1955

The history of the lower Congo River tribes of the Belgian Congo

Benner, Phyllis Louise

Boston University

http://hdl.handle.net/2144/7799

Boston University
BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE HISTORY OF THE LOWER CONGO RIVER TRIBES
OF THE BELGIAN CONGO

BY

PHYLLIS LOUISE BENNER
(A.B., Boston University, 1940)

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
1955
Approved
by

First Reader  Stanley P. Wransky...
PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION

Second Reader  William O. Brown
PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY
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INTRODUCTION

This will be an attempt to record the history of the tribes now located on the lower Congo River in the Belgian Congo.

Until recently the world knew little or nothing about the continent of Africa or of the peoples inhabiting it. The peculiar formation of the continent itself defied conquerors and would-be friends. Within a comparatively few years the geographical obstacles have been penetrated and a vast field of new discovery has been opened to the world. One of the last areas to be entered by the white man was the territory centered on or near the equator now known as the Belgian Congo.

When the first white man penetrated the western boundaries of Africa at the mouth of the Congo River, he found there a well developed state called the Kingdom of Kongo by the people living there within its boundaries. The people themselves took the name of the state and called themselves the Ba-Kongo. The language of this Kingdom was called Ki-Kongo. To this day no written history of this group, who inhabit what is known as the lower Congo (from Leopoldville west to the Atlantic Ocean), exists.

The purpose of recording this history is threefold.
1). Its primary use will be in the schools of this area, especially in those of the secondary level. The young people must come to know their country. A new nation is being built here, and nothing constructive can be done unless they understand and appreciate their heritage.

2). Aside from its use in secondary schools, this material will be of great use in the training of teachers of this land. More and more all leaders are coming to see that native leaders must be trained. Those who are training teachers are in need of a history so that these teachers, the leaders of the future, may become well versed in the story of their own people. 3). It seems probable that for some time to come much of the education in the Belgian Congo will be under the direction of foreigners. I myself went there to work knowing almost nothing about the country or its people. This history will be invaluable to these leaders, helping them to gain an understanding of the people.

Thus it is hoped that education on three levels will be aided: the secondary school, the normal schools and other centers training teachers, and the preparation of those members of the white race who will work with the native people.

In this history of the lower Congo tribes of the Belgian Congo, which tribes are known as the Bakongo tribes, I shall first, as an introduction to the subject, present
briefly what the present evidence shows must have been the process of tribal development in Africa. Since the Bakongo tribes are a part of the Bantu peoples, I shall pay particular attention to that group or groupings of people and how they were formed.

Two sources of material will be available for the rest of the study: the very meagre written records of Portuguese, Belgian, British and American origin; and the abundant but sometimes hard to interpret traditions, legends, landmarks and memories of the land and the people themselves. With the aid of these two sources I shall attempt to reconstruct what has happened to this country and people from the earliest times of the Kingdom of Kongo to the beginnings of the twentieth century, both in regard to their own native governments and culture, and also in regard to their relationships with the outside world and foreign peoples.
PART I

THE PREHISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 1

THE BANTU

The story of the formation of the Bantu peoples cannot be recorded without tracing, at least in outline, the growth, development, and expansion of many other peoples of Africa.

When and how the tribes and peoples now called Negroes first took possession of the continent of Africa is not known. One theory says that the Negroes came from central or southern Asia. Another says that they grew up in Africa itself. We have no way of knowing, at the present time, which theory is true, although most students of the subject tend to think that the theory of Asiatic origin is the most probable in the light of the facts known at this time.

Probably the first settlers of the central part of Africa were those tribes which were ancestors of the peoples called the Pygmies. They were lighter in color and slighter in build than the rest of the Negroes. Wherever they came from, be it Asia or Africa itself, they seem to have started to move into the area of the lake region north to Lake Chad not less than 50,000 years ago. They were hunters and fishermen, and probably remained in this area for a long stretch of
time. The Hottentots, Bushmen, and Pygmies of the equatorial forests are considered to be their descendants.

After a long lapse of time, other people began to move into this same area. (Some authorities go so far as to say that this migration began about 30,000 years ago.) They came from the south east and were the first real Negro of the type we know today. The newcomers were nomads, or semi-nomads, probably because they were migrating and could not settle down long enough to plant and raise crops.

They pushed the earlier comers out of his lands as they moved northward, and many of these dispossessed people fled into the swamps. As the newcomers settled down they became agriculturalists, and even developed an art and religion. The Sahara was not as yet a desert, and seems to have invited them to settle on its rich land. Thus they even reached the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. In these many years of searching for new homes they seem to have mingled with the Primitive Negro to form the ancient Egyptian tribes and the beginnings of the modern Negro tribes and peoples of Africa.

Thousands of years after the first migration of the first Negro type as we know it today, there came another migration. These people pushed out the remaining groups
of the primitive stock in their movement to the north and west. It was under the stress of these incoming aggressive tribes that the ancestors of the Pygmies were pushed into the Congo area, finding the dense forest lands there their best chance of escape from the incoming hordes. These new arrivals who finished pushing the original inhabitants out of their land developed agriculture and domesticated certain animals. They seem, also, to have invented the working of iron and the making of pottery. All this migration and mixtures of peoples took place before the time of the first Egyptian dynasty.

Thus we see three main types of Negro peoples in Africa: the primitive stock which is lighter and smaller than the others; the larger Negro, probably the predecessor of the Bantu people, although that group was not formed for some thousands of years after; and lastly, the tall Nilotic Negro who came in the last migration and pushed on into eastern Sudan.

When Egypt developed, she naturally attracted to her and her land the more energetic peoples of the south. There seems to have been a steady stream of Negroes passing up and down the Nile as traders and even as slaves while Egypt was strong and great.
By this time the Negroes had expanded right across Africa to the Atlantic and then curled backward in their push for land, only to meet Egyptian and Ethiopian influences as far away as Lake Chad. During this period there was much mingling of the tribes, although the tall Nilotic Negro seems to have mixed much more with the primitive stock than did the smaller Negro type. Both groups mixed to some extent with the Hamites and Semites they met in their wanderings.

Later the tide of migration was turned southward by pressure by the Arabs from the north, and from west and north Africa. Slowly but surely the tribes, which had come in first after the primitive peoples, began to push and be pushed southward. And as they went they pushed the primitive groups before them. It is estimated that these ancestors of the Bushmen and Hottentots arrived in South Africa over a thousand years B.C. Those tribes which were pushing and being pushed came gradually to feel themselves one people and grandly called themselves "The People - Bantu". They came to be more or less closely knit together, and developed one general language, with many related dialects. At first their movement was a slow one, but with the coming of the Moslems to the north their march became a steady one.
This movement of the Bantu cannot be ascribed to just one cause. The pressure was very great from the Civilization on the Nile River. Local kingdoms had grown up around Lake Chad and on the west coast of Africa. More especially the Yoruba-Benin culture on the west coast of Africa was expanding and seeking new territory. At the same time centers were developing to the southeast and lake region there. The tales of wealth and opportunity coming from there may have urged them on. For untold centuries the Congo River valley had beckoned men because of tales of fertility of the soil and of the lushness of the vegetation there. These tales may have had their influence upon these moving peoples.

Whatever the cause, and it was probably a combination of several reasons, the migration which started out as a slow and small one took on the proportions of almost a whole race migration.

The first movement may have been from east to west to the Gulf of Guinea, but the main and stronger movement came later and was eastward. The great tide seems to have skirted the dense forest of the equator and arrived at Lake Tanganyika. There the group split into two sections, one continuing down the east coast, the other turning westward to the Congo valley. The horde of invaders who chose the westward path into the valley
of the Congo River broke up again, this time into three groups. One swept northward into the Cameroons, a second moved southward to the southern Congo valley and to what is now known as Angola, and the third moved southward and settled with the Hottentots and Bushmen.

When this long migration began two or three thousand years ago, it was made up of many tribes who differed widely in their physical characteristics, customs, and languages. Their common march for many years welded them together into a strong group of tribes bound together by common customs and one basic language. As they moved along, conquering or driving out all peoples and tribes in their way, they themselves became united. Much of this unity remains today, a unity of culture and language, for they differ widely in their physical characteristics.

We are primarily interested in those Bantu tribes which turned westward and went into southern Congo valley and into Angola. As they came in and settled down on the land they found little or no protection in the land itself against the later comers in that same stream of migration which they themselves had started. There were no natural protecting barriers, once the initial barrier had been crossed. For hundreds of years those same pathways which they themselves had opened
continued open to those who followed them. And people and tribes poured in by the hundreds and thousands.

There was only one defense for these people who had come first in this long migration, and that was to build states as a defense against the later comers. Thus it was that states developed at the mouth of the Congo River, one northward of the Congo called the Anguika, the kingdom of the Balunda near the Kasai and Zambezi Rivers, the kingdom of Matama south in the land of the Hottentots, and the Kingdom of Bechuana in the present area of the Union of South Africa. These were all Bantu states built up in attempts at self protection.

These kingdoms had to fight for their very existence, and all of them perished for two main reasons: 1) Those outside made continuous war on the ruling states, and the main reason for this war was their desire for slaves. Slaves were one article of the systematic commerce of that area. 2) Then in the sixteenth century A.D. the highways of trade between Africa and the Mediterranean were cut off by the Moors. At the same time trade with Asia was closed to the Turks. The slave trade with the Europeans was the only commercial outlet for the traders, and this threw the kingdoms into the turmoil of internal war.
But one thing more was needed to sign the death warrants of the native kingdoms, and that was the partition of the continent by Europeans.

The background for this chapter was found in the following books:


CHAPTER 2
THE BAKONGO TRIBES

The history of the Bakongo is, until the late nineteenth century, the history of the Kingdom of Kong, whose capital is on Angola, at San Salvador.

As we have seen, when the first Bantus came into the valley of the Congo River some thousands of years ago, they found a land without natural defenses. As the thousands poured in, those who were there first found it necessary to set up tribal organizations in defense against those of the same migration who followed. At first these tribes were merely families organized on defensive lines, banded together for common protection. But gradually strong families, well versed in the art of self protection, gathered about them other groups. Thus, much as the feudal system grew up in Europe, developed a series of strongholds and strong groups.

We do not know when these groups of families began to assume the status of strong tribes and of states. It must have been some time ago, for when the first European arrived at the end of the fifteenth century they found a series of states well established across central Africa. One of the most important of these states was the Kingdom of Kongo. Its capital was Mbanz'a Kongo, now called San Salvador, in
Angola. The Kingdom itself consisted of six provinces - Sonyo, Mbanba, Mpemba, Naundi, Mpangu, and Mbata. These provinces were ruled by relatives of the king and were welded together, speaking one language, having well developed laws and courts, and paying taxes to the capital city. Trade routes were well laid out. Several levels of society had developed, each with its responsibilities and privileges.

In addition to these six provinces, which extended from the mouth of the Congo River inland about three hundred miles, to Stanley Pool, and which lay mainly to the south of the river for about 200 miles - altogether some 60,000 square miles - the King of Kongo exercised more or less control over much of the surrounding country. Kakongo, now Kabinda, and Loango both had to pay tribute to the kingdom. 1/ In addition it was a well established rule that anyone who wished to succeed to the kingship of Kakongo must have married a princess of the royal blood of Kongo, and the ruler of Loango must have married a princess of Kakongo. These two states probably added another 15,000 square miles to the area controlled by Kongo. 2/ Later on,


as the Portuguese entered into the country, these states separated off from San Salvador, but at the beginning they were directly controlled by the King. One province, Nsundi, was reserved for the prince who was the heir apparent.

We have begun in the middle of the story, because it is at this point, in 1482, that we begin to have written records of this area. When the Portuguese arrived, there were strong traditions existing, among the people, of what had happened in the years before. These traditions exist today among the leaders and chief families of the Bakongo.

Every tradition seems to agree that the first members of the kingdom came from the east and south east, from the Kwango and Kasai areas. When first they had pushed, and been pushed, into the central African depression, they sought and settled in the valleys of the Kasai and Kwango. As they came in they found the smaller, lighter colored people in possession of the land. At first they evidently tried to live along side of these people, treating them as subject peoples. As the hordes pressed in, however, the fight for free land became more intense. The first comers were pushed on beyond the Kwango, into the area of the Cristal Mountains and onto the ocean plains. They intermarried with the people they found throughout this area. Those

La Ligue du Souvenir Congolais, A Nos Heros Coloniaux Morts Pour La Civilisation, 1876-1938, Brussels, 1931, p. 22.
who had first settled in the Kasai valley were in turn
pushed on into the Kwango and then into the forbidding
mountainous areas. They came in greater hordes than the
first migration, and intermarried less. The aborigines
were pushed south or became the slave families living with
the Bantu conquerors.

All traditions agree that the Bakongo are descendants
of the same woman, Mpemba Nzinga. The daughters of this an-
cestress are the ancestors of the various Bakongo clans. The
descendant the most direct, by the woman, of the oldest
daughter, is the head of the tribe. The chiefs of the clans
are those who descend from a younger daughter. On the
interior of the clans this same rule works. Each one’s
position depends upon his relation to the common ancestress.
The close relatives are the nobles of the group. They have
certain responsibilities and certain privileges. The legit-
imate descendants of the common ancestress are the true
Bakongo. They are free men. The others are slaves. They
may have come into the clan because of conquest, or they may
have been part of the original people who occupies the land
before the coming of the bantu conquerors. They are subject
peoples. A free man may lose his freedom temporarily

2/ J. Van Wing, *Etudes Bakongo I - Histoire et Sociologie*,
Librairie Felix fils, Georges Van Campenhaut, Successeur,
Brussels, 1921, p. 23.
because of debts, combats, etc., but this loss is only temporary. The Bakongo is always born free by virtue of his relation to the common ancestress.

It is also a tradition among the people that the ruling families follow the trade of blacksmith. The Bantu peoples have a common feeling of awe for the blacksmith. He is either shunned entirely, or looked up to and revered. Until recent times the chiefs of the tribe and clans of the Bakongo seem to have maintained their trade as blacksmiths. Indeed, it is easy to imagine that one reason the families were able to establish themselves was because of their special knowledge. 1/

At first, evidently, the organization of the Bakongo tribes was very simple, simply an organized family, with each his own work. But as the family grew, and its dependants increased, more complex organization developed, too. When written history begins, the tribal organization was very complex, a living witness to the fact that the Bakongo had not come into prominence overnight.

Life was divided into two areas, each important, and each with its ruling man. The chief was king, judge, magistrate, and leader in battle. In brief, he was responsible for the affairs of this life.

But the Bakongo, in common with most of the Bantu people, were and are a profoundly religious people. They

1/ Ministère des Colonies, Colonial Course, Brussels, Belgium, July and August, 1949.
believed that God, Nzambi, had created the world and its inhabitants. Somehow or other he had become disinterested or perhaps even discouraged, and had gone off about other work. And left man, in fact, the whole of creation, to the mercy of the spirits which inhabit the world. Man had to depend upon himself for protection against these forces.

This realm of life was in charge of the magician, the nganga. Sometimes the same man was both chief and magician, but not often. Sometimes a woman held this position, but more often it was a man. The nganga was the priest of the community. Of later years this position has often deteriorated into black magic, in which the nganga uses his position and hold over the people for his own or his group's advancement. At the height of the kingdom this was not so. He dealt with the spirits of the universe. He depended, by means of certain formula, upon the help of the good ancestors.

The Bakongo were, almost without exception, ancestor worshippers. Their good ancestors could be depended upon to intervene with Nzambi himself. The nganga knew how to deal with the spirits of the bad ancestors and the evil spirits who lived below the earth. Until recently the nganga was an honest priest striving to understand the mysteries of life. In his hands were the ceremonies of life, of birth and death, of marriage and divorce, and, what was often more
important of initiation into the tribe itself.

The foundation of the actual kingdom of Kongo is shrouded in mystery. There is a common tradition, however, that it was founded by one Lukeni. A few accounts say that he came from a village on the lower Congo, a village called Musoko (Nsuku). 1/ Others say that he came from the east, from the region of Corimba in the Kwango. 2/ The Bakongo themselves say that the ruling family came from the Kwango, and conquered the previous inhabitants, the Ambundu.

Those who are particular about Lukeni's relationship to the common ancestress, Mpenda Nzinga, say that Lukeni was the grandson of a chief of the Balata, great grandson by his grandmother of the chief of the Lukeni clan of the Bakongo ancestress. 3/ More particularly, he was the son of a chief called Nimi Nzinga and of his wife Lukeni kua Nzana. The son became a warrior, and worked with his father in collecting toll for all who went through his area, up and down the river, or by the regular trade routes. One day

1/ Bentley, op. cit. p. 12.


Van Wing, op. cit., p. 17.

Lukeni was alone at his work. His aunt came along the river, and he demanded toll from her. She felt that as a member of the family she was exempt from such duty, but he insisted and finally killed her. She was pregnant, which made his condemnation even more severe. But matters were complicated when the warriors sided with Lukeni, against the tribe. The father was in a difficult position. Whether it was decided peaceably or with force we do not know, but Lukeni left the Kwango and moved west with his followers, there to conquer a new country.

The first group of this conquering tribe went on to the central plateau, the source of the Mpozo, Bridge, and the Lufu rivers. And there they set up their capital city, Mbanza (now known as San Salvador). The tribe was already called the Kongo tribe, so the city became Mbanza Kongo, the city of Kongo.

A second wave of this same tribe came as far as the Inkisi river. They stayed there and extended along the left bank of the Inkisi, and acknowledged the sovereignty of the first group, and became the province of Mbata. 1/

The first province became known as Mpemba, after the common ancestress. This was to remain the center of the Kongo kingdom, under the direct control of the leading chief, who became known as Ntotila.

1/ Van Wing, op. cit., p. 30.
After Lukeni other chiefs followed. The clans which inhabited the province of Mpemba developed so well that they began to lack for land. Before the cries of a hungry people the chief, or chieftess, Mpemba Nzinga, proposed that they scatter. One part of each tribe would try to stay at home, one part would go and conquer a new land. From each clan a chief with his families and possessions, separated from the whole clan. They assembled in families, and those related marched in the same direction led by a chief. The Mbamba tribes marched toward the ocean, and conquered the earlier comers who had intermarried with the primitive peoples of the land. The Nsongo clans went to the northwest, up to the mouth of the great river Nzadi a Kongo, and took over the land there. Their province later came to be known as the Sonyo. The Bansundi marched north to the Kongo river, and established their capital on the banks of the river. Only later did they cross to the north bank, to escape from the foreign invaders from the east, the Jagas. 1/ The Bampangu went toward the east, establishing their villages up the right bank of the Inkisi. 2/

Thus, substantially, were founded the six provinces which the Portuguese found when they came at the end of the

1/ Van Wing, op. cit., p. 31.
fifteenth century. All were bound to the central ruler and his city by bonds of family. It was not a kingdom as we understand the word today, but a federation of related families and clans. Both traditions and documents agree that the Mtotila, the chief of chiefs, was elected by the great chiefs. With the matrilineal system the successor comes from the side of the mother of the dead king, - a brother or a nephew. When the Portuguese records say "son" they mean member of the royal family, a child of the family. Any other sense, such as the king's own son, would be contrary to the fundamental law of the Bakongo.

The electors were principally chiefs of the great provinces. Later as these tribes became more and more independent, it was the neighboring chiefs of San Salvador who served in this capacity.

An election pure and simple was not known to the Bakongo. The candidate was designated before the death of his predecessor, by his predecessor himself or on the advice of his council of free men. He could be chosen from several royal families, or lines, although serious attempts were made at the beginning to choose the eldest of the senior line. Several junior lines, however, presented claims and often fought for the position.  

1/ By the time the Portuguese arrived the province of Naundi was the province of the heir

1/ Van Wing, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
This establishment of Lukeni and his line as kings of the Kongo federation could not have been too many years before the coming of the Portuguese in 1482. Upon their arrival the title given to the king, as recorded by the first arrivals, was Ntota, Ntinu a Lukeni. 1/

During this time the people lived in an agricultural culture, in which culture the use of iron and copper was well known. As has been said before, the chiefs were blacksmiths, and they guarded their knowledge zealously. The Cristal Mountains were in all probability forest lands, and well stocked with animal life. The people had an abundance of meat, bananas, seeds, roots, tubers, beans, peas, palm oil and the leaves of wild vegetables. They probably had goats and the small white chicken seen in all the villages today. There were no cattle because of the presence of the Tsetse fly and the devastating sleeping sickness.

They were well versed in basketry and made all sorts of cloth and mats on their native looms. This cloth was made out of grass and fiber, for while cotton was native to this country, it was such a poor variety that its use was never developed. Chairs, stools, cups, headrests, spoons were carved rather than cut, for the saw was not

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 15.
known. There was no potter's wheel, so all pottery was made by hand. There were beautiful and elaborate designs, and careful choice was made of colors and materials. A glaze was obtained by the application of charcoal, of vegetable dyes, or of a mixture of oils. When the vessel was cool the surface was polished. This work was done by the women.

Various musical instruments were known and developed, the drum or tom-tom, the friction drum, the drum proper, the xylophone, and wind and string instruments. 1/

There were well developed trade routes throughout the whole of the area, and probably reaching up into Arab territory. One main route reached from the capital city straight up to what is now called Stanley Pool and Léopoldville. The Bateke were perhaps even greater traders than the Bakongo, and they were going up and down this route continually, thus connecting the lower river Bakongo with the upper river and the east of Africa. At first the trade was in produce, but squares of grass cloth, the blue beads of Katanga, teeth of animals, and iron and copper in various shapes and sizes later came into use as the medium of exchange. 2/

In all, the Bakongo developed a well integrated cultural life before the disaster of explorations hit them. They were naturally suspicious of strangers, and had no

reason to distrust their own ancestor cult. They had
developed rigid moral values and rules in regard to chastity,
stealing, and killing within their own group. The rewards
and punishments were clearly set forth, and were in effect
in the six provinces, and even influenced the laws of the
vassal kingdoms. They honored greatly their tribal rulers
and elders, and their laws were quite intricate and very
complete in social implications. It was always the good of
the group as a whole which was sought, and little emphasis
was placed on individual rights. On the other hand, while
everyone had his duties and responsibilities toward the
tribe and group, each person also had his place and honors.
No one was ever without family or help, so close were the
bonds of family. Everyone was taken care of by the clan
or tribe.

When the Portuguese came with the new rules and rulers,
they were resisted by many. The King and some of the nobles
thought that he and his people would benefit from the new
alliance. They did not reckon with their people. And the
people, for the most part, resisted the disaster and decay
of their life and its rules in the coming of the foreigner
with its consequent breakdown of ordered life.
PART II
THE PORTUGUESE INFLUENCE

CHAPTER 3
THE ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE

The arrival of the Portuguese at the end of the fifteenth century upset all that was well established and normal in the life of the tribes of the lower Congo River. This influence reached as far inland as the regions of Stanley Pool, and even beyond.

The coming of Portuguese ships as far south as the Congo River was but a part of the expansion of the world in the latter part of the fifteenth century. Under the same impulse Columbus discovered America and other Portuguese discovered the ocean route to the far east. The world opened all of a sudden. Indeed, the fact that America was discovered at about the same time influenced very greatly the history of Africa. There was created a new demand for labor, and so Africa was condemned to a servitude from which it has not yet emerged.

In 1482 Diego Cao or Cam - which means bald - left Lisbon to explore the coasts of Africa. He ordered his
ships to sail "always toward south and towards the rising of the sun as far as would be possible". Some months later, going south and east over unchartered waters, his ships found themselves in brown turbulent waters, some miles from shore. The ships fled to the shore for safety, and before them was a great unknown land and river. (August 4, 1482) When Diego had landed, he immediately erected one of the Portuguese stone pillars, to show that this far, at least, had come the Portuguese ships. When he had inquired among the natives about the river, and its name, they told him it was the Nzadi. Nzadi means river. For them, as today, there was only one river, the River. The Portuguese understood Zaire, and it is thus that it appears in all their documents and on all their maps. The people also told him of the great king who lived inward to the east, several day's journey. So vivid was their account of this king and his power that Diego determined to send some of his men in to visit the king. He prevailed upon some of the natives to lead them, arranged for the meeting time, and sent them off.

1/ Albert François, Convo Terre d'Herolisme, Office de Publicité, Collection Nationale, Brussels, 1949, p. 3.
2/ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Bentley, op. cit., pp. 4-6.
When twice the length of the time arranged had lapsed, Diego sailed back to Lisbon, taking with him four nobles of the district as hostages. In 1484 he reached Lisbon and went with his news and hostages, to the court of King John II. On the long trip he had taught the four Kongo men Portuguese and so they themselves were able to talk with the king.

King John was pleased with their report, and recommisioned Diego that same year to return to the new river and explore it, taking back with him the four hostages and gifts to the King. He further sent instructions for the King of Kongo to follow his noble example and become Christian. 1/

Diego returned accordingly in 1485 with the end of exploring the river, not of exploring the coast of Africa. As soon as he sighted the great river he sent one of the nobles to the King of Kongo, asking him to send back his men. While he was waiting for them to return, he went farther inland, arriving at the Mpozo River and to the first cataracts beyond the Mpozo. 2/ There he put up another pillar, and, after looking at the terrible cataracts, retreated gracefully to the ocean. When he arrived there he found his men had returned and were waiting for him. They told him wonderful tales of the king and his capital

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 5.
2/ François, op. cit., p. 4.
and life. To the head of their escort he gave the gifts from King John, and told them to tell the king that he was coming in to visit him. While they went in and delivered the messages and gifts, Diego himself went farther down the coast of Africa to Cape Cross, 22° 50'. 1

After he returned from this short side trip, Diego himself and his men went to Mbans'a Kongo to visit Nzinga Nkuwa (Nzinya a Kuvu, as he himself reported it.) He told the king all about the King of Portugal, his greatness, his power, his life and capital, and his religion. 3 The king was most impressed by all this, and interested in becoming a Christian. 4 When Diego Cam left, the king asked that Nsaku (Zako, Portuguese writing), one of the first four hostages, be taken back to Lisbon to ask for representatives of the Christian church as missionaries to the Kingdom of Kongo. 5 Nzinga Nkuwu

1/ François, op. cit., p. 4.
2/ Ibid., p. 4.
3/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 6.
4/ François, op. cit., p. 5.
   Bentley, op. cit., p. 6.
5/ Ibid., p. 6.
   François, op. cit., p. 5.
also sent to King John a gift of ivory, nuts, and palm fiber cloth. A number of young men of the kingdom accompanied Diego and Nsaku to be instructed in the holy faith. Before Diego went he left a priest from his own expedition to instruct the people.

The king of Portugal listened to the requests brought by Diego and the native representatives, and set about answering them. He confided the education of Nsaku and the young men from Kongo to the church. Several religious orders began to make plans to evangelize the Kongo. The first to arrive were the Franciscans. This expedition was under the direction of Ruy de Sousa. They were well received at Sonyo (which they renamed San Antonio). The native governor of the district was an uncle of the king of Kongo. He accepted Christianity and was baptized

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 6.
2/ François, op. cit., p. 5.
3/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 16.

by the missionaries (April 3, 1491). 1/ A rough church containing three altars was built. 2/ And then the expedition moved on toward the capital of the Kingdom.

Full details of the great day can be found in the old Portuguese records of the settling of Angola. 3/ The road, or path, over which they had to travel was widened, by orders of the king, for one hundred and fifty miles. The nobles of the kingdom came out to meet them. When they had made the long awaited trip they were received by the king himself in the great square.

Cavazzi, to whom we indebted for much of our knowledge of these and other events tells in detail of the reception by the king of these missionaries sent out by the king of Portugal. The king was seated on a throne, or perhaps it was a raised platform, "as is the ancient custom". 4/

It was evidently a very gracious reception, the reception by the king of the priests. Mass was performed there, and the natives demanded an explanation. The king was greatly impressed by all this, and decided to build a church "for the reception of these holy men and utensils". 5/

In a few months the Church of the Holy Cross was consecrated

1/ La Ligue du Souvenir Congolais, op. cit., p. 27.
2/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 16.
3/ Ibid., p. 16.
4/ Ibid., p. 17.
5/ Ibid., p. 17.
at Mbanz'a Kongo. And shortly after that the King and Queen were baptised. They took the names of John and Leonora, the names of the King and Queen of Portugal.  

With the taking of the names of the royalty of Portugal, other Portuguese names came into Kongo, too. The provinces became duchies and their chief's dukes. There were counts and counties and Marquises and Marquisats, too. At this time the heir to the throne, Mbemba Nzinga, governor of Nsundi, was fighting the Bateke who had revolted. The Bateke were evidently members not of the original kingdom, but people who had been subjugated later. The Portuguese reported Mbemba Nzinga as being the eldest son of the king. The native Bakongo insist that the Portuguese must have understood the word "mwana". The same word is used for a man's own children or the children of his sister. In any case, he is more responsible for the children of his sisters than for his own, for it is the maternal uncle in each family who assumes what European society would call paternal responsibilities. Under no conditions could the children of the king have succeeded to his position. That was reserved for the children of the king's mother's family.

In any event, the heir to the throne, called by the

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 18.

de Mello, op. cit., p. 6
king his eldest "mwana", in all probability his eldest nephew, was governor of Naundi. He was having trouble subduing the revolters, and so the newly baptised king, with a banner emblazoned with the cross, went to the aid of the soldiers. The Portuguese went with him, and altogether, they subdued the rebellious Bateke. 1/

Mbemba Nzinga was baptised, under the name of Alphonso. 2/ He became an ardent defender of the Christian faith and church. 3/ People today still know his name. When the first protestant missionaries arrived after Stanley had been through, they found the name everywhere. Everywhere they extolled his virtues and zeal for Christianity. 4/

While Mbemba was governor of Naundi, his brother or cousin, for "mpangi" means either or both, was governor of Mpangu, south of Naundi, and less important. 5/ This brother or cousin was Mpanzu a Nzinga. 6/ For the rest

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 19.
2/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 19.
5/ Ibid., p. 20.
Cuvelier, op. cit., p. 896.
of his life he seems to have opposed the new faith and his relative. 1/

Whether he opposed the Portuguese because of his senior being in favor of them, or whether he opposed them because the new faith was against men having but one wife, 2/ or for some other reason, he became the head of the conservative party, the defender of the ancestor cult, the one in favor of the old and honored tried way of living. He was suspicious of these newcomers and their religion, and gathered quite a group about him. He was successful enough so that Nzinga Nkuwu renounced his faith and even banished his heir, Mbemba Nzinga. 3/

Mbemba seems to have been faithful to the new faith, in spite of the defection of the king. During this period of his banishment the priests were ill treated, and the old seems to have returned in full force. Indeed, the immediate environment of Mbanz’a Kongo seems to have been pretty well stirred up over the arrival of these strange white men. They were suspicious of their purposes. The Christian chief of Stonyo came to the rescue of the situation. He persuaded the weak and vacillating King Nzinga to enquire

1/ Cuvelier, op. cit., p. 896.
Bentley, op. cit., p. 20.
2/ Ibid., p. 20.
3/ Ibid., p. 20.
more carefully into the charge of treason which Mpanzu had brought against Mbemba. After all, Mbemba had shown his loyalty for the king and his people before. He was shown to be a wise governor. He should not be banished on a trumped up charge. The charges were found to be false and Mbemba was restored to the governorship of Nsundi. 1/

Mbemba set about to Christianize his area. The most outstanding thing which he did was to forbid the fetishes. The people looked upon these fetishes as protection against evil spirits, both those of their ancestors and of other evil spirits peopling the world. When this insurance, so to speak, was forbidden, they appealed to the king against Mbemba. Mbemba was recalled from his post to the capital, but he refused to go. 2/ Shortly after this the king died (about 1505). 3/ The death was kept secret by the Queen and the chief of Sonyo until Mbemba could arrive at the capital and take the throne. 4/ Immediately Mpanzu contested his position and right. Mpanzu gathered a large force of men and attacked Mbemba. Mbemba, with the great chiefs of Nsundi, won a decisive victory against Mpanzu. 5/ The Portuguese fought along with

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 20. 4/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 21.
3/ Cuvelier, op. cit., p. 897.
native chiefs, thus establishing their right to advise and even force the king to do things according to their way. The fighting lasted for several days, and Mpanzu and his men were finally driven into the swamps north of Mbanza Kongo. Mpanzu had planned to drive forces of Mbemba into the swamp, and, in keeping with that plan, he buried stakes there to hamper their progress and even kill them. He himself died in the trap which he had set for his opponent. 1

Thus the immediate leaders who opposed Christianity and the Portuguese were removed, and a clear path was laid for the new. But the threat of revolt still lingered among the people who had seen the new comers, and were afraid of them. They might have risen up then and insisted on their way if the powerful governor of the province of Mbata, the most powerful chief after the new king (who now had the king's province of Mpemba), had not supported the royal authority.

Mbemba took the name of Alphonso at his baptism in 1491, when the old king, his predecessor, was baptized. It is as Alphonso that he is known in all the Portuguese records. Osorio and other Portuguese writers tell us much about his rule and country. 2 He was evidently a zealous

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 22.
2/ Ibid., p. 23.

Christian, being utterly convinced of the truth of his new position, and trying in every way he knew to be faithful to it. Of the other kings who later professed to be Christian, we have tales of their failings, especially morally.  

Mbemba and his predecessor, Nzinga Nkuwa, evidently had very high hopes of their alliance with Portugal and the Portuguese. Ever since the early Bantu left the north and the influence of Egypt and the Moslems to come south, they had been thrown more or less upon their own ingenuity, without any stimulation from other peoples and tribes. The Portuguese brought new knowledge, they could read and write, at least those in the religious orders could, and this the Kongo rulers wanted for themselves and for their people.

Nzinga Nkuwa did not stick by his first decision. We do not know if he was quickly disillusioned by the Portuguese themselves, or if he shifted position because of pressure from his own people.

Mbemba on the other hand stood firm by the first desire for alliance with the Portuguese. He seems to have had unusual qualities of intelligence and understanding. His letters to Lisbon were well composed and those of an educated and proud man. Later he came to see that the advantages he wanted for his country would not result from Portuguese rule, and then he tried his best to save what he

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 23.

could of the situation. 1/

He tried his best to make sense of the European avarice. The Bakongo were traders, but not to the exclusion of every other value. He had accepted their demand for slaves thinking that by slaves they meant domestic slavery as common in the Kongo Kingdom. When finally it dawned upon him that the European slave trade was something far different, he regretted his acceptance greatly, and did what he could to save his people and country, but he was not successful.

When the Portuguese first came they made many and wonderful promises, which they rarely fulfilled. He put forward all his strength and energy to try to hold the Portuguese to their promises, but he had been fooled by those whom he trusted. Later he even appealed to the Pope in Rome for help, to exclude the Portuguese slave traders. But nothing was done.

He put much of his faith in missionaries, and sent for them to come and teach him and his people. And he sent many of the Kongo people to Portugal to be trained. 2/ But even this did not work very well. The most famous of those whom he sent to Portugal were two young men of his own family, Henrique and Rodrigue. Henrique became a bishop later. The incomplete records of the time indicate that he was born in the present territory of the Bas-Congo, at

1/ Ibid., p. 49. 2/ Ibid., p. 50.
Mbanz'a Mavundi, in 1495. This date is based upon a brief of Pope Leo X, of May 22, 1518, when he said that at that time Henrique was twenty three years old. 1/

From many authorities we have the information that the king built monasteries and churches everywhere. 2/ He himself learned Portuguese and studied Portuguese law. He seems to have been a great reader and well versed in the scriptures of the Catholic Church. One of his greatest attempts was the establishment of public schools throughout his domain. As soon as possible these were put into the hands of trained natives. In 1526 he could write to the king of Portugal, "Do not send any more school masters. There are many in the country." 3/

Unfortunately, for the high hopes of the king and his religious advisors, the Franciscans were not the only new comers to the Kingdom of Kongo. Almost from the first traders arrived. According to the correspondence of the king himself they cooperated very little with his attempts at civilizing his people. There seem to have been around seventy traders in Kongo during this time. And others south in the area of Angola. The leading commodity of the time was slaves, and the traders immediately began terrifying

1/ Cuvelier, op. cit., p. 898.
2/ Ibid., p. 898; Bentley, op. cit., p. 23; de Bouveignes, op. cit., p. 37.
the countryside in their attempts to obtain slaves.

Evidently, backed as they were by the Portuguese flag, the traders soon got out of hand. In an attempt to save his own people from this disaster, Mbemba opened all roads to the traders, that they might obtain their slaves from farther inland, outside his own domain. All native traditions say that these traders reached the Pool in their search for slaves, although at least one Catholic authority of the times insists that no white man saw the Pool at this time. 1/ Certainly the slavers knew this area, for they established their slave posts everywhere.

This attempt by Mbemba to save his people was without effect. Soon the whole area up and down the great river was prey to slavers. What saved many was the Cristal Mountains and the cataracts.

By 1536 the king was having trouble with the outside tribes, too, who were making raids upon the kingdom from the north and east. These people were called the Anzika. In that year Manuel Pacheco wrote, "For the things of war, the King sent me several times with troops against the unfaithful who make many wars upon this kingdom." 2/

Two canons of St. John the Evangelist, chaplains in the army, were taken and eaten by cannibals. It seems

1/ Ibid., p. 898.
2/ Ibid., p. 899.
quite possible that Manuel Pacheco, who was a former explorer in Angola, knew at least in part, the banks of the river above Matadi. 1/

Mbemba, the great king, even now called that by the Bakongo people, died somewhere about 1543. With his death the strong hold on all parts of the kingdom weakened. He himself maintained his authority and grasp of the situation against the encroachments of the Portuguese, both the religious leaders and the traders.

1/ Ibid., p. 399.
CHAPTER 4

THE DECLINE OF THE KONGO KINGDOM

Nkanga Mbemba, known as Pedro I in the Portuguese records, was the successor of Mbemba. He seems to have tried to follow in his uncle's footsteps. Even so, during his reign, the central power of the kingdom declined, and the outlying provinces and tribes were more inclined to go their own way.

During this time the Bishop of San Tome had the Kingdom added to his diocese. When the bishop died, Nkanga Mbemba asked to have a native bishop succeed to this position. Henrique, one of the young men educated in Portugal, was chosen. He had been partially educated in Rome itself, and had had experience as a priest in Portugal. He died shortly after landing in Congo, on his way into the country. The experiment does not seem to have been repeated.

Nkanga Mbemba was succeeded by his brother (or he may have been only his cousin) Mpudi Nzinga, known to the Portuguese as Francisco. He, in turn, was succeeded in quick order by Nkumbi Mpudi a Nzinga, known as Diego I. He seems to have been a man of great energy, and a warrior. The latter he needed to be, for there was almost continual fighting from the north and east at this time. In 1548

Bentley, op. cit., p. 25.
the Jesuits arrived to help in the work of evangelizing the Kongo Kingdom. From this time on the door was wide open to hundreds of missionaries. They settled up and down the great river, especially in the estuary district.

Nkumbi Mpudi a Nzinga seems to have had a weakness for fine clothes and furniture. He dressed as a Portuguese and tried to copy other Portuguese customs. 1/ The ruling group was slowly succumbing to the will of the foreigners. There grew up at Mbanza Kongo, now called San Salvador in recognition of the rising supremacy of the Portuguese, all the outward forms borrowed from the Portuguese court. Portuguese was the official court language. The power of the kingdom was fast diminishing, and, in its weakened form, the kingdom was becoming but a weak vassal of Portugal.

After the death of Henrique another bishop arrived in Kongo, this time a Portuguese. He had a great deal of trouble with the priests and the friars. Their morals scandalized him, and he set forth to correct them. Some were sent to San Tomé, others returned to Portugal. Pigafetta quotes Lopez as saying, "so that, instead of the Christian doctrine growing, it rather diminished, and this from the fault of those who taught it." 2/

1/ Ibid., p. 25.
At the death of Nkumbi Mpudi a Nzinga there was a scramble for the throne. Three Princes claimed it. Each had his own party, but things became twisted about very soon, and it became an out and out fight against the Portuguese. One of the claimants was killed at the very first. One of the two left was taken over as a tool of the Portuguese. He was killed by the people's party. The third one, as representing the people's party, was killed by the Portuguese. At this the people rose up and massacred all the Portuguese in the capital, except the priests. 1/ Finally Mpudi a Nzinga (known as Henrique in the Portuguese records), who was said to be a cousin of the king Nkumbi, was made king.

Mpudi Nzinga had to leave almost immediately for the regions of Stanley Pool, to fight the invaders. He was defeated, and returned home to try to appease his country and set things in running order again. In 1570 the Dominicans arrived, to join their forces with those other orders already working in Congo.

When Mpudi Nzinga died, the ancient line died with him. He was succeeded by a member of a junior line (Lukeni lua Mumbba), Nimi na Mpangu Lukeni lua Mumbba, called Alvaro I by the Portuguese. 2/ He made things right with the Portuguese, and they moved in again. The people had gained nothing by revolting, only the extinction of

their royal line.

Soon after this the bishop died, and things went wrong again. The Portuguese seem to have tried to rule with and upper hand, and the nobles of Mongo saw no reason for this, and went their own way for awhile. They showed how shallow had been their understanding and acceptance of Christianity by what followed. Among other things they reverted to polygamy. 1/ During the first part of the rule of Nimi na Mpangau (the first one to bear that name for there were three others to follow), there was an attack on the eastern frontiers of the country by the Jagas (or Ayaka). Whether or not they were the Bayaka tribes of today we do not know. They were a fierce cannibal tribe which raided the whole country. The defenses of the kingdom had been weakened by the attacks from the north. The slavers had wreaked further havoc. The villages were pillaged, their food was all eaten or destroyed, and many hundreds were enslaved in this invasion. The king himself fled to one of the islands of the lower river with a number of followers. The whole population of the country was decimated by hunger and pestilence. 2/

1/ Ibid., p. 28.
2/ Ibid., p. 29.

de Bouveignes, op. cit., p. 51.
The Mbata and Mpangu tribes were pushed back by the invaders. The province of Mpemba was ravaged, and many hid on the other side of the Congo River. The Basundí fled across the river, too, and for this reason suffered less than the other tribes. When finally the Jagas settled in the middle and upper Kwango, some groups established themselves in the southeast of the province Mbata. The Mpangu tribes crossed the Inkisi River at this time, and the Bambata were pushed north.

The internal wars and fights which resulted from this pushing were tremendous. The clear cut boundaries between the provinces became blurred and almost lost in some places. Gradually each family clan became a law unto itself, vaguely recognizing ties with Mbanza Kongo, but actually submitting to no higher authority.

Those who were left were finally driven, by the fear of famine, to begin the cultivation of their lands again. Many hundreds of those left died of famine. The locusts came and destroyed the young crops. As a result of all this the power of the Portuguese increased. The people came by the hundreds and sold themselves to the Portuguese so that they might eat. The Portuguese bought all they could house or ship. And the country was theirs.

1/ Van Wing, op. cit., p. 12, 92-93.
In dire emergency Captain Govea came to help them. The capital was restored. A great wall was built around the city, part of which remains today. 1/ This wall was fifteen to twenty feet high, and as much as three feet thick. Govea heard something about gold mines and reported it to Lisbon. Mining experts were sent out by the King of Portugal. The King, Nimi na Mpangu, on the advice of his father confessor, Barbute, sent them on a wild goose chase, and nothing was found. 2/

The whole country of the kingdom was ruined. The traders could not make the barest living. Most of the priests had left. Only in the capital city did things improve.

In Portugal things were difficult, too. The inquisition had arrived. The Jews who had financed most of the African enterprises had been expelled. In 1580 the ruling house of Aviz became extinct. Philip II of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire took over Portugal by devious methods. Nimi na Mpangu wrote to Philip asking for missionaries, promising that if they were sent he would disclose the position of the gold mines. The ship was wrecked, and the casket enclosing the letter was washed ashore and delivered at Madrid.

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 30.
2/ Ibid., p. 31.
Nimi na Mpangu became impatient, and sent Lopez, one of the historians of the time, to be his messenger. Lopez waited eight months for a leaky boat of one hundred tons, which landed him at Granada, the West Indies. There he waited eighteen months to get a boat to Spain. 1/

Nimi na Mpangu sent yet another message by one of his own people, known only by the name of Antonio. He set sail with a Portuguese accompanying him. The ship was wrecked on the English coast and Antonio was drowned. The Portuguese escaped and reached Spain, to find Lopez just arriving.

Philip sent Lopez to the Pope. The Pope was interested, but thought it was the work of Philip. 2/

In December 1584 three Spanish Carmes, sent by Philip II, arrived at Mbanz'a Kongo. They were invited by the governor of Mbata to visit his province. Crowds of people ran to meet and welcome them. One of the great chiefs of the area, Kondi dia Nlaza, walked one hundred and fifty miles, although he was lame, to meet and talk with these new arrivals. A catechist went back with him to unstrut him and his people in the Christian religion. 3/ The chief was later baptised when he went to Mbanz'a Kongo to pay his taxes.

1/ Ibid., p. 32.
2/ Ibid., p. 33.
Schools were set up everywhere, and the natives sought ways in which to learn. The means of education seems to have been very limited, however, for each new group of missionaries and travelers reported on the extent of ignorance and lack of practice of Christian laws. 1/

In 1574 Nima na Mpangu the first died, and was succeeded by his nephew who bore the same name (he was known in Portuguese records as Alvaro II). He also sent a request for more missionaries, and many more were sent out. Slowly the work revived. 2/

This second king of the junior line had been governor of Nsundi. We can deduce that much of the ruling was now in the hands of the Portuguese, for the only records we have of his work are in the matters of the church. He requested that his capital be erected as a bishopric, and this request was granted in 1596. In 1624 the fourth bishop died, and from then on the bishops lived in Loanda. After the erection of the diocese, seven parishes were established - Mbata, Mpangu, Nsundi, Mpemba, Soyo, Mbamba, and Mutemo. There were about twenty priests in them, among whom were native priests. 3/

1/ Ibid., p. 900.
2/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 34.
3/ Cuvelier, op. cit., p. 901.

de Bourgeignes, op. cit., p. 53-56.
CHAPTER 5

THE DUTCH AND THE PORTUGUESE

By this time - 1600 - the Portuguese exercised a somewhat doubtful rule over the Kongo Kingdom. At first their rule had been accepted, but, as the years went by, the inner excesses of the Portuguese rule and rulers and the weakening of Portugal itself when it was involved with the affairs of Spain and the usurpation of the Portuguese throne by Spain combined to weaken the Portuguese hold in Kongo.

The weakening of the Portuguese power left the way open for the native rulers to assume more power. The equilibrium which had been reached before the arrival of the Portuguese in 1482 had been upset by their intervention. If the kingdom were ever to reach a state of peace and self rule under its own power many personal quarrels must be settled. The people had forgotten how to rule themselves, and only a great hate and fear was the result of the years of Portuguese rule.

When Nimi na Mpangu (the second) died in 1614 he was succeeded by the third of that name, called Bernardo by the Portuguese. But there were quarrels within the country and even among the ruling families over his succession, and in less than a year he was killed, and succeeded by the fourth
to carry the name Nimi na Mpangu (known as Alvaro III to the Portuguese). 1/

The presence of the priests during this time seems to have led to a certain amelioration of the situation. All this time embassies were being sent to ask for more missionaries. One of these priests, Bra Correa, worked in the province of Nsundi. He reports, among other things, of a visit to the district of Msanga, north of the Congo River. His interpreter was the brother of the king and later became governor of the province of Mpemba. Bra Correa seems to have done much to pacify the country, and, in his zeal, became an important representative of the Catholic Church and president of the royal council. 2/

The rule of this fourth Nimi na Mpangu was in no way a peaceful reign, for there were continual revolts. In the first year of his rule, the governor of Nsundi, Alvaro Alfonso, either the uncle or the cousin of the king, revolted. Nimi na Mpangu was himself from Nsundi, and he tried personal politics in an attempt to bring peace. But he did not succeed. Bra Correa went into the territory, and reestablished order, which lasted only a very short time. Finally the king resorted to war, and the governor was killed in battle. 3/

Several religious orders sent teachers and preachers

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 31.
2/ Cuvelier, op. cit., p. 902.
3/ Ibid., p. 902.
during the rule of Nimi na Mpangu, upon his request. Among them were Jesuits and Capuchins. It was also necessary for Pope Paul V to set up some regulations for Congo missionaries, for they were very numerous at this time, and there was a great deal of friction among them.  

In 1622 a younger line succeeded to the throne of the Kingdom, a line called Ntumba Mfemba. Mkanga, son of Mbika, was the first representative of this line, and he was known as Pedro Alfonso II to the Portuguese. His reign was only three years in length and was an extremely troubled one. This time there were revolts in the province of Mbata, and the governor and many of his followers were killed in August of 1622.  

During all this time the Portuguese merchants were travelling over the country, slave trading in rich caravans. The life of the people became, in many areas, one of continual fear. After working and reworking the country for some years, these caravans ventured beyond the confines of the Kingdom of Congo. This move was urged by the king himself, and his governors, in an attempt to save their people. However, these merchants made the mistake of going over into the Kingdom

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 37.

2/ Cuvelier, op. cit., p. 902.
of Mukoko, a powerful kingdom to the north east. And there they were captured, plundered, and held prisoners. 1/

Nkanga thought at first of making war, after he had been pushed by the Portuguese, but the Congo River was a sufficient barrier against this. And, as an after thought, they realized that war would bring about the immediate death of the prisoners. A friar was sent to ransom them, but he died on the way. In the meantime, famine and pestilence arrived in the kingdom of Mukoko. This was attributed to the presence and imprisonment of the Portuguese. And so they were sent back to Mbanz'a Kongo, with payment for their losses. 2/

When Nkanga died in 1624 his successor was Mbemba Nzinga, known as Garcia I to the Portuguese. Mbemba was attacked by the governor of Nsundi and he fled to the province of Sono. The governor of Nsundi had a certain Ntumba Mbemba (known in Portuguese records as Ambrosia) elected king in 1626.

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 38.
Guvelier, op. cit., p. 903.

2/ Ibid., p. 902.
Bentley, op. cit., p. 32.
During this time they were thinking of penetrating the upper Nile by way of the Congo River. When Rome asked the advice of the Jesuits in San Salvador, it was told that it would be impossible, because of the Jagas. 1/

In 1631 Ntumba died and was succeeded by another man by the same name, known as Alvaro IV. He died in 1636, and was followed by two men who were so much Portuguese figure-heads that their native names are not even remembered. They were called Alvaro Vth and VIth in Portuguese records. 2/

The former was killed within six months, and the latter succeeded. There was trouble within the royal family, as there often had been. What the source of the trouble was is not known, but the king attacked his cousin or brother Kimbaku, Nkanga ne Lukeni, known as Garcia II to the Portuguese. The nobles who had sided with Kimbaku succeeded in defeating Alvaro, but they evidently lacked the full support of the people, for they allowed him to continue as king. The trouble between them was not over, however, and soon, in 1641, Alvaro raised another army and attacked Kimbaku and his followers again. This time Alvaro was killed. 3/

1/ Cuveller, op. cit., p. 903.
2/ Ibid., p. 903.
3/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 32.
Then Kimbaku, Nkanga na Lukeni, became king of what
was left of the Kongo Kingdom.

In August 1641 the Dutch, who were engaged in their
long war with Spain and thus with its vassal Portugal,
descended upon the coast of Angola. With their fleet of
twenty ships and their force of three thousand soldiers,
they drove the Portuguese inland. The Dutch, however, did
not extend their authority beyond the coast, and had very
little to do with the Kongo Kingdom. 1/

A Dutch embassy visited Mbanza Kongo in 1642, 2/ but
aside from that they did not have many contacts with the
kingdom and its people. They were too busy maintaining
themselves against the country itself and the Portuguese
defenders. They are reported to have lost one thousand
men by fever alone, including their commander Van de Does. 3/

The arrival of the Dutch gave the native rulers the
chance they had been waiting for, and they revolted. The
Portuguese managed with only a few remaining native
soldiers to keep the Dutch from expanding. 4/

1/ de Mello, op. cit., p. 8.
2/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 32-33.
3/ Ibid., p. 35.
4/ de Mello, op. cit., p. 9.
But, while the Portuguese kept the Dutch in check, they lost all control of the Kongo Kingdom. The missionaries then in the area were imprisoned and, from their accounts, badly used. All that was new and Portuguese went out, and all that was old and honored came back in again. As is quite natural, the Portuguese records read that heathenism was rampant again. What really happened we do not know in detail, but it is very evident that there was a successful revolt against the white Portuguese rule and customs. 1/

Before the Dutch were driven out, (in 1648), the Capucin missionaries began what might be called the second period of evangelization in Congo. A group of twelve arrived in May 1645. They brought a crown from the Pope to the King of Kongo, with instructions that the Capucins alone had the right to crown the kings of Kongo. In 1648 another group arrived. They were given lands for their convents and churches, and slaves to help them with their work. 2/

In 1648 rescue came to the Portuguese from Brazil

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 33.
2/ Ibid., p. 32.

Cuvelier, op. cit., p. 904.
in the form of fifteen ships and nine hundred men under the leadership of Salvador Correia de Sa e Benevides. On the fifteenth of August, 1648, Loanda was retaken by the Portuguese. After the Dutch were driven out there began a long fight with the native tribes, which fight was not finished for some years. 1/

In 1660 Kimbaku died. With him died the ancient ruling clan, or at least he is the last member of that clan to head up the kingdom. A period of anarchy set in which finally split the kingdom wide open and left it and its people at the mercy of the Portuguese. 2/

The Nlaza clan took over the rule of the kingdom, or at least tried to. The first king elected was Ne Nlaza, known as Antonio I, and he tried to begin his rule in 1663. At least one reporter speaks of him as the son of Kimbaku, and says that he was no better than his father. 3/

He had this in common with his predecessors, that he

1/ de Mello, op. cit., p. 9.
3/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 33.
was against the Portuguese and their rule. He is reported by them to have undertaken the wholesale slaughter of all his family and nobles who opposed him. 1/ This was probably a part of his fight for the throne. And later he determined to kill all the Portuguese missionaries, traders, and government men in the country. 2/ This was but a continuation of the revolt of the kingdom against the Portuguese.

He and his power were already weakened by the inner turmoil of the country, and before he could gather his forces for the final thrust the Portuguese received word of his plans and organized against him. To deceive the natives they talked of taking the country of mines to the east. Under this pretext they raised a force of four hundred white men, and imported six thousand natives. Then, in January of 1666 they attacked and killed the Kongo king. This battle took place at Amuila, and the leader of the Portuguese was Captain Luis de

1/ de Mello, op. cit., p. 9.
2/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 33.
Sequeira. 1/

Finally, all the military forces had been set to flight and the Portuguese attempted once again to take over the authority of the Kingdom of Kongo. 2/

1/ de Mello, op. cit., p. 8.
2/ Cuvelier, op. cit., p. 910.
CHAPTER 6

THE DECLINE OF THE PORTUGUESE POWER

When the Portuguese set about to reassure their place of authority in the kingdom of Kongo they found everywhere a great hostility to anything white and Portuguese. 1/

They thought they had gained an ally in the person of the new king elected in the kingdom, one M'pangu a Masundu, known as Alvaro VII, who was elected in 1666. They did not realize for some time that the ancient royal line had died out and that this young man was but one of many claiming to be king.

M'pangu was a friend of Father Jerome, a great missionary of that time. He had worked throughout the whole Bas-Congo, especially Nsundi. He volunteered to go to Loanda and negotiate a peace with the Portuguese. His way was barred by the chiefs of Mbanda. And then the king himself was killed. 2/

He was succeeded by another M'pangu, known as Alvaro VIII,

a young man of twenty years. But he was not accepted by many, and pretenders were established in most of the provinces of the country. 1/

At San Salvador, Mpangu continued in power of a sort until 1670. And from 1670 to 1694 there was almost no pretense of a central authority and control in the kingdom. Each district had its own pretender to the throne, and each village was a law unto itself.

At San Salvador itself Mbemba, known as Rafael I, came in after Mpangu in 1675. In 1679 Miyala Mpangu, known as Daniel I, followed him.

At a rival center of Kibangu one who is known only by his Portuguese name Alfonso III was in nominal control in 1699. Then Nkanga Mbemba, known as Garcia III, followed in 1678, Nlaza (Andere I) followed in 1679, Nimi a Mvemba (Alvaro IX) followed in 1680, and Nzinga (Manuel I) replaced him that same year.

At Mbula, Nsuki a Ntamba (Pedro III) appeared as king in 1679, and Nsuki a Ntamba (Joao II) in 1710. 2/

From 1666 to 1694 there were fourteen who claimed the Kongo throne. They disputed among themselves and involved their people in almost continual warfare. Many of the people left San Salvador to establish themselves away from the center of the argument. 3/

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 33; Cuvelier, op. cit., p. 911.
In 1674 the Recollets arrived to add their force to the other missionaries already in Congo.

During this time some outstanding missionaries worked in the Congo. George de Gheel, a Capucin, was the most famous. He was in charge of the mission work in the province of Mbata. In addition to these great responsibilities, he worked on the oldest dictionary that we have of the language of Kikongo, and produced a voluminous dictionary Latin-Spanish-Kikongo. This is the oldest known Bantu dictionary. 1/

There are many indications that the Bas-Congo area at this time was very thickly populated, as opposed to its present numbers. Father Jerome speaks of baptizing 100,000. Before his arrival, this area in which he worked was supposed to be Christian, so that he did not by any means baptise everyone living there. Another indication of the density of the population is the number given by the Portuguese recorders in listing the numbers who revolted. In the district of Sevo (a small section on the now sparsely settled Bangu) the able men listed as revolting number from twenty to thirty thousand, which is much more than the population of that district today, and that figure

1/ Guvelier, op. cit., p. 905.

includes only the fighting men. 1/

During this long period of fighting for the throne of the kingdom all commerce between the tribes seems to have ceased, and the roads were closed over great periods of time. The years of ceaseless war took its toll on the capital city. By 1670 the former capital had only two canons and one secular priest. The Jesuits abandoned their center there in 1699. When the king called Miyala Mpangu who ruled about 1680 was killed the population fled and the capital became abandoned to the forest. 2/

The history of the various provinces is sometimes contradictory, sometimes non-existent in this period from 1666 to 1694. By 1693 the governor no longer inhabited the old capital city of Mpangu - Mbanz'a Mpangu - but he had established himself at Cunghii, which can be identified with the present Ngungu, the native name of Thysville. 3/

By 1694 most of the pretenders who had arisen to complicate matters were dead. Alvaro X, residing at Kibangu died in 1694, and was replaced by Nsanu a Mpemba (Pedro IV). Nsanu a Mpemba, of Kibangu, and JoaoII of Kongo dia Lemba were the only pretenders left at this time. The Capucins sided with the former, and finally a majority of the tribes

1/ Cuvelier, op. cit., p. 911. 3/ Ibid., p. 915.
2/ Ibid., p. 913.
recognized him. 1/

The one who had the most right to the throne, evidently, was a woman, and if women had not been thought of as ineligible, she would have gained it. 2/ This woman, Donna Anna Alfonso de Leao, was an ancient and honored ruler and queen. Tradition is that she was the daughter of one pretender Garcia II Alfonso and the wife of another, Alfonso II Alfonso. 3/ (1667)

This queen lived independent of other competitors and in her own area seems to have been pretty much of an absolute monarch, having her armies and soldiers of war.

It is not uncommon to find influential women in the Kongo. Dona Leonore was the aunt of the king Kimbangu, the last of the ancient ruling clan. She was succeeded by Dona Isabelle, his sister. 4/

The old queen Dona Anna, was favorable to Joao de Lembas. She suggested through an intermediary that Joao reoccupy the ancient capital of Kongo, and restore it, to show his eligibility, and that she would back him. Her suggestion was not followed, and so her support was lost. 5/

Pedro IV took up her idea and moved from Kibangu to San Salvador. There he had a review of the troops, and had

2/ Ibid., p. 917.  3/ Ibid., p. 917.
his secretary read aloud the statutes and laws of the kingdom of Kongo. After this Mani Vunda, whose ancient privilege it was to install the kings according to the ancient traditions and ceremonies, took Pedro IV and sat him on the throne. And the vicar (Luis de Mendoza), who had been led there against his will, crowned him. The crown at this time was an elaborately ornamented hat. The Pedro IV, gearing an attack from Joao, returned in haste to Kibangu. 1/ He ruled but a quarter of the old kingdom. 2/

The Portuguese at this time tried very definitely to restore the power and glory to the old Kongo kingdom. Father Francois de Favie thought it was time to ask Rome to intervene for the restoration of a united kingdom of Kongo, at least by sending a crown to Pedro IV. But his fellow missionaries who had noted with increasing alarm the hostilities between the chiefs were sure that any such attempts were doomed to certain failure. It would be impossible to create unity out of the increasingly separate and distinct tribes. More and more the chiefs were becoming rulers of their own tribes, and they had lost all idea of depending on a central ruler. In fact, the Kongo

1/ Ibid., p. 917.
2/ La Ligue du Souvenir Congolais, op. cit., p. 35.
Kingdom no longer existed, but in its place were many independent tribes, often hostile to each other. 1/

Now began a period when anything Portuguese and white and Christian was automatically bad and to be destroyed. Pedro IV never succeeded in restoring even a part of the ancient kingdom, and his successors could not begin to lay claim to being sovereigns of the six provinces.

In 1709 San Salvador became again the seat of the government, and some of the descendants of its former inhabitants returned. The land in its immediate territory, extending even to the regions of the Kwilu, was still governed by Joao, the last pretender to the throne. 2/

The six provinces outside of the area ruled by Joao and taken in by San Salvador were divided into even more divisions, and were independent of outside control. The chiefs did not ask to be named or approved by the king. Their brothers and nephews succeeded them in turn without royal intervention. And in every section there were usually several who claimed the position of the dead chief. 3/

For a few years the missionaries remained in the

1/ Guveller, op. cit., p. 918.
2/ Ibid., p. 920.
3/ Ibid., p. 919.
country, but not for long. In 1759 the Jesuits were excluded from Portugal, and so from all Portuguese colonies.

In 1834 all religious orders were banned in Portugal, and from then on there was no pretense of missionary work in the Kongo. For some years before this, however, the anti-Portuguese, anti-Christian tide had been overpowering. The missionaries had tried in all the time honored ways of the Catholic Church to change the citizens of the Kongo Kingdom into Christians worthy of the name. And they had failed.

Many things had been against their success. "The climate, the immorality of the white people, the political instability of the Kingdom, the slavery and enslaving of the Congolese by the Europeans annihilated the persistent efforts and sacrifices of the heroic missionaries." 1/

The truth of the matter is that the priests defeated their own ends. 2/ Their work seems to have been to baptize, preach, and hear confessions - all through interpreters. With a few notable exceptions they did not learn the language of the people. There is no trace of organized work in building schools and sending out trained catechists.

1/ Rinchen, op. cit., p. 5-6.
2/ Van Wing, op. cit., p. 38.
The temporary churches they built had fallen in fifty years.
And they were never rebuilt.

Very early the missionaries became connected with the
slave trading of the area. It seems that there were at
first a few feeble protests against the enslaving of the
people. But it was argued that they were made for slavery. 1/
The result was that the priests insisted that slaves collected
first be baptised before they were sent away from their
homes. And the Church received part of the tax collected
by the government for every slave exported. 2/

From all reports the Portuguese priests and after them
the native ones possessed none of the virtues of their
profession. They seem to have been unworthy in many ways
of their high calling. For two centuries and a half they
scandalized the people with their acts. In the end, no
distinction was made between them and the slavers and
commercial traders, and all were opposed by the people. 3/

When they left in 1834 there remained only eight
secular priests to care for the thirty six provinces of
Loanda. For many years the work among the Bakongo tribes
had been non-existent. The people had by this time long ago

1/ Davidson, op. cit., p. 46.
2/ Ibid., p. 55.
3/ Van Wing, op. cit., p. 38.
thrown off the rule of the Kongo Kingdom, and fearing the slave traders had set up a series of defenses very effective for them, helped as they were by the Christal Mountains.

Those people of the estuary itself had been raided so many times that they were either in the employ of the traders or were crippled and old and weak and worth nothing as slaves. Any white people who ventured outside the narrow coastal band found a hostile people, suspicious of every move, unwilling to believe that any white man could mean well by them. This suspicion had grown up over a period of time, and for good reasons.

Christianity had never touched beneath the surface in the Kongo Kingdom. Neither those who taught nor those who learned had understood nor practised it.

In 1851 peace and reconciliation with the religious orders came to Portugal. They became concerned with the moral conditions of their colonies, and missionaries were sent out. But their activities were confined to the area south of the Kongo Kingdom.

\[\text{Ibid., p. 75.} \]
\[\text{de Mello, op. cit., p. 41.} \]
CHAPTER 7
THE SLAVE TRADE AND THE END OF PORTUGUESE POWER

When the Portuguese established their forts along the coast of Africa, it was for the purpose of trade. Indeed, that was why they went searching for a route to the Indies, to find a trade route. When the first Portuguese came into the Kongo Kingdom the traders came with them. And they dealt in one of the most important commodities of the day, slaves. Everywhere the priests went the traders went, too. And even farther.

The first record we have of anyone reaching Stanley Pool is in 1697, when Luc de Sltanisssetta and Marcellin d'Atri arrived there. About 1622 a Portuguese caravan had ventured across the Congo River, northeast, into the territory of Mukoko. To arrive there they must have seen the Pool. They were not, however, literary men. Very early the king of Kongo attempted to transfer the attentions of the traders from his own to other areas. They soon knew the Kwango and the area north of the Kongo, but they left no written reports. They were not interested in geography, but in money.
By 1609, already, to guarantee a monopoly on trade, the Portuguese had decided to erect a stronghold at Pinda, at the mouth of the Congo River. Antonio Gonçalves Pitta was commissioned to construct it. However the Congolese held things up so much that disease finally won and the fort was never completed. 1/

Later on, towards the end of the seventeenth century, a Portuguese maritime fleet, under the direction of Alvaro de Souza, patrolled the west coast to ensure the Portuguese trade monopoly, but even so the Dutch, English, French, and Belgians continued their trade on the river. 2/ They never began to attain the trade which the Portuguese commanded, but they were, nevertheless, a thorn in the Portuguese flesh.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the Congo had become one of the most active centers of trade. The slave traders ranged over the interior and raided villages to lead to Boma, Cabinda, Songo, and to Bomangoy the long line of slaves, chained together, to sell to slave markets. Boma was the principal center of this trade. Even after slavery was abolished in Europe, the exportation of slaves doubled. The regions around the river were full of slave

2/ Ibid., p. 30.
caravans. The slaves died by the millions from disease, mistreatment, starvation, and exhaustion. 1/

From 1832 and on war ships patrolled the river coast of the Atlantic, examining suspect ships, but even so many succeeded in escaping detection.

The length of the river from the ocean to what is now Matadi the slaves erected what were called "baracoons", the lodgings for slaves. Every little indentation of the river was a hiding place for the slaves trading vessels. It is no wonder that the once prosperous well populated Bas-Congo is today almost a barren country.

Fires were set up everywhere to round up the slaves. Then it was that the forest lands of the Cristal Mountains began to disappear. As the forest disappeared, and the grasslands appeared, the sun itself and the lightening set fire to the grass. All this conspired to drive the herds of animals from the area, until only a few antelope and wild elephant and buffalo remained. The people, who were dependent on such animals for food, were driven in search of other food.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century what was once the well-integrated Kingdom of Kongo, with its six provinces, was just a series of small states, composed 1/ ibid., p. 36.
of federations of villages. San Salvador was unknown to white people, and it was a dead city of sad memories to the native people. 1/

The Portuguese had succeeded in breaking down entirely the ancient and honored Kongo Kingdom. The Catholic Church had tried to raise up a strong church in the Kongo, but it had failed. All that was left of the words of the hundreds of missionaries was the presence of a few crucifixes, used as fetishes.

The commerce of Europe had been the most destructive force of all, for in the attempt to make money they had bought and sold people. Portuguese historians say that, from 1486 to 1641, they took 1,389,000 slaves from Angola and the Congo. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this became intensified until they were exporting about 30,000 a year. 2/ Many millions were enslaved in Angola itself, or died in consequence of slavery.

This slavery is the most important reason for the breakdown of the kingdom and the failure of the white man and his religion. What had been a well integrated kingdom became a land of terror. The people who had reached a high degree of civilization fell into the depths of despair, in which they had to fight for generations for their lives

1/ Ibid., p. 35.
2/ Davidson, op. cit., p. 56.
and the lives of their children.

The barriers which the kingdom had created as protection against the other Bantu invaders were broken down, and savage and foreign tribes swept in and out at will.

The Portuguese priests, as they lost their touch with their mother country, also lost their moral rules, and often groups of half-breeds grew up, ostracized by the native peoples.

What had been a large influential tribe, the Bakongo, deteriorated into a much smaller group by comparison. And, in their attempts to find safety, they moved north to the protecting hills of the Cristal Mountains and the Cataract regions of the Congo River. Most of them left their capital city to the south, for it offered no protection for them.

In a word, what had been a well organized country (comparable to that of feudal Europe in the middle ages, with an area, at its height comparable to that of modern France) with a life of a well established order and ease, had now become a no man's land. And the people had one aim in life, to preserve themselves against their enemies.
PART III
THE TRANSFER OF EUROPEAN POWER

CHAPTER 8
THE EARLY EXPLORATIONS

The coast of Africa has had a long history of explorations, in which the chapter of Congo has been one of the hardest and the most discouraging. Only the keen interest of the nations in the slave trade of this area kept them going at all after many disastrous defeats of exploring expeditions.

The first real milestone of the Congo explorations was the arrival of the Portuguese expedition under the direction of Diego Cam, on the fourth of August, 1482. While there were rumors and traditions here and there that others may have seen the mouth of the Congo River before he did, Diego Cam was the first to record this event. The natives were not at all afraid of Diego Cam or his sailors, which leaves open the questions of who was the first to arrive here.

1/ La Ligue du Souvenir Congolais, op. cit., p. 25.
Diego Cam erected his Portuguese pillar on the south side of the river, and returned to Lisbon, arriving there in 1484. There he was recommissioned by the king to return and explore the river and to make advances to the king of whose existence Diego had brought back rumors.

Diego arrived back at the mouth of the river, which he called the Zaire, in 1485, with three caravels (a special kind of Portuguese boat). While he was waiting for the arrival of his negotiators whom he had sent to the king of Kongo, he pushed on up the river, to the Mpopo, just beyond Matadi. There he encountered the rapids, and wisely turned back after leaving another Portuguese pillar as a witness of his arrival. This pillar was not discovered until four hundred years later.

From then on until the nineteenth century, there was not, properly speaking, any expedition to the Bas-Congo for the purposes of studying the geography and the country. Two sorts of groups journeyed throughout the land now occupied by the Bakongo tribes. And these were the missionaries of French, Portuguese and Dutch

1/ Michels, A et Laude, Notre Colonie, Bruxelles, 1848, p. 303.
extraction, working mainly for the interest of the Portuguese, and in the country at their invitation. And the second group was the Portuguese traders. This is a term which covered, in the main, just one sort of trading, slaves, although often cloth, guns and trinkets were used as a device by the traders whose primary interest was slaves.

It is certain that these two groups of travelers knew the Bas-Congo fairly well, although they left little record of what they saw. The Portuguese traders probably saw Stanley Pool quite early, but no written records of this early discovery have been found. It was just another part of the great and terrible river which limited so effectively their activities. We have records in the religious history of priests seeing Stanley Pool in 1697, but no one thought anything of it.

The maps of the period of the Portuguese ascendancy do not show the Pool. About this same time the Portuguese themselves reached the Kwango River. The maps of this time do not seem to record only what the Portuguese saw, but also what they hoped to see, for the waters of the Nile, the Zambezi, and the Congo were united by all

sorts of natural devices, the favorite one being the natural canals. 1/

Somewhere about 1515 an Essex sailor of Leigh, Andrew Battell, shipped on a voyage of discovery of America. He got shipwrecked on the coast of Brazil and was eventually rescued by a Portuguese ship, and kept by them for several years as a kind of prisoner, lest he communicate geographical knowledge to his country and sailors. 2/

For perhaps a period of twenty or more years he was kept as a hostage, for in "Pinkerton's Voyages" is included an "account of a residence on the coast of Africa for eighteen years, by Andrew Battell, of Leigh, Essex, 1589." 3/ There is nothing much unique in his story, for the Portuguese recorded the same, only in much more detail.

In 1816 Captain James Kingston Tuckey was sent out by the British government to explore the possibility of the Congo and Niger being joined in the same way. It was thought at that time that either the Congo was the real

1/ Johnson, op. cit., p. 77.
2/ Ibid., p. 78.
3/ Ibid., p. 78.
outlet of the Niger, or that perhaps they had a common source. 1/

His instructions were to explore the river and its tributaries. 2/ There were fifty six when they left for the Congo, fifty six Europeans. Two were dead before they reached the Congo at all. The natives told them, when they arrived at the mouth of the river, that the Congo was called the "Nzadi". The group reached the Mpozo, where Diego Cam had left his pillar, and pushed beyond, as far as what is now known as Isangila.

In the three months that the expedition was on the river, eighteen men died, including Captain Tuckey himself. A group of thirty men was sent out to study the region around the cataracts, and fourteen of them died. 3/ The only effective results of this trip were biological and botanical, done by the botanist of the expedition, Christian Smith. He also contributed a short study of the Congo language and peoples. 4/ Many details on the slavers

1/ Johnson, op. cit., p. 80.


2/ Ibid., p. 4-5.

3/ Ibid., p. 5.

4/ Johnson, op. cit., p. 80.
and the excesses of the area were also furnished by the survivors.

This disaster kept any new expedition from trying to explore this area for more than half a century, so lurid were the tales of the dangers from disease, especially in this area. All would-be explorers thought in terms of the easier east coast.

From 1827 to 1829 H.M.S.S. Levin and Barracouta of Captain Owen's African Coast exploring expedition surveyed the Congo estuary. In 1857 Captain Hunt carried on the survey as far as Matadi. And in 1863 the explorer Burton went a few miles farther, to the Yelala Falls.

In 1858 the German expedition of Bastien rediscovered San Salvador, which was at that time unknown to the white traders of the area. His description of the cathedral and all the rest of the historic city is a sad one.

Lt. Grandy, R.N., and his expedition reached Congo and San Salvador in 1873. This was one of the two expeditions sent out to reach Dr. Livingstone before it was known that Stanley had reached him. Lt. Grandy tried to

1/ François, op. cit., p. 8.
2/ Stanley, op. cit., p. 5.
4/ La Ligue du Souvenir Congolais, op. cit., p. 35-36.
push his way north east past the cataracts of the Congo, but once more the river was the victor. His journey was arrested at Tungwa. 1/

In 1810 the Europeans resolved to abolish slave trade. In 1817 slavers were redefined as pirates by Great Britain. 2/ From 1832 and on war ships patrolled the African coast to enforce this rule. 3/

The revival of the slave trade from 1870 to 1875 caused the British war ships to take a great interest in this part of Africa. They had other things to deal with besides slave traders, for piracy on a fairly large scale had arisen along the coast and inland from the river. The trading houses, established in the 1850's and 60's, were large and prosperous. (A French post had been established in 1858, a Dutch one the next year, 1859, and an English one in 1868. 4/) And they were a great temptation to the natives and ex-slavers of the area. Since Portugal did not really claim the land at this time, and had, in reality, never claimed the river itself (and no other country had either), this area was a no-man's land. For

1/ Johnson, op. cit., p. 82.
2/ Stanley, op. cit., p. 10.
3/ La Ligue du Souvenir Congolais, op. cit., p. 36.
the main parts these pirates were half-breeds and outcasts with a dash of European blood. They lurked in the numerous streams and islands of the estuary of the Congo. When strong enough, they attacked isolated trading stations and boats up and down the river. They were completely suppressed by 1875, mainly under the leadership of Sir William Hewett.

The Congo coast was fast becoming English. The English language in a corrupted form was the trade language of north of the river, as Portuguese was south of it.

In 1877 an incident occurred which gave Portugal a chance to show her authority over this area, a chance for which she had been waiting for some time, for the presence of so many English and English warships had not been exactly to her liking.

Several proprietors of slaves were involved in the murder of many natives slaves near Boma. Most of those implicated in this brutal act were Portuguese, with one English. The British consul at Loanda felt obliged to

1/ Johnson, op. cit., p. 83.

Robert Stanley Thompson, Fondation de l'État Indépendant du Congo, Office de Publicité, Bruxelles, 1933, p. 123.

2/ Johnson, op. cit., p. 83.

3/ Thompson, op. cit., p. 127.
protest, both to his own government and also to the government of Angola, against the attitude which would let such things happen in Congo. The governor general of Angola answered that he would take such measures as were necessary, and went on to apologize for such a state of affairs, which were due, no doubt, as he said, to the ineffective occupation of this area by the Portuguese government.  

No court was considered capable of judging this case, and so it was dropped. But, it furnished a chance for Portugal to enforce her hitherto non-existent authority in this area. In August, 1877, the minister of colonies of Portugal signified that his government was ready to do whatever was required, or even to compromise with the British government and to give every possible guarantee to assure the freedom of navigation and to remove every obstacle to commerce in all her possessions in west Africa. Nothing was done about this offer, however, and things slid along until the work of de Brazza precipitated the nations into action.  

On August ninth, 1877, Stanley arrived at Boma, from the east, and so the barrier was pierced. Ever since Diego Cam was stopped by the cataracts to the east of Matadi in

1/ Ibid., p. 127.  
2/ Ibid., p. 127.  
3/ Ibid., p. 130.
1487, men had been trying, without success, to go up the Congo river and thus break through. But they had not succeeded. Ever since Tuckey no one had made any real effort to go up the Congo River. And then Stanley, in trying to answer Livingstone's and his own questions about the sources of the Nile and the Lualaba, found an answer to the whole problem.
CHAPTER 9

STANLEY AND THE REOPENING OF CONGO

In 1876 Stanley was in Congo for the second time. He had, in his brief acquaintance with Livingstone, been fired with questions about the source of the Nile and the course of the stream called by the natives the Lualaba. Once he had started out along the latter stream he couldn’t turn back because of the hostility he met all along the way. As the river began to head west doubts as to its connection with the Nile came. These were increased when he saw the size the river attains in its northern course.

By the time the group arrived at Boma on August 9, 1877, his three white companions and 236 of his porters from Zanzibar were dead. He himself was too weak to make it into Boma itself, but sent messengers asking for help. He had come through a land alternately friendly and hostile, but with emphasis on the latter. From Stanley Pool west, on the north bank of the river, he met his greatest difficulties. No longer could the river be depended upon to carry them, for the great series of rapids stopped that. Food was scarce, and the various tribes were reluctant to
sell them enough.

As to the country itself, and the people, his early impressions were borne out in his later ones, that it was a country of many small tribes and peoples, each ready and willing to fight for its life. Of the lower river tribes he learned that there was a nominal chief whose village Stanley called Ambassi (Mbanza). The king, whom he heard called Totela (Ntotela) was an unimportant person. The national flag was dark blue, with a golden star in the center, which flag Stanley later adopted for the new Free State.

In reality, as he described it, the country on the south of the river was divided into many small subdivisions of power, under as many petty chiefs. He came to the conclusion that at times no chiefs existed at all, but instead only a group of elders. In the light of what he found out later and we know today it is more accurate to say that the group of elders existed for each village, for it was with them that every chief ruled.

Here and there a native chief existed who had at least nominal rule over some of the other villages near his own. This was, however, nothing more than an acknowledgement of seniority. Manipambu of Loango, Mpumu-Ntaba of Mbe, and Samuna of Nsanda, near Vivi, are the ones Stanley names of this class. 2/

1/ Stanley, op. cit., p. 17. 2/ Ibid., p. 18.
At Boma Stanley found six factories manned by sixteen Europeans - two English, one Dutch, twelve Portuguese, and one Belgian, and agent of the French house (Alexandre Delaccommune). 1/

From there Stanley returned to the east coast ship to return his helpers to their native country. 2/ By January 1878 he reached Europe. As he landed at Marseilles he was met by two representatives of Léopold II of Belgium. Léopold II had been trying for some time to establish himself on African soil. In 1876 he had founded an International African Association. He himself was president of the Executive Committee. Various national committees were set up under this association, English, French, German. They tried to penetrate central Africa from the east, and established various stations, which later were ceded to England when this association ended. 3/

When the news reached Europe that Stanley had cut across central Africa, Léopold saw immediately the possibility of penetrating Africa from the west.

Stanley, however, refused to think about returning to Congo or of visiting Brussels at that time, but returned to


2/ For all the preceding material, see also Henry Morton Stanley, Through the Dark Continent, 2 vols., London, 1878.

3/ Ministère des Colonies, op. cit.
England to regain his strength and zeal. In August, however, he met a group in Paris, and by November 25th they had formed the Comité d'Études du Haut Congo. The honorary president was Léopold II, Col. Strauch was the actual president, and Stanley was the chief in Congo. They set about organizing another expedition, with the immediate aim of establishing stations along an overland route for the convenience of transport. The land for these stations was to be leased or purchased.

The end of January 1879 everything was ready, and Stanley proceeded to Zanzibar to enlist men to help in this new expedition. On the fourteenth of August 1879 the group was at Banana. The avowed intent of the group was to ascend the river with "the novel mission of sowing along its bank civilized settlements, to peacefully conquer and subdue it, to remould it in harmony with modern ideas into National States, within whose limits the European merchant shall go hand in hand with the dark African trader, and justice and law and order shall prevail, and murder and lawlessness and the cruel barter of slaves shall forever cease." 2/


2/ Ibid., p. 59-60.
Stanley presents very clearly the isolation of the trading posts in Banana and Boma. 1/ No villages were visible, nor was there much intercourse between the white and the native peoples. Always excepting the Congo traders. But aside from various markets for European cloth and trinkets, the culture of the white man had not moved out from the commercial centers. The land round about Boma was almost entirely void of trees. Fire and erosion had made serious inroads into the productivity of the area. 2/

Boma (Mboma) was established as a center in the slave trade. For over two centuries before the coming of Stanley it had been the center to which slaves were brought before they were shipped to the Americas. Whole fleets of slavers had been anchored in the harbor. All river and coast towns had seen their people taken here. 3/

Since the incident of 1877, however, the trade had been comparatively free of abuses. The natives collected butter of the oil palm, rubber, kernals from the oil nuts, peanuts, copal, and ivory, and brought them in for cotton, wool, cutlery and guns, crockery and hardware, beads and brassware, gin and rum, tobacco and fish. 4/

From Boma Stanley and his expedition ascended the

1/ Ibid., p. 93. 2/ Ibid., p. 94. 3/ Ibid., p. 96. 4/ Ibid., p. 98.
river beyond Nokki and the present site of Matadi. Then they were once again in the territory of the chief of Nsanda who had helped in 1877 by dispatching a message to Boma. There after some negotiations, it was decided to build the first post, and center of the work, on a high hill on the north side of the river, Vivi Hill. It was thought at that time that the tops of the hills were the best settlements, disease being thought to live in the lowlands and swamps. So it was on hills that the first posts and stations were built.

A down payment of thirty two pounds plus a monthly rental of two pounds was the price paid. 1/

Then work was begun building. People from the surrounding villages were recruited as workmen. Houses, roads, gardens, all were carved out of mountain rock. Then it was that Stanley, and by him all government representatives, started to earn the name of "Bula Matadi". Sledge hammers and explosives (used later in the laying out of the bed of the railroad) earned the authoritative name of "Breaker of Rocks". 2/

By February 6, 1880 most of the work at Vivi was done, and Stanley was ready to move east up the river. The end of the month a group, headed by Stanley, moved inland to

1/ Ibid., p. 137.
2/ Ibid., p. 148.
explore for a feasible wagon route. At Banza Nsanda, the seat of Chief Samuna, thirty chiefs were assembled to greet Stanley and to exchange gifts. Here Stanley told them of the road he proposed to build, the immediate part of it through their own territory from Vivi to Isangila. The venture was seen as a commercial one, and since the long road to Boma was hard and dangerous, this did much to overcome the people’s suspicion and distrust of motives. 1/

Guides and help were offered, and so began the long and costly process of treaties with all the peoples along the river. (By 1884 four hundred and fifty treaties had been signed with the local tribes and chiefs, and these were used as the basis of the foundation of the Congo Free State.)

By March the tenth the group was back at Vivi, followed by many sightseers. A road was seen as possible, although backbreaking. And by the twenty first of February 1881 that lap of the journey was done. The road over which the boats and materials had to be drawn was done.

From Isangila boats were launched on the river, for from Isangila to Manyanga the rapids permit river navigation of a sort. And from Manyanga they moved overland to Stanley Pool.

1/ Ibid., p. 171.
In the Manyanga territory, which they reached in April, the people were not nearly as gracious in their reception of the white strangers as had been the lower river tribes. They granted permission to settle for a time at Manyanga, however, which was accomplished by the first of May. Later a satisfactory contract was made for land on which to build a station, and Stanley moved on east. As he approached Stanley Pool he was met by the news that de Brazza had been there since he came through in 1877, and had claimed the area around the Pool in the name of France.

This news, coupled with the animosity of the natives, sent Stanley's thoughts to his friend Ngaliema on the south bank. On his way through from the east they had sworn oaths of brotherhood. Ngaliema was a former slave who had bought his freedom by his ability and success in commerce and was, at that time, chief of Kintambo, the village on the lower southern shore of Stanley Pool.

Ngaliema received his friend, whom he called "Tanley" with some hesitance. Both he and his people felt that their trade on the Pool and inland and to the sea was threatened. Stanley was put off by Ngaliema for a while by being asked for hostages, to acquaint the people with

1/ Ibid., p. 300.
the habits of the strangers. And the main body of the expedition was asked to return down river to Zinga, there to cross over and come up the river on the south. 1/

In the meantime Ngaliema was in trouble with his own people for dealing with Stanley at all. They got him at his vulnerable point - that he was no chief at all, with none of the tribes of the immediate country side in back of him. The Bambundu, from whom he had acquired his land and permission to be there, demanded an accounting of his actions. 2/ All the other chiefs sided with the people, and Ngaliema held out alone. Finally he sent the men who had been left as hostages down the river in a canoe to rejoin the expedition, with directions that they were to come no farther.

Then, for the first time, did Stanley understand on what flimsy ground Ngaliema had built his village and authority, being not even a member of the local tribe, but of the trading people, the Bateke of the north shore. The ivory traders of the Bakongo and Bazombo and affiliated groups were fighting for their business in their own country.

From the Inkisi River on the expedition was in the

1/ Ibid., p. 309.
2/ Ibid., p. 319.
area of the Bampundu. At first the order of the petty chiefs along the way was for their people to refuse to sell food. This order was rescinded when it was seen that the newcomers did not fight the order, but sent back along the trail for food. Finally the senior chief of the area, Makoko, came to see for himself the strangers and their strange looks and their stranger ways of doing things. With him the people of the area were finally won over.

Now the enmity of Ngaliema who had banded together with the traders was encountered. All throughout their dealings with him Ngaliema was to act this way, crafty and arrogant, until nothing in him and his attitude could be thought of as dependable. Nor was his animosity in defense of his own country and people, but rather in defense of his position and wealth.

When finally he met Stanley it was to show enough of a measure of friendship to strengthen Stanley's stand for permission for land on which to establish a post there on the Congo River. And in December 1881 this post was built on a hill overlooking the Congo, Mont Léopold. There Stanley set up his instruments and a semi-permanent camp was established. At the foot of the hill, on the

1/ Ibid., p. 323.
2/ Ibid., p. 358-59.
edge of the shoreland belonging to the shipbuilding company, Chanio, was established the little port. And here was brought the little boat "En Avant" which was destined to lead the group still farther inland.

While the camp was still on the hill the two missionary groups, L.I.M. (Livingstone Inland Mission) and B.M.S. (Baptist Missionary Society) settled a little farther down the hill. Later the B.M.S. moved to its present site in Kalina, and the L.I.M. (to be taken over by the A.B.F.M.S.) settled at its present site next to the government post. That mission port was used for some years by all mission groups.

The settling of the post at Léopoldville was not as easy as it sounds. Everyone was suspicious of the white man, and if a softer more easily defeated person had been involved, he would probably have given up and left the people alone. But Stanley felt that he had a two-fold right there - as a blood brother of Ngaliema, and as a superior person bringing trade and cultural help to the inferior Congolese. He himself had no idea that the country belonged to the people. He saw it as a great waste without the benefit of white occupation. He knew, too, that if he didn't take the land, others would. And he thought of himself and the group which he represented as by far the
most superior group to rule such a poor benighted people. And this much must be said for Stanley, he was a just man. Under his guidance and direction brutality and injustice were reduced to a minimum. He was a hard worker, and demanded that all those who were with him work hard, too. He was equally harsh with the white man and native. He definitely saw his work as a saving one.

Until recently there was living in Kintambo an old man named Mpeya who had been bought as a little boy from slavery and given to the first medical doctor in Congo, Dr. Sims. He remembered Stanley as a gruff kindly man who was a friend of all who dealt honestly with him.

By February the hostility of the neighboring town of Kinshassa had begun to wane. 1/ Or perhaps they had begun to accept the changes as inevitable. They came over more and more for trading purposes, and with them the people from the other villages of Lema, Kimbangu, and Mikungu. Finally a treaty was signed with the chiefs of these villages for the preservation of the peace on the south shore of Congo. 2/

By April some permanent houses down the hill away had been built, and gardens planted. And Stanley was ready to leave for up river exploration. 3/

They reached as far as Lake Léopold II, and they were on their way back, when Stanley became sick and they had to carry him back to Léopoldville. When he was able to travel he went down to Manyanga. 1/ And there he advised Mr. Comber of the B.M.B. to establish work at Léopoldville. 2/ From there Stanley went on down to Vivi and home to recuperate and plan more for Congo.

1/ Ibid., p. 444.
2/ Ibid., p. 445.
The arrival of Stanley at Boma was the signal for which the world had been waiting. Immediately traders, missionaries, and explorers rushed to the west coast, to begin the long delayed entrance into the Congo valley.

The arrival of the missions was one of the most important to take place. To all real intent and purposes the Bakongo did not know Christianity. The Catholicism which they had known had been, at best, skin deep. Here and there, there lingered a few material remains and traditions of the church, but they were not understood by the people.

The reason for this is two fold. For one thing, according to Portuguese witness, the priests often forgot themselves the true meaning of what they were teaching. 1/ But the most important reason for the failure of Christianity to take root in the Bakongo

1/ Bentley, op. cit., p. 26 (quoted from Cavazzi)
tribes was the presence of the Portuguese themselves and their traders. They did not pretend to be true to the teachings of their priests, and their most flagrant waywardness was their slave trading. The people came to see the white people as synonymous with slavers, and they wanted neither them nor their religion.

The first missionaries in this time were Protestants. And they and those who followed them quickly disassociated themselves with the traders and soldiers. They did not hesitate to condemn what they saw wrong in their own race. More than once they protested to their own governments in Europe and to the proper authorities within the country itself. The people were quick to distinguish between the two kinds of strangers who rushed into the newly opened land. There have been, of course, exceptions to this general rule, but the exceptions are few.

In January, 1878, the first missionaries, George Grenfell and Thomas Comber, arrived. They were sent by the Baptist Missionary Society to explore the region of the lower Congo with a view to founding a chain of mission stations which would reach, eventually, from the mouth of the Congo across central Africa to the Indian Ocean.  

George Grenfell later became associated with the Belgian

\[1/\text{Johnson, op. cit., p. 2-3.}\]
government in exploring in government disputes and settlements of the boundary with Angola.

No sooner had these two men left to report to their mission that the pioneers of the undenominational mission, Livingstone Inland Mission (the successors of which are the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and the Congo Bololo Mission) arrived in February 1878 to set up work immediately. Their first station was on Palabala Mountain, just east of Matadi, on the southern bank of the Congo. The founder of the mission, Dr. Grattan Guinness of Harley House, Bow, in London, and the first worker in Congo, Henry Graven, produced after some three years of study (assisted by Congo natives in London) the first good grammars and dictionaries of the Kikongo language. The work was the best done until Holman Bentley, of the B.M.S., (Baptist) published his work in 1886-87. 1/

Grenfell and Comber reached the mouth of the river again June 28, 1878. They were aided by the Dutch trading house with stations at Banana and Boma, and so made their way up the Congo River and on to the old capital of the Kongo Kingdom, which they reached on August 8, 1878. There they were well received by the king, Pedro V, whose official title was Ntotela, Ntinu a Lukeni. 2/

1/ Ibid., p. 63-64.
2/ Ibid., p. 64.
In the town of San Salvador they noticed a great baobab tree on which Lt. Grandy, of the expedition of 1872-74 in search of Livingstone, had cut his initials. Grenfell and Comber added theirs, with the date 1878. They then decided to proceed northeast to the Makuta country, near the present center of Moerbeck, on their way to Stanley Pool. 1/

For this trip they secured the services of the native guides who had accompanied Grandy in 1873. They reached the town of Tungwa, and, unlike Grandy, were allowed to enter it and have an audience with the chief of Tungwa, Sengele. They requested that they be allowed to travel on through Makuta country to Stanley Pool. This request was passed on by the chief's son, Nsusu a Mtembe, to the chief man of the Makuta territory, Bwaka Matu, who lived at Mbanza Makuta, about six miles on, just south of the present Gattier. 2/

Grenfell recorded in his diary, with some humor,

Bwaka Matu's reception of Nsusu a Mtembe's well meant description of the missionaries' aims and ambitions — "Oh, they don't buy ivory? What do they want then? Teach us about God? Something about dying, indeed! There is too much of that now: people are always dying in my town. They are not coming here...to bewitch me. Why do not the

1/ Ibid., p. 65.
2/ Ibid., p. 65.
Tungwa people send them away?" So Grenfell and Comber were turned back from Tungwa on the word of the chief, and retraced their steps to San Salvador. And from there Comber went on to England to lay the joint report before his mission council. 2/

In June, 1879 an expedition of B.M.S. missionaries reached the Congo to set up their work - Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Comber and W. Holman Bentley. 3/ They proceeded to San Salvador, and were met by an expedition of greeting, waving the king's flag, the gold five pointed star on a dark blue background. 4/

Their description of San Salvador, Mbanz'a Kongo, is a very interesting one. In 1879 it was a town of some two hundred houses of grass and sticks, built on a plateau about eighteen hundred feet above sea level. Among the tangled and matted vegetation of the outskirts of the city could be traced masonry of the ancient walls, fifteen to twenty feet high, built, evidently, of lumps of iron ore and slabs of limestone. 5/

1/ Ibid., p. 67.
2/ Ibid., p. 68.
3/ Ibid., p. 85.
4/ Ibid., p. 87.
5/ Ibid., p. 87.
The cathedral in the center of the town was built of the same materials. In 1879, according to Bentley, the west wall had fallen in and the roof long since disappeared, but the other walls were fairly well preserved, especially the chancel. The chancel arch was a fine span of largely dressed rocks. The high altar was covered with ferns, but in fair condition. There was a lay chapel on the north side of the nave, and a vestry on the south side of the chancel. Three hundred to four hundred yards to the west were the extensive ruins of a convent, and in various places in the jungle were found groups of stones which marked the sites of ancient buildings. Near the west front of the cathedral were the graves of the old kings and notables. 1/

By the spring of 1880 the first stone house of the B.M.S. missionaries were finished, and they had begun on their work. 2/

In the meantime, in the same year of 1879, Henry Richards of the L.I.M. had moved from the initial station of Palabala to the foot of the hill which was the site of the village of Banza Manteke. Later on, on the advice of Stanley, this station was moved to the top of the hill, for, as he said, it would be healthier there. So this

1/ Ibid., p. 88.
2/ Ibid., p. 89.
first mission of Nkondo was abandoned for Banza Manteke.

This idea of high hills and health going together was a favorite one of Stanley's, for he founded all of his caravan stops on high hills, and, while this may have been healthier from the point of view of swamps and swamp air, it was hard on the legs of those who had to arrive there, and the homes and settlements there were in an almost continual fog.

In August 1880, Comber made another attempt to go through the Makuta country to Stanley Pool. Here he met with hostility, as he did the first time. The natives of Makuta territory were the leading middlemen who traded between Stanley Pool and San Salvador. This time Comber turned south onto the edge of the Zombo plateau. 1/

Late in the autumn of 1880, Comber and Hartland set out again. In Mbanza Makuta they were attacked with stones and sticks, and had to run for their lives. Shots were fired at them, and Comber was struck with a bullet in the back. They ran through many villages, and were repeatedly fired at and attacked with stones and knives. In this flight they covered eighty miles in three and a half days. 2/

Seven months later Bwaka Matu, the chief, died, as did the chief of Tungwa, with a number of important men of

1/ Ibid., p. 92.
2/ Ibid., p. 95.
the tribe. Smallpox had come, and it devastated the whole area. 1/

Meantime the L.I.M. had gone along the south bank of the river and established two stations among the Manyanga tribes, along what was then the old path used by traders up and down the river, but what was to become the great caravan trail. The B.M.S. first used the river route, with stations at Isangila and Manyanga, but later they located a post at Ngombe Lutete. Gradually the hostility of the people from Lukunga to Stanley Pool was overcome, and by 1883 the overland route from Matadi to Léopoldville on the south bank was established. 2/

By 1884 these two pioneer missions had two river boats launched at Léopoldville, the Peace and the Henry Reed. They were shipped in pieces from England, and carried up the caravan road in loads of sixty pounds by the porters, to be established at the Léopoldville station. It was the work of thousands of porters, but by this time the village people were becoming friendly, and their young men earned a little money this way. The boiler of the Henry Reed weighed too much and had to be rolled all the way, two hundred and fifty miles.

1/ Ibid., p. 95.

The Peace was used by Grenfell in his explorations of the Congo to Stanleyville.

The establishment of the mission stations along the caravan road was an important step, for the next twenty years saw thousands of porters carrying the baggage of a growing country up and down this trail. Hundreds became sick and died along the way, and the stations became centers of help. 1/

The following is a list of all stations, both government and mission, established in the early years along the lower Congo:

1879 Vivi 1878 Palabala L.I.M.
1879 Banza Manteke L.I.M.
1879 San Salvador B.M.S.
1880 Matadi L.I.M.
1881 Underhill-Matadi, B.M.S.
1881 Bembe L.I.M.

1881 Manyanga
1881 Isangila
1881 Léopoldville

1882 Mukimgungu L.I.M.
1882 Lukunga L.I.M.
1882 Manyanga-Wathen I B.M.S.
1882 Baynestown B.M.S.
1882 Léopoldville B.M.S., L.I.M.
1883 Ngombe Lutete-Wathen II B.M.S.
1886 Kinshasa (Léó.) B.M.S.

In 1884 the L.I.M. turned most of its stations over to the American Baptist Missionary Union, with headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts. This later became the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, known as the A.B.F.M.S.

1/ Ibid., p. 10.
in the Congo. 1/

The station of Mukimbungu was turned over to the Swedish Mission Covenant (Svenska Mission Forbundet), known as the S.M.F. in Congo. In the late twenties and early thirties an agreement was worked out by the two societies whereby Mukimbungu was worked by A.B.F.M.S. and the Swedish mission was responsible for the whole north bank. In the twenties both B.M.S. and the A.B.F.M.S. turned over their work at Matadi to this Swedish group. In 1892 a press was established at Matadi, and the first periodical in Congo, Minsamu Miayenge (Tidings of Peace) began its appearances. 2/

In 1884 work was begun by the Christian and Missionary Alliance, C.M.A., at the mouth of the river. Boma was later occupied, and several stations in the Mayombe and along the coastal plain were opened.

In 1886 Methodist missionaries tried to begin work, too, by establishing a post at Vivi, near Stanley's first government post. Other posts were established at Isangila and Stanley Pool, and they attempted to work these stations on a self-supporting basis. This proved impractical, and the work was closed in 1897. 3/

1/ Ibid., p. 21.
2/ Ibid., p. 21.
3/ Ibid., p. 22.
From then on missionaries came through Angola, and pushed up into the Katanga and Kivu areas. Others came to work along the equator, but no new groups came into the Bas-Congo until much later, with the coming of the Salvation Army in 1934.

It was soon seen that these varied and diverse groups should work together. The very early missionaries knew no other way. The early language notebooks of Henry Craven, L.I.M., were used by W. Holman Bentley, B.M.S., in preparing his grammar and dictionary. And these Laman, S.M.F., used in his definitive work. The Peace and Henry Reed were built on the same slipway at Kintambo, with much mutual help.

Lukunga, on the caravan route, had become a great center of rest and help, with both its government and mission houses and stores. Dr. Sims, the first medical doctor in Congo (L.I.M. and A.B.F.M.S.), went with Grenfell in 1884 on his first exploration trip. As other groups came in they took counsel together and pooled their knowledge.

When the railroad was finished in 1898 it was decided that this beginning of mutual help and understanding must not be lost. And so, periodic conferences were planned. The first one was held at Kintambo in 1902. Others were held at varying intervals. At first they were purely

Ibid., p. 34.
consultative and advisory.

The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 proposed that its work be carried on by a Continuation Committee, and that various committees be established on the mission fields of this same general order. And so the Congo General Conference of 1911 voted to form such a committee. This was the beginning of what is now known as the Congo Protestant Council. Its first act was the publishing of a quarterly, the Congo Mission News, in 1912. 1/

In 1924 its name was changed to the Congo Protestant Council. And a part time secretary, Emory Ross of the D.C.C.M., was appointed. He went to Léopoldville, and there, upon land given by the A.B.F.M.S., built a residence and offices for the Council. This had been the headquarters until 1954, when a new set of buildings was built in Kalina, the new government center. 2/

Throughout the years the teacher-evangelist has been the key to the work of the Protestant church. The first missionaries set up schools everywhere they went, as did the later comers, the Roman Catholics. Every station trained its young people to teach in their own villages. By 1908 a joint normal school was established at Kimpese for the higher training of these teachers. The A.B.F.M.S. and the

1/ Ibid., p. 35.  
2/ Ibid., p. 37.
B.M.S. first collaborated in what is now called Ecole des Pasteurs et d'Instituteurs. Later the S.M.F. joined in 1937.  

The Roman Catholic Church has also a strong work in the lower Congo. And their progress has been greatly aided by the Congo government itself, since Belgium itself is Catholic and until recent years its government has been consistently Catholic.

The missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church came in later than the protestant missionaries, however, except for a small work along the coast, which work had not been active for some years.

In 1880 they opened a small school at Boma. In July 1886, a Belgian, Emile Callewaert, arrived at a mission station near Banana. His work was done between Boma and Banana.

In 1888 Congo was named "vicariat apostolique" and given under the care of the Congregation of Scheut for evangelization. Immediately they were accorded special privileges in Congo, and in 1906 a special agreement was signed with the Pope whereby they received special help and recognition of their work.

The first of these missionaries arrived in Congo in 1888. Their first station was established at Léopoldville,

"Ibid., p. 56."
and they took over the work of their predecessors in Banana and Boma.

With an eye to building hospitals they called out the organization of Sisters of Charity of Gand. Ten sisters arrived in 1891. Five established an orphanage at Moanda, near Banana. The other five established a hospital at Matadi, the hospital of Kinkanda, to take care of those working on the railroad. 1/

The organization known as the "vicariat apostolique" disappeared in 1919, and instead Congo was organized into three divisions, of which Léopoldville was one. 2/

In 1893 the Jesuit fathers arrived in Congo. They established themselves along the shore of Stanley Pool, on a series of marshes. Later they moved to Kimwenza, a little south of Léopoldville, and there established a school. Their immediate aim was to free and educate young slaves from all parts of Congo. Father Liagre was in charge there, and he went down the Inkisi river to a point where the railroad line was destined to cross, and established another post there, Kisantu. Soon a flourishing school was going there, which was destined to grow into a great center of work and education. The main emphasis was agriculture. 3/

3/ Ibid., p. 25.
Little agricultural plots were established everywhere. In 1894 the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame arrived at Kimwenza to take on the work of educating the girls. 1/

The secular priests of Gand came out to work along the railroad during its building, in 1891. When their work was over in 1898 and they had returned to Belgium, the Congregation of T.S. Redemptor of Gand took over the work, establishing themselves in 1900 at Tumba. From there they established stations north of the river, and along the railroad line at Kimpese and Thysville. 2/

Since that time the work of the Roman Catholic Church has greatly increased. To those whose coming has already been listed came others to help in the section of Léopoldville les Frères des École Chrétiennes, les Soeurs Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie, les Dames Chanoinesses de Saint-Augustin, les Soeurs de l'Enfance de Jesus de Gand, les Dames du Sacre-Coeur de Jette, les Soeurs des Saint-Vincent de Paul de Gysegem. 3/

In a word, great zeal has been shown, first by the Protestants and then by the Roman Catholics, who set up schools and hospitals and thus helped a people who were

1/ Ibid., p. 27.
2/ Ibid., p. 30.
being confronted abruptly with a new civilization and government. It was not a question of leaving them alone to live in their old ways of happiness and peace. Those had been torn down many years before, and they were even more disrupted by those later comers who saw in them and their country a great storehouse of wealth.
CHAPTER 11
THE INDEPENDANT STATE OF CONGO

Stanley was greatly disappointed in the lack of progress that had been made at Vivi, when he returned. The roads had even deteriorated. Dr. Peschuel-Loeche was left in charge of the work in Congo, and the 15th of July 1882 Stanley left Vivi for Europe.

In October he was in Brussels, reporting to his fellow workers there. Above all, he said, Congo must have a railroad. This was not a new tale, but he was more insistent about it than ever. The matter was gone into at great length and it was agreed to look about for means of financing such a railroad.

It was decided that the time had come for the forming of an Association in Congo, which would attempt to govern the whole country. Preliminary treaties had already been signed. Now others were to be negotiated ceding ultimate power to the central government, which was to be called the Association International du Congo. Then it became evident that a larger personnel would have to be maintained in Congo. And that an efficient assistant must be left in

\[\text{Stanley, op. cit., p. 462.}\]
the lower Congo while Stanley went on to establish posts in the upper Congo. 1

By December Stanley was back in Congo. Everywhere he found disorder. Four months before Dr. Peschuel-Loeche had left for home, and the expedition was leaderless. The leaders of Vivi, Isangila, and Léopoldville were not on the job. The boats were captainless. There were sporadic fights between some of the natives and white men (one when a white trader near Vivi shot one of the trusted native interpreters.) 2

Lt. Van de Velde was sent to see to the Kwilu-Niadi value to the north to negotiate treaties with the chiefs of the surrounding territories. Captain Elliott and later Captain Hanssens worked in the upper valley to explore and sign treaties for the land between Isangila north to the Kwilu-Niadi area. 3

Lt. Valcke had been dispatched along the southern bank to make treaties with all the principal chiefs between Manyanga and Léopoldville. Orders were sent to the chief of Léopoldville to make treaties with the chiefs of Kinshasa, Kimbangu, and Kimpoko. 4

Orders went out for the construction of a new road

1/ Ibid., p. 464-5
2/ Ibid., p. 472.
3/ Ibid., p. 476-7
4/ Ibid., p. 477.
on the south bank of the river from Manyanga to Stanley Pool. Léopoldville was found to be in desperate need of food, and it was ordered sent up from the full stores of the down river stations. 1/

When finally he saw the station of Léopoldville again Stanley was greatly disappointed. Grass had grown up everywhere, and almost nothing new had been attempted. The boats were idle. The new boat which was supposed to be almost done – the A.I.A. – was still many months from completion. Quarrels had grown up between the whites and the natives.

A point of the river, just above the port, beyond which the river widens to form the great pool, had received a new name – Kalina Point, in honor of a young soldier who, against orders, had sought to go on ahead by river to explore new territory. His boat had capsized, and he had drowned. 2/

Stanley immediately set out to straighten out the mess. Food was sent for. Men were sent to haul the boilers of the boat up to Léopoldville. The chief of Léopoldville was asked to resign for neglecting his duties. Efforts were made to reestablish friendly feeling with the

1/ Ibid., p. 476.
2/ Ibid., p. 486.
neighboring chiefs. They came to see him, Ngaliema, Makabi, Manswala, Ganchu, and Ngako representing the Bampundu. They repeated not only the early happy meetings with Stanley but all the later insults which they had received at the hands of the white people of Léopoldville. It seemed, too, by their own report, that at least Ngaliema had not been blameless in his actions. He had refused to return the capsized boat of Kalina, he was arrogant when called in to conference with the white soldiers, etc. 1/

Stanley straightened all this out, and a treaty was signed uniting all the chiefs of the Bambundu, Kintambo and the Association for the preservation of the peace of Stanley Pool. The sovereign power was vested in the Association. 2/

This process of treaty making went on until by 1884 treaties with four hundred and fifty tribes had been signed. Thus was created the A.I.C., the Association International du Congo. In April the United States of America was the first to recognize the A.I.C. as a state.

Sir Francis de Winton was appointed vice administrator general on April 1, 1884, and came out to replace Stanley

1/ Ibid., p. 492-3
2/ Ibid., p. 495.
as the chief of the state. He arrived at Vivi in May, and
Stanley stayed with him to introduce him to the work until
June. Then he left, feeling that he had done his duty to
Congo.

In the fall of this same year the conference of Berlin
was called by Bismarck. Here states having interests in
Africa got together to agree on certain rights and bound-
aries. During this meeting all the states recognized the
new state of Congo. Some of the agreements included
commercial liberty, freedom of all ships in Congo ports,
no slavery, freedom of navigation on the Niger and Congo
rivers. The A.I.C. accepted these conditions, and the new
state was solemnly accepted by all.

Léopold II was recognized as personally responsible
for the rule of the A.I.C., and Belgium gave him permission
to do this. When this latter was accorded in 1885, the
name of the country was changed to L'Etat Independent du
Congo.

At Berlin an agreement was reached with Portugal
allowing the E.I.C. a certain amount of land at the mouth
of the river, and this had to be incorporated into the
previous arrangements for the rule of the country.

On July 1, 1885 the proclamation of the independance
of Congo was written, and on the nineteenth of July this
was proclaimed at Banana by Sir Francis de Winton. The first of August Léopold notified the countries of the change of name to E.I.C.

After the proclamation of independence the government set about putting the rules, agreed upon at Berlin, into effect in Congo. Slavery and the sale of alcoholic beverages to the natives were banned.

The government itself was organized under three departments, the department of foreign affairs and justice, the department of finances, and the department of the interior. At the head of each department was a secretary. The country itself was divided into fifteen districts, of which five were in the Bas-Congo - the districts of Boma, Banana, Matadi, the Cataracts, and Stanley Pool.

Important rules were put into effect about the land of the country and its ownership. These made Léopold II the greatest land owner of the world. All land designated as unoccupied became the property of the state, which was, in effect, Léopold. Land which for centuries had belonged to certain tribes was adjudged not occupied, because they weren't in use at that time. No account was taken of the way the Congolese farm, moving around their lands as the

1/ Ministère des Colonies, op. cit.,
2/ de Rouck, op. cit., p. 3.
land in use wears out, and so letting much of their tribal land lie fallow and renew itself. They had declared at Berlin that commerce was free, but immediately this was negated when the king became the greatest land proprietor.

In 1886 the capital was moved from Vivi to Boma, where it stayed until it was transferred to Léopoldville in October 1929. 1/

The greatest time and strength of the new state, in the Bas-Congo, was laid out in the building of the railroad from Matadi to the Pool. Before the conference of Berlin the first engineer had been sent out to study the possible routes of the railroad. He (Zboinski) advised that the railroad be built south of the river, and not north as planned by Stanley. 2/

Others were sent out on 1885. Because of the indifference of his own country Léopold II looked for aid in the financing of this railroad to England, and they formed a Company of Manchester to help him. Albert Thys became aware of this and started a crusade in Belgium which woke the bankers up, and through his energy England and her money were kept out of the deal. 3/

In February 1887 the Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et l'Industrie was created in Brussels, and to it, in March of the same year, the Independent State gave permission and land to build the railroad of the Bas-Congo as far as Stanley Pool. 1/

Perhaps some word should be inserted here about Albert Thys, for he became the prime builder of the railroad.

Albert Thys, for whom Thysville was later named, was a Belgian soldier on the personal staff of Léopold II. In 1876 he was assigned to the work in Africa as a secretary, and from then on was much concerned with the Belgian expeditions and concerns in Africa.

When he saw the evident intent of the king to let an English group finance the Congo railroad, he took it upon himself to personally arouse Belgian financial interests in such a scheme. So successful was he that relations were broken off with the English group, and the wealth of Congo was kept exclusively within the Belgian fold.

Albert Thys was greatly valued by the king. He could have had greater titles if he had wanted them, for he was designated as secretary of the Stat Indépendant du Congo, but he asked to be released from such a post. 2/

1/ Ibid., p. 81-82.
2/ Ibid., p. 65.
He was one of the few Belgians at that time who understood what Congo and its wealth (which was not fully understood then) would mean to Belgium if they were properly developed. And Belgians have him to thank for the railroad, for many times a lesser man would have abandoned what seemed an impossible and terribly expensive job.

Under his insistence the C.C.C.I. was founded and financed. The primary object of this organization was to study, build, and exploit a railroad connecting the Bas-Congo with Stanley Pool. Two expeditions were immediately organized and sent out to Congo. The first was under the command of Ernest Cambier. And it was made up of engineers and surveyors to study and plan for the best route to be followed. The other expedition was less important for our study, although, since it had its base at Léopoldville, perhaps it should be mentioned. It was to study the upper Congo to find the best way to develop and exploit commercial navigation. This later developed into what is now a virtual monopoly of railway and river transportation in Congo (at present, this organization of exploit is Otraco).

1/ Ibid., p. 81.
2/ Ibid., p. 83.
Albert Thys was in charge of these two groups and interests. And he and his underworkers mobilized the whole of the lower Congo and Léopoldville to carry on the functions of these two committees. He even had the power to enter into local government and make decisions. From then on Thys went back and forth between Belgium and Congo, acting as director of these two groups and as private agent of the king.

The first months nothing went very well. On all sides there were personal problems. The agents of the state did little to endear themselves to either the men working for the interests of the railroader to the native peoples themselves. One of Thys' first duties was to explore the persistent stories of mistreatment of the natives. The land was pretty much in the hands of the freebooters, when little of justice or concern for others were understood as part of the rules of the game. This was a condition prevalent throughout Africa. Thys seems to have been of the same thought as Stanley, the pocketbooks of Belgium could best be served by treating the Congolese as people and enlisting them on the side of order and financial gain. His personal orders were against the habit of hitting

1/ Ibid., p. 83.
2/ Ibid., p. 83.
and beating. 1/

Thys returned to Belgium with his preliminary reports and problems, and it was decided to go ahead with the projected railroad. Reports were piled upon reports. Three committees of engineers had been sent out. They had walked up and down the river to make calculations.

Two things emerged from their reports, the railroad would be no easy matter to construct, but the country could not be developed without it. So, in July, 1889, the Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Congo was constituted, the Belgian lawmakers obtained permission for the government to participate in this financially, and a constitution was approved by the Senate. 2/

The first engineers definitely concerned with the building of the railroad arrived in Congo in November, 1889. 3/ And the actual battle of laying the route was begun March 15, 1890.

At first the patience of everyone concerned was tried by this new railroad and its building. The greater burden was carried by the native villagers and workers. They did not know the European system of pay, nor did they understand the European ways of working. Contracts

1/ Ibid., p. 118.
2/ Ibid., p. 170.
day wages and work, work gangs, all these were new terms and concepts to them. Everywhere was half-hidden or outright animosity to the white man and his possession of their country.

For the most part the white man did little to help this situation. Few of them saw the Congolese as a person, and the word animal was much on their lips. Too, they were not adverse to forcing villages to produce so many workers, and a system close akin to slavery grew up.

Later, under a combination of many methods and teachings, the Congolese became more amenable to the white direction and system. Good food was part of it. Acceptance of the inevitable was another. Disease weakened the whole countryside. The desire for new things of the whites played a part.

The Congolese learned the hard way to be laborers on the railroad and thus to work under the direction of the white man in many capacities. And a younger generation of men grew up whose bitterness against the conqueror took a different form, and in many cases was lessened by the good life that came with the white man's money.

The first problem of the railroad was that of the laborers. They couldn't be recruited from the surrounding villages, at least, not at first. The villages were
small, and the men were very reluctant to work. And, at best, they were only raw recruits. Whatever young men might have been available were pretty much absorbed by the needs and demands of the caravan routes.

Almost the same problem was met in the recruiting of white workers. The first were a motley crowd, and hired without too much attention to character and experience. Most of them were Belgians, but they came also from Italy, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Greece, and Luxembourg. Some were serious men and did honor to their work. Most of them were impossible, and the lot of the other workers both European and African was considerably worsened by them. 1

Housing and food were inadequate, as were the sanitary and medical conditions. Death was a common visitor, for all sorts of diseases and epidemics hit the work villages. Only the hardiest and the strongest characters made it for more than a few months.

The first African workers were also a motley crew. Because few natives of the area were available, they were recruited from all along the west coast of Africa, the first workers came from Guinea. And soon the cry went

1 Ibid., p. 179.
up that slavery was in again. Sometimes the working and
living conditions were such as would bear out this
accusation. Always Thys and his workers insisted that
the workers had signed contracts, and were paid. But the
old question of understanding the contract came up again.
As time went on conditions were changed for the better,
and less and less were they obliged to import labor.

The end of that first year, 1890, others came from
the coast of west Africa, Krus, Accras, Sierra Leonians,
and Houssas. Some of them had worked on the railroads
before, at Bakar, and had the added advantage of speaking
French. Two groups of workers also came from Zanzibar.

By the beginning of 1891 about two thousand workers
of various countries and talents assembled. Five thousand
workers were thought necessary, but that was impossible.
It took a strong police force and even an army to control
these diverse groups, and the impression they made upon
the native countryside and peoples is incalculable. Food
had to be provided by the company. And, supposedly, so
were sanitary conditions. But disease was rampant, and
spread to all the villages nearby, dysentery, malignant

1/ Ibid., p. 181.
2/ Ibid., p. 181.
fevers, malaria, beri-beri. Day after day they died by
the hundreds, and others of the sick were taken back to
their native lands. 1/ Desertions across the Portuguese
border into Angola were frequent.

Nature itself added to the nightmare, for the very
nature of the land itself was against them. The area
around Matadi itself is a vast ridge of mountains, then
the difficult and turbulent Mpozo river, and then the
highest elevation of that area, Palabala Hills. These
three barriers were almost insurmountable. 2/

The length of the old railroad bed is bordered by
the burial places of those who died in this work. In
fact, the valley of the Mpozo is a vast cemetery. 3/
By June 1892, nine hundred men had died. One hundred and
fifty had died the first month of the work. 4/ The
workers were demoralized. Desertions and revolts were
the common thing. And many of them fled to Noki, the
river port on the Portuguese side of the border, thereby
constituting a constant threat to the work. 5/

1/ Ibid., p. 185.
2/ Ibid., p. 187.
3/ Ibid., p. 207.
4/ Ibid., p. 209.
5/ Ibid., p. 183.
Always the question of recruitment was acute, until they came from as far away as Asia, five hundred and fifty Chinese coolies from Macao. \(^1\) These Chinese never did return to their homes, and today you see here and there evidence of their being in Congo in the slanting eyes of some of their children and grandchildren.

Meanwhile the work advanced slowly. Fifteen months after the ground was first broken two and a half kilometers of the road had been finished. The rest went faster. Thirteen months later they had finished six and a half more.

Finances were the continual worry of Thys. By the time the ninth kilometer had been reached nearly half of the resources of the company had been exhausted. The Belgian parliament came to the rescue and invested more money. Never was the need so acute again. \(^2\)

By December 1893, the first section from Matadi to Kenge was in use, thirty seven kilometers. \(^3\) Three times a week now, trains went back and forth between these two spots. Passengers were carried, but the great


\(^2\) *J. Lébégue et. Cie.*, *La Verité sur le Congo*, Bruxelles, 1903-4, p. 9.

\(^3\) *Cornet*, *op. cit.*, p. 240.
bulk of the work was freight. Most of the work of the porters on the caravan route from Matadi to Kenge was taken over, and the men were relieved for porter service higher up on the road, and for work on the railroad itself. \(^1\) Porter service was still needed to and from the railroad on both ends, and the loading of the cars still demanded manual labor, but the work was easing, so that the lot of the Congo man was somewhat lighter.

By this time working conditions were much changed. Many more workers from the surrounding areas had been recruited. The majority were still from the English colonies, as the following list of workers will show, but almost a third were native to Congo. Almost eight thousand were working in 1897, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>1,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Colonies</td>
<td>4,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo coast</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo rapids area</td>
<td>1,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>7,921</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The death rate, which was 9.80% in 1892, had fallen to 0.75% in 1897. It was a far cry from the nightmare of Matadi and Palabala. \(^2\)

The halfway station at Tumba was inaugurated on

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 250.  
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 336.  
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 336.
July 22, 1896. And on March 16, 1898 the locomotive reached the end of the line at Ndolo, on the shore of Stanley Pool. 1/

From this time on the caravan and porter problem was at an end. And suddenly the lower Congo became a bustling commercial area. The number of commercial enterprises multiplied. These were for the main part owned and financed by Belgians, although some Portuguese and English money and workers were also included. None of this expansion was Congolese in nature, although it all rested on the Congolese as laborer. 2/

On July 6, 1898 the whole railroad line was officially opened. And thus the center of Africa was really opened to the outside world. It made of the lower Congo a road. In recent years many people have gone in and out of Congo by plane, but in those early years they came by train. And virtually all of the baggage and merchandise came in this way. By 1952 what was a few tons that first year, was over two million tons a year. 3/ No longer was the Bas-Congo isolated, separated from the world. All peoples came to know the white man and his

1/ LeSage, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
2/ Ibid., p. 10.
things.

The railroad today is not exactly what it was in 1898. In October 1923 work was undertaken to improve its route, and to enlarge its tracks from the narrow gauge of the original. This was a chore, but not to be compared with the original work. And it was completed in December, 1931. From this time travel became easier and shorter. And trains went each day, excepting Sunday, to and from Matadi, accomplishing the trip in eleven hours instead of the two or three days of previous times. In April, 1936 the Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Congo was liquidated, and since then the railroad has been under the rule of Otraco, the arm of the Congo government.

The railroad which brought such development and activity brought also death in its wake. All during the building of the railroad the workers and the villagers had been subjected to diseases and epidemics of diseases. The imported workers had brought some of them. Others were a product of the country itself. Little or nothing was known about controlling germs and disease. After the railroad was finished in 1898 these troubles did not abate, but rather their area spread. Smallpox and

1/ Ibid., p. 384.
2/ Ibid., p. 385.
sleeping sickness swept through the country. And the people died by the hundreds. Hospitals were established everywhere, especially by the missions, in an effort to stop the annihilation of the whole countryside.

Sleeping sickness was not understood and almost nothing was known about fighting it. Gradually the diseases spread until the interior villages which knew almost nothing of the railroad were wiped out. The Sanda-Kimwenza area lost ninety five percent of its population in eight years. Areas which had counted two thousand two hundred able bodied men in 1894 had no more than three hundred and ten in 1907.

Whole villages were wiped, and what was once a fairly well populated land became a desert. Many medicines were tried, and the first to give any help at all was atoxyl. Then began the wholesale examination and treatment of disease. Missionaries and government men joined hands in the fight, and a yearly examination was required of all Congolese. Thus, little by little, the imroads of sleeping sickness abated, until today

it is pretty much under control. 1/

Events were occurring in the rest of Congo which were to effect profoundly the course of history in the Bas-Congo. In 1895 a revolt broke out among the Batetela in Luluabourg, in the Kasai. 2/ Many were the causes of this revolt, but the immediate one was the execution of one of the powerful chiefs, Congo Lytete, by the government. Even more than this it was the revolt of a proud people and state against their would-be rulers.

The revolt spread into the great lakes area, until the situation was really serious. The mutineers were transported many places outside of their own area, and many were imprisoned in the fort Shinkakasa down the river from Boma. On the 17th of April 1900, they made an attempt to revolt, and in a flash had taken over the ammunition. 3/ Help was sent from Boma and nearby places, and the 19th of April the fort was retaken.

Then began the hunt for the many who had fled into

3/ Ibid., p. 46.
the hills. Many were taken just north of Boma, others were followed into the Cristal Mountains themselves. Rewards were offered for their capture, and the search went on until most of them were retaken and executed. 1/

This revolt in Boma was of minor importance when you consider other events which were taking place in the rest of Congo. Certainly the Bakongo were not able to take part in the revolt, and some of them were even used in the army and police forces to put down the revolt and capture those who tried to escape.

The system of forced labor and the method of exploiting the land brought far greater troubles. Forced labor had been in effect during the building of the railroad. Each chief was required to furnish a certain number of workers, and there was no investigation of the methods he used in such recruitment. The same method was used for recruitment for the army. Further, each native was required to give forty hours a month to the state as taxes. It was argued that this was an educational measure, to teach the Congolese to work. 2/

This system might have worked better under responsible trained government men, but most of the agents and

1/ Ibid., p. 47.
2/ Lebogues, op. cit., p. 13.
commercial people at the time were freebooters, such as were working in the rest of Africa. Little or no control was exercised over their methods, and, as a result, they resorted to many methods of forcing the people to work in order to fulfill their quotas of work and workers, soldiers and produce. The lower Congo was comparatively free from some of the results of these methods because it was not in the area of rubber and copal. But the great inner regions were the centers of production, and the pressure of gain was very great there.

As a result the cry soon went up in England and America of slavery and atrocities. Committees of investigation were sent out, both by the king himself and by other countries in 1904. It was quickly seen that the truth was somewhere in the middle, and the reports had been greatly exaggerated. Furthermore it became evident to people who knew the situation that what was happening here was no different from what was happening in the other colonies. Everywhere methods of force were used by men who thought in terms of the riches of Africa. 1/

At the same time Léopold II was having a hard time financing the colony. He had invested his own private fortune, and enlisted others, even the Belgian government, to do the same. But still the expenses were far beyond his gains. His efforts to make money quickly had resulted in many abuses. From January 1889 it had been known that upon his death he would leave the Congo to Belgium, but soon, under the pressure of criticism and financial difficulty he let it be known that he was willing for Belgium to take the colony over before his death.

Belgium was smarting under the censure which the rest of the world had given her because of the rule in Congo, although it was not her responsibility at all.

All this agitation ended in 1908, when, the 20th of August, the Belgian parliament voted to take over the Congo as a Belgian colony. And so the État Indépendant du Congo came to an end, and all the peoples of this area, without being consulted at all, were handed on, lock, stock, and barrel, to Belgium to be ruled as a colony. 1/

CHAPTER 12
A BELGIAN COLONY

Belgium took over the Congo without the full consent of her king, Léopold II. She felt that she had every right to do this to clear up her reputation in the eyes of the world. For it was the Belgians who had first given Léopold the right to become the king of the Congo state, and the state and its citizens had great sums of money invested there. In the eyes of the world she was responsible, and she intended to exercise her responsibility. On November 15 Léopold II reluctantly signed the law which transferred his direct rule of Congo to the rule of Belgium. 1/

Most of the countries who had signed the act of Berlin in 1885 saw this as a step in the right direction. England refused to recognize it at first, and she held out until 1913, when she badly needed Belgium's help and friendship in the first world war. Her attitude

1/ Ibid., p. 46.
can be understood when one considers her colonial hopes in Africa.

With her reputation at stake, Belgium set about immediately to reform the rule of the colony. Serious attempts were made to restore commercial liberty, taxes were paid in money, not labor and produce, young colonial agents were recruited and trained in adequate ways to work with the Congolese, and the system of land ownership by the state and crown was greatly changed. Forced labor was greatly reduced and every effort was made to employ the native peoples with contracts and wages. A very concerted effort was put forward to help medically. The medical work of the missions was subsidized, and gradually state medical hospitals and doctors and nurses were established. ¹

Even before the king finally had given in and ceded the Congo to Belgium as a colony a completely new law, called the Colonial Charter, had been drawn up in October, 1908. No longer was the law of the land to be decided on the spur of the moment by any person of white skin. Now the rights, and duties, of all peoples were laid down on paper. The ultimate rule of Congo lay in

¹ Ibid., p. 24.
the Parliament of Belgium. The King had certain powers under it, and the Governor General and Vice Governor Generals represented the king and had certain powers of a local nature.

The whole system of courts was worked up, reaching from the little courts of the native villages, and manned by the natives themselves, to the final court of appeal in Belgium. A minister of colonies was appointed in the cabinet of the king to concern himself with colonial affairs.

Immediately the lot of the Congolese became easier. The emphasis on medical help did much to stop the inroads of disease in the lower Congo. Little was done at this time in regard to education. Belgium was committed to the principle that education should be in the hands of the church. A few government schools were built, but most of them were put into the hands of the Catholic church. The other schools of the Catholic church were also largely paid for out of the state funds, according to the agreement with the Vatican in 1906. As a result of this backing they were able to build many more schools than the Protestant missions, who were considered strangers. This situation was somewhat changed in 1948 when the government began a system of subsidizing all
schools which could meet certain standards.

An attempt was made to return some of the chiefs of the local villages to their positions of authority. In cases where the chieftain line had died off or was uncooperative, the chief was chosen by the government. And a very serious attempt was made to allow the native laws and customs to continue, as long as they did not contradict the Belgian laws and ways of doing things. But always on top was the Belgian official, ruling in what is called the way of paternalism.

This greater organization of the central government, even though the Congolese participated in it, destroyed whatever hopes and thoughts there might have been of returning to the old ways of doing things, or even of advancing toward self-government. The new attitude and activities of the white ruler broke down the solidarity of native thinking against colonial rulers. The very great opportunities in the economic world gave the ambitious an outlet for their energy and a great deal of return in material things.

A small segment of the Bakongo people were cut off from the main Bakongo tribes contained in the Belgian colony. These were the Bakongo around the ancient capital of Kongo.
Portugal held onto them, as well as other areas south of the Congo River and east of Noki. They were partially cut off from the rest of the tribe by the very different rule of the Portuguese. This separation was partial only, for there was a great deal of movement across the border during the first years of separation, and still is to some extent.

Where the new Belgian government emphasized medical help, Portugal kept on in its old colonial ways. Little attention was paid to this aspect of its responsibility. Where Belgium encouraged the building of schools, mainly by missions but also by the companies, and where these Belgian schools were to emphasize both the native languages and French, and fairly wide leeway was given to all, Portugal became very repressive. The Baptist Missionary Society has work in both areas, Portuguese and Belgian. They have built up a competent school system in the Belgian area, but in Angola they have been in doubt, at times, as to whether they could continue there, and are, at this time, required to teach in Portuguese and to hire a Portuguese school master in order to continue work at all.

San Salvador itself is a fairly large native village today, with a representative of the Portuguese
government in residence. The prestige given to the
descendant of the kings is much greater among the
people themselves than his position in the Portuguese
government would warrant. The salaries and living
conditions among the people are much lower than in the
Belgian area to the north, but this is true of the white
people too, and probably reflects the comparative wealth
of the two colonies.

The material for this chapter was taken from the
Belgian Colonial Course, from a study of the Colonial
Charter, and from personal conversation and experience
in the Congo.
CHAPTER 13
THE SITUATION TODAY

The Bakongo today do not constitute a nation, nor is there much hope that they can do so in the immediate future. In their peoples have been mixed the blood of many of the workers who came during the building of the railroad. The upriver peoples, the Bateke especially, the Bangala, the Bayaka, and other tribes of the Kwango have also mixed with them.

But still there exists today a common feeling and knowledge that they are one people, with a common ancestry, home, and history. Thinking Bakongo cherish the hope that in the future they will constitute a united group within a united Congo.

These Bakongo tribes are by no means the same as those Portuguese found when they arrived in 1482. Much happened to them and their land before the Belgians assumed the rule of their country in 1908.

Some things remained constant, of course. The Bakongo are an agricultural people; they were when the Portuguese found them, they were when the Belgians took over, they are today. They have also been traders, and very often in these days they have abandoned
agriculture for trading. Many alert and active people trade either in or near their own villages, or they move to the urban centers. Few of them plan to be gone permanently from their villages. A well-to-do man in the city builds a brick house in his village. The whole economy and still the majority of the people are agricultural.

The Bakongo trace their family relationships through their mothers. They have been matrilineal since they have been known in history, and way before that time according to their own traditions. Their common ancestor was a woman. While the family patterns have changed somewhat since the first contact with European civilization, the foundation is the same. Very often now, in the cities and on the mission stations especially, the father is admitted to have some authority and jurisdiction over his children. The important man in the family, however, is still the maternal uncle, ngua nkazi. He is always to be reckoned with, and must always bear his share of the family burden.

The language of Kikongo has always been the badge of the Bakongo. It first showed their allegiance to a common ancestor and capital city. Even in the days when it was each tribe for itself, this bond united all.
Today there are about one million who speak Kikongo. Many are not members of the original Bakongo tribes, but sometime in history they came under their control, and still speak the language of the Kongo Kingdom. Many of the young people in the urban centers think it smart to speak Lingala, everyone wants to speak French, the language of the Belgian rulers. The women have been the last to give in, and many still speak the dialect of their family and village. The men are more apt to speak a more general version of Kikongo. Most of them, while they speak other languages, speak proudly the language of their fathers.

These three aspects of Bakongo life are basically the same as they have been since the Bakongo first joined together to form a state. Many other things and ways have changed through the years. They have descended pretty low in the ladder of life since they first welcomed the white stranger into their land. Slavers, anarchy, foreign rule, invaders, forced labor, and disease have reduced the level of Bakongo civilization. But they still have the same orientation and philosophy of life. They still speak the same language.

The Portuguese found a well organized central government which reached out into all sections of the
kingdom with established rules and customs. The Belgians found small clans and tribes artificially united by a series of "treaties" into a state which was frankly ruled for economic profit. The peoples had little or nothing to say about their country, and their customs and rules were disregarded.

The Portuguese found a people who knew how to make beautiful cloth, closely woven baskets with beautiful designs of many colors, fine pottery, and various kinds of musical instruments. The Belgians found a people who knew just enough of the rudiments of these arts to get along in life. The fine cloth of former days was gone and forgotten. The baskets were made for carrying garden produce to and from the fields and markets, but they had been reduced in quality and kind. The pottery was utilitarian, for carrying water, for cooking and storing, but gone were the intricate designs and varied shades of color. Many musical instruments were known, but their use and kind was static and crude.

The Portuguese found a profoundly religious people who made religion a part of everything they did in life. They worshipped their ancestors, and many rituals of life were directed toward the spirit world, that the good spirits and ancestors be enlisted on their side of life.
The nganga was the good priest, the man seriously concerned with understanding the mysteries of life. The Portuguese tried to teach the Bakongo the Christian religion, but they failed. The Belgians found a people who had gone back to the way of their fathers, and were much concerned with the spirit world. The nganga had deteriorated considerably from his first high estate, and often used the people for his own ends. Some of the people had left this way of life and accepted the new Christianity which had come after 1877. This division had undermined to some extent the unity of the Bakongo people.

The Portuguese found a society which taught its young people that the clan, the tribe, was all important. Tribal lands were held in common, for the good of all. No child was an orphan, no old person without someone to look after him. The group was more important than the individual. Marriage, religious ritual, birth, death, work, crops, all were matters for group decision. The Belgians found this rule still working. The years of white rule since the arrival of Stanley had inflicted much trouble upon the people, but their's was still a group centered philosophy. Marriage was still in the hands of the family, not a matter for individual choice. Tribal lands had been wrested from them, against their
own will, to bring wealth to their white masters. They stuck doggedly to their belief that land could not be bought or sold but belonged to the clan or tribe, and were bewildered at the events that took place. The system of forced labor whereby the chiefs had to fulfill a quota of workmen and soldiers to work elsewhere was very much against their traditions. A man did not willingly leave his ancestral land and the home of his family.

The Portuguese found a strong proud people, well to look upon, and proud of themselves and of their country. The Belgians found a people ridden with disease, for the great epidemics which came with the railroad were not yet under control.

The Portuguese found a land of sufficient food, plenty of meat, and no man in want. The Belgians found a land grown barren over the years. The years of slave-trading had wasted the Bas-Congo. Fires set to round up slaves had burned off forest lands. The wild animals, once so plentiful, had sought shelter elsewhere. Desert and erosion and great barren wastelands were the rule rather than the exception. The former forest lands did not make good farming lands. The Portuguese had brought, among other foods (such as rice, sugar cane, pineapples, peanuts), manioc. Manioc is an easy food to grow, but it robs the land of its goodness.
Great have been the changes in the land and people since 1908 when Congo became a colony of Belgium. One of the first things Belgium did was to stop the inroads of such diseases as sleeping sickness, malaria, and smallpox. They sent out medicine and workers, and gave help to the missions and companies who were engaged in the same fight for life. The picture is entirely different today. Yearly examinations are required, and hospitals are everywhere.

Life within the tribe has changed considerably. Some measure of self rule, which was lost entirely in the years before 1908, has been returned. In so far as possible, the traditional chiefs and elders rule the land, and native courts are the courts of the people. But the chiefs are not their own bosses, they do what they are told to do. They rule for and with Belgium, and are always under the Belgian. Whereas the elders and chiefs were formerly greatly respected, and their word honored, they are today often regarded as other men who work for a boss. If they refuse to obey the government, they are ousted from their positions. If they obey, they often cut themselves off from their people.

The agriculture of the villages is pretty much the same as it has been throughout the years. The men do the clearing of the land and the heavy work; the women plant,
harvest, and even market. Erosion has washed away much of the top soil. Rotation of crops is little understood, except near centers which emphasize this area of knowledge. The same old hoe is used, and the land is most often cleared by burning the brush and trees.

The houses of the villages are the same rectangular shape of their ancestor's houses, with ridge poles, overhanging roofs, small windows, and a low door. They are used more for storage and sleeping than for living. Each house had its little cooking area outside, sometimes in or near a small building. And each set of buildings has its own yard swept clear of grass, with a few trees and flowers, and surrounded by a fence or lupangu. Most of the houses are still made of clay plastered onto a framework of sticks and sun-dried. But every village now has at least one brick house, either that of the chief or of some rich man which has made or is making his money in the city.

The cities are filled with people who have come loose of the old rule that the group and group decisions are all important. There is no longer any secret initiation into the tribe. The family still maintains its right to plan marriages, but here and there young people are insisting on marrying outside of the fixed families and rules. The man and his family must give tokens and gifts
to the family of the girl, and sometimes, in these days of looking for money, the prices have become exorbitant. The basis for marriage in the eyes of the government is still the tribal one. The Christian church usually insists upon a Christian marriage, but only after the tribal rules and requirements have been met.

The old tribal arts and crafts are changing under the impetus of new European designs and materials. Weaving has almost stopped, except for mats. Dishes and baskets can be bought in the stores. There is a decline in the interest in what is the old way of making such articles. If they are kept up at all it is with new designs, European methods, and often store materials.

Men have almost entirely adopted the European way of dressing. Women wear both the old and the new, but cling rather to the old.

There are not two distinct groups, the urban and the rural dwellers. Rather there is continual movement in and out of the city. The women visit their families and villages very often, and they take their children with them. The men go less frequently, because of their work obligations, but they are expected to go home every year or so. The village relatives are not strangers in the city homes. The trains and trucks are are full of people coming and going from their villages.
Now that schools are becoming more and more important, it would almost seem as if much of the old that exists even today among the Bakongo must go. The sheer plenty of things must bring even more changes. The radio, the newspaper, world visitors, books, all tell of other ways of doing things. And yet I venture to predict that the unity of the Bakongo which has existed so long, through easy and hard conditions, will not disappear. Rather, it will grow.

Those who live in the cities and commercial centers are almost more aware of their oneness with the tribe and family than are those who live in their ancestral villages and therefore have no need to defend what is theirs already. They live together, they meet together, they form their groups together, they like each other. They feel heavy obligations to those members of their families in the city or back in the villages. There are, of course, exceptions to this, but comparatively few.

They talk over their family traditions, they discuss fine points of history and family relationships, they tell their native fables. They spend long hours advising or comforting members of their family.

In the villages, life goes on very much as it has through the years. Birth, marriage, death, work in the fields, village gatherings and palavers. Brick houses
and bicycles, store dishes and clothes have been added on the surface, as well as European money. But the spirit and the rules are still there.

As a people they have been through much together, and while they do not have control of their own lands at the present time, they are part of the same family, tribe, people. And they know it.
ADDENDUM
Underneath and on the edge leaders and movements are continually arising among the Bakongo with the promise and hope of joining them as a group against the white intruder and other groups foreign to their land. These movements usually take the form of secret religious groups, and while they usually start out as a force to unify the Bakongo group, they often take on an anti-white tinge later as they progress.

The greatest of these movements arose, under the leadership of a carpenter named Simon Kibangu, in 1921. He started out with the idea of building a strong native Christian church under native leadership, as a protest against the white-rulled churches of his day. He lived within the area of the work of the Baptist Missionary Society, and tried, at first, to work with them. But they did not understand him or his message, and he became discouraged and was led, in a dream, to leave them and work for himself. He was greatly revered by all who knew him, and evidently merited the name of prophet which he received. His fame as a worker of
miracles spread throughout the land.

His greatest appeal to the people was in the realm of healing, for he felt called upon to work miracles of healing, even to the extent of raising the dead. All this he did in the name of Jesus.

Both the new European medicine and the old African fetishes were thrown away by his followers. The shrines were destroyed, and dancing and polygamy were banned. Everywhere his followers founded their own African churches and supported their own workers. The Protestant Bible and hymnbook were used, and a great boom of the sales of these two books resulted.

People left their jobs in the cities and their own little farms in the villages to flock around their great prophet. This created a crisis in the commercial world, for the economy of the cities is very much dependent on the farmer. It was even feared that the railroad might have to be closed for lack of food.

Things became even more disorganized when this church declared Wednesday as a day of rest.

What had started out as a perfectly valid movement within the church itself became, under many of its minor leaders, a radical and even anti-white movement. The

The anti-white movements and leaders in British West Africa were said to have influenced to some extent these minor leaders in Kibangu's movement. From this time on the whole group was seen as dangerous by the government and Europeans.

One recurring theme was the destruction of the white man (the date first given was October 21, 1921) and the deliverance of the Congolese from white oppression. There were several alternatives as to the way they were to be delivered, one was by the American negro, another was by the second coming of Christ. 1/

Kibangu was arrested in June, 1921, but managed to escape. Martial law was declared and enforced until Kibangu and some of his followers were rearrested in September. During this interlude Europeans lived in fear that they might be killed, so frantic were the followers of this movement.

Kibangu was sentenced to death, but this sentence was later changed to life imprisonment. Nine other leaders also received this same penalty, many others shorter terms, and a great many were exiled for life in other parts of Congo. 2/

From this time on the government was most vigilant


that nothing like this occur again. Secret meetings of any kind were strictly forbidden, with special emphasis on any meetings in private homes. Throughout the years since that time any group which disobeys this law is subject to arrest and exile.

In spite of this rule and the enforcement of it, no year has gone by without the arrest and exiling of the leaders of such groups.

Such strictness has discouraged many would-be leaders of such movements, or they have early been removed from the scene of action. But in these last few years another strong religious movement has arisen which has, as did the "prophet" movement of Kibangu, taken on an anti-white tinge.

This movement was called the "Kukisa" movement. It is said to have arisen north of the Congo River, among those people in the French area who are closely akin to the Bakongo. It was quickly embraced by the members of the Bakongo tribes south of the river, and spread to almost every village and family.

The form as known among these people was a combination of many factors. The cross of the Catholic Church was taken, the Bible of the Protestant Church, and the ground taken from one of the ancestors' graves who had
lived before the coming of the white man. All of this was arranged outside of the village Christian church, and each member of the village was required to kneel and take oath on the sacred items that he had never caused the death of any person by witchcraft.

Members of the village who lived in one of the cities or who were working in other parts of Congo were called back to take such an oath before the village elders. Many obeyed the family summons.

This was quickly seen by Christians to be a return to the old witchcraft, and contrary to their new way of life. Heroes and Heroines risked alienation from family and even death to fight it. In several instances they even managed to unmask the whole hoax, and show how the voices of the ancestors speaking from the cemeteries were show-managed.

After a quick and initial start, when it burst over most of the Bakongo villages and centers, the Belgians government came to see that here was another subversive movement. They added their strength to the fight.

The movement was at its height from 1950 to 1952. By now most of the people have seen, under pressure from the government and the churches, that what they did had little basis in truth, that they were taken in by leaders who used underhanded methods to see a return to the old
ways, which can never return to Congo.

The original idea of this movement seems to have been a rallying around a village, tribe and ancestors. It was such as the government first understood it. Later it became anti-white, and was then seen as dangerous. Many were the stories among the Congolese. Some said that Kibangu would come back again. Others said that Christ was the Savior of the white people, Kibangu the Savior of the Congolese. They even said that the Americans were going to release the Congo from bondage, and placed American citizens in a most embarrassing position. (In one case an American patriotic song was sung to a Belgian government man.) It was even feared that it might be thought in government circles that the American had a hand in such a movement.

In most cases the leaders of the Christian Church, the Congolese leaders, fought it with all their strength. Church discipline was used, and, after the initial swing, the church members swung back in protest against such heathenism.

Still the small secret groups continue to meet, especially in the cities. Probably they will continue to do so until some more valid or vivid outlet is found for their smoldering nationalism.

For the Bakongo have not forgotten nor lost their family and tribal ties. It needs only the uniting of
this feeling with the concept of a Congo race and country, and then there will exist in Congo and Africa a force which cannot be subdued until it founds its own country.

Those of us who work with the Bakongo and in the Congo work against time, trying to develop a people who will be able to take their rightful place in the world today.
APPENDIX
SUITABLE TEXTBOOKS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

As was stated in the Introduction, this study is intended primarily for the schools of Bas-Congo, Belgian Congo, Africa.

It might, however, be included in a class of world history in the American schools of secondary level. This course of world history, if offered, varies from community to community, but would probably be more suited to the eleventh or twelfth year of study.

There are no textbooks available in English, but several books would make interesting and informative reading - Bentley, W. Holman, Pioneering on the Congo, 2 vols. Fleming H. Revell Co., New York, 1900.


Much more reading is available in French, as can be seen in the bibliography, but no complete history exists even in that language.
### SOME IMPORTANT DATES

- **c. 1000 B.C.** Negroes begin moving south and southeast of Lake Chad.
- **c. 1300 A.D.** Creation of Kongo Kingdom, with rulers the most recent arrivals from the Kwango.
  - 1482 A.D. Diego Cao discovers mouth of Congo River.
  - 1491 First missionaries arrive in Congo-Catholic. Building of Cathedral at San Salvador.
  - 1505 Fight for throne - rebellion by those against coming of Portuguese.
  - 1543 Death of strong king Mwamba. Kingdom begins to fall apart.
  - 1570 Invasion of Jagas.
  - 1641 Arrival of Dutch on coast of Angola.
  - 1660 End of royal line of Kongo kings. Period of anarchy begins.
  - 1666 Wholesale invasion by Portuguese. Result - capital abandoned each tribe for itself.
  - 1815 Tuckey exploring expedition up the Congo - as far as Isangila.
  - 1832 Patrol of mouth of Congo River by warships, watching for slavers.
  - 1834 Catholic missionaries expelled from Congo.
  - 1858 Bastien expedition at San Salvador. French trading house established on Congo.
  - 1859 Dutch trading house established on Congo
  - 1863 Burton explores the lower Congo River.
  - 1868 English trading house established on Congo.
1873 A.D.  Grandy expedition.
1877  H.M. Stanley crosses the Congo from the east.
1878  Arrival of Protestant missionaries, Founding of "Comité d'Études du Haut Congo".
1879  Return of Stanley to explore Congo. Vivi, first capital, established.
1884  De Vinton takes over from Stanley as governor. Conference of Berlin.
1886  Capital transferred to Boma.
1895  Telegraph line Boma-Matadi established.
1898  Completion of railroad Matadi-Léopoldville.
1904-05  The commission of Inquiry in Congo.
1911  Congo Protestant Council begun by the Congo Continuation Committee.
LIST OF KONGO RULERS

14th c. Lukeni

Senior line - Nzinga Mbemba -
Nzinga Nkuwa - Jean I - d. 1505
Mbemba Nzinga - Alfonso I - d. 1543
Nkanga Mbemba - Pedro I - d. 1546
Mpudi Nzinga - Francisco I - d. 1548
Nkumbi Mpudi Nzinga - Diego I - d. 1556
Nzinga Mbemba - Alfonso II - 1561
Nzinga Mbemba - Bernado I - d. 1567
Mpudi Nzinga - Henrique I - 1568

Following line - Lukeni lua Mbemba -
Nimi na Mpangu Lukeni lua Mbemba - Alvaro I - d. 1574
Nimi na Mpangu Lukeni lua Mbemba - Alvaro II - d. 1614
Nimi na Mpangu Lukeni lua Mbemba - Bernado II - d. 1615
Nimi na Mpangu Lukeni lua Mbemba - Alvaro III - d. 1622

Youngest line - Ntumba Mbemba -
Nkanga, son of Mbika - Pedro Alfonso II - d. 1624
Mbemba Nzinga - Garcia I, 1626
Ntumba Mbemba - Ambrosia - d. 1631
Ntumba Mbemba - Alvaro IV - d. 1636
? - Alvaro V - d. 1636
? - Alvaro VI - d. 1641
Kimbaku, Nkanga ne Lukeni - Garcia II - d. 1660

New clan - Nlaza -
Ne Nlaza - Antonio I - 1666
Ne Mpangu a Masundu - Alvaro VII - 1666

Competitors -
at San Salvador -
Ne Mpangu - Alvaro VIII - d. 1669
Mbemba - Rafael I - d. 1675
Ne Miyala Mpangu - Daniel I - d. 1680
Nsamu Mbemba - Pedro IV - 1710
? - Pedro Constantin I - d. 1710

at Kibangu -
? - Alfonso III - d. 1669
Nkanga Mbemba - Garcia II - d. 1678
Nlaza - Andere I, d. 1679
Nimi a Mbemba - Alvaro IX, d. 1680
Nzinga - Manuel I, d. 1680
Nsamu Mbemba - Pedro IV, d. 1710
(see San Salvador list)

at Mbula -
Nsuki a Mtamba - Pedro III, d. 1679
Nsuki a Mtamba - Joao II, d. 1710
Zuzi, d. 1733
Neriko, Mlengi
Kafwasa
Garcia (Nkanga Mvembi)
Donderi (André)
Neriko Lunga
Pedro V (Kivuzi), 1855-1891
Mfutila (Alvaro), d. 1896
BAS-CONGO
ALTIMÉTRIE

ÉCHELLE 1 : 1.000.000

(René de Rouck, Atlas Géographique et Historique du Congo Belge, p. 10.)
Plate 2. Stanley Pool.
(Ibid., p. 4.)
Plate 3. Kingdom of Kongo

(Ibid., p. 6.)

(Ibid., p. 8.)
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Plus - Personal visits (with conversations) at San Salvador, Matadi, Boma, Banana.

Six months personal contact with the early mission stations and stations on the old caravan route - Palabala, Lukunga, Mukimbungu, Banza, Manteke.

Over six years work (June 1945 - January 1948, July 1950 - March 1954) at Léopoldville, with daily contact with the Bakongo from all parts of the Bas-Congo, plus many other tribes.
ABSTRACT
ABSTRACT

The history of the lower river tribes of the Belgian Congo is the study of the major part of the Bakongo tribes. They are part of the great Bantu peoples, and probably did not settle in their present area until about 1300 A.D.

In common with the history of all the Bantu, their origin, whether it be inside or outside Africa, is not known. All documents and all Bakongo traditions point to their arrival from the east to the area south and west of the Congo River.

The great southern and western movements of the Bantu came for a variety of reasons, but two stand out as important: 1. the activity of the people in the north of Africa, particularly the Arabs and the kingdom building groups to the north west; and 2. the search for a fertile and productive land for expanding peoples.

The first to arrive in the equatorial areas were pushed south and west by the later comers, and tribes banded together in groups and confederations for protection from these later comers. Thus did the early organizations grow up.
More than one invasion entered the area now occupied by the Bakongo, and the last invaders to come came west from the Kwango, and set themselves up as the rulers of the area. This in time grew, until it became the Kingdom of Kongo that the Portuguese found when they arrived in 1482, with its capital at Mbanza Kongo (San Salvador, Angola), its ruler called Ntotoila, six provinces (Sonyo, Mbamba, Mpemba, Nsundi, Mpangu, and Mbata), and with a sphere of influence which extended far beyond these provinces.

They were a people who had reached a fairly high degree of civilization with agriculture as basic. Their religious perspective was directed toward their ancestors, and they were organized as matrilineal families and state.

This kingdom and people were in no way prepared to fight for their culture against an aggressive commercial people backed by the force of the military. And their initial welcome of the white man's religion and commerce broke down, in a very short time, their whole organization. And what had been a prosperous land and people became ultimately a few people living in no-man's land.

There was, basically, little difference between the Portuguese newcomers and the Congolese civilization they
found, apart from their religion and their soldiers. The great difference which existed when the country was re-opened in 1877 were a result of many changes which resulted from the early years of contact with the white man. The Congolese had gone backward, and the white man had gone forward.

The first two Kongo kings laid the kingdom of Kongo wide open to the Portuguese. Both religious and commercial men came in great numbers. Of the former, they condemn themselves, in their own records, for they say that they were not true to their own ideals. And they left almost no traces of their work, aside from a few fetishes. The commercial men ran over the country, for the important commodity of the times, slaves.

Later kings became either figure heads or anti-white. And soon the country was involved in a series of revolutions which were complicated by outside assaults, the greatest of which came from the Jagas to the south east.

A brief interlude of Dutch rule on the coast weakened the Portuguese hold on the country, and finally the people became unmanageable. No central ruler could establish his power. Piracy on the estuary of the Congo River aggravated the situation. So, the Kingdom was no
more, and the Portuguese rule of the Bakongo tribes became nominal, and the religious groups abandoned the country.

When slavery was forbidden in the British Isles and America, their warships began patrolling the Congo coast to stop slave trading.

During all this time sporadic attempts had been made to explore the Congo River, but the rapids kept the explorers back. The solution was found by Henry M. Stanley who came from the east in 1877. He found several commercial houses established on the estuary of the Congo River, and a series of tribes all along the river inland, all more or less independent of each other. From Stanley Pool west they spoke one language, and talked of a ruler whom they called Ntotila at San Salvador. For all practical purposes they ruled themselves.

With Stanley's help the Congo was reopened again. The first comers were the Protestant missionaries. Commerce was not easy until the caravan routes were replaced by the Matadi-Léopoldville railroad. The Catholic missionaries came later. Much of the help which came in the areas of education and medicine came from these two groups of missions, the Protestant and Catholic.

Stanley was employed by Léopold II of Belgium to
return to Congo, explore the country, and establish a series of settlements. From this original purpose developed the Association Internationale du Congo, which founded its claim on the territory on the treaties it had signed with four hundred and fifty chiefs and tribes. This state in turn was renamed the État Indépendant du Congo, and was under the personal rule of Léopold II.

The lot of the Bakongo was a hard one under this new foreign rule. They were forced to supply porters for the caravan route and workers for the railroad. Due to the latter and its many imported workers, coupled with a lack of sanitary methods, epidemics of smallpox and sleeping sickness swept the land, leaving the once well populated land almost a desert.

In 1908, because of the many cries of slavery, mismanagement, and atrocities, Belgium took the Congo from its king and from then on ruled it as a colony.

Most of the Bakongo are now contained within the boundaries of the present Belgian Congo, but their old capital city, Mbanz'a Kongo, is in Angola under Portuguese rule. The Bakongo themselves have lost many of their distinctive features as a group and no longer have their own state, but still maintain their feelings of identity and common ancestry.