwithstanding – into < v > in accordance with the sound system of most present-day Kikongo varieties, including Kisikongo, where the distinction between / β / and / v / is indeed no longer phonemic. However, it still was in seventeenth-century Kikongo. While / β /, noted as either < bh > or < b >, systematically corresponds to Proto-Bantu intervocalic *p followed by a non-closed vowel (3a), / v /, noted as < u >, is the reflex of any Proto-Bantu voiced stop in front of the closed back vowel *u and of Proto-Bantu *b preceding the closed front vowel *i (3b). This shift of stops, such as /b/, to fricatives, such as /v/, in front of closed vowels is a common Bantu sound change known as 'spirantization' (Schadeberg 1995; Bostoen 2008). Within the KLC, / v / is the most frequent outcome of spirantization.

(3)   The graphic distinction between / β / and / v / in seventeenth-century Kikongo

a.   ***-pí-** 'be burnt, hot, cooked'   >   **cú-bhia** '*uro*' (VG)

   *-píà 'fire'   >   **tu-bia** (Ca), **oqui a tú-bhia** '*incendarius*' (VG), **tu-bhia** (Br)

   *-pèep- 'blow (as wind)'   >   **npebhele** '*uentus secundus*' (VG)

   *-páan- 'give'   >   **-bâna** (Ca), **cu-bhana** '*do; perhibeo; tribúo*' (VG), **-bhana** (Br)

   *-páng- 'act, make'   >   **cu-banga** (Ca), **cu-bhanga** '*ago; efficio; facio; tracto*' (VG), **-bhanga** (Br)

   *-pód- 'be cold, cool down'   >   **cu-bhola** '*absorbeo; allicio; frigesco; morior*' (VG)

   *-póp- 'speak'   >   **cu-bôba** (Ca), **cu-bhobha** '*dico*' (VG), **-bhobha** (Br)

b.   ***-bímb-** 'swell'   >   **cú-úimba** '*inflo; obsturgao; túmeo*' (VG)

   *-bìmbà 'corpse'   >   **edi-uimbu** (Ca), **e-uimbu** '*cadauer; corpus*' (VG)

   *-bìtá 'war'   >   **üita** '*bellum; certamen*' (VG), **quibhanga vita** 'warrior' (Br)

   *-bìì 'excreta'   >   **tú-úi** '*fimus*' (VG)

   *-búdà 'rain'   >   **n-úúla** '*imber; plúúia*' (VG), **n-úúla** (Br)

   *-dùm- 'roar, rumble'   >   **cú-úúma** '*floreo; horreo; timeo; tono; tremo*' (VG)

   *-dùmbí 'continuous rain'   >   **mu-uumbi** '*diluuium*' (VG)

   *-dògù/dàgù 'wine, beer'   >   **ndúúú a malaúú** '*uinipotor*' (VG)

This seventeenth-century distinction between / **β** / and / **v** / is lost in subsequent sources from the South Kikongo language domain. As shown in (4), the cognates of the words in (3a) and (3b) are indistinctly written with < v > in South Kikongo documents since the early nineteenth century.

(4) Loss of the orthographic distinction between < **b(h)** > and < **v** > in South Kikongo

a.   *-**pí**- 'be burnt, hot, cooked'   >   -**vica** (dC), -**via** (C&B, Be, Vi, dS), -**vika** (Ta, dS, C&M)

        *-**píà** 'fire'   >   <u>tu-**bia**</u> (dC, Ta), **tu-via** (C&B, dS), **touvia** (Vi)

        *-**pèep**- 'blow (as wind)'   >   -**veva** 'winnow' (C&B, Be, Vi, dS)

        *-**pépò** 'wind, cold'   >   **vevo** 'umbrella' (C&B, Be, Vi)

        *-**páan**- 'give'   >   -**vána** (dC), -**vana** (C&B, Be, Vi, Ta, dS), -**vááná** (C&M), -**vàánà** (NM)

        *-**páng**- 'act, make'   >   -**vánga** (dC, NM), -**vanga** (C&B, Be, Vi, Ta, dS, C&M, NW)

        *-**pód**- 'be cold, cool down'   >   -**vola** (Be, dS)

        *-**póp**- 'speak'   >   -**voúa** (dC), -**vova** (C&B, Be, Vi, Ta, dS, KM), -**vóva** (C&M), -**vòva** (NM)

b.   *-**bímb**- 'swell'   >   -**vinba** (dC), -**vimba** (C&B, Be, Vi, dS, KM, NW)

        *-**bìmbà** 'corpse'   >   e-**vimbu** (dC, Be, dS), **di-vimbu** (C&B, dS)

        *-**bìtá** 'war'   >   **vita** (dC, Be, Ta), **m-vita** (C&B), **n-vita** (Vi, dS)

        *-**bìì** 'excreta'   >   **tu-vi** (C&B, Be, dS, KM), **tú-vì** (NM), **tou-vi** (Vi)

        *-**búdà** 'rain'   >   **m-vula** (C&B, Be, Ta, NW), **n-vula** (dS), **n-voula** (Vi), **mb-vúla** (C&M), **mvúlà** (NM)

        *-**dùmbí** 'continuous rain'   >   **nvumbi** '*neblina, calígem*' (dS)

        *-**dògù/dàgù** 'wine, beer'   >   **ma-lavu** (C&B, Be, Ta, dS, NW), **ma-lavou** (Vi), **ma-lavù** (C&M)

The only exception to the orthographic merger between < **b(h)** > and < **v** > in (4) is the word for 'fire' in de Cannecattim (1805) and in Tavares (1915). In early-twentieth-century Kisolongo, this notational inconsistency can no doubt be accounted for by the fact that according to Tavares (1915: 3), < **v** > is *antes de e, i, u, é, em geral, mais labial que lábio-dental* ['before e, i, u, é, in general, more labial than labiodental'].

Tavares (1915) probably does not make the correct generalization here. The grapheme < v > is not consistently pronounced [β] in front of these vowels, but it rather represents the phoneme / β / in those words which originally had *p, as evidenced in the Kisolongo spoken today north of the Congo delta in the DRC where this phonemic distinction is still maintained. Lembe-Masiala (2007: 83) emphasizes that Kisolongo distinguishes between two kinds of / v /, i.e. the one which is also found in French [v] and one which is not found in French and is pronounced between the two lips and not by joining the lower lip and the teeth of the upper jaw, in other words [β]. During fieldwork in 2012, the KongoKing project team observed the same voiced labial fricative in Congolese Kisolongo reflexes of Proto-Bantu reconstructions containing *p, such as -**βía** (< *-**pí**- 'be burnt'), **tu-βía** (< *-**píà** 'fire') and -**βóβa** (< *-**póp**- 'speak'). It is also attested in the 2015 fieldwork data that Heidi Goes collected on Angolan Kisolongo, though not systematically. Further south along the coast, De Neef (2013) did not observe it in the data she collected with a consultant originating from N'zeto.

The occurrence of the phoneme / β / in both seventeenth-century Kikongo and in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Kisolongo could be interpreted as evidence for them being more closely affiliated to each other than to other South Kikongo varieties. However, / β / is also attested as reflex of *p in other South Kikongo varieties, such as Kizombo (Mpanzu 1994: 18; Fernando 2008: 32). Moreover, *p has the same correspondence in at least one other subclade of the KLC, i.e. the northern cluster of West Kikongo (de Schryver *et al.* 2015). Indeed, the sound shift *p > β has been reported in all varieties belonging to that subclade: Yingubi (B404) (Puech 1988: 259, 253, 254), Yishira (B41) (Blanchon and van der Veen 1990), Yisangu (B42) (Blanchon 1991), Yipunu (B43) (Blanchon 1991), Yilumbu (B44) (Gamille 2013), Kiyombi (H16c) (Nguimbi-Mabiala 1999: 32) and Civili as spoken in Mayumba (Gabon) (Ndinga-Koumba-Binza 2000). The scattered distribution of this specific reflex of *p in different subgroups is not surprising if one takes into account the split seriation of the successive changes which that stop underwent within the KLC in (5), as proposed in Bostoen *et al.* (2013: 66):

(5) Evolution path of Proto-Bantu *p in the KLC

$$*p \;>\; °\phi \begin{cases} > \quad \beta \quad > \quad v \\[1em] > \quad h \quad > \quad \ring{\gamma} \quad > \quad \gamma \end{cases}$$
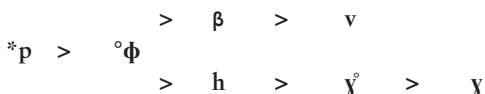
As shown in (5), **β** is obtained through the voicing of °**ɸ**, which can be tentatively reconstructed as the reflex of intervocalic Proto-Bantu ***p** in Proto-Kikongo. Through a further change in place of articulation, **β** shifts to **v**. The naturalness of the **β > v** shift is apparent from the fact that **v** is the most common reflex of Proto-Bantu ***p** within the KLC. Hence, if certain South Kikongo varieties no longer have a phonemic contrast between / **β** / and / **v** /, it just means that they are more innovative in this regard than those South Kikongo varieties which maintained the **β** sound also attested in seventeenth-century Kikongo. This shared retention can thus not be taken as evidence for the fact that present-day South Kikongo varieties, such as Kizombo and Kisolongo, would be more direct descendants from seventeenth-century Kikongo than Kisikongo.

This being said, the fact that, as shown in (6), certain eastern South Kikongo varieties, such as Kitsootso (TST) (Baka 1992), Dihungu (DHG) (Atkins 1954) and Kipombo (PMB) (fieldnotes Heidi Goes 2015), provide evidence for the ***p > h** shift is more relevant in this respect.

(6)　The sound shift ***p > h** in eastern South Kikongo
　　　*-pìcí 'bone'　　　>　　**kì-hí:sì** (TST), **ki-hisi** (DHG, PMB)
　　　*-páan- 'give'　　　>　　**-ha:na** (TST), **-hana** (DHG, PMB)
　　　*-póp- 'speak'　　　>　　**-hóhà** (TST), **-hoha** (DHG, PMB)
　　　*-cèp- 'laugh'　　　>　　**-séhà** (TST), **-seha** (DHG, PMB)

The comparative data in (6) imply that if indeed South Kikongo is a discrete subclade within the KLC, as proposed in de Schryver *et al.* (2015) on the basis of synchronic lexical data, its most recent common ancestor, Proto-South Kikongo, must have conserved Proto-Kikongo °**ɸ**. It furthermore implies that the South Kikongo subclade had already split into at least two subgroups in the seventeenth century, namely those languages that had undergone °**ɸ > β** and those that had undergone °**ɸ > h**. The Kikongo attested in the seventeenth-century sources belonged to the first subgroup, just like all other South Kikongo varieties bearing witness to °**ɸ > β > v**. Kitsootso, Dihungu, Kipombo bearing witness to °**ɸ > h**, and their most recent common ancestor, on the other hand, belong to the second subgroup, and this since at least the early seventeenth century. In other words, seventeenth-century Kikongo can certainly not be considered

as ancestral to all present-day South Kikongo varieties. But if South Kikongo rather clusters with East Kikongo to form a subclade which is distinct from North Kikongo, West Kikongo and Kikongoid, as the diachronic phylogenetic tree in Figure 3.3 suggests, the comparative phonological data in (6) indicate that eastern South Kikongo is more closely related to East Kikongo than to the other two South Kikongo subgroups. Eastern South Kikongo and East Kikongo share the innovation °ɸ > h, which then further evolved as °ɸ > h > ɣ̥ > ɣ in East Kikongo (Bostoen *et al.* 2013).

Intervocalic Loss of *b

In the vast majority of words which seventeenth-century Kikongo inherited from Proto-Bantu or subsequent ancestral languages (cf. Bastin *et al.* 2002), the voiced bilabial stop ***b** is lost in between two vowels of which the second is not reconstructed as a closed vowel of the first aperture degree, as shown in (7). Only some of the examples found in Van Gheel (1652) are also attested in Cardoso (1624) (cf. Bontinck and Ndembe Nsasi 1978) and Brusciotto (1659) (cf. Guinness 1882), but all confirm the regular sound shift ***b > Ø /V__ V$_{[-closed]}$**.

(7) Regular loss of Proto-Bantu intervocalic *b in seventeenth-century Kikongo

*-bîi 'bad'	>	**-ii** *'mauvais'* (Ca), **u-ÿ** *'deformitas'* (VG), **-ij** 'bad' (Br)
*-bìd- 'boil up'	>	**cu-ila** *'bullis; ebullio; ferúeo'* (VG)
*-bìng- 'chase (away)'	>	**cú-inga** *'abigo'* (VG)
*-béed- 'be ill'	>	**cú-éla** *'morbus'* (VG), **cu-ela** 'to be weakened' (Br)
*-bá 'oil-palm'	>	**e-a** *'palma'* (VG)
*-bábʊd- 'singe, burn'	>	**cú-aúla** *'ustulo'* (VG)
*-bòd- 'be rotten'	>	**cú-ola** *'putreo, currumpo'* (VG)
*-bɔ́mb- 'mould in clay'	>	**cú-úmba** *'plasmo'* (VG)
*-bʊ́t- 'bear, generate'	>	**ocu-uta** *'mettre au monde'* (Ca), **cú-úta** *'genero; orior; pario; parturio; procreo'* (VG)
*-bɔ́k- 'divine, cure invalid'	>	**cú-úca** *'curo; sacro'* (VG)
*-gàb- 'divide, give'	>	**cú-caa** *'partior'* (VG)
*-dób- 'fish with line'	>	**cú-lóa** *'piscor'* (VG)

*-**jóbʋd-** '(to) skin'	>	-**yu'uula** '*se dépouiller*' (Ca), **cú-úúla** '*exspolio; núdo*' (VG)
*-**tábì** 'branch'	>	**lutai** '*ramus*' (VG)

As observed by De Kind (2012: 63), the intervocalic loss of ***b** is not entirely regular in seventeenth-century Kikongo. A few cases of intervocalic ***b** conservation are attested, but only one relates to a well-established Proto-Bantu reconstruction, i.e. *-**bʋ̀d-** 'break, smash; kill'. Van Gheel (1652) has the irregular reflex **cu-búla** '*affringo; confringo; conquasso; dimidio; findo; frango; quasso; rumpo*', but possibly also a phonologically regular reflex with a slightly deviating meaning, i.e. **cú-úla** '*decortico; glubo*' ['to peel, rob']. Other cases of intervocalic ***b** maintenance, as those shown in (8), correspond to Bantu lexical reconstructions with a lower reliability and/or a shallower time depth (Bastin *et al.* 2002).

(8) Irregular conservation of intervocalic ***b** in seventeenth-century Kikongo

*-**bìng-** 'be successful in palaver'	>	**cubinga** '*triúmpho; uinco*' (VG)
*-**bàag-** 'tear'	>	**cú-baaca** '*abrumpo; rúmpo*' (VG)
*-**bák-** 'get; catch; rob'	>	**cu-baca** '*assequor; comprehendo; destruo; impetro; nanciscor*' (VG)
*-**bànjí** 'rib; side of body'	>	**lu-bançi** '*costa*' (VG)
*-**bʋ̀-** 'fall'	>	**cu-bua** '*cado; corruo; decido; occido; procumbo*' (VG)

Some of the forms in (8) also manifest other irregularities, e.g. the devoiced final consonant in **lubansi** 'rib'. Word-final devoicing is regular in East Kikongo varieties, such as Kintandu having **lubaansi** 'rib' (Daeleman 1983). Such multiple irregularities suggest that certain cases of ***b** conservation can be accounted for by contact-induced copying from Kikongo varieties that regularly maintain intervocalic ***b** (cf. infra). Moreover, regular sound changes do not necessarily affect all words satisfying the right phonological conditions in a language. Apart from dialect borrowing, other factors, such as analogy, lexical frequency or functional load, may also influence or inhibit sound change (Garrett 2014: 239–41). Nonetheless, it is unmistakably so that intervocalic ***b** loss prevails in seventeenth-century Kikongo. This is furthermore corroborated by the fact that grammatical morphemes, such as the Proto-Bantu noun class prefixes ***bà-** (cl. 2), ***bì-** (cl. 8)

and ***bʊ̀-** (cl. 14), and their corresponding concord prefixes have also lost their initial consonant: **muleque/a-leque** 'boy(s)' (cl. 1/2), **qui-lumbu/i-lumbu** 'day(s)' (cl. 7/8), **u-lungu/ma-lungu** 'ship(s)' (cl. 14/6) (Brusciotto 1659, cf. Guinness 1882).

Apart from the seventeenth-century Kikongo sources, intervocalic ***b** loss regularly occurs in only one specific subclade of the KLC, namely South Kikongo. As shown in (9), it is observed in South Kikongo sources since the early nineteenth century. In all of these varieties, except Kimboma, the prefixes of classes 2, 8 and 14 also lost their initial bilabial stop. The exceptionality of Kimboma ties in with the fact that this variety rather clusters with Central Kikongo in the diachronic lexicon-based phylogenetic tree included in this chapter, and not with South Kikongo as was the case in the earlier synchronic lexicon-based phylogenetic tree in de Schryver *et al.* (2015).

(9) Regular loss of Proto-Bantu intervocalic ***b** in South Kikongo varieties since the nineteenth century

*-bîi 'bad'	>	**yi** 'ugliness' (Be)
*-bìd- 'boil up'	>	**-yila** 'boil' (C&B), **-yila** 'boil' (Be), **-ila** *'bouillir'* (Vi), **-iila** *'ferver'* (dS), **-yíl-** *'bouillir'* (KM), **-yíla** 'boil' (KK)
*-bìng- 'chase (away)'	>	**-yinga** 'chase away' (Be), **-iinga** 'chase away' (dS)
*-béed- 'be ill'	>	**-yela** 'be ill' (C&B), **-yeela** 'be ill' (Be), **-iela** *'être malade'* (Vi), **ku-ielanga** *'está doente'* (Ta), **-iela** *'doença'* (dS), **-yéelá** 'be sick' (C&M), **-yèélà** *'être malade'* (NM), **-yééla** 'be ill' (KK)
*-bá 'oil-palm'	>	**eia** *'palmeira'* (dC), **diya** 'palm' (C&B), **eya** 'oil palm' (Be), **ia** *'palmier'* (Vi), **eia** *'palmeira'* (Ta), **éia** *'palmeira'* (dS), **yá** 'oil palm tree' (C&M), **díya** 'oil-palm' (KK)
*-bábʊd- 'singe, burn'	>	**-yaula** 'to cook so that it is well done outside and raw inside' (Be), **-iaúla** *'passar pela chama'* (dS)
*-bòd- 'be rotten'	>	**a-óla** *'podre'* (dC), **-wóla** 'to rot or putrefy, to be corrupt or rotten' (C&B), **-wola** 'decay, rot' (Be), **-ola** *'pourrir'* (Vi), **-ola** *'putrefazer'* (dS), **-wolá** 'rot' (C&M), **-wòl-** *'pourrir'* (NM), **-wola** *'pourrir'* (NW), **-wóla** 'rot' (KK)

*-bómb- 'mould in clay'	>	**-wumba** 'make pottery' (Be)
*-bút- 'bear, generate'	>	**-wuta** 'to bear or bring forth' (C&B), **-wuta** 'bear, bring forth' (Be), **-outa** '*enfanter*' (Vi), **-ut-** '*dar à luz*' (Ta), **-uuta** '*dar à luz*' (dS), **-wùt-** '*accoucher*' (NM), **-wúta** 'bring forth' (KK)
*-búk- 'divine, cure invalid'	>	**-wuka** 'to work a charm on man, to attend or to treat medically' (C&B), **-wuka** 'give medicine, heal' (Be), **-uuka** '*curar*' (dS), **-wúka** 'treat for illness' (C&M), **wúk-** '*soigner*' (NM)
*-gàb- 'divide, give'	>	**-kaia** 'divide (distribute)' (C&B), **-kaya** 'to distribute, divide, deal out, allot, give away' (Be), **-kaia** '*partager*' (Vi), **-kaila** '*dar a alguem*' (Ta), **-káia** '*contribuir*' (dS), **-kayíla** 'divide, share with' (C&M), **-kày-** '*partager*' (NM), **-káya** 'divide' (KK)
*-dób- 'fish with line'	>	**-lóa** '*pescar*' (dC), **-lôa** 'fish (with a line)' (C&B), **-lowa** 'fish with hook' (Be), **-loia** '*pêcher*' (Vi), **-lóya** 'fish with line' (KK)
*-jʊ̀bʊd- '(to) skin'	>	**-yuwula** 'to slough (as a reptile), to cast (the skin)' (Be)
*-tábì 'branch'	>	**tai** 'branch' (C&B), **tayi** 'branch' (Be)

Intervocalic ***b** loss is a regular sound change in none of the other KLC subclades. As shown in (10) on the basis of data from one representative language per subclade, ***b** is generally maintained in this phonological context. The languages selected are Kimanyanga (MNY) for Central Kikongo (Laman 1936), Kintandu (NTD) for East Kikongo (Daeleman 1983), Kihangala (HGL) for North Kikongo (Nguimbi-Mabiala 1999), Ciwoyo (WY) for southern West Kikongo (KongoKing fieldnotes 2012, WY1 in Fig. 3.2) and Yilumbu (LMB) for northern West Kikongo (Mavoungou and Plumel 2010).

(10) Regular conservation of Proto-Bantu intervocalic ***b** in other Kikongo varieties

*-bìd- 'boil up'	>	**-bila** 'boil' (MNY), **-bil-** (NTD), **kù-bìlà** (HGL)
*-bìng- 'chase (away)'	>	**-binga** (MNY), **-bing-** '*être à l'affut (en chassant)*' (NTD), **bìŋg-** (HGL), **u-bing-a** '*pratiquer la chasse avec des chiens*' (LMB)

*-béed- 'be ill'   >   **-beela** (MNY), **-béél-** (NTD), **béélé** (HGL), **-beela** (WY), **u-beel-a** (LMB)

*-bá 'oil-palm'   >   **li-ba** (MNY), **bá** (NTD), **bà** (HGL), **byá** (WY), **di-ba** (LMB)

*-bábʊd- 'singe, burn'   >   **-bābula** '*rôtir, griller, brûler*' (MNY), **-babul-** '*brûler légèrement*' (NTD), **bàbùlà** '*flamber*' (HGL)

*-bòd- 'be rotten'   >   **-bola** (MNY), **-bol-** (NTD), **-bòlá** (HGL), **-bola** (WY), **u-bol-a** (LMB)

*-bómb- 'mould in clay'   >   **-bumba** (MNY), **-búumb-** (NTD), **-bumba** (WY)

*-bót- 'bear, generate'   >   **-buta** (MNY), **-bút-** (NTD), **-bùtá** (HGL), **-búta** (WY), **u-bur-a** (LMB)

*-bók- 'divine, cure invalid' >   **-búka** (MNY), **-búk-** (NTD), **-bùká** (HGL), **-búka** (WY), **u-bugh-a** (LMB)

*-gàb- 'divide, give'   >   **-kaba** (MNY), **-kab-** (NTD), **-kàbá** (HGL), **-kába** (WY), **u-ghab-a** (LMB)

*-dób- 'fish with line'   >   **-lóba** (MNY), **-lób-** (NTD), **-lòbà** (HGL), **-lóba** (WY), **u-lob-a** (LMB)

*-jòbʊd- '(to) skin'   >   **-yùbula** '*changer de peau*' (MNY), **-yùbùlà** '*enlever la peau*' (HGL)

Cases of intervocalic ***b** loss are rare in those languages and are only observed with certain specific common Bantu words, such as the first three in (11), which seem to have lost ***b** in most languages of the KLC suggesting that it was already absent in their most recent common ancestor. In other cases, such as the common Kikongo word for 'rule over' in (11), irregular ***b** loss can possibly be accounted for by contact-induced spread from South Kikongo where that sound shift is regular.

(11)   Irregular loss of Proto-Bantu intervocalic ***b** in other Kikongo varieties

      *-bédò 'door'   >   **mwelo** (MNY), **mweeló** '*baie de porte*' (NTD), **múéló** (HGL)

      *-bókò 'arm, hand'   >   **koko** (MNY), **kookó** (NTD), **-ókò** (HGL), **kóóko** (WY), **ghu-oghu** (LMB)

      *-tábì 'branch'   >   **ntai, ntáyi** (MNY), **ntayí** (NTD), **di-tayi** (LMB)

      *-bíad- 'rule over'   >   **-yàala** '*régner*', **-byāla** '*être chef*' (MNY), **-yáál-** (NTD), **-yála** (WY)

Kindibu is the only variety which does not belong to the South Kikongo subclade in the classification of de Schryver *et al*. (2015), but

where ***b** loss is still regular, as shown in (12). This seems to confirm that Central Kikongo is indeed a centrally located convergence zone that arose through intensive language contact rather than a true phylogenetic subclade. It furthermore suggests that genealogically speaking Kindibu belongs to South Kikongo.

(12) Regular loss of Proto-Bantu intervocalic ***b** in Kindibu (Coene 1960)

*-bìd- 'boil up'	>	**-yila**
*-bá 'oil-palm'	>	**ya**
*-bòd- 'be rotten'	>	**-bola** '*pourrir*', **-wola** '*se gangrener*'
*-bómb- 'mould in clay'	>	**-wumba**
*-bót- 'bear, generate'	>	**-buta** '*enfanter*', **-wuta mvuma** '*fleurir*'
*-bók- 'divine, cure invalid'	>	**nganga a wuka** '*médecin*'
*-gàb- 'divide, give'	>	**kaya**

In contrast to ***d** retroflexion and ***p** lenition, intervocalic ***b** loss does confirm that seventeenth-century Kikongo is South Kikongo. This sound shift is only regularly attested in historical or present-day varieties that belong to that specific subclade of the KLC or – in the case of Kindibu – may once have belonged to it. However, this is not the end of the story, since intervocalic ***b** loss does not seem to be regular in the entire South Kikongo subclade. In at least two eastern South Kikongo varieties, i.e. Kindamba (DMB) on which Heidi Goes carried out fieldwork in 2015 and the Kizombo (ZMB) variety studied by Mpanzu (1994), ***b** is neither systematically deleted nor does it always become a glide in intervocalic position, but it regularly undergoes velarization. As demonstrated in (13), both varieties share several common Bantu words where the intervocalic voiced bilabial stop ***b** has become the voiced velar stop **g**: ***b** > **g** /V__V$_{[-closed]}$. Other eastern South Kikongo varieties for which Heidi Goes collected new field data, i.e. Kitsootso (TST), Kipombo (PMB), Kisibemba (SBM) and Dihungu (DHG), rather adhere to the common South Kikongo pattern of intervocalic ***b** loss.

(13) Velarization of Proto-Bantu intervocalic ***b** in Kizombo and Kindamba as opposed to other eastern South Kikongo varieties

*-bìd- 'boil up'	>	**- gílà, -ìl-** (ZMB), **-gil-** (DMB), **-yil-** (TST, SBM, PMB)
*-béed- 'be ill'	>	**-géél-** (ZMB), **-geela** (DMB), **-weela** (TST, PMB, DHG), **-yeela** (SBM)
*-bòd- 'be rotten'	>	**-gól-** (ZMB), **-gola** (DMB), **-wola** (TST, SBM)

*-bádɪk-/-bátɪk- 'begin'	>	**-gát-ìk-a** (ᴢᴍʙ), **-yatika** (ᴅᴍʙ, ᴛsᴛ), **-watika** (ᴘᴍʙ), **-atik-a** (ᴅʜɢ)
*-bómb- 'mould in clay'	>	**-gumba** (ᴢᴍʙ, ᴅᴍʙ), **-wumba** (ᴛsᴛ, ᴘᴍʙ)
*-bót- 'bear, generate'	>	**-guta** (ᴅᴍʙ), **-wuta** (ᴛsᴛ, ᴘᴍʙ)
*-bók- 'divine, cure invalid'	>	**-gúkà** (ᴢᴍʙ)
*-gàb- 'divide, give'	>	**-kaya** (ᴅᴍʙ, ᴛsᴛ, sʙᴍ)
*-dób- 'fish with line'	>	**-lowa** (ᴅᴍʙ, ᴛsᴛ, ᴘᴍʙ, sʙᴍ)

Given that this intervocalic velarization of Proto-Bantu ***b** is not attested elsewhere within South Kikongo, it potentially indicates that the languages sharing this very distinctive innovation, i.e. Kizombo and Kindamba, are more closely related among each other than with other South Kikongo varieties. In the lexicon-based phylogenetic classification, both varieties also cluster together in what seems to be a distinct eastern subunit within South Kikongo. This subgroup also includes Kitsootso, Kipombo, Dihungu and Kisibemba, in which ***b** velarization is not attested. However, at least the first three of these varieties share a feature which is possibly an intermediate step between ***b** loss and the rise of an intervocalic velar sound, i.e. the generalization of the labial-velar glide or approximant **/w/**. As can be observed in several examples in (9), (11) and (12), when ***b** is deleted, it is actually represented by the glides **y** and **w**. This is not really a reflex of ***b**, but rather a so-called 'vowel hiatus resolution', i.e. the phonetic transition between two successive vowels. In the seventeenth century and certain more recent South Kikongo sources, this transition glide was never noted. In others, it was, but often inconsistently. Its purely phonetic status is evidenced by the fact that the articulatory nature of this glide is entirely predictable on the basis of the following vowel. If it is a back vowel, **w** appears; if not, one gets **y**. However, as can be seen in the words for 'be ill' and 'begin' in (13), this is no longer (always) the case in Kitsootso, Kipombo and Dihungu. The labial-velar approximant **w** is also observed in front of certain non-back vowels and is thus no longer predictable. This phonologization of **w** is assumed to be a first step towards the emergence of **g** as a reflex of Proto-Bantu ***b** along the evolution path sketched in (14) with the velar approximant **ɰ** and the velar fricative **ɣ** as possible intermediate steps.

(14) Evolution path of Proto-Bantu **b** in the KLC

   *b > Ø > w > (°ɥ̃) > ɣ > g

If the generalization of intervocalic **w** is indeed a first step towards the development of **g** as regular reflex of ***b**, the eastern South Kikongo varieties Kitsootso, Kipombo, Dihungu, Kindamba and Kizombo share a distinctive phonological innovation which sets them apart as a discrete subunit within the larger South Kikongo subclade. Within eastern South Kikongo, the ***b > w > g** innovation allows to further isolate Kindamba and Kizombo, while the ***p > h** innovation distinguishes Kitsootso, Kipombo and Dihungu as a distinct lower-level subgroup. The specific evolution of Proto-Bantu ***b** within the eastern cluster of South Kikongo languages is a further indication of its distinct position within South Kikongo, even if according to the seriation in (14) the reflex of Proto-Bantu ***b** in seventeenth-century Kikongo (i.e. Ø) could still be ancestral both to **w** as attested in Kitsootso, Kipombo and Dihungu and to **g** as attested in Kizombo and Kindamba (in contrast to seventeenth-century **β** vs. present-day **h** as reflexes of ***p**).

Interestingly, this velarization of ***b** is attested in only one other variety within the KLC, i.e. East Kikongo Kimbata as studied by Bafulakio-Bandoki (1977) who establishes the regular correspondence between [b] in Kintandu and [ɣ] in Kimbata. Following the seriation in (14), **ɣ** is the intermediate step between **w** as attested in Kitsootso, Kipombo and Dihungu and **g** as attested in Kindamba and Kizombo. Bafulakio-Bandoki (1977) situates the distribution area of the sound shift ***b > ɣ** /V__V$_{[-closed]}$ mainly south of the Mfidi river and east of the Inkisi river in the Lower Congo Province of the DRC. The KongoKing project team also observed it in 2012 among the Bambata potters of the Nsangi-Binsu village (Kaumba 2017). They call their clay **luɣumba**, a reflex of the common Bantu pottery term ***bómbà** (Bostoen 2005). However, not all Kimbata speakers whom the KongoKing project team interviewed manifest this sound shift systematically. Many just maintain the bilabial stop in intervocalic position, as is commonly the case in East Kikongo. The instability of this distinctive sound change can no doubt be accounted for by the fact that present-day Kimbata is strongly influenced by Kintandu, the main East Kikongo variety. The velarization of ***b** is also not systematic in all varieties of Kizombo. It is entirely absent from the data published by Hazel Carter. The Kizombo

variety of her main consultant and co-author João Makondekwa was perhaps also more influenced by Kisikongo as spoken at Mbanza Kongo, the principal South Kikongo variety. This feature may once have had a wider distribution area, but is clearly on its way out due to the contact-induced impact of more vehicular Kikongo varieties, such as Kisikongo and Kintandu, which are used in education, religion and national media. It is remarkable that such a highly characteristic innovation is shared by varieties that are neighbouring but belong to distinct subclades, i.e. Kimbata (East Kikongo) on the hand and Kizombo and Kindamba (South Kikongo) on the other hand. This suggests intensive language contact across genealogical Kikongo subgroups. Given that *b velarization is attested in at least two distinct South Kikongo varieties and that the steps leading to *b > ɣ/g are also found in eastern South Kikongo, it is most likely an innovation that originated in the latter subunit and must have impacted Kimbata from there through contact-induced change of some sort.

Phonological Augment Merger

A distinctive feature of seventeenth-century Kikongo in terms of noun morphology is the use of what is traditionally called 'augment' in Bantu linguistics (De Blois 1970). It precedes the regular class prefix of a noun and is therefore also known as a 'pre-prefix'. The augment may serve a range of functions, such as indicating definiteness, specificity, focus and/or it may mark the syntactic function of a noun. As discussed by Katamba (2003: 107), these functions vary across the Bantu languages and can seldom be equated with that of a determiner or an article in European languages, as many early scholars erroneously did. So did Brusciotto (1659) in his grammar of seventeenth-century Kikongo in which he refers to both augments and noun prefixes as 'articles'. He also refers to augments as particles, as in the following description of what is currently known as 'class 6' in the Bantu nominal classification system: 'In the direct case in the plural it admits the article *O*, as the praises, *O matondo*, which is understood when some declarative particle is added, as the praises of God are good, *O matondo ma n'Zambianpungu ma maote*, otherwise it is placed absolutely, as in the singular. In the oblique cases in the plural it admits the same particle *O*, as, let us love the praises of God, *Tuzitissa o matondo ma n' Zambianpungu*: the rest as in the singular' (Guinness

1882: 3). While in this passage Brusciotto (1659) writes the class 6 augment **o-** disjointly from the following noun prefix **ma-**, he elsewhere writes it conjointly as in the following description of the class 3/4 pair, or 'principiation' in his own words: 'Nouns of this principiation sometimes admit the article *O* before them in the singular, and then chiefly when followed by some declarative particle; as the work of God, God will esteem, *Omufunu üa n'Zambianpungu uafuaniquinea cuzitissua*, &c.: but when it is placed alone and simply, it admits it not, as work of God, *Mufunu üa n'Zambianpungu*. In the oblique cases, nouns placed actively admit the same article as, I prosecute the work of God, *Jalanda omufunu ua n'Zambianpungu*. In the plural simply they admit no article, as the works of God I prosecute, *imeno jalanda emifunu mia n'Zambianpungu*' (Guinness 1882: 4–5). In contrast to what Brusciotto (1659) claims here, the plural class 4 obviously does admit an augment, i.e. **e-** as in **e-mi-funu** 'works'. In Proto-Bantu, the augment has been reconstructed 'identical in form with the pronominal prefix' (Meeussen 1967: 99), thus with a Consonant Vowel shape. In most present-day Bantu languages, however, their initial consonant has been dropped and they take the shape of a simple vowel. As shown in Table 3.3, such was the case in seventeenth-century Kikongo.

As can be deduced from Table 3.3, not every noun class had a distinctive augment in seventeenth-century Kikongo. This morpheme only had two distinct shapes, i.e. **o-** and **e-**. These can be considered to be allomorphs, i.e. different phonologically conditioned realizations of a same underlying morpheme. The shape **e-** only occurs when the following noun prefix also has a front vowel or a simple nasal; otherwise one gets **o-**. This binary contrast is actually a simplification of an older 3-vowel pattern **e-a-o**, whereby one also gets a central vowel when the noun prefix has one, for instance **e-mi-**, **a-ma-**, **o-mu-**. Through vowel lowering, the **e-a-o** pattern is in its turn derived from another 3-vowel pattern, i.e. **i-a-u**, whereby the augment vowel is simply identical to the vowel of the prefix vowel, for instance **i-mi-**, **a-ma-**, **u-mu-**. Both 3-vowel patterns are widespread in Bantu (De Blois 1970: 99–101), but neither of them is attested within the KLC. The augment actually disappeared in most subclades of the KLC. It is entirely absent from Kikongoid, East Kikongo, North Kikongo and Central Kikongo.

Figure 3.4 summarizes how we reconstruct the evolution of phonological augment merger in those subclades where a vocalic augment is

Table 3.3 *Augments and noun class prefixes in seventeenth-century Kikongo according to Brusciotto (1659)*

Class	AUG+NP	Brusciotto (1659)	
1	o-mu-	omuleque	'boy'
2	o-a-	oaleque	'boys'
3	o-mu-	omufunu	'work'
4	e-mi-	emifunu	'works'
5	e-(ri)-	e(ri)tondo	'praise'
6	o-ma-	omatondo	'praises'
7	e-ki-	equilumbu	'day'
8	e-i-	eilumbu	'days'
9	e-N-	enbongo	'fruit'
10	e-ziN-	ezinbongo	'fruits'
11	o-lu-	olutûmu[3]	'commandment'
12	?-ka	cassasila	'altitude'
13	o-tu-	otutumu	'commandments'
14	o-u-	oulungu	'ship'
15	o-ku-	ocuria	'food'

still attested, i.e. West Kikongo and South Kikongo, where reductions towards a 2-vowel or even a 1-vowel pattern took place. Remnants of the **i-a-u** pattern are found in West Kikongo. Within northern West Kikongo, aka the Shira-Punu group (B40), Yingubi is the only member to have retained a vocalic augment, i.e. **i-** for all classes, while a tonal augment can be postulated at a more abstract level for the other members (Puech 1988). Southern West Kikongo is more conservative in that its members manifest (traces of) the 2-vowel **i-u-u** pattern. In contrast to Yingubi – and by extension northern West Kikongo – which levelled the original 3-vowel contrast in favour of the front vowel **i-,** southern West Kikongo underwent a partial levelling towards the back vowel **u-,** which is an important indicator of genealogical subgrouping within West Kikongo. The French-Kikongo dictionaries, which French missionaries compiled in the late eighteenth century, testify to this southern West Kikongo **i-u-u** pattern (Drieghe 2014: 119), as shown in Table 3.4.

[3] Brusciotto (1659) does not provide the word **lutumu** with an augment, but Cardoso (1624) has it as **olutûmu** (Bontinck and Ndembe Nsasi 1978: 141).
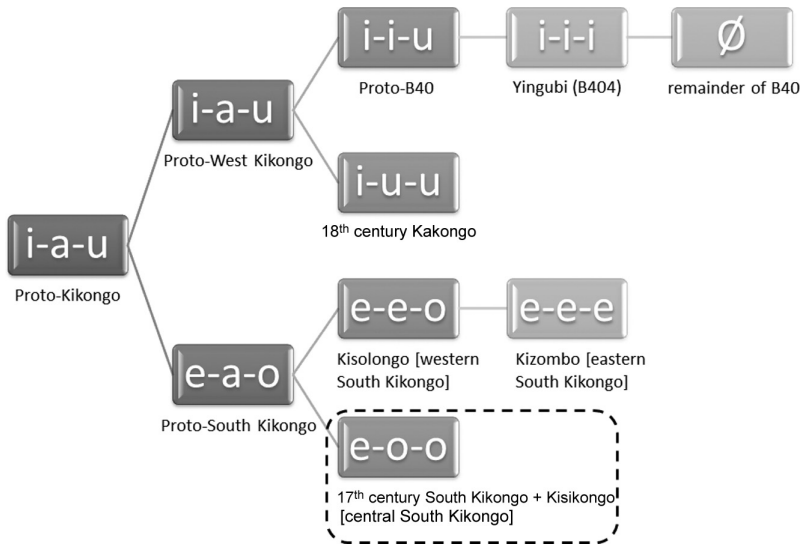
Figure 3.4 The evolution of phonological augment merger in West and South Kikongo.

Kikongo as spoken during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Kongo and Kakongo kingdoms respectively thus underwent a similar reduction towards a 2-vowel augment pattern in favour of the back vowel, but seventeenth-century Kikongo underwent vowel lowering to obtain **e-o-o,** while eighteenth-century Kikongo as spoken in Kakongo did not partake in this innovation. This variation is crucial for genealogical subgrouping within the KLC, since present-day West Kikongo varieties systematically have high vowel augments as in eighteenth-century Kikongo from Kakongo, while present-day South Kikongo varieties systematically have mid-vowel augments as in seventeenth-century Kikongo. Augment vowel lowering from the Proto-Kikongo **i-a-u** pattern to the Proto-South Kikongo **e-a-o** pattern is thus a shared innovation that corroborates South Kikongo as a discrete genealogical subclade within the KLC, primarily with regard to West Kikongo, which did not undergo it, but maintained Proto-Kikongo **i-a-u** (cf. Figure 3.4). Other KLC subgroups, not represented in Figure 3.4, distinguish themselves from South Kikongo and West Kikongo by the complete loss of vocalic augments.

The evolution of vocalic augments not only corroborates the genealogical position of seventeenth-century Kikongo within South Kikongo,

Table 3.4 *Augments and noun class prefixes in eighteenth-century Kikongo from Kakongo as found in a 1772 dictionary manuscript (Anonyme 1772a, cf. Drieghe 2014: 119)*

Class	AUG+NP	Kakongo (1772)	
1	u-mu-	u mu-ntu	'person'
2	u-ba-	u ba-ntu	'persons'
3	u-mu-	u mu-aia	'yawn'
4	i-mi-	i mi-aia	'yawns'
5	i-li-	i li-ambu	'thing'
6	u-ma-	u m'ambu	'things'
7	i-ki-	i ki-ndélé	'commodity'
8	i-bi-	i bi-ndélé	'commodities'
9	i-N-	i npoko	'horn'
10	i-ziN-	i zinpoko	'horns'
11	u-lu-	u lu-kata	'box'
13	u-tu-	u tu-imbu	'songs'
14	u-bu-	u bu-ala	'dwelling'
15	u-ku-	u kuela	'marriage'

it also helps to determine more precisely its exact position within that subclade. Younger South Kikongo varieties manifest augment variation in such a way that not all of them can directly descend from seventeenth-century Kikongo. While certain varieties manifest the same **e-o-o** augment pattern as seventeenth-century Kikongo, others rather testify to a levelling of places of articulation in favour of the front vowel. They manifest **e-e-o** or even **e-e-e** augment patterns. The only South Kikongo sources complying with the **e-o-o** augment pattern of seventeenth-century Kikongo are those which describe the variety spoken in the vicinity of Mbanza Kongo, i.e. late-nineteenth-century Kisikongo as in Bentley (1887, 1895), mid-twentieth-century South Kikongo as in da Silva Maia (1961) and present-day Kisikongo as in Ndonga Mfuwa (1995). In these sources, nouns of classes 2 (**a-**) and 6 (**ma-**) are found with the **o-** augment, e.g. **o wantu** 'people', **o wana** 'children', **o mambu** 'things', **o maza** 'water', **o madia** 'food'. The only exceptions to this pattern are found in Ndonga Mfuwa (1995) who provides **è-má-nkóndò** 'bananas' and **è-má-zà** 'water' for reasons unclear. However, in the Kisikongo novel *Ntambi za kulu eto* from 2010 written by his main consultant José T. Kumenda, these very same words consistently take the **o-** augment,

just like other words of classes 2 and 6. A possible explanation for the exceptions in Ndonga Mfuwa's Kisikongo grammar is interference from other South Kikongo varieties. This is not inconceivable, since most other varieties provide convincing evidence for the **e-e-o** pattern, as is shown in (15) with class 2 and 6 nouns found in Craven and Barfield (1883), Visseq (1889), Tavares (1915), Carter and Makondekwa (1987) and Lembe-Masiala (2007) (Le).

(15)   Irregular attestation of the **e-e-o** augment pattern in some South
       Kikongo varieties
       *-jàmbò 'affair'   >   **e mambu / o mambu** (C&B), **e m'ambou**
                                       (Vi), **e mambu** (Ta, Le), **omaámbu** (C&M)
       *-gàdí 'oil'   >   **e manzi** (Vi), **e máazi** (C&M), **e mazi** (Le)
       *-jínà 'name'   >   **e mazina** (C&B, Vi), **o mazina** (Ta)
       *-pátà 'village'   >   **e mavata** (Vi, Le), **o mavata** (C&M)
       *-díá 'water'   >   **e maza** (Vi, Le), **omáaza** (C&M)
       *-jóódì 'yesterday'   >   **emazuuzi** (C&M)
       *-ntʊ 'person'   >   **e wantu / o wantu** (C&B), **e antou** (Vi), **e**
                                       antu (Ta), **owaantu** (C&M), **e yantu** (Le)
       *-jánà 'child'   >   **e i ana** (Vi), **e ana** (Ta), **owaana / ewaana**
                                       (C&M), **e yana** (Le)

The image that surfaces from the data in (15) is quite cluttered, but certain significant tendencies can nonetheless be distinguished. In two sources, the augment in front of noun prefixes of classes 2 and 6 is consistently **e-**, i.e. Visseq (1889) and Lembe-Masiala (2007), both bearing on Kisolongo as spoken north of the Congo delta, where the impact of Kisikongo is less pervasive than south of the Congolese-Angolan border. The **e-e-o** pattern is also attested in the Congolese Kisolongo fieldwork data gathered by the KongoKing project team in 2012 in Kanzi and Muanda. The two other sources bearing on varieties spoken along the coast and in the Congo delta area, i.e. Craven and Barfield (1883) and Tavares (1915), predominantly yield the **e-e-o** pattern and often have a doublet with the **e-** augment for those class 2 and 6 nouns attested with the **o-** augment. Hence, it is safe to assume that South Kikongo as spoken along the coast and in the Congo delta area – in other words Kisolongo – innovated its augment pattern differently from South Kikongo as spoken in the vicinity of Mbanza Kongo, i.e. a partial levelling of places of articulation in favour of the front vowel **e-** instead of the back vowel **o-**, as sketched in Figure 3.4.

The source in (15) in which the **e-e-o** pattern is most weakly attested is Carter and Makondekwa (1987). As highlighted above, their Kizombo variety seems to be strongly influenced by Kisikongo. Their language course still contains words, such as **é-mw-áana** 'child', **é-n-kkanda** 'letter' (cl. 3), **é-n-kkoko** 'river' (cl. 3) and **é-lú-ku** 'cassava flour', which do not comply with the Kisikongo **e-o-o** pattern, but rather point towards the use of **e-** even in front of noun prefixes that have or originally had a back vowel. Highly relevant in this respect is the fact that according to Mpanzu (1994: 75), Kizombo would indeed have uniformized its augment to the **e**-shape in front of all noun prefixes. This generalized **e-e-e** pattern has been reported in two other eastern South Kikongo varieties. Baka (1992: 69) notes that *le Kitsotso connait un augment qui est représenté par la voyelle /e/ a toutes les classes*. Atkins (1954: 154) observes that 'the ubiquitous *E* of Dihungu occurring in almost every conceivable context is a puzzling feature of the language. This *E* no longer serves a definite grammatical function, since it can usually be employed or omitted at will, except in certain negative constructions where *E* is probably a different particle. If, as might be thought, *E* were a remnant of a former double prefix, then its presence before zero prefixes, both nominal and verbal, would remain to be explained.' This pattern is also observed – though irregularly – in the fieldwork data, which Heidi Goes collected in 2015 on Kitsootso and Dihungu and on other eastern South Kikongo varieties, such as Kindamba, for which she noted sentences such as *mbwa mutatika kena* **e** *mwana* 'the dog bites the child', *awu anatini* **e** *ana* **e** *mankondo* 'they brought the children bananas', *mono nkayisi* **e** *mase* 'I've welcomed the parents', *yani sumbuludi* **e** *nlele* 'he bought the cloth' and *yani mubuuka kena* **e** *menga* 'he shed blood'. Even if the data for certain sources are quite disparate due to the strong contact-induced interference of the prevalent Kisikongo variety, eastern South Kikongo varieties also seem to have evolved in a different direction from central South Kikongo in terms of vocalic augment patterns. Just like western South Kikongo, as presented in Figure 3.4, it gave more prominence to the **e**- shape, though not only to the detriment of the **a**-shape but also to the detriment of the **o**- shape, resulting in a complete levelling towards **e-e-e**.

In sum, the phonological evolution of the augment within the KLC happens to be quite significant in terms of genealogical subgrouping. It not only allows isolating South Kikongo as a discrete subclade, but

also points towards the existence of three distinct clusters within South Kikongo, i.e. western, central and eastern South Kikongo. In contrast to South Kikongo as documented in the seventeenth-century sources, both South Kikongo as spoken along the coast and in the Congo delta area and South Kikongo as spoken east of Mbanza Kongo innovated their augment pattern differently, i.e. a levelling in favour of the front vowel **e-** instead of the back vowel **o-**. Given that western South Kikongo attests **e-e-o**, eastern South Kikongo **e-e-e** and central South Kikongo **e-o-o**, one cannot but reconstruct ***e-a-o** in Proto-South Kikongo and assume that South Kikongo had already started to split into at least three distinct subunits in the seventeenth century. This indicates once more that South Kikongo as documented in the seventeenth-century sources is not directly ancestral to all present-day South Kikongo varieties, but rather only to the central Kisikongo variety spoken in the vicinity of the kingdom's former capital. Thanks to its social prominence, however, this central South Kikongo variety had a strong lateral influence on more western and eastern South Kikongo varieties resulting in messy augment systems, which presently considerably blur the regularity of the augment patterns that were inherited.

Conclusions

Table 3.5 summarizes the evidence discussed in this chapter and its historical relevance.

The historical-comparative linguistic evidence presented in this chapter leads to the inevitable conclusion that the three seventeenth-century Kikongo records that are still at our disposal today document one and the same variety of the language. This variety is nothing but Kikongo as spoken in Mbanza Kongo, the capital of the Kongo kingdom, and its immediate vicinity. In contrast to earlier assumptions that were based on an injudicious interpretation of comparative language data, it is not the Kikongo variety spoken in the coastal area of the Soyo province. Western South Kikongo varieties spoken along the coast on both sides of the Congo mouth as described in Craven and Barfield (1883); Visseq (1889); Tavares (1915) and Lembe-Masiala (2007), as well as eastern South Kikongo varieties as found in Atkins (1954); Carter and Makondekwa (1987); Baka (1992); Mpanzu (1994) and the 2015 fieldwork data of Heidi Goes are at best grandnephews or grandnieces of seventeenth-century Kikongo.

Table 3.5 *Linguistic evidence discussed in this chapter and its historical relevance*

Linguistic evidence	Historical relevance
Lexicon-based phylogeny	Seventeenth-century Kikongo is the direct ancestor of Kisikongo
*d retroflexion	Irrelevant for internal classification in contrast to early scholars who took it as evidence for considering seventeenth-century Kikongo as the direct ancestor of Kisolongo
*p lenition	This is a *shared retention* and does NOT indicate that Kizombo and Kisolongo are more direct descendants of seventeenth-century Kikongo than Kisikongo; seventeenth-century Kikongo is not ancestral to all present-day South Kikongo varieties
*b loss	A shared innovation corroborating South Kikongo as a distinct subclade to which seventeenth-century Kikongo belongs; the development of new (labial-)velar consonants after the loss sets eastern South Kikongo apart as a discrete subunit within South Kikongo and distinguishes Kizombo and Kindamba from other eastern South Kikongo varieties
Augment merger	A shared innovation corroborating South Kikongo as a distinct subclade to which seventeenth-century Kikongo belongs; Western, central and eastern South Kikongo had already split up in the seventeenth century; the seventeenth-century sources are directly ancestral to central South Kikongo, i.e. Kisikongo

The Kikongo found in the *Doutrina Christãa* (1624), the *Vocabularium Congense* (1652) and the *Regulae quaedam* (1659) is thus not ancestral to the entire KLC and not even ancestral to the entire South Kikongo subclade to which it belongs. Only Kisikongo from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as found in Bentley (1887, 1895), da Silva Maia (1961) and Ndonga Mfuwa (1995) can be considered as its direct descendants. The phonological data found in de Cannecattim (1805) are too patchy to determine the genealogical affiliation of the Kikongo variety he described within South Kikongo, but from a lexical point of view it clusters more closely with central South Kikongo, or thus Kisikongo, rather than with western or eastern

South Kikongo of which respectively Kisolongo and Kizombo are the principal representatives today.

Within the old kingdom of the Kongo, all missionary efforts from the seventeenth century onwards – and probably even earlier – until the early nineteenth century to document Kikongo exclusively focused on the variety spoken at Mbanza Kongo. When the London Missionary Society landed there in the late nineteenth century, William Bentley (1887, 1895) picked up the work that his predecessors had left unfinished. It was not before that time that missionaries of other denominations, such as Craven and Barfield (1883) and Visseq (1889), started to describe other South Kikongo varieties. Descendants of other Kikongo subgroups present in the Kongo kingdom, such as Kintandu (Butaye 1909, 1910) or Kimanyanga (Laman 1912, 1936), also had to await the attention of missionaries who arrived in the wake of European colonialism.

As far as the South Kikongo speaking part of the Kongo kingdom is concerned, the historical-comparative language data considered in this chapter thus corroborate the linguistic division into coastal, central and eastern dialects which Thornton (1983: 15) proposes. These three South Kikongo dialectal areas already existed in the seventeenth century and do not result from the collapse of the kingdom's centralized structure in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as is often assumed. This process may have deepened the dialectal variation that already existed in the seventeenth century, but definitely did not trigger it. Not all inhabitants of the kingdom's southern provinces spoke Kikongo as documented in the seventeenth-century language sources, let alone those who lived in the kingdom's northern dominions where distinct though related languages prevailed.

In spite of genealogical divergence within South Kikongo specifically and the KLC more generally, political centralization and economic integration in the realm of the Kongo kingdom did stimulate intensive language contact across distinct Kikongo varieties. These protracted interactions have persisted until the present and have led to the contact-induced lateral transfer of language features between related languages. This can be deduced from the many phonological irregularities which present-day varieties – especially those from northern Angola – manifest with regard to the regularly inherited structures.

Finally, according to historical Kongo traditions, which John Thornton reconsiders in Chapter 1, the founders of the Kongo kingdom originated from either the chiefdom of Vungu situated north

of the Congo River in present-day Mayombe or the chiefdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza situated in the eastern part of the kingdom between the Inkisi River and the Kwango River. According to the historical understanding of the KLC we have today, these assumed centres of origins would have been located in areas where respectively West Kikongo and East Kikongo were spoken. Whatever the historical veracity of these origin traditions may be, the dynasties ruling from Mbanza Kongo in the course of the seventeenth century certainly did not speak a language which was dramatically different from the South Kikongo that prevailed then in the kingdom's heartland. If their ancestors were indeed foreigners who spoke West Kikongo or East Kikongo, they must have shifted to South Kikongo soon after their arrival in Mbanza Kongo. If so, they left nothing but possible minor traces of their original language in South Kikongo, such as the royal title *ngangula* of East Kikongo origin (Bostoen *et al.* 2013). Or, more parsimoniously, the origin of the Kongo kingdom must be situated in Mbanza Kongo itself, at which point the origin traditions become just that: legendary.

Acknowledgements

4 | *Soyo and Kongo: The Undoing of the Kingdom's Centralization*

JOHN K. THORNTON

In 1648, Daniel da Silva, the Mwene Soyo or Count of Soyo[1], wrote a letter to Pope Innocent X, explaining to him the situation of his province of the Kingdom of Kongo, 'it is true that I am a vassal of the King of Congo, but of all his vassals, only those of this county make their own Count when one dies' (Brásio 1960c: 123–4). In this definitive statement of precedence, he announced formally a fact that had been true since he came to the position of Count in 1641: that his province was in fact independent of Kongo. He had defended his county successfully against Garcia II, king of Kongo, who denied this claim absolutely, and dispatched several armies to try to assert his rights.

The separation of Soyo from Kongo, which would grow larger and larger in the years that followed was crucial to the later history of Kongo. The challenge of Soyo was one of the factors that broke Kongo's centralization. As Soyo gained and defended its independence, it also became the most powerful force in Kongo politics, especially after the Battle of Mbwila, when civil war wracked the kingdom. The Count of Soyo's meddling in Kongo's politics in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries profoundly destabilized his former overlord, leading Kongo into a lengthy and devastating long-term civil war. When Kongo recovered from the civil war in the early eighteenth century, it was no longer, and would never again be, a centralized kingdom (Thornton 1983: 77–113).

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[1] Soyo is the modern orthography and pronunciation of the province's name. It is fairly clear that until the eighteenth century it was spelled <Sonho>, which is pronounced as [sonyo]. The [ny] sound in Kikongo was spelled <nh> in the earliest Kikongo catechism (Cardoso 1624), e.g. *monho* 'heart', pronounced as [monyo]. However, in the earliest Kikongo dictionary (Van Gheel 1652), the same word is written *moÿo* suggesting that the *ny/y* alternation is an old one, at least within South Kikongo.

Soyo's capacity to become a spoiler in Kongo politics stemmed from its long history as a special province that was ruled by an independent branch of the royal family and its taking on a role as part of the electoral process of the kings. When royal power expanded in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Soyo was more fully integrated under royal control, but its ruling family took on the role as a contending family group, the House of Soyo, in the politics of family factions that dominated seventeenth-century Kongo politics. Working as a faction and intermarrying with other factions, even as it was conscious of its special role in elections, provided an opening for its reoccupation of Soyo and subsequent meddling in Kongo elections in the civil-war period that followed.

Soyo had a special relationship with Kongo from the founding of the country. According to traditions of Kongo recorded in the late sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries, Kongo developed originally from a union between Mbata, a province of the Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza, and the emerging kingdom of Kongo, an alliance sealed by a dynastic marriage which we can date to around 1300 (Thornton 2001, see also Chapter 1). From this beginning, other provinces were conquered and annexed. Sixteenth-century traditions, notably the account of Duarte Lopes, Kongo's ambassador to Rome, who wrote a geographical historical account of the country around 1588 (cf. Pigafetta 1591), tell us primarily of the conquest of the small kingdoms of Nsundi and Mpangu, also former dependencies of the Seven Kingdoms in the Inkisi Valley and neighbours of Mbata. In the process of founding the new capital at Mbanza Kongo, the growing kingdom swallowed up Mpemba, the dominant power in that region. But this tradition is silent on how the coastal provinces of Mbamba and Soyo entered the kingdom (cf. Figures 1.1 a–d in Chapter 1).

Soyo in Early Kongo

Early accounts of Soyo make it clear, however, that from the late fifteenth century Soyo enjoyed a special relationship to Kongo as an apanage of the royal family. In an account written in 1492 by the Portuguese royal chronicler Rui de Pina, based on the testimony of six witnesses just returning from Kongo, the Mwene Soyo (lord/count of Soyo, usually written as 'Mani' in texts) was the first Kongo noble to be baptized, taking the name Manuel. He thought it was

good to be baptized before the king, because he was 'the elder, being the brother of the king's mother' (*fratello della madre*) and was then some 50 years old (Radulet 1992: 106, fo. 190va). In a somewhat different version written in 1515, de Pina noted that he was 'uncle of the king' (*tyo del Rey*) (Radulet 1992: 140). Perhaps using different sources, João de Barros described the king of Kongo as Manuel's *sobrinho* or nephew (Brásio 1952: 79). This relationship suggests that Soyo at that time was ruled by a branch of Kongo's own royal family and not, as Mbata was, by a pre-existing elite that had joined Kongo voluntarily, nor like Mpangu and Nsundi, which were conquered.

The chronicler Garcia de Resende, who was archivist during the time of João II of Portugal and wrote his chronicle before his death in 1536, probably using most of the same original documents as other chroniclers, wrote an important addition to his account of the baptism. He noted that following the baptism of Manuel and his son Antonio, Manuel sent a message to his overlord, King Nzinga a Nkuwu, informing him of the events, and then the king, to recognize his service 'gave him a grant for this of thirty leagues of land along the coast, and ten leagues into the interior (*sertão*) with all its incomes and vassals' (Brásio 1952: 74). The terms of this grant also imply a special relationship that would give the territory of Soyo a fairly substantial revenue under the control of its leaders. Taken literally, it would extend Soyo southward to the Mbidizi River, which was its southern border in the late sixteenth century (Pigafetta 1591: 25).

In addition, along with its connection to the royal house through Manuel's relationship to the king, Soyo appears to have had hereditary control of its province. Manuel's son was named Antonio when they were both baptized in 1491, and although Soyo and its ruler are mentioned in subsequent documents, no named Mwene Soyo appears in documents again until 1520, when 'Dom Antonio Manysonho' certified the receipt of three suits of clothing. As Manuel's son was named Antonio, the document suggests, though it cannot prove conclusively, that this was the same Antonio, baptized in 1491, who had succeeded his father (Brásio 1988: 57). Taken together, these early attestations of Soyo's position in Kongo suggest that it was a sort of royal apanage, a territory given to one branch of the royal family, perhaps in order to encourage that branch to undertake the risk and danger of conquest of the region in exchange for granting the holder

hereditary control. It might contrast with Nsundi, which according
to Afonso I in 1514 was the province given to the heir apparent of
the kingdom, one that the king could assign to anyone and dismiss
the holder if he wished.

   The idea that Soyo was ruled by the royal family but as a sort of
land apart is strengthened by the fact that Soyo was mostly absent in
official statements from Kongo about its government over the next
few years. In two letters to Portugal, Kongo's king Afonso I (r. 1509–
42) took some trouble to request his 'brother king' to write special
letters to prominent members of his nobility. In the two letters, he
named a total of seven provinces: Nsundi, Mbamba, Mbata, Mpangu,
Wandu, Wembo and 'Soasana' (an otherwise unidentified province).
Although Afonso I admitted that there were many other provinces,
this list covers most of the largest provinces. Only two major ones are
missing: Mpemba, which was the province that contained the capital
city, and Soyo (Brásio 1952: 460–1; 534–5). All the provinces that
were named, except Mbata, were under the control of Afonso I's close
kin, and it appears that the custom, reported more fully in the later six-
teenth century, of kings appointing governors from his family or client
families to provinces at his own will and for limited terms was widely
practised in Afonso I's day as well. Afonso I himself testified to one
such province, Nsundi, where he was appointed and removed several
times by his father and the loss of the province left him 'like a straw in
the wind' (Brásio 1952: 295).

Elevating Soyo: Revisionism in 1591

But if there is little in the contemporary record of the early six-
teenth century about Soyo or Manuel, historical accounts of the
later sixteenth century have much to say about early Soyo. Official
statements of history assigned Soyo a much greater role in Kongo's
affairs in earlier times than the contemporary record of the early six-
teenth century shows, even that of Kongo writers. When King Álvaro
I dispatched an embassy to Rome to seek an episcopal see, he sent
Duarte Lopes as his ambassador and official representative. During
his time in Rome, Lopes made a written statement of Kongo's history
and a description of the country, which must be considered the official
version of Kongo's own elite. This statement, along with other points
he made in discussion with the Italian humanist Filippo Pigafetta,

was an important source for the latter's famous description of Kongo published in 1591.

In composing his history, Pigafetta also made use of earlier written sources on Kongo's history in his edition, especially the Portuguese historian João de Barros (published in 1552, cf. Baião 1932) either directly or through its use by the Jesuit historian Giovanni Pietro Maffei (1588: 8–13). De Barros' account was important since it was primarily written using Afonso's correspondence as source material. Pigafetta mentions both de Barros (p. 18) and Maffei (p. 46), the latter not by name but by the title of the book. However, he clearly favoured Lopes' testimony, at times correcting information he found in de Barros and Maffei citing Lopes' observations (Pigafetta 1591: 46). Thus, in recounting the events of early Kongo history, including historical notes on the country's past as well as the early years of contact, Pigafetta relied mostly on what Lopes told him. For the initial evangelization of Kongo and particularly for the earlier years of the sixteenth century, Lopes probably drew on local oral traditions that related to a period long before they were born and also subject to the sort of manipulation that such tradition can be subject to over time. Given that Lopes was Kongo's ambassador, his version of events was surely that accepted or promoted by the Kongo court at the time.

The official version of Kongo's early history as related by Pigafetta changes what the contemporary record of the early sixteenth century tells us. It alters and greatly expands Soyo's role in early Kongo history by means of interpolating new elements into the existing story and suggests that the court had emphasized Soyo's importance in the late sixteenth century by revising the earlier history of the country to give it a place. To the degree that a history is also a statement of the country's constitution, the heightening of Soyo's role has the effect of altering the constitution.

The early-sixteenth-century sources mention Soyo and the Mwene Soyo Manuel only in the context of the first contacts. Nevertheless, Pigafetta's version of the Kongo official history gave Manuel an important role in the events of the early sixteenth century that was well beyond anything we can learn in those sources. As Pigafetta told the story, quite contrary to what he read in de Barros or Maffei, the Portuguese traded with Soyo in the period following first contact in 1483, and in the course of this, instructed by a secular priest (*prete da*

messa) the Portuguese had left in Soyo, Manuel embraced Christianity. Then Manuel, according to this account, 'went to the court to tell the king of the truthful doctrine of the Christian Portuguese and to encourage him to receive the Christian faith' (Pigafetta 1591: 43).

Pigafetta continued, initially following de Barros and Maffei concerning the baptism of Nzinga a Nkuwu as João I in 1491 and then the embracing of the Christian faith by João's son, i.e. the later Afonso I. He also noted that Afonso faced opposition from an opposing pagan party and was recalled to the capital. At this point, Pigafetta interjected a story which held that Manuel who 'happened to be at court at the time' persuaded the king to be merciful, 'through his skilful reasoning' and because he was the 'oldest courtier' and 'much loved by the people', and 'to remit the sentence made against the Prince D. Alfonso'. But once Manuel left to return to Soyo, the king soon doubted his son again (Pigafetta 1591: 47–8).

No contemporary account of the events allows Manuel this role, including even Afonso I's own account of this event that is recounted in summary in a letter of 1514 (Brásio 1952: 298) and in more detail in a now lost letter of around 1509, which probably informed de Barros as well as the Spanish account of Martin Fernandez de Enciso (1519).

Pigafetta again altered de Barros and Maffei's story with Lopes' testimony, in describing the succession struggle following João I's death in 1509. The contest involved Afonso and his anti-Christian brother Mpanzu a Kitima and was recounted in detail by de Barros. But Pigafetta, surely following Lopes, again has Manuel of Soyo play a very important role. When João I died, Afonso I entered the capital, but found his brother had gathered an immense army to attack him. As he awaited the onslaught, the 'good old lord of Sogno' Manuel stood with him 'by reason of the Holy Faith of Christ' (Pigafetta 1591: 49). Afonso I tried to rally his outnumbered band of supporters, but many would not remain with him, as they were afraid. When they tried to desert, however, Manuel, who was outside the city on a reconnaissance mission, met them and persuaded them to return, making a long speech on how he was steady in Christian faith. Manuel was ready to take up arms again to fight for Christianity, although he was already 'one hundred years old' (Pigafetta 1591: 49–50). In fact, he should have been about 70, if he was indeed 50 in 1491 as de Pina claimed (Radulet 1992: 106, fo. 190va).

While it may well be true that Soyo played a prominent role in the events and that Afonso I, our sole contemporary source for them,

opted not to mention this role in his own account of the situation for reasons only known to him, the interpolation is remarkable. What is safe to say, though, whatever the situation was in 1509, the story circulating at court by the 1580s gave a very important role to Soyo in Kongo's early formation. How did this variation come to be? The most likely explanation is that the interpolations were a sort of historical revisionism to accommodate a greatly expanded role played by Soyo in Kongo's politics at the time.

It is extremely unlikely that the additions of Soyo to the story of Kongo as told by de Barros, and indirectly by Afonso I, was simply a pattern of mistakes by Pigafetta. They surely were additions included by Lopes. The elevated and early role of Soyo was reinforced by another similar interpolation of 1624 in the Jesuit Mateus Cardoso's history of Kongo. Citing and occasionally quoting Garcia de Resende and Damião de Goís, Cardoso was unmistakably aware of several sixteenth-century sources. He still recorded the grant of additional land to Soyo, but not as an extension of territory; rather it declared Manuel as being 'legal and hereditary lord [*senhor de juro e herdade*] for him and all his successors of the whole province of Sonho', specifying also that it 'extended inland ten to twelve leagues to Moxabo' (Brásio 1969: 57; cap. 17, fol. 23). As such, both sources probably reflected a new perception of Soyo's role in Kongo supported by the court of Kongo in the days of Álvaro I (r. 1568–87) and Álvaro II (r. 1587–1614), rulers at the time that Lopes was there and continuing afterward. They suggest that the more limited relationship between Soyo and Kongo had altered and court historians had modified history to accommodate this change.

What seems likely is that Soyo had come to play a role as a sort of neutral province that was held by a branch of the royal family on behalf of the kingdom as a whole, but not itself eligible to rule. In times of crisis and during contested transitions from one king to another, Soyo could play the role of kingmaker. This was precisely what was going on when Lopes was in Kongo, and perhaps the historical inclusions reflected the important role that Soyo would play in Kongo's history at that critical juncture, but probably did not play in the time of Afonso I.

When Lopes arrived in Kongo in 1578, the country was in the early stages of a dynastic shift. A decade earlier, in 1568, Álvaro I came to the throne in an irregular fashion. He was the son by a previous husband of

the wife of his predecessor Henrique I, who had left him in charge of the capital and government as he went off on a fatal campaign in the east. When Henrique I died, Álvaro I took over. Álvaro I's right to the throne was clearly controversial, though Lopes, acting as his partisan, only acknowledged that 'with [the death of] Henrico the lineage (*schiatta*) of the most ancient kings of Congo failed' (Pigafetta 1591: 58).

This statement overlooks the fact that there is substantial evidence, first, that the royal lineage had not failed at all as there were plenty of eligible candidates, and, second, that should the royal line actually fail, the most likely option would be for the line of Mbata to succeed. Álvaro I took power mostly because he was a force in the capital. While the other branches of the royal line did not recognize his right, he had managed to fight them off and consolidate his rule, though his rivals bided their time and would re-emerge when Álvaro I died. The apparent constitutional claim was perhaps nothing more than a convenient explanation for his seizing power.

Álvaro II, Álvaro I's son, succeeded him upon his death in 1587. His right to rule was immediately challenged by his brother, whom Álvaro II defeated in single combat giving him immediate control of the capital (du Jarric 1608–1610: vol. 3, 67–74). However, this immediate victory over his closest competitor did forestall the claims on the throne by other contenders including among them 'grandchildren of former kings' who 'wanted to take control of the kingdom' (Brásio 1953b: 350, 378–9). There were at least two familial blocks: grandchildren of Afonso I and children of Diogo I. These were surely the branches that had been excluded from succession when Álvaro I took the throne, once again asserting themselves in spite of the claim that the royal line had become extinct.

Soyo as Kingmaker

Although not stated in existing primary sources, Soyo probably played a crucial role in the evolving political situation, because of its role as kingmaker. If we accept that Lopes' version of Soyo's role in the succession of Afonso I was an interpolation intended to grant Soyo a greater role in government, then we can also understand how Soyo played an important part in the politics of Álvaro II's reign.

The plots by disappointed contenders that troubled Álvaro II included a plot to overthrow him in 1590, conceived by a royal official living in

Mbanza Kongo named D. Rafael, and the Mwene Mbamba. We know that the Mwene Mbamba in 1583, when Lopes left for Europe, was a cousin of Álvaro I, and thus had been put in office by him and appears to have been ruling in the first years of Álvaro II's reign (Pigafetta 1591: 25). A subsequent rebellion involved a 'Mwene Pumpo' (perhaps Mwene Mpemba) as well as another Mwene Mbamba, but Álvaro II managed to put that one down too, killing the Mwene Pumpo and forcing Rafael to flee the capital (Brásio 1953b: 424). The confused record also points to an unsuccessful revolt some time before 1592, led by the Mwene Wembo, Sebastião Majala Masamba, whom the king was also able to defeat (Brásio 1988: 487). It was during this war that Álvaro II captured the wife of the Mwene Wembo, who became mother of his son later crowned as Álvaro III.[2] To cap this time of troubles, another provincial governor, the Mwene Nsundi also led an unsuccessful revolt fairly early in Álvaro II's reign, probably also representing a rival branch of the royal family (Brásio 1988: 493) .

Soyo played an important role as broker in this struggle, as Soyo had refused to participate in the suppression of the revolt of 1590, possibly to retain its neutrality (Brásio 1953b: 424; Brásio 1955b: 235). This refusal surely explains the complicated language that the unnamed 'lord of Sonho' wrote out for the visiting vicar of Soyo, Gonçalo da Silva Mendonça, on 20 November 1591. He swore he was a loyal vassal of King Álvaro II, but that he had had differences with him, which he did not wish to detail at the moment. He went on to swear on a missal to do nothing against his lord, thus continuing to assert his neutrality but cautious support.[3] However, the affair did not end there, for in 1593 another document, issued by Dom Miguel, count of Soyo and probably the same 'lord of Sonho' from 1591, granted António Manuel free passage to settle with the king the matter of wars that caused many deaths, closed roads and interfered with trade.[4] António Manuel, on his way to becoming the seasoned diplomat that Álvaro II would later send to Rome, was engaging in the sort of negotiations to end the wars that his patron, Dom Miguel, had to do.

[2] Since Álvaro III was 29 years old at the time of his death in 1622, he was born in 1593, thus making the rebellion of Wembo take place some time between 1587 and 1592.

[3] Archivio Segreto Vaticano [henceforward ASV], Arm I, vol. 91, fol. 245–245v, Provision of Visitor of Congo, 20 December 1591.

[4] ASV, Arm I, vol. 91, fol. 125–6, Provisão de Miguel, Conde de Sonho.

If Miguel was lukewarm in supporting Álvaro II in 1593, though, he would have more cause for concern later, for Álvaro II was very interested in centralizing and regularizing Kongo's state and this would include gaining full control over Soyo. This was pretty clear in the case of the succession of a new count, Fernando. When the Dutch States General sent Wemmen van Bechem to negotiate an alliance and trading agreement with Soyo in 1608, Pieter van den Broecke, who was with the expedition, noted that Miguel was still the count at that time (van Wassenaar 1628: fol. 26v–27). However, in 1612, Samuel Brun, a German doctor in Dutch service, recorded that there was a new count in his day named Ferdinando (Jones 1983: 61–62).

As Brun understood it, 'the Count of Songer has often declared war on the king, when the latter happened to place too much trust in the Portuguese'. Brun added, wrongly, that the Portuguese 'have set up as Count a Black who will let himself be used against the king', who they call Dom Fernando. Fernando was blind and rarely seen, though he was reported to be sprightly on his feet (L'Honoré Naber 1913: 27).

The Dutch were mistaken in thinking that the Portuguese had set either Álvaro or Fernando on their respective thrones, though Álvaro had apparently used Portuguese mercenaries in his efforts to defeat Miguel (L'Honoré Naber 1913: 29). Fernando, as it happens was established in Soyo as an ally of Álvaro, and the struggle was not over who was pro- or anti- Portuguese, although the Portuguese did hope that one or the other would expel Dutch traders.

In fact, it seems that Fernando's succession as Mwene Soyo represented an important step in Kongo taking firmer control of Soyo and it was the Portuguese who were the losers in all of this. This seems fairly clear from a letter that Álvaro II's son, who became king Álvaro III in 1615, wrote to the king of Portugal that year, explaining that his father had had trouble with Miguel at the beginning of his reign, but eventually more or less left him alone as he was tired of fighting. Now, Miguel was dead and there was a new count, who was more obedient. He finished by noting that if the new count were to be disobedient, he would punish him (Brásio 1955b: 234–6).

The Count Displaced: The da Silvas in Mbamba

Álvaro III's letter points to Fernando as a royal appointee, and this is strengthened by Olfert Dapper's account which, though only published

in 1668, drew on now lost Dutch West India Company records of the earlier period. Dapper noted that when Count Miguel died, his son, named Daniel da Silva, 'finding the opposing party too strong' was disowned and fled to the neighbouring Duchy of Mbamba where he took refuge until circumstances permitted his return to Soyo. This was the same Daniel da Silva who would assert in 1648 that the people of Soyo had the power to choose their own rulers (Dapper 1668: 584). The 'opposing party' were certainly partisans of Fernando and the king.

The circumstances of Daniel da Silva's flight to Mbamba are important since Álvaro II had faced a revolt from Mbamba in 1590, and awarded the province to a certain António da Silva in the early 1590s.[5] The surname 'da Silva' is significant, for although count Miguel of Soyo did not sign with a surname in his certificate of 1593, it is quite probable that he bore the same surname 'da Silva', since his son definitely did. Therefore it is equally likely that António da Silva was a kinsperson and a member of what would come to be called the 'House of Soyo', which commonly bore da Silva as a surname.

If Álvaro II had displaced the da Silvas from Soyo, he did not abandon the role of the House of Soyo in brokering kingship. Álvaro II was particularly attentive to António da Silva in Mbamba. In 1598, Álvaro II granted António the title of Duke of Mbamba, in perpetuity, to be 'always lord' (Brásio 1955b: 55). In so doing, he had made Mbamba into the same sort of perpetually held fief that Soyo had been, and when he appointed a da Silva to lead Mbamba, he also granted that family the right to intervene in royal elections. Mbamba certainly became a pre-eminent province, for when Dominicans came to Kongo in 1610, Mbamba led the way in financing their church, giving an offering equal to the king's (Brásio 1955a: 612).

That Álvaro II expected António da Silva to continue the rule of the counts of Soyo as brokers of the succession was revealed when the former died in 1614. According to his son, Álvaro III, the late king had named António da Silva his 'testamentary executor', and for this reason, Álvaro complained that his half-brother Bernardo took possession of

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[5] In a testimony given in 1596, Diogo Rodrigues, curate of the church of Mbanza Kongo, mentioned 'D. António Manibamba' referring to his actions since 1593 (ANTT Inquisição de Lisboa, Livro 766 Visita a Angola, fol. 83). Dom António's surname is attested in a letter which he wrote to the Dominican Vicar on 20 August 1610 (Brásio 1955a: 603–4).

the kingdom illegally 'with the aid of some Grandees (*Grandi*)' while he was still a minor. But seeing 'how he aggrieved me' and other disorders, in less than a year, António da Silva headed an armed rebellion and 'took away D. Bernardo's kingdom and his life and restored it to me' (Brásio 1955b: 288–91). In effect, when Álvaro II removed the da Silvas from Soyo, he gave one of them Mbamba, where he performed in 1614 the same role of overseeing or brokering disputed successions as the counts of Soyo did in the succession of 1587.

Soyo under Kongo

Unfortunately, it is not for another decade, i.e. 1622, when we learn who was ruling Soyo. A document of that year reports that António Manuel, half-brother of Álvaro III, held the office of count. Thus it seems that Soyo was now a province just like the older royal provinces of Nsundi, Mpemba or Mbamba, which kings could give or take away as they pleased, and no longer the royal apanage held by the da Silvas. But if he had chosen the count from his own family, it did not ensure his loyalty, for at that point António Manuel was hostile to his half-brother, even though like Miguel thirty years earlier, he refused to say explicitly why (Brásio 1988: 483).

Álvaro III might have capitalized on his father's displacement of the da Silvas from Soyo and now had most provinces in the hands of his own family, even if it were still fractious and disobedient. However, he did not control the da Silvas – now the House of Soyo (even though not ruling in Soyo) – who had been granted perpetual title as dukes of Mbamba and had brought him to the throne.

But thanks to António da Silva's role as protector of Álvaro II's son and executor of his desire to have him succeed as king, the royal family and the da Silvas were closely intermarried. One of António da Silva's daughters was married to Álvaro III, and another to Álvaro's cousin Dom Álvaro Afonso, the Mwene Nsundi (Brásio 1955b: 374–5). Álvaro Afonso rebelled in 1616 and was subsequently killed (Brásio 1955b: 252). When Álvaro III's first wife, a daughter of António da Silva, died, he remarried to another unnamed woman, also from the House of Soyo (Brásio 1988: 487). Álvaro III had no children by the second wife, suggesting that the marriage happened relatively shortly before his death.

As powerful as the House of Soyo was, however, António da Silva did not claim the throne himself, undoubtedly because he still accepted the idea that the House of Soyo was ineligible for the throne. Álvaro III's rule over Kongo was hardly comfortable, for he also faced numerous revolts, starting in 1616 and led by various kinsmen, which were mollified by either internal diplomacy or force. Still Álvaro III pressed on and when António da Silva died in 1620, leaving Mbamba in his son's hand, he invaded the province, killed the son and granted it to a loyal supporter named Pedro Afonso. This act terminated the hereditary tenure that Álvaro II had granted to the House of Soyo in Mbamba and made it a royal province.

In addition to making both Soyo and Mbamba royal provinces, Álvaro III had also effectively extinguished the House of Soyo as a family that held a perpetual estate, remaining viable only through family ties to the king. At Álvaro III's death, Kongo faced the prospect of civil war, because his determined move to gather authority in his own hands had many opponents waiting to reverse things and his own brother was in open rebellion in Mbata.

The Portuguese of Angola were aware of the delicate situation in Kongo and were preparing to capitalize on the potential succession struggle to invade. The Kongo court had witnessed how the Portuguese had used rivalries within Ndongo to facilitate their campaigns there in the period 1618–21 and fearing that a succession struggle would open the door for the Portuguese to do the same in Kongo, the electors met and chose the Duke of Mbamba, Pedro Afonso, to be King Pedro II. Pedro II's election was a quick compromise worked out by the Kongo royal council, headed by the Spanish priest Bras Correa, who at least took credit for the selection to forestall civil war and allow the threat from Angola to be met with a united front.

Pedro had led the army that displaced the da Silvas from Mbamba, and had been granted its rule in exchange. He firmly defended the country and defeated the invading Portuguese army at Mbanda Kasi in the early days of 1623, which was followed by a re-occupation of territories that Portugal had recently taken over on Kongo's southern border. He negotiated the return of prisoners taken in the Portuguese invasion and even contacted the Dutch States General to arrange a simultaneous invasion of Angola by Kongo and the Dutch West India Company (Thornton 2016c).

Pedro II died rather unexpectedly on 13 April 1624 and the electors chose his son Garcia I to succeed him. The crisis, which had allowed the speedy and uncontested election of Pedro II, had passed by 1624. Garcia I had even rebuffed the Dutch Admiral Piet Heyn who came to Soyo with a fleet that year to carry out Pedro II's plan for an invasion of Angola. Without the crisis, politics in Kongo resumed its previous course and Garcia I faced conspiracies, which probably resulted from a sense that power should return to Álvaro III's line.

As Garcia I took the throne, two rival Houses dominated Kongo. Mateus Cardoso, the leading Jesuit in Kongo at the time, called these family factions the House of Kwilu (Coilo in texts) and the House of Nsundi (Sundi in texts) (Brásio 1969: cap. 25, fol. 35v). In outlining the genealogical relations in the country on Álvaro III's death in 1622, Cardoso wrote that Álvaro's line, the House of Kwilu, descended from Afonso I's second daughter Izabel Lukeni lua Mvemba who gave 'four kings of Congo one after the other, and they were the first, second and third Álvaros' as well as Bernardo II (between Álvaro II and Álvaro III) (Brásio 1956: 292). The line got its name because Álvaro I's father had been born in Kwilu (Cavazzi 1687: para 234). It had come to power when, according to Pigafetta and probably its own partisans, the former royal family had been exhausted with the death of Henrique I, but it had eventually displaced all rival candidates from other lines.

The House of Nsundi, which came to power with Pedro II in 1622, was descended from his grandmother, Afonso I's daughter Ana Ntumba a Mvemba. It was called the House of Nsundi, because Pedro II's father had been Mwene Nsundi when he was born. Because Pedro II had not had a king as a father or grandfather, he took the surname 'Afonso' to show his kinship to the great king Afonso I (Thornton 2006: 449–50). He was also connected to the House of Soyo through Pedro II's mother Christina, a member of the House of Soyo, and Pedro II's daughter was married to António Manuel, half-brother of king Álvaro III and Mwene Soyo (De Laet 1645: 66).

However, the House of Soyo, which was not eligible to rule, was also a factor. Although it controlled no provinces, its connections by marriage and descent interpenetrated the other two Houses. Furthermore, its commitment to neutrality with regards to the throne made its members attractive as appointees that would be outside the politically charged provincial appointments. This situation therefore gave it unusual strength.

Pedro II's House of Nsundi was also crippled by having ruled for only two years, since he had not had the chance to get many provinces into his hands. He had, however, been able to choose one member of his own House, his brother Paulo, to rule Soyo (Heintze 1985: 275; Thornton 2006: 450). Paulo's rule in Soyo would prove to be lengthy as he held it for the House of Nsundi, and retained it even when that House lost the kingship in 1626.

While the House of Kwilu had allowed Pedro II to rule in peace, they were not as happy with having Garcia I succeed him, especially as he was young and inexperienced. Not surprisingly, Garcia was beset by revolts. Manuel Jordão, a loyal supporter of the House of Kwilu, attacked Mbanza Kongo and dethroned Garcia I, who then fled to Soyo, which he hoped would be loyal, since Paulo was 'his own father's brother' and believed 'that he would restore him'. But Paulo, whom Garcia I had offended in some way, simply told him he could stay 'in certain towns and he would treat with him through messengers about these affairs' (Franco 1726: 247).[6] However, before the matter could be resolved, Garcia died of smallpox on 26 June 1626 and the issue rested there.[7]

When Manuel Jordão drove Garcia I from the throne, he claimed that Garcia – and presumably anyone from the House of Nsundi – was not the legitimate heir. Therefore, he instead proposed that Ambrósio Nimi a Nkanga, the son of 'king Anime' (Álvaro I Nimi a Lukeni) and cousin of Álvaro III, should be crowned, as indeed he was (Brásio 1956: 649–50). Given his ancestry and the expectation that power would revert to the House of Kwilu, Ambrósio I was the logical choice to succeed Álvaro III, whose own son was too young to follow his father. Paulo, the Mwene Soyo, acknowledged Ambrósio's succession and repudiated Garcia's claims to the throne; in fact even before Garcia I died. Paulo seized the royal insignia, especially the Bull 'Sacramento', an important part of the royal regalia, which Garcia I brought with him, and gave it to Ambrósio (Brásio 1956: 651–2).

Although one might have expected Ambrósio I to begin appointing members of the House of Kwilu to important posts, in fact he made

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[6] The Capuchin missionary Girolamo da Montesarchio met the wife of Garcia I and stated her relationship to Miguel da Silva when he travelled in Soyo in 1648 (Piazza 1976: 173, fol. 173 of the MS).

[7] Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid (henceforward BN Madrid), MS 3533, Antonio de Teruel, 'Descripcion narrativa de mission … reyno de Congo' (1664), p. ix (unpaginated introduction).

several appointments from the House of Soyo, perhaps because of their role of neutrality and ineligibility for the throne. Almost immediately he gave a certain Daniel da Silva (definitely not the deposed son of Count Miguel) the Duchy of Mbamba (Brásio 1956: 652). Moreover, thanks to Paulo deciding immediately to recognize Ambrósio I as king and turn over the regalia, Ambrósio did not try to replace him as Mwene Soyo.

The relationship between Ambrósio I in Kongo and Paulo in Soyo was, however, a tense one. The king pressured Paulo to expel the Dutch traders there, which the count reluctantly did in 1627. Problems emerged again when Manuel Jordão, Ambrósio I's one-time bene-factor, tried to overthrow him in 1628. Ambrósio I ordered a 'mocano' (*nkanu* or judicial investigation) which accused both Duke Daniel da Silva of Mbamba, the most prominent member of the House of Soyo, and Paulo of the House of Nsundi, of conspiring to overthrow him. Da Silva, fearing for his life, fled to Paulo, who took him in and protected him (Brásio 1956: 579).

Ambrósio I's downfall and death on 7 March 1631 are not well enough described to see the forces that shaped it, but his successor, Álvaro Nzinga Nkuwu, who was elected as Álvaro IV on 8 March 1631, was the 11-year-old son of Álvaro III, probably the choice of convenience of unnamed forces from his House of Kwilu that needed a figurehead to keep the House in power (Franco 1726: 262). Daniel da Silva was soon restored to Mbamba, as he had ample connections to the House of Kwilu, since he was the new king's uncle, the son of Álvaro III's wife. In addition to being solidly in the House of Kwilu, Álvaro III was also connected to the House of Soyo through his aunt, the daughter of António da Silva, the late powerful Mwene Mbamba, who had enthroned Álvaro III in 1615.

Daniel da Silva decided to take on the House of Soyo's traditional role of protector of the monarchy and raised a large army in 1633 to 'rescue' the young king from shadowy nobles of the House of Kwilu at the court. The king in turn fled to Soyo, where he was taken in by Count Paulo, who was his relative through mutual connections to the House of Soyo (Franco 1726: 262). Da Silva pursued him there with an even larger army, and the two had a showdown in the lands just south of the Congo River, most probably in Soyo's natural forest region of Mfinda Ngulu. In the heat of this battle, the young king gave up hope and fled, but one of his supporters Garcia Afonso, nicknamed

'Kipaku', managed to lead a determined assault where he killed da Silva and then rescued the young king and restored him to his throne (Franco 1726: 263; Brásio 1960a: 262).

This brash young man and his older brother Álvaro were of royal stock, but not from any of the powerful Houses, Kwilu, Soyo or Nsundi. Their extended genealogical names, Nimi a Lukeni a Nzenze a Ntumba, reveals a genealogy that connected them to the third daughter of Afonso I, Ana Ntumba a Mvemba, that Mateus Cardoso had named in his genealogical statement of Pedro II's ancestry.[8] Perhaps it was the common descent from a relatively remote royal ancestor that drove the brothers to support Paulo and the House of Nsundi in general. Like the members of the House of Nsundi, they also bore the surname, Afonso, to indicate their royal lineage. The House of Kwilu party had chosen them, in turn, probably because they were not from the House of Nsundi but from yet another obscure branch of the royal family.

In acknowledgement of Garcia's efforts on his behalf, Álvaro IV granted him the marquisate of Mukatu, and gave Garcia's elder brother Álvaro Afonso the duchy of Mbamba. Álvaro IV's death on 25 February 1636 was widely believed to be from poisoning, and he was succeeded by a younger half-brother who took the throne two days later as Álvaro V. The choice of two young kings revealed the desperation of the leaders of the House of Kwilu that they had to find someone who was fit to be king and maintain the House in power. A certain Gregorio, probably an older Kwilu partisan, served as a power behind the throne.

Gregorio used rumours that Álvaro Afonso, the new duke of Mbamba, was plotting against the king in order to persuade the ruler to replace Álvaro as duke with Gregorio's brother, Daniel, and thus return this important province to the House of Kwilu. But Álvaro Afonso did not agree to being replaced and as a result the king sent the army to replace him by force. Álvaro, once again aided by his brother Garcia in Mukatu, defeated the army and captured the king. Instead of killing him, however, they put him back on the throne and honoured him, even serving him at his table. But Álvaro V was not satisfied and tried once again to unseat the duke of Mbamba and was

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[8] BN Madrid, MS 3533, de Teruel, 'Descripcion narrativa' (1664), p. ix (of unnumbered introduction).

again defeated. This time the two brothers were resolute; on 14 August 1636, they cut off Álvaro's head and Álvaro Afonso took the throne with the name of Álvaro VI, immediately assigning his brother Garcia Afonso the Duchy of Mbamba (Franco 1726: 268).[9]

Álvaro VI's seizure of power left him with significant enemies, as there were relatives of the House of Nsundi and the House of Kwilu who could argue that the throne belonged to them. The House of Kwilu struck back quite soon. In 1637, Gregorio raised a revolt in Mbata against Álvaro VI, who managed to defeat it, thus staunching the strongest proponent of the House of Kwilu's interests (Franco 1726: 272–3). Just a few years later Álvaro died, on 22 February 1641, under suspicious circumstances and his brother Garcia stormed into the capital, dismissed the electors who had chosen another candidate to be king and claimed the throne.[10]

Garcia II was crowned a few days later in 1641, and soon after Paulo, the long-serving Count of Soyo, also died. Replacing Paulo was a crucial issue: would Garcia choose someone from his newly prominent House, continue with someone from Paulo's House of Nsundi, or fill the vacancy with someone from the House of Soyo, its traditional ruling family until Álvaro III had inserted Fernando around 1613? Garcia, however, did not get to make the choice, for Daniel da Silva, Miguel da Silva's patient son who had spent almost thirty years in Mbamba, took control of the province in the name of the House of Soyo. His justification for that seizure was encapsulated in his letter to the Pope in 1648 that began this chapter, stating that ancient tradition had given the nobility of Soyo the right to choose their own count and the office was not the prerogative of the king. His House would never relinquish it again.

Garcia was not to be easily thwarted, even though the Dutch invasion of Angola soon occupied his attention and his military strength,

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[9] BN Madrid, MS 3533, de Teruel, 'Descripcion narrativa' (1664), pp. 123–5.

[10] BN Madrid, MS 3533, de Teruel, 'Descripcion narrativa' pp. ix (unpaginated introduction) and 125; although de Teruel understood that Álvaro died of illness, the Dutch merchants on the coast heard that he had been poisoned (Nationaal Archief Nederland, Oude West-Indische Compagnie 46, Letter of Frans Cappelle, undated and unpaginated, fifth folio of the letter). Jadin (1966: 225) dates this letter March 1642, which is probably correct. In the manuscript the year of the King's death is given as 1640, but as other sources mention 1641, Jadin has opted to transcribe the year as 1641 in his edition.

for not long afterwards he began a series of disastrous invasions of Soyo that all failed and cost him greatly. He was quite successful in getting members of his own family and client families into all the provinces of the country, including defeating a last-gasp effort of Pedro II's sons, the residue of the House of Nsundi, to take power in 1656–7. However, Soyo eluded his grasp as it did all other kings who followed. Soyo would resume the kingmaker role that it had taken when António da Silva had 'given and taken' as he saw fit in 1614–15, and after that became an independent state, still claiming nominal allegiance to Kongo but styled 'Grand Prince' since the late seventeenth century. In that role, Soyo was responsible for placing kings on the throne of Kongo, even though it could not protect them from other rival factions.

Aftermath: Soyo in Kongo's Decentralization

Faction names changed in the period following Garcia II's reign: the old House of Kwilu came to be known as the Kimpanzu; the House of Nsundi became Kinkanga a Mvika (Pedro II's Kikongo name); and the House to which Garcia belonged was the Kinlaza. Nomenclature thus switched from territorial designations to kinship ones, though there does not seem to be any distinction in the way they were recruited or functioned (Thornton 1983: 76–96). The House of Soyo became attached as a client to the Kimpanzu, from the connections that the da Silvas had with that faction when they were called the House of Kwilu.

When António I was killed at the Battle of Mbwila in 1665, a civil war began to choose his successor. Warfare between factions over the succession to the throne was nothing new in Kongo's history, but this civil war was far more protracted and divisive than earlier ones. The new Count of Soyo, Paulo da Silva, intervened in Kongo soon after the battle, overthrowing Álvaro VII, who had taken over from several rivals to represent the Kinlaza, and installing his own Kimpanzu king as Álvaro VIII. However, the Kinlaza soon retaliated and installed Pedro III in 1669.

Soyo was sufficiently strong to take the city, but because the Kinlaza ruled most of the provinces, it was not strong enough to hold it for a longer period. Soyo was able to defeat, single-handedly, a Portuguese invasion in 1670. It assembled an artillery park of some fifty canons.

Several rounds of taking and retaking the city resulted in the destruction and abandonment of São Salvador in 1678; in contrast, Mbanza Soyo grew to over 30,000 people, making it a new demographic centre. The depopulation of the capital, and the unwillingness of anyone, including the courts and then princes of Soyo, to support a ruler or rebuild the abandoned city meant that the factions withdrew to several regional bases, which became quite hardened by the end of the century.

When Pedro IV restored the city in 1709, thanks to its reoccupation by partisans of Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita in 1705, it was no longer possible to rule the whole country. In the new dispensation in Kongo, negotiated by Pedro IV during his reign, kingship was to rotate between three branches of the royal family who would occupy the city from a regional centre. The upshot of this was that Soyo ceased to perform its role as kingmaker: the last attempt to install a king, Manuel I, took place in 1690. The new king, though vigorously supported by Soyo, was unable to re-establish the capital and Soyo, perhaps less interested in sustaining a king, turned its attention elsewhere. It intervened in the affairs of Ngoyo to the north and, thanks to a strong trading relation with the Dutch, it even sought to obtain missionaries from Dutch-speaking Catholic territories (Hansen 1995).

The role of arbitrator had fallen to the rulers of Kibangu, beginning with Pedro IV, who served as kingmakers in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries. Rival factions of the royal family of Kongo would still struggle endlessly over Mbanza Kongo throughout the eighteenth century, but Soyo was no longer involved in those politics (Thornton 1983: 97–113).

Acknowledgements

5 | *The Eastern Border of the Kongo Kingdom: On Relocating the Hydronym* Barbela

IGOR MATONDA

Introduction

The KongoKing project focused on the origins and the early history of the Kongo kingdom. Its aim was to examine how political centralisation and economic integration within the realm of that polity influenced language evolution and how these macro-historical processes are reflected in the archaeological record. Within this ambitious endeavour, it has been key to define what we understand by the concept of 'Kongo kingdom'. Such an attempt at circumscribing the project's core topic entails several questions, which are easier to ask than to answer, definitely when it comes to pinning down its evolving borders, not only in space and time, but also in the mind of its (potential) subjects. A kingdom is never only a geographical territory under the direct political, economic and/or military control of the central authorities, but it is also a symbol of identity and belonging to which people may adhere, even far beyond the scope of the king's territorial dominion. Whatever the concept 'border' may mean in each particular case, the borders of a kingdom need to be identified and explained historically (Storey 2001; Fray and Perol 2004). Chapters 1 and 4, by John Thornton, and Chapter 2, by Wyatt MacGaffey, broach the issue of the Kongo kingdom's borders and the limits of the political influence of its leaders through very different methodological lenses. It is evident that in spatial terms the Kongo kingdom was not a static and fixed entity; its size and form changed considerably over time according to the fluctuating alliances and conquests that occurred.

For the KongoKing project, the location of boundaries and the identification of Kongo centres of political power known as *mbanza* were of particular relevance in view of the archaeological excavations undertaken. The choice of archaeological sites was guided by evidence found in the historical sources concerning political borders, provincial capitals, economically important settlements, etc. A crucial example

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is the idea that the Inkisi River was the eastern border of the Kongo kingdom at the moment of the first contacts with Europeans, i.e. at the end of the fifteenth century. According to this view, the territories east of the Inkisi would only be later annexations as the result of the kingdom's expansion at the end of the sixteenth century. As Hilton (1985: 34) stated: 'the eastern capitals, Mbanzas Nsundi, Mpangu, and Mbata were all located in the fertile Nkisi valley near the eastern frontier of the kingdom'. In my view, this hypothesis influenced at least implicitly the archaeological fieldwork strategy of the KongoKing project, in that no major excavations were undertaken east of the Inkisi River. All *mbanza* that could have contributed to a better understanding of the kingdom's origins, organization and evolution prior to the sixteenth century were expected to be found to the west of the Inkisi River. My quest to reassess this matter was especially triggered by scholars, such as Balandier (1965: 18), Randles (1968: 20–1) and Miller (1973: 138–40), who did not consider the Inkisi to be the kingdom's eastern border since the fifteenth century, but rather the Kwango River. On the basis of the historical evidence I present below, I wish to further reinforce the latter hypothesis, especially by reinterpreting the hydronym *Barbela,* which occurs on many historical maps of the Kongo area and which some have interpreted as the former name of the Inkisi. The Inkisi is one of the most important left-bank tributaries of the lower Congo River. It originates in Angola's Uíge province and is for large parts not navigable, because of rapids and gorges rendering its flow rather tumultuous in certain places.

The Concept of 'Border' in Pre-colonial Africa

The concept of 'border' is not self-evident. As Coquery-Vidrovitch (2005) has stressed, it is impossible to generalize about the perception and role of borders in African societies. It is a notion which needs specific definition, as Planas (2004: 293–4) and Coquery-Vidrovitch (2012: 149–51) have done from a lexicographic and semantic point of view, and which needs to be discussed in relation to pre-colonial African kingdoms. Borders take on different forms: linguistic, cultural, economic, ethnic and political. Borders are also dynamically linked to the historical conjunctures that create them (Breton 1987: 211). Debates on political boundaries in Africa are a rich subject involving nearly all disciplines of the social and human sciences.

Kopytoff (1987), whose work on frontiers in sub-Saharan Africa has been the cornerstone of a general interpretative model of pre-colonial African history, redefined the notion of frontier by integrating the question of internal borders and cross-border areas and their dynamics into his analysis. In the wake of his model, scholars have focused on the political capacities of so-called 'frontier entrepreneurs' to restructure space. As Kopytoff (1987) explains, such 'frontier entrepreneurs' surpass the limitations set by the state and so become cross-border actors. In different parts of the continent, their presence has led to political and armed conflicts in post-colonial states (Galaty 1999; Mathys 2014; Segoun 2017), which highlights the artificiality of many modern-day state borders in Africa. These newly created political, economic and cultural spaces and the new identities connected to them have been interpreted as an attack on the established pre-colonial order (Bouquet 2003). It is widely assumed that the conception of frontiers in pre-colonial Africa was radically different from how they are conceived in Africa's modern-day states. Pre-colonial Africa is often believed not to have had fixed borders at all, at best permeable and flexible boundaries, if not the total absence of political frontiers. To some the very notion of 'border' would even be a colonial invention.

Nevertheless, such a radical rejection of the concept of 'border' in pre-colonial African can be criticized in a number of ways. First, there is linguistic evidence suggesting that the notion of 'border' is old in Central Africa. Many Bantu languages share a common noun stem, which designates this very concept and has been reconstructed as **-dìdò* 'boundary' (Bastin *et al.* 2002), with attested reflexes in zones A, B, C, J, H and R of Guthrie's updated referential classification (Maho 2009). In other words, this specific form-meaning association occurs in all major sub-branches of the Bantu family (Grollemund *et al.* 2015), which means that it can be traced in all likelihood to Proto-Bantu, the most recent common ancestor of all Bantu languages having an estimated time depth of about 4,000 to 5,000 years (Bostoen 2017: 257). It is also the generic term for 'frontier, limit, border' attested in all subgroups of the Kikongo Language Cluster (de Schryver *et al.* 2015), as discussed and mapped in Drieghe (2015: 62–5). It equally figures as *múrilú* '*limitatio; margo; terminús*' in the oldest Kikongo/Bantu dictionary (Van Gheel 1652).

Secondly, several scholars have shown the historical depth of certain colonial borders and challenged their arbitrary nature by insisting on

their social and historical roots (Hien 1996; Bennafla 1999; Nugent 2003; Von Oppen 2003; Hien 2005; Vellut 2006; Lefebvre 2008; Coquery-Vidrovitch 2012; Lefebvre 2015).

Thirdly, even in modern European nation-states, political frontiers have often turned out to be much more fluid and flexible on the ground than they were supposed to be according to state maps. We merely have to think of the recurrent military clashes between France and Germany during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which were triggered, amongst other things, by conflicts around border areas, such as Alsace and Lorraine. Another more recent case in point are the late-twentieth-century armed conflicts in the Balkans, which have highlighted that certain European state borders are also felt to be extremely artificial (Batakovic 2005). Each political border, be it in Europe or Africa, is man-made, in that it is a construct, even when it follows natural features such as rivers, forests, or ridges (Coquery-Vidrovitch 2012: 149–50). Moreover, in medieval Europe, for example, borders of polities were both politically and militarily much less precisely delineated not only than they would be in more recent periods, but also than they used to be in the Roman Empire (Bois 2007: 11–13). Within a given space, territorial borders can also become more or less strictly defined through time. This also holds for pre-colonial Central Africa.

Reflections on borders in pre-colonial African states have highlighted the complex relations that existed between political centres and the periphery. Herbst (2000: 35–57, 134) proposes a model of concentric circles of diminishing authority, whereby power was most intensively felt near the political centre and became ever less intensive the further one went from there. Coquery-Vidrovitch (2005: 40) also refers to this model with regard to the kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, Songhai and Kuba and the Shona state of Zimbabwe. Such a model probably also fits the Kongo kingdom very well, as actually proposed by Randles (1968: 21–5) who considered the Kongo kingdom to be constituted by a central nucleus, i.e. the capital at Mbanza Kongo, towards which first its provinces and then neighbouring polities, such as Loango, Kakongo, Ngoyo, Vungu, Anzica, Ocanga and Kongo dia Nlaza, gravitated as increasingly autonomous entities. The further removed from the nucleus, the less effectively the power of the central authority was felt. Due to their remoteness, these peripheries were more or less in a state of permanent dissent and their relations with the central

kingdom were rather loose. It is indeed highly likely that the power of the king of Kongo was exercised differently at the heart of the Kongo kingdom than in those regions, which constituted the limits of its political space. Yet, Kongo kings still regarded even those remote entities as part of their sphere of influence, as they emphasized for instance through their long titles, which would become longer after each war of conquest (Thornton 1982: 334–5, see also Thornton, Chapter 1). Of course, it should also be taken into account that Kongo kings might have had a tendency to exaggerate the size of their domain in their correspondence in order to impress their foreign fellows. Moreover, as I argue extensively in Matonda (2017: 183–210), changes in the titles of Kongo kings do not necessarily reflect the incorporation of new territories. Furthermore, European visitors may not always have had access to the right information, leading to mistakes in their interpretation. In other words, a thorough source critique is indispensable to draw sound conclusions about the kingdom's extent both from royal letters and missionary accounts.

All the same, the available historical sources are often rather explicit about the local people's awareness of boundaries between different political entities as well as the political, social and economic implications that flowed from them. Evidence of this kind is especially abundant in the accounts of the missionaries who travelled through the kingdom and also reached those areas that were the most remote with regard to Mbanza Kongo. An account of Spanish Carmelite missionaries is instructive in this respect. In 1585, Diego del Santissimo Sacramento reports that his two confrères made an apostolic tour in several of the kingdom's northern provinces, while he remained in the capital (Brásio 1954: 404–15). During their stay in Mbanza Nsundi, the capital of Nsundi province, the two missionaries learned that the Tio kingdom was situated on the other side of the Congo River. Mbanza Nsundi was thus close to the border with the Tio kingdom. They wanted to go there, but their guide would not take them there without the consent of the congregation's authorities in Mbanza Kongo. Informed of the intention of his confrères, Diego del Santissimo Sacramento gave them permission to cross the Congo River. However, King Álvaro I learned about the missionaries' plan and sent the Mwene Nsundi the order to prevent them from crossing by any means the Congo River. Faced with this interdiction to cross the kingdom's border, the missionaries returned to Mbanza Kongo (Brásio 1954: 400–1; Bontinck

1992: 119–20). Another missionary account provides evidence for the demarcations that existed between two of the kingdom's provinces, i.e. Nsundi and Mpangu. Marcellino d'Atri said that the village of Matuntolo in 1697 was the last in the province of Nsundi thus functioning as a border with the province of Mpangu (Toso 1984: 72). These European testimonies indicate that borders were a political and administrative reality of which Kongo people were very much aware, also in pre-colonial times. They certainly were not a colonial invention in the Lower Congo area.

In the case study presented in this chapter, we wish to contribute to the debate about borders in pre-colonial Africa, not so much by focusing on the characteristics of borders within the realm of the Kongo kingdom, but by discussing the location of one specific boundary, i.e. the kingdom's eastern border. Exploring the geographical specificities of this border is of crucial importance for a proper understanding of the kingdom's spatial layout.

The Inkisi as the Kingdom's Eastern Border

Various historical sources mention a river called Barbela, which is said to be an important tributary of the lower Congo River. Simar (1919: 47) was one of the first scholars, if not the first, to equate the Barbela in the chronicle of Pigafetta (1591) with the present-day Inkisi and to consider it as the eastern border of the Kongo kingdom. Making reference to the same historical source, he was soon followed by Van Wing (1921: 81, note 2) who stated that '*La Barbela est la Malewa, autre nom de la rivière Inkisi*' ['The Barbela is the Malewa, another name for the Inkisi River', our translation] as well as by Plancquaert (1932: 20) who asserts that '*[c]es détails, ainsi que l'ont cru la plupart des auteurs, ne peuvent convenir qu'à la rivière connue aujourd'hui sous le nom de l'Inkisi*' ['these details, as most authors have believed, cannot but fit the river known today under the name of the Inkisi', our translation]. Both Inkisi and Malewa are recent hydronyms that do not appear in the literature before the twentieth century. In contrast to what Van Wing (1921: 81, note 2) seems to assume, the Malewa actually is a left-bank tributary of the Inkisi having its source near Mount Tanda in the Mbanza Ngungu territory (Matonda 2017: 276).

This tendency to consider the Inkisi as the kingdom's eastern border may have been motivated by the fact that the Inkisi indeed served

as a border for various purposes during colonial times. At the end of the nineteenth century, it divided the apostolic zone of the Jesuits who worked between the Inkisi and the Kwango Rivers and that of the Redemptorists who were active between the Inkisi and Matadi (Kavenadiambuko 1999). In 1947, the Inkisi became the administrative boundary between the territories of Madimba and the Cataractes (Matonda 2017: 41). Also in the present-day Kongo-Central province, it is the border between the Madimba and Mbanza Ngungu territories. Moreover, as the phylogenetic classification by de Schryver *et al.* (2015) indicates, the Inkisi forms an ancient language border that separates the East Kikongo subclade comprising the Kintandu, Kimpangu, Kimbata, Kimbeko and Kinkanu varieties from the rest of the Kikongo Language Cluster, most immediately from the Central Kikongo variety Kindibu that is spoken to the west of it (see also Bostoen and de Schryver, Chapter 3).

Referring to the chronicle of Cavazzi (1687) and her own PhD dissertation (published as Wilson 1978: 29–32), Hilton (1981: 193–4) also asserts that the Barbela and the Inkisi were one and the same: '[i]n Kongo texts, however, the Berbela is constantly used to refer to the River Nkisi. This identification is supported by the fact that Pigafetta stated that the Berbela formed the "ancient limit of the kingdom of Kongo to the east". This boundary was most probably the Nkisi and certainly not the Kwango.' Following the reconstruction of long-distance trade routes in Central Africa by Vansina (1962: 376), Hilton (1981: 200) argues that the territories beyond the Inkisi only became part of the kingdom's influence sphere with the expansion of Portuguese commercial activities towards the Kwango River from about 1600 onwards. In Hilton (1985: 3, 4, 63), all maps indeed mark the Inkisi as the kingdom's sixteenth-century eastern border. On his map of the Kongo kingdom and its neighbours in the sixteenth century, Vansina (1999: 607) situates the eastern border slightly to the east of the Inkisi, more or less in accordance with his earlier view that 'to the east the border reached almost to Stanley Pool [= Malebo Pool] and continued from there to the Nsele river and then to the watershed between the rivers Kwango and Inkisi (Nzadi)' (Vansina 1966a: 38–9). Instead of being located in the heart of the sixteenth-century Kongo kingdom, the Inkisi basin is hence rather considered to be at its periphery and subdivided into distinct zones: its left bank belonging to the kingdom and its right bank outside of it (Thornton

1982: 335; Thornton 2001: 112, 116). This subdivision of the Inkisi valley is further reinforced by Thornton's hypothesis concerning the *Sette Regni di Congo Riamullaza* ('Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza'). Thornton holds that the addition of this region to the titles of Álvaro I (r. 1568–87) (and not his successor Álvaro II as Thornton writes) in 1583 (Brásio 1953b: 238) resulted from the incorporation of the entire region situated between the Inkisi and Kwango Rivers into the kingdom (Thornton 2001: 112).

However, as I discuss in detail in Matonda (2017: 183–237), this hypothesis is the consequence of conflating Kongo dia Nlaza with the Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza. As a matter of fact, it concerns two different entities, the territory of Kongo dia Nlaza being part of the larger region of the Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza. This wider region was called the *Momboares* by Cardoso, which would be a deformation of the Kikongo word *mumbwadi* standing for 'people of the seven' (Bal 2002: 268). It refers to the seven entities constituting this region, i.e. Lula, Kongo dia Nlaza, Kundi, Okanga, together with the counties of Nsundi, Mbata and Mpangu, which are commonly seen as the kingdom's northernmost provinces (Jadin 1968: 365–6). Kongo dia Nlaza, located to the east of the Inkisi, was only one of the counties of this larger region. The Inkisi actually ran through the centre of the *Momboares* region and nowhere does Cardoso refer to it as the boundary of this entity (Matonda 2017: 220).

In order to better understand the origin of this interpretation, i.e. how the Barbela hydronym came to be identified with the Inkisi, and secondly, how this came to be interpreted as a border, we have to re-analyze the existing sources, starting with the source that first mentioned the Barbela, namely Filippo Pigafetta (1591). This will allow us to highlight how the view of the Inkisi as a frontier has distorted our interpretation of the kingdom's spatial organization.

Reassessing Barbela in Pigafetta's work

Pigafetta (1591) is one of the most famous sources about the Kongo kingdom. His work was translated into Dutch (1596, 1706), English (1597), German (1597) and Latin (1598), and reprinted several times (Bal 2002: 341–4). It served as the basis for many descriptions of Africa during the seventeenth century. Authors, such as van Linschoten (1596), del Mármol Carvajal (1599), du Jarric

(1608–1610), Dapper (1668), Cavazzi (1687) etc., have all largely exploited his book (Brucker 1878: 9–10; Bal 2002: 17–19). In his account, Pigafetta (1591: 17) wrote: 'The east side of the Kingdom of Congo begins, as has been said, at the junction of the Rivers Vumba and Zaire […] and after crossing the River Barbela, which issues out of the first lake, there terminate the ancient limits of the Kingdom of Congo on the east. Thus the eastern boundary of this kingdom extends from the junction of the above-named River Vumba with the Zaire to Lake Achelunda and the country of Malemba, a distance of 600 miles …' (as translated from the original in Italian by Hutchinson 1881: 29–30).

The Vumba River was already mentioned in the 1552 account of the Portuguese humanist João de Barros together with other tributaries of the Congo River, i.e. Bancare, Cuyla, Zanculo, etc. (Baião 1932: 372–3). The different rivers cited by de Barros have all been identified as tributaries of the Kwango River. On sixteenth-century maps, the Kwango was represented as the main tributary of the Congo River and sometimes merged with it. The Bancare probably corresponds to the Bakali River (Lacroix 1992: 58), a left-bank tributary of the Kwango, although Bal (2002: 290) rather equates it with the Nsele, a tributary of the Congo River located to the west of the Kwango River. The Coyla or Cuyla, also spelled sometimes as Cuilu, is to be identified as the Kwilu River (Matonda 2017: 148–9) and the Zanculo, also written as Zanga Culo (Upper Cugho), would be the Cugho River (Plancquaert 1932: 16, 105), another Kwango tributary (Capelo *et al.* 1882: 147). The Vumba itself is probably also a tributary of the Kwango, right bank in this case, i.e. the present-day Wamba River (Plancquaert 1932: 18; Hilton 1981: 193). So it is not a tributary of the Congo River, as Pigafetta (1591: 17) seems to suggest. Even with only the basic notion of the hydrography of the region that sixteenth-century chroniclers had, it is clear that the eastern boundary of the Kongo kingdom cannot have been situated both at the confluence of the Wamba and the Kwango and along the Inkisi, which was much further to the west. It is therefore difficult to imagine that the Barbela in Pigafetta's quotation above indeed stood for the Inkisi. The Kwango would a better fit, especially if one also takes into account the most likely location of the so-called Lake Achelunda or Aquilunda.

Authors such as Simar (1919: 50–1), De Jonghe (1938: 723) and Plancquaert (1932: 20) thought that Aquilunda could stand for Lake

Yanga Kulu from where the Cugho River has its source (Bal 2002: 267, note 4), but Miller (1973: 140) identifies it as the small lake now called Kalunga, which lies between the Jombo and Luhando rivers in present-day Angola, not far from the sources of the Kwango. He also takes the prefix on the name Aquilunda as evidence for locating the lake near the sources of the Kwango since it would be distinctively Umbundu (*oki-* or *oci-*), the language spoken in the southern highlands where the river starts. The sources of the Inkisi are located in the Zombo area, to the northwest of these highlands, where varieties of South Kikongo are spoken. If the Barbela indeed issues out of Lake Aquilunda, the Kwango would again be a better fit than the Inkisi.

Furthermore, it needs to be stressed that several sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century missionaries who lived in the Kongo kingdom and knew the Inkisi well because they crossed it repeatedly, never called it Barbela, although many other names were reported, i.e. *Nzari a luelo* (Jadin 1964: 251; Bontinck 1970: 39), *Zaire de Bata* (Bontinck 1972: 66), *Zaire piccolo/pequeño* (de Bouveignes and Cuvelier 1951: 36; Piazza 1976: 233), *Singa* or *Singuam* (Jadin 1968: 362; Bontinck 1972: 66–7). According to Bontinck (1972: 67, note 49), the Inkisi would have been named *Singa*, because it flows into the Congo River in the Mazinga region. *Singa* would have been an alternative name for Nsundi.

Locating the kingdom's eastern border becomes even more complicated if one takes into account the further statement of Pigafetta (1591: 36) on the province of Mbata, i.e. 'This country is bounded on the north by the Province of Pango, on the east it crosses the River Barbela, to the Monti del Sole and to the foot of the Salnitro range, and towards the south of the said mountains is bounded by a line passing from the junction of the Barbela and Cacinga Rivers to the Monte Bruciato' [as translated from the original in Italian by Hutchinson (1881: 60, see also 31–2, 42–3)]. If Barbela stands for the Inkisi here, it definitely cannot have been the kingdom's eastern border, since the Mbata province is crossing it. If it stands for the Kwango, as we suppose it does, it would mean that the kingdom extended even further east of it. Simar (1919: 47) and Bal (2002: 291) equate Cacinga with the Lukusu, a tributary of the Inkisi River, and see this as further evidence for interpreting the Barbela as the Inkisi. However, the Lukusu is a right-bank tributary of the Inkisi and its source, its course and its confluence with the Inkisi are all situated in

what used to be the kingdom's province of Nsundi. By no means does it cross the territory of the former province of Mbata, which is located further south and separated from Nsundi by the Mpangu province (Matonda 2017: 179–81). Furthermore, none of the tributaries of the Kwango is known by a name closely resembling Cacinga. Kakinga does occur, however, as a village name in the Kenge and Kahembe territories of the present-day Kwango province of Congo-Kinshasa (Omasombo Tshonda 2012: 209, 227).

Such ambiguities urge us to question to what extent Pigafetta's descriptions faithfully reflect the region's sixteenth-century geography. The geographical descriptions of Pigafetta, particularly the hydrographic indications, were already the subject of much controversy in the nineteenth century when Europeans started again to explore Central Africa (Bal 2002: 18–24). In order to disentangle such ambiguities, it may be interesting to examine more closely Pigafetta's map of the Kongo kingdom, which was also produced in 1591, as well as other cartographic maps of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Barbela on Maps of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

All maps discussed in this section are freely consultable online in the Cartographic Free Library Afriterra.org, to which we refer here as 'Afriterra 2017' followed by the map's unique number within the catalogue (http://catalog.afriterra.org).

The map attached to Pigafetta (1591) is the first to mention the Barbela (Afriterra 2017: map 292). The source of the Barbela is formed by a lake called Aquilunda and it flows in a northwestern direction towards the *Rio de Congo* or Congo River. The River *Vumba* is situated much more to the north flowing into the *Rio Zaire*, which seems to be an eastern continuation of the *Rio de Congo*. The Barbela is mentioned with the Cacinga near the junction of two river arms above Lake Aquilunda and north of Matamba. East of the River Barbela there is a series of mountains, i.e. from north to south *Serras de Cristal*, *Serras de Saliere* and *Serras daprata*, the latter being situated in Malemba territory north of Matamba. These references on the map do not bear much correspondence to geographic reality. Pigafetta actually never set foot in the Kongo kingdom. The contents of his book, including the map, are entirely based on the testimony

of the Portuguese trader Duarte Lopes who lived in the country. Pigafetta's original map was produced by the brothers Theodore and Israël de Bry in 1591 (Norwich and Kolbe 1983: 67). It introduced a new cartographic tradition that departed from the first one initiated by the Venetian cartographer Giacomo Gastaldi who relied on the chronicle of João de Barros (1552) for his maps of Africa (Norwich and Kolbe 1983: 24; Matonda 2017: 145–8). Maps made in the tradition of Pigafetta contain more details than those of the Gastaldi tradition and depict more toponyms and hydronyms, even if many of them are fictitious. Maps in the cartographic tradition of Pigafetta, which continued until 1792, are characterized by a hydrographic network in which the Congo River is connected to two lakes: Zembre/Zaire and Aquilunda. Other rivers represented are, among others, Zaire, Bancare, Vamba/Vumba, Barbela/Berbela, Lelunda and Ambriz, which are all connected in one way or the other to Lake Aquilunda. Most maps also depict the mountains mentioned above and they mention communities such as *Anzicana populi* and *Panguelungi populi*. Provinces and territories are bolded: *Sunda, Sogno, Pango, Bamba, Batta, Pemba, Loango, Angola, Cacongo, Anzicana*, etc. This cartographic model became very popular, not so much because of how the Kongo kingdom was represented, but much more due to the drawings, cartouches and decorations that accompanied the map. One of the most decorative and most popular maps within that tradition was the map of Africa produced in 1630 by Willem Janszoon Blaeu Senior (1571–1638) (Afriterra 2017: map 193). The longevity of this cartographic tradition is partially due to the fact that the Blaeu map was reprinted many times between 1631 and 1667 in texts published in languages as diverse as Latin, French, German, Dutch and Spanish (Norwich and Kolbe 1983: 78). The *Congi Regnu* map created by Gerardus Mercator around 1630 (Afriterra 2017: map 46), which for a long time established the standard of representing the kingdom, belongs to the same tradition (Matonda 2017: 148–53). One of the recurrent features of the maps in the tradition of Pigafetta (1591) is the presence of a place called Sunde/Sunda on the left bank of the River Barbela. This toponym unmistakably refers to Mbanza Nsundi, the capital of the northern Nsundi province. Given that Belgian missionary historians had previously located that provincial *mbanza* close to the Inkisi River, more specifically on its west bank (Van Wing 1921: 109; Cuvelier 1946: 349), the KongoKing project

team mistook the Barbela depicted on those historical maps for the Inkisi (Clist *et al.* 2015c: 375; Matonda *et al.* 2015: 534).

However, on most historical maps of this type, a small anonymous stream separates the town of Sunde and the Barbela. On the map of Pigafetta (1591), another anonymous town figures in between that river and the Barbela, depicted by a similar cluster of stone buildings as Sunde though smaller in size. This town constitutes together with Pango (Mbanza Mpangu) and Sunde (Mbanza Nsundi) a kind of triangle leaning against the Congo River.

A third cartographic tradition provides a possible explanation for this. This tradition starts in 1640 with the map of Africa by Johan Johannes Blaeu (1596–1673) (Afriterra 2017: map 591), the son of Willem Janszoon Blaeu, and continues until 1792 (Norwich and Kolbe 1983: 29). Historical maps of this type distinguish themselves from the two previous traditions by the fact that the hydrographic network constitutes a sort of heart for the Kongo kingdom and part of the pre-colonial political entity of Angola. Another innovation is that the easternmost river is no longer called Barbela but Coango, although in some of them its upper course is still called Barbela, while in others Barbela is one of the tributaries of the Coango, flowing in from the west (Matonda 2017: 153–61). This partial overlap between the hydronyms Barbela and Coango in the third cartographic tradition further corroborates our hypothesis that Barbela stands for the Kwango River and not for the Inkisi River.

Interestingly, in many of these maps, the small town in the vicinity of Pango (Mbanza Mpangu) and Sunde (Mbanza Nsundi) is no longer anonymous, but is given the name Cundi. Such is, for instance, the case on the 1650 map of Joannes Janssonius (1588–1664) (Afriterra 2017: map 814), which is very detailed in its information. Cundi also features on the 1668 map of Jacob van Meurs (1619–80) (Afriterra 2017: map 914), which has stylistically more affinities with maps of the Pigafetta tradition. According to Jadin (1968: 433), Cundi was governed by the princes of Mbata. It should thus not be confounded with Sunde, the capital of the Nsundi province, systematically occurring on the same maps, but on the other side of the small anonymous river. Given the proximity of Mbanza Sundi, the latter possibly represents the Inkisi, but it could also be one of the many other rivers situated between the Kwango and the Inkisi, such as the Nsele, the Bombo or the Lukunga. The depiction of Cundi on seventeenth-century

cartographic maps – first anonymously, then under its proper name – is not a coincidence. The toponym Cundi is also prominent in travel accounts and chronicles of the same period, because of its economic importance as a market for raffia cloths, the so-called *panos Cundi.* This trading post was situated on the Kwango's left bank until at least 1885, when it was visited by the German explorer Büttner (Avelot 1912: 328; Plancquaert 1932). Avelot (1912: 328) considers Cundi to be the capital of Pombo de Ocanga, a county that is indeed marked in the vicinity of the town of Cundi on certain seventeenth-century maps, such as the one of Jacob van Meurs from 1668 discussed above. Nowadays, there exists a settlement called Kundi on Kwango's right bank. We take the indication of the market town of Cundi on the maps as another piece of evidence indicating that Barbela stands for the Kwango River and not for the Inkisi River. As proposed by Miller (1973: 140), the famous Lake Aquilunda, where the Barbela/Cuango originates on seventeenth-century maps, might well be one of the small lakes in present-day Songo territory in Angola, where the source of the Kwango is indeed situated.

   One factor that may have led modern-day scholars to mistake the Barbela for the Inkisi is the fact that the anonymous town representing Cundi located between the Barbela and the anonymous river near Sunda does not feature on the many maps belonging to the tradition of Pigafetta. Such is the case, for instance, with the *Congi Regnu* map that Gerardus Mercator produced around 1630 (Afriterra 2017: map 46). On other maps of that tradition, both the anonymous town and the anonymous river are deleted, due to which Sunda is no longer separated from the Barbela. This is also the case, for instance, with the maps of Guillaume Sanson from 1677 (Afriterra 2017: map 836) and 1695 (Afriterra 2017: map 1804) and of Henry and Anna Seile from 1703 (Afriterra 2017: map 958). These maps still circulated in the eighteenth century and may have misled modern historians of the Kongo kingdom, even if Bruzen de La Martinière (1737: 95), geographer to King Philip V of Spain, already had a relatively good understanding of the Barbela River:

Barbela ou Verbela, rivière d'Afrique au royaume du Congo. Elle arrose la ville de S. Salvador, capitale du Païs, si nous croyons Mr. Baudrand, & se jette dans le Zaïre un peu au-dessus de son embouchure dans l'océan. Il se trompe aussi bien que Mr Corneille, qui dit après Mr de La Croix

que la Barbela naît premièrement du Lac d'où le Nil sort, traverse celui d'Aquilonde, arrose la ville de Pango, & s'unit ensuite au Zaïre vers le midi de ce fleuve. La rivière de Barbela n'approche point des sources du Nil, ni du cours de ce fleuve de quelques centaines de lieues; elle n'a rien de commun avec la rivière de Lelunda, qui coule au pied de S. Salvador; quoique sur quelques cartes, on les remarque comme communiquant l'une de l'autre; & enfin elle ne traverse point le lac d'Aquilonde. Elle a sa source au royaume de Matamba vers le 42° de longitude, & le 6° de latitude sud, au Nord-Est du lac d'Aquilonde d'où sort la rivière d'Aquilonde, ces deux rivières ont un cours presque parallèle vers le Nord occidental, & se perdent à quelques distances l'une de l'autre dans le fleuve Coango qui grossi de quelques autres rivières et prend le nom de Zaïre au-dessous de les Cataractes.

Barbela or Verbela, African river in the kingdom of the Congo. It flows across the city of S. Salvador, capital of the country, if we believe Mr. Baudrand, and flows into the Zaïre a bit before its mouth in the ocean. He is wrong, just like Mr Corneille, who says following Mr de La Croix that the Barbela originates in the Lake from where the Nile leaves, crosses that of Aquilonde, flows across the city of Pango, and joins the Zaïre towards the south of that stream. The River Barbela comes nowhere close to the sources of the Nile and also not closer to the course of this stream than some hundreds of leagues; it has nothing in common with the River Lelunda, which streams at the foot of S. Salvador; although on certain maps, one observes both as if they were in touch with each other; & finally it also does not cross at all lake Aquilonde. Its source is situated in the kingdom of Matamba towards 42° longitude, & 6° latitude south, to the North-East of lake Aquilonde from where the River Aquilonde leaves, these two rivers have a course that is almost parallel towards the North-West & they flow at some distance one from the other into the Coango River which swells thanks to some other rivers and takes the name of Zaïre below the Cataracts.

Conclusions

Pigafetta (1591) never wrote that the River *Barbela* constituted the eastern border of the Kongo kingdom. He rather located that border in the vicinity of the River Vumba, known today as Wamba, and a lake called Achelunda situated north of the Matamba region in north-eastern Angola. In this chapter, I have provided two main arguments to interpret Barbela as representing the present-day Kwango River and not the Inkisi River, as several twentieth-century authors had argued. First, on maps published later than Pigafetta (1591), and especially on those of the tradition initiated by the 1640 map of Africa by

Johan Johannes Blaeu, the hydronym Barbela is replaced by Cuango/ Coango. Secondly, a place called Cundi, referring to the famous raffia cloth market which used to be situated on the left bank of the Kwango River, appeared on several seventeenth-century maps in the vicinity of the river in question. These two elements have enabled me to point out that the Barbela was erroneously associated with the Inkisi. This mistaken interpretation has its origin in Pigafetta's map of 1591, while the subsequent cartographic traditions correctly associated Barbela with the Kwango. Our interpretation makes it possible to identify the Vumba/Wamba River described by Pigafetta as adjacent to the eastern border of the Kongo kingdom. The Wamba River is actually a tributary of the Kwango River.

By re-establishing the eastern border of the Kongo kingdom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries near the Kwango River, the Inkisi valley is no longer to be considered as a peripheral zone but rather as being part of the kingdom's heartland, and possibly linked to its emergence. For sure, the Inkisi basin hosted the northern provinces of Nsundi, Mbata and Mpangu. The settlement of their capitals or *mbanza* within that area can be accounted for by the desire to control the resources and trade routes, which contributed to the growth and success of the Kongo kingdom. These three provinces actually belonged to the so-called Momboares or Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza named after the Nlaza county situated in between the Inkisi and the Kwango. This loose federation of polities was an integral part of the Kongo kingdom since its earliest contacts with Europe, long before the sixteenth century. As a consequence, searching for historical Kongo settlements and archaeological traces far beyond the Inkisi River should not be a vain enterprise.

Hence, this region between the Inkisi and Kwango Rivers deserves more attention than it has received until present in order to gain a better understanding of the Kongo kingdom's genesis. It is beyond doubt that the Kongo kingdom occupied a vast space which was transected by communication and trade networks, which was structured and controlled by political authorities and which had borders defined by those authorities and known to their subjects. These borders within and around the kingdom reflect the region's historical dynamics. The exact ways in which political authorities controlled those borders is still far from clear. The present study has rather focused on the identification of the kingdom's main

eastern border than on how this border was determined and controlled and on how it may have changed through time. The next step would probably be the quest for the seven polities which composed the Momboares in order to understand how these entities were structured both in time and in space and what their degree of integration was within the Kongo kingdom.

Acknowledgements

Kongo's Cosmopolitan Culture and the Wider World

6 | *From Image to Grave and Back: Multidisciplinary Inquiries into Kongo Christian Visual Culture*

CÉCILE FROMONT

Introduction

Capuchin Franciscan friar Bernardino Ignazio d'Asti created a remarkable group of images in which simple yet rich compositions based on his eyewitness experience bring to life West Central Africa in the middle of the eighteenth century. The Italian cleric, who had worked in Kongo and Angola in the 1740s, composed his *Missione in Prattica: Padri Cappuccini Ne' Regni Di Congo, Angola, Et Adiacenti*, literally a "Practical Guide to the Mission" for "Capuchin Fathers in the Kingdoms of Kongo, Angola, and neighboring [kingdoms]" around 1750 to serve as a didactic tool for members of his Order preparing for apostolic work in the Christian kingdom of Kongo and in Angola, a loosely defined area around the namesake Portuguese *conquista* seated in the coastal city-port of Luanda (d'Asti *ca*. 1750). The *Missione in Prattica* is very much a manual, information-rich in content and instructional in tone. It proposes to make present to the eyes and minds of European novices the missionary environment of Central Africa, from flora and fauna to social mores and what the friars perceived as idolatry (Fromont 2011a). To operate this task of knowledge transmission and cross-cultural translation, friar Bernardino relied not only on written advice and admonitions but also and – in some versions of his work principally – on carefully composed and painstakingly detailed paintings. In this chapter, I merely use some of this corpus of Capuchin Central African images for their role as documents recording – however imperfectly – the visual environment of Central Africa in the early modern period. These are of course complex documents that demand a careful approach. I study the several versions of friar Bernardino's manuscript as well as the role and significance of these images elsewhere (Fromont in preparation). The best-known and most illustrated of the three iterations of his handbook, now in the Turin Civic Library and available in a full online edition,

consists of an allegorical frontispiece, nineteen full page images each glossed at their foot with five or six written lines, eight folios of text, and a title page.[1]

Among the dozens of Central African men and women friar Bernardino included in his pages, I propose to consider two who will serve as gateways to this chapter's exploration of the methodological possibilities the KongoKing project has opened for the study of Kongo Christian visual culture. The first is the elegantly dressed bride pictured at a wedding ceremony being conducted by a Capuchin, outdoors, under a veranda (Figure 6.1 a). The second figure is a male member of the Kongo kingdom elite, grandly outfitted for the celebration of the martial ritual of *sangamento*, who appears in Figure 6.1 b kneeling at the foot of a monumental cross, in front of a friar and a Catholic church. Bringing these painted characters together with archaeological findings from the KongoKing project, this methodologically geared chapter probes the opportunities that multidisciplinary approaches afford for the study of Kongo's material environment, social make-up, and historical trajectory between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Although images and excavations document different locales within the kingdom of Kongo, the former concerned principally with the coastal area of Soyo and the latter with the eastern region of Nsundi, they still form a coherent set of evidence for the historical study of West Central Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Case for Multidisciplinarity

Friar Bernardino's image in Figure 6.1 b depicts our first main protagonist, a member of the Christian elite of the kingdom of Kongo during the performance of a *sangamento* martial dance. Dressed in his full ceremonial garb, right hand holding an iron sword, he conspicuously kneels in front of the Christian church building to seek the blessing of an ordained Catholic cleric. The pious gesture as well as the cloak of the Order of Christ on his shoulders herald his Christian status, an affiliation central to his legitimacy as a ruler within a kingdom in which the religion has played a central symbolic and political role

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[1] The online edition of the Turin manuscript may be consulted at www.comune. torino.it/cultura/biblioteche/iniziative_mostre/mostre/missione/prefazione.html
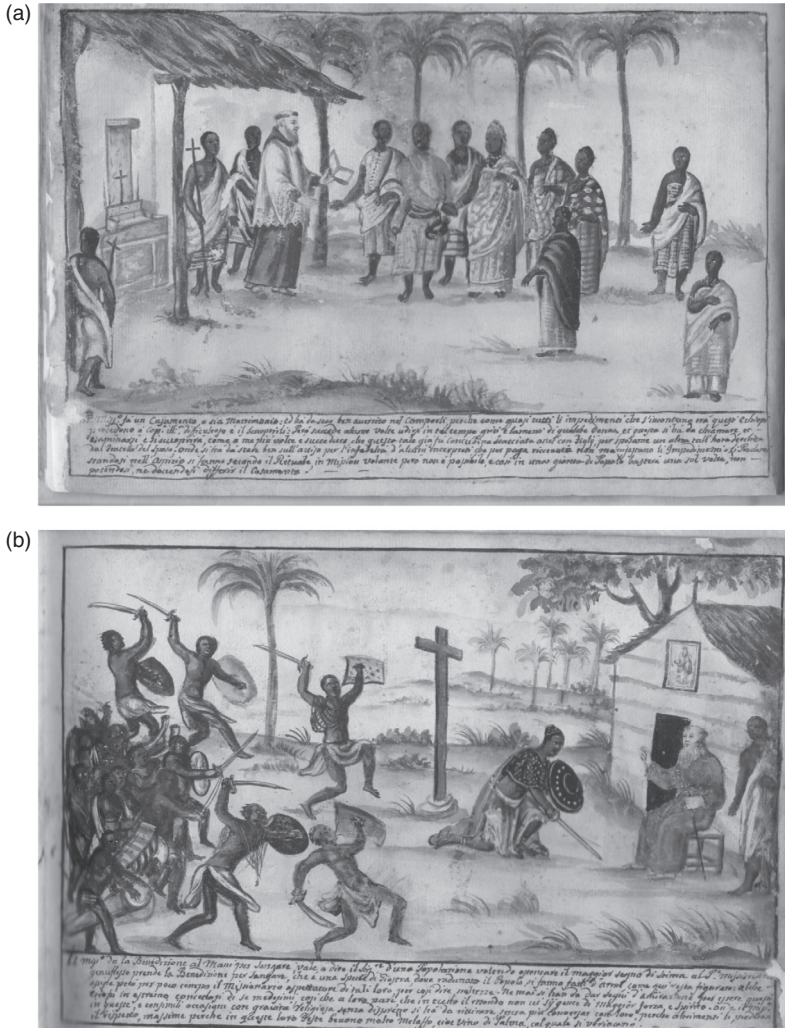
Figure 6.1 (a) Bernardino d'Asti, The Missionary makes [sic] a Wedding, *ca*. 1750, watercolor on paper, 19.5 × 28 cm. Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin, MS 457, fol. 12v; (b) Bernardino d'Asti, The Missionary gives his Blessing to the Mani during Sangamento, *ca*. 1750, watercolor on paper, 19.5 × 28 cm. Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin, MS 457, fol. 12 r (Photographs © Settore Sistema bibliotecario urbano della Città di Torino). (A black and white version of these figures will appear in some formats. For the colour versions, please refer to the plate section.)

since the beginning of the sixteenth century. Armed and blessed, he will be ready to ritually accept and overcome the danced challenge to his authority that his men are excitedly preparing behind him with acrobatic passes. Part ritual, part martial exercise, the *sangamento* political performance has been amply described in written primary sources on the Kongo and surrounding polities. Travellers' accounts, missionary chronicles, and early histories seized the spectacle from a range of European perspectives. These foreigners' views, in turn, combine powerfully with recorded iteration of local mythologies that both corroborate the accounts and explain their otherwise obscure contents (Fromont 2011b).

The visual testimony of the *sangamento* that friar Bernardino left us completes the written and oral sources with the information density typical of images. Created in the context of early modern Europe's growing interest in depictions of otherness and faraway lands, in often fanciful images by European artists routinely working in emblematic or allegorical modes, his paintings demand critical attention and a cautious approach. It cannot be taken as a given that they may have any value as documents shedding light on Central Africa. Rather, an understanding of the kind and accuracy of information they contain and of the knowledge they articulate demands careful, multi-angled consideration. Methodologically, the documentary potential of such images emerges (or wanes) through cross-reference with a range of complementary sources, such as written accounts and elements of material culture from the time and place they portray. Bringing together different categories of documents not only probes individual sources, but also, and most productively, amplifies their potential contribution to the study of the subject matter at hand.

In this regard, the archaeological work undertaken in the KongoKing project since 2012 offers exciting new perspective for the understanding of Central African history, religion, and material culture from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Beyond simply probing the images' accuracy, the newly uncovered material brings to the fore sometimes inconspicuous and often easily overlooked details present in the images. In turn, the paintings allow us to piece together unearthed fragments into whole objects and to take the excavated material beyond the grave, placing them into rich interplay with their historical social environment in a range of contexts, in addition to the funerary.

Framing Nsundi

In 2012 and 2013, the KongoKing project team led two excavation campaigns uncovering an elite cemetery linked to the historical Kongo kingdom's northeastern province of Nsundi. As outlined in the group's publications, they located the tombs thanks to a close reading of seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century historical documents cross-referenced with local oral histories collected in the twentieth century and interviews with locals in 2012 (Clist *et al.* 2015c). Missionary scholars, such as Jesuit Joseph Van Wing and protestant Karl Edward Laman from the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden, gathered testimonies from and related to Nsundi in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century (Van Wing 1921; Laman 1957). They recorded these elements of oral history a mere two generations after the 1835 burial of the last Duke of Nsundi, the last ruler associated through his title with the political hierarchies of the historical kingdom, a date established from interviews Laman conducted later in the century, that is to say possibly from still living eyewitnesses. Redemptorist Joseph De Munck, present in the region from the mid-twentieth century to the 1980s, and archaeologist Pierre de Maret, visiting in the 1970s, confirmed the continued local knowledge of elite burials into the 1900s, in spite of the profound changes that the inhabitants of the region had lived through during the colonial period (De Munck 1971; Clist *et al.* 2015c: 376). However, the existence of the specific cemetery excavated by the KongoKing project team was no longer known by the present-day villagers of Mbanza Nsundi at the onset of the excavation campaigns (Bernard Clist pers. comm.).

This still recent memory of the Kongo kingdom era can, thanks to the exceptionally rich archive existing for the region by African standards, be confronted with historical documents. Accounts from missionaries and travellers as well as correspondence from the Kongo elite provide relatively rich sources about Nsundi, a province of the kingdom and large interface between its core and areas beyond its limes. The importance of the region already appeared in the earliest moments of the kingdom's Christian era, inaugurated in earnest by king Afonso I (r. 1509–42), around 1510. The central and notorious Afonso I is also routinely referred to as just Afonso, as I do here. I also use the Portuguese titles of nobility and aristocratic kinship that he would adopt and promote as part of his reinvention of Kongo kingship.

While still a prince living under the reign of his father, Afonso, who would become the first great Christian king of Kongo, was the governor of Nsundi when he first heard of the new faith he would be instrumental in transforming into a local religion. In what would become the first episode of the story of his conversion, Afonso travelled from Nsundi to the coastal province of Soyo where Portuguese travellers and clerics had landed and begun to introduce Christianity to local inhabitants. This inaugural journey would precipitate a chain of events that culminated with the prince's ascension to the throne of Kongo, as retold in the foundation myth of the Christian kingdom, which he later invented and successfully promoted. Nsundi, whose leaders soon followed the lead of Afonso in adopting the new faith, could thus boast of being, along with Soyo, the cradle of Kongo's most ancient Christianity (Brásio 1952: 143, 534; Fromont 2014: 26–63).

Early traveller and chronicler of the Kongo, Portuguese Duarte Lopes opined in Filippo Pigafetta's *Relatione del reame di Congo* that governorship of the province was the privilege of the king of Kongo's heir apparent (Pigafetta 1591: 35; Thornton 1998b: 51; see also Chapter 1 and Chapter 4 by John Thornton). Kings of Kongo in fact came from many different provinces over the centuries, not only Nsundi, and eligibility for the throne resided in complex genealogical reckonings following both matrilineal and patrilineal links to Afonso (Hilton 1985). However, it is not surprising that at the time of Lopes' stay in the Kongo in the late sixteenth century, but also in later periods, governorship of Nsundi would offer a means to endow pre-eminent status on an individual and buttress the position of the king of Kongo's chosen heir. Leadership over the symbolically, strategically, and economically crucial region would grant him both economic power and prestige, essential elements from which his claim to the throne would be made viable. The crown of the Kongo indeed traditionally fell to one of a group of eligible candidates chosen by a council of electors. It was not inherited through strict or automatic genealogical transmission. In practice, both kinship and consensus played a role in the elevation of a man to the throne. Moreover, wealth and its close pendant of manpower increasingly became deciding factors in the matter starting in the era of the civil wars in the mid-seventeenth century.

Whether the heir apparent or not, the Duke of Nsundi enjoyed in the Christian era a privileged position. Documents of the early seventeenth century stress both the key status of the province in the

kingdom and its increasing political independence vis-à-vis the rulers of Mbanza Kongo. In 1616, for instance, the king of Kongo attempted to bring back into the kingdom's fold his cousin the Mwene Nsundi Don Álvaro Afonso, his principal military commander in the region, coaxing him with letters and personal envoys from his close family (Brásio 1955b: 252). The tension around the status of the province and its close inclusion in the fabric of the realm derived not only from a concern with territorial integrity. Nsundi's location afforded the kingdom's access to copper- and raffia-producing areas north of its frontiers. Not only were these materials valuable commercially, they were also key to the crafting of the kingdom's legitimizing regalia. Copper alloy objects – including Christian paraphernalia – and raffia fiber textiles in the form of shoulder nets, prestige caps, and other luxury cloths were essential to enthronement rituals of leaders at all levels of the Kongo's political organization, including the king himself. Ecological conditions in the broader Central African region meant that most of the territory of the Kongo kingdom lay south and west of raffia-producing areas, with the notable exception of the *Momboares* or Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza, giving the northeastern province of Nsundi the enviable position of a hub for the highly sought-after products that it either produced in its own lands or secured from farther regions (Thornton 1990–1991; Vansina 1998: 274). "Many [in Nsundi]", chronicler Lopes wrote in the late 1500s, "trade with neighboring countries, selling and bartering salt and textiles of various colors imported from the Indies and Portugal as well as currency shells. And they receive in exchange palm cloth and ivory and sable and marten pelts, as well as some girdles worked from palm leaves and very esteemed in these parts" (Pigafetta 1591: 36). In other words, Nsundi served as a commercial node where local merchants traded the cosmopolitan imports the Kongo was able to secure thanks to its long-distance Atlantic connections for products originating from inland regions. The archaeological material closely fits this status of Nsundi as an area rich in metal, textile, and imported goods, and overall commercially prosperous (Clist *et al.* 2015c).

It is no wonder then that the flourishing and prominent province attracted a number of foreign visitors during the early modern period, who described its capital and church, two areas of archaeological potential (Brásio 1955a: 4; Brásio 1960a: 443). It hosted Carmelite friars during their short stay in Kongo in 1583–5 (Brásio 1954: 355–415),

perhaps Duarte Lopes who described it in the last quarter of the sixteenth century (Pigafetta 1591), the Jesuit Mateus Cardoso who writes of his time as the curate of Nsundi in the 1620s (Brásio 1969: 22), the Capuchin friar Girolamo de Montesarchio around 1650 (Piazza 1976), and, later, his colleagues Luca da Caltanisetta (Rainero 1974) and Marcellino d'Atri (Toso 1984) around 1700.

Reckoning with Finery, Power, and Gender

Eleven graves emerged from the KongoKing project excavation at the hilltop of Kindoki, the area identified as a possible location for the historical capital of the Nsundi province. The tombs, which were constructed between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, following a similar plan, orientation and in close proximity to each other, likely belonged to related men, women, and children (Clist *et al.* 2015c). The elite status of those buried is evident from the wealth of funerary material entombed with them as well as from physical characteristics their remains displayed. Markers of diabetes and overweight in the bones of the woman buried in tomb 11, a matron with an estimated age of between 40 and 60 years old, for instance, flesh out the material significance of her status. She occupied during her lifetime a position that afforded her access to a rich diet that reflected a social position characterized by the ability to acquire consumables as well as material luxuries, some of which graced her body as it was interred (Sengeløv 2014: 46; Clist *et al.* 2015c: 394). Living around the time of the burial of the last Duke of Nsundi in 1835, she wore to the grave hundreds of red and white glass beads as well as pierced white shells around her neck, thick iron chains stacked three rows high around her ankles, and possibly an elaborate coiffure combining textile and decorative metal pins. As it was the documented practice in the region for elite burials (Cavazzi 1687: 116, 117; Cuvelier 1953a: 49), her body was likely wrapped in a thick bundle of textiles traces of which have left a discoloration in the earth around her body (Clist *et al.* 2015c). In another burial of the group, tomb 8, dated to the same range of 1825–45, the shroud of the deceased woman therein remains partly conserved, along with thrirty-two of the small copper-alloy hawk bells that were once attached to it. This second lady also wore an anklet around her right leg, a gold necklace chain, more than a thousand white and red, white, blue, and silvery glass beads, hundreds

of pierced shells, one copper bead, and a distinctive spiral-shaped shell (Verhaeghe *et al.* 2014).

Beads, metal objects, and textiles are the three primary types of finery associated with female members of the Kongo elite. Friar Bernardino's wedding scene in Figure 6.1 a shows us several women from the kingdom wearing a mix of textiles and adornment closely similar to their counterparts entombed less than a century later. With a close attention to detail typical of Capuchin images of Central Africa, friar Bernardino gives us a useful reading grid for the archaeological evidence from the burials. The grave goods found at Kindoki, in turn, further attest to the keen, observing eye of the friar. Looking at coiffure illustrates the enriched view of the historical era that derives from cross-referencing the two sources. The cloth and metal tacks found around the female skull in tomb 11, for instance, may be approached with an eye to the elaborate coiffures seen on wedding-goers in the watercolors (Figure 6.1 a). Red ribbons, colorful cloth, and items depicted in white paint, possibly to convey the shine of metal, grace the heads of the women gathered in friar Bernardino's image. Rows of necklaces and bracelets depicted in the scene also correspond to those on the Kindoki bodies; long outfits however do not reveal the ankles of the painted ladies, who may have worn leg adornments. The analysis of the archaeological material so far does not indicate the types and origins of textiles used in the tombs, but it is very likely that it consisted of a mix of locally fabricated and imported cloth, a blend that would echo the cosmopolitan provenance of the beads and bells found on the two women's bodies and other imported items such as Portuguese ceramics also found in the Kindoki excavations (Clist *et al.* 2015c: 386).

A similar combination of elaborate coiffure, necklaces, and long cloth wrapped about the body further links the painted figures and the archaeological remains to a visual genre of copper alloy pendants cast in the round, identified as figures of the Virgin Mary on iconographic grounds and following twentieth-century ethnographies (Figures 6.2 a and b). It is intriguing that no such pendants have been found in the excavations, although their relative scarcity in comparison to medals and crucifixes in the known record of Kongo Christian material provides a statistical explanation for this lacuna. Hundreds of crucifixes from the Kongo are still extant today, but only a handful of copper alloy female saint pendants and only a few more male saint figures remain. The Metropolitan Museum is the only public collection
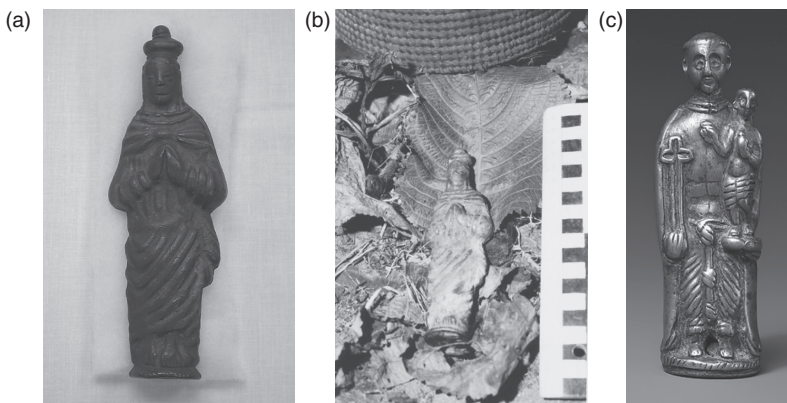
Figure 6.2 (a) Pendant: Virgin Mary, sixteenth–seventeenth centuries (?), Angola, Northwestern Angola, brass, 14.6 × 5.1 × 1.9 cm, The Metropolitan Museum, Gift of Ernst Anspach, 1999, 1999.295.9 (Public domain); (b) Photograph of female figure at Kindoki by Pierre de Maret, 1973, Royal Museum for Central Africa, negative number 752, archaeology section; (c) Pendant: Saint Anthony of Padua, sixteenth–nineteenth centuries, Kongo peoples, Kongo kingdom, Congo-Kinshasa, Congo-Brazzaville or Angola, brass (partially hollow cast), 10.2 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ernst Anspach, 1999, 1999.295.1 (Photograph © The Metropolitan Museum of Art). (A black and white version of this figure will appear in some formats. For the colour version, please refer to the plate section.)

holding an example of the female figure (inv. 1999.295.9). Examples of the slightly more numerous male saint statuettes are, among other depositories, in the collections of the same museum (inv. 1999.295.9; 1999.295.1; 1999.295.2) and the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (inv. HO 1998.52.5). Notably, Pierre de Maret photographed such a female pendant in Nsundi in 1973, preciously kept in the local community alongside swords of status and a large bell, around one meter high. A photograph remains in the archives of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (negative number 752, archaeology section) (Figure 6.2 b). The figure which Pierre de Maret photographed is closely similar to or the one in the Metropolitan Museum collection. For an illustration of a female figure example in a private collection, see Volper (2011: plate 24); Fromont (2014: plate 26).

The Kindoki findings bring new perspective on some of the characteristics of the copper alloy female saints in particular when considered in conjunction with the similarly cast, similarly scaled, and

stylistically close figurine pendants of male saints (Figure 6.2 c). Both categories of objects, associated through iconography and oral history with the Kongo's Christian period, mirrored the appearance of the elite men and women who would wear them. The same mirror effect described above between the entombed women and the copper figurine linked elite men and figures of male saints, especially the very popular Saint Anthony. The long lengths of textile depicting the Franciscan habit of the Saint in particular created figures of ambivalent appearance, which could easily be read as members of the Central African elite. As wear smoothed the surface of the copper figures and blurred their details, the Capuchin garb increasingly echoed the long lengths of draped cloth enveloping elite Kongo men, the hood and collar of the habit approximated the look of the *nkutu* shoulder net of prestige, and the tonsure of the saint that of a *mpu* cap. Saint Anthony's very attributes, the cross and the child Jesus continued to reinforce the connection, making the saint a bearer of just the type of imagery that the great men of the Christian Kongo proudly owned and displayed, in a striking *mise-en-abîme* of wearers and copper alloy figures. Watercolor, excavations and metal figurine, considered together, suggest that a similar visual connection existed between elite women and their female pendants.

Yet, considered side by side, male and female saints and male and female members of the elite, both painted and entombed, differ in remarkable ways. While the role of textiles and of imported material in their finery is similar, the women are not explicitly associated with Christian objects such as medals, crucifixes, or swords. This observation extends to the written archive from the period that seems to report Christian objects mainly in the hands of men, even if a more systematic reading of sources with an eye on this issue might lead to new insights. Notably, a couple of prominent women, prophetess Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and a devout, elderly widow of the king of Kongo ostentatiously used clerical garb as part of a gender ambiguous self-presentation (Fromont 2014: 207–10). Nevertheless, contrast more generally observed between men's and women's relation to Christian paraphernalia was made particularly striking by the funerary material found in grave 6 of Kindoki around the remains of what was originally thought to be a seven-year-old boy (Clist *et al*. 2015c: 398). More extensive research on this skeleton has revealed, however, that his most likely age at the time of burial was rather between 18 and 22 years,

which is still young (Polet 2018). He was buried with a sword and a medal, indicating not only the hereditary dimension of status, probably more bequeathed rather than earned, but also of the access and use of the Christian objects associated with it. It is not happenstance that in a closely linked burial group sumptuously outfitted women would not count among their finery Christian objects, while their elite male counterparts, living at most two generations apart, would even in their youth. What, then, to infer from this gendered difference in the tombs?

The present data is of course too little evidence to suggest anything beyond Kindoki. Even the robust written record on the region should be approached with caution, as it was composed in its majority by European men likely to overlook women or to have only limited knowledge about elite female practices. What is more, the methodological caveats of arguments of absence, paired with the anecdotic dimension of such a small archaeological data set, warrants cautions in any attempts at interpretation of this discrepancy. It is also possible that the women's tombs at Kindoki were more recent than the men's and thus belonged to the other side of a hypothetical chronological divide marking a decline of the availability or relevance of Christian material. Accounts from the period ranging from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, however, testify to the continued presence of Christianity in the region (Thornton 2016b). In any case, that neither engraved women, nor female saint figures, or painted ladies wear or carry Christian paraphernalia warrants remark and interrogation. At a minimum, it offers the opportunity to reflect on whether, in the kingdom of Kongo, the experience of Christian practices, symbolism, and paraphernalia followed gender-differentiated paths and it outlines the relevance of further reflection about the role and status of women in the Kongo at the dusk of the Christian era.

Since the early moments of the history of the Christian Kongo, elite women had been deeply and decisively involved in the advent and trajectory of the new Faith in the kingdom (Thornton 2006). However, Kongo elite women, who enjoyed positions of social, political, and spiritual influence in the pre-Christian Kongo, found themselves running up against the drastic limitations that the Roman Catholic Church imposed on the involvement of female members of society in its hierarchy and institutional organization. Women could and did participate in the Church as worshippers and patrons but could not

be involved in clerical or pseudo-clerical capacities as could their male relatives. In the late sixteenth century, an ambitious daughter of King Álvaro I (r. 1568–87) attempted to bring some corrective to the situation through the instauration of a female religious order to Mbanza Kongo, the kingdom's capital. Struck by the sight of a statue of the Virgin dressed in the habit of Carmelite nuns that newly arrived male Discalced Carmelites paraded in procession in the city in 1584, the princess, whose name sources did not record, set out to bring a female convent to her land. In a move revealing elite Kongo women's wishes for greater spiritual and institutional engagement with the Church and telling of their ambitions and, in fact, ability to act internationally, the princess wrote to the prioress of the Carmelites in Lisbon to enquire about the creation of a nunnery in the Kongo (Sérouet 1974: 54–7; Gray 1999: 142–3).

The visual dimension of the story is significant. Seeing, probably for the first time, a female Christian statue dressed in what she clearly recognized as a religious habit was both impactful and inspiring for the unnamed princess. Although many images of the Virgin graced Mbanza Kongo at the end of the sixteenth century, none, to my knowledge, were dressed in clerical garb in the manner of the newly arrived Carmelite statue. In contrast, images of Francis, Anthony, or other robed saints offered a common example of artworks representing men in habit directly similar to the living and breathing missionaries in religious garb active in the region. The religious outfits, different in shape and uniformity from other European clothing seen in the capital, would not have escaped the attention of the highly textile literate elite of the kingdom. What is more, images of the Virgin were very frequently displayed alongside male mendicant saints, making the contrast between their secular dress and the male saints' habits all the more noticeable. In a manner furthest from monks' or friars' habits brought from Europe, some statues of the Virgin were even at times dressed in local fabrics (Fromont 2014: 197–201).

The princess thus recognized in the Carmelite-dressed Mary an equivalent to images of male saints. The vision of the Virgin in a habit presented in her view an alternative idea for female religious engagement in which women had access to religious garb and enjoyed close, formalized connections with the Church. For elite Central African men, opportunities for institutional engagement with the Church abounded. Although few men became members of the clergy, some

did, and many others served in their youth as altar boys and, once adults, as *mestres*. *Mestres* or church masters were high status men who attended to the religious and to some extent lay education of the next generation of the elite as well as to other matters regarding the upkeep of the Catholic Church. This afforded ample opportunity for the male elite to cultivate close associations with the ecclesiastic organization (Brinkman 2016). This link in turn encompassed a visual dimension through the liturgical garb of clerics and altar boys and the typical uniform of the *mestres*, a white cloth draped on one shoulder as seen for instance on the three men standing behind the friar in Figures 6.1 a and b (Fromont forthcoming). The special roles and differentiated outfits gave the male members of the elite an opportunity to make manifest their social status as Christians in public displays, both heralding and reinforcing the privileges they derived from membership of the Catholic Church. A female regular Order would have provided similar opportunities for Kongo women.

The unnamed princess' plan eventually failed and no female convent opened in the Kongo. In spite of this, female connections to the Church still found a range of outlets. The Kongo elite created female lay associations alongside those of men that formed a significant locus of religiosity, social prestige, and collective action, albeit without uniforms. Women's continued interest in Christianity over the early modern period yielded other occasional attempts at channeling Catholic religious garb as visual statements. As already mentioned, at least two biologically female figures in the history of the kingdom appropriated male regular habits into statements of their own. The anti-European, but Christian-inspired prophetess Kimpa Vita, whose charismatic religious and political movement rocked the Kongo in the late seventeenth century, on the one hand, and an elderly, pious widow of a king of Kongo, on the other, both playing on ambiguous gender status, adopted male Franciscan garb to herald their religious dedication and suggest political authority around 1700. Outside of the kingdom, Angolan Queen Njinga and later her sister, Dona Barbara, chose to be buried shrouded in a Franciscan habit in a similar sort of statement. In all these cases, the women wearers used the habit, among other things, to contribute to claims of gender ambiguity that served their political agenda (Fromont 2014: 207–10).

In fact, Christian objects and emblems in the historical Kongo were as much religious paraphernalia as they were insignia of rulership.

Crucifixes, medals, and swords formed integral parts of the kingdom's insignia, showcasing the legitimacy of their wearer as members of the political system king Afonso founded on the basis of Christianity and its symbols. As men played the most prominent leadership role in the kingdom, they were the ones most associated with the emblematic objects of Kongo Christian rule. However, women could be, and in fact were with some frequency, heads of elite households, participated directly in political life, and even served on occasion as provincial governors or sub-provincial rulers, that is to say in positions of *de facto* independent political authority, particularly in later periods (Toso 1974: 208). Thornton (2006: 438, 454) even dated a marked increase in the number of women in acting political position to the aftermaths of the battle of Mbwila of 1665 and the era of the civil wars (1641–1718).

The content of the Kindoki graves testifies to the continued relevance of at least some of the emblematic features of Kongo Christian political symbolism, such as the swords and crucifixes, as discussed below. The early-nineteenth-century women of Kindoki thus lived in a world where they could have been in position of power as potent actors in that system. Yet, their grave goods did not include Christian insignia. The proximity of the tombs and the cohesive nature of the burial complex indicate closely related burials and an equally close social group. The women of Kindoki were likely consorts or matriarchs in the same group to which the male relatives or recent ancestors buried alongside them belonged, that is to say members of the ruling elite in positions central to the structure and transmission of authority in the Christian system. But in their case, such status is not evidenced by the presence of Christian material.

Following another line of enquiry, we may interrogate the absence of Christian objects in the female graves for clues about alternative sources and symbolism of prestige at the decline of the Kongo Christian era. Broadhead (1983) described how women from the Kongo were in that period not only of particular importance in the productive and reproductive economy of the region through their role in agriculture and as mothers, but also as active participants in the slave trade. Nsundi's geographic position at a key trading crossroad between the two shores of the Congo River and its long-established commercial networks made it an important importer of slaves from beyond the *limes* of the Kongo. The wealth and prestige of early-nineteenth-century Nsundi

women could have derived as much from commercial success as from hereditary social and political standing within the then fading historical Christian political organization.

An intriguing hint to a reading of the women's funerary finery outside of the symbolism associated with the Christian kingdom may be gleaned from the woman in tomb 8. Her funerary material included several items known in other contexts for their links with initiatory associations such as *kimpasi* or *khimba*, suggesting the possibility of her participation in these or similar groups. She wore among her plentiful ornaments a single spiral-shaped shell (*Tympanotonus fuscatus*), larger and distinct from all the other, mostly rounded, beads in her necklaces (Verhaeghe *et al.* 2014: 26). The conspicuous singularity of the shell makes it a point of focus that demands interpretation. Although mentions of a ritual association called *kimpasi* occurred since at least the 1600s, Léon Bittremieux's early-twentieth-century study of the Bakhimba association from the Mayombe offers the closest geographical and chronological discussion of an initiatory group. The author, a member of the Scheut Catholic missions, not only discusses the role in the Khimba of long, spiral shaped *zinga* shells of the sort found in the excavation. He also describes several implements using hawk bells, "*grelots*" in his words, albeit of organic rather than metallic manufacture judging from the objects illustrated in his book, that offered further parallels to the findings in tomb 8, specifically with the intriguing set of bells buried with the woman (Bittremieux 1936: 38–9). The "wound oblate bead […] composed of translucent dark blue glass […] 8.2 mm long and 11.0 mm in diameter" found with the woman warrants further research as this was one of the insignia of a third type of association, the *mani*, which Bittremieux also studied in 1916–17 (Bittremieux 1936: 226; Verhaeghe *et al.* 2014: 28). The purpose of these isolated, but, I hope, generative rapprochements between the ethnographic historiography and the archaeological findings is to underline the many avenues of research that such excavations open up when approached from a multidisciplinary angle. One of the truly exciting prospects the Kindoki excavations open up for instance is the opportunity to better understand the paradoxically little studied and understood transition between the relatively well known kingdom era and the equally well documented colonial period. The historical and material context of the early decades of the nineteenth century revealed by the excavation

already hints at ways in which the material, religious, and political culture of the kingdom period still operated while practices that would become prominent among the people living in colonial Congo already played a noticeable role.

Of Swords, Men, and Crosses

The material from the excavation not only sheds light on obscure material, it also enriches our understanding of better-known practices. Swords, the main feature of the graves men occupied at Kindoki and Ngongo Mbata, were among the most emblematic objects of the historical Kongo. Central to the kingdom creation myth and key political insignia, the iron weapons are also among its best known and most numerous material remains, with many examples still extant today in local Central African communities (Sengeløv 2014: 94) as well as museum and private collections abroad, such as the Dartmouth Hood Museum of Art (inv. n. 997.20.30355), the Afrika Museum Berg en Dal (inv. n.: 29–692 and 29–473), the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (inv. n. 1953.100.1 and HO 1955.9.20), and the British Museum (inv. n. Af1995,05.1). Ample and detailed documentation of the weapons also appeared in visual and written historical sources. Cosmographer Pigafetta's 1591 edition of Portuguese traveller Duarte Lopes' eyewitness account of the Kongo prominently showcases two large swords its illustration of Kongo nobles (Pigafetta 1591), as shown in Figure 6.3 a. Long considered as fanciful depictions of Africans, the engravings in the volume have been shown to contain accurate information. The net on the chest of one of the men for instance is a convincing depiction of the *nkutu* shoulder net seen on various protagonists in Figure 6.1 b. More unexpectedly perhaps, the eagle-head sword carried by the same figures may in fact derive from accurate eyewitness information about Central African practices. In her study of Kongo swords, Amanda Sengeløv spotted the weapon peeking out from the waist of a figure in Olfert Dapper's 1668 *Description of Africa* (Dapper 1668: 586) (Figure 6.3 b). The Dutch compiler's text on the Kongo provides detailed and sometimes, but far from always, verifiable information on the Kongo, and Africa at large, yet its composition from uncited and often still unidentified sources has made it a difficult document to use. Efforts to chart Dapper's published

(a)

(b)
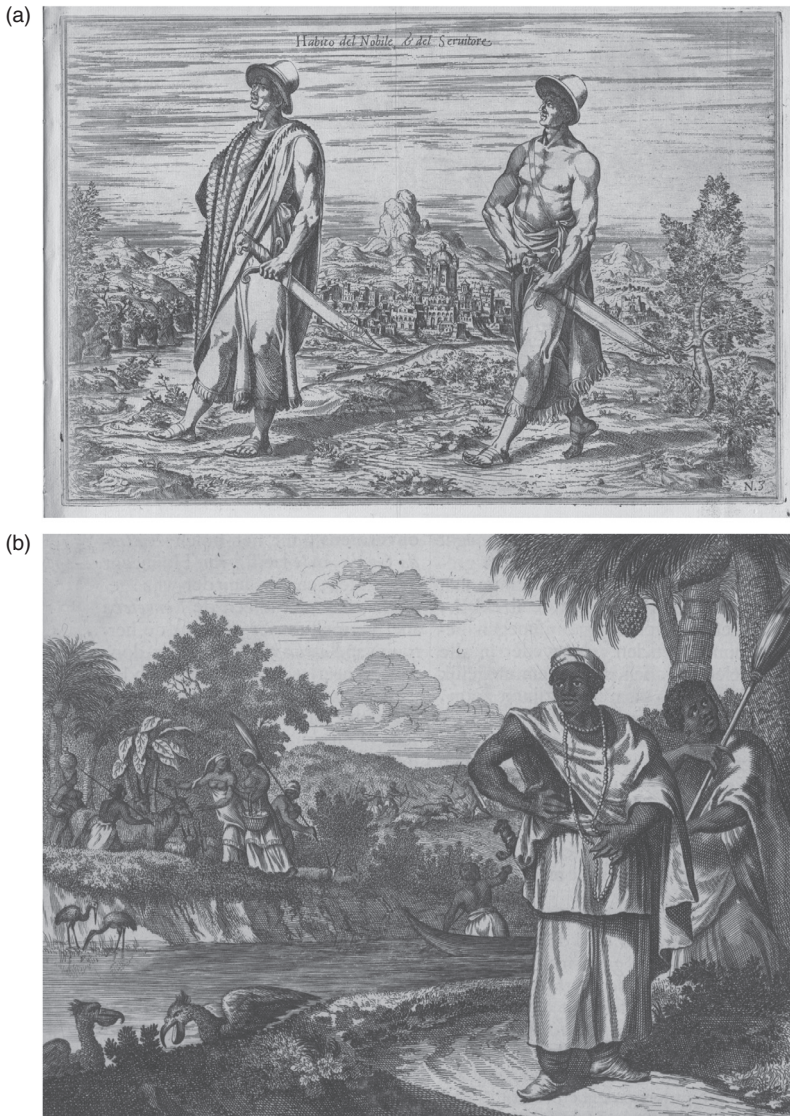
Figure 6.3 (a) Dress of the Noble and the Servant. From Duarte Lopes, and Filippo Pigafetta. Relatione Del Reame Di Congo. Roma: Appresso B. Grassi, 1591, plate no. 3 (Photograph courtesy of the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies, Northwestern University, Evanston); (b) From Olfert Dapper, Naukeurige beschrijvinge der afrikaensche eylanden; als Madagaskar, of Sant Laurens, Sant Thomee, d'eilanden van Kanarien, Kaep de Verd, Malta en andere, vertoont in de benamingen, gelegentheit, steden, revieren, gewassen &c. Amsterdam, 1668, 586.

and unpublished sources for his works concerned with other regions of the continent have yielded important results, but much of his texts and images still await systematic study that would probe their origins and establish the nature of their documentary value as matter of fact eyewitness accounts, products of European imagination, or something in between (Jones 1990). In the present case, the "eagle's head" sword provides a cautionary tale about too rapidly dismissing such European images as fanciful projections. This type of handle not only formed, as Sengeløv established, a "common thread running through these pictures" of the Kongo, but also emerged as a motif linked to one of the items uncovered in tomb 12 at Ngongo Mbata, a sword that the same author identifies as a North African piece closely linked to the eagle-head examples illustrated in the prints (Figures 6.3 b and 6.4 a) (Sengeløv 2014: 80). Converging evidence from early modern visual sources and archaeology thus points to an array of findings deserving further investigation, for instance, about a possible aesthetic sensibility on the part of the Kongo elite for this type of import or about the specific symbolic functions such objects could fulfil. At this first level of analysis, we recall how feathers, often represented on elite headdresses in the early modern period, denoted power. Worn by ritual specialists, and used in empowered bundles and objects, they also served as emblems and instruments of access to invisibles forces. At another level of analysis, the conspicuous presence of this specific subgenre of swords opens up the possibility to map the networks of trade that provided Kongo men with these particular imported objects. The chain of commerce linking makers and users of the swords would also map networks of exchange and direct as well as indirect interactions that would enrich our understanding of Central Africa in relation to the broader world.

For seeking the prestige of items of recognizably cosmopolitan flair, the Kongo elites also demonstrated a robust interest in a creative reworking of such objects. Crucifixes and medals, as well as swords were taken apart, recomposed, rearticulated, and at times recreated completely from locally produced parts. Decorated ivory handles seen on several Kongo swords are an example of such manipulations (Sengeløv 2014: 97). Tomb 4 at the Kindoki cemetery presents a similar, if less ostentatious, instance of such rearticulation of foreign items into local formulations in a sword handle (Figure 6.4 a). The shell-like shape of the guard and the thread wrapped around the handle of the

(a)

(b)
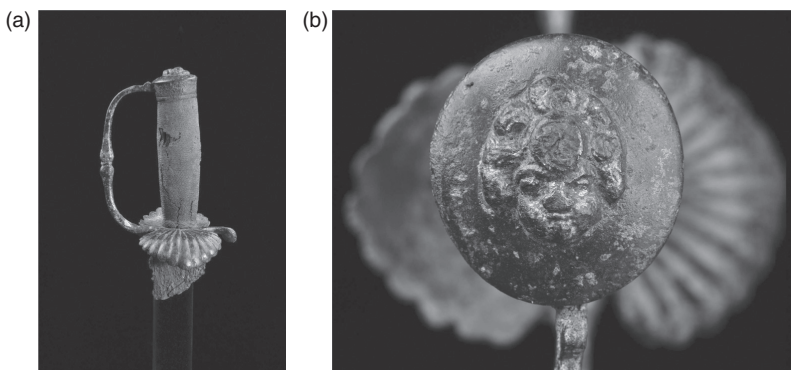
Figure 6.4 (a) Fragment of sword from Tomb 4 at Kindoki and (b) detail of the angel medal at the end of its handle (Photographs KongoKing). (A black and white version of these figures will appear in some formats. For the colour versions, please refer to the plate section.)

excavated fragment offer intriguing points of comparison to the coat of arms of the Kongo on which swords and shells feature prominently. That an elite object of prestige would participate directly or indirectly through the evocative power of some of its design in this visual culture of political symbolism is hardly surprising.

The angel face at the end of the sword is a common element found on Kongo crucifixes, reaffirming the connection between crosses and swords as part of a single set of insignia of Kongo Christian power. Both categories of objects would be worn together, and often echoed each other in their decoration patterns. Yet, the discreet angel face at the top of the handle also operates at a different level than that of political regalia. Virtually inconspicuous, the angel functions less as an emblem than an intimate feature, providing, perhaps, protection to its owner. Wearing the weapon at the waist, the man could glance down at the upward looking face or his left thumb could rub the textured plate while his hand rested on the handle. Perhaps the flashing eyes of the angel brought the first blow to an adversary as the end of the sword pointed directly out to the front of its owner as he pulled the sword out of its sheath.

The obvious and forceful piercing of the angel's head with a nail is also striking. Anthropomorphism is a common feature in Kongo swords whose shape and decorations broadly echoed the look and regalia of their owners, in particular when involved in *sangamento* danced rituals. The angel face in this sword may be part of a more

subtle form of personification of the sword, turning the end of the weapon into a head. The metal thread around the handle also creates a textile-like effect reminiscent of the spiraling construction characteristic of Central African elite textile *mpu* caps. The effect created by the different textures of the several metal chains combined around the handle of another sword found in tomb 5 provides another striking parallel between this peculiar treatment of the handle and textiles. The handle as head, then, wears a cap.

In this reading, the nail connecting the angel to the weapon also pierces the occiput of the anthropomorphized sword. The forceful piercing of the angel's head could then be compared to similar gestures central to the construction of power figures or *minkisi*, a category of objects first recorded in European descriptions around 1800, i.e. around the time of the Kindoki burials (Tuckey 1818). The top of the head in particular was a location understood to be endowed with particular power and often enhanced with medicine packets. In one example collected from the Scheut mission in Kangu, in the Mayombe region, a shell similar in shape to the one in the sword's guard tops the medicine packet on the figure's head (Tollebeek *et al.* 2011: 131)[2]. Without suggesting direct links between these two objects that did not cross paths, this comparison brings to the fore common themes, motifs. and practices, outlining a distinct visual culture of object empowerment at the decline of the Kongo kingdom: material accumulation, piercing, use of shells, etc.

In whole or in parts, reconfigured or preserved in their original forms, items and motifs such as the angel face plate or swords found at Kindoki not only participated in a visual culture with still-visible links to the Christian Kongo but also foreshadowed imagery, practices, and emblems that would be recorded in the colonial era. The excavated tombs and the rich material they yielded thus crucially contribute to the understanding of the transition between the visual culture prevalent in the kingdom era between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries and the new visual and material environment that developed in the nineteenth century under the growing pressure and eventual colonial dominance of outside powers.

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[2] About the clan and lineage links between inhabitants of Mayombe and the region of Nsundi and nearby Manyanga markets, see MacGaffey (2000b: 61–77).

Conclusion

The KongoKing project has made a monumental contribution to the understanding of Central Africa between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Its archaeological campaigns in particular have brought to light objects that, though well known from the texts and images documenting the region, and sometimes akin to extant examples in museum collections, are for the first time available to scholars with rich, precise information about date, geography, and material context. Such findings have decisively enriched the documentary corpus concerning the historical Kongo from its origins to its Christian era, and eventually, its waning during the nineteenth century. In this chapter, I have endeavored to locate the KongoKing project findings in relation to existing archives and comparanda to identify new avenues of research and suggest opportunities for further investigations. Three themes in particular, I argue, are ripe for renewed, robust, and multidisciplinary attention: province-level studies of regional variations within the Kongo kingdom; the role of gender in Central African religious, political, and social organization; and the transition from the era of the historical kingdom to the colonial period during the nineteenth century (see also Vos, Chapter 10).

Acknowledgements

7 | *Ceramics Decorated with Woven Motifs: An Archaeological Kongo Kingdom Identifier?*

ELS CRANSHOF, NICOLAS NIKIS AND
PIERRE DE MARET

Introduction

The archaeological record of the Kongo region stands out in Central Africa by an exceptional amount of pottery with elaborate decorations, obviously inspired by woven motifs (Figure 7.1). As textiles of high aesthetic quality played a prominent role in Kongo society, especially during the heyday of the kingdom (see also Fromont, Chapter 6), it is hence interesting to explore what may have been the relation between this pottery and those textiles. In this chapter we seek to explore this relation from a predominantly archaeological point of view.

In order to prepare for the post-congress excursion of the Fourth Pan-African Congress of Prehistory and Quaternary Studies that was held in Kinshasa (then Léopoldville) in 1958, Georges Mortelmans, a geology professor, visited several caves in the Mbanza Ngungu area situated in the current-day Kongo-Central province of Congo-Kinshasa. The walls of several of these caves were decorated with rock art. Some of these caves, such as Dimba, Ngovo and Mbafu, also yielded considerable finds of pottery.

In 1962, Mortelmans published the first classification of these arch-aeological ceramics. He subdivided them into several distinct groups, i.e. Groups I to VI, based on their shape, fabric and decoration. He noticed striking similarities between the intricate decorative patterns of Group II ceramics and those appearing on rock art, wooden sculptures and textiles from the region (Figure 7.2). He called them '*broderies*' ('embroideries') or '*velours*' ('velvet'). He went on to suggest that their decorative patterns were closely similar to well-known Kuba and Chokwe motifs (Mortelmans 1962: 413–14).

Mortelmans' pottery collection was subsequently deposited at the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in Tervuren. A decade later, Pierre de Maret (1972) analyzed the collection more thoroughly.
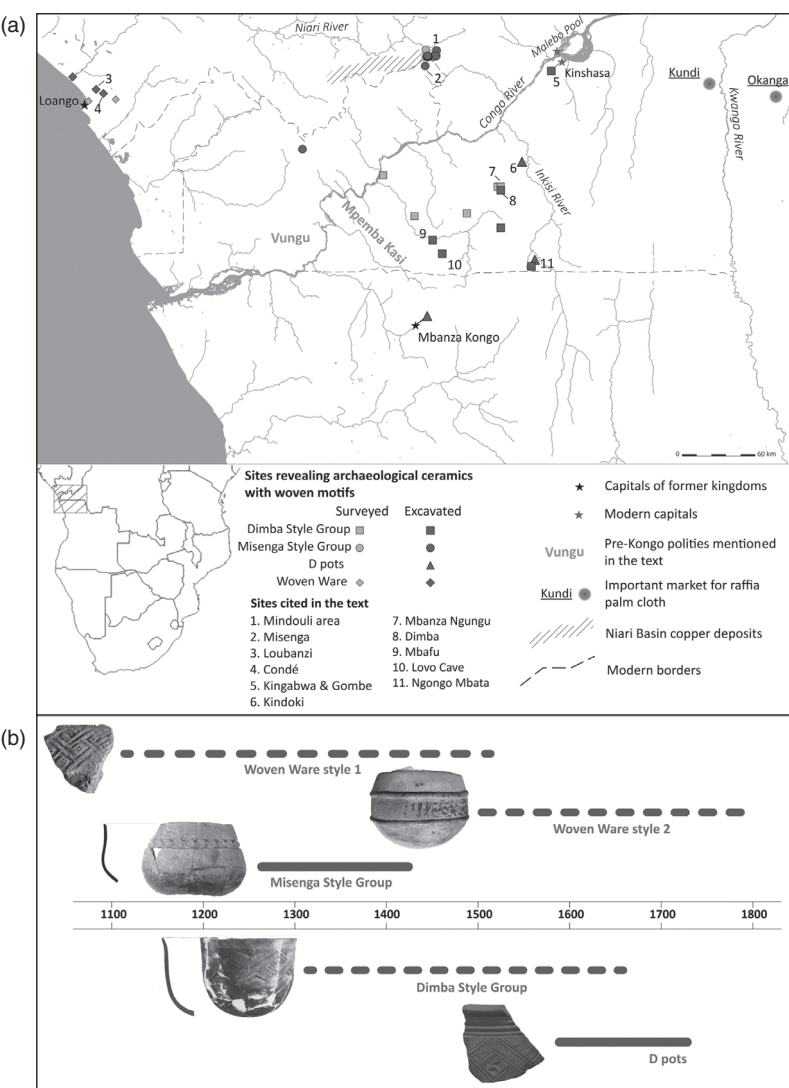
Figure 7.1 (a) Distribution map of archaeological pottery with woven motifs and main localities mentioned in the text; (b) Schematic chronology of the different ceramic groups with woven motifs ('Woven Ware', style 1 & 2: © James Denbow; D-pots: © KongoKing/Bernard Clist; Dimba style: © Pierre de Maret; Misenga style: © Nicolas Nikis).

Figure 7.2 (a) Statuette (detail), Yombe, Kongo-Central, Congo-Kinshasa, *ca*. late nineteenth century, wood and glass, 28.5 × 12.8 × 12 cm (EO.0.0.24662, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo © R. Asselberghs, RMCA Tervuren); (b) Ivory sceptre (detail), Woyo, Kongo-Central, Congo-Kinshasa, nineteenth century, ivory, 35.5 × 5 × 7.5 cm (EO.1979.1.260, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo © J. Van de Vyver, RMCA Tervuren); (c) Basket, Vili, Kongo-Central, Congo-Kinshasa, vegetal fibre, 33 × 27.5 cm (EO.0.0.7349-2, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo © J. Van de Vyver, RMCA Tervuren); (d) Basket, Vili, Kongo-Central, Congo-Kinshasa, vegetal

He specifically studied the decorative patterns of Group II ceramics in more detail and showed that these constitute a very sophisticated repertoire, expressed within a regular structure and created systematically following the same steps (de Maret 1972: 43–54). De Maret (1972: 54) also observed such decorations on stone pipes from the same area (see also Clist, Chapter 8). New surveys and test excavations combined with radiocarbon dating in the same caves soon led to revising the chronology of ceramic groups as proposed by Mortelmans (de Maret 1975; de Maret *et al.* 1977; de Maret 1982b).

Still a decade later, while working on other collections from the current-day Kongo-Central province collected by Maurits Bequaert between 1950 and 1952, Bernard Clist (1982) reviewed and redefined Group II and added to it material from Misenga, as already suggested by de Maret (1972), as well as some shards from Sumbi. After thirty years, Clist (2012) once more re-examined Group II ceramics in detail, discussed their chronology and distribution and renamed them the Mbafu Tradition, within which he distinguished two distinct facies.

Meanwhile, further north, along the Atlantic coast, in the area of the former Loango kingdom in current-day Congo-Brazzaville, James Denbow unearthed, during rescue excavations, different pottery wares with dates covering the last 3,000 years. On one of the first Later Iron Age wares, Denbow (2012) also noticed the striking similarity between its decorations and woven patterns. In his later book, he consequently

Figure 7.2 (*cont.*)

fibre, 30.5 × 31.5 cm (EO.0.0.29075, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo © J. Van de Vyver, RMCA Tervuren); (e) *Mpu*, Yombe, Kongo-Central, Congo-Kinshasa, before mid-twentieth century (date of acquisition), raffia fibre, 21 × 16 × 16 cm (EO.0.0.43042, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo © J. Van de Vyver, RMCA Tervuren); (f) *Mpu*, Kongo, Kongo-Central, Congo-Kinshasa, before late nineteenth–early twentieth centuries (date of acquisition), raffia fibre, 23 × 16 cm (EO.1971.36.24, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo © J.-M. Vandyck, RMCA Tervuren); (g) Mat, Kongo peoples, Congo-Kinshasa, Congo-Brazzaville or Angola (Cabinda), nineteenth–early twentieth centuries, vegetal fibre, pigments, 73 × 128 × 0.3 cm (EO.0.0.29115, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo © J.-M. Vandyck, RMCA Tervuren); (h) Mat, Kongo, Boma, Kongo-Central, Congo-Kinshasa, early twentieth century, vegetal fibre, 105 × 162 cm (EO.0.0.29225, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo © J.-M. Vandyck, RMCA Tervuren). (A black and white version of these figures will appear in some formats. For the colour versions, please refer to the plate section.)

calls these ceramics 'Woven Ware' (Denbow 2014: 68–9, 136–8, 140, 145, 150, 172, 175).

In 2012, new surveys and excavations were carried out within the framework of the KongoKing project and associated PhD projects. In total, more than 200 sites were surveyed and some 55 sites were explored by means of test pits in Congo-Kinshasa and Congo-Brazzaville (see for instance Clist *et al*. 2015b; Nikis and De Putter 2015). On two sites, Kindoki and Ngongo Mbata, over 500 m² were excavated in order to try to understand the historical occupation of both hilltops (Clist *et al*. 2015c; Clist *et al*. 2015d; Matonda *et al*. 2015; Clist *et al*. 2018a; Clist *et al*. 2018b).

During a recent exhibit of Kongo art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the quality and the significance of ancient Kongo textiles were displayed prominently (LaGamma 2015c) and their parallel with certain pottery decorations was emphasized once more (Martin 2015: 59).

In fact, in this part of Central Africa, such woven motifs not only occur on cloth, baskets and ceramics, but are also conveyed via various other media (Figure 7.2), such as architecture (Fromont 2014: 187–8), rock art (Mortelmans 1962; Mortelmans and Monteyne 1962; Heimlich 2014), wooden sculptures (LaGamma 2015a: 173), ivory (Martin 2015: 73–81) and metalwork, more specifically crucifixes (Fromont 2011c: 115) and copper ingots (Nikis *et al*. 2013; Nikis 2018a). In Mayombe, they have been reported in women's body scarification, also known as keloids, some of which have a same basic motif called *kimbangumuna* that is used to create complex interlaced patterns as in weaving (Bittremieux 1923–1927: 778–94).

These findings support the use of a shared decorative repertoire inspired by weaving in the Kongo cultural area during at least the heyday of the kingdom. In fact, it is not uncommon to use the same motifs on different supports in Central Africa or indeed elsewhere in the world. Marie-Louise Bastin (1961) described how the Chokwe people from the south-western Congo-Kinshasa use the same motifs on different media and designate them by the same name. An example is the pattern seen on the Gabonese viper that is called *mapembe a yenge* ('the triangles of the viper's back') and is recurrent in tattoos, sculptures, metalwork, weaving, etc. (Bastin 1961: 121). Among the Kuba as well, playing with various decorative motifs was very meaningful and made Kuba art easily distinguishable (Weghsteen 1963;

Cornet 1972: 138, 141; Vansina 1984: 123, 126). Further east, among the Luba of Katanga (Congo-Kinshasa), one single term, i.e. *ntàpo*, is used for pottery decoration and the keloids on a woman's belly (Nooter Roberts and Roberts 1996: 102; Lemal 1999: 67).

In Central Africa, as in many other societies around the world, it is likely that the interlaced patterns created through the weaving of baskets and textiles have been at the origin of geometric decorative motifs on other objects. Such a morphogenesis can easily be explained: when interlacing warp and weft, by skipping certain points, a geometric pattern is created, which can be further enhanced by using contrasting colours or textures.

In fact, all over the world, there are numerous examples of physical ornaments or designs on a given object that are made to resemble another material or technique. This phenomenon is also known as 'skeuomorphism' following the definition of Blitz (2015: 666): 'skeuomorphs are design attributes with meaningful content transposable across physical media. For example, many features of previously wooden buildings were repeated on stone buildings in Ancient Egypt and Greece (e.g. Angenot 2011). In Niger, Tuareg and Fulbe commodities such as textiles or leather goods or, for a more recent period, popular wax imprints are popular objects and are therefore a source of inspiration for the ceramics of so-called 'Niger River Polychrome Tradition' (Gosselain 2016).

Raffia Cloth and Basketry in the Kongo

In the Kongo area, the mastery of weaving skills reached near unprecedented heights when the kingdom was at its peak, to the extent that both Kongo textiles and baskets were among the most selected items brought back to Europe by navigators and explorers. Subsequently, they were carefully conserved in the treasuries and *Wunderkammers* belonging to lords and kings (LaGamma and Giuntini 2015: 131 and *passim*).

In the Kongo kingdom, sophisticatedly decorated textiles were elite objects marking upper class social status. Raffia cloth especially was essential in the display and exercise of power. Cloth was ubiquitous in the kingdom and its vicinity, as some pieces were also used as currency (for general or specific purposes) as well as for decorative purposes (Vansina 1998; Forbes 2013; Martin 2015: 58).

Baskets are less well known as status symbols within the Kongo area, but they were still widespread as receptacles for storing cloth or

other valuables. Ancient Kongo baskets are among the most exquisite and technically elaborate on the continent (Cooksey *et al.* 2013a: 129; Cooksey *et al.* 2013b: 217). Their manufacturing technique is closely affiliated to weaving and the resulting decorative patterns are similar (Figure 7.2).

Other woven elements, notably architectural features, such as fences and house walls made out of palms, carried the same geometrical motifs, which were executed with similar techniques as those used in both weaving and basketry (Fromont 2014: 187–8).

Raffia cloth came in many variations: from the simple plain weave cloth used for everyday dress to the highly sophisticated luxury cloth with exuberant decorations. The cloth was made from the fibres of several palm trees, such as the *Raphia textilis* and *Raphia gentiliana* (Gillet and Pâque 1910: 52; Vansina 1998: 265; Latham 2004) as well as the wine palm (*Raphia vinifera*) or the fan palm (*Hyphaene guineensis*) (Martin 1986: 1). In Kintandu, the main East Kikongo variety spoken in the vicinity of Kisantu, Daeleman and Pauwels (1983) noted four distinct vernacular terms for different raffia species: (1) *gúsu* or *mpúsu* used for fibre (*lusíinga* or *lupúsu*); (2) *koóko*, also reported by Latham (2004), for *Raphia gentiliana*; (3) *toómbe* used for palm wine (*malǎfú mámátóómbe*), also reported by Martin (1986) for raffia palm wine but by Latham (2004) as generic term for raffia palm; and (4) *yáanda* also used for palm wine.

Raffia fibres went through a process of soaking, drying and splitting or combing to prepare them for the actual weaving, which was executed using a single heddle loom. Since the length of the fibres determined the size of the woven panels, several panels or lengths of finished cloth were sewn together to obtain textiles of a larger size. After weaving, the cloth was softened by soaking and pounding it and possibly dyed (Vansina 1998: 267).

Although additional decoration techniques were often added after weaving, most ornamental patterns were structural decorative elements directly integrated in the fabric through supplementary weft-floats. These float weaves are a deviation on standard plain weave. The latter simply interlaces warp and weft in a regular over one/under one pattern. When creating float weaves, certain points are skipped for decorative purposes (Figures 7.2 c and h). Through repetition of this process in subsequent rows, geometric patterns or figures are created (Seiler-Baldinger 1994: 89). Designs that were loom-woven into the

fabric distinguish Kongo's cloths from neighbouring traditions, where decorations are often solely embroidered on top of a plain fabric (LaGamma and Giuntini 2015: 135).

Moreover, appended non-structural decoration techniques were often superimposed on an already woven raffia panel and included embossing, embroidery as well as cut-outs and hand-rubbing to create a velvet-like texture (Vansina 1998: 268; LaGamma and Giuntini 2015: 135). Most cloth was monochrome (Cornet and van Braeckel 1995), but the juxtaposition of weft-floats reflecting light and velvety cut-piles absorbing it gave the cloth panel 'a rich surface of alternating textures and tonalities' (LaGamma and Giuntini 2015: 135) and some pieces alternate fibre of two different colours (Figures 7.2 g and h).

The decorative motifs created through the float-weave techniques were endless variations of one basic motif (Figure 7.3 a), i.e. 'that of a knot in which the interlaced strands encircle and enjoin to create a contained form' (LaGamma and Giuntini 2015: 135). This widespread Kongo motif, also known in the Kuba language as *imbolo*, might be derived, in its turn, from basic over-one under-one plaiting (Torday 1969: 101), mimicking the very technique of weaving. Using different symmetries, the standard contained knot is expanded upon and undergoes a series of transformations (Crowe 2004: 4; Gerdes 2007: 32–7). These alterations result in geometric configurations of interlaced or interlocking zigzags, lozenges, triangles and chevrons (Moraga 2011: 33; Martin 2015: 59). Because of the technical constraints of right-angle intersections of warp and weft, most clearly observed in basketry (Figures 7.2 c and d) (Washburn and Crowe 2004: XV), the geometrical patterns are developed on four axes (both diagonals, horizontal and vertical) (Moraga 2011: 38).

In the Kongo region, designs were dense, symmetrical (Gerdes 2004) and organized in two distinct formats: either individual contained knot-like motifs filled the void within a framework of rows and columns (Figure 7.3 c) or a pattern of two or more interlaced strands created 'an endless network extending in every direction (Figure 7.3 b) (LaGamma and Giuntini 2015: 135).

Kongo baskets showed the same decorative technique as weaving, but called twilling instead of float weaves (Sentance 2001: 110), which produces similar geometric ornamentations highlighted by the different colours of alternating strands (Figures 7.2 c and d). However, their overall decorative organization was slightly different due to their
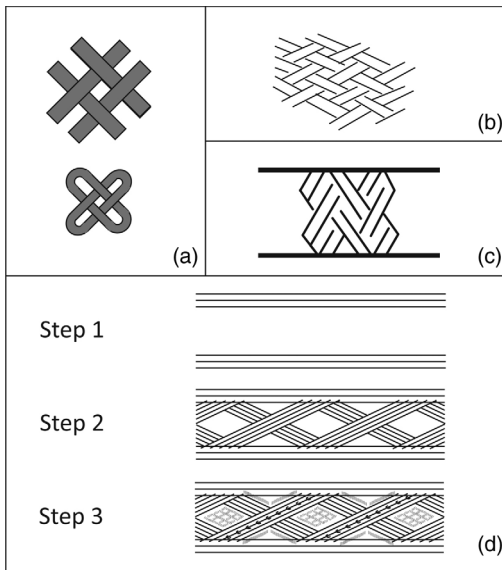
Figure 7.3 (a) Interlaced strand creating the basic 'contained knot' motifs; (b) Endless network motif based on a cushion cover, Kongo kingdom, seventeenth–eighteenth centuries (Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen, EDc106); (c) Individual interlaced motif based on a cushion cover, Kongo kingdom, seventeenth–eighteenth centuries (Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen, EDc108); (d) Steps of Dimba style group decoration following de Maret (1972).

three-dimensional shape. On some baskets the 'endless network' was maintained, while on others a horizontal register was filled with a main motif of interlaced geometric strands. These were then filled with secondary, smaller motifs in which the artisan had more liberty of execution leading to different variations of the same motif on one single basket. Kongo baskets were made of raffia or rattan fibres placed on a skeletal structure made of wood or bark and had cylindrical, oval or rectangular shapes (Moraga 2011: 33).

Lastly, the *mpu*, the very typical Kongo supple-knotted cap associated with political authority, deserves our attention, as it had characteristics of both weaving and basketry (Figures 7.2 e and f). It is considered to be textile, since it was made with the same malleable fibres of raffia or sometimes pineapple (Moraga 2011: 24). Nevertheless, like a basket, it was not woven on a loom and had a shape comparable to that of cylindrical baskets. Moreover, it also had

a similar ornamental organization. Even though the top of the cap typically had a spiralling pattern, believed to mimic and protect the crown of the head (Volavka 1998: 15), the cylindrical part of the headgear generally bore a delimited register sporting a main pattern depicting a zigzag or a series of interlocked lozenges of which the gaps were filled with smaller isolated motifs.

Raffia cloth was produced in regions where raffia palms were endemic, i.e. in rainforests and their surroundings. This means that raffia palms did not grow in the Kongo heartland or in the Portuguese colony of Angola. They were present on the Loango coast, beyond the Mayombe mountain range as well as in the Inkisi Valley, but most cloth was exported from the markets of Kundi and Okanga situated in the Kwango basin (Figure 7.1) (Vansina 1998: 274). It is less clear where basketry was produced, but since it often also involved raffia as a material, the same regions might be concerned.

Raffia cloth was produced in large quantities (Vansina 1998: 281) and palm trees were cultivated in orchards and treated with the utmost care (Jones 1983: 51–2). Weaving cloth was primarily men's work, even though women could assist in some of the more marginal tasks (Vansina 1998: 268). For basketry, the division of roles is not as clear: while women made baskets and mats in Loango (Martin 2015: 48), Vansina (1998: 281) mentions baskets and mats made by men, whereas the ethnographic studies of Gerdes (2004) and Mabiala Mantuba-Ngoma (1989) describe mats woven by women.

Several trade routes served the cloth trade and, in a later stage, the slave trade. If Mbanza Kongo first sought its raffia cloth primarily from Malebo Pool and from about 1590 onwards from Okanga, Luanda traded with Mbanza Kongo over land and Loango over sea, but also developed a trade route to Okanga completely bypassing Mbanza Kongo. Huge quantities of cloth were traded and Portuguese accounts testify that commerce in raffia was more profitable than the slave trade, at least until 1640 (Brásio 1955b: 103–15; Vansina 1998: 277). From the late sixteenth century onwards, luxury raffia cloth competed with expensive imported cloths, but its total demand probably declined only in the eighteenth century. This same evolution was later also observed with plain weave cloth, although it remained the daily wear further in the interior until late into the nineteenth century (Vansina 1998: 272).

Different types of fabric were produced on a gradient from undecorated plain weave to extremely intricate luxury cloth (Vansina 1998: 265–9). The value of a raffia textile was determined by the number of panels incorporated in the textile, the size of the individual panels (as longer fibres were rarer), the fineness of the thread indicating the number of combings the raffia fibre went through, as well as the tightness of the weave. To these parameters were added the decorative motifs used and their meaning chosen by weavers according to the taste of their consumers, the complexity of execution of those decorations, as well as the overall level of decoration of the cloth (Vansina 1998: 267, 275–6). In other words, a more valuable piece of cloth was more labour-intensive in every aspect of its production sequence. While trained weavers could make one to four panels of plain weave cloth in a day (Vansina 1998: 269), a single panel of luxury cloth required up to sixteen days of work (LaGamma and Giuntini 2015: 135). As we will see below, being quite elaborate, elite clothing simply required more lengths of cloth as well.

Raffia cloth functioned primarily as clothing, with ordinary plain weave cloth serving as the daily dress for commoners, while the nobility used the range of different luxury textiles to mark their socio-political status. An ordinary raffia outfit usually consisted of a simple wrapper going from waist to knee and sometimes down to the ankles for male wearers (Vansina 1998: 269–70). The elite wore longer and more layers of skirts, adding lengths of cloth hung over the shoulder as well as a *nkutu* net, a loose looped garment reserved for high-placed members of Kongo society (Fromont 2014: 113–14; see also Fromont, Chapter 6). People with authority would be outfitted with the typical *mpu* cap too (Moraga 2011: 24). Raffia panels were furthermore hoarded in noblemen's treasuries as well as transformed into carpets, tapestries or cushion covers displayed at their courts (LaGamma and Giuntini 2015: 136). The king of Loango was known to have a monopoly on certain types of luxury cloth, reserving him the right to keep them entirely for himself or to distribute them to those in his favour (Martin 1986: 2; Vansina 1998: 270). Economically, raffia cloth could serve to pay tributes and fines or as a gift, and acted as official currency in Loango, Kongo and Angola (Martin 1972: 37–8). Raffia cloth was also an export product in addition to copper and slaves (LaGamma 2015b: 24). Finally, raffia fabrics were associated with rites of passage

and were used during rituals of birth, initiation, marriage and burial (Martin 1986: 3–4).

Luxury baskets were used to store valuable possessions (LaGamma and Giuntini 2015: 136) and figured prominently in the ritual practices and beliefs of the Kongo people (Moraga 2011: 33), but basketry was probably also present in everyday life, perhaps through objects similar to those (ethnographic) wicker bottles from Mayombe (Mabiala Mantuba-Ngoma 1989: 137).

In essence, woven items, especially raffia cloth, were at once omni-present in Kongo society and crucial 'in the wielding of power' by its leaders (Martin 2015: 58).

Archaeological Ceramics

In sharp contrast to cloth and baskets, pottery is hardly mentioned in historical accounts. Even for recent periods, our knowledge of Kongo pottery has remained patchy for a long time. From an archaeological perspective, the situation is hardly better despite decades of academic interest.

As mentioned above, the first classification of Kongo-Central ceramics was based on artefacts collected by Georges Mortelmans and Maurits Bequaert. Most of the material consisted of surface finds and it is challenging to make sense of the few excavations carried out by Bequaert. In the area, erosion is intense and caves have been occupied repeatedly, two phenomena causing major disturbances and admixtures (de Maret 1982a: 82; de Maret 1982b). In the absence of absolute dating, attempts to establish a relative chronology of the findings were tentative at best.

Besides the work of these two scholars, potsherds were collected all over the present-day Kongo-Central province, often in caves. During the first half of the twentieth century, the collectors were mainly amateurs. Their discoveries are even more poorly contextualized. The ceramics collected before the seventies and now stored at the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) therefore did not consti-tute a solid basis for defining most of the original ceramic groups. In addition, the interest for the '*belle pièce*' that prevailed for a long time raises some questions about the integrity and representative-ness of archaeological assemblages in the old collections (de Maret 1990: 133). However, surveys and excavations since the eighties, and

especially those carried out as part of the KongoKing project, provide a much sounder basis for some of the earlier proposed ceramic groups (Figure 7.1), amongst others those discussed below, i.e. the so-called 'Group II' (which we subdivide here into Dimba and Misenga styles), 'D-pots' and 'Woven Ware'.

Group II

After a systemic analysis of its ornamental style, Clist (2012) proposes to rename Group II as the 'Mbafu Tradition' on the basis that, except for Misenga, the Mbafu cave is the only site to have yielded a representative sample of this pottery. However, within this newly created pottery tradition, he still distinguishes a distinct Misenga facies found north of the Congo River. Taking into account the spatial distribution of the Mbafu Tradition and its tentative dating between AD 1400 and 1800, Clist (2012: 196) considers it to be a Kongo production, distributed more specifically in what used to be the kingdom's Nsundi province (Clist 2012: 202).

The extensive fieldwork carried out since 2012 as part of the KongoKing project and the new archaeological data it yielded have changed our understanding of this type of pottery. Independently of the questions of whether it should be called 'Mbafu' or 'Group II' and whether it should be designated with the term 'style', 'group' or 'tradition', we think that most archaeological pottery decorated with woven motifs, collected throughout the current-day Kongo-Central province, should be considered to be part of it. While Mortelmans (1962) and Mortelmans and Monteyne (1962) originally defined Group II on the basis of surface finds from the Dimba and Mbafu caves, its definition was subsequently broadened by de Maret (1972) and Clist (1982), who principally relied on decorative criteria, i.e. the mainly interlaced patterns, to incorporate shards that no longer corresponded to the prototypical ones of the original Group II, based on the shape, on the fabrics and on the ornamental organization of the interlaced patterns.

For the time being, we consider it is safer to refrain from lumping together various groups and facies until their time period will be clearer. We propose to use here the term 'style group' in accordance with the '*stilgruppen*' used by Wotzka (1995) to describe archaeological pottery from the Inner Congo Basin. A style group is a primary 'neutral' unit of ceramics well localized in space and sharing a distinct

fabric as well as specific stylistic and morpho-functional characteristics (Wotzka 1995: 52–7). Here, we may shorten 'style group' to 'group' to refer to the same basic unit. Depending on future research, these groups could be diachronically or vertically integrated into traditions if they turn out to be genealogically related through time (Wotzka 1995: 217–19). We distinguish within the former Group II/Mbafu ceramics two separate style groups. The first one, situated south of the Congo River (Figure 7.1), is the Dimba style group, which we name after the site used by Mortelmans (1962) to define the initial Group II. The second one, situated north of the Congo River (Figure 7.1), is called the Misenga style group after the specific type of ceramics initially identified in Misenga (Clist 1982; Clist 2012) and now also attested in the Mindouli area of Congo-Brazzaville (Nikis 2018b). For the time being, we thus examine Dimba and Misenga ceramics as style groups in their own right, i.e. as two distinct sets of shards. Other ceramic sets having decoration with woven motifs ('D-pots' and 'Woven Ware') will be considered subsequently.

The Dimba Style Group
The Dimba style group (Figure 7.4) is mainly known from the old collections, especially those gathered by Georges Mortelmans. It is well attested south of the Congo River (Figure 7.1) (de Maret 1972; Clist 2012). Owing to the lack of archaeological knowledge about the region immediately south of the Congolese-Angolan border, it is, however, hard to know how far south its distribution stretched. Further north, but still south of the Congo River, a few shards have been found at Kingabwa on the left bank of Malebo Pool. Most ceramics of the Dimba style group, sometimes conserved in nearly perfect shape, were found in three caves: Dimba, Mbafu and Lovo (Mortelmans 1962; de Maret 1972). All three sites yielded human remains. In one of the various caves in the Lovo Massif, human remains were clearly associated with ceramics (de Maret *et al.* 1977). Mbafu is also well known for its rock art (Mortelmans and Monteyne 1962), just like Lovo.

The ceramics of the Dimba style group are finely tempered, resulting in a mineral soap-like touch of either sericite or talc, which is often associated with a vegetal temper. The paste colour varies from pinkish over brown to grey and black; it is most commonly grey. Some vessels seem to have been polished or have at least received a surface treatment.
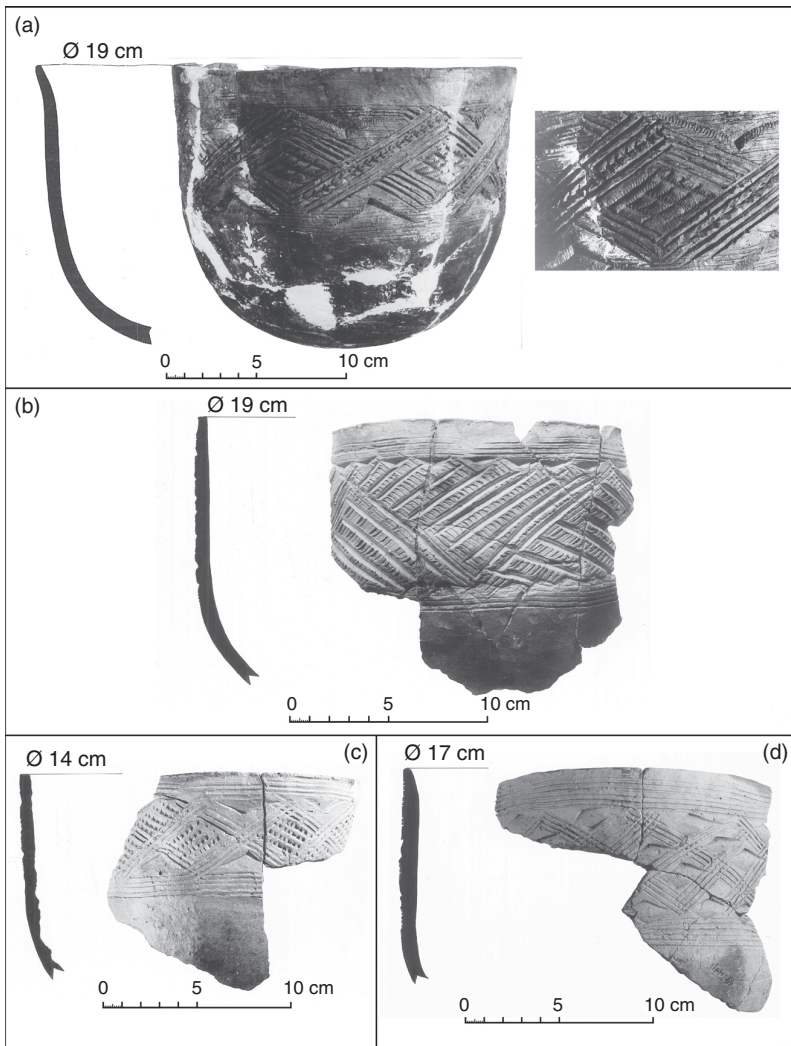
Figure 7.4 Ceramics of the Dimba style group: (a) Surface collection (1959, Georges Mortelmans), Dimba cave, Congo-Kinshasa, RMCA, Tervuren, Inv. RMCA PO.0.0.84912 (© P. de Maret 1972, fig. 52); (b) Surface collection (1957/1959, Georges Mortelmans), Mbafu cave, Congo-Kinshasa, RMCA, Tervuren, Inv. RMCA PO.0.0.85033 (© P. de Maret 1972, fig. 173); (c) Surface collection (1957/1959, Georges Mortelmans), Mbafu cave, Congo-Kinshasa, RMCA, Tervuren, Inv. RMCA PO.0.0.85027 (© P. de Maret 1972, fig. 167); (d) Surface collection (1957/1959, Georges Mortelmans), Mbafu cave, Congo-Kinshasa, RMCA, Tervuren, Inv. RMCA PO.0.0.85009 (© P. de Maret 1972, fig. 149).

The ceramics of the Dimba style display little variation in shape. Almost all are open bowl-like recipients, but a more closed pot-like vessel was identified in Kele (Clist *et al.* 2018c). Those vessels have a convex bottom, prolonged by a spherical lower body followed by a cylindrical or sometimes slightly concave neck ending with a rounded lip. On the basis of their sophisticated decoration, de Maret (1972: 38) had previously integrated nine pots with a more closed shape into the Group II. However, on closer examination, it turns out that they do not correspond to the paste, shape and decoration criteria used here to define the Dimba style group.

The Mbafu cave yielded one single specimen that manifests the characteristic formal and fabric features of the Dimba style group, but is not decorated. So far it is the only known example of an undecorated Dimba style vessel, but this could be due to the bias towards collecting only the most beautiful potsherds.

Most of the Dimba style potteries have a finely executed decoration located in a register on the cylindrical neck (Figure 7.4). The ornamental organization is relatively standardized. Indeed, it seems to respect a specific execution order and can be divided in three general and successive steps (Figure 7.3 d) (de Maret 1972). On most of the ceramics, this register is first delimited above and below by at least two parallel lines usually drawn with a comb. Then, in the space between these borders, a main pattern is drawn with at least two oblique parallel lines. It forms a motif of either chevrons or interlaced hatching. Over the first lines, some additional oblique lines are sometimes traced in an opposite direction (Figures 7.3 d and 7.4 b). The operations of this second stage create the overall effect of a large geometrical pattern consisting of interlocking lozenges, triangles or interlaced strands. This pattern may result in some triangular empty spaces along the borders of the decorative register and in some lozenge shapes that are created by the interlaced-strands pattern. In a third step, the remaining empty spaces are filled with impressions, either oblique lines of comb impressing (Figures 7.3 d, 7.4 a and c) or impressed triangles (Figures 7.3 d, 7.4 a and d), probably using the corner of a comb. Sometimes, they are also indented by comb impressing (Figures 7.3 d and 7.4 a). Finally, rod stampings are sometimes realized on the traced lines (Figure 7.4 a). Thus, ceramics of the Dimba style group always combine two decorative techniques: tracing for the first and second step of decoration and impressing for the third.

The dating of the Dimba style group remains problematic. No dates are available for the major deposits at Dimba and Mbafu. In the meanwhile, the Mbafu cave has been destroyed to produce concrete. However, in the Lovo Massif, the cave known as the Necropolis has yielded what appears to be pottery of the Dimba style group in association with at least seventeen burials (Raymaekers and Van Moorsel 1964: 10, fig. 9–10, pl. 37–9). Unfortunately, tourists looted this cave in the years that followed. However, during his 1973 survey, de Maret revisited the cave and excavated two one by one metre test pits, which yielded a few potsherds and a fragment of human skeleton. One shard was decorated with a triangle imprint, but not really characteristic of the Dimba style group. The associated charcoal was dated to 230±95 BP (Hv-6259) (de Maret *et al.* 1977: 486). After calibration, it ranges between the late fifteenth century and the second half of the seventeenth century.

In Kingabwa (Cahen 1981: 135), a ceramic of the Dimba style group was recovered among the site's characteristic whitish ceramics. The context was dated to 305±80 BP (Hv-6262), i.e. between the early sixteenth century and the early nineteenth century (de Maret *et al.* 1977: 497). In Gombe, also in modern-day Kinshasa, one context, which yielded some shards of Dimba style pottery in association with whitish Kingabwa ceramics, was radiocarbon dated to 220±30 BP (GrN-7218), i.e. the mid-seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century AD (Cahen 1976; de Maret and Stainier 1999).

Given the high uncertainty of some of those dates and the fact that two of them come from contexts where Dimba style pottery only has a marginal presence, the Dimba style group can only be dated very roughly, i.e. somewhere between the second half of the fifteenth century and the early nineteenth century. However, given the high degree of admixture at Kingabwa and Gombe, the date coming from the Necropolis in the Lovo Massif is likely to be the most relevant date. If so, the time range of the Dimba style group could be tentatively narrowed down to the period between the fifteenth century and the seventeenth century, but this uncertain dating is in need of further corroboration.

The close stylistic proximity with the ceramics of the Misenga style group suggests that the two productions might have been contemporaneous, at least for some time (Clist *et al.* 2018c), an hypothesis

that would link the group to a period earlier than the tentative dating above.

The Misenga Style Group
In contrast to the Dimba style group, the one identified at Misenga (Figure 7.5) is particularly well dated and documented (Clist 1982; Clist 2012; Nikis *et al.* 2013; Nikis and De Putter 2015; Nikis 2018b).

This pottery distribution was first limited to the eponymous site, located north of the Congo River (Figure 7.1), close to the border separating Congo-Brazzaville and Congo-Kinshasa and excavated by Maurits Bequaert in 1951 (Clist 1982: 47) and again by the KongoKing project in 2014 (Clist *et al.* 2014: 48–50). Recent archaeological research on copper production sites a few kilometres further north, just across the border in Congo-Brazzaville, allowed the discovery of several other sites with a similar pottery, where it is always associated with remains of copper metallurgy (Nikis *et al.* 2013; Nikis and Champion 2014; Nikis and De Putter 2015; Nikis 2018b).

Like the ceramics of the Dimba style group, those of the Misenga style group are tempered with a mineral temper having a soap-like touch, such as talc or sericite. Variation in temper particle size is observed within the assemblage. Coarser temper is generally observed in the fabric of undecorated vessels, whereas highly decorated shards are often tempered with finer mineral particles. The fabric shows colour variations from dark grey to light brown, sometimes within one and the same pot, probably due to firing. Some vessels seem to have been smoked or smudged and, in some cases, their surface shows traces of polishing.

The pottery assemblage comprises a variety of shapes from closed pots to open vessels, such as bowls with variations in the shape of their neck (Clist 2012: 188). Some pots have no neck and their mouths are largely opened giving the illusion of an open shape (Figure 7.5 e). Closed bottles and large storage vessels are very rare. Some of the small pots have a handle on the upper belly (Figure 7.5 c). Only a few bottom shards have been identified. They are lightly rounded or convex; some of them are dimple-based.

The different sites have a homogeneous ceramic assemblage with only a small number of ornamented pots (Figure 7.5 a). The decoration of the latter presents different levels of complexity. It is located on the upper part of the vessels, generally on the upper belly, but
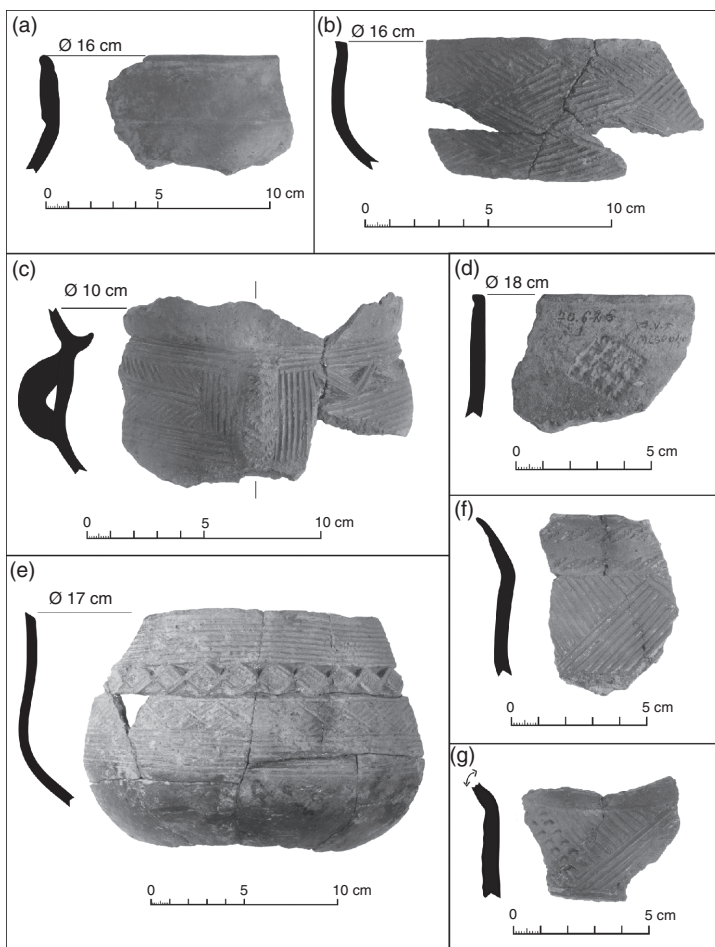
Figure 7.5 Ceramics of the Misenga style group: (**a**) Excavation (2014, SIV 0–5), Makuti 3, Congo-Brazzaville, Direction Générale du Patrimoine et des Archives de la République du Congo (© N. Nikis 2014); (**b**) Excavation (1951, Maurits Bequaert), Misenga, Congo-Kinshasa, RMCA, Tervuren, Inv. RMCA PO.0.0.70524 (© N. Nikis 2017); (**c**) Excavation (1951, Maurits Bequaert), Misenga, Congo-Kinshasa, RMCA, Tervuren, Inv. RMCA PO.0.0.70623 (© N. Nikis 2017); (**d**) Excavation (1951, Maurits Bequaert), Misenga, Congo-Kinshasa, RMCA, Tervuren, Inv. RMCA PO.0.0.70625-1 (© N. Nikis 2017); (**e**) Excavation (2013, SII 20–30), Makuti, Congo-Brazzaville, Direction Générale du Patrimoine et des Archives de la République du Congo (© N. Nikis 2013); (**f**) Excavation (2014, SIV 0–15), Makuti 3, Congo-Brazzaville, Direction Générale du Patrimoine et des Archives de la République du Congo (© N. Nikis 2014); (**g**) Excavation (2014, SVI 25–35), Makuti 3, Congo-Brazzaville, Direction Générale du Patrimoine et des Archives de la République du Congo (© N. Nikis 2014). (A black and white version of these figures will appear in some formats. For the colour versions, please refer to the plate section.)

sometimes also on the neck (Figure 7.5 f). Decoration is organized in clearly delimited geometric patterns and can be classified in different modes (Clist 2012: 19). Among the simplest examples are the isolated traced lozenges filled with comb-traced hatchings or comb impression (Figure 7.5 d).

These geometric patterns cover the entire circumference of the pottery. The register can be non-delimited and the oblique comb-traced hatchings form imbricated triangles and/or lozenges. They give the illusion that the traced lines pass over and under one another hinting at the interlacing of warp and weft (Figure 7.5 b). These triangles or lozenges can also be organized in a register delimited by one or several horizontal traced lines above and under the ornamental register. In this case, the pattern forms smaller triangles next to the borders that are sometimes excised, accentuating them by adding relief (Figure 7.5 e). On some vessels, crosshatched triangles alternate with triangles filled in with comb impressions (Clist 2012).

Likewise, decoration can be organized in several superimposed registers separated by horizontal lines and decorated with alternate crosshatched triangles, excised triangles bordered by oblique drawn lines or associated in friezes with lozenges filled with lines, comb-impressed herringbone, etc. (Figure 7.5 e). In some rare cases, registers are divided into a series of panels separated by vertical comb traced hatching or horizontal hatching (Figure 7.5 c). Some isolated stamped motifs can be added, like hollow reed or stick impressions, at the corner of triangle patterns or in lines following the crosshatching (Figure 7.5 g). The handles are decorated with comb impressions (Figure 7.5 c).

Several radiocarbon dates have been obtained in Misenga (680±30 BP – Poz-69049 and 535±30 BP – Poz-69050), Makuti 3 (645±30 BP – Poz-70551) (Nikis and De Putter 2015), Makuti (605±30 BP – Poz-59484) and Nkabi (610±30 BP – Poz-59435). After calibration, they range between the early fourteenth century AD and the mid-fifteenth century AD, which may also be the age of the Dimba style group.

The D-pots

A very different ceramic style group called 'D-pots' (Figures 6 a–e) has been identified at three major sites situated in the former Kongo kingdom, more specifically south of the Congo River (Clist *et al*. 2018c). These D-pots are well represented in excavation units of the polity's

capital Mbanza Kongo (Clist *et al.* 2015e) as well as at Ngongo Mbata, which used to be an important commercial centre (Clist *et al.* 2015d). They are less frequent at Kindoki, which was probably part of the former provincial capital of Mbanza Nsundi and just like Ngongo Mbata situated in Kongo-Central province of Congo-Kinshasa (Figure 7.1). Interestingly, this ceramic style group has so far not been found in any of the surveys or test pits located in between those three major sites.

D-pots have relatively thick walls and are made of crushed quartz particles and fine-grained micaceous clay particles finely tempered with sand. Their fabric's colour ranges from a dark reddish to a dark brown, but the colour of a small number of vessels leans towards either orange or almost black. Undecorated parts are often polished.

Due to high fragmentation, it is hard to reconstruct a complete shape for the ceramics of the D style group. Only the upper body is well known: its orientation is either straight or slightly narrowing, meaning that the overall shape of the pot is either open or slightly closing. The pots are topped with either an exterior re-curved flat rim or an exterior thickened pinched rim, the latter giving the impression of a triangle when considered in a cross-sectional way. In both cases, the lips are rounded (Clist *et al.* 2018c).

All potteries of this style group seem decorated so far (Clist *et al.* 2018c). This decoration is finely executed and requires considerable skill and time investment from the potter. Ornamentation is predominantly organized in a series of traced horizontal registers of varying width, alternating those with decorative content and those without. When left blank, the narrower bands also serve to border those with more intricate decorative patterns. Several subtypes of this decorative mode exist. Either the decoration starts immediately under the rim (Figure 7.6 c) – usual for vessels sporting the thickened triangularly shaped rim – or the decoration is preceded by a register left completely blank (Figure 7.6 e). In the simpler of decorative subtypes, only one or two smaller registers receive additional decorative motifs consisting of traced or impressed lines or points with combs or awls forming lozenges, diagonal impressions or intermittent sets of vertical straight lines (Figure 7.6 e).

Below several rather blank registers, a register with more decoration can sometimes be found. Again, several variations exist. Either the register is filled with a relatively simple motif, such as hatchings, or
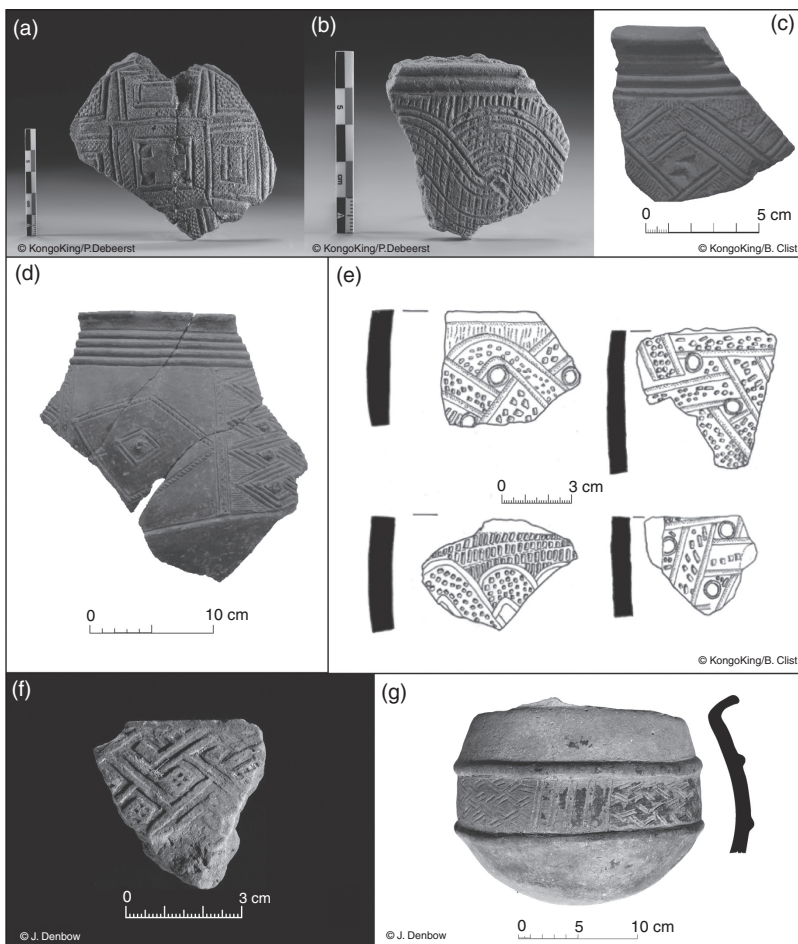
Figure 7.6 D pots: (a) Excavation (2014, Tr. 1), Ngongo Mbata, Congo-Kinshasa (© KongoKing / P. Debeerst); (b) Excavation (2013, Tr. 41), Ngongo Mbata, Congo-Kinshasa (© KongoKing / P. Debeerst); (c) Excavation (2013, Tr. 1), Ngongo Mbata, Congo-Kinshasa (© KongoKing/B. Clist); (d) Excavation (2011, Madungu Station), Mbanza Kongo, Angola (© KongoKing / P. de Maret); (e) Excavation (2014, Tr. 70, 72, 78, 83), Ngongo Mbata, Congo-Kinshasa (© KongoKing / B. Clist); **'Woven Ware' style 1:** (f) Excavation (K.164), Loubanzi, Congo-Brazzaville (© James Denbow); **'Woven Ware' style 2:** (g) Surface find, Loango Coast, Congo-Brazzaville (© James Denbow). (A black and white version of these figures will appear in some formats. For the colour versions, please refer to the plate section.)

a simple textured surface carried out with several combing techniques. It can also support a main motif, often with the texture as a background (Figures 7.6 b, d and e). This principal motif is always traced and can be inspired by the patterns discussed above, such as interlacing strands or an ever-extending network. However, in contrast to the style groups discussed previously, curved lines are sometimes used (Figure 7.6 b). Afterwards, spaces not covered by the main motif, often between two strands, can be filled with additional, isolated motifs such as triangular comb impressions (Figure 7.6 c), 'false relief chevron', hollow awl impressions or appliqué pastilles overwritten with comb impressions (Figures 7.6 d and e).

Other D-pot specimens have a different organization with the main register divided into panels sporting isolated main motifs (Figures 7.6 a and d), similar to the rows and columns with knot-like motifs found in raffia textiles. Still other pots have a series of adjoining squares alternating those with and without a textured surface.

This play of textures alternating between polished, blank and textured surfaces is a characteristic found in most ceramics of the D style group. Like the Dimba and Misenga style groups, the principal motif – if present – is generally realized through tracing. However, the order of execution is less straightforward as the textured background is often produced before this main pattern is realized. Another characteristic of D style decoration is that patterns are not monolithic, but often composite and assembled with multiple juxtaposed traced lines to form a single pattern resulting in the sophisticated and labour-intensive decorations typical for this style.

Of all the D style fragments found at Ngongo Mbata, the site providing us with the largest and most representative sample, about twenty-nine per cent have decorative motifs paralleling those found in weaving, while another fifteen per cent have motifs more loosely inspired by those weaving motifs.

Comparing radiocarbon dates associated with well-dated European objects from contexts associated with the D style group in Ngongo Mbata (Clist *et al*. 2015d; Clist *et al*. 2018a), Kindoki (Clist *et al*. 2015c; Clist *et al*. 2018b) and Mbanza Kongo (Clist *et al*. 2015e), it is possible to date the D style between the late sixteenth century AD and the first half of the eighteenth century, with particular emphasis on the second half of the seventeenth century.

Woven Ware

Denbow (2014) called some of the pottery from his surveys and excavations along the Loango coast 'Woven Ware', because its decorative patterns resemble woven motifs. Pottery shapes and the location of ornamentation on the vessels allow for that ware to be divided into two different styles. According to Denbow's description, the first one consists of jars with a tall and everted neck, tempered with sandy grit (Figure 7.6 f). Its decoration is located all around the neck and features diamond or lozenge motifs, most likely traced (Denbow 2014: 68, 136). The shape of the vessels seems to be a continuation of the forms of Early Iron Age ceramics in the same area.

This ceramic style was collected during surveys on twenty-four sites; two of them, i.e. Conde and Loubanzi, were also excavated. Conde gave a radiocarbon date of 810±70 BP (Tx-7019), which ranges between 1040 and 1291 AD after calibration, but it was associated with chert and quartzite flakes that were found alongside pottery suggesting admixture with older levels. In Loubanzi, the context yielding these ceramics is dated to 420±50 BP (Tx-7017), which corresponds to the period between 1415 and 1633 AD after calibration. Taking into account these dates and the fact these sites did not yield European ceramics, Denbow (2014: 136) situates this style group between 1100 and 1500.

The characteristic recipients of the second 'Woven Ware' style group are hemispherical pots with a sharply everted rim (Figure 7.6 g). Decoration is located in the midst of the belly in a register bordered on both sides by *appliqué* strips. This band is most commonly filled with traced hatching or cross-hatching designs, but some pots also show panels of diamond patterns formed by drawn interlaced strands (Denbow 2014: 140). The latter design is sometimes combined with applied strips on which copies of cowrie shells were moulded (Denbow 2014: 69).

This second style group consists almost exclusively of survey finds. Only one shard was retrieved from an archaeological context, namely in Loubanzi. It has its decorative register filled with stamping realized by the scalloped edge of a cockleshell. According to the illustration in Denbow (2014: 141), the pattern seems to produce a rope-like effect. It is unclear whether or not this potsherd could be linked to the 420±50 BP date (Tx-7017) obtained from the same site (cf. *supra*).

The other examples of this second 'Woven Ware' style group, all of them obtained through surface collection, were associated with European artefacts on most sites. Denbow (2014: 69–70) therefore dates them between 1500 and 1900 AD. He postulates also that the change in shape between the two 'Woven Ware' style groups was influenced by the arrival of European goods and he compares the hemispherical pots of the second style to 'chamber pots'.

There is no doubt that the first style is older than the second, but, given the uncertainty of the context of the two radiocarbon dates and the lack of excavated contexts for the second style, both styles cannot yet be placed in a solid chronological framework. Likewise, there is little evidence for the representativeness of the interlaced pattern among the ceramic assemblages from the Loango area, but its presence still confirms the use of this kind of pattern in the wider Kongo cultural area. Although the decorative pattern of this ware is indeed inspired by woven motifs, our knowledge remains rather sketchy and further analysis on a larger corpus is needed.

Discussion

The pottery style groups discussed above use, at least partly, the same decorative language of geometric patterns derived from the 'contained knot' (Figure 7.3 a). On some vessels (for instance, Figures 7.3 d, 7.4 a and 7.5 d), the patterns used are not merely a play of interlocking lozenges and triangles. The artisans went out of their way to mimic the visual effect of strands going over and under one another. In the case of weaving, this effect is the inevitable consequence of the technique used. When applied to ceramics, however, it is a deliberate choice, which considerably complicates the ornamental execution.

The decoration of the ceramic style groups discussed sharply contrasts with the decorative pattern found on contemporaneous ceramic style groups from the Kongo area, such as the style group A, specimens of which have also been unearthed in Ngongo Mbata, Kindoki and Mbanza Kongo (Clist *et al.* 2018c). Kongo pottery decorated with woven motifs is almost exclusively built up with right angles around the same four axes discussed above. Again, this makes sense in weaving, when using techniques such as weft-floats and twilling, but on clay material this same pattern is purposely sought after.

Similarly to the weavers' search for 'alternating textures and tonalities' (LaGamma and Giuntini 2015: 135), the potters paid a great deal of attention to fabrics and surface treatments. Surfaces free from decoration are often polished and the pots of both the Mbafu and Misenga style groups often have a silky touch due to the sericite or talc temper. The decoration itself is a juxtaposition and sometimes superimposition of different decorative actions with several different tools. All of the stamped and traced motifs, but especially the 'false relief chevron' (Phillipson 1968; Phillipson 1972), create a play of light and shadow comparable to alternating woven textures reflecting and absorbing light.

Additionally, when looking at those woven objects which most resemble the shape of ceramic pots, i.e. the cylindrical baskets and (inverted) *mpu* caps, the overall organization of decorative elements on them is very similar. A principal pattern, usually a variation on the contained knot or a zigzag, is found in the main well-delimited register situated on the cylindrical part of the volume. Wherever that chief motif leaves blank spaces within the register, it can be filled with secondary, smaller and usually finite and free-floating patterns. While the potter actually executes the decoration in this order on the vessel, the weaver has to invent the entire design before starting the loom work, because the patterns are embedded in the weave. However, in both weaving and pottery- making, most artisans have more freedom executing the smaller additional motifs. This is where we find the false relief chevrons as well as various other stamped finite patterns. As Fromont (2014: 125–30) describes for a *mpu* held in the collections of Copenhagen's National Museum, this is where a cross symbol was integrated on the headgear, integrating a new reference into the range of Kongo symbols of authority.

It makes sense that the ubiquitous geometric motifs found in woven objects were transposed to other types of materials in this 'highly textile-literate society' (Fromont 2014: 112). We know that the contrast between plain and decorated cloth corresponded to a distinction between ordinary versus prestige goods. Could the same be true for pottery? Plain vessels would then serve ordinary purposes, whereas the highly decorated ones with typical Kongo motifs would have been luxury goods. In the Misenga style group, there is a fair proportion of undecorated and decorated vessels, but in the Dimba style, there are almost only decorated vessels among those collected. This is probably

due to the fact that they were discovered in caves, which probably link them to ritual practices, but this may also reflect a collector's bias towards fine pieces. All the Ngongo Mbata Group D shards are decorated, but there is some noticeable variation, some vessels being less elaborately decorated than others. Moreover, they are contemporaneous with other less decorated groups of ceramics (Clist *et al.* 2018c).

In raffia weaving and basketry, the more labour-intensive and skilfully executed the finished product, the more valuable it was. This was true at every stage of the manufacturing process, from selecting and processing the raw material to creating the extremely complex decorative patterns. As was the case for raffia cloth, the most elaborate ceramics also result from a careful selection of raw material and temper, shaping techniques and complex decorative patterns. The latter are applied through a time-consuming process of juxtaposing several decorative techniques within one single general pattern, already complex as such, making its appearance even more intricate. As with decorations woven on a loom, this requires the final result to be conceived in the finest details before execution. In addition, particular care is observed in other stages of the ceramic production. Dimba and Misenga potteries decorated with woven motifs generally have a more meticulously polished surface, while some Ngongo Mbata vessels of style group D display the same surface treatment. In all groups, one notices that the more richly decorated pots also have the most carefully processed paste. This is especially apparent in the Misenga style group, where one observes a striking difference between decorated and undecorated pots. It is thus very likely that, as is the case for cloth and baskets, the most sophisticated pots were more valuable than their more ordinary counterparts.

If these pots decorated with woven motifs were more valuable, they were, like luxury cloth, probably also more prestigious and more apt to express and display status. However, the question remains if and to what extent these highly decorated ceramics became prestige goods in their own right and, therefore, associated with the elite. It can also be surmised that they were imitations of elite items in other media. The current state of research does not allow for definitive answers, but some elements tend to support the elite character of these ceramics.

First, the location where some of those artefacts were found can be indicative of links to power, ritual or economic activity. The Misenga

style group has thus far been found exclusively at copper production sites in the Mindouli area. Even though we still have little knowledge of the trading networks contemporary to this ceramic group, we know that at least in the sixteenth century copper was a valuable resource (Hilton 1985: 54–7).

Second, the Dimba style group was mostly found in caves and once in a funerary context. These kinds of sites are in all likelihood ritual places (Heimlich 2014: 154–65), where one could expect the use of prestigious items. In addition, the ceramics' highly unusual shape and the thinness of their walls do not make domestic use a likely purpose. It is also interesting to note that Dimba pots circulated beyond their main distribution zone. Some Dimba remains have been collected in Kingabwa, today a suburb of Kinshasa on the left bank of Malebo Pool, where they are clearly exogenous within the local assemblage (de Maret and Stainier 1999: 485).

Moreover, the extremely finely carved embellishments found on some steatite pipes from Ngongo Mbata closely follow the decorative patterns of those on Dimba pots (de Maret 1982a: 82) and we know that stone pipes used to be prestigious objects in their own right (Clist 2018 and Chapter 8).

As far as the Ngongo Mbata D Group is concerned, it is so far mainly found in places that used to host the kingdom's elite. When 'walls, clothing, and objects of status echoed one another in palatial spaces in a concert of geometric patterns of varying scales, colours, and shapes' (Fromont 2014: 188), it makes sense that elite ceramics were integrated in and contributed to this visual culture through the display of the same decorative motifs.

In addition, all over the world, prestige items are prone to be imitated. For example, Inka vessels were used by the elites, but in some of their provinces, blended imitation styles were used by a local elite (Menzel 1960). In Namazga Bronze Age ceramics from West Central Asia around *ca*. 3200–2700 BC, a given pottery assemblage displays certain geometric patterns recalling textile designs. In the next period, i.e. 2700–2000 BC, this ceramic is replaced by skeuomorphic assemblages imitating metal recipient. This change has been interpreted as a shift from textiles to metal as valuable goods in long-distance exchanges (Wilkinson 2014). Today counterfeit luxury goods have become a major phenomenon worldwide (Wilcox 2009). We may very well have one example of this process within the Dimba

style group. At Dimba cave, Mortelmans collected a pot, which he initially designated as Group III and thought to be a child's imitation (Mortelmans 1962: 414–15). As a matter of fact, it is an obviously clumsy replica of Dimba vessels. Its fabric, shape and decoration are similar though far more irregular (de Maret 1972: 36–7).

Even though the use of finely decorated pottery is hardly mentioned in historical sources, we believe that it was presumably associated with the elite for display or rituals. Our assumption needs further corroboration, preferably with evidence from the major political and/or ritual centres, not least Mbanza Kongo, once all material excavated there has been studied in detail and published. Furthermore, we need to fill the remaining gaps and uncertainties in the chronology and distribution of the numerous pottery groups throughout the Kongo area.

Despite the chronological gaps, it seems that the currently attested woven motifs on pottery – especially the most sophisticated among them – coincide with the rise and fall of the major polities in the area, such as the Kongo and Loango kingdoms. The Kongo kingdom is indeed estimated to have risen from the thirteenth century onwards (Thornton 2001; Chapter 1, this volume), just like the Loango kingdom (Martin 1972: 9) and some other less known and smaller polities. Historians have suggested that the exploitation of copper deposits in the Niari Basin, on the border between Congo-Kinshasa and Congo-Brazzaville, was linked to the emergence of those centralized and stratified entities (Hilton 1985: 54–7; Martin 2015: 55; Martin pers. comm.). In Hilton's view (1985: 55), this was indeed a major factor in the rise of the Kongo kingdom.

Looking at that same area from an archaeological perspective, the Misenga ceramic style group, well dated to the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, is contemporary to the above-mentioned period. This may not be a pure coincidence, as copper metallurgical activities in the region became very visible in the archaeological record from this period onwards (Nikis and De Putter 2015). Although the link between the copper region yielding Misenga pottery and the early Kongo kingdom itself is not yet soundly established, Martin (2015: 55) has hypothesized that the polities present early on in Vungu or Mpemba Kasi may well have been in contact with the mineral-rich region. In the same way, the style group D of Ngongo Mbata is chronologically situated towards the end of Kongo's apogee, but so far is not attested beyond the political collapse of the kingdom towards

the end of the eighteenth century. The Dimba style group, although still poorly documented and dated, is almost certainly also situated within the kingdom's chronological confines, if not earlier.

Similarly, it is striking that in the whole of the Kongo area, not one vessel from the last two centuries is decorated with woven-inspired motifs (Coart and de Haulleville 1907; de Maret 1974; Vincke 2002; Kaumba 2017; Kaumba 2018), once more mirroring the evolution observed in raffia cloth (LaGamma and Giuntini 2015: 135). When the Kongo state was disrupted by political unrest and collapsed, the highly elaborate weaving know-how, considered one of the Kongo kingdom's trademarks both in Africa and Europe, vanished (Giuntini and Brown 2015).

In addition, the distribution pattern of ceramic groups decorated with woven motifs seems to be limited to the Kongo cultural area. Despite the importance of raffia weaving in Central Africa, weaving motifs seem to have been transferred to ceramics to that extent only in the Kongo region (Vansina 1998; de Maret 1999). Although the Kuba decorative repertoire comes to mind here, as it already did to Mortelmans, modern Kuba pottery does not display this degree of skeuomorphic transfer, while this decorative language and organization was transferred to wooden vessels.

In the regions adjoining the Kongo cultural area, the decorative repertoire is obviously different. To the northeast, Kongo pottery decorated with woven motifs contrasts with the various productions identified in and upstream from the Malebo Pool area. This pottery with its whitish paste has a decoration style comprising undulating lines, cowrie or *nzimbu* (*Olivancillaria nana*) imitations, hollow awl impressions and *appliqué* (Van Moorsel 1968; Pinçon 1988; Rochette 1989).

Further east, the closest excavated site serving as a comparison is Mashita Mbanza in the Bandundu province of Congo-Kinshasa, where pots are primarily decorated with horizontal and vertical parallel tracing without the typical Kongo knot-like patterns or organization (Pierot 1987).

Further south in Angola, the few excavated sites have so far not yielded the same kind of patterns either (Ervedosa 1980; Gutierrez 1999; Da Silva Domingos 2009).

According to our current-day knowledge, the intricate woven motifs found in the Kongo area stand out in the pottery production

of West-Central Africa and could well be regarded as a characteristic feature of Kongo material culture during the zenith of its kingdom.

Conclusion

Elaborate interlaced patterns are clearly prominent motifs within the Kongo cultural area. They make up a decorative repertoire shared among several media, but are most prominent and visible on luxury raffia cloth and basketry. They are also found on a significant proportion of ceramics within certain pottery style groups. Ceramic decoration retains the knot-like motifs, probably derived from the very idea of interlacing warp and weft and in many cases the more global decorative organization, especially of baskets and *mpu* headgear.

As highly prized and positively connoted goods, luxury cloth and baskets would have acted as 'boundary objects', allowing developments of shared aesthetics and taste in the wider Kongo cultural area expressed on different media (Gosselain 2016). Decorative patterns on the more labour-intensive ceramics would subsequently have been imitated in more loosely executed versions.

This 'recognizably Kongo' pattern (Cornet and van Braeckel 1995) is an obvious cultural marker and it is probably closely connected to the prestige of local elites. To what extent it was directly related to Kongo's nobility hierarchy remains to be evaluated. In any case, the feature seems to chronologically correspond to the pinnacle of the kingdom. It may well be further evidence for the fact that political centralization and economic integration within the realm of the Kongo kingdom led to the diffusion and the increasing homogenization of material culture, as Bernard Clist argues in Chapter 8 with regard to Kongo pipes. Along similar lines, Bostoen and de Schryver (2015) and Goes and Bostoen (2019) have carried out dedicated studies on specific language features showing that the growing spread and impact of the high-prestige South Kikongo variety spoken in the vicinity of Mbanza Kongo induced linguistic convergence and higher similarity between Kikongo varieties belonging to distinct subgroups. In the kingdom's northernmost provinces, the contact between South Kikongo and these other subclades of the Kikongo Language Cluster was even so intensive that it gave rise to the central convergence zone from which the present-day

Kimanyanga and Kindibu varieties evolved (de Schryver *et al.* 2015; Dom and Bostoen 2015; see also Bostoen and de Schryver, Chapter 3).

In summary, considering their chronology and distribution closely paralleling the spatial and temporal limits of the Kongo kingdom, pottery displaying woven motifs could be used for the time being as a proxy-marker for the apogee of that famous polity. In our view, it is a highly relevant archaeological marker of the Kongo kingdom and its cultural influence, to the same extent as the smoking pipes (see Chapter 8). This hypothesis should be tested in future research with further excavations resulting in better distribution maps and a sounder chronology.

Acknowledgements

8 | *From America to Africa: How Kongo Nobility Made Smoking Pipes Their Own*

BERNARD CLIST

Introduction

The KongoKing project aimed at examining the origins and development of the Kongo kingdom through the combination of two disciplines that have been key to the reconstruction of Africa's early history, i.e. archaeology and historical linguistics. As for the archaeological component, the project's stated objectives were to establish a sound cultural sequence of the Lower Congo region, to map the spatial distribution of Kongo structures and remains in the landscape, and to study the evolution of the kingdom's material culture. To that end, it was planned to focus the project's archaeological excavations on the kingdom's central capital Mbanza Kongo, its provincial capitals (e.g. Mbanza Soyo in Angola and Mbanza Nsundi and Mbanza Mbata in Congo-Kinshasa) and their immediate surroundings. As the project never obtained official authorization to excavate in Mbanza Kongo, situated in present-day northern Angola and recognized as UNESCO World Heritage since July 2017, its archaeological research focused on the Kongo-Central province of Congo-Kinshasa. This eventually turned out not to be a major drawback, given that the origins of the kingdom may be situated there (cf. Thornton 2001; see also Thornton on Kongo origins in Chapter 1) and the capitals of the kingdom's northernmost provinces were also located there: Mbata, Nsundi, Mpangu (Thornton 1977: 523; Thornton 1983: 4; Hilton 1985: 7). Our archaeological fieldwork has shown how difficult it is to locate these ancient capitals geographically, as their architecture, material culture and lay-out were not fundamentally different from those of ordinary villages except for size (Clist *et al.* 2015c).

Our archaeological research concentrated first on Mbanza Nsundi, where extensive excavations were carried out on a large hill called Kindoki. Already in 2012, this strategy led to the discovery of a cemetery consisting of eleven tombs dating from the late seventeenth century

until the early nineteenth century. These contained the remains of men and women belonging to the local elite as indicated by the funerary objects. Excavations were continued in 2013 and 2015, and resulted in the unearthing of Stone and Iron Age artefacts, the latter of both Kongo and European origin, mainly ceramics. We were able to prove the existence of a settlement on Kindoki hill during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Our fieldwork also led to the discovery of a previously unknown type of comb-impressed pottery dating back to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This constitutes the main evidence for arguing that the hill was already settled before the arrival of the first Europeans (Clist *et al.* 2015c; Matonda *et al.* 2015; Clist *et al.* 2018b).

The more southerly Ngongo Mbata site, situated on the Sabala plateau, was excavated between 2012 and 2015. Here we found traces of early human presence during the Late Stone Age as well as the remains of a settlement dating back to the sixteenth century. We were able to recover the foundations of a stone church that had already been excavated in 1938. We demonstrated that its construction probably dates from the seventeenth century, just like most of the Kongo and European material culture that we excavated on this site. The re-examination of the objects found in the graves located in the church led to the conclusion that upper-class Kongo people were also buried there. Our archaeological finds corroborated seventeenth-century historical sources indicating that this settlement formed an important trade post between the Atlantic ports in the West, the capital Mbanza Kongo in the centre and the Kwango area in the East. Ngongo Mbata was probably the most important settlement of the Mbata province and larger than Mbanza Mbata, the official residence of the Mwene Mbata, the provincial political leader (Clist *et al.* 2015d; Clist *et al.* 2018a).

Besides the extensive excavations on the Kindoki Hill and the Ngongo Mbata site, various surveys and smaller excavations were carried out on numerous locations across the Kongo-Central Province, for instance in the Misenga, and in the Mindouli and Boko-Songho regions in southern Congo-Brazzaville (Clist *et al.* 2013a; Clist *et al.* 2013b; Nikis *et al.* 2013; Clist *et al.* 2014; Matonda *et al.* 2014; Nikis and Champion 2014; Clist *et al.* 2015a; Nikis and De Putter 2015; Clist *et al.* 2018a; Clist *et al.* 2018b; Nikis 2018b). These border regions were particularly interesting, because of the ancient copper exploitation (Nikis 2018a), which has been associated with the origins of the Kongo kingdom (Hilton 1985: 3).

As for Mbanza Kongo, the KongoKing project team was invited there by the Angolan Ministry of Culture for a two-week mission in November 2015 in order to collaborate with an international team of Angolan, Cameroonian and Portuguese archaeologists, who had been carrying out archaeological research in the ancient capital of the Kongo kingdom since 2011 as part of a UNESCO World Heritage project. During that short stay, the artefacts collected over the past four years and their contexts could be examined. This joint research led to a scientific report (Clist *et al.* 2015e), to which we also refer in the present chapter. The report was submitted to the Angolan national heritage authorities to support their UNESCO World Heritage application, which was eventually successful.

The KongoKing project's archaeological research contributed significantly to our understanding of the region's ancient past, not least because our excavations were the first south of the Congo River for 25 years and north of it for 60 years. A series of new dates was obtained for the Early Iron Age and even if there is still a hiatus between that period and the beginning of the second millennium of our era, the region's chronology has become much more precise for the millennium during which the Kongo kingdom emerged. Thanks to the KongoKing project, we can now monitor, in an uninterrupted way, the evolution of cultural traits in the Kongo region from the thirteenth to the twentieth centuries using the cultural sequences developed.

Such a *longue durée* perspective on material culture is also possible for an item we regularly found during the excavations, namely smoking pipes. The excavations carried out between 2012 and 2015 yielded not only several tens of thousands of pottery fragments and fifty-three new radiocarbon dates, but also more than a thousand fragments of both terracotta and stone pipes dated between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Smoking pipes have their origin in the Americas, but as we show in this chapter they were imported commodities which the Kongo kingdom's elite readily adopted and appropriated. The study of these archaeological pipe remains provides us with insight into Kongo's complex social structures and the relations that existed between Mbanza Kongo functioning as the geographical and symbolic centre of the kingdom and the northern provinces of Mbata, Nsundi and Mpangu on which the KongoKing project's archaeological fieldwork focused. In this chapter, we will first briefly discuss the history of tobacco and the first pipes to

pinpoint when and how Kongo pipes could have appeared. We will then present an overview of the formal and stylistic attributes of Kongo pipes, which have been studied in more detail elsewhere (Clist 2018). Finally, we will assess whether the development of Kongo pipes attests to the homogenization of Kongo material culture in the course of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, as has been argued for its pottery (shape and decoration) during the same period (Clist *et al*. 2018c; see also Cranshof *et al*., Chapter 7).

The Introduction of Tobacco and Smoking Pipes in the Kongo Kingdom According to the Historical Sources

Nicotiana sp. is a plant that originates in South America and was cultivated for several millennia on the eastern flanks of the Andes (Pickersgill 2007: 929; Sierro *et al*. 2014). Before the Columbian Exchange started at the end of the fifteenth century, *Nicotiana rustica* was grown on the Atlantic coasts of Canada and the United States, while *Nicotiana tabacum* grew in Brazil and on the Caribbean islands. The tobacco plant was grown and smoked in parts of North America, South America and the islands of the Caribbean Sea (Staden 1557; Thévet 1558; King 1977; Goodman 1993; Keoke and Porterfield 2003). Initially, native Americans snuffed tobacco or smoked it using either so-called 'cigars' made of leaves wrapped around the tobacco or 'tubes' (Mason 1924; Dunhill 1999: 29–42). Tubular-shaped pipes were known in both South and North America including Canada (Cartier 1545: 31). Two major types exist, i.e. short-stemmed and long-stemmed pipes. In eastern North America, for instance, so-called 'elbow pipes' or 'bended pipes', with a short stem and made of stone or terracotta, were common during the Late Woodland and Mississippian Periods, i.e. around AD 1000–1550 (Rafferty 2016: 14–16; 18–21). Later, early colonists in North Carolina and Virginia adopted smoking tobacco with local clay pipes (Dickson 1954: 231; Walker 1975: 231) and these are known to have been used and taken back to Europe by early settlers and traders, such as the English in North Carolina in the 1580s (Harriot 1588: 21–2). In Florida, the French trying to establish a colony in the 1560s used local short-stemmed pipes (Rowley 2003: 29–30). The discovery of a short-stemmed bended clay pipe in the wreck of the Spanish ship *Atocha*, which sank in 1622 off the coasts of Florida, shows that native American pipes were indeed transported

on board of European ships (Sudbury and Gerth 2014: fig. 8). In this way, during the sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries, tobacco and the practice of smoking were exported from the Americas as part of transatlantic trade into both Europe and Africa (cf. Laufer 1924; Laufer *et al.* 1930; Dickson 1954; Goodman 1993; Dunhill 1999; Rowley 2003).

   The cultivation of tobacco along the African coasts is historically attested in Senegal and on the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe in 1602 (de Marees 1602: 11, 18), while it is already described for the first time at the Cape of Good Hope in 1601 (Goodwin 1939, cited by du Toit 1980). As early as 1607, men and women from both Sierra Leone and Liberia were reported to smoke tobacco with articulated pipes made of terracotta and to grow it themselves everywhere between their houses (Purchas 1625; Laufer 1924: 169; Alpern 1995: 26). In Gambia, around 1620–1, men and women were known to smoke tobacco imported from Brazil (Jobson 1623: 155; Laufer *et al.* 1930: 170). Then again, archaeological evidence indicates that smoking must have been a common practice at El Mina in Ghana, mainly using imported English and Dutch pipes, with only a few indigenous African pipes (DeCorse 2001: 163–7). Ossah Mvondo (1988) situates the earliest smoking pipes in the West-African archaeological record in the sixteenth century. However, according to Canetti (2011: 35–9), none would actually be older than the early seventeenth century, when pipes also start to be mentioned in the historical documents of that particular region. In Central Africa, and more specifically in the Kongo kingdom, tobacco and the smoking of it were probably introduced in the same period.

   The oldest historical sources relating to the Kongo kingdom remain silent on tobacco, the practice of smoking and the use of smoking pipes. Neither the early account of Pigafetta (1591), which was mainly based on the testimony of Duarte Lopes who lived in Mbanza Kongo between 1579 and 1583, nor Father Diogo's report of 1583 (Brásio 1954: 355–92) provide any indications. The extensive travel diary of Jan-Hugo Van Linschoten describing his experiences from 1583 to 1592 (De Linschot 1638), Peter Van den Broecke's travel notes from 1607 to 1612 (Cuvelier 1955) and the chronicle of Andrew Battell, who lived in Angola and visited the kingdoms north of the Congo River between 1590 and 1610 passing through Ngongo Mbata during a trade expedition around 1603 (Ravenstein 1901), likewise do not

provide any evidence for the existence of tobacco or pipes in the Kongo kingdom. We owe the oldest testimony on the practice of smoking tobacco in the region to the Swiss merchant Samuel Brun who visited Mbanza Soyo on the Atlantic coast in 1612: 'They can bear hunger for a considerable time, as long they have "*magkay*" or tobacco, whose leaves they grind and ignite, so that a strong smoke is produced, which they inhale for thirst and hunger' (Jones 1983: 61). This confirms that tobacco was consumed in the first half of the seventeenth century, but it does not make clear whether this happened with the help of smoking pipes or rather by rolling cigars. Other references to smoking similarly do not explicitly mention pipes (see below).

   The first explicit mention of smoking pipes occurs no earlier than the second half of the seventeenth century, in the account of Giacinto Brugiotti da Vetralla, who lived in the Kongo kingdom between 1652 and 1657. He briefly reported a pipe together with its Kikongo name in the following passage: *cosi tenendo sospesa con una delle mani la pipa o carimbeo* ('and thus he holds a pipe or *carimbeo* hanging between his hands') (Simonetti 1907: 321). The missionaries Michelangelo Guattini and Dionigi Carli, who resided at Mbanza Mbamba in 1668, provided a more detailed testimony, which indicates that by that time tobacco consumption was already quite common within the kingdom and was done by means of 'pipes as big as a small cooking pot with a stem of two fathoms long, which were never exhausted' [our translation from the French translation: *pipes grandes comme une petite marmite avec un tuyau de deux brasses de long qui ne sont jamais épuisées*] (du Cheyron d'Abzac 2006: 139). We think this rapidly developing practice of smoking tobacco may be related to local tobacco production, perhaps creating new trade networks and eventually even allowing slaves to smoke, a process that had previously occurred in the Gulf of Guinea between 1602 and 1607 (Bontinck 1970: 145). On São Tomé and Príncipe, slaves are known to have attended their tobacco gardens in 1626 (Labat 1732: 337). This is partly confirmed by a few texts referring to tobacco plantations in the areas close to Malebo Pool and the Bengo River (Cuvelier 1953b: 200; Bontinck 1970: 145; Vansina 1973: 450, 464). Girolamo Merolla da Sorrento (1692: 563, 696), who lived in the Kongo between 1683 and 1688, testified that both men and women in Mbanza Soyo smoked using long pipes, especially nobles when they walked the town's streets and attended church. He also provided an illustration of a man smoking
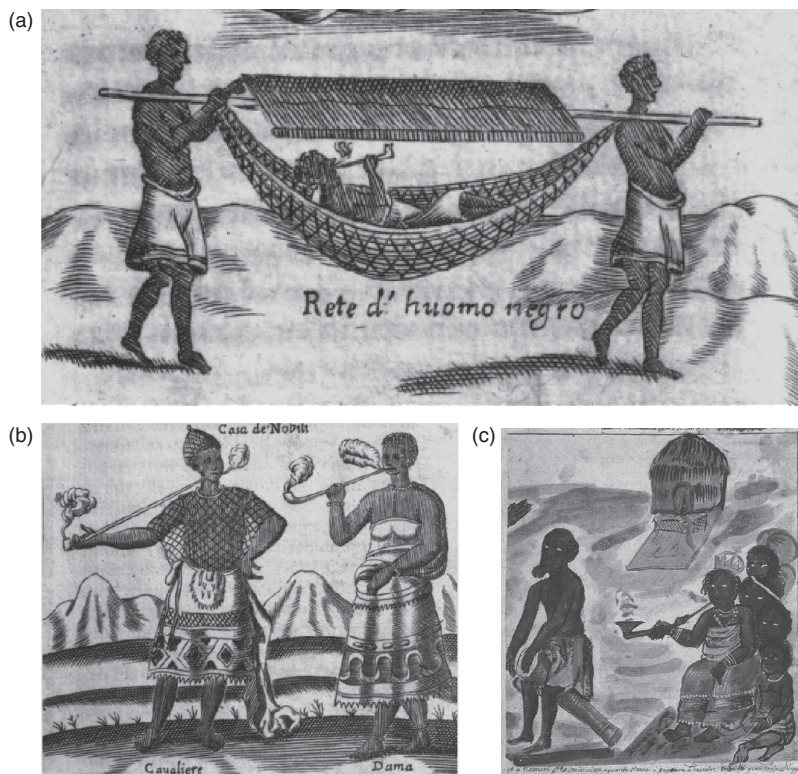
Figure 8.1 (a) 'Black man', probably a noble, smoking his pipe while being transported using a 'wooden horse' (Merolla da Sorrento, 1692: 27); (b) Noble man and woman smoking tobacco using long-stemmed pipes (Merolla da Sorrento, 1692: 116); (c) Queen Nzinga using her pipe (Cavazzi 1687). (A black and white version of this figure will appear in some formats. For the colour version, please refer to the plate section.)

while being carried about in a 'wooden horse' (hammock), and of two nobles, a man and a woman, indulging in the pleasures of tobacco (cf. Figures 8.1 a and b) (Merolla da Sorrento 1692: 116). Unfortunately, the illustrations are not detailed enough to determine the exact type of pipe they were smoking. A long-stemmed bended pipe is also depicted with interesting details in one of the watercolours adorning the work of Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi (1687) (cf. Figure 8.1 c). This pipe has a characteristic large imposing furnace ending in an everted lip as well as a long stem and an extension with a length similar to the ones depicted by Merolla da Sorrento. The fine and complex details of the

mouth, in which the pipe's stem made of perishable material (wood or reed) is inserted, highlight the aesthetic quality of the watercolours in Cavazzi's manuscript. Although the picture represents Queen Njinga of the neighbouring kingdom of Ndongo, this pipe strongly resembles the seventeenth-century Kongo pipes discovered further north on the Kindoki hilltop and in Mbanza Kongo and Ngongo Mbata.

Archaeological Evidence of Kongo Kingdom Tobacco Pipes Between the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Centuries

As for the pipe remains discovered in the archaeological record of Mbanza Kongo, Kindoki and Ngongo Mbata, major differences can be observed between those dated between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, produced in either clay or stone, and the more recent ones from the later eighteenth to twentieth centuries, exclusively made from clay (Clist 2018). It is probably not a coincidence that this typological divide set in with the end of a long period of civil wars (1641–1718) that wracked the Kongo kingdom (Thornton 1983), especially after the Battle of Mbwila in 1665. By that time, the polity's strongly centralized structure, which had developed since the reign of Afonso I (1509–1542), had vanished. The period between the late seventeenth century and the start of European colonialism in the second half of the nineteenth century was one of growing decentralization and political fragmentation (Broadhead 1971, 1979; Heywood 2009). The same divide is also reflected in other aspects of Kongo's material culture, most prominently its pottery and its glass beads imported from Europe (Clist *et al*. 2018c; Karklins and Clist 2018). In the subsequent analysis, I will focus on the oldest Kongo pipes from the late sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.

The excavations in Ngongo Mbata, corresponding to a total of 847.5 m², resulted in a corpus of 358 stone and 771 clay pipe fragments from contexts dating from the late sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, while only 74 clay and no stone pipe fragments date from later centuries. The excavations in Kindoki, corresponding to a total of 537 m², yielded only 10 stone and 27 clay pipe fragments from the late sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, while the bulk of the pipe remains – all in clay – are more recent, i.e. 190 in total. In Mbanza Kongo, 206 pipe fragments have been collected from different sites in the town, of which only 7 are in stone. Not all contexts in which they

were discovered can be dated exactly, but many of the pipes excavated in Mbanza Kongo probably date back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and most of them are identical in stylistic features to those found in Ngongo Mbata and Kindoki. Several others can be recognized as being of European origin and/or post-date the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Clist *et al.* 2015e). Roughly speaking, about 1,300 of the entire collection of more than 1,800 pipe fragments from those three sites were found in contexts corresponding to the period between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. At this point, it needs to be stressed that Kongo stone pipes were exclusively produced during the seventeenth century.

The high number of pipes in Ngongo Mbata is an indirect testimony to their specifically intensive use since the first half of the seventeenth century. This is confirmed by the characteristic tooth wear on three men buried at Kindoki and Ngongo Mbata, aged around 20, from 24 to 30 and from 30 to 35, which all attest to heavy smoking at quite a young age (Polet 2018). As their bodily remains date from between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this further corroborates the statements in the seventeenth-century texts. The two men buried in Kindoki were nobles; the one from Ngongo Mbata may have been a young priest as his head had been positioned eastwards. He was, however, not a Capuchin missionary as no deaths were reported from Ngongo Mbata between 1645 and 1835 in the list of deceased Capuchin missionaries (Saccardo 1983: vol. 3, 19–112), apart from Joris Van Gheel, the well-known 'martyr' who passed away in 1652 (Hildebrand 1940). During this period, clay pipes are more commonly found in the archaeological sites and their use leading to tooth wear complements testimonies, such as *y todo el dia sin cesar están tomando tabaco en humo* ('without stopping, throughout the day, they use tobacco to smoke' [our translation]) (Brásio 1974: 462), or *Le missionnaire ne laisse point d'être incommodé dans ces circonstances par la fumée continuelle du tabac des Nègres (ce qu'il ne faut pas leur défendre)* … ('The missionary is regularly bothered by the continuous tobacco smoke of the Negroes (which they should not be forbidden)' [our translation]) (Nothomb 1931: 52, who translated and edited Da Bologna's book from 1747) and *les Nègres fument du tabac toute la nuit* ('the Negroes smoke tobacco the whole night long') (du Cheyron d'Abzac 2006: 243, who edited the work of Michelangelo Guattini and Dionigi Carli from 1668).

Another striking observation is the fact that most of the pipes of the late sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, whether in stone or in terracotta, are long-stemmed. This characteristic feature can be related to the way they were introduced into the Kongo kingdom. As a matter of fact, the first production of English pipes, which probably started around 1575, was inspired by long-stemmed native American models from coastal North Carolina and Virginia, which had already been used there by English settlers and sailors for quite some time (Dunhill 1999: 52, 210). The earliest depiction of such an English elbow pipe, i.e. a so-called 'little ladell', is found as an engraving in the work of Anthony Chute (1595). The first Dutch pipes, which were produced in Amsterdam, Gouda and Leiden from about 1610, were also long-stemmed and resemble very much the earliest English exemplars, as English pipe-makers set up the first Dutch workshops (de Vries and van der Woude 1997: 309–11). Given that long-stemmed pipes were not in use in sixteenth-century southern Europe, where tobacco was more commonly snuffed than smoked (Teixeira *et al.* 2015: 25–8), it is very likely that Kongo pipe-makers took their inspiration from English or Dutch clay pipes. It is well known that English and Dutch traders, along with other Europeans, already operated in the vicinity of the Congo mouth and moored at Kongo's Mpinda harbour towards the end of the sixteenth century (Cuvelier 1955: 174–5; Thornton 1998a: 39; Thornton 2016c: 196; see also Brinkman and Bostoen, Chapter 9). As mentioned above, English and Dutch sailors also seem to have had a hand in the introduction of smoking along the West-African Gold Coast, as most pipes discovered in the archaeological record of El Mina were imported from England and the Netherlands while only very few were locally produced (DeCorse 2001: 163–7). This does not seem to be the case in the Kongo region, given that the archaeological excavations at Mbanza Kongo, Kindoki and Ngongo Mbata have yielded only very few imported pipes. Kongo pipe-makers appear to have very rapidly appropriated the foreign models and to have made them into something of their own, both in terms of shapes and decoration. As the pictures in Figure 8.2 illustrate, Kongo pipes tend to be thicker than their contemporaries from Europe and their furnaces are generally also bigger and almost all of them are decorated using local designs.

Figure 8.3 synthetizes the furnace-based typology of Kongo pipes from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries as developed from a
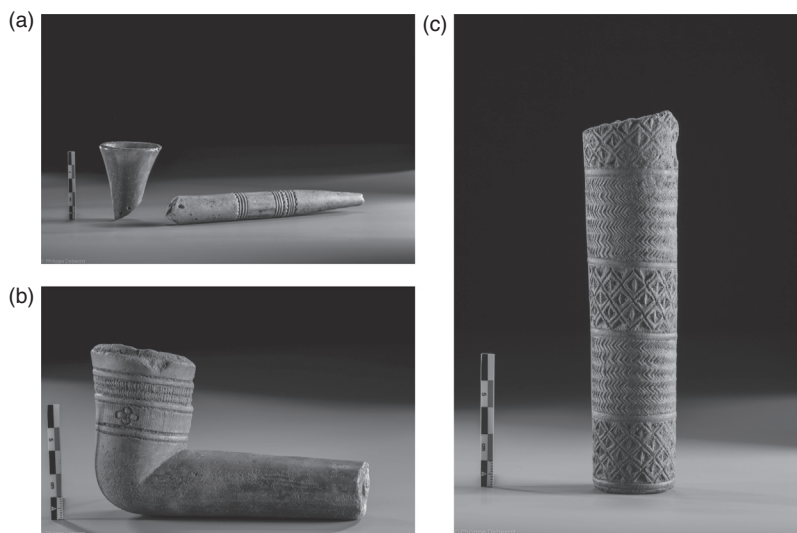
Figure 8.2 (a) Stone pipe fragments coming from two different pipes, Ngongo Mbata site, seventeenth century; (b) Large fragment of a clay pipe, Ngongo Mbata site, eighteenth century; (c) Large fragment of a fully decorated clay stem, Ngongo Mbata site, eighteenth century (All pictures @ KongoKing & Ph. Debeerst). (A black and white version of these figures will appear in some formats. For the colour versions, please refer to the plate section.)

corpus of over 1,300 fragments. Types labelled 'Af' ('Ancient Furnaces') are clay pipes. A detailed description of this typology can be found in Clist (2018).

The clay pipes of the types Af1 to Af3 are the most common at Ngongo Mbata and Mbanza Kongo. Af2 and Af3 pipes are identical, except that Af3 pipes have a kind of shoulder creating a slight rupture of the profile (Figure 8.3). Type Af4 corresponds to a single artefact that was discovered in the so-called south trench of the Kindoki site, more specifically from a pit which was radiocarbon-dated to a most likely time interval between the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century (Clist *et al.* 2015c: 391). Its decoration very closely resembles that of a type Af2C furnace, also unique, which was retrieved from the monumental platform mound, on which the stone church in Ngongo Mbata was built in the second quarter of the seventeenth century (Clist *et al.* 2015d). It is possible that the Af2C and Af4 types constitute some of the first manufacturing tests before the Af1–Af3 types became standard and widespread. The Af5 type may
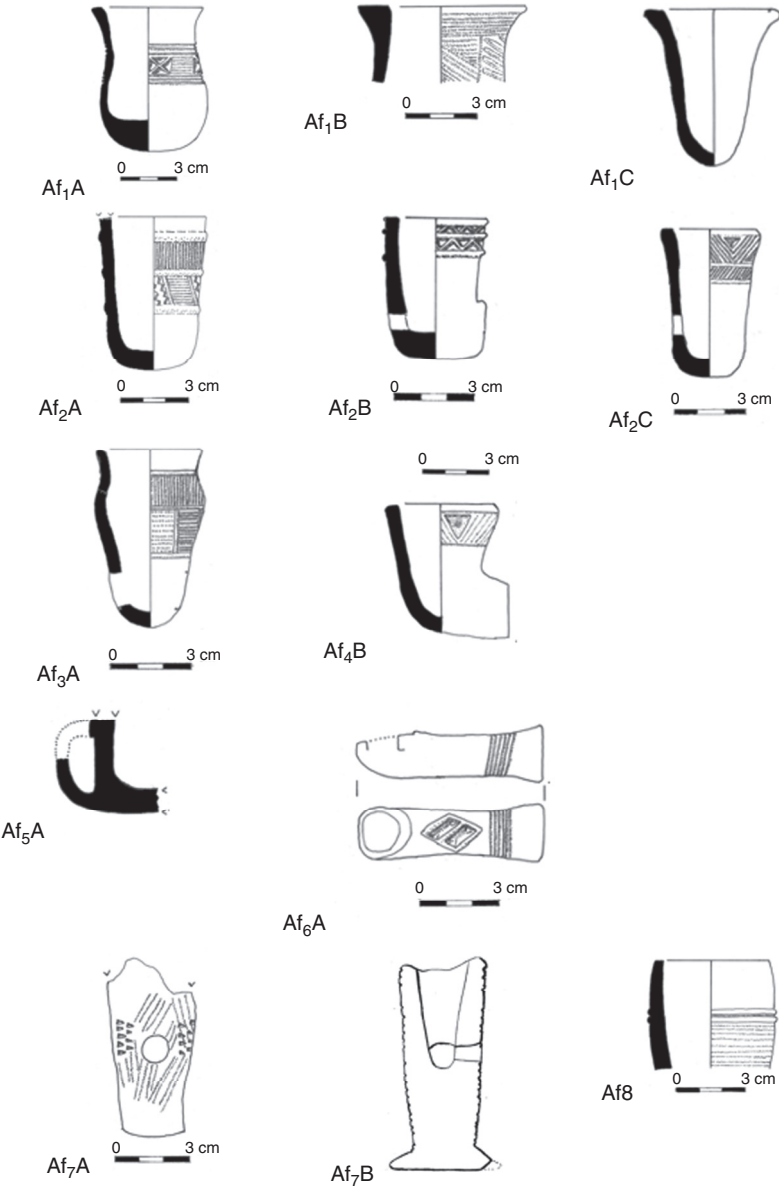
Figure 8.3 Typology of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century clay pipes of the Kongo kingdom. (All drawings © KongoKing & B. Clist)

be another example of such an early production. A few fragments of several Af5 pipes have been found at Ngongo Mbata, but only in pit 1 of trench 1, which was radiocarbon-dated and estimated to stem from the first half of the seventeenth century. Their specific fragile clay, their flat handle and their rarity set them apart from the other types. The Af6 type is of special interest, since it was first discovered to the south of Luanda (Ervedosa 1980: 224; figure 54B). Five Af6 pipe fragments were found at the Tadi dia Bukikwa and Lumbu sites in Mbanza Kongo, dating back to the first and second half of the seventeenth century respectively (Clist *et al.* 2015e). Several others were retrieved from different pits at Ngongo Mbata; their dates of use range between the first half of the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century (Clist *et al.* 2018a). Even if such a hypothesis is still very tentative for the time being, several elements suggest that Af6 pipes could have been imported from south of the Kongo kingdom. Arguments for this hypothesis could be that their clay and fabric are different from the other types, they sometimes have short stems and a flared mouth, their decoration is based on a pattern of triangular or lozenge shaped excisions, their numbers are small compared with types Af1 to Af3, their present geographical distribution ranges from Luanda in the south to Ngongo Mbata in the north and they are always found in small numbers in the excavations of Mbanza Kongo and Ngongo Mbata. Type Af7 is restricted to one single item found at Ngongo Mbata, which is labelled type Af7A. It very closely resembles three specimens discovered in the 1920s at Kalina Point (currently known as Gombe Point) in Kinshasa (Bequaert 1938; Cahen 1976; Cahen 1978) and still three others discovered in the 1980s at the Kintele and Lifoula sites in neighbouring Congo-Brazzaville (Pinçon 1988), which are labelled Af7B. Type Af7 could thus be of northern origin. Finally, type Af8 consists of only two specimens discovered at Ngongo Mbata in early-seventeenth-century and mid-eighteenth-century contexts. Just like type Af7, it might be a northern import, since it strongly resembles pipes that were also found in Congo-Brazzaville.

A final interesting discovery regarding Kongo clay pipes is the use of an iron oxide to give them a red colour. This pigment was found inside the hollows of geometric excisions on several Af1B, Af6A and Af6B pipes, both in Mbanza Kongo and in Ngongo Mbata, suggesting that this colouring technique was part of the manufacturing process of these types.

Stone pipes seem to have been manufactured exclusively in the Mbata province, more specifically at workshops in Ngongo Mbata and the nearby village of Kinlongo (Figure 8.2 a). This is evidenced by unfinished pipe pieces on both sites, which in Ngongo Mbata are exclusively found in seventeenth-century contexts. While we have retrieved 358 stone pipe fragments from Ngongo Mbata, the centre of their production and use, only ten were discovered in Kindoki located about 70 km to the north and just seven in Mbanza Kongo some 112 km to the southwest. All seven Mbanza Kongo exemplars were discovered at the Lumbu site associated with the capital's quarter traditionally hosting the king's public decision-making court where the most important nobles of the kingdom gathered, like the Mwene Mbata. The two types of stone pipes only differ from each other in terms of the position of the stem with regard to the axis of the furnace, i.e. either oblique or straight. The furnace lip of all stone pipes is identical to that of Af1 clay pipes. While the furnaces of all stone pipes are undecorated, about 26 per cent of their stems are decorated. This rather standardized decoration is placed in the middle of the pipe stem or at its mouth. We discovered only one fully decorated stone pipe stem, i.e. in Kinlongo. Fully decorated clay stems are also rare: one specimen from Mbanza Kongo and five from Ngongo Mbata, one of which is illustrated in Figure 8.2 c.

The differences between clay and stone pipes are summarised in Table 8.1, which makes clear that Kongo pipe-makers did not simply model the production of stone pipes on that of clay pipes.

Clay pipes were produced from local material and their shaping technique was not difficult to acquire, especially not for artisans familiar with pottery. Although the modelling of clay pipes closely resembles the production of ceramics, certain techniques, decoration types and their layout also betray woodworking, engraving and weaving craftsmanship (see for instance Figure 8.2 c). While pottery was most often the apanage of women during at least the twentieth century (Kaumba 2018), men most commonly practised these crafts in the Kongo area (Bassani and McLeod 2000: 280; LaGamma 2015a: 185; Martin 2015: 81). Hence, it is not excluded that clay pipe-making was the apanage of men at that time, as it is known to be the case in the neighbouring coastal kingdom of Kakongo at the end of the eighteenth century (Proyart 1776: 107). Later, possibly in the nineteenth

Table 8.1 *Differences between Kongo stone and clay pipes from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries*

	Clay pipes	Stone pipes
Material	Local clay found in the immediate vicinity of the production centre	Serpentinite found at a distance of at least 100 km as the crow flies from Ngongo Mbata
Furnaces	Nearly always decorated, especially in the case of Af1, Af2 & Af3 types	Never decorated
Stems	18% decorated at Ngongo Mbata, while only 4.5% in Mbanza Kongo	26% decorated at Ngongo Mbata
Decoration pattern	Covering the furnace, limited on the stem	Absent from the furnace, limited on the stem
Chronology	Late sixteenth to eighteenth century	Late sixteenth (?) to seventeenth century

century, the *sa kya boondo* or *sa tshya boondo*, the funerary terracotta monuments west of Matadi, were made by men using the same type of clay (Cornet 1981a). The intricate decoration patterns as well as the bright red colouration on at least some of them indicate that pipe-makers undertook painstaking efforts to embellish certain clay pipes, no doubt because they were specifically produced for the kingdom's elite. This is more than probable for the rare clay pipes with an entirely decorated stem that were found in Mbanza Kongo and Ngongo Mbata, such as the one illustrated in Figure 8.2 c. Moreover, it needs to be stressed that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, specific types of clay pipes, i.e. Af1, Af2 and Af3, were widespread in the kingdom and contemporaneously used, both in the central capital and in important centres in the Northern provinces, such as Ngongo Mbata and Kindoki. The same was true for certain specific types of pottery (cf. Clist *et al.* 2018c). These observations suggest that Kongo material culture underwent a certain degree of homogenization during the kingdom's heyday under the stimulus of political centralization and economic integration (see also Cranshof *et al.*, Chapter 7). This process was backed up by the spread of Christianity and literacy through

education (Brinkman 2016) and also favoured contact-induced lin-
guistic convergence (Bostoen and de Schryver 2015; Goes and Bostoen
2019; see also Brinkman and Bostoen, Chapter 9, as well as Bostoen
and de Schryver, Chapter 3).

The stone pipes were in all likelihood exclusively produced in the
Mbata province, in and around Ngongo Mbata. As far as we can
judge from the currently available documentation, they seem to have
been produced during the seventeenth century only. Their production
was both labour-intensive and expensive. The stone pipes were of ser-
pentinite, probably extracted from quarries situated in the remote
Mayombe area north of the neighbouring Nsundi province and thus
had to be transported over long distances, over 200 km return journeys.
Moreover, the manufacturing of stone pipes required the mastering of
specific techniques and mechanical tools to shape, drill and decorate
the stone. This could suggest again that men were the specialists of this
particular item of Kongo material culture. It is known that men were
the producers of the funerary stones or *mintadi* found west of Matadi
in both Angola and Congo-Kinshasa (Cornet 1981b). These were
made from the same kind of soapstone extracted from local quarries of
the Mayombe range. The stone sculptures seem to date back to about
1695 at least (Cornet 1981b: 214). In other words, the production
of these high-value stone pipes involved a strictly organized system,
which probably did not simply develop to only serve the Kongo elite's
well-known desire for luxury goods (see also Vos, Chapter 10). If stone
pipes had been highly desired among Kongo nobles, they would have
been found in larger numbers in Mbanza Kongo, the kingdom's cen-
tral capital. Given the fact that stone pipes are mainly concentrated in
Ngongo Mbata and its immediate vicinity, we may surmise that the
Mwene Mbata and his court may have exploited them to distinguish
themselves within the kingdom's nobility. The few stone pipes found
at the Lumbu site in Mbanza Kongo may be understood as attesting
to the presence of the Mwene Mbata at important decision-making
meetings in the capital.

It is worth noting that a clay furnace was found at Kindoki, which
was made of grey white clay, probably in an attempt to imitate the
white or beige colour of 35 per cent of the stone pipes without any
decoration and with a shape identical to the furnace of stone pipes (cf.
Figure 8.2, type Af1C). At its discovery, this item was thought to be a
stone pipe. It is obviously a clay copy of a stone pipe, which suggests

that the latter had an important social status inciting the production of cheaper copies. This phenomenon has also been suggested for some pots of the Mbafu Group of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, which could be copies of high status ones (Cranshof *et al.*, Chapter 7).

Conclusions

The KongoKing project developed a new cultural sequence for the region based on the changes in style, form and decoration observed on the excavated pottery. This new cultural sequence suggests that during the fifteenth century, before the arrival of the first Europeans, the homogenization process of Kongo material culture had already started, probably related to an increasing political centralization and economic integration. This homogenization process may have accelerated after 1483 due to the importation of European commodities, which were appropriated and reinterpreted by Kongo people, and by the local creation of new types of pottery for the king and for the nobles representing him in the kingdom. This process was probably completed early in the sixteenth century as by then these types of pottery were present in the capital and in the important settlements of the northern provinces (Clist *et al*. 2018c, Cranshof *et al.*, Chapter 7).

Engravings, watercolours, written sources and archaeological objects all reveal the extent and the speed of the material cultural transformation within a generation of contact under the leadership of the first Christianized Kongo kings. This process of extraversion, as discussed by Vos in Chapter 10, can be followed through the rapidly changing nature of the Kongo regalia, incorporating European-made objects in no less than a century in all parts of the kingdom (e.g. Randles 1968: 183–4). This is also attested to by the material found in the few cemeteries from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, which illustrates the strongly cosmopolitan nature of Kongo material culture based on European products or imports (textiles, beads, Christian objects like crucifixes and religious medals, swords, gold necklaces, copper-hawk bells, Chinese porcelain, etc.). In Chapter 6, Fromont notably discusses textiles in this connection.

Tobacco smoking and tobacco pipes originated from Northern, Central and Southern America. First encountered in 1492 in the Caribbean by navigators working for the Spanish king, then by

Portuguese explorers in Brazil in 1500, tobacco smoking was subsequently introduced in Europe.

The new practice of smoking tobacco and the use of smoking pipes in the Kongo kingdom seem to have constituted two separate historical processes. It can be argued that tobacco smoking using cigars started in the second half of the sixteenth century and was limited to some locations on the Atlantic coast. The use of pipes started during the final years of the sixteenth century, probably after 1583, and quickly spread throughout the kingdom. For this new practice, long-stemmed clay pipes were used, based either on the first English clay pipes (if before 1610) and/or on Dutch pipes (if after 1610) or on the few and rare Amerindian pipes brought by European ships.

It can be suggested that the creation of the first Kongo pipes in clay followed the introduction of tobacco and tobacco smoking at Mbanza Soyo at the latest in 1612. Later workshops were set up in Ngongo Mbata to create the first stone pipes. Probably first tried by the nobles due to the high price of imported Brazilian tobacco, smoking and the way of smoking could have been status symbols, as evidenced by a 1692 illustration of Merolla da Sorrento (Figure 8.1 b), by some highly decorated clay pipes found in Mbanza Kongo and Ngongo Mbata and by stone pipes produced in and around Ngongo Mbata. We consider the latter as specific status symbols used by the Mwene Mbata and the nobles from the Mbata province to further reinforce their important position within the kingdom's political structure.

Texts of the second half of the seventeenth century clearly show how fast and widespread tobacco smoking had become, for both men and women, in use first by the nobility, later by commoners and then perhaps by slaves when cheaper local tobacco production started. This is confirmed by the characteristic tooth wear on three men buried at Kindoki and Ngongo Mbata. It shows heavy smoking was practised during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries at quite a young age, i.e. 20 to 35 years old. The archaeological data reveal that tobacco smoking – only known from texts of the second half of the seventeenth century – was already practised much earlier. Tobacco plantations developed in the Kongo kingdom and in Angola in the course of the seventeenth century.

The rare types of clay tobacco pipes found at Ngongo Mbata may be interpreted as early creations (types Af2C, Af4, Af5), after which types Af1A and B, Af2A and B, and Af3A became the

standardized clay pipes widely used in the kingdom's central capital Mbanza Kongo and in the most important settlements of the northern provinces. This fast process of homogenization is in line with the spread of other items of Kongo material culture, like pottery, completed early in the sixteenth century. The creation and making of Kongo clay tobacco pipes was immediately adopted for use throughout the kingdom. In this manner, tobacco pipes became true markers of the kingdom's material culture.

As with all other conclusions from the KongoKing project based on archaeological data, one must bear in mind that the excavations carried out in Mbanza Kongo did not follow the same strategy as in the northern provinces, that no elaborate archaeological fieldwork has been pursued in Mbanza Soyo and that none at all has been carried out in the other *mbanza* or in any of the important settlements of the central and southern provinces, not to mention the Angola colony or the kingdom of Ndongo.

Today, thanks to our cataloguing of the shape, style and decorative attributes of Kongo clay and stone pipes, we can start to study the American collections of pipes to possibly identify Kongo influence on them stemming from the enslaved Kongo men and women who were taken to the Americas.

9 | *'To Make Book': A Conceptual Historical Approach to Kongo Book Cultures (Sixteenth–Nineteenth Centuries)*

INGE BRINKMAN AND KOEN BOSTOEN

Introduction

'What will it mean?' Many a missionary translating Bible texts into a local language vexed himself with this question (only very few missionaries were women) (Peterson 1999: 31–2). Theoretically missionaries thought language to be without opacity: the divine message would shine in full transparency across languages (Hofmeyr 2004: 13). In the field, missionaries knew better. They struggled with words, concepts, and phrases, always concerned whether a term's local semantic field would fall within the parameters of what they regarded as the proper Christian message. The problem of translation was not restricted to missionaries: traders, explorers, and – at a later stage – colonial officials required local people to communicate with African counterparts or subjects. The issue has entered scholarship, and a growing body of literature deals with translation in colonial, missionary contexts, focusing on the relations between Europeans and local interlocutors (e.g. Rafael 1993; Peterson 1999; Hofmeyr 2004; Peterson 2004; Mazrui 2016).

Translation also became pertinent in many ways in the Kongo kingdom, especially in the Christian church after Kongo rulers were baptized at the end of the fifteenth century. European priests started living in the region and an educated local intellectual elite developed. These so-called *mestres* were important in translation work, in church services, and in teaching the Christian doctrine and literacy. In the sixteenth century, Christianity was turned into the kingdom's official religion and the then king Afonso I started a policy of state-wide conversion and Christian education by sending local Christian teachers or *mestres* into all the provinces. His policy was further implemented by his successors and Kongo was long considered as a Christian kingdom

in the wider Christian world (Thornton 2013; Brinkman 2016). Christianity also spread beyond the borders of the kingdom, to the north in the kingdoms of Kakongo and Loango, but in these regions its history is much more ambivalent – with some rulers embracing, yet most rejecting, the new faith (Brásio 1953b: 307; Hansen 1995: 47; Vanhee and Vos 2013: 83).

At the same time Portuguese traders settled in the region. They did not leave as many historical sources, and so their ideas about language are more difficult to trace. Furthermore, most of them learned to speak Kikongo fluently, and they became part of Kongo society (Birmingham 1981: 60; Hilton 1985: 77). By the later seventeenth century, however, trading ships from various countries visited the coastal regions, staffed with people unfamiliar with Kikongo. As a consequence a new group of local trade brokers emerged, active as intermediaries and interpreters. By the eighteenth century the Kongo kingdom had become less centralized. Soyo had become an independent polity. While the Kongo king was accorded ceremonial status, most of the regional leaders enjoyed considerable political autonomy and based their power on the trade relations (Hilton 1985: 212).

Not only did the visiting Europeans require translation, linguistic issues were also a matter of debate. Should church-related activities be held in Kikongo or in Portuguese, was it appropriate to have interpreters present during confession, how to translate Christian concepts into Kikongo, etc.? From the start, European missionaries were concerned with these issues. The sources do not tell us whether Kongo Christians were as engaged, although some references hint they were. Also for the Kongo case, these issues have received some attention. Especially in the realm of missionary studies, work by Thornton (2013), among others, has led to new insights into the semantic fields of various Christian concepts.

Apart from discussing the translation process, and the surrounding debates and social relations, we can also focus on Kikongo as a historical construct and study the history of new concepts in the local languages. After all, the history of vocabulary does not stop with translation, and reconstructing the route that concepts followed linguistically may help us to understand not only linguistic change, but also social dynamics and political relations. In this chapter we will neither address the problem of translation as such nor take the Kikongo language at face value, but trace the longer linguistic history of words related to

the concept of 'book' in Kikongo. It is safe to assume that 'book' and its surrounding semantic field had no existence prior to contacts between Europeans and Bakongo. Books entered the region through various domains: Christianity, trade and political administration. The history of the translation of book-related concepts will be considered in connection with the spread and employment of books in the region.

This will lead us beyond the translation process into the realm of language use. What happened with the new vocabulary after translation? How did newly introduced concepts spread to the various parts of the kingdom, and how were they appropriated there? Not only local struggles over translation and meaning are then of concern; we also need to study spheres of political influence, commercial interaction, and religious exchange. Where did the vocabulary for 'book' come from and how did it spread? Especially in the Kongo case this would seem important: there has been much attention to the relations between the Kongo kingdom and Europe, but processes of change within the region itself are just as crucial for understanding the kingdom's history.

A first step will be to provide an interpretation of the importance of books in the Kongo region from the end of the fifteenth century. Subsequently we will assess the distribution of book-related concepts diachronically through the different varieties of the Kikongo Language Cluster. Finally, we offer an interpretation of these examples, discussing the geographical distribution and the socio-religious and political implications.

Literary Practices in the Kongo Region

Africa has been considered 'the oral continent' *par excellence* (e.g. Derive 2008). Africa's assumed orality has been related to matters ranging from the continuing relevance of proverbs, griots, and myths of origin to the appropriation of the mobile phone. This stereotype has been qualified already (Finnegan 2007), but especially for Africa's pre-colonial past, studies of the spread of paper, books, and literacy are few and far between. Yet, books have been important in the precolonial history of various regions in Africa – Ethiopia, the Swahili coast, many West-African cultures, and also the Kongo kingdom.

Soon after contact between Portugal and Kongo was established in 1482 there is evidence of the presence of books in the Kongo kingdom,

as the King of Portugal sent his colleague 'everything that is necessary for a church', crosses, organs, cruets, and also 'many books' (Brásio 1952: 71). On other occasions as well, books were sent from Portugal to Kongo: a list of items sent in 1512 refers to 'the books that are in the treasury to be packed and delivered to Álvaro Lopez, trained as a linguist' (Brásio 1952: 252). Reportedly two German printers were also sent over, but they soon returned, as 'the land was not healthy for Germans' (Brásio 1954: 19).

The Kongo nobility learnt to read and write in Portuguese and the upper layer of society studied Portuguese books related to Christianity. Apart from the letters written by King Afonso I to his Portuguese colleague (Brásio 1952; Jadin and Dicorato 1974), he himself was said to do ' … nothing but study and many times he falls asleep over the books, and many times he forgets to eat and drink for talking about the things of our Lord, and he is so absorbed by the things of the scripture that he even forgets himself' (Brásio 1952: 361). There may be a hagiographic tendency in this letter, as it was sent by the king's vicar to the Portuguese king. It is clear, however, that the king and his entourage were eager to become literate, and to put the new skills to use: the king took to writing letters and reading books. The quote falls within the parameters of classic studies on the acquisition of literacy, in which reading is viewed as a private and individual experience (Ong 1982). Other people in the Kongo kingdom may also have read books, letters, and other materials on a private and individual basis. At the same time, 'the book' may not have been limited to this.

Hofmeyr and Kriel (2006: 15) point out that book history often takes modern book cultures in the United States and Europe as a model, which may not apply anytime or anywhere: 'If one is dealing with other contexts like medieval Europe, pre-colonial and colonial Africa and India, the conception of a "book" can be strikingly unusual: "books" can, for example, appear miraculously, often sent from heaven in dreams, or "books" can appear magically on clothing, plants and buildings. The understanding of the term "book" which currently animates much of the scholarship generally cannot accommodate such ideas of "bookness"'.

The status of literacy and the nature of books were also more inclusive in the Kongo kingdom than generally conceived of in post-medieval Europe. This was at least partly due to the Christian sphere in which many books were situated. European missionaries in the

kingdom also did not always relate to books in the 'modern' way. Thus Andrea de Pavia, an Italian Capuchin missionary who stayed in Kongo between 1685 and 1702, called upon the prince of Soyo to make peace with the Portuguese with the words: 'Would it not be good for Your Excellency to show the entire world that he is a true Catholic prince? As you are known as such, it is necessary to carry out a heroic deed, one that would not only be inscribed in the book of eternity in heaven, but will also be known forever in the entire world' (Jadin 1970: 463–4).

By far most books concerned Christian literature, although Afonso I also studied the entire book of Portuguese law, after requesting the Portuguese king for a copy, as the judge in Kongo told him it was no longer in his possession, he only having books in Latin (Brásio 1952: 356, 374–5). This hints at private ownership of books: they were in individual possession and could only be borrowed with the owner's consent. Another reference of non-Christian character is the letter by the Portuguese king that told Afonso I to keep a record book as a form of administration: 'As in your kingdom there is reading and writing, you must adopt the manner of all Christian kings. To have account books and inscribe all the taxes and the names of the nobles' (Brásio 1952: 530). Yet Christian literature, including the Bible, hymn books, mass books, and catechisms, constitute the most frequently mentioned books in the Kongo kingdom.

Apart from the spiritual books meant to inspire the Christian congregation in the Kongo kingdom, church life was also registered in books. Thus each baptism was noted in a book, as described by Dionigi Carli when he fell ill in 1668 in the province of Mbamba and still baptized ten to twelve children per day from his sickbed: 'two blacks support me under the shoulders, another holds the book, and a third the baptistery' (du Cheyron d'Abzac 2006: 134). Similarly, each matrimony was written down in a book (Jadin 1970: 437). There were books that listed all confessions made (Zucchelli 1712: 175) and the names of people becoming knights in the military Order of Christ were listed in *liuros da matricula* (registration books) (Brásio 1955a: 553).

Production and Spread of Books in the Kongo Region

As there were no printing machines in the kingdom, books had to be imported from Europe. Most of these were in the Portuguese

language. Probably Kikongo Christian books were already available in the region around the 1550s, but we have no further evidence of this (cf. Bontinck and Ndembe Nsasi 1978: 17). In 1624 a catechism was printed in Kikongo, a book that was very well received. Its author, the Jesuit Mateus Cardoso, took this book from Luanda to Mbanza Kongo and left various copies on the way (Brásio 1956: 372). A later Jesuit father, Pero Tavares used it when he and a group of *mestres* started teaching the Christian doctrine in the region of Dande. This catechism in Kikongo was not only used along this route, it also spread into Soyo, and perhaps to Latin America (Jadin 1967: 285–6; Jadin 1975: 960; Bontinck and Ndembe Nsasi 1978: 17; Hilton 1985: 161). Soon a reprint of the Kikongo catechism was needed. There were still not enough copies, so missionaries took to copying the book by hand, at night (Saccardo 1982: 378). As in other contexts, printed books were hence not some sort of final stage; they could be turned into manuscript form again (cf. Davis and Johnson 2015: 6).

Books in Kikongo were clearly in demand: the Spanish Capuchin Antonio de Teruel requested the printing of as many as seven books in Kikongo: 'a manual for the people of Congo', a catechism, a book of sermons and calendar 'following their customs', a book of feast days for the Virgin, a book of prayers for lay congregations, a 'vocabulary in four languages, Latin, Italian, Spanish and Congolese', and finally a 'grammar and syntax to learn the language easily' (Saccardo 1982: 378; Thornton 2011d). Books in other regional languages also became available: a first catechism in Kimbundu was printed in 1642 (Tavares and Santos 2002: 477).

Books were rare and expensive, and requests to send books over from Portugal were frequent (Brásio 1952: 362; Brásio 1953b: 307; Brásio 1955a: 312). In the 1650s paper cost a chicken per sheet, and as an alternative banana leaves were used (Simonetti 1907: 376–7; Tavares and Santos 2002: 476, 495). When the catechism was first printed in Kikongo in 1624, a copy cost a hundred *reis* in paper money; initially only a few copies were made available (Bontinck and Ndembe Nsasi 1978: 31). By the 1650s, prices for a book for higher studies reached 6,000 *reis* (10 *scudi*) and a common missal could be bought for a slave (Simonetti 1907: 376–7).

Literacy was held in high regard. Books, paper, and literacy acquired a nearly ritual status, as this quote from the Italian Capuchin Brusciotto de Vetralla in the 1650s suggests: 'And also the indigenous people

have a great desire to learn and they are very ambitious to appear literate; in the processions those who have learnt all the letters of the alphabet stick a piece of paper in the form of a card on their forehead so as to be recognized as a student' (Simonetti 1907: 377).

Such uses point to the integration of writing into Kongo societies, even if restricted to elite circles, and belie the idea that literacy remained 'European' and foreign to African society (cf. Tavares and Santos 2002: 473). Kongo people integrated the notion of 'books' into their history, even if books remained rare and costly. Books were indeed precious items in the Kongo kingdom and highly valued. A document written by the end of the sixteenth century, found in the archives of the Vatican, stated: 'Nearly all of them learn how to read so as to know how to recite the Divine Office; they would sell all they have to buy a manuscript or a book and if they have one, they always carry it by hand with their rosary which they say often and with devotion' (Cuvelier and Jadin 1954: 131).

Similarly, in 1710, the Capuchin missionary Bernardo de Gallo wrote: 'Happy is the person who can obtain a spiritual book or a prayer book, especially a Portuguese book of hours of the Virgin Mary' (Jadin 1961: 483). This value attributed to books continued well into the nineteenth century; Kongo Catholics reportedly would on no account part with their 'missals and other books, letters, chalices, and other church furniture of the olden time' (Monteiro 1875: 212).

As in Europe, books also became a matter of controversy. Around 1620 incoming Dutch visitors spread Protestant tracts and books, a source of much indignation on the part of the Catholic missionaries (Brásio 1955b: 360). A missionary described twenty years later how the then king of Kongo, Dom Garcia I, had taken to burning the books: 'They also handed him a Portuguese book, full of errors and heresies of Calvin and entirely opposed to our sacred faith. After having read the said book and having learnt its contents, the king convened all the inhabitants of the town to the public square, which is very large. He ordered a large fire to be lit, and then in the presence of everybody and the Dutch themselves he fervently exhorted all the people to stay firm and stable in the Catholic faith, and then impetuously he threw the book into the fire' (Bontinck 1964: 112).

As we have noted, to a certain extent book concepts and book-related practices in the Kongo kingdom resembled those in Europe. Books were at the time part of the elite culture and strongly related

to the Christian doctrine, in Europe and Kongo alike. Probably books were less widespread and more expensive in Kongo than in contemporary Europe. As in Europe, people swore on the Bible in court, and newly elected kings were installed with an oath of allegiance with their hand placed on the Bible (Barbot 1732: 492; Jadin 1967: 403, 404; Brásio 1988: 491)

The custom of Kongo political leaders to kiss the gospel book as a form of blessing was less well received by European missionaries. Some missionaries did not view this practice as problematic (Merolla da Sorrento 1692: 562), but others held that the 'abuse' had been introduced by 'missionaries who had been little conversant with usages of this mission or deceived by the blacks' (Jadin 1961: 590; Bontinck 1970: 36–7). Overall, however, book concepts and practices in the Kongo kingdom were not dissimilar to those in Europe and they were acceptable to European missionaries and other visitors.

Early references mostly concern the kingdom's capital, Mbanza Kongo. Numerous references indicate the spread of literacy throughout the kingdom: Afonso I and his successors implemented an educational system for the nobility, largely led by the intellectual elite of the already mentioned *mestres*. Letter writing and literacy – usually in Portuguese – became important political instruments. Paper, ink, stamps with inscriptions, written certificates and permits, etc. were used in the administration of the church and of the court. Letters were exchanged between the capital and the provinces to ensure communication among the political-intellectual elite (Hilton 1985: 79–80). In other words, literacy came to play a role in the process of centralization of the kingdom: cohesion in the kingdom was partly established through the Christian church, education, and the spread of literacy.

Within the Kongo kingdom, by 1608, for example, the school youth in Soyo was reported to be in possession of books: 'There are 8 to 10 schools here, as in Portugal, where all the children are taught and educated in Portuguese. Everyone goes the entire day with a little book in his hands, and with a rosary' (Ratelband 1950: 31).

About a century later, however, the number of books in the Soyo region seems to have dwindled: 'In the school an African, who is chosen by us as the *mestre*, teaches the children the Christian Doctrine, with oral lectures introduced by the Church; and the most docile and capable of the pupils are also taught to read and write in the Portuguese

language. Because they don't have books, they learn how to read and write from simple hand-written letters' (Zucchelli 1712: 297–8).

While in the sixteenth century books were imported from Europe, there were fewer books over time and books in the Kongo kingdom became an ever more rare commodity. European missionaries frequented the Kongo kingdom to a lesser degree and the Kongo Catholic Church took its own direction (Thornton 2013).

Writing and literacy spread not only through the Kongo kingdom. After Luanda had been founded in 1575, Angola also formed a centre from where literacy spread, as testified by reports of *pombeiro* traders and Portuguese travellers (Tavares and Santos 2002: 475, 499). While some of the letters from and to the various regions of the kingdom can be found in Brásio's volumes, the spread of books is more difficult to trace. Even so, the presence of books is attested to. Thus Queen Njinga of neighbouring Matamba brought 'crosses, medals, rosaries, and spiritual books' taken by her troops from the battlefield in the 1640s to Christian prisoners of war (de Castro and du Cheyron d'Abzac 2010: 112).

In the regions further north, in the polities of Kakongo, Ngoyo, and Loango, documents say very little about books in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was only with the upcoming overseas trade relations in the later seventeenth century that books came to play a more central role in these more northern regions. The broker states that were based on trade relations came to relate to books in a very different manner from the earlier Kongo Christian book tradition. Literacy was here related to trade: logbooks, inventories, account books, and contracts. This later 'bookness' in the wider Kikongo-speaking regions took various, novel directions, not necessarily coinciding with European ideas about a book. Many of these belonged to non-syntactical, non-textual uses of writing (Goody 1986: 54). While the earlier Christian book traditions in the Kongo kingdom had not astonished European visitors, in the later eighteenth century and nineteenth century, Europeans often mocked local book-related practices. Thus a German traveller ridiculed not only the material state of a book that the sons of the Kongo king showed him, writing that it concerned 'the rudiments of a book, lacking the beginning, the end as well as the title', and the fact that they 'of course' could not read it, he also referred ironically to one of the noblemen's 'glassless glasses that could find no resting point on his

broad nose' (Bastian 1859: 119–21; see also Tavares and Santos 2002: 490, giving an example of the Portuguese travellers Capelo and Ivens). The possession of 'glassless glasses' points to the notion that the idea of reading and writing could be appreciated beyond the process of creating or deciphering texts.

The meaning of the word 'book' in the northern regions came to include anything written: a ticket, a letter, a contract, a book, accounts, etc. 'With *mukanda* the Fiote indicate everything that is written or printed, especially letters and the notes that one hands them for hiring contracts, with specification of the negotiated payment' (Güssfeldt *et al.* 1888: part 1: 153). Trade on the coast between the Congo River and Ambriz took the following procedure: 'As each bag of coffee (or other produce) is weighed and settled for, the buyer writes the number of "longs" that has been agreed upon on a small piece of paper called by the natives "Mucanda", or, by those who speak English, a "book"; the buyer continues his weighing and purchasing, and the "books" are taken by the natives to the store' (Monteiro 1875: 107–8). The usage of such 'books' or *mikanda* (plural of *mukanda*) was widespread, according to Julius Falkenstein: 'A Mukanda was issued for everything thinkable' (Güssfeldt *et al.* 1888: part 2: 18).

At the same time, 'to make book' could also conceptually refer to education. Thus, the British traveller James Tuckey 'received' in England a young man who had been entrusted to an Englishman by his father. The latter, a Loango nobleman, had been promised that his son, then eight to ten years old, would go to 'make book', that is, to study in England, but he was sold as a slave instead (Tuckey 1818: 153). The concept 'book' was hence opened up and came to include a wide range of matters, not always coinciding with European notions of 'bookness' at the time. Yet, European travellers took the effort of pointing out that local people thought of these matters as 'books': as the examples of Tuckey ('to make book') and Monteiro ('books' as 'small pieces of paper') show. In some cases, the word *mukanda* shifted and came to mean 'letter' exclusively, while for book another term was used, in nearly all cases *buku* (cf. infra).

There was a shift from largely Christian, European-based ways of experiencing books in the Kongo kingdom especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to new, local meanings in the realm of trade, with a nodal point in the coastal regions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This broad spectrum on books and book-related

practices can be related to linguistic evidence from the Kikongo Language Cluster.

Words for 'Book' in the Kikongo Language Cluster

As books circulating in the region and the documents referring to them were initially written in Portuguese, we do not know the Kikongo words used for 'book' at the time. While the first references date from the fifteenth century, the first reference to a word for 'book' in Kikongo that we know of comes from Mateus Cardoso in 1624. In his edition of the catechism in Kikongo we encounter five references to book-related concepts, in order of appearance *maliuru* for *liuros* 'books', *omuquissi mucanda üaucua* for *Sagrada escritura* 'holy scriptures', *mudiuulu* for *em um liuro* 'in a book', *omucanda* for *a epistola* 'an epistle', *omucanda* for *escrituras* 'scriptures' and *Üaçonama* for *as Escripturas* 'the Scriptures' (Cardoso 1624: 48, 79, 84, 91, 94, 125). So three terms are used when referring to books: the Portuguese loan *livro* (then spelled '*liuro*') and two Bantu words. The first Bantu term is the noun stem *-kanda*, which takes the *mu-* prefix in the singular and the *mi-* prefix in the plural, both often syncopated to a single nasal *n-* in present-day Kikongo varieties (Bostoen and de Schryver 2015). In Portuguese spelling, the singular is written *mucanda*. It is a common Bantu noun stem, which can possibly be reconstructed in Proto-Bantu as **-kándà* with the meaning 'skin, cloth' (Bastin *et al.* 2002), a meaning still attested today within the Kikongo Language Cluster. The final word *Üaçonama*, in modern spelling *wa sonama*, is derived from the verb stem *-sona*, 'make marks' or 'write'. Containing the verbal extension *-am-*, it is a passive-like verb form referring to what is marked or written.

   The Portuguese borrowing occurs twice in the catechism, as *maliuru* on page 48 and as *mudiuulu* on page 84, in both instances translated with Portuguese words for 'book'. It is clear that when Cardoso published his catechism in 1624, this Portuguese loan was already well established as it had acquired various features of Bantu languages. The form *maliuru*, in modern spelling *malivru*, corresponds with the Portuguese source word *liuro* phonologically, but the Bantu noun class prefix *ma-* is used to make it plural instead of the common Romance plural suffix *-s*. The form *mudiuulu*, in modern spelling *mudivulu,* is nativized to Kikongo both phonologically

and morphologically. Sound-wise, the initial liquid consonant is reproduced as a stop, because the latter is its common allophone in front of a high front vowel in Kikongo. This means that *l* is automatically realized as *d* when followed by *i*; the sequence *li* is not allowed (see also Bostoen and de Schryver, Chapter 3). Moreover, *r* is turned into *l*, because *r* does not occur in Kikongo, except in certain varieties in front of a high front vowel, which is not the case here. Finally, vowel epenthesis took place to break the consonant cluster *vr* (or *vl* after nativization), which occurs neither in Kikongo specifically nor in Bantu more generally. In this way, a more common Consonant Vowel Consonant Vowel Consonant Vowel syllable structure is obtained. With regard to word formation, *diuulu* is preceded here by the additive noun class prefix *mu-*, which serves as a locative expressing 'insideness', here 'in the book'. Such in-depth phonological and morphological integration of a Portuguese loanword cannot occur overnight, implying that it must have been present in Kisikongo, the Kikongo variety of Mbanza Kongo, for quite some time already, thus well before 1624.

Other documents from the seventeenth century provide similar examples based on the Portuguese loan: *riuulu*, with plural *mariuulu* (Van Gheel 1652; Brusciotto 1659: 61, 73, 74). The initial syllable *di-* is noted here as *ri-*, which is a common orthographic correspondence between the catechism from the 1620s on the one hand and the dictionary and the grammar from the 1650s on the other hand. It might suggest that the pronunciation of *d* in front of *i* tended to be rather retroflex, a phonetic realization that is also attested elsewhere in the Kikongo Language Cluster (cf. Bostoen and de Schryver, Chapter 3). Apart from this spelling specificity, the form manifests similar signs of nativization into Kikongo: prefix addition, vowel epenthesis, and *r* becoming *l*. The fact that the plural class 6 noun prefix *ma-* is added to the entire word and does not commute with the initial syllable *ri* indicates that the latter was not reanalyzed as a class 5 noun prefix, which is one of the common singular equivalents of class 6. These three seventeenth-century sources all relate to the Christian realm: they were composed by *mestres* and/or missionaries, and testified to the importance of the Portuguese language for Kongo Christianity.

Over a century later, a very different loanword appears more to the north. By the 1770s, French missionaries had founded a mission station in the Kakongo region (cf. Proyart 1776; Cuvelier 1953a). While the

station was soon abandoned, the missionaries produced a number of works on the Kikongo variant they had learnt in the Kakongo region (Van Bulck 1954; Drieghe 2014). In these works Kikongo terms for 'book' are mentioned. The dictionaries also have an entry for *livre* as a mass unit: the French word *livre* (pound) is rendered as *libla* with the final schwa – non-existent in Kikongo – reproduced as the common Kikongo (and Bantu) central vowel *a*. This form was later mistakenly interpreted as a loan meaning 'book' (Nsondé 1995: 198). The words for 'book' in these French sources consistently combine the loanword *buka* with the common Bantu stem *kanda* (Anonyme 1772a; Anonyme 1772b: 34; Cuénot 1773: 399; Cuénot 1775: 62), as in *i buka a m'kanda*, with plural *zibuka zia m'kanda*. The determiner *m'kanda* may not have had its derived meaning 'letter' or 'book', but may rather have referred to the (local) material of which these books were made, i.e. skin. Though not with absolute certainty, the loan *buka* could be interpreted as being of Dutch rather than of English origin, and more specifically originating in the plural inflection of Dutch *boek*, i.e. *boeken*. Nasal apocope in the plural ending *-en* is a common phenomenon in many Dutch varieties giving rise to a simple schwa, which was then nativized to *a* in Kikongo as in *libla* from French *livre*. The English plural form *books* would not give rise to such a phonological nativization strategy. The English (*book*) and Dutch/Flemish (*boek*) singular forms, which are nearly homophonous, would rather and in fact did give *buku* as a nativized Kikongo equivalent, with a simple copy of the first vowel in order to avoid an unacceptable closed syllable, as it actually also did in Indonesian, for example. That is why we rather tend to see *buka* as a Dutch loan, connected to the Dutch plural *boeken*. The presence of Dutch traders at the coast would explain this loanword.

   The loan *buku*, attested for the first time in the dictionary and grammar of William Holman Bentley (1887) of the Baptist Missionary Society, is more likely to be a loan from English, although Yengo-ki-Ngimbi (2004: 182) holds that it may come from Flemish, a hypothesis not to be excluded, as we have explained above. Bentley (1887: 24) notes three words for book: *nkanda*, *ebuku*, which he relates to the English *book*, and *edivulu*, recognized as coming from the Portuguese *livro*. The French Spiritan missionary Alexandre Visseq (1889: 84) likewise mentions *livlou* (pl. zi-) as coming from the Portuguese, and *boukou* (pl. zi-) as based on the English. *Buku* is also mentioned in

many other contemporary sources (Carrie 1888: 141; Le Louët 1890: 91; Derouet 1896: 217; Butaye 1909: 17; Laman 1912: 239). The loan must have been present for some time already and/or have spread through the region at high speed: Bentley (1887) refers to the 'San Salvador' variety also known as Kisikongo and Butaye (1909: 7) specifically relates to the East Kikongo variety spoken north of the Inkisi River, while Laman's work is based on the Central Kikongo variant of Kimanyanga. In other words, the loan *buku* was used not only in the northern coastal regions, but also in the southern Mbanza Kongo variant, and in the central and eastern interior. From Tuckey's reference to English-speaking Kongo people in 1818 and Monteiro's explanation of local people using the term 'book' in 1875 (see above), we may conclude that the word 'book' entered the Kikongo Language Cluster as a loan in the course of the nineteenth century. As no linguistic documentation on Kikongo is available for the first half of the nineteenth century, it is difficult to reconstruct precisely how the English loan *buku* entered the region and how it subsequently spread, although it can be safely stated that the spread occurred from the coast towards the interior.

Some of the late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century sources also mention French loans, now referring not to mass units, but to books. Thus both Derouet (1896: 217) and an anonymous Portuguese–Iwoyo dictionary of 1948 mention *livla* for book. The French missionary Carrie (1888: 173) gives a form with vowel epenthesis and the addition of the preferred final vowel in Bantu languages: *livăla oio*, translated with '*ce livre*', and for the plural a form that shows prefixation: *zi livăla ozio* ('these books'). Although these instances have a limited geographic spread as they all occur in the coastal Ngoyo and Kakongo region north of the Congo River delta, this French-based loan appears to be relatively well-integrated into the local language.

Apart from the loans from European languages, Kikongo speakers also used and still use the common Bantu term -*kanda* to refer to books and book-related matters. As -*kanda* is widely attested in Bantu with the meaning 'skin', one would expect it to indicate paper or parchment. Yet, generally a loan from Portuguese is used to refer to sheets of paper, *papela* being the most frequent. *Mukanda*, *mkanda*, or *nkanda* is reserved to refer to books, letters, tickets, contracts, in short, paper that contains writing. As we have shown, *mucanda* as meaning

'book' was first observed in 1624, and recurs consistently throughout the centuries and in the various Kikongo-speaking regions.

In sum, loans to express the word for 'book' in Kikongo were taken from no less than four European languages and were integrated to varying degrees into the different Kikongo varieties. The introduction of the loans coincides with historical patterns of interaction of the Kikongo-speaking region with the wider world. Furthermore, the Bantu noun stem *-kanda* was used to denote books, letters, and the like, in the Kongo kingdom as well as in the wider Kikongo Language Cluster.

Current Spread of Kikongo Words for 'Book'

The different historical layers also come to the fore when we study the current spread of the various loans and the noun stem *-kanda* as referring to books (Figures 9.1 and 9.2). The Portuguese loan was, as noted, mentioned in the works of Bentley (1887: 24) and Visseq (1889: 84), but it does not occur often in more recent sources and where it does, then only in the South Kikongo varieties. Thus the Kisolongo grammar of Tavares (1915: 129) mentions *livulu*, while *divulu* is attested in the Kisikongo dictionary of Petterlini (1977: 13, 436). During fieldwork of the KongoKing project team in the vicinity of Muanda in 2012, a Kisolongo speaker also mentioned *livulu* for 'book'. The spread of this loan is clearly extremely limited and either disappeared or never occurred in the more northern and eastern parts of the Kikongo Language Cluster.

The loan *buka* that was once used in the Kakongo region has been encountered in 2012 during fieldwork of the KongoKing project team in the Mayombe area of Congo-Kinshasa, close to the border with Cabinda, more specifically in Kizobe, a variety of Kiyombe (cf. Drieghe 2013). In no other recent source was this loan found and it seems on the verge of disappearing. Likewise the French loan *liv(a)la* is not entirely extinct, but by now only knows a strongly limited occurrence. It was noted in Ciwoyo during the 2012 fieldwork of the KongoKing project team in the neighbourhood of Boma. In other words, it did not spread beyond the region where it was first adopted and has only limited usage.

By far the most widespread and frequently mentioned in present-day references to the word 'book' in Kikongo are the English loan *buku* and the local term *-kanda*. As indicated, the loan *buku* was well
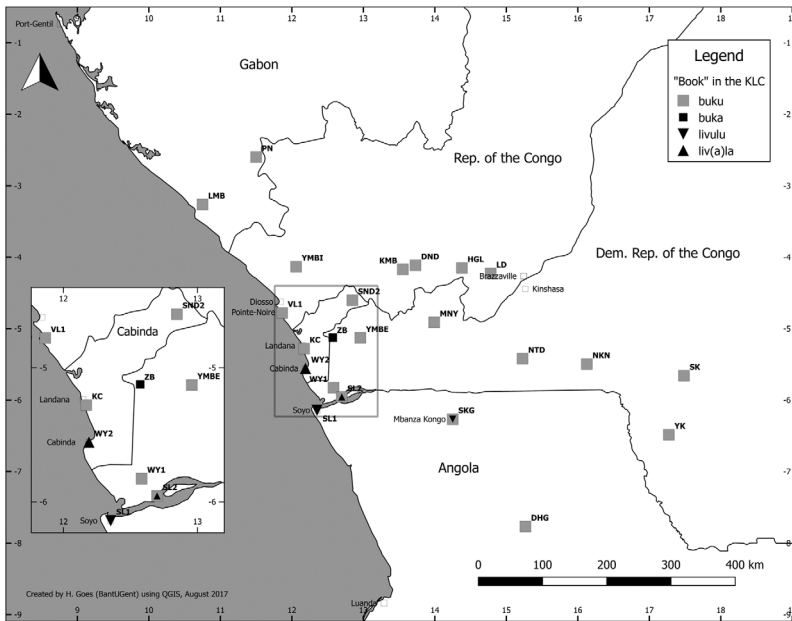
Figure 9.1 Spread of European loans for the word 'book' in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century Kikongo Language Cluster (for the language names corresponding to the codes in the map, see Figure 3.2 in the chapter of Bostoen and de Schryver, Chapter 3).

established and widespread by the end of the nineteenth century. Its presence has not diminished: on the contrary, while the loans from Portuguese, French, and Dutch for 'book' are most limited in their distribution, the loan *buku* is currently used in the entire Kikongo-speaking region (see also Nsondé 1995: 198). In some varieties the English loan is reserved for identity cards (Nkiene Musinga 2011: 302; Joseph Koni Muluwa, pers. comm., May 2016). Petterlini (1977: 436) gives *mpasi-buku* for identity card. However, in most cases the loan is used to denote 'book'. The word may in singular be prefixed with *li-* or *di-*, although not necessarily so, and the plural can be either *mabuku* or *zibuku*, pointing to the morphological integration of the loan into Kikongo.

The noun stem *-kanda* is a widely distributed Bantu word, meaning 'skin'. In the sense of 'book', its usage is much more restricted and roughly coincides with the borders of the ancient Kongo kingdom, at

least within the Kikongo Language Cluster (see Figure 9.2). Beyond the Kikongo Language Cluster, the noun stem -*kanda* is used to refer to 'book', among others, in languages as diverse as Kimbundu, Mbala, Pende, Kwezo, Mbagani, Lunda, Ciluba, Kanyok, Cokwe, and Umbundu. In Ciluba, for instance, the tone scheme of *mukàndà* does not regularly correspond to that of Proto-Bantu **-kándà*. This suggests that it is not a simple retention from the ancestor language that was semantically reinterpreted, but rather a loanword from another Bantu language through contact. Kikongo is no doubt the most likely donor language, all the more because Ciluba also has *mbukù* 'book, manual' (Kabuta 2008). Even if Ciluba did not borrow these 'book' terms directly from Kikongo, it indicates that the cultural influence of Kongo reached deep inland. It is not unlikely that -*kanda* as meaning 'book' spread from the heartland of the Kongo kingdom.

If we were to draw together present-day references of -*kanda* to the word 'letter', the coastal region and its hinterland north of the Congo River delta, where mainly West Kikongo languages are spoken, would also be included. It has been found to specifically refer to 'skin' and 'letter', and not to 'book', in Iwoyo from Cabinda (Anônimo 1948: 28), Ciwoyo, Kimbala and Kisolongo (Vandenabeele 2016: 124, 173, 212) as well as Kiyombe (De Grauwe 2009: 83) from the DRC. As we have shown, the trade relations in the Loango region produced a specific usage of the word 'book' that is more related to written paperwork in general. Over time, -*kanda* in these northern coastal regions came to be reserved for 'letter', while 'book' was denoted with *buku*. In the other Kikongo-speaking regions, *kanda* for 'book' was retained and can still be used as an alternative for *buku*.

Conclusions

Translation is often conceived of as a singular transaction that occurs between language A and language B. In this case we have shown the multiplicity of translation. Especially when taking a diachronic perspective, the complexity of translation comes to the fore and it becomes clear that processes of retranslation, shifts of meaning, and disappearance occur.

In the literature on Kikongo – including the wider Kikongo Language Cluster – there is a Lusophone bias: in terms of intellectual and material exchange the Portuguese and the Kongo are
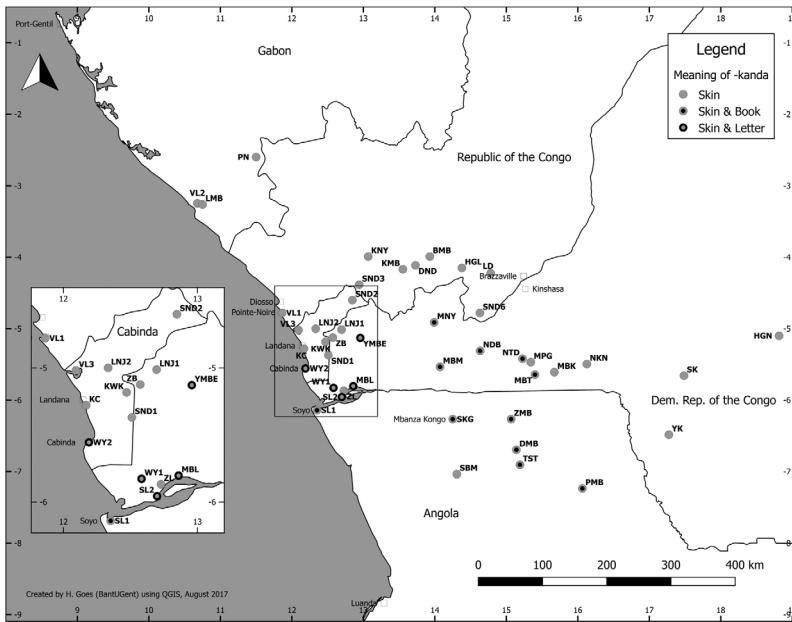
Figure 9.2 Spread of the term *-kanda* meaning 'book' in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century Kikongo Language Cluster as compared to its spread with the meaning 'skin' (for the language names corresponding to the codes in the map, see Figure 3.2 in the chapter of Bostoen and de Schryver, Chapter 3).

strongly associated (Martins 1958; Bal 1974; Yengo-ki-Ngimbi 2004). However, this chapter has shown that more languages were involved in the processes of loan adoption in Kikongo: French, English, and possibly Dutch/Flemish. These words – based on the words *livro*, *livre*, *book*, and *boek* respectively – entered the Kikongo Language Cluster in different regions at particular times, reflecting the historical connections these regions had with speakers of these European languages. The subsequent spread of these loans reveals that an exclusive framework of Kongo–Portuguese interaction is too limited. With an English loan, stemming from trade relations at the coast, occurring in present-day Kisikongo – the variant spoken in Mbanza Kongo – we have to reconsider the emphasis on Kongo–Portuguese relations and draw a more cosmopolitan image of Kongo's global interactions.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Kongo's political and religious leaders devoted much energy to developing a Christian religious

and educational structure, not only in the capital, but also in Kongo's provinces. The legacy of this in terms of vocabulary seems limited: the Portuguese-based loan for the word 'book' has all but disappeared (Martins 1958: 145; Yengo-ki-Ngimbi 2004: 185–94). Instead an English-based loan, connected to coastal trading activities, has spread throughout the region. The shift from Christian, European-based book-practices in the Kongo kingdom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to later localized trade-related meanings of 'book' in the coastal regions can also be perceived in the linguistic evidence from the Kikongo Language Cluster. From the religious realm, only the reflex of the Proto-Bantu noun stem *-kándà* 'skin, cloth' survived as a term for 'book'. From the late fifteenth century, when Kongo elites started to 'make book', this inherited Bantu term became intimately associated with book culture and followed its early spread across Central Africa far beyond the borders of the Kongo kingdom.

Acknowledgements

10 | *Kongo Cosmopolitans in the Nineteenth Century*

JELMER VOS

Introduction

Explaining Africa's current position in the global economy and international state system has long animated scholarly debate. In recent years, historians have increasingly pointed to watersheds beyond the European partitioning of the continent in the late nineteenth century and the recapture of independence around 1960. Instead of focusing on colonial rule as a defining moment in Africa's recent past (Boahen 2011), they have emphasized the nineteenth-century abolition of the Atlantic slave trade and the subsequent rise of 'legitimate' commerce (Hopkins 1995), the colonial development programmes of the 1950s (Cooper 2002), or the unravelling of these state-led initiatives three decades later (Young 2004; Ellis 2011). Most scholars now also consider the Eurocentric segregation of African history into pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras misleading. Some have begun to study change and continuity in the African past from the era of the slave trade through the twentieth century (Austen and Derrick 1999; Guyer 2004; Isichei 2004), thus opening the temporal scope of historical analysis. In this context, the changes wrought in African lives under colonial rule are also increasingly measured against the backdrop of nineteenth-century patterns (Reid 2012).

This chapter studies the colonial moment in Kongo in the light of the region's previous engagement with the Atlantic world. It contributes to a current trend in the literature that explains African interactions with the outside world in the centuries before colonial rule in terms of 'discovery' (Northrup 2014) and 'cosmopolitanism' (Getz 2012). This literature partly aims to counter a still widely held belief – rooted as much in nineteenth-century European racialism as in the subsequent African experience of colonial exploitation – that Africans were 'passive victims' of global economic and political processes that presumably evolved beyond their control. Instead, Getz (2012), Northrup

(2014) and other historians approaching Africa from an Atlantic per-
spective (Thornton 1998a; Sparks 2014) portray Africans as active
participants in a range of economic and cultural exchanges with
Europeans and other outsiders. Both Northrup (2014: 36–43) and
Getz (2012: 18–24) refer to Kongo's adaptation of Christianity as a
prime example of cross-cultural exchange between Africa and Europe
in the era of the slave trade. It must be noted that this exchange was
not only religious in character, but also involved much diplomacy and
the introduction in Kongo of foreign goods, languages, and technology.
Interestingly, while Northrup's own historical survey ends with the
wind-up of the transatlantic slave trade in the mid-nineteenth cen-
tury, he comments that 'the further acceleration of African-European
interactions since 1850 has exhibited more continuities with the past
than departures' (Northrup 2014: x). Using another concept that has
recently enriched Atlantic history, 'extraversion' (Lindsay 2014), this
chapter tracks several continuities in Kongo's interaction with the West
across the academic divide between pre-colonial and colonial history.

Better than discovery and cosmopolitanism, 'extraversion' explains
why Africans were so often keen to look for partnerships outside. In
his seminal study of the post-colonial state in Africa, Jean-François
Bayart (1993) described extraversion as a political strategy adopted
by governing elites across the continent, who found in the inter-
national arena the means to combat political vulnerabilities at home.
To circumvent internal limitations to the accumulation of wealth and
power, Bayart (1993: 21–2) argued, African leaders often mobilized
'resources derived from their (possibly unequal) relationship with the
external environment'. In the post-colonial era, these resources mainly
stemmed from elite access to diplomatic connections, foreign military
supplies, western education, and other 'rents' derived from positions
of power (Bayart 1993: 74–5). But in a later effort to historicize the
concept, Bayart (2000) identified extraversion in a wider range of
social practices beyond political rent-seeking and focused on material
culture as an important mediating factor in Africans' interactions with
the outside world. A case in point are the colonial-era churchmen,
teachers, doctors, nurses, and clerks who used their privileged access
to Western consumer goods to pioneer modern 'life-styles' and so laid
the foundation for a new social class that would become dominant
in post-colonial Africa (Bayart 2000: 246–52). Here it must be noted
that, while the consumption of imported consumer goods accelerated

under colonial rule, foreign merchandise, especially textiles and clothing materials, had long been vital to African processes of political and social stratification. In fact, the linkages African ruling classes forged with Islamic, Christian, and other long-distance traders in pre-colonial times foreshadowed twentieth-century strategies of extraversion (Bayart 2000: 254; Green 2012: 80, 85).

This chapter examines the history of the kingdom of Kongo in the nineteenth century through the prism of cosmopolitanism and extraversion. I argue that Kongo's early 'discovery' of the West profoundly influenced local responses to the colonial intrusions of the late 1800s, making local power brokers, including the king of Kongo, extraordinarily receptive to foreign approaches. At the same time, the colonial era brought a crucial shift in Kongo's relation to the outside world, as interactions of local leaders with foreign political and economic partners defined by a notable measure of autonomy gave way to dependency. Kongo's adoption of a Christian religion, the local consumption of foreign textiles, and the kingdom's association with the Portuguese empire were three main historical forms of extraversion in northern Angola. Initially, these different practices all served to centralize power and strengthen local networks of patronage. As will be shown, however, these elite practices changed under the impact of colonial rule and sometimes gave way to broader, more popular strategies of extraversion.

Order of Christ

Kongo's conversion to Christianity in the late fifteenth century was the kingdom's quintessential form of extraversion, as the kingdom's ruling class transformed an imported religion into a royal political cult, giving their polity a new collective identity and strengthening the control of the Mwene Kongo, the ruler at Mbanza Kongo, over provincial governors (Hilton 1985: 90–103). Recent archaeological research in Ngongo Mbata in Congo-Kinshasa confirms the existence of stone churches that, at the kingdom's peak in the seventeenth century, helped bring several important marketplaces in the Kongo-speaking world within the orbit of Mbanza Kongo (Clist *et al.* 2015d). At the core of Kongo's Christian cult stood the Order of Christ, the Portuguese crusader order that the Kongo nobility turned into a title association of their own. Significantly, investiture into the order gave wealthy chiefs

the right to use the cross as a symbol of authority. Until the late 1800s, they used it to protect themselves and their followers against malevolent forces and to establish tax-collection stations in the countryside (Hilton 1985: 219).

It is unclear when the Kongolese order was detached from its mother institution, itself a successor to the Portuguese branch of the Templar Knights based in Tomar. Ironically, while by the mid-1600s the Order of Christ had 'outlived its usefulness' to Portugal's seaborne empire and was subsequently secularized at home (Dutra 1970: 23), it began to lead a life of its own in Kongo, where it always maintained its politico-religious character. Cécile Fromont (2014: 130) points out that 'Kongo rulers routinely knighted their own nobles' without authorization from the king of Portugal. Although the degree to which the Kongo domesticated this imported institution and used it as a 'ritual association' (MacGaffey 2000b: 13) appears to contradict the notion of extraversion, it is important to stress that the order could only function with foreign input. In the early twentieth century, Kongolese noblemen installed as knights still swore oaths in the presence of an ordained priest, whose blessing was required to make the initiation effective.

The political fragmentation of the kingdom from the seventeenth through to the nineteenth century is commonly accepted (Broadhead 1971, 1979; Heywood 2009), although still poorly understood. By the time Europeans began to infiltrate the Kongo expanse, in the second half of the nineteenth century, chiefs and commercial brokers throughout the region had used the growing decentralization of the export trade to free themselves from the control of Mbanza Kongo. While the kings at Mbanza Kongo traded and accrued followers like other chiefs, they could barely match them in terms of material wealth and political power. In this period, Mbanza Kongo was mainly important as a religious centre, providing spiritual power to a Kongo oligarchy that used the rituals of the Catholic Church to marry their children, bury their ancestors, convey their authority, and combat witchcraft. In the Kongo heartland, though, ruling families still relied on the Order of Christ to regulate access to senior titles.

In this age of geographical exploration and imperial expansion, several Portuguese visitors to Kongo witnessed or took part in the investiture of Kongo knights. In 1856, for instance, Alfredo de Sarmento travelled to Mbanza Kongo from the Atlantic port of Ambriz, about

100 miles north of Luanda. To him it seemed that 'all inhabitants of this vast country are knights [*cavalleiros*] of Christ', who donned the order's cross in cloth of varying colours. He described how the Portuguese priest with whom he travelled dubbed a local nobleman a knight. As the man knelt, holding his right hand on the Bible while the priest tapped him three times on the shoulder with a large iron sword, he made the following oath: 'I swear on the Holy Gospels to defend our king [and] the Holy Roman-Catholic Faith, to respect only one God, to support all priests who come to the kingdom of Kongo, and to persecute all idols and witchcraft [*feitiçarias*]' (de Sarmento 1880: 49, 58). By professing allegiance to the Order of Christ, Kongo aristocrats declared their loyalty to the Mwene Kongo, their respect for priests, and their opposition to healing cults that undermined the authority of the Catholic Church.

In 1860, a few years after de Sarmento's visit to Mbanza Kongo, Dom Pedro V came to power with the help of the Portuguese government in Luanda, which effectively made the royal court dependent on outside support for its survival. Twenty years later, in the context of growing European rivalry in West-Central Africa, Portugal funded the establishment of a Catholic mission in the Kongo capital. The new clergy was explicitly instructed to defend Portugal's colonial interests in the Lower Congo region against incursions by the British Baptist Missionary Society and Belgian King Leopold II's International African Association (Vos 2015: chapters 1 and 4). In 1881, Pedro V asked the priest in charge of the mission, Padre António Barroso, to confer the order's habit on several noblemen loyal to him. The process of the ritual that Barroso described was practically the same as de Sarmento had observed earlier, although the content of the oath had seemingly changed in accordance with the new colonial situation. Barroso proffered the following translation: 'I promise to be faithful to the Catholic religion; I promise to do what the priests order and I promise obedience to the king of Kongo and the king of Portugal; may God punish me if I do not keep these promises' (Brásio 1961: 23–4).

While loyalty to Portugal might have been a central tenet of the oaths sworn by Kongo knights in pre-colonial days, it took on a distinctively political meaning in the context of growing Portuguese interference in the kingdom. Padre Daniel Simões Ladeiras, who lived in Mbanza Kongo from 1902 to 1913, recounted how at the king's request he knighted two royal counsellors. 'On their knees, with their

hands stretched out as a sign of oath, they pronounced the formula used on such occasions which was, more or less: I promise to keep and defend the Catholic faith, always obey the orders of the priests and the laws of the government' (Ladeiras 1927: 117–19).

Comparing these three renditions of the oath, it seems that by the time Barroso arrived in Kongo the emphasis had shifted from combatting witchcraft to obeisance to the priests and the Portuguese king, whereas two decades later the order specifically demanded respect for the colonial government. Perhaps the content of the oaths had not significantly changed, but was only understood differently by witnesses whose perception of the whole proceeding was, no doubt, shrouded in linguistic and cultural ignorance. For the Kongo, after all, the eradication of witchcraft from politics and society was always part of effective governance; devotion to the Catholic faith was a declaration of political loyalty. Ostensibly, however, the order's pledge had been adapted to a new political environment, in which the Kongo kingdom existed as a 'client state' of Portugal. In other words, the presence of a colonial government in Mbanza Kongo had changed the nature of an old patron–client relationship between Portugal and Kongo that used to be articulated through the Order of Christ. A clientship that had so far been mainly religious in character was turned into political dependence.

The order began to lose much of its glamour and attraction around 1900. Membership carried fewer benefits than before, as the colonial government now claimed control of local trade routes and the new missionary churches were developing a Christianity focused on individual mobility instead of chiefly authority. Several members of the Kongo elite therefore started looking for new titles of distinction to demonstrate authority, which they borrowed, again, from their Portuguese patrons. During the reign of Álvaro XIV (r. 1891–6) a remarkable fashion for colonial military titles took hold of the Kongo ruling class. Álvaro himself obtained the honorary rank of colonel in the colonial army; his successor, Henrique III (r. 1896–1901), was awarded a similar title. In 1903, Pedro VI (r. 1901–10) received the title of major and an army uniform to affirm his status, while two years later he was promoted to lieutenant colonel. As he himself explained, he wanted a military rank to 'earn the respect of my subjects'.[1] Although the titles

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[1] Arquivo Nacional de Angola (henceforth ANA), caixa 3308, doc. 11.1.1, Rei do Congo to Governador geral, S. Salvador, 25 June 1902.

were often honorary, for some notables the rank of lieutenant involved the performance of actual military duties, relating especially to policing and the recruitment of labour. The distribution of such titles can be explained as an attempt by the colonial government to socialize an African ruling class through its army, as Terence Ranger (1983: 224–5) suggested in a famous essay. At the same time, it is important to note the continuity between the old and new military orders (L'Hoist 1932: 258) and that the initiative for these colonial decorations often came from the recipients themselves. The fact that Pedro VI also lobbied for military titles on behalf of his followers indicates that for Kongo's ruling class these titles carried importance.[2] Acutely aware of the colonial transformation of the kingdom and the future role of the Portuguese government in structuring local power relations, these elites coveted imperial honours to affirm their authority in a changing political environment.

In short, by the early twentieth century the Order of Christ had 'outlived its usefulness' in Kongo. While elite figures close to the centre of imperial rule began to use ranks in the colonial army as marks of honour, mission-educated young men, by contrast, found respectable lifestyles in new careers as teachers, office clerks, or traders in colonial society (Iliffe 2005: chapters 12 and 14). With these lifestyles came specific dress codes, which looked novel at the time, but betrayed a longstanding fashion for exotic fabrics and clothes.

Textiles

Whereas the adoption of the Order of Christ to control political relations within the kingdom was unique in the African Atlantic world, the taste of Kongo elites for exotic textiles resembled the attitudes of wealthy persons almost everywhere along the African coast. Historians of the Atlantic slave trade have long recognized the central place that Asian and European textiles occupied among the wide array of barter goods that slaving vessels carried to Africa. While trade cargos were composed in response to regionally specific consumer cultures in Africa and, therefore, differed between ports and changed year after year, textiles were generally the most important category in terms of value

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[2] ANA, caixa 3590, Governador do Congo to Secretário Geral, no. 8, Cabinda, 28 March 1905; BO 29 (1903), ofício no. 349, 3 June 1903.

(Richardson 1979). 'Part of their appeal', David Northrup (2014: 87) explains, 'was due to the variety of designs, colours, sizes, and textures imported textiles came in'. The fact that 'clothing was a popular way of displaying wealth', explains why economic and political elites tried to control the distribution of textiles in society (Northrup 2014: 89).

Textiles served as main currencies for African rulers to build and maintain personal networks of patronage. Imported in large bundles, textiles were mainly traded inland to be exchanged for slaves, ivory, or nineteenth-century products like rubber, although trade brokers always retained some items for themselves. The cargo lists of several slave vessels from Liverpool destined for the Angola-Congo region reveal the wide variety of textiles that Kongo brokers imported in the late eighteenth century.[3] For instance, the *Enterprize* in 1794 carried large amounts of cotton bafts, romals, chelloes, calicos, bejutapauts, byrampauts, neganepauts, nicanees, photaes, 'long cloths' from India, Guinea stuffs produced in Manchester, and dozens of worsted caps (see Alpern 1995 for descriptions). This last item hints at the strong taste coastal brokers developed for European clothing, which conveyed their status as important go-betweens to both their foreign trading partners and their local constituencies.

In 1816, James Tuckey travelled to the Congo River and took note of the goods that Spanish and Portuguese traders exchanged for slaves at Boma, the centre of the local slave trade. Tuckey offered one of the last detailed descriptions of the merchandise imported in Kongo in the era of the slave trade. Soon after Tuckey's visit, the slaving business went underground in response to British-led efforts to suppress the trade and records of its conduct thus became increasingly rare. According to information obtained from local Kongo traders, a single slave was then worth two muskets, two casks of gunpowder, two jars of brandy, five knives, five strings of beads, one padlock, one iron bar, a razor, a looking glass, a cap, a pair of scissors, and a range of exotic textiles, including several measures of Guinea cloth, 'long Indians', nicanees, and romals (Tuckey 1818: 112–13). One notes the continuity with the

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[3] Merseyside Maritime Museum, DX/1732, Invoice of sundries on *Enterprize*, 1794. Liverpool University Library, MS. 10.47, Invoice of sundries on *Madampookata*, 1783; MS 10.49, Invoice of sundries on *Spitfire*, 1795; MS. 10.50(2), Invoice of sundries on *Earl of Liverpool*, 1799. Liverpool Record Office, 387 MD 44, Invoice of sundries on *Fortune*, 1805.

kinds of fabrics traded in previous decades, although specific designs, colours, and sizes tended to change frequently. Over the course of the nineteenth century, moreover, Manchester cloth would take precedence over Asian textiles in the West-Central African market, while Dutch traders would introduce local consumers to manufactures from the eastern Netherlands (Van der Aa 1871: 129).

Western imports included ready-made clothes, which Kongo brokers mixed with traditional garments to underscore their social position and demonstrate their cosmopolitan lifestyle. In Malembo, an important slaving port north of the Congo River, Tuckey described the hybrid clothing style of the local broker community as 'a singular medley of European and native costume'. The main broker, or Mafook, 'had on a red superfine cloth waistcoat; his secretary, an English general's uniform coat on his otherwise naked body; a third a red cloak edged with gold lace like a parish beadle's … The native portion of the dress consisted of a piece of checked or other cotton cloth folded round the waist, and a little apron of the skin of some animal, which is a mark of gentility, and as such is not permitted to be worn by menial attendants. A striped worsted cap, or else one of their own manufactures and of very curious workmanship, on the head, completed the useful part of their dress' (Tuckey 1818: 62–3). On first reading, Tuckey's words might sound condescending, but they fit a long pattern of historical descriptions of West-Central African dress regimes that, like clothing rules in other places along the Atlantic rim, served to differentiate elites from commoners (DuPlessis 2016: 33–40).

In the Congo River, Tuckey observed similar forms of incorporating exotic elements in clothing, although he seemed less impressed here than he was on the coast. The broker at Shark's Point, at the river's entrance, was in his view 'the most ragged, dirty looking wretch that can well be conceived … he certainly made a very grotesque appearance, having a most tattered pelisse of red velvet, edged with gold lace, on his naked [carcass], a green silk umbrella spread over his head, though the sun was completely obscured, and his stick of office headed with silver in the other hand' (Tuckey 1818: 75). At Boma, Tuckey met the principal chief, whom he called Chenoo and whose outfit was 'composed of a crimson plush jacket with enormous gilt buttons, a lower garment in the native style of red velvet, his legs muffled in pink sarsenet in guise of stockings, and a pair of red Morocco half-boots; on his head an immense high-crowned hat embroidered with gold, and

surmounted by a kind of coronet of European artificial flowers; round his neck hung a long string of ivory beads, and a very large piece of unmanufactured coral' (Tuckey 1818: 102). The modern-day 'dandies' of Kinshasa and Brazzaville (Gondola 1999) begin to look less extravagant in the light of these nineteenth-century observations.

In Tuckey's account, depictions of the conspicuous clothing styles of Kongo trade brokers are interspersed with references to Spanish and Portuguese slave traders, conveying the strong association between these brokers' lifestyles and the export slave trade. In this context, it is worth noting the diary of the famous Calabar merchant Antera Duke, which highlights the dependence of a regional culture of exchanging gifts, dashes, bride wealth, and other forms of social debts on the export trade in slaves and palm oil (Behrendt *et al.* 2010). Tuckey noted that higher up the Congo River the European influence on local dress was not so strong (Tuckey 1818: 157, 176). Unfortunately, he never had the chance to visit Mbanza Kongo and collect impressions of the consumption of foreign textiles at Kongo's royal court. It is important to remember, however, that by exploiting their international connections, many coastal brokers could accumulate more goods, build larger households, and extend their networks of patronage further than the king at Mbanza Kongo was now able to (Broadhead 1971; Vellut 1989).

An example from Vumpa seventy years after Tuckey's visit to the river shows how Kongo traders used their commercial riches to buy women, slaves, and clients. In 1886, a Portuguese visitor to this village on the south bank of the Congo River was awestruck by the household of Dom Paulo, Vumpa's chief broker, which included dozens of women and many slaves. His wooden house, which had separate stores attached to it, was filled with firearms, liquor, textiles, and other European goods. Reflecting his important role in the local palm produce and peanut trade, Dom Paulo occasionally provided credit to other merchants when they were faced with sudden shortages. 'For this reason', the visitor commented, 'he is highly respected among all neighbouring populations and even by the European traders who live on his land'.[4]

Late-nineteenth-century Kongo kings must have been aware of the inequalities in wealth and power that existed between themselves

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[4] Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (henceforth AHU), SEMU-DGU, Angola, 1ª repartição, pasta 7 (no. 791), 1887, José Maria Pereira Folga, Relatório, S António do Zaire, 20 November 1886.

and several broker-chiefs elsewhere in Kongo, like Dom Paulo of Vumpa. Because of their relative economic and political weakness, some scholars have viewed the kings in this period predominantly as religious figures, defining them as 'guardians of the Christian cult', 'barter chips', or 'living charms', but this perspective discounts their secular interests and entrepreneurial spirit. For instance, Henrique II (r. 1842–57) and Pedro V (r. 1860–91) saw in the European campaign to abolish the export slave trade and promote 'legitimate' commerce a new opportunity to erase their economic inferiority and gain the upper hand in local power struggles. Thus, in the 1850s, Dom Henrique II rallied behind Portuguese attempts to suppress the slave trade on the Kongo coast in hopes of imposing his will on 'insubordinate' chiefs near Ambriz and other Atlantic ports. His successor, Dom Pedro V, pulled Portuguese strings to defeat his main rival for the Kongo throne, Dom Álvaro Ndongo, and his slave trading allies (Vos 2015: chapter 1). Around 1880, moreover, Pedro recognized the political benefits of patronizing the merchants controlling the new export trade in commodities.

Kongo kings had long profited from the flows of global commerce by exacting tribute from trade caravans that passed through Mbanza Kongo, bringing slaves, ivory, and rubber to the Atlantic coast or carrying imported merchandise inland. The prospect of widening access to imported luxury goods motivated Pedro V to invite several commercial houses to open stores for the purchase of rubber in Mbanza Kongo in the early 1880s. First came the French House of Daumas, followed by the Portuguese trader João Luís da Rosa, and an imposing Dutch firm from Rotterdam. The land concessions that each of the houses negotiated with Pedro V followed 'coast custom', which signified the exchange of 'rents' for the provision of services. For example, da Rosa paid the king annually twenty trade guns valued at 40,000 *reis* for his concession. In return, the king supplied Rosa with workers to build his factory and, in exchange for another two guns, carriers for transportation if requested. In addition, Dom Pedro demanded a fixed quantity of cloth for every box of rubber and every ivory tusk the European factories collected. These customs, paid out in various goods, were purportedly valued at 360 *milreis* (about eighty pounds sterling) by 1885 (Brásio 1961: 105–7; de Oliveira and do Couto 1971: 49). Pedro V applied the tribute collected from caravan traders and factories to the maintenance of client chief networks; these

networks, in turn, helped with the provision of security along the trade routes. 'No chief ever visits him without getting a good present of cloth', a British missionary commented in 1880 (*Missionary Herald* 1880, 121).

The arrival of trade factories transformed Mbanza Kongo from an important crossroads of caravan routes into a selling place for rubber and a distribution centre for imported prestige goods. In 1884, Pedro V informed the governor of Angola that 'commercial [i.e., export] goods increase considerably, and would pour in even more if people were certain that they would find here all the necessary trade ware for their transactions'.[5] Not only the king took delight in the commercial expansion of the Kongo capital. Because rubber had to be transported from Mbanza Kongo to the port of Noqui or Musuku on the Lower Congo River, many young men from around Mbanza Kongo found employment as carriers at the local factories. These men were paid for their labour services in textiles, beads, and other commodities. Widespread participation in the colonial economy thus facilitated access to coveted imports for many different Kongo inhabitants. This altered economy was captured in the writing of some Baptist missionaries, who had come to Mbanza Kongo shortly before the trade factories. For instance, William Holman Bentley noted that when he first arrived in Mbanza Kongo, in 1879, only a handful of men was dressed in European style, while the rest still wore locally produced cloth (*mbadi*). A decade later, however, 'cloth was to be earned by [anyone] who went to fetch our stores up from Musuku, or went as carriers in the expeditions into the interior, or worked at the building of our house' (Bentley 1900: 137).

By the end of the century, kings and headmen were no longer the only cosmopolitans in Mbanza Kongo. Work at European trade and mission stations gave young men direct access to imported luxury items, especially textiles, traditional markers of social distinction in Central African culture (Martin 1995: 155–65). After 1900, wages in the colonial economy became progressively monetized, but for many workers, cash incomes facilitated the acquisition of foreign prestige goods (Ross *et al.* 2012). Contemporary registers of imports in Noqui

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[5] AHU, SEMU-DGU, Angola, 2ª Rep., pasta 7 (no. 834), Pedro V to Governador geral, S. Salvador, 18 February 1884, encl. in Governador geral to MSENMU, no. 157, Luanda, 18 March 1884.

indicate which barter goods were most in demand in Kongo at the start of the twentieth century. Red, striped, and blank cotton fabrics, mostly of British make, clearly ranked first. But other recurring commodities of significant value were dyed and printed cloth, army uniforms and second-hand suits, German schnapps, gunpowder, as well as flintlock, percussion, and breech-loading rifles.[6] One important consequence of the widening participation of Kongo men and women in the export economy was that access to luxury imports was no longer restricted to the old slave trading oligarchy, which therefore struggled to uphold its former status and prestige. As one long-term resident of Mbanza Kongo observed, 'The proud chiefs of old times, dragging their rich cloths [*panos de benza*] behind them, with an air of disdain, wearing caps embroidered with gold or silver, umbrellas, silk, and thick ivory bracelets, have almost all become despicable blacks wearing imported jackets, chintz, and felt [*alpaca*] hats' (Leal 1915: 126–7). But what this Portuguese administrator dismissed as degradation was rather a democratization of conspicuous consumption, with chiefs ending up wearing the same imported garments as their ambitious sons, nephews, and other young male upstarts. When extraversion took place on a broader social scale, as happened in Kongo, it reflected a levelling of economic power.

Imperialism

During the nineteenth century, the kingdom of Kongo generally kept a mutually beneficial partnership with Portugal. In the early 1800s, for instance, diplomatic relations between Mbanza Kongo and the Portuguese in Luanda developed around the exchange of slaves for the provision of Catholic priests and western education for young Kongo noblemen.[7] While the relations of Kongo with other foreign

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[6] ANA, caixa 3413, Santo António, Estatística geral de importação, 1902; ibid., Santo António, Estatística geral de importação, 1905; ibid., Santo António, Alfândega, mapa no. 30, importação por países de procedência, 1910; caixa 3374, Circunscrição administrativa de S. Salvador do Congo, Estatística aduaneira, 1908; caixa 3672, Distrito do Congo, Circunscrição civil de S. Salvador, Importação por paizes de procedência, 1911; caixa 3910, Circumscrição civil de Maquela do Zombo, Estatísticas de importação e exportação, 1912.

[7] Among other evidence, see the correspondence of the governor of Angola to the King of Kongo, 1802–12, in *Arquivos de Angola* 3.16–36 (1937), 53–70.

powers before the reign of Dom Pedro V (r. 1860–91) remain insufficiently studied, it is almost certain that Brazilian, Cuban, and northern European traders built stronger relationships with broker-chiefs along the Kongo coast and the banks of the Congo River than with the king at Mbanza Kongo (Vellut 1989; Herlin 2004). From the middle of the nineteenth century, Dutch, British, and French merchant houses specializing in 'legitimate' trade acquired commercial advantages in the coastal zone at the expense of the Portuguese, who were economically minor players there. When the Portuguese government in Luanda tried to extend its imperial reach north of Angola in the 1850s in hopes of securing control of the new export trade, it thus had few alliances to build on. Out of necessity, therefore, Portugal used its special diplomatic and religious ties with the court of Mbanza Kongo to create a sphere of influence in northern Angola.

The arrival of colonial traders and missionaries, as shown above, granted Pedro V an opportunity to reinforce his personal network of patronage. But it was the advent of Portuguese imperialism and then colonial rule that boosted the power of the Kongo court in northern Angola. To begin with, Pedro V owed his occupation of the Kongo throne to the military support he received from Luanda, which helped him oust his rival, Álvaro Ndongo, from Mbanza Kongo in 1860 and propped up his rule in a politically unstable environment in subsequent years. Access to education in Luanda for his sons and the collection of government salaries for himself and his secretaries were some of the main benefits Pedro immediately drew from his clientship to Portugal (Vos 2015: chapter 1).

Portugal withdrew its colonial army from Mbanza Kongo in 1870, but ten years later the colonial ministry sent Padre António Barroso on a 'patriotic and religious' mission to Kongo to respond to growing international agitation in the Lower Congo region. As the European race for the Congo gained pace in the early 1880s and several nations signed treaties with local rulers to stake out imperial claims in the area, the old alliance with the king of Kongo was Portugal's only possible trump card. Although Barroso and his superiors within the Church ultimately considered their mission to harness Pedro V to Portuguese imperial ambitions a failure, it remains to be seen to what extent the king's presumptuous claims to sovereignty over the Congo's south bank helped Portugal in its bid for control of northern Angola at the Berlin Conference of 1884–5. The International Congo Association,

for example, took the king's protest in 1884 against their treaty with a lower-ranked Kongo chief more seriously than is often assumed in the literature on the European 'scramble' for Africa (Wauters 1884).

Although the Catholic mission lavished Pedro V with expensive presents, the king was always more interested in receiving military support from Portugal, which would, as he himself put it, 'sustain my influence among the peoples inland'.[8] Pedro V saw his wish fulfilled in 1888 when Portuguese colonial troops reoccupied the Kongo capital. But in contrast to the occupation in 1860, the king was now placed in a subordinate position, as the colonial government took away his authority to collect tribute and rents from trade caravans and European factories. To sustain his network of client chiefs, the king became fully dependent on foreign subsidies, which included his monthly government stipend and the presents the government continued to distribute through the Catholic mission. To the question of whether Pedro V was 'master or dupe' of his alliance with Portugal (Thornton 2011b), the answer is both: he had manoeuvred himself into a situation of great dependency from which he concurrently benefited.

There were indeed clear benefits attached to the position of client king in the new colonial system. Pedro V and his successors could use the military might of the colonial government to impose their rule on chiefs who refused to accept their authority. In addition, kings could extend their own patron–client relationships as the royal court became a crucial channel for ambitious men to obtain positions as clerks, police officers, or messengers in the nascent colonial administration or as helpers at one of the nearby trade factories. Individuals close to the court, especially members of the royal Agua Rosada clan, were exceptionally well placed to occupy these positions (Vos 2015: chapter 4).

Under colonial rule, therefore, the number of clients of the royal court in Mbanza Kongo steadily increased. But clientelism, as Sandra Barnes (1986: 8–9) once pointed out, 'is a many-tiered phenomenon'. The case of Dom Álvaro de Agua Rosada, alias Tangi, demonstrates that some 'cogs' in the colonial system could use their subordinate position to expand their own base of dependants and followers. Born around 1870, Tangi was one of the younger sons of Pedro V. He received his education from Padre Barroso, who took him to Lisbon in 1888 to improve his knowledge of Portuguese language and culture.

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[8] ANA, caixa 212, Pedro V to Governador geral, S. Salvador, 3 June 1883.

Shortly after returning to Kongo, he was appointed lieutenant of the colonial army's auxiliary troops, the so-called *segunda linha*. In this capacity, half-soldier, half-ambassador, he facilitated the establishment of Portuguese trade factories in eastern Kongo, helped these same factories to recruit carriers, and offered local chiefs the protection of the colonial government against armed predators from the nearby Congo Free State. With the wealth generated from his role as colonial intermediary, Tangi married, accrued followers, and built a settlement along northern Angola's rubber highway. Later in the twentieth century, two of his sons built on their father's capital to become successful businessmen in Congo-Kinshasa (Bontinck 1982: 52).

Few local agents represented the interests of the Portuguese government in Kongo more strongly than Tangi, who was known throughout the region as a *mundele andombe*, a black white man. However, the agency of people like Tangi was not universally welcomed. Some individuals who had been recruited through the royal court to work as messengers, soldiers, or revenue collectors for the colonial government abused their newly gained powers to extort personal favours from the Kongo populace. Such behaviour – greed exacerbated by the tools of extraversion – collided with collective notions of proper social conduct. In fact, popular distress about the abuse of power by local government agents lay at the root of the famous Kongo revolt in 1913, which called the old alliance between Portugal and the Kongo kings into question, if only temporarily (Vos 2015: chapter 6).

Conclusion

Throughout the nineteenth century, Kongo elites, especially in Mbanza Kongo, used Catholic priests, imported textiles, and the colonial state to build political capital. This raises the question of to what extent African rulers were dependent on foreign inputs for their political survival and moreover how historians should formulate this elite dependency on the outside world. Was the exchange of textiles for slaves, ivory, and other raw materials the beginning of an unequal economic relationship between Europe and Africa? Bayart (1993: 23) once argued that African leaders who used outside resources to generate wealth and power at home helped create a situation of dependence from which they themselves stood to gain. Particularly in the early colonial period, rulers who built alliances with foreign powers

to gain domestic ascendency were, in his words, 'active agents in the *mise en dépendance* of their societies' (Bayart 1993: 24). While this argument was heavily criticized, with several scholars accusing Bayart of blaming Africans for their own underdevelopment (Mamdani 1996: 10), Kongo and other historical examples (Des Forges 2011) broadly support the claim. But another question mark should be added to Bayart's suggestion that the 'unequal entry into the international systems has been for several centuries a major and dynamic mode of the historicity of African societies' (Bayart 1993: 27). While strategies of extraversion can be observed in different historical contexts, recent scholarship underscores that the external relationships through which African elites pursued these strategies varied in nature and did not always entail dependency.

The idea that already in the era of the slave trade African societies played the role of 'dependent partner in the world economy' (Bayart 2000: 220) is especially debatable. While not denying that Europeans were its main economic beneficiaries, David Northrup (2014: 54) defines Atlantic commerce in pre-colonial Africa in more neutral terms as a 'partnership', as it was driven as much by a local demand for imported goods as by a European demand for gold, slaves, and other commodities. Regarding the personal relations that developed between European traders and broker communities on the African coast, Northrup (2014: 58, 72) suggests that the position of Europeans was effectively one of 'subordinate symbiosis': they acknowledged African customs and submitted to African rulers on whose protection and hospitality they depended. Thus, in Africa, Europeans were generally the underlying party.

Colin Newbury (2003) has equally stressed the dependency of European commercial agents, missionaries, and other colonial settlers on the patronage of indigenous rulers. In his model, European dependence was the first stage in a series of changing patron–client relationships on which European empires were founded. The nineteenth century witnessed a 'reversal of status', however, as European powers emboldened by superior military force pressed their former patrons into subordinate positions. Such reversals often happened through the imposition of treaties, after a breakdown in political negotiations or diplomatic relations, or in the wake of outside military interventions in domestic power struggles. People in nineteenth-century Kongo witnessed these transitions one by one. Portugal's

intervention in Pedro V's *coup-d'état* in 1860 effectively transformed the small Kongo kingdom into a European protectorate. On the coast, gunboat diplomacy became a regular means to resolve trade conflicts. Suddenly, the treaties local chiefs signed with European allies no longer stipulated mutual obligations regulating trade, but became contracts by which Africans exchanged their sovereignty for European protection. As Newbury (2003: 265–9) points out, the demotion of local rulers to client status was a crucial step towards the construction of colonial rule.

The work of these scholars seriously questions the thesis that already in the pre-colonial period African societies occupied a position of dependency in the world economy. Potentially, African elites were always more dependent for their political survival on exotic imports than European businessmen were on African supplies. In other words, to maintain their local networks of patronage, African rulers became structurally dependent on access to imported goods and credit, thus forcing a transformation of their domestic economies into suppliers of slaves and raw materials (Miller 1988). But not all historians agree on the extent to which the Atlantic slave trade, or any other external trade, affected the lives of Africans on the continent in this period (Lovejoy 1989). Many also question the idea that the creation of the Atlantic world was programmed in Europe and emphasize African ingenuity and resilience instead (Carney 2001; Sweet 2011); some even argue that the way African economies and societies were structured considerably influenced the shape of global commerce in the early modern era, including the transatlantic slave trade (Pearson 1998; Thornton 1998a; Eltis 2000; Prestholdt 2008).

As the case of Kongo exemplifies, gross asymmetries in the relations of power between Africa and the West emerged only in the second half of the nineteenth century, allowing European empires to reverse existing patron–client relationships. What followed in the early 1900s was a reconfiguration of local networks of clientage (Osborn 2003), enabling the colonial exploitation of African economies. Africans high and low in the system continued to use their connections in the colonial state to generate wealth and power for themselves. But perhaps the more significant development during this nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of extraversion was related to the cash-crop revolution and the subsequent expansion of the colonial economy. As the participation of African farmers,

miners, clerks, and other workers in the global economy widened, the old elite fashion for foreign textiles, liquor, and other imports was gradually popularized. In other words, the Africans who pioneered modern 'life-styles' under colonial rule borrowed as much from their ancestors as they did from Europeans.

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11 | *The Making of Kongo Identity in the American Diaspora: A Case Study From Brazil*

LINDA HEYWOOD

Introduction

The issue of cultural survival and development in the African Diaspora has a long and contentious intellectual trajectory. Its roots lay in the pioneering work of Melville Herskovits (1941), who found African survivals and continuities just about everywhere in the Americas. The debate continued with E. Franklin Frazier who contended that on southern plantations 'the negro slave sloughed off almost completely his African heritage' (Frazier 1957: 11). Later scholarship by Sidney Mintz and Richard Price (1976) cautioned against attributing African Diasporic cultures in the Americas to any single African culture and suggested instead a creole synthesis, which they argued began during the Middle Passage. Apter (1991), for example, undertook an attempt to reconsider the Herskovits syncretic model.

Interrogating what conditions informed the creation, re-making or even the forgetting of specific African ethnic and cultural identities in the Americas has become even more pertinent since the time of Herskovits and his detractors and supporters. This stems from the fact that the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* and lately the partially completed *African Origins Project* have significantly improved our knowledge of the African homeland and the ethno-linguistic origins of enslaved Africans. Linking the enslaved Africans in the Americas to their places of origin in Africa allows us to reconstruct the historical conditions of their enslavement and makes the task less daunting. The recent studies of Henry Lovejoy (2010; 2012) offer exciting examples of what is possible, if these databases are fully exploited (see also Hall 2005).

The issue, however, remains challenging if the focus is on Central Africans. Kongo and Mbundu captives, who came from the kingdoms of Kongo and Ndongo, ended up as slaves in Brazil beginning in the latter part of the 1500s. Captives from these areas continued to arrive well into the 1850s as the slave trade finally ended. In the Brazilian

record, they appear under a variety of designations during more than three centuries of the trade. The two groups appear under broad ethnic or regional categories, such as *gentio de Angola*, *nação Angola*, *nação Congo*, *Congo-Angola, Angolas, and Congos*. Other Central Africans, such as '*nação Cassange*', *nação Luanda*, *naçao Quissama*, *nação Benguelas*, also fit the category '*nação Angola*'. In Cuba, the Central Africans were identified as *nacion Congo reales*, *congo mondongo*, or *congo luango*, among others (Farias *et al.* 2005; Agostini 2008; del Carmen Barcia 2009). Although Kongo and Mbundu people were divided into separate 'nations', interrogating Kongo identity in Brazil still presents different challenges. The two groups had much in common. Henry Koster (1816: 419), who lived and travelled in Brazil from 1809 to 1820, concluded that 'the Kongo negroes partake much of the character of the Angolans …' Nevertheless, the specific histories of the two groups in Africa, particularly their relationship with the Portuguese in Central Africa set them apart, which makes it possible to analyze how a specific Congo cultural identity emerged over time in Brazil.

Since identities are situational, examining the Central African background of these enslaved Africans is a crucial first step in understanding identity formation in the Americas. The history of the Kingdom of Kongo, the Kingdom of Loango, the Kingdom of Ndongo, and Portuguese Angola, all located in modern Angola, Congo-Kinshasa, and even parts of Congo-Brazzaville, from where these enslaved Africans originated, is well represented in extant primary sources beginning from the late 1400s through the last years of the slave trade. Moreover, extensive accounts of the cultural practices of Africans in these kingdoms are also available. Enslaved Central Africans in Brazil left their own cultural marks and these have also entered the historical records (Fernando Ortiz 1906; Ramos 1935; Carneiro 1937; Rodrígues 1977; Bastide 1978; Cabrera 1984; Fernando Ortiz 1984).

Exploring specific historical events and descriptions of cultural practices recorded during the period of the slave trade must be the entry points for assessing whether enslaved Africans had strong attachments to their place of birth in Africa, its history and culture. Records of these events allow us to interrogate to what extent the African background may have informed identity formation in the Americas. In contrast to Cuba, for which the scholarship on identity formation among enslaved Central Africans is almost non-existent (except for Lovejoy 2010, 2012), several scholars have examined, during the past two decades,

the links between African history and Afro-Brazilian identity formation (Prandi 2000; Kiddy 2005; Agostini 2008). Most important here is Marina de Mello e Souza's study of the celebrations connected to the feast of the coronation of the King of Congo. According to de Mello e Souza (2002: 323), in 'the choice of Congo as a symbol of conversion', Afro-Brazilians distinguished themselves from the rest of Brazilian society. Although she recognizes the historical role of Kongo as a Christian country, the general consensus is to view claims of a specific African identity by Afro-Brazilians as politically motivated. In fact, Suzel Ana Reily (2001: 15) went so far as to dismiss Afro-Brazilian claims of African-informed identity and culture as politically motivated forums 'for collectively negotiating the past as a means of constructing critiques of their present experience'.

Cécile Fromont (2013; 2014), in her excellent analyses of the visual and performance culture of Kongo and Brazil, has refocused attention on the central place of royalty and Christianity among Kongo people whether in Africa or in Brazil. She rightly concluded that newly arrived Africans in Brazil were crucial contributors to the memories that Afro-Brazilians manipulated to reinforce their Afro-Brazilian identities.

The contention of Stuart Hall (1990: 235) that 'diasporic identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference' offers a framework for interrogating identity formation among enslaved Kongo people in Brazil during and after slavery. For Hall, history, language and culture are malleable tools for identity construction. An analysis of selected historical events, ideas and cultural practices in Central Africa, the history of the *autos de congo* or *congada* (King of Kongo) and similar celebrations in Brazil are relevant entry points for interrogating how Kongo people and other Africans made and remade their African Diasporic identity in Brazil. In fact, locating the traditions that place Afro-Brazilian memory more concretely in Africa, rather than in Brazil or even in Portugal, must be the starting point to understanding Kongo and Central African identity in Brazil.

Autos de Congo and the Making of Identity in Brazil

Folklorists working in Northeast Brazil during the late 1800s and early 1900s were some of the first outsiders to observe, record and analyze

what was by then the end product of African Diasporic identity-making in Brazil. Gustava Barroso, who published his *Ao som de viola* in 1921, and Luís da Câmara Cascudo, author of several works on Brazilian folklore, were two of the early-twentieth-century folklorists to study Afro-Brazilian cultural festivals called *autos de congo, congadas, cucumbis, maracutatús* and the like. Although the participants in these performances included Afro-Brazilians from all the different African ethnicities and their descendants, the folklorists were convinced that these dramatizations were based on actual historical events that occurred in Angola and Kongo during the period of the Dutch occupation (1641–8). They conjectured that the performances were the result of hundreds of years of adaptations during which enslaved Central Africans and their descendants, as well as enslaved Africans from other regions of Africa, made American history with reference to the African linguistic and cultural legacies in exile. Barroso also suggested that the *autos de congo* and the *congadas* began to appear at the beginning of the eighteenth century when these memories surfaced among Africans even as white Brazilians had forgotten them (Barroso 1921: 170; Barroso 1942: 43–60; da Câmara Cascudo 1942; da Câmara Cascudo 1965). At the time, Brazilian scholars discredited such conclusions, unwilling to accept attempts to connect Afro-Brazilian folklore to historical events in Africa, which indeed, many of them did not know, as historical scholarship on Africa was still decades in the future.

Besides singing songs and delivering dramatic speeches in African languages, they used Portuguese suffused with Bantu terms and phrases such as *Ganga* (from *nganga*) 'priest', *Zumbi* (from *nzumbi*) 'spirit', and *Zumbi, Zumbi, Oiá, Oiá Manêto muchicongo*, *Oiá papêto* Zumbi, Zumbi, Oh! Zumbi, 'Our Muxikongo mother, O our Father'. In this case Kongo origins are stressed with *Muxikongo* being a term for inhabitants of the heartland of the kingdom surrounding Mbanza Kongo, while at the same time a Kimbundu term is included, i.e. *nzumbi* 'spirit'. The Kikongo origins of the terms and the address to the 'our Muxikongo' leaves no doubt that the song honoured the kingdom of Kongo. Although Kongo people made up a smaller percentage of the enslaved Central African population than the Mbundu, their continuing importation into Brazil from the 1580s to the early 1700s allowed them to have a dominant cultural presence. The *congadas* and *autos* dramatized the Christian identity, the courtly life and royal demeanour of the Central African rulers (cf. Bastide 1978: 121–5).

By the early twentieth century these celebrations consisted of elaborate folk dramas performed publicly on saints' days, particularly those of Saint Anthony and Saint Benedict, by members of the *irmandades* (Catholic brotherhoods) in communities from the Amazon in the north to Porto Alegre in the south. In the dramas the King of Kongo, his queen and his court was the focus of the performances. Barroso, for example, noted that the performers sang songs and the leading figures in the performance made dramatic speeches that might include a non-Portuguese language. The generative and regenerative elements of Kongo culture were in evidence in the rituals connected with the *congadas*.

There is no doubt that the African participants portrayed in these dramas had been construed with the input from enslaved Africans who had lived in the kingdom of the Kongo, particularly from the 1600s to the 1750s when the kingdom was at its height despite the civil war. When the kingdom was at its apex (1600s–80s), a central part of the culture focused on the Christian king and was in full display at coronations or at those times when the king met with visiting civilian and religious delegations from Europe or with delegations from neighbouring African officials. In the *autos* and *congadas*, for example, the most important roles in the celebrations were set aside for the King of Kongo and a queen – eventually identified as Queen Njinga of the neighbouring polities Ndongo and Matamba – along with court officials. The historical events that the dramas recorded would be easily recognized by any historian of pre-1860 Central Africa (cf. Fromont 2014, especially chapter 4).

The central part of the dramas was the election of the King of Kongo – an act that symbolically restored the king in his splendour and power among his subjects in Brazil. In one dialogue from a twentieth-century *maracutá* performance, the king of Kongo proudly announced:

Eu sou Rei! Rei! Rei!	I am King! King! King!
Rei do meu Reinado!	King of my kingdom!
Maracutal la do Congo	Maracutal there of Kongo
La do Congo	There of Kongo
Nêle foi corado!	In that land I was crowned!
	(Nery *et al*. 2003: 21)

By locating the power and prestige of the king along with his queen and court both in Kongo and in Brazil, enslaved Africans embedded in

the dramas an idiom of African sovereignty, which asserted a counter-hegemonic discourse that eclipsed the reality of their servile status. In this empowerment drama, they created the conditions for the development of a distinct African Diasporic identity in Brazil (Barroso 1921; Barroso 1942: 43–60; da Câmara Cascudo 1965).

Kongo People and the Place of Royalty in Central Africa

Scholars who have examined the seventeenth-century writings of rulers and other officials from the kingdoms of Kongo and Ndongo and the Europeans with whom they had extensive diplomatic, commercial and cultural ties all suggest that the rulers and peoples had well-developed notions of a Kongo identity despite the deep integration of Kongo into the Atlantic slave trade (cf. Fromont 2013; Heywood 2014). The fact that Kongo identity emerged in Africa before slaves from these areas arrived in Brazil goes a long way in explaining why Central African historical motifs, particularly the King of Kongo, came to serve as vehicles for memory and identity among enslaved Central Africans arriving in northeast Brazil in the 1600s.

Central African motifs related to royalty, Christianity and exchanging of embassies came to dominate the folk-cultural landscape of colonial northeast Brazil, and more recently of all Brazil, because Central Africans from the kingdoms of Kongo and Ndongo comprised the largest segment of the slave population during the seventeenth century when Brazilian folk culture began to emerge in the region. These slaves came from an African environment where kings and queens were attached to the idea of royal rule and defended their claims to royal privileges and rituals. Moreover, this was a period when the politics of diplomacy between the Kongo kingdom, the Portuguese kingdom of Angola (*Reino de Angola*) and the kingdoms of Ndongo and Matamba reached beyond the borders of Central Africa to Portugal, Rome and Brazil. Finally, particularly in the kingdom of Kongo, as for instance Cécile Fromont discusses in Chapter 6, it was also a period when Italian and Portuguese missionaries and the kings and the ruling elites of Kongo all helped to spread Catholic teachings and rituals throughout the kingdom (see also Brinkman 2016). This environment provided enslaved Central Africans who came to northeast Brazil with the building blocks for the cultural traditions that would in time become part of the folk tradition, particularly the *congadas*.

Royalty in the Kingdom of Kongo

During the period from the 1600s to the 1660s when large numbers of Kongo people were arriving in Brazil, descriptions of elite behaviour leave no doubt that dancing and other public celebrations were common throughout Kongo society. Indeed in 1610, when the Dominican missionaries travelled through the region of Maola on their way to Mbanza Kongo, the capital of the Kongo kingdom, they marvelled when the local lord received them 'with ostentation with 600 armed men with bow and arrows and with plumed heads, chest and arms painted red, running, leaping and making warlike representations'. The men were in fact performing the *sangamento,* the military dance that Kongo nobles performed for the king and important visitors. Although this was a gendered performance that revolved around males performing mock battles, women and children participated as the chorus who would follow 'dancing and clapping hands' (de Cácegas and de Sousa 1662: 612–13; Brásio 1955a: 607–14; see also Fromont 2013). During the 1701 St James celebration in Mbanza Kongo, which the missionary Marcellino d'Atri recorded, young women dressed in white had a prominent part in the mock battle that was at the centre of the celebrations as well (Toso 1984: 250–1).

Beginning in 1624, Jesuits like Mateus Cardoso, among others, authored many texts that provide rich descriptions of the death, burial and election of kings in Kongo. The Dutch West India Company, whose officials developed close diplomatic and economic relations with the king and nobles of the Kongo kingdom from 1638 to 1648, also left detailed written and visual representations of the Kongo king, members of his court and the associated rituals and performance cultures that accompanied royal celebrations focused on the Catholic religion. The Dutch, who were staunchly anti-Catholic, were surprised at the elaborate rituals performed at the court, particularly around the king. Johan Nieuhof and Olfert Dapper believed that the adulation and respect the Kongo people showed King Garcia II was unnatural and bordered on idolatry (Dapper 1668: 579; Nieuhof 1682: 56). Portuguese Jesuits and Italian missionaries likewise condemned the Kongo people for the pride they took in the kingdom. Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi, writing in the 1650s, noted that Kongo people were always ready to praise their country, suggesting that it was the most beautiful country, had the best food and the most wonderful climate,

and in other ways distinguishing Kongo from neighbouring countries whose rulers they considered far less developed and powerful. Cavazzi, like the Dutch critics, identified Kongo pride (*mosicongos orgulhosos*) as one of the major 'defects' of the group. He recorded a version of a tradition that circulated in Kongo at the time about how God sent his angels to create the rest of the world 'so he could devote himself to constructing Kongo' (Cavazzi 1687: 63). Cavazzi accused them of having an exaggerated idea of their own pasts and glories, and 'think this part of the world not only is the largest but also the happiest, richest and beautiful of all' (cf. Thornton 2011a). He also expressed disdain with the way that even Kongo people of humble peasant birth all wanted to be addressed with the title of 'Dom or Dona'.

Cavazzi and other Capuchins also commented on the ostentatious public displays of Kongo's elites. For example, travelling through the Province of Mbamba in the mid-1660s, the missionaries Michelangelo de Gattini and Dionigi de Carli commented on the dress of the Duke, noting that although he was not as elaborately dressed as his over-lord King Álvaro VIII, the Duke's attendants included 'the son of some lord who carried his hat, another his scimitar, and a third his arrows. Fifty blacks went before him playing confusedly on several instruments, twenty five of note and one hundred archers followed him'. The women of 'quality', they commented, 'wear the finest cloth of Europe' (du Cheyron d'Abzac 2006: 130). Indeed, António de Oliveira de Cadornega, the Portuguese chronicler and soldier, believed that the Kongo nation (*Nação Muxiconga*) remained arro-gant, despite the inglorious defeat inflicted by Portuguese forces at the Battle of Mbwila in 1665 when King António I's head was paraded by victorious Portuguese troops in Luanda and ingloriously 'stuffed' in one of the walls of the Church of Our Lady of Nazareth which the governor had built the previous year (Delgado 1972a: 208; see also de Alencastro 2011: 43). The fact that the Kongo people could retain this level of attachment to and pride in their country strongly suggests that enslavement in Brazil would not have affected this dimension of their identity.

Catholic Christianity as a Mark of Identity in Kongo

Pride in the status of the kingdom as a Catholic country, the central role of the Catholic Church in their lives and their identity as Christian

people also set Kongo people apart from their neighbours who were also proud of their own traditions. These Christian markers would re-appear in Brazil in dramatic ways among enslaved Kongo people and other Central Africans. From the turn of the 1600s to the 1660s when Central Africans made up the majority of slaves shipped to Brazil, a significant percentage of the Kongo captives would have identified themselves as Catholics or at least would have been baptized in Kongo before their departure for Brazil.

The Kongo had the longest and most sustained exposure to Christianity of any other African group involved in the slave trade, a relationship that began when King Nzinga a Nkuwu converted to Christianity in 1491 to become João I. Throughout the sixteenth century and increasingly in the seventeenth century the Christian identity of the kingdom and its population set Kongo apart from other Central Africa polities, particularly the Ambundu of the Ndongo Kingdom. The many churches that sprang up in the capital and provinces, the presence of Christian crosses even in remote villages, the political intrigues in which noble factions and priests became involved and the host of public religious rituals in which the Kongo people participated were the symbols of this Christian identity (Thornton 2013). Even Kongo people who lived in regions far removed from the capital and who may not have seen a priest in decades were familiar with hymns and prayers and knew how to conduct themselves at mass, as Girolamo da Montesarchio witnessed in crossing the Kwilu Valley and Nsundi region in 1650 (Piazza 1976: 189, fol. 14v).

Public religious ceremonies involving the entire community were quite commonplace. By the beginning of the 1600s Kongo's capital Mbanza Kongo was an Episcopal See with a cathedral, twelve churches and a large Catholic population. From there, Kongo kings sent and received embassies from the rulers of Portugal, the Papacy, the Portuguese colony of Angola and the Dutch in the Netherlands and Brazil. The Kongo welcomed several orders of regular clergy, including Dominicans, Capuchins and Jesuits. Moreover the country had its own lay teachers who spread Christianity throughout the kingdom, but Kongo also had a corps of parish teachers who catered to populations even in remote districts. The capital saw a round of coronations and rituals where Catholic rituals mixed freely with those of the Kongo, despite the preferences of some kings who wanted to promote celebrations, such as those associated with the Brotherhood

of the Rosary as 'it was done in Portugal'. Elite Kongo people who lived in the capital Mbanza Kongo became members of various religious brotherhoods that had their own offices in the capital (Brásio 1955a: 608; see also Thornton 1984; Heywood and Thornton 2007).

In 1610, for example, Kongo officials were so eager to demonstrate that the country was a Christian country that King Álvaro II agreed to the suggestion of the Dominicans, who had arrived that year, to fund the Brotherhood of the Rosary. He even went so far as to order a procession of nobles and people similar to the 'way it was done in Portugal', and agreed that the brotherhood should receive 20,000 *reis* of alms in local money. The Duke of Mbamba also contributed alms and many others followed since they did 'whatever the king does'. Álvaro ordered that his cousin should be the judge of the Brotherhood and the Duke of Mbamba held the position of *procurador* or attorney (Brásio 1955a: 608). By 1612, there were '12 churches which are built in the kingdom of Congo' and the 'black *fidalgos*/nobles of his kingdom supply the twelve churches, each of which who has them in their lands …' (Brásio 1955b: 69). Throughout the seventeenth and into the early eighteenth century foreign missionaries who visited Kongo described being welcomed by huge crowds eager to have their children baptized. Their knowledge of the elements of the faith, particularly the songs and the rituals or the keeping of Holy Days, surprised them since the people also practiced polygamy and consulted local religious practitioners. Most of the missionaries considered the Kongo people Christians in name only (Brásio 1955a: 608, 612–13).

Furthermore, no provincial noble would go off to war without first making confession and taking Holy Communion and some armed themselves 'with the relics of various saints' (Brásio 1988: 516). Christian Kongo people who made up the army would also have been familiar with, and were likely to have been participants in, the elaborate military/religious festival held on Saint James Day (July 21), where the Kongo king received homage, collected taxes and witnessed the soldiers perform the *sangamento* (cf. Thornton 1998b: 30–5; Fromont 2013).

Significant expansion of public religious ceremonies occurred during the 1620s due in large part to the work of the second batch of Jesuits who arrived in 1619 and the support which they received from King Álvaro III. Kongo people living in Mbanza Kongo and the surrounding areas, who had already established the institutional basis for the centrality of Catholic Christianity, eagerly collaborated with

the missionaries to expand the religion. During that period, activities connected to the public dedication of churches attracted huge crowds. Some Kongo people would have participated in as many as six religious festivals including penitence processions with flagellation during the year (Franco 1726: 245). In fact, penitence procession and flagellation became so popular the ceremony took place 'in the area before the doors of the church', and involved men who 'beat only the back and it became the custom of these themselves to advance on the nude men from the head to the navel, especially those covered above the skin with a little garment which they themselves call *ecute*' (Franco 1726: 249), which referred to the *nkutu* shoulder net of prestige that the nobles wore (see also Cécile Fromont, Chapter 6). These elaborate public ceremonies were not limited to Holy Days alone, but took place on major state occasions, such as the marriage or burial of kings and nobles, when the kings and rulers entertained foreign visiting secular and religious delegations or when preparing for major battles.

Even in the aftermath of civil war and decentralization that the kingdom experienced from the 1660s onwards, the idea of Kongo as a Christian kingdom ruled by a Christian king informed the identity not only of the local population, but also of the slaves who were exported to Brazil. The idea of rule by a Christian king was reinforced by members of the Kongo nobility who could trace their descent from King Afonso I and who, at the death of a king, always elected a new king. Even though the candidate often had fewer followers and fewer resources than his electors, once he was crowned by a priest (usually a visiting Capuchin missionary), he could grant favours, such as titles of the Order of Christ to the nobles, and people deferred to him as king. The Capuchin missionary Raimondo da Dicomano, who worked in Kongo from 1792 to 1795, criticized how the nobles exploited this system (cf. Correia 2008: 5–10).

The nobles and people also sustained the Christianity that had emerged in Kongo during the two centuries since King Afonso I (r. 1506–43) had created a Kongo-informed Christianity in the country. Da Dicomano was so frustrated in his efforts to impose a more European orthodox Christianity on the population that he accused the king and nobles of being only interested in the appearance of being Christians. He noted that in Mbanza Kongo, 'if the Missionary Father goes to their Church to say mass and recite the acts of faith, hope and charity, and to teach the doctrine by

means of his interpreters, nobody comes' (cf. Correia 2008: 6). In fact, some of the nobles went so far as to accuse da Dicomano of not knowing the customs and laws of the church.

If the nobles rejected da Dicomano's Christianity, it was because Kongo lay teachers (*mestres de escola*) had succeeded in institutionalizing Kongo Christianity in the country during the previous centuries (Brinkman 2016). From the time of King Afonso I they were the frontline Christian soldiers who brought the teachings of the Kongo church to the people. In fact, da Dicomano noted that the Kongo approach to Christianity was so intertwined with Kongo culture and customs that 'even the interpreters … do not dare to translate what the father says against the customs, for it is *muccano/nkanu*!' (cf. Correia 2008: 6), *mucano* being attested in Kikongo since at least the seventeenth century as a judicial inquest, and by extension, a court case or accusation (cf. Van Gheel 1652). The core elements of the world view that Kongo slaves brought with them to Brazil rested on the centrality of royalty, a Christianity that took shape in Kongo and a common set of cultural practices and traditions that all the people of Kongo accepted.

Kongo People in Brazil: Christian Slaves and Elites

It is impossible to provide estimates of the total number of enslaved Kongo Christians who ended up in Brazil and whose royalist attitude and Christian background may have set them apart from captives from West Africa, and even from most of their fellow Central Africans from the Kimbundu-speaking region. Although the Dutch, the Portuguese, the Kongo kings and other officials sold thousands of Kongo Christians, who were exported to Brazil and elsewhere in the Americas, enslaved Kongo people rarely appear as a separate category of slaves in the earliest Brazilian records. All slaves arriving in Brazil from Angola during the period were listed as *Angolas*. This was largely because enslaved Kongo people purchased in the Kongo region often travelled overland to Luanda for export to Brazil. This would certainly have been the case with the large numbers of slaves whom the 1,000 Portuguese living in the Kongo in 1623 would have exported to Brazil (Brásio 1988: 512). An estimate culled from Dutch records of ships arriving in Recife from Angola between 1638 and 1645 suggests that slaves from the Kongo/Loango/Soyo region made up about 23 per cent of the arrivals. The Dutch were certainly aware that they were

exporting many Kongo Christians to Brazil. In 1642, the Dutch representative Pieter Moortamer noted that he was expediting the export of the seventy-eight slaves whom he had in Luanda, even though 'we need them here, but as they are Manicongos they risk being retaken … or fleeing. We judge it prudent in assuring ourselves in sending them to Brazil', and he added that 'most of them speak Portuguese and are a little instructed' (cf. Jadin 1975: 196–7).[1]

In 1651, King Garcia II condemned and sent to Brazil more than 200 Kongo Christians from the village of Ulolo. The villagers were found guilty of murdering the missionary Joris Van Gheel who had travelled to the area to weed out 'unchristian practices' (Brásio 1960b: 264–7; Saccardo 1982: 490). Missionaries in Kongo had no compunction selling Kongo Christians, whether accused of witchcraft or not, to Portuguese and other European slave traders (Merolla da Sorrento 1692: 202–4).

Dutch records referring to 1645 noted that because of the strong commercial and military ties that Kongo King Garcia II maintained with the Dutch during their invasion of Angola from 1641 to 1648, the Portuguese became so frustrated that they took 'by force … from the king … around 600 pieces of slaves' (Jadin 1975: 766, 797–8). Even larger numbers of Christian Kongo people left Luanda for Brazil after the famous Battle of Mbwila in 1666 when the Portuguese army beheaded Kongo king António I, decimated the large Kongo army and took 'numerous' prisoners (Brásio 1981: 582–91). Among the group were 'two illegitimate children of King António and his relatives', along with other noblemen. When these elite Kongo arrived in Brazil they were designated as *degredados* (condemned criminals) and not slaves, since they were 'freemen' (Delgado 1972a: 216). Kongo Christians continued arriving in Brazil up to the end of the slave trade.

Kongo Christians and Nobles in Brazil

Records of the royal and Christian identity of the Kongo people show up in the rare records available for northeast Brazil from the early 1600s when the sugar plantations first emerged. For example, baptismal

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[1] Nationaal Archief Nederland, Oude West-Indische Compagnie 57, Moortamer and Nieulant to Governor and Council in Recife, 24 January 1642.

records from Curia Archives in Salvador at Bahia that reach back to the late sixteenth century reveal the names of two slaves, Sebastião Congo and his wife Maria, who had their daughter Izabel baptized in the church on 10 December 1601. Furthermore, in 1605, several Kongo people, including Francisco Congo, Luiza Congo, Sebastião Congo and Maria Congo, were received into the church, an indication that they were already baptized, probably in their homeland.[2]

Sometimes, a Kongo Christian might show up in historical records because of the actions of the rare Kongo official who stopped in Brazil on their way to Europe. One such case occurred in 1604 when the Kongo ambassador António Manuel visited Salvador da Bahia on his way to Rome and ransomed a Kongo slave named Pedro Mambala whom he considered to be illegally enslaved (Heywood 2009: 7). The case of a large group of Christian Kongo people whom the Portuguese captured and exported to Pernambuco in 1622, which created a diplomatic crisis between Portugal and Kongo, presents another example.

Kongo's King Pedro II wrote a letter to the Portuguese king Philip III in which he accused the Angolan Governor João Correa de Sousa of having authorized the campaigns that led to the capture of more than 80 Kongo nobles, the illegal enslavement of thousands of free Kongo and the exportation of several thousand to Brazil. Pedro II demanded their return (Brásio 1988: 514; Heywood and Thornton 2007: 223). Indeed, Jesuits at the time complained that the Portuguese army carried the Kongo captives to Luanda and they 'were embarked for the Indies of Castille, the State of Brazil, and São Tomé' (Brásio 1988: 514). Most of the captives who were sent to Pernambuco eventually ended up in 'Maranhão and other localities' within a few months of their arrival (Brásio 1956: 64–5). In 1623, in response to King Pedro's complaint and the Jesuit report, King Philip in Portugal instructed the governor of Brazil to find out where the Kongo Christians and nobles had been sent. In 1624, when the fate of the Kongo people was still unknown, the king again inquired into the matter and stressed that since some of the captives 'sent to Brazil were *sovas/sobas* (local officials) and other free persons', the Brazilian authorities should find out 'whether they want to return to Angola and if they wish to do so that you send them to the kingdom, as quickly as possible at João Correia de Sousa's

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[2] Arquivo da Curia, Arquebispo da Bahia, Estante 2, Cx. 9, Paróquia Conceição da Praia, 1649–76, fol. 17, 25.

cost' (Brásio 1956: 220). Although in 1624 some of the captives were rounded up and returned to Kongo, many others remained in Brazil. Other Christians, some of them of noble birth, joined them in subsequent years (Brásio 1956: 220).

Sometimes, royal and noble behaviour was on display in Brazil. In December 1624 to March 1643 during the Dutch occupation of Brazil and a formative time that nurtured the institutions which would eventually give rise to the King of Kongo celebrations, three ambassadors Miguel de Castro, Bastião of Soyo and António Fernandez from the court of the count of Soyo Daniel da Silva, all members of Kongo's ruling elite, arrived in Recife to obtain Dutch support for Daniel da Silva's claim to rule Soyo. Another embassy that King Garcia II sent arrived some months later in Recife. As they were royals, the Dutch hosted the ambassadors as they would other high-ranking nobles. Cornelis Nieulant noted that the ambassadors spoke Latin (learnt in Kongo's schools) at the meeting and made several speeches in it. The Soyo ambassadors also brought along 'six or seven slaves' to cover part of the expenses of the voyage to the Netherlands. The company officials covered the rest (Jadin 1975: 372–4). For their part, Garcia II's ambassadors brought several slaves as gifts to the officials in Recife and turned over another additional 200 slaves to Count Nassau, the head of the council at Recife (Jadin 1975: 375, n°372). In the Netherlands, Garcia II's representatives not only put on an elaborate royal *sangamento*, but went on to dramatize for their Dutch hosts the many ways Kongo people honoured their king. The visitors' deportment, dress and education, as well as the royal *sangamento*, were all recalled in the reports of the Dutch officials who hosted them and in the vivid and realistic painting that the court painter at the time Albert Eckhout left (cf. Fromont 2014: 114–21). The presence of the Kongo royals in Recife, however short, and the arrival of Kongo slaves, who may well have been slaves in Mbanza Kongo and were familiar with religious celebrations such as the *sangamento* in the city, must have significantly reinforced the memories of the celebrations in their homeland among Kongo people who arrived in Recife during the decades before.

Sometimes the last names of enslaved Africans reveal their Kongo background. Domingos Umbata (Province of Mbata), for example, lived in Salvador in 1646 and may have been captured and enslaved during the attack that Gregorio, Duke of Mbata, made against his

rivals in Mbanza Kongo (Sweet 2003: 132–3). Although the records are silent as to whether Domingos Umbata was a nobleman in Kongo, several other cases have emerged of enslaved Kongo nobles, such as the two illegitimate children of King António I and his relatives who arrived in Brazil as *degredados* after the Battle of Mbwila in 1665 (cf. *supra*). Another Kongo noble who ended up as a slave in Brazil was Dom Miguel Correa de Sá, who in 1674 identified himself as a vassal of the king of Kongo and wrote to the king of Portugal detailing his false imprisonment.[3]

Other members of the Kongo nobility continued to travel to Brazil and also appear in historical records in the following century. Two letters that two enslaved Kongo noblemen wrote to King John of Portugal on 5 July 1734 leave no doubt that Kongo nobles ended up working on slave plantations in Brazil and considered this an injustice and false enslavement. The contents of the letter, which follow, are revealing:

Dom João rei de Portugal e dos Algarves de quem … senhor da Guiné e das navegações.

Eu, Dom Deonizio filho de Dom Domingos de Camargo faço saber … cujo tenho escrito a Vossa Magestade pela frota da Bahia donde faço saber que fui vendido por Bernardinho da Silva por falsidade para esta terra do Rio de Janeiro e fui escravo de Don Jorge de Andrade e depois servi ao Rndo Pe Jorge de Souza, cujo for de nossa Senhora da Candelária foi difunto [sic] e agora fiquei em mão de D. … estou padecendo de minhas moléstias e por quanto tempo andei cómodo pelas Minas e assim estou esperando pela resposta de vossa Majestade decida desongo de meu tio el rei de Congo que nos mande buscar eseras do cativeiro onde estou ejunttem [sic] estão obrigado ao senhor Antônio Telles de Meireles que é irmão do (…) Barão Padre(?)

Eu Dom Jorge Manuel filho de Dom Pedro Manoel faço também saber qye sou primo de Dom Dionizio sobrinho de rei Congo estou também cativo em mãos do senhor Hiromiro Rebelo que mora na maria de Candelária enquanto me comprou deu cem mil réis como ajuste de cinco anos mas eles estão correndo a mais de sete anos e eu sofrendo em trabalhos como outros cativos […] que estou esperando em vossa majestade que nos mande tirar deste cativeiro em que estamos e já fomos mandados pela frota da Bahia 5 de Julho de 1734.

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[3] Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (henceforth AHU), Caixa 11, Doc. 46, Letter of 13 December 1674.

To Your Highness John, King of Portugal and the Algarves … Master of
Guinea and of Navigation, nobleman Deonizio son of nobleman Domingos
De Camargo … I have written to your majesty from the ship of Bahia where
I make it known that I was sold by Bernardino da Silva through falsehood
for this land of Rio de Janeiro and I was a slave of Honourable Jorge de
Andrade and after I served Renaldo Pedro Jorge de Souza who was a member
of Nossa Senhora da Cadellária now dead and now I remain in the hand of
Honourable … I am bearing my burdens, and meanwhile I walked comfort-
able through the mines, and this is how I am waiting for a response from
Your majesty to resolve the dispute between my uncle and the king of Kongo
who will send to search for us and take us from captivity where I am …

I, nobleman Jorge Manuel, son of Nobleman Pedro Manuel, I also make
it know that I am the cousin of Nobleman Dionizio nephew of the king
of Kongo [Manuel II, 1718–1743] and I also was made a captive in the
hands of Mr. Hiromiro Rebelo who lives in Maria de Candelária where he
bought me I gave 100,000 *reis* as adjustment for five years but it is now
more than seven years, and I am suffering with work like other captives […]
I am hoping that your Majesty will free us from this captivity in which we
are and we were already sent to the fleet at Bahia. 5 July 1734.[4]

Although the letters show that the Portuguese enslavers treated the
Kongo nobles as ordinary slaves, the fact that the two noblemen went
so far as to write to the king in Portugal leaves no doubt that they
did not consider themselves slaves, and neither would the non-noble
enslaved Kongo people. Events involving the kings of Kongo and other
nobles continued into the latter part of the 1700s, and undoubtedly
reinforced royalist sentiments among the enslaved Kongo people.

   Although all of the Kongo nobles who showed up in Brazilian
records were Christians, some of the freemen and slaves who were
exported to Brazil were also Christians who were baptized in Kongo.
The occasional visitors to Brazil left details about the status of the
unfortunate Kongo Christians enslaved in the country. For example,
in 1668 when the Capuchin missionary Dionigi Carli passed through
Pernambuco on his way to Kongo he recorded having observed a
black woman 'who kneeled, beat her breast and clap her hand on the
ground'. When he enquired of the Portuguese who were observing the
antics of the woman about her background he was told: 'Father … she
is of the Congo and was baptized by a Capuchin. And being informed

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[4] AHU, Caixa 30, Doc. 2958, 4 September 1734.

that you are going thither to baptize she rejoices, and expresses her joy by those outward tokens'. As he travelled through the town he noticed that it was full of people, especially of black slaves from 'Angola, Kongo, Dongo and Matamba' (du Cheyron d'Abzac 2006: 56). The Christian identity of Kongo people was also evident in other parts of Brazil as members of the group identified themselves, and were identified by Europeans and enslaved non-Kongo Africans, as Christian. Pedro 'of the Congo nation', a slave in Itaubira in Minas Gerais, was brought before the Inquisition in 1768 for holding mass in a 'synagogue' for a large group of slaves, including ten Mina women and one Mina man, as well as several other Africans whom his accusers did not know. When confronted with the heretical content of his preaching, Pedro responded that he was teaching Christian doctrine, and he noted that for four *viteis* (Portuguese coins) the souls of dead Africans on the Mina coast would go to heaven (see also Sweet 2003: 207–9).[5] Although the number of Kongo people in Brazil never equalled the number of Ambundu, their Christian identity and the idea about rule by a Christian king stood out among the many African ethnicities in Brazil. None of the other ethnicities, whom the authorities identified as 'nations' with designations such as Kongo, Angola, Mina, Jeje, Benguela and the like, came from a country that Portuguese slave owners and government officials recognized as Christian with kings whose status Europeans recognized and accepted. This helps to explain why these two issues came to dominate the traditions that emerged among enslaved Kongo people and other captives from Central Africa.

Searching for the Origins of the King of Kongo Celebrations in Brazil

With their long history of rule by a Christian king embedded in rich traditions that involved performance culture, election of the king and public celebrations including music, dance and the like, all linked to the church and religious brotherhoods, both Portuguese authorities and Kongo captives could capitalize on this background. Within decades of the arrival of large numbers of Christian Kongo people in Brazil, particularly in Salvador and Pernambuco, Afro-Brazilians, some of whom

[5] Arquivo Nacional Torre de Tombo, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processo 16001, pp. 2–3.

were members of the Kongo nobility or free Kongo people who had
participated in such celebrations in their homeland, took the initia-
tive to elect their king in their new homeland. People from the Kongo
kingdom living in cities like Bahia, Recife and Rio de Janeiro were
in the best position to spearhead the celebrations, because they and
their children were baptized, married or allowed to be members of the
few brotherhoods open to both free baptized Africans and slaves. One
such brotherhood was the brotherhood of Nossa Senhora de Rosario.
As early as 1674, for example, the Camara of Recife recorded the
crowning of Antônio Carvalho and Ângela Ribeiro as '*Reis Congos*'
(da Câmara Cascudo 1972: 280),[6] and some years later, in 1711,
records of the Brotherhood of the Rosary of Blacks of Olinda noted
the election of a 'King of Congo' who received official recognition
from the Bishop. During the celebrations not only Central Africans but
all the enslaved Africans were involved in the celebrations connected
to the election of the 'King of Congo'.[7]

   Throughout the 1700s and 1800s the public celebrations involving
the election of the 'King of Kongo' continued. For example, in the 1782
constitution of the Brotherhood of Nossa Senhora de Rosário dos
Homens Pretos of Recife, the membership elected 'A King of Congo
and a queen' and the members were required to give an annual 'alms
of four thousand reis' to each.[8] When Henry Koster visited Itamaraca,
one of the oldest settlements in Pernambuco, he left the earliest and
most detailed account of the celebrations, which had become elaborate
public spectacles. Although he wrote that the participants were cele-
brating 'the white man's' religion and copying his dress, in reality they
were continuing to publicize their royalist orientation and Christian
outlook whose deep roots lay in Central Africa, but which they had
adapted to Brazilian reality. Koster commented: 'The election of a king
of Congo by the individuals who come from that part of Africa seems
indeed as if it would give them a bias toward the customs of their native
soil. But the Brazilian Kings of Congo worship Our lady of the Rosary,
and are dressed in the dress of the white man; they and their subjects

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[6] Arquivos da Prefeitura de Recife, Diretoria de Documentação e Cultura, 1 & 2,
   55–6, Diretoria de documentação e cultura. Prefeitura do Recife, 1949–50.
[7] Ovidio Martins, 'A Presença do Negro na Documentaçao Colonial Brasileira',
   no page number.
[8] AHU Codice 1303, 'Compromisso da Irmandade de Nossa Senhora dos
   Homens Pretos da Vila do Recife', 1782.

dance, it is true, after the manner of their country; but to these festivals are admitted negroes of other nations, creole blacks, and mulattoes, all of whom dance after the same manner, and these dances are now as much the national dances of Brazil as they are of Africa' (Koster 1816: 411).

By the time folklorists like Barrosa observed and recorded the celebrations, the custom of electing a king of Kongo had come to inform not only Kongo identity, history and culture, but also larger Afro-Brazilian identity (see Fromont 2013 for how the celebrations developed during the 1700s).

Conclusion

The argument presented in this chapter on Kongo identity in Brazil connects directly to several of the chapters in this volume. In the first place, John Thornton's hypotheses on how the kingdom came into existence leave no doubt that the Kikongo-speaking group who first moved into the area that became Mbanza Kongo established a centralized state, and laid the foundations for what became the Christian Kingdom of Kongo. Koen Bostoen and Gilles-Maurice de Schryver's extensive interrogation of the historical-linguistic features of the kingdom in this volume also reinforces the specific notion of a developed linguistic identity of the people who lived in the kingdom. It was in this dominant political centre (which pre-dated by more than a century the arrival of the first Europeans) that enslaved Africans who came to Brazil would form their notions of royalty. The kingdom's variant of the Kikongo language was the language that enslaved Kongo people utilized on the plantations in Brazil. They creatively manipulated and integrated selected words from the Kikongo language into the dramatic performances that characterized the public *congadas*. In this way, especially because the central feature of the celebrations highlighted the election of the king of Kongo, enslaved Kongo people symbolically reaffirmed their links to the kingdom. Furthermore, Cécile Fromont's Chapter 6, which creatively analyzes Kongo Christian visual culture using the findings of the archaeologists as well as the extensive historical and artistic representations that were produced during the period of the Kongo's zenith, leaves no doubt that Christianity was the central icon of the kingdom. The Christianity that enslaved Kongo people in Brazil espoused and identified with was

connected directly with the Christianity that developed under Kongo cultural traditions that existed throughout the kingdom. Finally, even as the centrality of the Christian identity and political unity of the kingdom were disintegrating under the pressure of European coloni- alism following the Berlin Conference, as Jelmer Vos has so painstak- ingly demonstrated in Chapter 10, memories of the kingdom survived. The enslaved descendants of the kingdom in Brazil continued to use their royalist ideas, their identity as Christians and the elements of the language they retained to keep alive the idea of a Kongo identity, even as their identities changed.

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