BEYOND DECLINE: THE KINGDOM OF THE KONGO IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

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In the years between 1709 and 1715 the kingdom of Kongo under Pedro IV emerged politically in its modern, precolonial form after two generations of uncertainty and change. The defeat in 1665 of Kongo armies under António I by the Angolan Portuguese[1] weakened the power of the dominant royal establishment at the capital, San Salvador (Mbanza Kongo), setting the stage for a showdown with its only internal rival, Mbanza Sonyo.[2] A protracted struggle followed for control of the central institutions of the kingdom, during the course of which those institutions were dramatically altered from a strong, centralized monarchy based on a large urban center to a weak rural-based monarchy whose titular head was only *primus inter pares.*

By 1715 Pedro's occupation of the capital and his right to the kingship were widely accepted by the provincial nobility.[3] The political system which operated for the next 175 years was characterized by great fluidity of structure, especially in the provinces where there was a tendency toward the multiplication of locally autonomous political units, a process which I have called Kongo syndrome.[4] This only marginally affected the kingdom in the eighteenth century because as we shall see nobles used the Christian cult

[1]Gastao Sousa Dias, *A Batalha de Ambuila*, (Lisbon, 1941), is the standard Portuguese version. For a more Kongo-oriented view, see John Thornton, "The Kingdom of the Kongo in the Era of the Civil Wars, 1641–1718," (Ph.D. thesis, U.C.L.A., 1979), ch. 7.

[2]Thornton, "Civil Wars," 174.

[3]*Ibid.*, 261; L Jadin, "Le Congo et la secte des Antoniens: Restauration du royaume sous Pedro IV et la 'saint Antoine' congolaise (1694–1718)," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, XXXIII (1961), 424–427. This article contains a French translation of the description of Bernardo da Gallo. Another available French translation of an eyewitness account is in François Bontinck, *Diare Congolaise (1690–1701) de Fra Luca da Caltanisetta*, Publications de l'Université Lovanium de Kinshasa, vol. 24, (Paris, 1970).

[4]See my "Trade and Politics on the Congo Coast: 1770–1870," (Ph.D. thesis, Boston University, 1971), 226. Similar processes are traced for Loango in Phyllis Martin, *The*

and their control of the inland slave trade to maintain both that trade and their aristocratic life style. However, by the mid-nineteenth century several changes, led by those in international commerce, resulted in a disastrous weakening of the aristocracy and thus the Christian cult and the kingdom. By 1891[5] the kingdom was little more than a memory among the Bakongo, living in independent towns and only rarely, if ever, dealing with the king at San Salvador.

These changes away from political centralization have generally been viewed as negative and unfortunate. It seemed to some nineteenth century observers that claims for a previously strong centralized state must surely have been exaggerations.[6] Some saw centralization as a European (Portuguese) import that had failed to take root. Others recognized that there had been a strong Kongo state in the past, but assumed that it had just disappeared.[7] Still others, seeing an obvious ill, were more interested in assigning blame for the situation than analyzing it.[8]

Thus the actual political processes which bear the label of decentralization or decline have not been analyzed carefully, nor have they been examined historically. In fact, the nature of the kingdom itself is far from clear. More often than not, once decline is identified as the problem and blame assigned, this period suffers the fate reserved for historical losers: it is ignored.[9] This option is also popular because the resources for historical reconstruction available for the Kongo kingdom peak in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and don't reach comparable levels again until the late nineteenth century.

Nonetheless this is an important period in Kongo history. The military and political weakness of the kingdom in the late nineteenth century meant that the Bakongo had no bargaining power when

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External Trade of the Loango Coast, 1576–1876, (Oxford, 1972) and for Kasanje in Joseph C. Miller, "The Slave Trade in Congo and Angola," in Martin Kilson and Robert Rotberg, eds., *The African Diaspora*, (Boston, 1976), 100.

[5]Pedro V Elelo, the last king of an independent Kongo, died in that year.

[6]Archivo da Propaganda Fide: Scritture Referite al Congresso (hereafter APF:SRC), VI, fol. 370^{v}, Pietro Paolo da Bene, "Relazione dello stato in che attualmente si trova il Regno del Congo" (1820), and *Boletim Official de Angola*, 642, (16 January 1858), 1.

[7]W. G. L. Randles, *L'ancien royaume du Congo*, (Paris, 1968), 120, describes it as "un espace géographique habité par des populations inorganisées."

[8]The most prominent example of this school of thought is Basil Davidson. See his *African Slave Trade*, (Boston, 1961), ch. 1.

[9]Randles, *L'ancien royaume*, is the most prominent example. Despite its title this work is an analysis of the sixteenth and seventeenth century kingdom with some end reference to the later nineteenth century.

colonial boundaries were established.[10] As a consequence three different nation-states compete for Bakongo allegiance today. Even more important, these two centuries of Kongo-syndrome politics were crucial to the formation of modern Bakongo society, shaping not only political theory and practice but collective memory and identity into the late twentieth century.[11]

Modern oral traditions reveal little about the precolonial history of Kongo. It has been argued that contemporary clan traditions do reflect to some degree the noble diaspora which took place in the wake of the civil wars of the late seventeenth century.[12] Nonetheless, Wyatt MacGaffey, the principal analyst of modern traditions, contends that these local histories are more reflective of political and social relations in the very recent past which have been rationalized in terms of a mythic kingdom structure.[13] Historical changes in traditions recorded for Kongo over the past four hundred years suggest that there are possibilities in both interpretations. However, the more conservative position must be the starting point for historical investigation. In any case, modern clan traditions purport to deal only with the history of small sections of Kongo and not with the kingdom as a whole. Modern Bakongo perceptions of the old kingdom are almost entirely formed from mission school texts based largely on the work of Belgian Catholic missionaries or their contemporaries in the colonial period.[14]

The problem with written sources lies both in their scattered and uneven nature and in their point of view. There are periods for which little data has been uncovered, and others with abundant data, of uneven quality.[15] Since contemporary observers from the early eighteenth century until the late nineteenth were generally European (at least in culture) and reported on only a very small portion of the kingdom for a usually short period of time, lacunae are inevitable

[10]Although it can be argued that the strength of the Kongo kingdom could have had little impact on the momentum of the scramble in the lower Zaire, it seems possible that a Kongo government which enjoyed the kind of diplomatic links pursued by its seventeenth-century predecessors could have exercised some influence on the course of events.

[11]Wyatt MacGaffey, *Custom and Government in the Lower Congo*, (Berkeley, 1970), chs. 2, 3, and 10; and "Oral Tradition in Central Africa," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 7, 3 (1974), 419.

[12]Thornton, "Civil Wars," 277.

[13]MacGaffey, *Custom and Government*, 22, 51, 239; and "Oral Tradition," 419.

[14]The most influential have been J. Cuvelier, *L'Ancien Royaume de Congo*, (Brussels, 1946) and Van Wing, *Etudes Bakongo*, (Brussels, 1921).

[15]The record is particularly weak from 1820–1840, but even in the period 1857–1866, for which there is abundant documentation, the quality of observation is very uneven.

and often vast, thus placing great interpretive pressure on the available materials.

An interpretive framework for carrying this heavy weight must start with an analysis of the kingdom itself, if for no other reason than that contemporary observers themselves were so fascinated with it. What was the kingdom? Did it play any meaningful role in organizing political affairs in Kongo? Political affairs, of course, concern "the attainment, use and abuse of power."[16] They are the business of government, which is most profitably viewed not in terms of static categories, but in terms of systems or processes by which society, through its political elite, articulates and channels the demands of interest groups into public policies, provides for their administration, for justice, defense, taxation and the maintenance of public support for the governing body.[17]

Such a dynamic model represents a good starting point, but it provides no guidance as to the particular historical shape of the Kongo kingdom. Two scholars have proposed at least partial models (beyond "decline") for identifying that shape, particularly in the eighteenth century. Several years ago Jan Vansina suggested that fission rather than decline was the appropriate framework for approaching it.[18] He saw the kingdom as consisting of numerous small, independent political units with a figurehead king, an arrangement which he compared to the Holy Roman Empire.[19] Recently John Thornton, following an eighteenth-century observer, also refers to the Kongo as an "empire" composed of constituent kingdoms and provinces arranged in loose, family-based alliances.[20] In both cases the somewhat peculiar use of the term *empire* emphasizes the weakness of the central monarch vis-à-vis his constituents, but in neither is the system of the *empire* given much attention.

Vansina, however, provides more helpful guidelines in this direction in his more recent analysis of the political system of the neighboring Tio.[21] In this case he refers to a *kingdom*, which he

[16]Maxwell Owusu, "Comparative Politics, History, and Political Anthropology," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, XIII, 3 (1975), 367–381.

[17]P. C. Lloyd, "The Political Structure of African Kingdoms: An Exploratory Model," in Michael Banton, ed., *Political Systems and the Distribution of Power*, A.S.A. Monographs, 2, (London, 1965), 63–109.

[18]Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, (Madison, 1966), 152–154, 189–197.

[19]*Ibid.*, 189.

[20]Thornton, "Civil Wars," 269–273.

[21]Jan Vansina, *The Tio Kingdom of the Middle Congo, 1880–1892*, (London, 1973), chs. 12, 14.

characterizes as being the focus of "overarching political structures" involving most of the Tio, despite the fact that it had a very weak political-economic position. It was sustained instead, he argues, by its independent religious base and its ideological and communications functions.[22]

This analysis raises the possibility that a kingdom might at the same time be simply one of a number of related small states or polities and also be the focus of institutions, services and/or ideologies which are overarching, and thus serve in some way to connect and identify them. This is precisely the case with the Kongo. There were two basic elements to the political structure: the kingdom and the autonomous constituencies. In Bakongo thought the kingdom was more than the sum of its parts. It seems specifically to have been more than the aggregate of its constituencies. It was instead a special institution or group of related institutions: the king, royal insignia, royal graves, royal titleholders, royal ancestor cult, and capital city–Mbanza Kongo, still the symbol of Bakongo identity.[23] These formed the political estate of the kingdom, which was recognizable in a specific set of relationships between its members. These in turn formed the girders of the overarching political structures associated with the kingdom.

The autonomous constituencies of the Kongo kingdom should not be thought of necessarily in terms of fixed territorial units. They replicated the kingdom with a ritual-political center and dependent constituencies. Each was ruled by a great lord whose title gave the region its name.[24] Like nesting eggs the structure of center and dependencies was repeated down to the smallest *banza. Banza* simply meant a town large enough to be ruled by a royal titleholder, that is, a town with dependent *libata* (hamlets).[25] The structure was

[22]Vansina, *Tio*, 372–407.

[23]Modern symbols of identity are dealt with in MacGaffey, "Oral Tradition," 419–420; and *Custom and Government*, 22.

[24]MacGaffey, *Custom and Government*, 244, suggests that clan names (which were the old provinces or titles) were used for this purpose. Loyalty, then, was based on allegiance to the titleholder rather than to the territory.

[25]This distinction was made by Father Raimondo da Dicomano in his missionary report of 1798. Father Dicomano's account was first published by Louis Jadin as "Information sur le Royaume du Congo par le P. Raimondo da Dicomano, 1798," in the *Bulletin des Sèances*, Academie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, II, 2 (1957). Jadin's French translation was based on a Portuguese translation recently published by Antònio Brasio as "Informação do Reino do Congo, de Frei Raimundo de Dicomano," in *Studia*, XXXIV (Lisbon, 1972), 19–42. The original Italian manuscript, long thought to have vanished, was discovered in the Arquivo Historico Ultramarino (hereafter AHU) in Lisbon in 1977, in the Angola Series, Pasta 823. Dicomano distinguished *banzas* and *libatas* by size and by the rank of their leaders. *Banzas* he describes as large, often with 200 or more houses. They were ruled by

hierarchical in conception, but the extent of the incumbent titleholder's political power at any given time was a function of his ability to command resources—material and human. It ranged from his being able to appoint and remove rulers of nominal dependents, to his only being able to confirm their election.

The king himself was not a figure of great economic and political power, but a mediator, a constitutional descendant of Pedro IV. The only power resource open to development under the circumstances was the sacred or cultic one—in this case the royal Christian cult, associated in practice both with the missionary Catholicism of the seventeenth century and with cults of the dead (ancestors or *simbi* spirits).[26] This cult was the creation of king and aristocracy who used it to control access to senior titles. The corporation of titleholders can be identified with the Kongo adaptation of the Portuguese Christian military Order of Christ, which became an independent institution in Kongo in the seventeenth century.[27]

Royal titleholders were dispersed throughout the countryside. Each had his own political and economic base from which he participated in the interlocking system of governance within his own region and in the affairs of the kingdom. The territories of the royal titleholders, at first simply the provinces of the old centralized state cut loose from their dependence on San Salvador, made up the constituent parts of the kingdom. Both Vansina and Thornton point to the tendency for the constituencies of the reconstituted kingdom to become more numerous (Kongo syndrome).[28] This process seems especially pronounced by the later nineteenth century when the old provincial hierarchies of appointed officials had virtually disappeared, leaving each *banza* and its surrounding *libata* as the basic units of the Kongo, with little or no intervening hierarchy between them and the king.

Arguments advanced to explain this fundamental process of Kongo syndrome are usually economic. Vansina asserts that in the eighteenth century units were composed of the nouveaux riches who

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titled *infantes* (descendants of one of the three children of Afonso I, 1506–c.1546, who had taken a Lusitized title such as marquis, prince or duke). *Libatas* were smaller, ruled by nontitled *infantes* or ordinary *fidalgos* (men of property). Dicomano, "Informazione," 3. For the modern Bakongo, *banza* means seat of government and refers also to the ancestral cemetery. MacGaffey, *Custom and Government*, 3.

[26]For a more extensive discussion of *simbi* cults, see Wyatt MacGaffey, "The Cultural Roots of Kongo Prophetism," *History of Religion*, 17, 2 (November, 1977), 182–186.

[27]André l'Hoist, "L'Ordre du Christ au Congo," *Revue de l'Aucum*, VII, (1932), 258–266; Broadhead, "Trade and Politics," 23–25.

[28]Vansina, *Kingdoms*, 189; Thornton, "Civil Wars," 272.

used their access to the slave trade to enter into at least temporary prominence in a system essentially based upon clientage, war and trade.[29] Thornton has a slightly different vision of fleeing nobles, cut off from the slave economy of San Salvador, establishing provincial bases much more economically dependent upon peasant agricultural production. These smaller rural polities were less slave oriented, less opulent. Politics were based on kinship, or the idioms of kinship, and the old central nobility gradually merged with the old rural stocks and slaves.[30] Either process (and they are by no means entirely incompatible) would have been strengthened by changes in the export structure first associated with the multiplying of ports of exit and onshore slave barracoons in the early nineteenth century, and second with the ending of the slave trade and the growth of cash crop exports from the 1860s.[31]

In the absence of a strong monarchy or stable hierarchical structures in the provinces, what mechanisms developed to articulate, formulate, and enforce necessary public policy? Here a good point of departure is provided by MacGaffey's analysis of modern Bakongo local government.[32] His investigation of politics among the citizens of Mbanza Manteke (Zaïre) in the 1960s led him to discount almost entirely the role of authoritarian institutions associated with the kingdom, the old provincial structures, and chiefs of any kind as factors in decision-making and enforcement. Chiefs in the twentieth century, he demonstrates, were basically the creation of the colonial establishment (especially in Zaïre).[33] Instead he concentrates on the importance of committees of various kinds, of spokesmen (*nkazi*), and carefully articulated procedural rules in organizing political affairs.[34]

Even when chiefs and hierarchies of titled officeholders were still important in Kongo politics, councils and committees of various kinds were clearly both important and ubiquitous. Officeholders always operated in council. They were chosen by committee and were often controlled by committee as well. Besides councils or committees associated with chiefly office, there were also committees composed of chiefs which were particularly associated with the establishment and running of local markets. All but the most local

[29]Vansina, *Kingdoms*, 189.
[30]Thornton, "Civil Wars," 277.
[31]Broadhead, "Trade and Politics," 229–230.
[32]MacGaffey, *Custom and Government, passim.*
[33]*Ibid.*, 51–52, 234.
[34]*Ibid.*, 103.

roadside stands required cooperation between neighboring towns. However, there are intriguing allusions to the employment of the principle of the market committee on a much larger scale. For example, the province of Zombo, a prosperous region of major commercial importance in 1774, was ruled jointly by four *dembi* (chiefs).[35] Moreover, in the 1850s a confederation of four chiefs alternated in ruling the important trade corridor which followed the Loge River Valley.[36]

Corporate groups other than committees also played a large role in organizing public affairs at various times and places. There were, for example, numerous organizations based on participation in cults, particularly *simbi* cults associated with specific localities.[37] There were also guilds or initiation associations such as *nkimba* which were more prevalent in those areas and at those times when normal (chiefly) political authority was weak.[38] These organizations could be very important in expressing public opinion. Perhaps less important in this regard, but also characteristic of their time, were the credit associations of the later nineteenth century. These *kitemo* enabled the younger, less affluent members of society to participate in trade, to which virtually all aspired by this time.

Since this study focuses first on the kingdom, it is concerned particularly with the political elite,[40] especially with aristocratic titleholders, leaders of important domains,[41] their relationships, resources, power and ideology. The kingdom was their creation and they were its main beneficiaries. Their relationships determined its day-to-day operation as well as its historical shape.

[35]L. Jadin, "Aperçu de la Situation de Congo et Rite d'Election des Rois en 1775, d'aprés le P. Cherubino da Savona, Missionaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, XXXV, (1963), 378.

[36]Adolph Bastian, *Ein Besuch in San Salvador de Haupstadt des Konigreichs Congo*, (Bremen, 1859), 50–51.

[37]MacGaffey, "Kongo Prophetism," 184–190. A much fuller discussion of the role of *simbi* cults in Kongo history will be discussed in his forthcoming book on the history of Kongo religion.

[38]John Weeks, *Among the Primitive Bakongo*, (London, 1914), 176–177, notes specifically that this association was kept out of San Salvador by the power of the king in that area.

[39]Weeks, *Bakongo*, 70.

[40]This term is borrowed from Lloyd, "African Kingdoms," and refers to those titleholders who were active in making and enforcing public policy.

[41]This term refers to the land under the direct control of a titleholder or chief. Generally in Kongo this meant the ruler of a *banza* and its subordinate *libata*. Thornton uses the term household in the same way ("Civil Wars," 233), and points out that the natural limit on the size of such a unit was the distance which taxes in kind could be conveniently carried, or a 30–50 kilometer radius.

However, the people—ordinary clan members, slaves and dependents—cannot be ignored. They were the farmers in the scattered *libata* of the titleholder's domain and the foot soldiers in noble-led armies. Their surplus was the support of the noble lifestyle. Their productivity and loyalty (or lack of it) made or broke great men. The plurality of competing political domains was both cause and effect of the ability of individuals and groups to transfer their political allegiance.

Before we can proceed with their history, it is necessary to consider something of what the Bakongo people believed about politics and right government. What were the basic elements of the political system from the point of view of those principles of political theory and action generally accepted by the public? By what models did they form their organizations, judge their leaders and settle their quarrels? The outline of these principles can be inferred by carefully reading historical data in the light of modern political theory.

The first principle, understood by all, was (and is) that politics—the exercise of power in this world—is not a purely secular activity. On the contrary, it is intrinsically sacred, and sacred power can be controlled only by the appropriate ritual means. This is clearly demonstrated by the overlapping functions and insignia of the major spiritual specialists of the Bakongo—chief, magician, witch and prophet—all of whom share the ability to see things supernaturally and to participate in the power of darkness, that is, of death.[42]

Building on this fundamental premise, two sets of organizing principles can be identified—one hierarchical and ideal, the other egalitarian and pragmatic.[43] There were two kinds of hierarchical structures: one based in the ritually powerful institution of sacred chief and the other on the more generalized idea of hierarchical relationships between elder and junior (fathers-sons, patrons-clients, masters-slaves) which operated at all levels of society. In the kingdom hierarchy was, of course, associated with the activities of a political elite. In practice, however, these groups did not always have the resources to impose their authority; they had to attract followers through patronage, prestige or purchase.

The apex of the Bakongo political hierarchy was occupied in theory by the king at Mbanza Kongo, who embodied the ideal

[42]Wyatt MacGaffey, "The Religious Commissions of the Bakongo," *Man*, (n.s.) V (1970), 27–38; and "Comparative Analysis of Central African Religion," *Africa*, XLII, 1 (1972), 21–31.

[43]MacGaffey, *Custom and Government*, 230, 235–239.

combination of sacred power and secular authority.[44] Conceptually this was paralleled in the role of all invested chiefs, that is, political leaders whose investiture confirmed in them the sacred power of life and death. Investiture required not only personal qualification, but also hierarchy. Investment was performed by a superior on an inferior.[45] It further required wealth since regalia were only conferred on those who could pay the required fees and who might reasonably be expected to contribute periodic tribute and military assistance.[46] In the centralized structure of the seventeenth century, the king was elected by a committee, but subordinate titles were appointed from the center.[47] The structure of investiture remained in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although the power to select officials devolved upon the localities.

Not every elected political leader was invested. By the late nineteenth century installations were quite rare, since few could afford the price and hierarchical structures were in disarray.[48] Despite the persistence in European literature of the term chief, this type of leadership is more accurately referred to as *nkazi*, spokesman, in this case representing the elders of the *banza*.[49] Both installed chiefs (including the king) and ordinary local *nkazi* shared certain characteristics and the roles overlapped in practice. Both types of leaders were chosen from a founding clan and acted as repositories for its symbols and traditions on behalf of the domain represented by the committee which elected them. Both were spokesmen for the governing committee and enjoyed the power to allocate resources. Neither position inherently carried political power.[50]

[44]MacGaffey sees the strong king as the embodiment of *kimfumu*, chiefship, or hierarchy (*Custom and Government*, 238). This dualism between the sacred or ritual aspects and the secular governmental aspects is also described quite clearly for the Nsundi in Karl Laman, *The Kongo* (Stockholm, 1953), I, 138–152. Secular authority is associated also with representation. *Yaala*, to rule, is connected integrally with *bamayaala*, those who come from the chief's house (his "children and grandchildren" who choose him).

[45]"Who invested you; Whom did you invest?" These were critical questions in determining the credentials of a chief (*mpu*). Patrons (or categorical fathers) were necessary to the process, as were, of course, clients (or categorical children and grandchildren). MacGaffey, *Custom and Government*, 235–239; Laman, *Kongo*, I, 141.

[46]MacGaffey, *Custom and Government*, 52, 229–247.

[47]Thornton, "Civil Wars," 123–125.

[48]The missionary Weeks gives a detailed report of an investiture in the San Salvador district around 1880. (*Bakongo*, 43–48, but beyond his own district; none have been reported under Pedro V.)

[49]Georg Tams, *Visit to the Portuguese Possessions in South-Western Africa*, (London, 1845), I, 190, describes the system in Ambriz in 1841. "The king, who is absolutely despotic, is, however, elected every five years from among the mafooks. . . ."

[50]MacGaffey, *Custom and Government*, 213–215.

However, invested chiefs, of whom the king at Mbanza Kongo was the senior, had ritual powers which did not belong to the *nkazi* position. The supernatural powers of the invested chiefs in eighteenth and nineteenth century Kongo derive from at least two sources: the ritual strength of the ancient cult of the local priests of the land and the powers of the Christian cult built up as a counterweight by the ruling aristocrats in their earlier struggles for control with the local officials.[51] Both elements were represented in the installation of titleholders or chiefs. With the disappearance of the strong concentration of economic, military and ritual power represented by mid-seventeenth century San Salvador, the nobility faced a problem. How could they maintain their preeminence in society and the kingdom without giving up too much to any central authority? Their answer appears to have been to continue their campaign to strengthen the Christian cult, which was already closely associated with the aristocracy.[52] Thus their introduction of a Christian founding hero into the traditions of Kongo,[53] the emphasis on a central Christian ancestor cult dedicated to that hero, Afonso I, and the consequent continuation of their interest—and especially that of the king—in Catholic priests, practices and artifacts.

Seventeenth-century Christian practice among the town-oriented nobility was strongly influenced by orthodox Roman Catholicism and supported by a large establishment of Capuchin and secular priests. By the second half of the eighteenth century, however, the mission establishment had shrunk considerably; from that point until the late nineteenth century, there were many years when no Catholic clergy at all served the Kongo.[54] Nonetheless Catholic trappings never entirely disappeared, especially at the court, while the local manifestations of the royal cult merged completely with those of the genre of *simbi* cults with which they had always been identified in Kongo.[55]

The spiritual power of the king was quite highly regarded in the countryside even in the later nineteenth century when his political

[51]Thornton, "Civil Wars," 156. The land priests, the *kitomi*, were coopted into the royal Christian cult. The Mani Vunda was the official identified with this position at San Salvador.

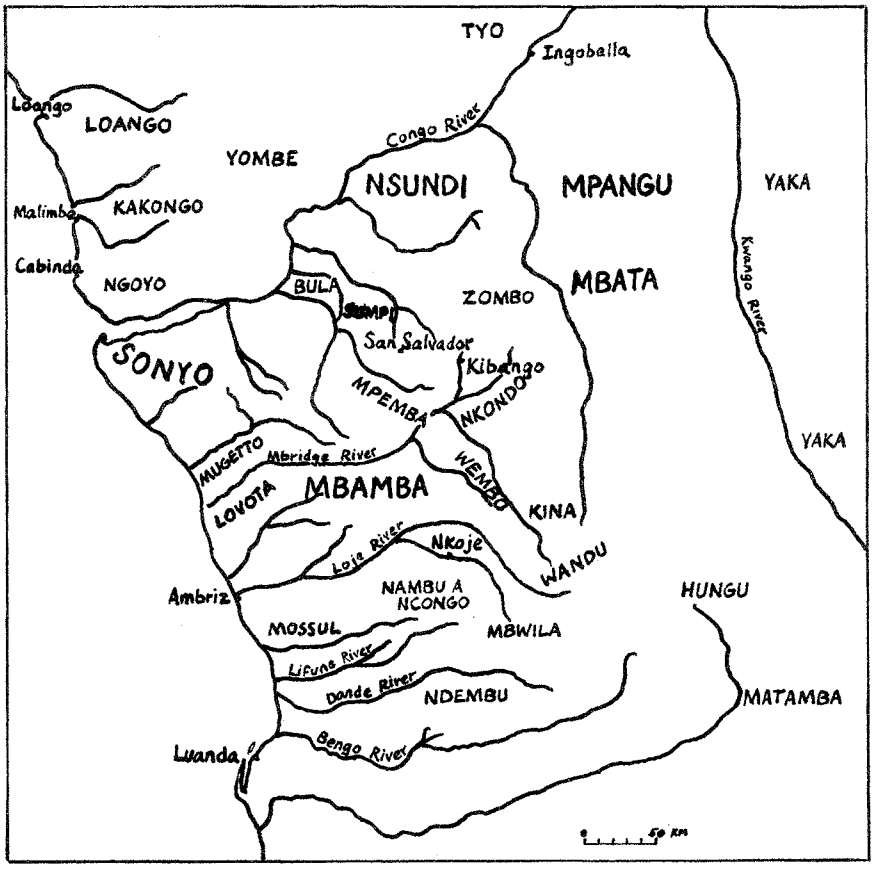
[52]*Ibid.*

[53]A 1782 tradition from San Salvador begins with the story of the conversion of the kingdom and the struggle of Afonso I to establish Christianity. António F. das Necessidades, "Factos Memoravèis da Angola," *Boletim Official de Angola*, 642 (16 January 1858), 1–2.

[54]In the nineteenth century, there were missionaries only in these years: 1816, 1819–1820, 1843–1844, 1859, and then from 1878 on.

[55]MacGaffey, "Kongo Prophetism," 182–186. Nineteenth century cultic practices associated with the installation of a chief are also described for Nsundi by Laman, *Kongo*, I, 140–156.

Map I



West Central Africa, c. 1770

powers were minimal. As an informant told the explorer Adolph Bastian in 1858, the power of the *Desu* of San Salvador was too strong for ordinary people and could only be controlled by the king.[56] The installed king or chief himself became *nkisi*, a sacred object, in touch with the world of the dead, and thus subject to ritual limitations on his physical powers.[57] San Salvador itself was explicitly connected with the other world. By the late eighteenth century the capital region was called Mpemba, a word for the dead, and was the site of the burial ground for nobility in the twelve ruined churches of the capital.[58]

In the political realm, the strong chief was in theory the symbol of social order. His power to inflict death (that is, his power to execute wrongdoers and his willingness to do so impartially) was guaranteed by the ritual requirement that the king kill a kinsman to achieve office.[59] Suitability for rule was also demonstrated by success in battle. Ritual wars—and often quite real ones—took place at the time of succession.

Both political theory and political practice included a strong egalitarian component, a wide range of cooperative or competitive institutions which were very important to the functioning of government. In theory the perfect committee or corporation and the ideal sociopolitical map were a combination of the hierarchical and egalitarian (or vertical and horizontal) principles. MacGaffey identifies four local clan sections in contemporary villages as the ideal domain, with their relationships being viewed in terms of either the hierarchical or egalitarian principles.[60] The organizational preference was for groups of four. Governing councils ideally reflected this fact as well as the idea that all affected peers, usually representative elders, should participate in decisions. Earlier aristocratic control was based on the ability of the king and his personal advisors to determine who would be admitted to the peer groups active in

[56]Bastian, *San Salvador*, 83.

[57]Laman, *Kongo*, I, 142; MacGaffey suggests that the ritual castration of candidates for invested chief may have been widely practiced (*Custom and Government*, 236).

[58]Father Castello da Vide identifies San Salvador with the name Bemba. His account was translated (into Italian) and published by Marcellino da Civezza as "O Congo" in *Storia Universale delle Missioni Francescane*, 7, 4 (1894), 349. The original manuscript, "Viagem do Congo do Missionário Fr. Rafael Castello da Vide, Hoje Bispo de S. Tome (1788)" is Ms Vermelho 396, Academia das Cienças, Lisbon. Father Bene, writing in 1820, calls the capital Mpemba ("Relazione," 370). The twelve ruined churches formed the entryway to the other world. The name Mpemba is associated with cemeteries. MacGaffey, "Oral Traditions," 418.

[59]Laman, *Kongo*, I, 138–142.

[60]MacGaffey, *Custom and Government*, 230, 235–240.

decision-making at the central court.[61] In the era of more localized control of policy-making, networks, marriage alliances and overlapping committee memberships, as well as the institutions and internal diplomacy of the kingdom, determined the shape of events.

These processes and beliefs shaped and were shaped by the historical Kongo kingdom, which will be examined next. This inquiry focuses first on the formative factors, affecting and reflecting the interests of the political elite and society generally: the king and his capital, court, and the royal cult; the kingdom, royal titleholders and their domains; and trade and warfare. A concluding section provides a survey of the chronology of the kingdom from 1718 to 1891.

The power of the king and the status of the capital city are two closely interwoven themes in the literature. It is usually taken for granted that the two are connected and that the decline of both is relatively continuous for the period. Before this proposition is examined, another must be introduced. For most observers the question of the decline of San Salvador is intimately bound up with the question of receding Europeanization (principally the deterioration of European-style churches and fortresses and the lack of public Christian observances).[62] For them the decline of Europeanization equaled the decline of "civilization" and thus of the kingdom itself.

While it is true that Europeanization declined from the lack of either foreign technicians (missionaries and builders) or properly trained local cadres, it is not true that the history of the capital city is one continuous decline in any other sense. In fact, if population statistics rather than church buildings are used as an indicator of health for the city, it had a very up-and-down career in the period. Since the population of the city consisted mainly of royal officials and their relatives, the number of residents can be used as a means of assessing the relative strength of the incumbent king. The data suggest a range of individual abilities rather than a gradual weakening.

Population reached lowest levels during periods of interregnum, when life at the contested capital was hazardous at best. It was not uncommon for the city to be sacked and burned during the course of a succession struggle.[63] In 1763 it was burned and abandoned for three years, but by 1774, in more peaceful times, it reportedly had a

[61]Thornton, "Civil Wars," 113–115.

[62]F. Latour da Viega Pinto, *Le Portugal et Le Congo au XIX^e siècle*, (Paris, 1972), 51.

[63]Jadin, "Savona," 352; Civezza, "da Vide," and Luis Silveira, *Um Missionário Português No Congo Nos Fins do Sèculo XVIII* (Lisbon, 1943).

population of 35,000.[64] This seems an exaggeration, and may refer to the entire capital region, not the town alone. The next highest estimate on record for the whole period was 18,000 in 1845, with the king's *libata* accounting for only 3,000 of the total.[65] In most of the reigns for which there are estimates, the number fluctuates between 700 and 2,000 inhabitants.[66] The low number reported for a period of incumbency was about 100 in 1793.[67] For most of the period San Salvador's population was probably in or just above the range for more important *banza*.[68]

The fortunes of the king were linked to those of the city, in both his secular and sacred roles. The secular power of the king, like that of his fellow aristocrats, can be divided into two spheres: power bases and alliances. The base included only those under the direct command of the chief—wives, nephews, dependents and slaves. Alliances, including those of peers and those involving subordinates, were formed with other domains, each of which had similar autonomous resource bases. Thus tribute, which the king received from his titleholders, did not necessarily indicate their political dependence or submission, but only their adherence to an alliance, their declaration of loyalty, their place in an hierarchy of investiture.

In his own region, the king acted toward his dependents as any other chief in relation to his followers. The most detailed description of life in the royal household comes from the reign of the last independent king, D. Pedro V Elelo (1858–1891), but is consistent with the report of Father Raimundo Dicomano for 1793. The crops grown by the king's twenty-five wives constituted his basic wealth. His military guard and his only regular tribute came from his nephews. Despite these meager circumstances, he was wealthier

[64]Jadin, "Savona," 378.

[65]António Joaquim de Castro, "O Congo em 1845," *Boletim da Sociedade Geographia de Lisboa*, II, 2 (1880), 65.

[66]Bene, "Relazione," 244; Weeks, *Bakongo*, 139; *Boletim Official de Angola*, (1858), 692.

[67]Jadin, "Dicomano," 378. Father Dicomano considered the incumbent Henrique illegitimate, and believed that the true successor was the lord of Kibangu (the future Garcia V). AHU, Angola Caixa 43. Vasconcellos to Martinho Mello e Castro, 25 January 1794.

[68]Both *banza* and district or domain are used as the basis for population estimates. Castro, "O Congo," cites *banzas* in the range of about 300 houses as large. The soldier, Silva Correia, estimates large establishments such as those of Kina, Mbwila, or Namboangongo in the southern Ndembu region in the 1790s as having about 4,000 houses each. He gives three levels of hierarchy: *banza, libata,* and *senzala*. Elias Alexandre da Silva Correia, *História de Angola*, II, 150–223. An American missionary gives the population of Ambriz in 1850 as 4,000, divided among seventeen towns. Records of Board of Foreign Missions of Presbyterian Church U.S.A., Africa: Corisco, Vol. IV, Letter of Reverend Mackey to the Board, 26 April 1850. (Hereafter, Mackey letter).

than average as his large stock of foreign cloth, comfortable house, and abundant table testified. He did get income from taxes on caravans, granting titles, judicial services and some tribute,[69] and he also received the services of a number of young sons of aristocrats to whom he taught the etiquette and rituals of court life.[70]

Within the kingdom the relationships of titles (provinces, domains) to each other and to the center was often expressed in terms of kinship. Mbamba and Mbata were said to have been grandfathers to the king. Mpemba, Wembo, and Pangu are, at various times, referred to as his brothers.[71] Within the aristocracy, however, actual lines of kinship and marriage alliances were also quite critical. Noble families such as the da Sylvas of Sonyo, or the Agua Rosadas of Kibangu successfully used marriage policies and systems of patronage to extend their power. For much of the century between 1764 and 1857 the Kibangu-based Agua Rosada family of Nlaza clan affiliation provided most of the incumbents at San Salvador. This occurred despite an earlier agreement that a Nlaza should alternate on the throne with a Mpanzu.[72]

The court of the chief was the political center of any Kongo polity. These were similarly organized throughout the interior. The chief ruled in council. The chief spoke for the council, but sometimes did little more. His council not only elected him, but could control him as well. The invested chief had independent power resources based on his sacred character, wealth, or allies. However, since invested chiefs were subject to ritual taboos,[73] a strong council could use these to isolate him. His highest officials surrounded the chief on all public occasions. General audiences were regularly held in a central square of the town. At festivals or other important occasions, all the armed men of the district gathered with the elders and councilors.

There is no list available of all the titled positions at the king's court. Nonetheless some important features of councils can be

[69]The Portuguese Canon Barroso pointed out in 1881 that D. Pedro derived a handsome income from the generous gifts of the English Baptist missionaries. "Relatório do Conego António José de Sousa Barroso, Superior da missão portugueza no Congo, enviado as Ex^{mo}e Rev^{mo} Sr. Bispo de Angola," *Arquivos de Angola*, 2nd Series, XI, 45 and 46 (July–October, 1954), 313.

[70]Weeks, *Bakongo*, 41.

[71]MacGaffey, *Custom and Government*, 239. Civezza, "O Congo," 331.

[72]Both da Vide and Garcia V speak of three divisions within the kingdom. It is not clear whether they refer to three factions or to the three royal clans (each claiming descent from a child of Afonso I). Civezza, "O Congo," 348; AHU, Angola, Caixa 62, Letter of Garcia V, 1813 (n.d.).

[73]A common one was the prohibition against viewing the ocean. Tams, *Visit*, 190; Mackey letter.

determined. Membership was drawn from two areas: San Salvador and the provinces. The councilors from San Salvador appear to have been further divided into royal titleholders and local elders or *fidalgos*. The necessity of a commoner background for the majority of the inner council was emphasized by Father Dicomano in 1795.[74] Resident missionaries normally held a high position in the council. They were electors and, of course, essential for the installation of a new king.[75] The king, on some occasions at least, had to defer to other members of his council. The most important of these was the Mani Vunda, successor to the ancient priest of the earth cult, who held a preeminent position in the judicial process, as advisor to the king, and as leader of the council. He was also a key member of the electoral committee and had a major role in the investiture.[76] Another official with considerable power was the one in charge of external affairs. In the late eighteenth century the heir apparent was associated with this post, which belonged to the Kibangu title.[77] The king and the highest titleholders each maintained a secretary, literate in Portuguese. There was also a royal archive in San Salvador under the control of a high titleholder.[78]

Not all of the important officials resided at court. The captains general of Kongo and of the Church were two important positions tied to provincial titles.[79] The former had explicitly military functions, as did the holder of the Wembo title, styled Vicar of the King and guardian of the southern roads to the capital.[80] Of the titles not connected with the Christian cult, the most important and ubiquitous was that of Mani Pemba, a judicial official found at all levels of the hierarchy leading to San Salvador. Despite their residence outside the court, these officials and all others were expected to gather on certain occasions. For example, the missionary da Vide was called back to San Salvador for a required assembly during Holy Week in 1785.[81]

Obtaining a title from the king had political and economic benefits. Association with the kingdom was prestigious and titulars had special prerogatives. Some could confer titles on their own

[74]Dicomano, "Informazione," 9.

[75]*Ibid.*, 9; AHU, Angola, Caixa 62, Letter of Garcia V, 1813 (n.d.).

[76]*Ibid.*, 9–10.

[77]Brasio, "Dicomano," 26.

[78]Alfredo de Sarmento, *Os Sertões d'Africa (Apontamentos de Viagem)*, (Lisbon, 1880), 59.

[79]Civezza, "O Congo," 323, Jadin, "Savona," 382. AHU, Angola, Caixa 39, Instruction to Mossamedes, 6 March 1784.

[80]Jadin, "Savona," 387.

[81]Civezza, "O Congo," 353.

vassals. The regalia of office carried with them real power. For example, members of the Order of Christ and their official (Christian) wives could wear the distinctive cross of the Order on their clothes, display it on their residences, and use it to establish tax-collecting stations in the countryside.[82] The bells of a chief guaranteed safe passage for merchant caravans, whose leaders also did business with him. His staff and cap of office entitled him to a share of the goods of his dependents, vassals, and those passing through his domain.

Control over ritual resources was an area of great concern in a system in which no one could command a monopoly of physical and political resources or impose a national administration and ideology, and in which everyone agreed that spiritual power was fundamental.[83] The titled and aspirants to office were constantly in competition, on the one hand, but on the other were constrained to support common institutions and symbols to give themselves legitimacy and strength in the eyes of their followers. The general control of sacred resources was politically important to the elite. The Christian cult was crucial for the maintenance of the kingdom.

The king's sacred power had two main political arms—his relations with the political elite and his standing with the masses. Ordinary people, at least by the nineteenth century, saw the king as a powerful *nkisi*. This reputation extended far and wide, but its political usefulness was limited to those areas with some direct relationship to the capital. At Ambrizette in the 1870s the local people did not even know the Christian name of the king, but they knew of Mani Congo and his fearful powers, which occasionally even touched them directly.[84] However, in the San Salvador region under the strong king, Henrique II, the king's royal staff placed on a market road, unattended, was still a sufficient tax-collecting device.[85] Spiritual coercion was effective, but only where it was connected to political power. Where the king had no following, competing spiritual powers could be invoked. Nsundi, for example, developed its own regalia for investiture, and then asserted that the Kongo king had given it to them with no strings attached.[86] Even in Mbamba, in

[82]Correa, *História*, II, 206, 208–209, 212; Dicomano, "Informazione," 10.

[83]The Portuguese Alfredo Sarmento, who worked at the Bembe mines in 1856, noted that Colonel Andrade, the leader of the Ambriz expedition, enjoyed a wide reputation among local people as a powerful magician. This reputation stemmed from his success in battle. Sarmento, *Sertões*, 39.

[84]Charles Jeannest, *Quatre Années au Congo*, (Paris, 1883), 36–37, 68–69.

[85]Sarmento, *Sertões*, 51.

[86]Laman, *Kongo*, I, 138.

the heartland of the kingdom, Bastian noted a strong competing territorial cult organized by the duke, operating in the 1850s.[87]

The husbanding of spiritual resources by king or elite, was important to their maintenance of political power over more than a very local area. The history of the Christian establishment illustrates this very well. Christian practice in Kongo had two distinct manifestations—among the nobility, and among the masses. For the masses Christian practice, introduced in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries by the Capuchin missionaries, consisted mainly in receiving baptism (initiation). This was always done en masse, and thus did not include much, if any, instruction about the faith.[88] A few other practices, such as the veneration of popular relics (*nkisi*) or the singing of litanies and chants, were kept up in some areas. Catholic priests themselves were popularly regarded as rainmaking *nkisi*.[89] Clearly, for ordinary people, Christianity was simply a particular kind of *simbi* cult.

Eighteenth-century nobles turned this spread of Christianity to their own advantage by restricting certain practices, among them Christian marriage, the Order of Christ, and literacy in Portuguese, to nobles alone. Some great nobles of the eighteenth century held the title *maestro da igreja*[90] indicating both literacy and a background in Church service. When the supply of missionaries ran short, the wealthier lords still maintained *maestri*, and sometimes chapels, shrines, or hospices.[91] Some of these were staffed, well into the nineteenth century, by communities of "slaves of the Church," descendents of those who had served the missionaries in the old days.[92] The Christian noble establishment, however, was not able to

[87]Bastian, *San Salvador*, 50–51. Silva Correa describes a regional *simbi* cult for the Lue River (west of Mbamba) in the 1790s. (*História*, II, 216).

[88]Baptism principally involved the distribution of salt, a precious commodity in the interior. Large numbers of baptisms were reported for missionaries in the period, from a few thousand to a hundred thousand. Father Dicomano claimed 25,000 in four years (Brasio, "Dicomano," 21), but Father Necessidades reported 106,064 for fifteen months' work in 1845 (François Bontinck, "Notes Complementaires sur Dom Nicolau Agua Rosada e Sardonia," *African Historical Studies*, II, 1 (1969), 105.

[89]Sarmento notes that the coming of the first rains in 1856 were associated with the arrival of Father Moura (*Sertões*, 49).

[90]This Portuguese term can be translated as "master of the church." Other offices held by mission assistants were catechist and interpreter. Sometimes the terms were used interchangeably. *Maestri* were often literate and held positions as secretaries and as teachers of Portuguese.

[91]Jadin, "Savona," 382, 387.

[92]Jadin, "Savona," 372; Letter of Henrique II to Governor General (Angolan), 4 July 1845, in António Brasio, *Angola*, Spiritana Monumenta Histórica, Series Africana, I, (Pittsburgh, 1966), 25–27.

maintain itself intact into the mid-nineteenth century. By the 1850s membership in the Order of Christ had become common, while Christian marriage and *maestri* were rarely encountered.[93] Because of this the last king's secretary had been trained in Angola, while the children of aristocrats learned their Portuguese (and French and English) at the factories along the coast.[94]

Maintenance of the Christian cult and San Salvador as its center was also of great concern to the king. Much diplomatic effort was expended in trying to provide the necessary staff of Christian priests and European technicians to maintain the royal cult center.[95] As early as 1760, a missionary warned that priests were mainly wanted to enhance the power of the king.[96] In 1798, Father Dicomano bitterly reported that the only reason that priests were sought was to grant memberships in the Order of Christ, thus filling the coffers of the king and the cavaliers.[97] By the nineteenth century clergy were so scarce that just finding a priest for the coronation of king presented a problem. Garcia V was elected in 1803, but wasn't crowned until 1814.[98] His successor, André, remained uncrowned.[99]

In its relations with foreign powers, particularly European, the king was the spokesman of the kingdom, its *nkazi*. But, in fact, he spoke more clearly for the kingdom represented by the Christian cult and its elite leadership. The only foreign government with which the Kongo had ongoing relations in this period was Portugal. Relations between the two were often strained by their position as competitors in trade and the fact that they shared a border. Further complications were introduced by the fact that the Portuguese king on occasion claimed the Kongo king as a vassal. This claim has been the subject of great dispute, but clearly in one sense the Kongo kings did consider that they were vassals of the Portuguese, that is, in the ritual sense. The crowns of Kongo kings, some of their regalia,

[93]Sarmento, *Sertões*, 49.

[94]Barroso, "Relatório, 308.

[95]Both Garcia V and Henrique II specifically sought carpenters and masons to repair the churches in the capital. Garcia's correspondence for 1813–1814 is found in AHU, Angola, Caixa 62. A French translation is in L. Jadin, "Recherches dans les archives et bibliothèques d'Italie et du Portugal," *Bulletin de l'Academie Royale des Sciences Coloniales*, II, 6 (1956), 958–969. Brasio, *Angola*, I, 23–24. Letter of Henrique II, 1845.

[96]Jadin, "Savona," 376, 388.

[97]Dicomano, "Informazione," 8.

[98]APF:SRC, vol. 6, 1781–1840, Zenobio da Firenze, "Relazione dello state in cui trovasi attualemente il Regno del Congo . . . del Viaggio, che vi fece il P. Luigi d'Assisi, . . . nel ano 1814," 244.

[99]No priest with the necessary regalia visited the kingdom during his tenure from 1830 to 1842.

coronation gifts, and priests for investiture all came from (or through) Portugal. In political terms however, in the Kongo view this was no more than a limited alliance between those of equal status (if not power). In fact the relationship was sometimes described as one between brothers or occasionally even in terms of the Portuguese monarch being ritually dependent on Kongo.[100]

This relationship is particularly interesting if it is examined in the light of the coexisting policy of excluding Europeans, particularly Portuguese, from the kingdom.[101] The Portuguese were not preferred as trading partners. In this sense economic and ritual policies were clearly distinct. While some Kongo kings were pro-Portuguese, most kings and other aristocrats preferred to find even their ritual assistants from among non-Portuguese. Everywhere Italian Capuchins were preferred as priests. Sonyo rejected both Portuguese priests and traders outright in 1785.[102] Native sons were encouraged to study for Holy Orders to provide an alternative to foreign dependency.[103] In the later nineteenth century, when the Capuchins were long gone, the king cultivated French Catholics[104] and British Baptists, who were greatly amused when Pedro V inquired into the possibilities of an alliance between himself and Queen Victoria.[105]

The national interest, in any modern policy sense, did not exist. Competition was endemic to the system, with each power center, including the royal one, interested first in enhancing its own wealth, prestige and power. Although regional mechanisms, including those associated with the kingdom, did exist to promote cooperation and provide dispute mediation, warfare always remained a lively possibility. Two types may be identified: conflicts between competing domains or towns and the warfare associated with succession to high office, particularly that of king. Two sets of rules and expectations developed. Ordinary warfare, erupting from the conflicts between neighbors, was usually small in scale and short in duration. By the

[100]AHU, Angola, Caixa 62, Letters of Garcia V. Brasio, *Angola*, I, 26–27. Letter of Henrique to Governor General, 4 July 1845, enclosing four tiger skins and a letter as a gift to the Portuguese queen.

[101]Savona noted of San Salvador in 1760: "All the inhabitants are black, they will not admit any white to live there." (Jadin, "Savona," 370). Monteiro, *Angola*, I, 89. No white was allowed to go south from the Zaire to San Salvador (1870s). This practice was widely noted between these two accounts as well.

[102]Miguel Antonio de Mello, "Relatório, 1802," *Boletim de Sociedade Geografia de Lisboa*, V, 9 (1885), 558.

[103]Bontinck, "Notes Complementaires," 104. A nephew of Garcia V, D. Afonso was ordained priest in 1824 and served in San Salvador from 1826 to 1836.

[104]Brasio, *Angola*, II, 26–27, 92–93.

[105]Weeks, *Bakongo*, 36.

late eighteenth century it was subject to rules and conventions, sacred and secular, designed to facilitate competition while keeping down losses. There were few military specialists, and the weaponry employed was largely locally made until well into the nineteenth century. Military committees did organize campaigns, and the chief provided powder for guns,[106] but every one participated. By the late eighteenth century wars had notably few casualties, but heavy emphasis on maneuvers designed to invoke favorable spiritual help and/or intimidate the enemy.[107] Such wars were part of the intricate and fluctuating system of domination and alliance-building between domains. At least by the mid-nineteenth century they were part of a complex negotiating process.[108]

Succession struggles, in common with foreign wars, were normally on a much grander scale. In fact, participation in them indicated membership in the kingdom itself. In these wars the ritual and symbolic requirements of the kingship were mixed with the struggles of regional factions for predominance. They were in a sense both competitive-normative[109] and potentially disintegrative. On the one hand they reenacted and thus reinforced the rituals of monarchy; on the other they represented political and ritual breaks in the authority structure which created a climate conducive to the simultaneous outbreak of small wars and raids.[110] Royal succession struggles were fought in the form of a competition between competing royal clans. In this, as in more mundane affairs, clan must be seen as the idiom of competition and political loyalty rather than as any strictly defined kinship corporation. Two succession struggles are particularly well documented for the period: the one which resulted in the enthronement of José I in 1781[111] and the one which resulted in the installation of Pedro V in 1859.[112] Analysis of these conflicts from

[106]Castro, "O Congo," 66. The fact that Henrique could supply powder in abundance doubtless explains the fact that he was said to be able to muster 12,000 militia.

[107]Dicomano, "Informazione," 15.

[108]Weeks, *Bakongo*, 190–194; John Weeks, "Notes on Some Customs of the Lower Congo People," *Folklore*, XX (London, 1909), 34–40.

[109]Lloyd, "Political Structure," 80.

[110]Bene, "Relazione," 370v.

[111]Civezza, "O Congo," 322–326; Silveira, *Missionário, passim.*

[112]The report of the Portuguese officer, Zacharias da Silva Cruz, who led the party to crown Pedro V, was published as "Relátório duma Viagem a Sâo Salvador do Congo," in the *Boletim Official de Angola*, (1858), 692–712. Speculations on the state of affairs by eyewitnesses during the late 1850s or early 1860s are contained as well in Bastian, *San Salvador*, 137–183, and Ribeiro da Fonseca, "O Rei do Congo," *Revista Militar*, XVIII, (1891), 292–302, 324–330. A good modern analysis of the succession struggle is contained in Bontinck, "Notes Complementaires," 110–115. The military activities surrounding this

the point of view of determining participation in the kingdom shows a pattern of competing alliances concentrated in a quadrangle bounded by Mbamba-Bula-San Salvador-Wembo.

If warfare served to define participation in the kingdom and the boundaries of the constituent domains, trade provided the fuel for the changes confirmed by war. The dominant staple of international trade until the mid-nineteenth century was slaves which, along with ivory and some local products, were exported in exchange for cloth, guns, powder, spirits, and other European, Asian, American, and African goods. Available data indicate that slave exports for the whole region were rising throughout the eighteenth century. Demand was especially intense in the period 1730–1790.[113] After a turn-of-the-century slump, slave exports rose again, reaching high levels by the 1820s and remaining high until the 1840s when antislavery measures began to take effect. Brazilian abolition in 1850 further undercut demand, despite a brief rise in exports during 1857–1862 as a result of the French "emigration scheme."[114] Although internal slave trading and forced labor recruitment continued well into the twentieth century, by the middle of the nineteenth century legitimate exports such as ivory, groundnuts, sesame and palm oil began a steady rise in volume, replacing slaves entirely by the late 1860s. European factories, supported by naval power, increasingly dominated the coastal export trade until late in the nineteenth century when, with the aid of colonial governments and railways, they established control over internal trade as well.

Control of foreign trade and the circulation of prestige goods associated with it were at the heart of political power. Possibilities for profit, both economic and political, arose in several areas: control over the movement of caravans in a territory, charges for transit, customs duties and tolls; monopoly rights over products such as slaves, guns, or ivory; privileged access to the market system including information about market conditions; exclusive access to foreign traders; alliances with foreign merchants; and direct participation in trading ventures.

Three institutions were basic to the organization of trade in

succession crisis and invasion are detailed in Pinto, *Le Portugal et Le Congo*, 63–68, and in René Pellissier, *Les Guerres Grises: Résistance et Revoltes en Angola (1845–1941)* (Orgeval, France, 1977), 102–108.

[113]Miller, "Slave Trade," 96–97.

[114]Little has been written about this late French re-entry into the slave trade business along the Zaire. However, extensive records of the operations are available at the Archives Nationales, Paris: Marine, BB⁴745, BB⁴786, BB⁴802; and Outre-Mer, Senegal XIV, 23, Generalités 87, dossier 809, Generalités 124, dossiers 1085, 1088, and 1089.

Kongo: the merchant caravans, the regional system of markets, and the coastal entrepots. Markets held every four or eight days formed the basic exchange network. They ranged in size from those primarily serving a single district to grand fairs which attracted foreign merchants, such as those at Mbwela and Kina in the south. While some chiefs, especially in the early period, were powerful enough to establish a market on their own, most markets were associated with a committee of chiefs from neighboring towns. Such markets were neutral ground, the scene not only of economic activities, but also serving as news bureaus, courts and sanctuaries as well. Chiefs organized and supervised them, controlled access roads, and got first choice of the most desirable merchandise.[115]

Caravans in eighteenth-century Kongo were associated primarily with the organizational and entrepreneurial skills of two groups, the Vili of Loango and the Zombo of Mbata. Although the Zombo gained ascendency along the main east-west axis in the 1760s, the Vili maintained their trade connections in the kingdom well into the nineteenth century.[116] The Zombo were only displaced by the advent of the colonial railway. The Solongo (Sonyo) and Mbamba men entered the caravan business as export facilities in their respective regions grew. In fact, participation in caravans became widespread in those areas within a hundred miles or so of the Atlantic or Zaire coasts.[117]

Control over caravan routes, markets, and access to foreigners and their goods were basic to political power. Some of the provincial titleholders of the kingdom had established themselves as slave trading competitors to the king long before the eighteenth century. In this respect Kongo syndrome was already more than a century old. Where there were opportunities for participation in international commerce, autonomous chiefdoms appeared. Growth of independent units followed both the line of interior caravan routes and the development of coastal shipping. Strong chiefdoms on the Kongo model were associated with the successful organization of major routes. Witness the rise of Zombo, recognized as an independent power by the 1770s; or the growth of Quiballa, starting point for

[115]Correa, *Historia*, 184; Jadin, "Savona," 382–383. Weeks, *Bakongo*, 199–201; Monteiro, *Angola*, I, 179, 210.

[116]Vansina, *Tio*, 427, 447.

[117]John J. Monteiro, *Angola and the River Congo*, (London, 1875), I, 19; Barroso, "Relatório," 311; Weeks, *Bakongo*, 204.

caravans of copper, ivory and slaves en route to Ambriz in the mid-nineteenth century.[118]

Early eighteenth-century exports were being purchased either by French or British shippers in the north or by Brazilians at Luanda in the south. By the 1770s, however, Luanda was only a secondary outlet; Loango was eclipsed by Cabinda to its south; and Ambriz became the first of many new Kongo coast ports to grow up over the next century.[119] While some of these coastal entrepots participated in the kingdom, many grew up at a time when the king's power was minimal. They found their patrons among foreign merchants, and their government model in the north coast broker states like Cabinda. The office of *mafouk*, a chief broker, became ubiquitous. Interpreters (*linguisters*), men who spoke at least some Portuguese, monopolized crucial brokerage services in the new towns. Competition between them was high, as each sought to organize lines of credit and clientage in the interior.

The expanding slave and ivory trade of the eighteenth century had provided opportunities for the aristocracy to enter fully into competition for wealth and power both with the king and with each other. Opportunities expanded as newcomers to the coastal trade sought to create their own links with the interior around the turn of the century. In the nineteenth century, however, the aristocracy itself lost the economic initiative when the slave trade first became illegal, then declined and ended. The cash crop exports which replaced it did not grow directly out of the old slave caravan system, but from the regional markets and the networks which had supplied foodstuffs to slave barracoons, trading factories and coastal towns.[120] Gradually the system came not only to favor the participation of the peasant over the lord in the agricultural heartland, it also increasingly reduced the independent brokers of the coast to the status of dependents on, or even employees of, the European factories.

The pace of social and political change quickened. The Bakongo moved enthusiastically into commerce. In contrast to the observation of an early eighteenth-century missionary who found the ordinary Mukongo uninterested in trade,[121] the late nineteenth

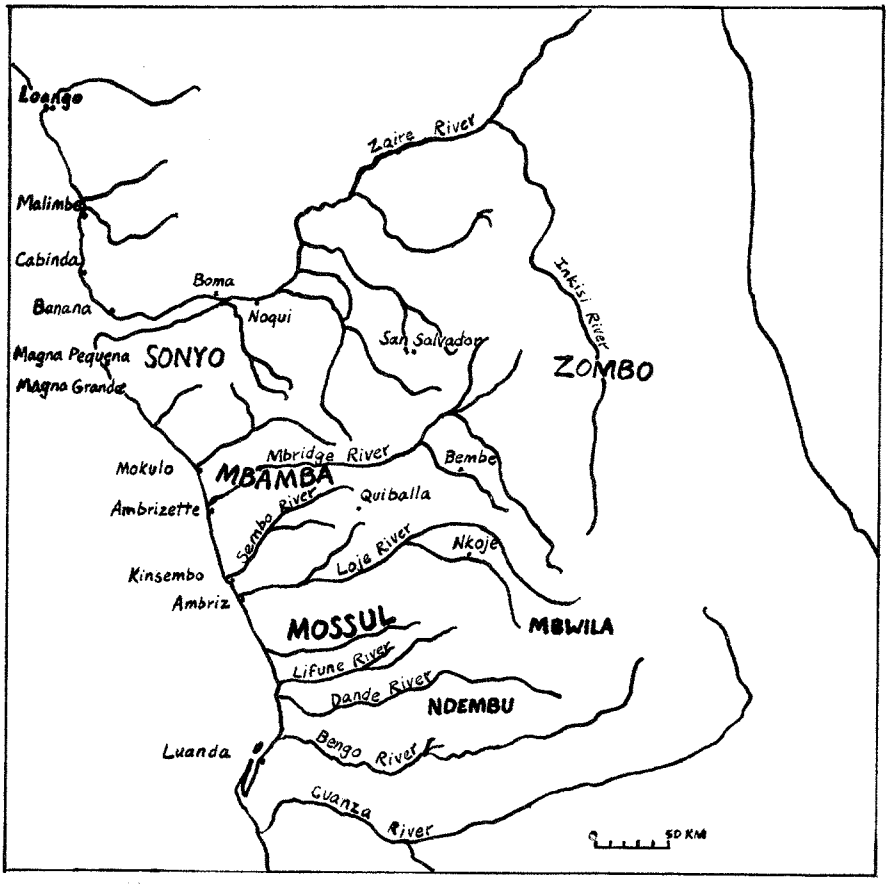
[118]Castro, "O Congo," 65; Jeannest, *Quatre Années*, 56; Sarment, *Sertões*, 32–33; Monteiro, *Angola*, I, 174–175.

[119]Martin, *External Trade*, 92.

[120]Monteiro, *Angola*, I, 85.

[121]J. Cuvelier, trans. and ed., *Relations sur le Congo du Père Laurent de Lucques (1700–1717)* (Brussels, 1953), 84.

Map II



West Central Africa, c. 1870

century Bakongo were characterized as "born traders"—ambitious, competitive, and heavily involved in international commerce.[122] Organizations sprang up such as *nkimba*, which among other things served to link merchants in a protective association, and *temo*, a means of raising credit for trading ventures among the less affluent.[123] Ritual specialists enjoyed a boom in the demand for devices to protect traders. Goods which a few decades before had been the prerogative of nobles became available through the market system without the redistributive intermediacy of noble monopolists.[124]

This democratization of access to foreign goods coupled with increasing economic dependency on foreigners had serious consequences for both the noble titleholders and the kingdom on which they depended for legitimacy and prestige. The founder of the new order, D. Pedro IV, died in 1718, having reunited the kingdom of Kongo under a system whereby he was recognized as ruler by all the major provincial factions. Local sovereignty was respected, thus reducing factional warfare. Pedro himself ruled directly in San Salvador and its districts, the most crucial of which was Kibangu, a mountain stronghold east of the capital which was his home and the site of a fortress refuge and mission. He claimed mixed descent from both the leading Nlaza and Mpanzu clans.[125]

By 1718 a basic tripartite political division existed among the Bakongo made up of (1) a central core of the kingdom, governed directly by the king and serving as ritual center; (2) the participating constituents of the kingdom, governed by titled nobles who chose the king, then were invested by him, and participated in the affairs of San Salvador, and (3) other, more peripheral Bakongo polities, many with roots in the seventeenth century kingdom, some with continuing links to the kingdom or to one or to the other of its constituencies, but not regularly involved in affairs at the capital. The distinctions in individual cases and at any given time are far from clear, but some patterns can be discerned.

Significantly, the major participants in the kingdom as reconstituted under Pedro appear to have been centered in that quadrangle centering on San Salvador and reaching from Bula (Boma) in the north to Wembo in the south. In the early eighteenth century it

[122]Laman, *Kongo*, I, 150–151; Monteiro, *Angola*, I, 195; Weeks, *Bakongo*, 199.

[123]Weeks, *Bakongo*, 70, 176–177; *Kongo*, I, 150–151; W. Holman Bentley, *Pioneering on the Congo* (London, 1900), I, 282, 451; Weeks, "Notes," 189, 198–201; MacGaffey, *Custom and Government*, 248–250.

[124]R. C. Phillips, "The Lower Congo: A Sociological Study," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, XVII, 17 (1888), 226–227; Monteiro, *Angola*, I, 265.

[125]Thornton, "Civil Wars," 246.

included Sonyo and its coastal dependencies. Alliances, as we have seen, were formed under the rubric of family and clan. However, the geography of the kingdom formed by these coalitions suggests that demographic and economic factors were equally important in shaping it. The participating areas were contiguous, in control of major trade routes, and the majority were located in the relatively well-watered hilly heartland, which was both more productive agriculturally and more defensible militarily than the coastal plain.

This heartland was controlled largely by factions or alliances of Nlaza loyalty, with the exception of San Salvador which was mixed. The coastal areas including Sonyo and an alliance centering on Bamba Lovata were Mpanzu in affiliation. Two of the major alliance clusters were under the nominal headship of women, D. Susanna de Nobrega in Lovata and D. Anna Affonso de Leâo in Wandu. Other prominent families were those of the da Sylvas in Sonyo and the Romano Leites and Agua Rosadas in the central districts. Several areas, which had earlier been relatively important, were showing a tendency toward less involvement in the affairs of the kingdom. Notable among these are Nsundi, straddling a major trade route between Bula and the Pool area; Mbata, to the east of San Salvador; and the chiefdoms to the far south in Ndembu.[126]

Although neither the exact succession of rulers between 1718 and 1763, nor the circumstances of their election and installation are clear, relative stability can be inferred from the fact that there were only three kings during the period.[127] Until 1759 the kingdom was generally at peace with its neighbors, the slave trade was prospering, and the constitution of Pedro IV apparently held. A survey of the kingdom provided by the Capuchin missionary Cherubino Da Savona in 1774 indicates regional groupings and power relationships which resemble those of 1718.[128] He names four "kingdoms," subdivided into numerous provinces, which compose the "empire" of Kongo. The four kingdoms, San Salvador, Nkondo, Bula, and Wandu, can be identified with the factional alliances composing the central heartland in the earlier period.[129]

This overview of the kingdom suggests not only strong continuities with the structures and alliances established by 1718, but also the importance for change of certain key institutions such as Christian

[126]*Ibid.*, 270–272.

[127]Jadin, "Savona," 349–352. They were D. Manuel II (1718–1730), D. Sebastião I (1730–?), and D. Garcia IV (?–1763).

[128]Jadin, "Savona," 379–385.

[129]Thornton, "Civil Wars," ch. 10.

titles, court position, and control of markets. The number of provinces increased. These are noted as being particularly strong and prosperous along the major trade routes: Nsundi, Mbata, and Zombo in the north, and Kina and Mbwila in the south.[130] Although the sizes of the provinces given by Savona are greatly inflated, it is clear that each major titleholder still enjoyed a larger than local following.[131] The boundaries of the kingdom come into focus when the Christian cult connections, court offices, and family names of the provincial leaders are used as indicators of participation. Although his lists, of court offices in particular, cannot be taken as complete, they are nonetheless suggestive. Four positions are mentioned, in connection with Mbamba Congo, Mpemba, Wembo and Lukunga. Three of the four were ruled by members of the Agua Rosada and/or Romano Leite families. At least two, Mpemba and Mbamba Congo, were linked by marriage. All had prominent Christian establishments. Lukunga, ruled by a duke with the surname Lollo, was the site of a mission characterized as being "the superior of the Kongo court."[132]

Several other inferences about the kingdom can be drawn from this survey. One is that good fortune in controlling trade could work either toward the growth of stronger states such as that of Zombo, or toward the division of older ones such as Sonyo, which lost control of Mugetto, near the mouth of the Mbridge River, during the period. It also demonstrates the usefulness of family ties in countering such breakaways. Mugetto achieved a separate identity, but at the same time the da Sylva family of Sonyo established themselves as rulers in Mossul, the leading growth area for the export trade in southern Kongo by that time. Many strong peripheral polities, such as Nsundi, Mbwila, or Kina, according to the survey, were still linked to the center by various means despite the fact that some were already outside the borders of the royal Christian cult and the Lusitized titleholding corporation.[133]

Both invasion and succession troubles plagued the kingdom from

[130]Jadin, "Savona," 382–383, 386.

[131]John Thornton, "Demography and History in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1550–1750," *Journal of African History*, XVIII, 4 (1977), 527, suggests a figure of 500,000 for the whole kingdom early in the century. Savona's estimates for the whole (including many peripheral) comes to about 6,000,000.

[132]Jadin, "Savona," 388.

[133]*Ibid.*, 382–386. Nsundi's ruler, a Grand Duke D. Alvaro Brandone, asked for catechists, although Savona classed it as almost pagan. Mbwela, a major southern entrepot, maintained its principal trade connections with Kongo. AHU, Angola, Caixa 40, Bishop's Letter, Enclosure, 4.

1759 to 1766. The Portuguese foundation of the *presidio* of Nkoje astride the southern trade route from Matamba to the north caused major disruptions. These were especially severe since they occurred in conjunction with a succession dispute. The queen of Wandu attacked San Salvador in support of D. Pedro V, who had been crowned in 1763. Despite this aid, he fled the ruined city in 1764 and held court until his death in the fortress of Inzundo in the Mpanzu stronghold of Mbamba Lovata.[134] His successor, D. Alvaro XI (1764–1778), was opposed in some quarters throughout his reign on the grounds that an Mpanzu, not an Nlaza should be on the throne.

Once Alvaro had rebuilt San Salvador in 1766 and trade returned to normal in the south,[135] the kingdom seems to have enjoyed a period of relative stability until 1778, when a combination of succession struggles, foreign invasions, drought,[136] and disruptions in international commerce led to several decades of intermittent warfare. Jóse I Agua Rosada, an Nlaza from Kibangu, was elected in 1778 after the death of Alvaro XI. He could not take possession of San Salvador and be crowned until 1781, when he was finally able to muster a sufficiently large army.[137] This succession crisis and the instability at the center which followed for at least the next fifteen years coincided with an Angolan military push to get control of the trade north of Ambriz. The Portuguese attempted to take over both the northern port of Cabinda and the southern one of Ambriz, and spent several seasons campaigning inland in the Ndembu region as well, in an effort to control key routes there.[138] These campaigns signaled the rising fortunes of Mossul in whose territory Ambriz was then located, and coincided with an influx of

[134]*Ibid.*, 352.

[135]A.H.U., Angola, Caixa 31; Instruction to Regent of Dande, 25 May 1767, Instruction to Captain Major of Nkoje, 25 May 1767. David Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola* (Oxford, 1966), 151.

[136]Jadin, "Dicomano," 332, notes that the years 1795–1798 were particularly dry in Angola.

[137]Silveira, *Missionário*, 24–28; Jadin, "Savona," 353.

[138]The best single source for these campaigns is the eyewitness, Silva Correa (*Historia*, II, *passim*). Another participant account of the Mossul campaign is Paulo Martins Pinheiro de Lacerda, "Notícia da Campanha, e paiz do Mosul," *Annaes Maritimos e Coloniaes*, VI, 4 (1846). There is abundant documentation for the attack on Cabinda. Some documents have been published in the *Arquivos das Colonias*, III, IV (Lisbon, 1917–1919). Manuscript resources include AHU, Angola, Caixas 37, 39, 40, and Bahia II: 567–571; as well as Archives Nationales, Paris, Marine, $B^4$267; Colonies, $C^6$24; and Archives de la Loire Atlantique, Nantes, Series C738.

missionaries whose presence was partly attributable to Angolan interest in Kongo at that time.

The problems of the period are reflected in the fact that during the eight-year mission of Father Castello da Vide (1780–1788) there were three kings.[139] Da Vide's reports make it clear that in addition to Mbamba Lovata in the west, opposition parties were strong in the northern sector of the kingdom, from Sumpi, formerly dependent on Bula, east to Pangu. The Kibangu stronghold of the Agua Rosada family, in alliance with Mbamba Congo and perhaps others in the old central Nlaza area, was apparently trying to establish itself as the only legitimate royal line. A measure of their success, at least in some quarters, is that the missionary Dicomano regarded the incumbent in 1795, Henrique I, as illegitimate and the future Garcia V of Kibangu, then "King of the Exterior," as legitimate.[140]

Times were troubled, but the basic institutions of the kingdom were operating much as they had in 1718. The titleholding elite maintained their connections with the royal court and cult, their level of literacy, and their general monopoly on imported goods and slaves. Nonetheless, many changes had occurred within this framework, particularly in the relative strengths of the domains, in their numbers, and in the relationships between dependents and vassals. Da Vide's observations make it clear that local government had devolved largely upon the titulars of important *banzas*. And, further, that the number of such *banzas* was relatively large, more than a dozen in the relatively restricted area visited by the missionary. Despite the signs of local autonomy, the marquis of the *banzas* were still tied to their superiors among the dukes, princes, and *infantes*, who, in turn, maintained strong ties to San Salvador.[141] The great families still maintained both their alliances and their prestige among the lesser branches of the artistocracy. Nobles could still afford the price of ruling and were still active in the slave trade.[142]

The early years of Garcia V (1803–1830) must have been ones of great difficulty for the kingdom. Turn of the century changes in the slave trade brought both a slump in exports and the withdrawal of first France and then England as major buyers in the northern broker ports. Exports recovered to their late eighteenth-century levels by

[139]Civezza, "O Congo," 395. The three kings were Jose I, Affonso V, and an unnamed one who was new in 1787.

[140]Brasio, "Dicomano," 20.

[141]Civezza, "O Congo," 322–323, 327, 331, 335.

[142]*Ibid.*, 387–388.

1820, but by then the system for exporting had changed considerably. New ports grew up, especially on the Zaire River and along the Atlantic coast south to Ambriz. They were organized by American merchants, particularly Brazilians, who relied very heavily on resident factors, largely recruited from Angola. Opportunities opened up for Bakongo entrepreneurs to forge new business and political alliances. Kongo syndrome began to spread out now from every convenient shipping point along the coast.

Although the exact connections are not clear, one may suggest some ways in which these changes affected the kingdom under Garcia. First, the levels of warfare between domains and the inability of San Salvador to control the situation are evident. Although da Vide earlier noted rivalry and warfare between competing nobles, Father Assisi in 1814 painted a picture, albeit more impressionistic and less detailed, of general war in the provinces.[143] And, of course, it was in 1820 that his successor, Father Bene, wondered out loud if there had ever been a strong Kongo kingdom. On the other hand, Captain Tuckey, ascending the Zaire in 1816, noted that the cap of office (*mpu*) for a local chief still came from the king.[144]

Garcia himself pursued a quite traditional foreign policy vis-à-vis Angola and Portugal, one congruent with the maintenance of his position as head of the Christian ancestor cult and its center. He sent a near relative into training as a priest, and successfully petitioned for priests, citing the Kongo royal Christian tradition to support his case.[145] His reign was a long one, and was probably more peaceful toward the end when the reorganization and recovery of the slave trade were completed.

There is evidence that the merger of lifestyles between town and country elite and masses was given a push in his reign. Even the position of slaves appears to have been merging with that of freeborn. Garcia reportedly had three hundred slaves in his employ, but had to pay them in cloth and palm wine to keep their services.[146] The wife of a chief near the Zaire was observed working in the fields alongside the slaves of the family.[147] Although Christianity as an

[143]Firenzi, "Relazione," 244.

[144]Captain J. K. Tuckey, R.N., *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire* (New York, 1818), 200.

[145]Bontinck, Notes Complementaries," 104. AHU, Angola, Caixa 62, Letters of Garcia, 1813–1814.

[146]Bene, "Relazione," 245.

[147]Tuckey, *Narrative*, 120.

initiation cult of the masses was still widespread, missionaries were appalled that there was not only no instruction given before baptism, but that people became hostile at the mere suggestion.[148] Christian marriage was resisted. The provincial Christian cult weakened as fewer resources were available to support it.

Garcia V was succeeded by André, about whose reign little is known because no missionaries visited in his time. He was never crowned despite the fact that there was a Mukongo priest resident during the early years of his reign. A native-born priest could not provide the gifts and regalia supplied by foreign priests acting on behalf of the patron Portuguese. André was followed by Henrique II, who continued the hegemony of the Agua Rosada family of Kibangu and who was an activist in both foreign and domestic policy. His reign was plagued in the early years by internal unrest, including a rebellion against him involving Mbamba, usually strongly in the royal camp, and supported by the community of those descended from slaves of the Church near San Salvador.[149]

Henrique appears to have been the last relatively strong king of an independent, politically relevant kingdom. His capital was strong and populous. His power apparently rested on his well-developed commercial and political relations with the northern Atlantic coast and Zaire ports.[150] However, while he enjoyed the support of the northern counties, he lost that of the equally important southwestern commercial area centered on Ambriz. Early in his reign Henrique had welcomed a Portuguese takeover at Ambriz. The titleholder at Ambriz was a rebel, he said, since he had not paid the required tribute for many years.[151] Tribute, even though nominal, was still expected as a sign of participation in the kingdom. Even Sonyo, independent for two centuries, paid tribute as late as the reign of Garcia V.[152]

The death of Henrique and the accession of his successor, Pedro V, marked another turning point in the political and economic milieu of Kongo. In the 1840s antislavery squadrons appeared off the coast. Beginning in the 1850s, the growing produce trade began to attract increasing numbers of European merchants, and the Portuguese grew increasingly agitated. Unable to compete economically

[148]Bene, "Relazione," 371.

[149]Brasio, *Angola*, I, 25–27.

[150]Cruz, "Relatório," 695.

[151]Reports of the war, including a copy of Henrique II's correspondence with the Angola government, can be found in the *Boletim Official de Angola*, 1855–1857.

[152]Bene, "Relazione," 370v.

or diplomatically with the other encroaching Europeans, they moved again to try and control the Kongo trade by military means. Before British naval pressure, Kongo resistance, and their own military overextension forced a pullback, the Portuguese succeeded in taking Ambriz (1855), opening up mining operations in the Kongo copper region of Bembe (1856), installing their favorite on the throne in San Salvador (1859–1860), and garrisoning the capital. The mines and garrison were gone by 1870, but Ambriz remained, nonetheless, a part of Angola. However, Mossul, between Ambriz and Luanda, kept its independence until 1888.[153]

Pedro V started his campaign for the throne at a disadvantage, since he was not the popular choice. D. Alvaro Ndongo had more support in the region and was probably the Kibangu candidate. Consequently Pedro decided to use the Portuguese to achieve the throne. His men reached Luanda first with the news of Henrique's death, claiming that Pedro was the legitimate successor.[154] He visited the Bembe mines and further pressed his claims. The Portuguese finally could not resist the opportunity and sent not only a priest to crown Pedro, but even regular army troops to help him take the capital from the 2,000 militia rallied by Alvaro to defend it.[155]

Pedro's tactics succeeded and he occupied the throne until his death in 1891. But by this time the Portuguese claimed sovereignty in Kongo and had the means to enforce it. The king's pro-Portuguese policies created hostility toward him and all those associated with him. This anger extended to his kinsman, the *assimilado* Kongo Prince Nicolas, whose death at the hands of a mob in Kinsembo, near Ambriz in 1860, created an international incident.[156] The opposition to Pedro was strongest in those areas hardest hit by the Portuguese invasions, Ambriz, Mbamba and Mossul. However, these areas were among those profiting most from the growth of cash crop exports.[157] It was the pull of the coastal districts away from San Salvador more than the Portuguese invasion itself which undermined the already fragile kingdom.[158] The old political leaders were

[153]Hélio Felgas, *História do Congo* (Carmona, Angola, 1958), 102.

[154]*Boletim Official de Angola*, 605 (1857), 6.

[155]Pelissier, *Guerres Grises*, 106–107.

[156]Bontinck, "Notes Complémentaires," 116–119; Pinto, *Le Portugal et Le Congo*, 59–60. For another view see Douglas Wheeler, "Nineteenth Century Protest in Angola: Prince Nicolas of Kongo (1830–1860)," *African Historical Studies*, I, 1 (1968), 40–58.

[157]Monteiro, *Angola*, I, 133–135.

[158]Phillips, "Lower Congo," 226–227; Jeannest, *Quatre Annees*, 36–37; Monteiro, *Angola*, I, 104–106.

becoming more and more closely tied to the new merchant establishments, now largely European-run. The Portuguese missionary António Barroso even found one of Pedro V's close relatives working for a French factory at Noqui on the Zaire.[159] The kingdom as an organized political and ritual force beyond the neighborhood of San Salvador weakened rapidly from the blows of Portuguese interference, European commercial expansion, and the end of the noble monopoly of resources.

The structure that has been described was not a rigid one. At least through the reign of Henrique II, the basic institutions and underlying rules of relationship did not change very much. Whether at the level of the kingdom or within individual domains, the greatest changes occurred in the degree and distribution of economic and spiritual power within the structures, rather than in the structures themselves. A strong chief, such as those in Mbwila or Sonyo, might combine wealth, personal leadership and ritual resources to centralize authority at his court, appoint subordinate titles, and command tribute and troops. His prestige and patronage assured the loyalty of subordinates.

For most leaders no monopoly of resources was available. Under these circumstances, structures moved in the direction of their more egalitarian components, with the king and leading titleholders confirming but not choosing dependent titleholders; leading alliances into battle rather than commanding armies into being; receiving ritual tribute rather than substantial economic support; and acting more as a liaison between leading elites than as their ruler. But as has been emphasized, movements between authoritarian and egalitarian poles were not historically unidirectional until very late. Furthermore, even in its most hierarchical forms, the Kongo political structure contained such strongly egalitarian elements as election, peer participation and conciliar government. However, these egalitarian modes also held to a hierarchical ideal. Small districts, born of war or trade, instituted governments in imitation of the royal court. Pedigree, age and wealth enjoyed precedence, both actual and theoretical. The model of plenty was the generous chief; personally flaunted wealth earned jealousy and was curbed by accusations of witchcraft.[160]

Throughout the eighteenth century the area of the kingdom, the general level of interchange within it, and its relations with peripheral

[159]Barosso, "Relatório," 308.
[160]Weeks, "Notes," 46, Monteiro, *Angola*, I, 195.

polities remained relatively stable. The kingdom's core—king, capital city, cult and court—maintained its appeal to the masses, its ritual preeminence among the aristocracy, and its focal role in organizing the titleholding corporation. The senior titleholders, bound by ties of family and cult, continued to have a prominent role in organizing military, judicial and ritual affairs, both through the king's court and on a regional basis. Aristocrats generally maintained their control over markets and caravan routes and thus could afford the price of investiture, whether with regalia obtained directly from Mbanza Kongo, through a senior titleholder, or locally invented.

In 1860 a Portuguese army secured the throne for Pedro V, but also undermined both his actual and ritual power bases, already threatened by changes in the export economy. At the same time the effectiveness of the kingdom as the communications network of the political elite was weakened by the reduction in the numbers of participants in the kingdom and in the power base of each member. Fewer and fewer neighborhoods could afford an invested chief at all. Rival cults to the Christian royal one flourished locally. Ordinary citizens joined the ranks of merchants and were able to acquire for themselves such formerly restricted commodities as trade cloth and literacy.

The reputation of the king as a great *nkisi* remained, but his ability to capitalize on this reputation beyond his own small district was virtually nil, because in most places he was without representation. The power associated with his office was used by hundreds of local big men—a bargaining chip in local power struggles. It was also used by the Portuguese who maintained the life of the kingdom in their own mythology and for their own purposes once they gained control of San Salvador. The kingdom became a useful memory. For many, Mbanza Kongo migrated to its mythic place at the center of Bakongo identity. The king remained as keeper of the national ancestral shrine of Ndo Fonso,[161] while his political powers were reduced to the level of permanent pretension.

[161]The shrine of Afonso I, object of the Christian ancestor cult.