

The Kongolese Atlantic: Central African Slavery & Culture from Mayombe to Haiti

by

Christina Frances Mobley

Department of History
Duke University

Date: _____

Approved:

Laurent Dubois, Supervisor

Bruce Hall

Janet J. Ewald

Lisa Lindsay

James Sweet

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
History in the Graduate School
of Duke University

2015

ABSTRACT

The Kongolese Atlantic: Central African Slavery & Culture from Mayombe to Haiti

by

Christina Frances Mobley

Department of History
Duke University

Date: _____

Approved:

Laurent Dubois, Supervisor

Bruce Hall

Janet J. Ewald

Lisa Lindsay

James Sweet

An abstract of a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History in the Graduate School of Duke University

2015

Copyright by
Christina Frances Mobley
2015

Abstract

In my dissertation, “The Kongoles Atlantic: Central African Slavery & Culture from Mayombe to Haiti,” I investigate the cultural history of West Central African slavery at the height of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the late eighteenth century. My research focuses on the Loango Coast, a region that has received little scholarly attention despite the fact that it was responsible for roughly half of slave exports from West Central Africa at the time. The goal of my dissertation is to understand how enslaved Kongoles men and women used cultural practices to mediate the experience of slavery on both sides of the Atlantic world. To do so, I follow captives from their point of origin in West Central Africa to the Loango Coast and finally to the French colony of Saint Domingue in order to examine these areas as part of a larger “Kongoles Atlantic” world.

My dissertation begins by exploring the social and political history of the slave trade in the Loango Coast kingdoms, charting the structural changes that took place as a result of Atlantic trade. Next, I use historical linguistics to investigate the origins of captives sold on the Loango Coast. I find that the majority of captives came broadly from the Kongo zone, specifically from the Mayombe rainforest and Loango Coast kingdoms north of the River Congo. I then use a sociolinguistic methodology to reconstruct the cultural history of those groups in the near-absence of written documents. In the last chapter of the dissertation, I follow enslaved Central Africans from the Loango Coast to Saint Domingue, examining how they used specific and identifiable north coast cultural practices in the context of slavery. I find enslaved Central Africans used north coast spiritual tools such as divination, possession, trance, and power objects to address the

material problems of plantation life. Finally, I argue the persistence of these spiritual practices demonstrates a remarkable durability of Kongolese ontology on both sides of the Kongolese Atlantic world.

My research produces new information about the history of the Loango Coast as well as the colony of Saint Domingue. The north coast origin of captives which I establish using historical linguistics contradicts earlier arguments that slaves traded on the Loango Coast originated from Kingdom of Kongo or from the inland Malebo Pool or Upper River Congo trade. I show inhabitants of the coastal kingdoms and Mayombe rainforest were not mere middlemen in the interior slave trade as previously thought, but were the victims of new mechanisms of enslavement created as a result of the erosion of traditional political institutions due to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The north coast origin of Loango Coast captives has repercussions for the cultural history of the Americas. It means that captives were not “Atlantic Creoles” with prior knowledge of European culture and religion. I argue historians can only understand the meaning of the cultural practices of Africans in the Americas by understanding where Africans came from and what cultural and linguistic tools they brought with them. The use and transmission of Kongolese ritual knowledge and spiritual technologies in Saint Domingue challenges historians of slavery to move beyond the false dichotomy that culture originated in either Africa or on the plantation and forces a fundamental reassessment of the concept of creolization

Contents

Abstract	iv
List of Tables	viii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: The Loango Coast until 1700.....	23
Geography and Ecology	25
People and Culture	29
The Rise of the Kingdoms of Loango, Kongo, and Tio	36
The Beginning of the Atlantic Slave Trade.....	54
Conclusion.....	62
Chapter 2: The Loango Coast and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1750-1800.....	64
The Atlantic Slave Trade and Political Change in Coastal Kingdoms.....	87
The Atlantic Slave Trade and External Conflicts.....	92
Conclusion.....	106
Chapter 3: The Kongolese Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century	107
The Loango Coast, Saint Domingue, and the Kongolese Atlantic World	107
Conclusion.....	133
Chapter 4: Tracing the Origins of Loango Coast Captives I: Documentary Evidence.....	135
Enslavement in Kingdoms of the Loango Coast.....	143
Interior Slave Traders and Trade Routes.....	167
Chapter 5: Tracing the Origins of Loango Coast Captives II: Historical Linguistic Evidence ...	186
Linguistics for Historians	195

Using Sociolinguistics to Establish Geographic Origin	201
Conclusion.....	227
Chapter 6: Christianity and the Cultural History of the Loango Coast and Kongo Region, 1750-1800.....	230
Christianity in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1750-1800	239
Dicomano and the Decline of Christianity	244
Cherubino da Savona and the Reliability of Missionary Documents	256
Christianity on The Loango Coast, 1750-1800	266
Translation, Sources, and the History of Kongolese Christianity	272
Conclusion.....	281
Chapter 7: ‘Kongo Help Me Cry’: Kongolese Cultural Practices in Saint Domingue	283
Makandal and Kongolese Spiritual Practitioners and Practices in Saint Domingue.....	287
Conclusion.....	335
Conclusion: “I’m a Creole-Kongo”	338
Bibliography:	350
Biography.....	369

List of Tables

Table 1: Sample Borrowed Bantu Words Stemming from Proto-Bantu Forms 211

Table 2: Western Kikongo Varieties in Baudry's Congo Vocabulary 213

Table 3: Bantu words in Eighteenth Century Saint Domingue..... 224

Introduction

In September 1785, a concerned colonist of the French colony of Saint Domingue wrote to the Attorney General (*procureur général*) in the capital of Cap Français to “denounce” the activities of a “Monster.” In the previous six months, the “Monster” had become so powerful in the quarter that the author dared sign their letter only as “M.” This “monster” was a “*négresse* [...] named *Kingué* of *Guinée*¹” said to have the ability “to kill and to bring back to life, to fight all sorts of illnesses” and to divine who was guilty of sorcery, witchcraft, and poisoning. She was “regarded by *les nègres* in general as a god.” Worst of all, even the white colonists in the region had been turning to her for help. Marie Kingué’s owner, Belhumeur of Port Margot, employed her to discover “criminals” in his slave workshops (*ateliers*) and allowed her to move and practice freely in the area. Indeed, Kingué’s skill as a diviner was such that even the local Commandant, Sieur Chailleau, called on her to “examine his workshop.” When Kingué was threatened with arrest, Chailleau went so far as to offer her protection in his own home.²

“She has acquired a renown that extends across the entire North Province,” one anonymous complaint claimed, where “she knows all the secrets of all the plantations.” Demand for her services “to discover the Macandals [poisoners or sorcerers] in workshops” was so high that she and her assistant Polidor began initiating students, a fact all the more remarkable given that in principle ‘*le Vaudoux*’ and African religious

¹ Guinée was used during this time to denote Africa.

² "Letter from 'M.' to François de Neufchateau, Attorney General, 3 September 1785," AN, 27 AP 12, Archives Privées, Fonds François de Neufchâteau, folder 2

practices were illegal in the colony at the time. All of Plaisance was said to wear the *garde-corps* or talismans she sold, of which there were never enough, “as one wears a Saint-Suaire [a Catholic saint’s medal].”³ The Royal Prosecutor of Cap Français, Jean-Baptiste Suarez d’Almeida, received similar complaints about Marie Kingué, which he summarized in this way: “This *Négresse*, or more accurately this Monster, attributes to herself a supernatural power, to divine the crimes of the *Nègres* & unfortunately, a superstition just as absurd has found believers among the whites, and made victims among the *Noirs*.”⁴

Who was this woman whose skill as a diviner was such that both the black and white population of the North Province turned to her, and who ultimately required a brigade from the capital to arrest her? According to court documents, her name was Marie Kingué, or Marie Catherine, she was aged between 35-40 years, and she was from the Kongo.⁵ Marie Kingué represents only one example of the Kongolese spiritual practitioners and cultural practices that flourished in the French colony of Saint Domingue in the last half of the eighteenth century despite colonists’ attempts to stop them. West Central African spiritual practices in Saint Domingue included the packets

³ [anon.], “La nommée Marie Katherine, dite Kingué...”, [1785?], AN, 27 AP 12, Archives Privées, Fonds François de Neufchâteau, folder 2

⁴ “Letter from Jean-Baptiste Suarez d’Almeida, Royal Presecutor, to François de Neufchateau, Attorney General, 16 Septembre 1785,” AN, 27 AP 12, Archives Privées, Fonds François de Neufchâteau, folder 2

⁵ Ibid.

called “gris” or “macandal” sold by Makandal in the 1750s,⁶ the “convulsive” dance of “Dom Père” popular in the 1760s,⁷ the practice of “bila or pretend Magnetism” in Marmelade in the 1780s,⁸ and the song to the deity “Bomba” collected before the revolution.⁹ Taken together, it is clear there were many common elements to the ceremonies and practices cited above: the use of divination to identify *macandals*, poisoners or sorcerers; the use of alcohol to induce trance or possession; public healing rituals to address disease; and the production, sale, and use of power objects such as packets, weapons, and other *garde-corps* (talismans) for healing, poisoning, and personal

⁶ Principal accounts: Sébastien Jacques Courtin, "Mémoire sommaire sur les prétendus pratiques magiques et empoisonnements prouvés au procès instruit et jugé au Cap contre plusieurs nègres et négresses dont le chef nommé François Macandal a été condamné au feu et exécuté le vingt janvier mille sept cents cinquante huit," 1758, ANOM F/3/88, Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry, p 240+; M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue. Avec des observations générales sur sa population, sur le caractère & les moeurs de ses divers habitans; sur son climat, sa culture, ses productions, son administration, &c* (Philadelphia: Chez l'auteur, 1797). I: 651.

⁷ M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue. Avec des observations générales sur sa population, sur le caractère & les moeurs de ses divers habitans; sur son climat, sa culture, ses productions, son administration, &c* (Philadelphia: Chez l'auteur, 1797). I: 69 M.E. Descourtilz, *Voyage d'un naturaliste* (Dufart, 1809). III: 181+.

⁸ Procès extraordinairement instruit en la cour à la requête du Procureur Générale du Roi au Sujet des assemblées de nuit tenues au Quartier de la Marmelade par les Negres sous le Pretexte de la denonciation de Bila ou Prétendu Magnetisme., 1786, AN, 27 AP 11, Archives Privées, Fonds François de Neufchâtel, folder 3

⁹ The song was recorded by Moreau and has been discussed by Aimé Césaire, John Thornton, David Geggus, and others. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description... de Saint Domingue*: I: 69.; Aimé Césaire, *Toussaint Louverture : la Révolution française et le problème colonial* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1981); John K. Thornton, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo": African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of World History* 4, no. 2 (1993); David Geggus, "Haitian Voodoo in the Eighteenth Century: Language, Culture, Resistance," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas* 28(1991).

protection. The most striking element they had in common, however, is that they all drew on elements of Kongolese cultural practices.

The powerful presence of Kongolese people and practices in Saint Domingue reminds us that while the colony was politically a European colony, it was demographically an African – largely West Central African – space. By the time of the Haitian Revolution in 1791, nearly ninety-five percent of the population was either African or of African descent.¹⁰ Nine out of every ten people in the colony were enslaved. Roughly two-thirds of those in bondage had been born in Africa, the majority in West Central Africa.¹¹ Known generally as “Congos,” most had recently arrived in the colony. Of the estimated half-million slaves in 1791, nearly half had been imported to the colony in the decade preceding the revolution. Many lived in majority Kongolese communities: West Central Africans represented the largest group of Africans in the colony, comprising the majority of the population of the North and South Provinces of

¹⁰ The population consisted of around 500,000 slaves, 40,000 whites, and 30,000 free people of color. The estimate of 500,000 slaves is almost without a doubt too low as slave owners had a vested interest in underreporting the number of slaves they owned. David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). 5.

¹¹ This area included the coastline of present day Gabon, the Congo, and Angola, from the Cape Lopez in modern-day Gabon south to the Kunene River that divides Angola from Namibia. In the eighteenth century, the French referred to the entire area as “*la côte d’Angole*.” Louis de Grandpré, *Voyage à la côte occidentale d’Afrique fait dans les années 1786 et 1787* (Paris: Dentu, 1801). I: xiv. Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004). 40-1. Thornton, ““I Am the Subject of the King of Congo”: African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution,” 185.

Saint Domingue.¹² The population of Saint Domingue was therefore not only overwhelmingly African, but also largely Kongolesse.

The demographic dominance of Kongolesse in Saint Domingue raises two important and related questions: What was the social and cultural impact of the Kongolesse in Saint Domingue? How did Central African men and women use Kongolesse knowledge and spiritual technologies to mediate the experience of slavery on both sides of the Atlantic world? In order to answer these questions, I argue, historians must first understand where in Africa these Kongolesse men and women came from and what cultural and linguistic tools they brought with them across the Atlantic Ocean. In order to do so, we need to move beyond generalizations about African culture and beliefs. Though Central Africans are often described as broadly culturally homogenous, there were in fact “remarkable local variations” in culture and language across this region.¹³

What does the term “Kongo” itself signify? It is in fact a generic term used to refer to the vast linguistic and cultural area of the Kongo language zone, which included the peoples and languages of the Loango Coast north of the Congo River south to Luanda

¹² Numbers from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD): "Voyages: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database," Emory University, slavevoyages.org. Laurent Dubois, "Complications," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2011). David Geggus, "The French Slave Trade: An Overview," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2001): 128.

¹³ Dunja Hersak, "There Are Many Kongo Worlds: Particularities of Magico-Religious Beliefs among the Vili and Yombe of Congo-Brazzaville," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 71, no. 4 (2001).

in Angola and east to the Kwango River.¹⁴ It therefore refers to a broad zone rather than more specifically to individuals from the areas that were part of the political unit of Kingdom of Kongo. It also includes groups other than that known as the “Bakongo” people. Within the Kongo zone there are many cultural and linguistic variations, notably among religious concepts that would cross the Atlantic to Saint-Domingue, especially those concerning *nkisi*, *simbi*, and *nkita*.¹⁵

The first step to understanding the lives of Kongolese in Saint-Domingue, therefore, is to determine precisely where in Central Africa the captives purchased by the French in the decades preceding the Haitian Revolution originated. It is only on this foundation that we can investigate how and why certain cultural practices were used in the colony and what impact they had on Saint Domingue plantation society. I therefore begin this dissertation by reconstructing the French slave trade from the Kongo region, which took place principally in the three ports of the coastal kingdoms of the Loango Coast: the port of Cabinda in the Kingdom of Ngoyo, Malemba in the Kingdom of Kakongo, and the port of Loango in the Kingdom of Loango. Most of the captives from the Loango Coast ended up in Saint-Domingue. The French slave trade bound the Loango Coast and the Caribbean colony together as two sides of a single system of inhuman

¹⁴ Based on updated Guthrie classifications compiled by Jouni Filip Maho: Jouni Filip Maho, "The New Updated Guthrie Online," <http://goto.glocalnet.net/mahopapers/nuglonline.pdf>.

¹⁵ Hersak, "There Are Many Kongo Worlds: Particularities of Magico-Religious Beliefs among the Vili and Yombe of Congo-Brazzaville."; Luc de Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

bondage.¹⁶ In so doing, the French Atlantic trading system created a Kongolese Atlantic world, leaving behind a series of archival traces that I use to reconstruct the particular sites of origin and experiences of those who made up this world.

This dissertation began as project about the Haitian Revolution, stemming from John Thornton's argument that understanding the political culture of the Haitian Revolution requires reconstructing the perspectives of the West Central African majority.¹⁷ I wanted to know more about the remarkable cohort of Kongolese men and women who migrated to Saint Domingue in the decades preceding the Haitian Revolution. But I discovered that in order to understand the social and cultural history of the Kongolese in Saint Domingue, I first needed to understand the social and cultural history of the Kongolese in Africa. I needed to determine where in West Central Africa the Kongolese came from and the social and cultural history of that region in order to get beyond banal generalizations about cultural homogeneity and understand why the Kongolese used certain cultural practices in Saint Domingue, what they meant, and what impact they had on plantation society. Therefore, in order to uncover the deep history of the Kongolese in Saint Domingue, I had to uncover the deep history of the Loango Coast and Mayombe rainforest. In short, I realized that in order to do Atlantic history, I had to do African history.

¹⁶ The term "inhuman bondage" is taken from the title of David Brion Davis' award winning book. David Brion Davis, *Inhuman bondage : the rise and fall of slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁷ Thornton, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution."

The goal of this dissertation is to tell the human story of the Kongolese Atlantic world. It is the story of the men and women who against their will were enslaved, first in Africa and again in Saint Domingue. Once in Saint Domingue, against all odds and all historical precedent, they survived, created communities, overthrew slavery and founded a new culture and a new nation – the Republic of Haiti. In the pages that follow, I offer a new reading of the history of Haiti by resituating colonial Saint Domingue in the Kongolese Atlantic world, viewing it from the vantage of the Loango Coast in West Central Africa. By bringing together the methods of archival research and analysis, comparative ethnography, and historical linguistics, I uncover the geographic origin of captives purchased by the French on the Loango Coast in the decades preceding the Haitian Revolution. I then follow captives from their point of origin to the Loango Coast and finally on to the French colony of Saint Domingue. I examine the cultural practices of the Kongolese in Saint Domingue alongside sources about their specific region of origin in West Central Africa: the Loango Coast and Mayombe rainforest north of the Congo River. My goal is to understand how and why certain cultural practices were used in the colony and what impact they had on Saint Domingue plantation society.

This research has led me to two conclusions. First, the use of historical linguistic offers new information about the Loango Coast slave trade in the last half of the eighteenth century, showing that most of the captives sold on the Loango Coast came from the Loango Coast kingdoms themselves and Mayombe rainforest hinterland north of the Congo River. Establishing the north coast origin of Loango Coast captives has important repercussions for the cultural history of the Americas, because the inhabitants

from the coastal kingdoms had little or no contact with European religious beliefs and those from the inland forest had none at all. They were not as some have argued, therefore, “Atlantic Creoles” with prior knowledge of European culture and religion. Enslaved West Central African men and women such as Marie Kingué used identifiable Kongolese cultural practices across the Atlantic in Saint Domingue and later Haiti. They drew on specific instrumental knowledge and spiritual technologies such as divination, possession, trance, and power objects to address the material problems of plantation life. By documenting this process, I demonstrate the remarkable durability of Kongolese ontology on both sides of the Kongolese Atlantic world.

This dissertation is part of broader effort by historians to reverse the marginalization of Africans in the history of the Americas, and the Caribbean in particular, in studies of the history of the Atlantic world. This problem is a particularly important one with regards to the history of colonial Saint Domingue and the Haitian Revolution. Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, historians such as Gabriel Debien and Jean Fouchard drew scholars’ attention to the dominance of “Congos” in the colony.¹⁸ Claude Auguste and John Thornton explored the role of “Congos” in the

¹⁸ Gabriel Debien, *Une plantation de Saint-Domingue. La sucrerie Galbaud du Fort (1690-1802)* (Caire: Les Presses de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1941); ———, *Études antillaises: XVIIIe siècle*, Cahiers des annales ; 11 (Paris: Librairie A. Colin, 1956). G. Debien and J. Houdaille, "Les Origines Africaines des Esclaves des Antilles Françaises," *Caribbean Studies* 10, no. 2 (1970); Gabriel Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Basse-Terre: Société d'histoire de la Guadeloupe, 1974). Jean Fouchard, *Les marrons de la liberté: édition revue, corrigée et augmentée* (Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Editions Henri Deschamps, 1988).

Haitian Revolution.¹⁹ More recently, Hein Vanhee and Terry Rey use Thornton and Heywood's concept to explore how the "Atlantic Creole" nature of the Kingdom of Kongo influenced Haitian Vodou and popular Catholicism. Wyatt MacGaffey, anthropologist of the Kongo, connects traditional central African beliefs to Haitian Vodou.²⁰ Still, despite the contributions made by these scholars, the full social and cultural history of the Kongoleses in Saint Domingue has yet to be written. Given the centrality of the Kongo people in the history of Saint Domingue's transformation into Haiti, this is a significant absence. In this dissertation I seek to bridge the gap between what has traditionally been written as two separate histories – the history of the slave trade in West Central Africa and the cultural history of slavery in Saint Domingue – in order to examine the history of Saint Domingue and of the Kongo zone through one broader geographical and chronological lens.

In seeking to bring together the history of Africa and the Americas, this dissertation builds on the rich work produced by Africanist historians of the Atlantic world in the past decades, which has called for the inclusion of Africa and Africans in

¹⁹ Claude B. Auguste, "Les congos dans la Révolution Haïtienne," *Revue de la Société haïtienne d'histoire et de géographie* 46, no. 168 (1990). John K. Thornton, "African Soldiers in the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of Caribbean History* 1, no. 1 and 2 (1991); ———, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution."

²⁰ Wyatt MacGaffey, "Twins, Simbi Spirits, and Lwas in Kongo and Haiti," Hein Vanhee, "Central African Popular Christianity and the Making of Haitian Vodou Religion,"; Terry Rey, "Kongoleses Catholic Influences on Haitian Popular Catholicism: A Sociohistoric Explanation," in *Central Africans and cultural transformations in the American diaspora*, ed. Linda M. Heywood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Atlantic world history.²¹ These scholars have criticized the problematic assumptions underlying Melville Herskovits's synthetic paradigm and Sydney Mintz and Richard Price's model of creolization.²² Instead, Africanist scholars argued for the study of the

²¹ This critique was largely leveled against scholarship following Sydney Mintz and Richard Price's scholarship on creolization. Mintz and Price criticized the Herskovits-Frazier debate over the existence of African cultural retentions in African American culture for polarizing "Afro-Americanist scholarship into a flatly "for" or "against" position in regard to African cultural retentions." Mintz and Price's essay marked a fundamental shift in the field away from the search for origins to the study of the process of cultural change and creation. Instead, Mintz and Price argued for an analytic away from comparing (seemingly) bounded cultural forms, to a focus on the historical and material context of social cultural practice. They proposed to study what they saw as the *process* of African American cultural creation. Mintz and Price's analytic model for the process of cultural creation became known as "creolization." The term creolization originated with linguistic theories about the emergence of new languages through the contact of two languages, one dominant, and one subdominant. Roger Abrahams used the metaphor of creolization to explain the "cultural conditions of creativity" evident in the practices of the African diaspora in the West Indies. Edward Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939); Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958[1941]); Sidney Wilfred Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: an Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992[1976]). Roger D. Abrahams, *The Man-of-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Richard Price, "On the Miracle of Creolization," in *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*, ed. Kevin A. Yelvington (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2006). In the wake of Mintz and Price's work, scholars debated the impact slavery had on the transfer of African cultural practices and beliefs, emphasizing creativity, context, and new-ness of culture. Kamau Brathwaite, *Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica* (London: New Beacon, 1981 [1970]); *Africa and the Caribbean: the Legacies of a Link*, ed. Margaret E. Crahan and Franklin W. Knight (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Monica Schuler, *"Alas, alas, Kongo": a Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

²² Early critiques come largely from two groups of scholars: cultural theorists and African historians. David Scott, "That Event, This Memory: Notes on the Anthropology of African Diasporas in the New World," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 3 (1991); Andrew Apter, "Herskovits's Heritage: Rethinking Syncretism in the African Diaspora," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 3 (1991); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993). Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, and Difference*, ed. Johnathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990). John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

African peoples, cultures, and ideas that had been central to the history of the early modern Atlantic world.²³ The demographics of Atlantic migration speak for themselves: before the year 1800, three out of every four migrants to the Americas came from Africa. Indeed, Thornton has observed “the fact is that in the eighteenth century African culture was not surviving: it was arriving.”²⁴ More recently, scholars of Africa have

Press, 1998). Michel-Rolph Trouillot pushed back against the criticisms of cultural theorists, arguing for a less theoretical, more historically rooted analysis of creolization. Creolization was a process, not a totality, he argued, one that could only be understood through careful attention to multiplicity of factors that historically shaped the lived experience. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Culture on the Edges: Creolization in the Plantation Context," *Plantation Society in the Americas* 5 1(1998).

²³ Paul E. Lovejoy, "The African Diaspora: Revisionist Interpretations of Ethnicity, Culture and Religion under Society," in *Studies in the World History of Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation II* (1997). Paul E. Lovejoy and David Vincent Trotman, eds., *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora*, The Black Atlantic (New York: Continuum, 2003). José C. Curto and Paul E. Lovejoy, *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil During the Era of Slavery* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2004); James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

²⁴ However, scholars have differed on how to understand their history, especially the relationship between “African” origins” and the “modern” cultural practices of the African diaspora. Many, such as Paul Gilroy, argued that the search for “authenticity” in African diaspora culture created a false dichotomy between African and European cultural practices and failed to take into account the important ways the two interacted during slavery. He proposed the “Black Atlantic,” a term first used by Robert Farris Thompson, as a hermeneutic framework to encapsulate the “rhizomorphic, fractal structure” and transcend the limitations of both “the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity” and “construct an intercultural and anti-ethnocentric account of modern black history and political culture.” More recently, Stephan Palmié argued that Afro-Cuban religious practices came from African religious practices, but drew new meaning from their usage in the context of slavery and post-emancipation Afro-Cuban society. For this reason, Palmié argues that Afro-Cuban practices were not only new but fundamentally modern. For J. Lorand Matory, the central “irony” of the African diaspora is that “Diasporas create their homelands.” Matory proposed a dialogic framework to view culture, arguing that Yoruba identity in Brazil was neither a passive carry-over from Africa nor a European invention but an active invention by Afro-Brazilians in the nineteenth-century.

criticized the construction of the Atlantic world as an exceptional space in which the history of non-Europeans is made legible only through European sources and, as a consequence, categories. The result, from their perspective, is that the Atlantic World model effectively silences the history of Africans, who were the majority of migrants in the early-modern Atlantic world.²⁵ James Sweet argues the category of “‘Atlantic’ Africans” is itself problematic because it implies the “march down the inevitable path of Americanization, and Americanization in dialogue with European ideas and institutions but very rarely African ones.” Sweet rightly criticizes the Atlantic World episteme, charging that it places enslaved Africans into a pre-determined narrative of the triumph of

Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*: 320. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1983). Stephan Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002). James Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

²⁵ This critique includes the use of European archival documents such as religious and legal documents that only identify Africans when they adopted a European cultural form or interacted with a European institution. It extends to the use of categories such as social death and Creole used in the work of Africanist scholars such as John Thornton, Linda Heywood, and Tobias Green. *Central Africans and cultural transformations in the American diaspora*; Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Toby Green, "Building Slavery in the Atlantic World: Atlantic Connections and the Changing Institution of Slavery in Cabo Verde, Fifteenth–Sixteenth Centuries," *Slavery & Abolition* 32, no. 2 (2011); ———, *The rise of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in western Africa, 1300-1589*, African studies ; 118 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). For critiques see: Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009); Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003); James H. Sweet, "Defying Social Death: The Multiple Configurations of African Slave Family in the Atlantic World," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2013).

Western modernity. The result is the effacement of “African categories of knowledge” and the reduction of the history of the Atlantic “to a European-American anachronism.”²⁶ More recently, the debate has revolved around how to tell their history.²⁷ Africanists have argued that including the history of Africans in the Atlantic world requires serious engagement with African history. James Sweet has recently articulated this critique, writing that the first step in uncovering the histories of Africans in the Atlantic world is using “more expansive and creative methodological approaches” including “archaeology,

²⁶ ———, *Domingos Alvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). 4-7. Sweet echoes a major trend in the history of colonial Africa where historians have sought to understand African cultural change through indigenous categories. Steven Feierman, *Peasant intellectuals: anthropology and history in Tanzania* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990). Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: the Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Jane I. Guyer and Samuel M. Eno Belinga, "Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa," *The Journal of African History* 36, no. 1 (1995); Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Wyatt MacGaffey, "Changing Representations in Central African History," *The Journal of African History* 46, no. 2 (2005). David Schoenbrun, "Conjuring the Modern in Africa: Durability and Rupture in Histories of Public Healing between the Great Lakes of East Africa," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (2006). Most recently, African historians have debated how to understand African cultural change, the possibility of producing social theories to represent culture, and the relative merits of emphasizing agency versus structures and power relationships. Achille Mbembe and Jean Comaroff, "Africa in Theory: A Conversation Between Jean Comaroff and Achille Mbembe," *Anthropological Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (2010); Harvey Amani Whitfield and Bonny Ibhawoh, "Problems, Perspectives, and Paradigms: Colonial Africanist Historiography and the Question of Audience," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 39, no. 3 (2005); Stephen Ellis, "Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa," *The Journal of African History* 43, no. 1 (2002).

²⁷ See the “ethnogenesis” form in *The William and Mary Quarterly*: James Sidbury et al., "Forum on Ethnogenesis," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2011); Walter Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1830* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Slavery and African ethnicities in the Americas: restoring the links* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

historical linguistics, oral traditions, and material culture.”²⁸ The goal, as Vincent Brown has powerfully argued, is not to identify cultural practices as authentically “African” but rather to ask, “What was it used for? What were its consequences?”²⁹ The reason is that cultural practices were not discrete, fixed entities. Instead, they were tools used to create meaning, communities and overcome the “threat of social chaos” in the context of slavery on both sides of the Atlantic world.³⁰

In order to seriously engage with African history, I use a sociolinguistic methodology and draw on field research in Haiti and Central Africa as well as a diverse range of archival sources. This transnational and interdisciplinary research allowed me to address the methodological difficulties of this topic. Few, if any, contemporary written sources document the history of Central Africans on either side of the Atlantic world in the late-eighteenth century. There are no written sources to document the interior slave trade or inland polities of the Loango Coast. Indeed, no European had yet travelled beyond the coastal kingdoms. The dearth of contemporary historical sources has hindered scholars in searching beyond the ports of embarkation listed in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database. This scarcity of historical sources exists on the other side of the Atlantic as well. Once in Saint Domingue, many Kongolese chose to create communities away

²⁸ James H. Sweet, "Reimagining the African-Atlantic Archive: Method, Concept, Epistemology, Ontology," *The Journal of African History* 55(2014): 156, 54.

²⁹ Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008). 8.

³⁰ ———, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery."

from the plantation in maroon settlements and later on the lakou. Those who succeeded created a life largely apart from the one imagined for them, and documented by others, in the written archive. This raises a question that has shaped much scholarship on the history of the enslaved during the past decades: How does one do research about people and places for which we have no direct documentary evidence? Or, put another way: How can historians understand the history of Africans in the Atlantic world who spent much, if not all of their lives, outside of or maligned by the gaze of Europeans? It is a question that is at once historical, methodological, and epistemological. Fortunately, scholars of equatorial Africa, following the foundational work of Jan Vansina, have shown it is possible to reconstruct the cultural history of a group or region in the absence of written sources by using a sociolinguistic combination of historical linguistics and contemporary archival and ethnographic evidence.³¹

In my research, I demonstrate that a sociolinguistic methodology can be a useful tool for historians to study the cultural history of Africans – both in Africa and in the Atlantic world. It allows us to gain a more in-depth knowledge of African cultural history and move beyond generalizations about African culture and beliefs. It also allows historians to eschew problematic secondary sources that often mixed sources from different regions and time periods or were based on problematic assumptions about Kongolese history. For example, studies created by Belgian colonial administrators suffer

³¹ Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

from the false theory that the Kingdom of Kongo was “the cradle of all Kongo ethnicities.” The colonial administration made this assumption a reality by officially seeking the traditional criterion of legitimation of the chiefs by manufacturing genealogies and traditions” to conform to the official model.³² One notable example is Joseph Van Wing’s *Études Bakongo* (1920, second volume 1938, second edition 1959), in which the author traces the history of the Mpangu in relation with that of the Kingdom of Kongo.³³ Historians can avoid reproducing the errors of previous works by using a sociolinguistic methodology to combine linguistic, archival, and ethnographic sources from across the Kongolese Atlantic world to investigate the history of the Kongo zone.

In the chapters that follow, I seek to show how this interdisciplinary methodology provides a way for historians to use sources from the wider Atlantic world to produce new information about African history, which in turn has repercussions for the social, political, and cultural history of the Americas. A major challenge facing the study of Africans in the Atlantic world has always been to understand their ideologies and worldviews in the absence of written documents but in the context of their lived experience in the Caribbean. Sociolinguistics provides scholars the opportunity to investigate where Africans came from and the meaning of the concepts and practices they used in the Americas. In so doing, it provides historians with a tool to make African

³²“L’administration coloniale consacrait cette hypothèse en y cherchant officiellement le critère de légitimation des chefs traditionnel en fabriquant des généalogies et traditions...” Albert Doutreloux, *L’Ombre des fétiches, société et culture yombe* (Éditions Nauwelaerts, 1967). 35.

³³ Joseph Van Wing, *Études Bakongo : histoire et sociologie* (Bruxelles: Goemaere, 1920).

origin a fundamental part of their analysis rather than a footnote. In my study, a sociolinguistic methodology allows me to investigate two aspects crucial to the history of the Kongolese in Saint Domingue: their origins and the cultural practices they used in the Americas. A sociolinguistic methodology allows me to uncover new information about the Loango Coast slave trade in the late eighteenth century. It also allows me to shed new light on practices and worldviews of “Congos” in Saint Domingue, and show how enslaved Central Africans used Kongolese instrumental knowledge and spiritual technologies as survival tools in the context of slavery. More broadly, I show how a sociolinguistic methodology offers a way for historians of Africans in the Americas to rectify their absence from the historiography of the Atlantic world.

The first part of the dissertation explores the history of the Loango Coast in West Central Africa in the last half of the eighteenth century in order to understand how, where, and why so many Kongolese men and women were enslaved and sold to European slave traders. The first chapter introduces the history of the Kingdom of Loango and surrounding area before the arrival of Europeans in order to understand, in subsequent chapters, how the Atlantic slave trade would disrupt the stability of the region. Atlantic trade initially exploited pre-existing trade routes and markets dominated by the Kingdom of Loango. In the eighteenth century, however, the dramatic increase in the slave trade on the Loango Coast would challenge rather than reinforce the Kingdom’s influence. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Atlantic slave trade had become the central organizing principle of political and economic institutions in the region. The influx of wealth from the Atlantic slave trade challenged the Kingdom of Loango’s

economic dominance over the north coast region and undermined central authority in the kingdoms. In so doing, the Atlantic slave trade would initiate a period of internal and external warfare and instability that resulted in the enslavement of increasingly large numbers of coastal inhabitants.

Part of the reason is that the Loango Coast became the focus of the French slave trade following the end of the Seven Years war in 1763. In the last half of the eighteenth century, the French were responsible for the majority of the slave trade on the Loango Coast and the majority of Loango Coast captives went to the French colony of Saint Domingue. By the apogee of the Atlantic slave trade in the 1780s, I argue the French slave trade bound the Loango Coast and the colony of Saint Domingue together as two sides of a single process of enslavement and slavery and in the process created a Kongolese Atlantic world.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I turn to the questions of *who* was enslaved and *where* they came from. Using contemporary documents, I investigate the origins and processes of enslavement of captives sold on the Loango Coast in the last half of the eighteenth century, exploring what the structural changes and political upheavals in Loango Coast societies meant for the freedom and security of the region's inhabitants. I find that these developments resulted in new mechanisms of enslavement including kidnapping, judicial enslavement, debt, witchcraft accusations, and especially warfare. However, I conclude that it is not possible to address the question of where Loango Coast captives originated using extant written documents because there are no eyewitness reports of the interior slave trade. For this reason, in Chapter 5, I use historical linguistics as a tool to trace the

origins of captives sold on the Loango Coast. Historical linguistics is an indispensable tool because it permits a more precise investigation of the geographical regions of origin of captives than possible solely with written documents. This work of historical linguistics yielded my first major conclusion: that the majority of captives sold on the Loango Coast came from the Loango Coast kingdoms and Mayombe rainforest hinterland north of the Congo River. This information challenges scholars' belief that the inhabitants of the Loango Coast were mere middlemen in the interior slave trade. It also contradicts the argument that captives who embarked from the Loango Coast had originated from the Kingdom of Kongo, south of the Congo River, or from the Tio-controlled market at the Malebo Pool or Bobangi trade along the Upper Congo River.³⁴ It likewise calls into question the significance of the concept of the slaving frontier in generating captives for the Loango Coast slave trade at this time.³⁵ The fact that captives did in fact originate from the coastal kingdoms and immediate hinterland in the late eighteenth century highlights the importance of understanding the political and economic

³⁴ Phyllis M. Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); Robert W. Harms, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: the Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500-1891* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Thornton, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution."; Linda M. Heywood, "Slavery and Its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo: 1491-1800," *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 1 (2009); Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*.

³⁵ Joseph Calder Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

changes in coastal societies initiated by the Atlantic slave trade and what those meant for the lives of the men and women who lived there.

The north coast origin of Loango Coast captives has important repercussions for the cultural history of the Americas because the inhabitants from the coastal kingdoms had little or no contact with European religious beliefs and those from the inland forest had none at all. They were not, therefore, “Atlantic Creoles” with prior knowledge of European culture and religion. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 6, there is little evidence to support the continued influence of Christianity in the Kingdom of Kongo at the end of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, Christianity had made little impact on the northern kingdoms of the Loango Coast. This information has repercussions for how we understand the cultural history of the Kongolese in Saint Domingue. In the final chapter of the dissertation, I show how knowing the origin of Loango Coast captives raises new questions about the use of African cultural formations in the Americas. I produce new information and provide new analysis about the practices and worldviews of “Congos” in Saint Domingue by studying them alongside appropriate contemporary linguistic, ethnographic, and documentary evidence from the Loango Coast and Mayombe regions. The chapter focuses on Kongolese spiritual practitioners such as François Makandal, Dom Pèdre for whom the Petro rite of Haitian Vodou is named, Marie Kingué and others. The research presented in this chapter reveals that enslaved West Central Africans such as Marie Kingué used and transmitted specific instrumental knowledge and expertise in Saint Domingue to address the material problems of plantation life. I conclude by using sociolinguistics to identify connections between the Loango Coast and Mayombe

rainforest and the Haitian cultural forms that characterized post-independence Haitian society, including the *lakou* system of social organization and land ownership, and the Vodou religion, specifically the Kongo and Petro rites of Haitian Vodou. I argue that Kongolese cultural practices therefore constituted the building blocks of independent Haitian society.

Chapter 1: The Loango Coast until 1700

The Kongo people and culture that Europeans made contact with were not only highly developed and complex; they were also ancient. The three kingdoms of Loango, Kongo, and Tio all emerged in the previous centuries from a shared equatorial African tradition. These three kingdoms controlled access to important resources and commercial centers and economic as well as cultural ties united them. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the Atlantic slave trade would initiate fundamental transformations in the political, economic, and social relations of the entire Kongo region. In order to understand how and why those changes happened, and what they meant for the everyday lives of the men and women who lived in the region, one must understand what came before. This chapter introduces the history of the Kingdom of Loango and surrounding area before the arrival of Europeans in order to understand how the Atlantic slave trade disrupted the stability of the region, which will be discussed further in the following chapters. The history of the emergence of the kingdoms of Loango, Kongo, and Tio as well as the major political and religious institutions of each is central to understanding what followed. The difference in Loango and Kongo's participation in the Atlantic slave trade can partly be explained by the structural differences between the kingdoms. While the Kingdom of Kongo was highly centralized, the Kingdom of Loango's power relied on economic, rather than political, power to control surrounding regions. Its extensive trade network and hinterland facilitated Atlantic trade. Likewise, unlike the King of Kongo, religious associations between the slave trade and witchcraft prohibited the King of Loango from directly participating in the slave trade. For this reason, the King could not

control the wealth introduced by the Atlantic slave trade. This lack of control ultimately undermined his central authority in the Kingdom, initiating a period of political instability that led to the enslavement of many coastal inhabitants.

Both the decentralization of the Kingdom of Loango as well as religious associations with Europeans and Atlantic trade initially discouraged the establishment of the Atlantic slave trade north of the Congo River. It was only in the late-seventeenth century that Loango became an active participant in the Atlantic slave trade. The trade initially exploited traditional, pre-existing trade routes and markets under the control of the King of Loango. At the same time, the rise of Atlantic trade spurred the expansion of a caravan system of interior trade. This was especially true of the caravaners from Loango known as the Vili who reached markets south of the Congo River, as far as the Luanda hinterland in the late seventeenth century. Loango's privileged position as the coastal broker of Atlantic trade led to the expansion of Loango's sphere of influence. Thus, the early period of Atlantic commerce reinforced and extended the traditional political and economic institutions of the Kingdom of Loango. The history presented in this chapter therefore provides a stark contrast to the social, political, and economic change initiated by the Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century, the subject of Chapter 2.

Geography and Ecology

The Loango Coast occupies the northern area of the Kongo cultural and linguistic zone.¹ The label ‘Kongo’ does not refer to the Kingdom of Kongo or the Bakongo people.² Instead, Kongo is used as a generic term to refer to the linguistic and cultural area of the Kongo language zone (H10), which includes peoples and languages of the Loango Coast south to Luanda in Angola and east of the Kwango River to the Yaka and Suku of modern Bandundu Province.³ It is a region that shares related languages and history. The Loango Coast held a privileged geographic position in West Central Africa because it occupied the territory from the Cape Lopez in the north to the Congo River in the south and straddled the resource rich edge of the Central African equatorial rainforest,

¹ On the unity of the Kongo zone in the early modern period, see the work of the Kongoking research group led by Koen Bostoen at the University of Ghent and the published work of Jean de Dieu Nsondé: Jean de Dieu Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques* (Paris: Harmattan, 1995).

² Barbaro Martinez Ruiz writes “[W]e should note that the term *Kongo* is inherently problematic insofar as it conflates into a single term a complex regional history and multiple cultural identities. The Kongo kingdom’s dominance in Central Africa from as early as the thirteenth century until the colonial period certainly shaped the development of the region, but reliance on the term *Kongo* to describe a complex amalgamation of cultures and a dispersed, varied population glosses over the region’s history of war, occupation, migration, and intra-African slavery and fails to tease out the effects of these disruptive events on smaller, less powerful groups.” Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz, *Kongo graphic writing and other narratives of the sign* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013). 16-17.

³ See linguistic classification of Guthrie and more recent update by Jouni Filip Maho: Malcolm Guthrie, *Comparative Bantu: an Introduction to the Comparative Linguistics and Prehistory of the Bantu Languages, 4 Volumes* (Farnborough, Gregg, 1967-71); Maho, "The New Updated Guthrie Online".

the southern fringe of which extended to the coast as far south as the port of Mayumba.⁴ French missionaries who arrived in Mayumba in June of 1773 described the natural splendor of Mayumba: “This plain is of a great beauty, well planted with greenery and surrounded by the most beautiful forests. [...] Nothing is more beautiful than the always-green forests” which are very abundant, “nothing is more agreeable than the plains that intersect them [...]”⁵ South of the rainforest fringe, the coastal area is made up of sandstone cliffs, such as those surrounding the Loango Bay. From Loango south to the Congo River, the coastline consisted of coastal plains varying in width between 6 to 35 miles.⁶ The Atlantic coast was an important site for fishing and salt collection.⁷ Savannas and light forests covered the coastal plains before giving way to heavier vegetation towards the mouth of the Congo River estuary.⁸ There, the Congo River stretched between nine to ten kilometers wide. Mangrove swamps dominated the north bank.⁹ To the interior of the coastal plains was a vast area of thick forest called Mayombe. In the eastern Mayombe

⁴ Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 1.

⁵ Jean Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*, (Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1953). 96.

⁶ Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 2.

⁷ John M. Janzen, *Lemba, 1650-1930: a drum of affliction in Africa and the New World* (New York: Garland Pub., 1982). 27.

⁸ Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 2.

⁹ Norm Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885." (Indiana University, 1985), 14.

forest lay a mountainous region containing deposits of iron, copper, and lead, minerals used and traded throughout the region for cultivation, hunting, and warfare.¹⁰ The Mayombe forest also marked the limits of European knowledge of the region in the early modern period; no European crossed into the Mayombe forest until the nineteenth century. East of the Mayombe rainforest the mountains gave way to the Teke plateau north of the Malebo Pool.

The southern border of the Loango Coast was the Congo River, which riverine peoples called *Nzadi*, “the great river that absorbs all lesser ones.”¹¹ Beginning at the central plateau of the Malebo Pool, the Congo River begins its descent toward the Atlantic Ocean. This region from the Malebo Pool to the Atlantic Ocean is known as the Lower Congo River. The journey to the coast is characterized by passage through an unnavigable area of canyons and cataracts extending from the Malebo Pool to present-day Matadi known as the Cataracts district.¹² Along the north coast of the Congo River from the central plateau of the Teke 800 kilometers west to Mboma is a narrow area of hill country. West of Mboma, toward the Atlantic Ocean, the Congo River widens dramatically. Between Mboma and the ocean, numerous islands divide the Congo River into three major channels. Only in the last 50 kilometers to the coast do these merge to

¹⁰ Janzen, *Lemba, 1650-1930: a drum of affliction in Africa and the New World*: 27.

¹¹ Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.," 16.

¹² *Ibid.*, 14.

form a single channel.¹³ These channels and islands would prove a major challenge for European traders who wanted to navigate the Congo River to trade directly with riverine groups.

Before the arrival of Europeans, the Kingdom of Loango was the central political unit in the region. It was ideally positioned between the resource-rich equatorial forest to the north, the iron and copper mining regions of Mayombe to the east, and the Congo River estuary to the south. Loango's inhabitants travelled in groups to places such as the mining areas in the dry season in order to take advantage of these resources. This regional trade formed "an incipient caravan system" that would expand once Europeans arrived on the Atlantic coast. Loango's privileged position contributed to the importance of her coastal market where squares of raffia cloth called *mbongo* were used as currency.¹⁴ The kingdom itself boasted enviable natural resources: fertile land, savannas and forests rich in wildlife, rivers and coastlines apt for fishing and salt-making.¹⁵ At its height, the Kingdom of Loango's privileged geographic and commercial position allowed it to extend commercial influence throughout the entire region.

¹³ Ibid., 16.

¹⁴ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 201.

¹⁵ Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 3.

People and Culture

The history of the Kongo region is better documented than any other area of comparable size on the African continent, with over half a million contemporary pages estimated to have been written after 1500.¹⁶ For the period prior to the arrival of Europeans, however, historians have few textual sources with which to work. Historian Jan Vansina reconstructed the early history of the region by using a sociolinguistic methodology (explained in detail in Chapter 5) that combined archaeological, linguistic, ethnographic, and textual evidence. According to Vansina, the coastal kingdoms encountered by Europeans arose, along with all of equatorial African society, from “a single ancestral society and culture” over the course of four to five thousand years.¹⁷ The history of Central Africa, especially “the development of political institutions” resulted from a “single equatorial African tradition.” This tradition manifested itself in cultural beliefs and institutions that in turn shaped the social, political, and economic history of the region. Vansina identified two ideologies which coexisted “right from the outset”: “one that extolled and explained the success of big men and one that stressed the ideal equality of all, which underlies the suspicion of witchcraft.”¹⁸ These two axioms are, at face value, contradictory. In practice, they acted as checks and balances on one another,

¹⁶ Jan Vansina, "The Kongo kingdom and its neighbors, based on a contribution by T. Obenga," in *Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. B.A. Ogot, *UNESCO History of Africa* (J. Currey, 1999).

¹⁷ ———, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 197; 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 253.

the former pushing for increased centralization of social and political institutions, the latter acting as a check on central authority by stressing equality, local autonomy, and decentralization.

The understanding of witchcraft further mediated the competing traditions of big man centralization and equality. By vilifying those who accumulated too much, witchcraft promoted an “ideology of equality and cooperation.”¹⁹ At the same time, political leaders – big men and later chiefs or kings – were believed to derive their power from the supernatural.²⁰ Leaders were themselves perceived as a type of witch, using supernatural power for the benefit of their people.²¹ The role of leaders was both political and ritual, as was their power.²² The social order also reflected the cosmological understanding of the universe. The political and religious spheres were themselves inextricably intertwined, as seen in the ritual role of chiefs, belying the modern Western understanding of the separation between church and state.²³ This equatorial African tradition expressed itself in every aspect of life – political, economic, and social – domains that were themselves interconnected aspects of a cosmological whole. The

¹⁹ Ibid., 96.

²⁰ Wyatt MacGaffey, "The Religious Commissions of the Bakongo," *Man* 5, no. 1 (1970). Vansina argues that MacGaffey's findings on Bakongo beliefs about leadership hold true “throughout equatorial Africa.” Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 327n86.

²¹ Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: chapter 1. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*.

²² MacGaffey, "Changing Representations in Central African History," 194.

²³ On the differences between Kongolese and Western categories, and the way they impact how we understand African history, see: *ibid.*

relationship between tradition and cosmology was a reciprocal one: both reflected fundamental meanings of the world. Equatorial Africans, therefore, not only shared a common political tradition, but also a common worldview.²⁴

The push and pull of the traditional esteem of big men as well as equality and decentralization is imprinted in the institutional history of the region. As late as 500 C. E., the socio-political organization was highly decentralized, a reflection of both the relative low population density and the cultural value on local autonomy. Social organization centered on the House and the village. Big men (*mfúmu*, *mpfó* [CS 1263-65]) led the House and the village. The village was characterized by relations of economic dependency rather than by blood or kinship relations.²⁵ They included family members, clients, and local hunter-gatherers. Big men used wealth to attract followers. One of their central roles as leaders was to resolve conflicts through the institutions of the palaver. Subjects understood the power of big men as both political and religious, connected with charms (*nkisi*) or nature spirits (*nkira*).²⁶ These political and religious powers were in turn tied to the land. This relationship can be seen in the title accorded to chiefs throughout the region: “master of the land.”²⁷ Among the Kongo the title was

²⁴ According to Vansina, “Worldviews are essential to the creation and maintenance of tradition. They are the cognitive substance that gives meaning and aims to life.” Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 95.

²⁵ Ibid., 146.

²⁶ A114 and CS 1071-3; A114. Ibid.

²⁷ Yombe, *mfumu nsi*. See: Janzen, *Lemba, 1650-1930: a drum of affliction in Africa and the New World*: 55-6.

ngáánsi. The Tio similarly used *ngántsi*. *Nsi* and *ntsi* refer to the land. Both titles linguistically highlight the role of chiefs as political founders and their link with nature spirits or charms (Tio *nkira*,²⁸ Kongo “Charms of the land” *nkisi ntsi*).²⁹ Centers of ritual prestige laid the foundations for future regions of political importance. The epicenter of spiritual life in the Kongo zone lay in the Mayombe rainforest and along the adjacent coast of the Congo River, the same region that would later develop into the kingdoms of Loango and Kongo.³⁰

Over the course of millennia, the centripetal forces of big man leadership overcame the centrifugal forces of the ideal of social equality and connected suspicion of witchcraft. According to Vansina, “increasing centralization” of political and social institutions characterized the history of the region in the *longue durée* by “leading to the emergence of first chiefdoms, then principalities, kingdoms, and finally three large

²⁸ “Nature holds the most powerful, the most beneficial spirits, *nkira*, who lived in the shadow of the cool woods, hidden near the murmur of a brook or rarely on the open dusty, hot, glare of the savannah. These spirits had names and were considered to be persons with a ghostly sort of white body, mostly invisible and with no real personalities: *nkira* spirits were not easily swayed by passions such as love and anger. The Tio plains are divided into chiefdoms and in each of these a *nkira* had taken up its abode and exercised his power over the same domain over which the chief of the land ruled. It was the privilege and the duty of the chief to be the master of the *nkira*, i.e., to ask of it blessings and fertility on behalf of the community.... At the level of the kingdom there was the national *nkira* at the Falls of the Lefini, associated with the king and holding sway over the whole realm.” Jan Vansina, *The Tio kingdom of the Middle Congo, 1880-1892* (London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1973). 224.

²⁹ ———, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 146.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 146-52; 346n71.

kingdoms surrounded by a circle of smaller kingdoms and chiefdoms.”³¹ Scholars have traditionally believed that kinship networks produced centralization in African societies. In reality, it was the product of conquest and subordination – economic or political – of surrounding groups. Through this process, villages formed into principalities, principalities into states, and states into kingdoms. Though oral traditions often legitimized the history of the Kingdoms through claims to common lineage, according to Vansina, military conquest played a decisive role in the rise of kingdoms.³² Principalities that had risen to prominence due to privileged access to economic resources used innovations in the arms, tactics, and magic of warfare to consolidate power over an extended region. As a result, prisoners of war became an important category for the first time and with them a new form of slavery.³³ The geographic locations of these kingdoms corresponded with major areas of commercial importance mentioned above. According to Vansina, the kingdoms emerged from “two early cradles”: the Kongo and Loango Coast kingdoms from north of the lower Congo River, “where the greatest number of Kongo principalities were located before the kingdom arose”; and the second on the northern or

³¹ Ibid., 146.

³² On oral traditions of the rise of kingdoms, see: Annie Merlet, *Autour du Loango: XIVe-XIXe siècle* (Centre culturel français Saint-Exupéry-Sépia, 1991). Luc de Heusch, *The Drunken King, or, The origin of the State*, African systems of thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); ———, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*. Frank Hagenbucher-Sacripanti, *Les Fondements spirituels du pouvoir au royaume de Loango, République populaire du Congo* (Paris: O.R.S.T.O.M. , 1973). Anne Hilton, *The kingdom of Kongo*, Oxford studies in African affairs (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1985).

³³ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 154-5.

northwestern edge of the Tio Kingdom.³⁴ The culmination of this process of centralization was the emergence of three kingdoms around the fourteenth century, all of whom would play an important role in Atlantic trade upon the arrival of Europeans one hundred years later: the kingdoms of Loango, Kongo, and Tio.

Political centralization was tied to economic growth. The principalities that emerged in this period were those who controlled economically important regions. Political centralization in turn led to the growth of trade. As a consequence, increasing tributes flowed to centers of political power, facilitating further political and economic expansion. Political centers also became important economic marketplaces and with them, “a set of innovative commercial institutions, such as market regulations, commercial law, the four-day week, which regulated the periodicity of markets, and a monetary system based on iron, copper, and raffia-square units.” The resource-rich copper belt in the Mayombe rainforest north of the Congo River represented a significant center of these innovations. According to the “fragmentary archaeological record” regions of commercial importance would later become political centers of power. By the end of the fourteenth century, three areas had emerged: the first along the Atlantic coast north of the Congo River, the second along the lower Congo River itself, and the third in an area farther north. These economically important areas corresponded to the political centers of what would become the kingdoms of Loango, Kongo, and Tio.³⁵ The region

³⁴ Ibid., 156.

³⁵ Ibid., 155.

north of the Congo River from the coast to the area known as the Mayombe forest was well endowed with mineral deposits including copper, lead, and iron.³⁶ According to Anne Hilton, the Kingdom of Kongo formed at the crossroads of two ancient commercial routes: one from Bungu (or Vungu), north of the Congo River, to the Inkisi Valley relaying copper; and the route of salt and *nzimbu* exchange, which connected the capital Mbanza Kongo to the Atlantic coast.³⁷ The Tio kingdom, meanwhile, came into being on the eastern side of the Mayombe forest on the Teke plateau. The kingdoms arose in the area with the most biological and geographic diversity which yielded economic resources that facilitated political centralization.

It is no surprise, given the fact that these kingdoms straddled such a resource and population rich area, that complex trade relations developed between them. Indeed, one of the earliest sources for the region, written around 1583, mentions trade between Kongo and Tio around the Malebo Pool.³⁸ Archaeological evidence suggests that the Malebo Pool had long been a central commercial location: “all known layers of Zairian Congolese archaeology are to be found around the Malebo Pool, thus bearing witness to a highly unusual degree of continuity in both the density of settlement and the variety of

³⁶ _____, "The Kongo kingdom and its neighbors, based on a contribution by T. Obenga," 547.

³⁷ Hilton, *The kingdom of Kongo*: 2. Dutch trader Cappelle described trade in *Nzimbu* shells for ivory, cloth, tobacco, elephant tails, and salt in 1642: Louis Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Soho, Congo, 1600-1675* (Rome: Academia Belgica, 1966). 221.

³⁸ Duarte Lopes and Filippo Pigafetta, *A report of the Kingdom of Congo and of the surrounding countries; drawn out of the writings and discourses of the Portuguese, Duarte Lopez, by Filippo Pigafetta, in Rome, 1591*, ed. Margarite Hutchinson (New York, Negro Universities Press, 1969 [1591]).

human activities.”³⁹ Several types of pottery uncovered at Kingabwa, near Kinshasa, on the right bank of the Malebo Pool have been found at other minor sites in the Kinshasa region all the way up the Congo River to the Lake Mai-Ndombe. The pottery, which archaeologists believe dates from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, is the “best evidence” of early the commercial relations along the Congo River. The pottery shows an extensive trade network, from the upper Congo River and its tributaries in the Congo River Basin to the Malebo Pool and, from there, to the Atlantic Coast. Archaeological studies suggest that goods exchanged in this long distance trade included camwood for cosmetic and religious purposes, copper from the lower Congo, salt, mats and baskets. It is important to note that this trade was already flourishing *before* the arrival of Europeans, laying the groundwork for trade routes that would later be exploited by Atlantic trade.⁴⁰

The Rise of the Kingdoms of Loango, Kongo, and Tio

Historians continue to debate the history of the emergence of the kingdoms of Loango, Kongo, and Tio and the relationships between them. This is especially true of the Kingdom of Loango, which was once believed to be an ancient province of the Kingdom of Kongo. The belief rested on Lopes’ claim, in the late sixteenth century, that

³⁹ Elikia M'Bokolo, "From the Cameroon grasslands to the Upper Nile," in *Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. B.A. Ogot, *UNESCO History of Africa* (J. Currey, 1999), 534.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

the ruler of Loango, the Maloango, no longer made tribute to the Kongo king.⁴¹ It also derived from oral traditions that linked the first ruler of Loango to the king of Kongo.⁴² Vansina rejects the idea that Loango was once a province of the Kingdom of Kongo as “dubious.” He concludes “there is no doubt that this state [Loango] may well be as old as Kongo itself, given the history of the acquisition of its provinces.”⁴³ It seems more likely that the two kingdoms emerged from a similar region, which would explain why oral traditions of the founding of the kingdoms of Loango and Kongo share common themes.⁴⁴ Both kingdoms claimed to have originated from Vungu (or Bungu), a

⁴¹ Duarte Lopes, *Report of the kingdome of Congo, a region of Africa : And of the countries that border rounde about the same. 1. Wherein is also shewed, that the two zones torrida & frigida, are not onely habitable, but inhabited, and very temperate, contrary to the opin* ([S.l.]: Printed by Iohn Wolfe, 1597 [original Portuguese 1571]).

⁴² Such as in the traditions reported by Merolla and Cavazzi. Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi, *Descrição Histórica Dos Três Reinos Do Congo, Matamba E Angola* (Lisboa: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1965 [1687]). Girolamo Merolla and Angelo Piccardo, *Breue, E Succinta Relatione Del Viaggio Nel Regno Di Congo...* (Napoli: Francesco Mollo, 1692).

⁴³ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 158.

⁴⁴ Earliest evidence about the founding of the kingdoms found in Dapper (1668), Cavazzi (1687), Bernardo da Gallo (circa 1700), and Merolla (1682): Olfert Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique, contenant les noms, la situation & les confins de toutes ses parties, leurs rivieres, leurs villes & leurs habitations leurs plantes & leurs animaux; les moeurs, les coûtumes, la langue, les richesses, la religion & le gouvernement de ses peuples*. (Amsterdam: Wolfgang, Waesberge, Boom & van Someren, 1668); Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi, *Descrição histórica dos três reinos do Congo, Matamba e Angola* (Lisboa: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1965 [1687]). Louis Jadin, *Le Congo et la secte des Antoniens: restauration du royaume sous Pedro IV et la "saint-Antoine" congolaise (1694-1718)* (Institut historique belge de Rome, 1961); Girolamo Merolla and Angelo Piccardo, *Breue, e succinta relatione del viaggio nel regno di Congo...* (Napoli: Francesco Mollo, 1692).

spiritually important region located just north of the lower Congo River.⁴⁵ Vungu was the home of the sanctuary of Bunzi, which played both an institutional and sacred role in both kingdoms by being the source of political and religious authority.⁴⁶ Whatever its relationship to the Kingdom of Kongo, Loango was independent at the time of the arrival of Europeans, and is clearly mentioned as such by the beginning of the sixteenth century.⁴⁷ According to Vansina, the rise of all three kingdoms probably pre-dated the arrival of Europeans by several centuries, most likely occurring in the fourteenth century, or even before.⁴⁸

All three kingdoms – Tio, Kongo, and Loango – had similar institutional structures, though important differences existed that would partly determine how Atlantic

⁴⁵ Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 7. Merlet, *Autour du Loango: XIVe-XIXe siècle*: 22. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 156. Hagenbucher-Sacripanti, *Les Fondements spirituels du pouvoir au royaume de Loango, République populaire du Congo*: 22-3.

⁴⁶ Cavazzi reports that the Kingdom of Kongo was founded by Lukeni, son of the king of Bungu (or Vungu). Dapper wrote that the founder of the Kingdom of Loango, the Maloango, came from Zarry a territory on the north bank of the Congo River near Bungu. Both rulers and their successors derived political power from the ritual blessing of the priest of the sanctuary of Bunzi. Cavazzi, *Descrição histórica dos três reinos do Congo, Matamba e Angola*: 564; Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique*, : 143; Merlet, *Autour du Loango: XIVe-XIXe siècle*: 22. Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 69, 76. Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 5-9.

⁴⁷ ———, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 9. Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: chapter 2.

⁴⁸ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 156.

trade would impact each kingdom. Early documents and linguistic evidence give us an idea of the political organization of the kingdoms. In each kingdom, two main groups of titleholders existed: officials at the palace or court and territorial officials. In the kingdoms of Kongo and Loango, but not Tio, the first group of officials was divided between those charged with government functions such as justice, revenue, and military and those charged with the royal household. Among the Tio, by contrast, the king was only lord over his *nkáni*, who ruled autonomously over their lands unlike territorial rulers in Kongo and Loango, who were accountable to the central government.⁴⁹ The shared origin of the kingdoms of Loango and Kongo helps explain why the two had similar language and customs surrounding religion and political organization. Throughout the area, the king bore the title *Ntotila* or *Ntinu*, as opposed to the Tio, who used a distinct term, *okoo*, to designate the king.⁵⁰ The Kingdom of Kongo represented the most centralized of the three. Only the Kingdom of Kongo had a centralized tribute, military, and justice system as well as a national currency, the *nzimbu* (*Olivancillaria nana*) shell. In the Kingdom of Kongo, most provincial officials could be appointed or dismissed at the discretion of the monarch. The Kingdom of Loango was less centralized. The monarch merely appointed a court supervisor of the provincial lords. Loango had some centralization of justice and tribute went to the king, though not to the extent seen in the Kongo. The Kingdom of Tio was the least centralized: the king only received tribute, but

⁴⁹ Ibid., 158.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 155-6.

enjoyed no military or judicial centralization at all.⁵¹ Loango was the only kingdom with a formalized succession structure based entirely on matrilineal clans. In the Kongo, by contrast, as well as among the Tio, “undifferentiated Houses were the main structure at the higher levels,” though matrilineal descent dominated at the village level in the Kongo.⁵²

Each kingdom’s ideology was deeply rooted in and dependent upon the “specifics of its own religious history.”⁵³ In all three kingdoms, the king’s “main functions were ritual ones.”⁵⁴ Indeed, the power of all three monarchs rested upon spiritual forces and functions. Among the Tio, the king held power by virtue of his possession of the shrine of the national nature spirit, Nkwe Mbali.⁵⁵ By contrast, “the Kongo and Loango kings ruled by virtue of their ancestors, and in Loango, by virtue of the approval of the keeper of the charm of the land” at the sanctuary of Bunzi in Vungu.⁵⁶ Modern scholars argue it is impossible to understand the political role of kings without recognizing their religious power and importance. For example, anthropologist Luc de Heusch argues that “the royal

⁵¹ Ibid., 158.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ M'Bokolo, "From the Cameroon grasslands to the Upper Nile," 526-7. See also: Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*; Vansina, *The Tio kingdom of the Middle Congo, 1880-1892*.

⁵⁵ For more on Tio kingship see: ———, *The Tio kingdom of the Middle Congo, 1880-1892*.

⁵⁶ ———, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 158. ———, *The Tio kingdom of the Middle Congo, 1880-1892*: 374.

person is the precisely the place where the natural order and cultural order articulate themselves. The sovereign is responsible as much for the social equilibrium of society as for the harmony of the universe. It would be absurd to want to disassociate these two aspects.”⁵⁷ Wyatt MacGaffey likewise concludes: “If the Kongo king were ever deficient in magical powers, he would, I believe, be unique in Central Africa, where the distinction between political and ritual roles, so important to those for whom the separation of church and state seems obvious, cannot be made.”⁵⁸

The monarch of the Kingdom of Loango was imbued with the most religious importance. The foundation myth of the Kingdom of Loango traced its origin from a group of Woyo blacksmiths. The first king is presented as a sacred king, the master of fire. The king was said to be a great magician with the power to make a sacred fire burn permanently in the court of Loango.⁵⁹ “During the coronation ceremony, each Maloango lit the *ntufia* (sacred fire) which was to burn until his death and torches lit from this fire were ceremoniously transported to the provincial capitals and thence to the lineage

⁵⁷ Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 28.

⁵⁸ MacGaffey, "Changing Representations in Central African History," 194.

⁵⁹ Versus primordial mother, pygmy, come from the sea, but the kings from her line forbidden to see the ocean. This explains the attitude of the Vili towards Europeans, refusing to let them establish themselves because they suspected, not without reason, they wanted to establish a new political domination. Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 43-4. On the associations with Europeans, see Battell: Samuel Purchas, *Hakhytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes, contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells, by Englishmen and others (4 vols.)* (1625).

homes.”⁶⁰ The investiture of the King of Loango was dependent upon the priest of the spirit Bunzi, the mother of all local earth spirits (*nkisi nsi*) and ruler of all nature spirits (*simbi*), who controlled the rain and fertility, located at the sanctuary in Vungu (which later became part of the Kingdom of Ngoyo).⁶¹ The cosmological order ascribed to the king a supernatural positionality, existing at and embodying the nexus of the natural and supernatural (savage and divine) worlds.⁶² This is why the king’s power was associated with “sacred monsters” such as albinos, pygmies, and dwarves, who were believed to serve as intermediaries between the living and nature spirits. The spiritual and ritual importance of the King of Loango can be seen in the account of Andrew Battell, later related by Samuel Purchas (1613, 1625). According to Battell, “The king is so honoured, as though he were a god among them: and is called Sambe and Pongo, that is, God.” [Nzambi Mpungu] People greeted the king by clapping “their hands and salute him, saying in their language; Byani Pemba, Ampola, Moneya, Quesinge.” The king was believed to have the power to bring on the rain. “And they believe that he [the King] can give them rain,” Battell reported. “So once a year when it is time to rain; which is in December, the people come to beg rain, and bring their gifts to the king: for none come empty. Then he appoints the day, and all the lords far and near come to that feat with

⁶⁰ M'Bokolo, "From the Cameroon grasslands to the Upper Nile," 526-7.

⁶¹ Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 48-9. Eduard Pechüel-Loesche, *Die Loango-Expedition ausgesandt von der Deutschen Gesellschaft zur Erforschung Aequatorial-Africas, 1873-1876 : ein Reisewerk in drei Abtheilungen* (Leipzig: P. Froberg, 1907). 276. LAMAN 1962, 69

⁶² Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 48-9.

their troupes [...] After they have sported and showed the king pleasure, he arises and stands upon his throne, and takes a bow and arrows in his hand and shoots to the sky, and that day there is great rejoicing, because sometimes they have rain.” Battell claimed to have witnessed this power: “I was once there when the king gave rain, and it chanced that day to rain mightily, which made the people to have great belief in their folly.”⁶³ Battell reported that no one was allowed to witness the king eating or drinking and that the king was surrounded by albinos (“dondos” or *ndundu*) “These are the king’s witches [...] The king of Longo [Loango] has four of them.”⁶⁴ The ritual importance ascribed to the King of Loango would have important repercussions for how the ruler was able to interact with Europeans.

The ritual importance of the king of Loango required isolation from outside contact and influence. The isolation of the king is an ancient tradition in the Kongo cultural zone.⁶⁵ The king of Loango, according to Battell and others such as Olfert Dapper, could not be witnessed eating or drinking. Custom severely restricted movement of the king. In fact, he was largely confined to the palace; he could not see the river or the ocean, and was forbidden to leave the palace at certain times. Battell reported “The last King Gembe, never used to speak in the day, but always at night.” The king and *mfumu-*

⁶³ Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes, contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells, by Englishmen and others (4 vols.)*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.."

nsi were also forbidden to access the *bibila*, nature sanctuaries, homes of the *minkisi* who spiritually legitimized all political rule.⁶⁶ The king of Loango and later the king of Ngoyo also largely refused contact with Europeans.⁶⁷ The ritual isolation of the king also applied to the use of European merchandise or contact with Europeans themselves. Most importantly, the king was forbidden to participate in the slave trade, which was associated with witchcraft (though he did levy taxes and customs on the trade).

As a result of this isolation, local chiefs, as opposed to the central government, profited most from the slave trade. In addition, the relative decentralization of the kingdom meant that the king had little power to legislate or regulate the trade. What power he did have was eroded proportionate with the accumulation of wealth by local chiefs. The increased wealth increased their autonomy from the crown and central authority. With the advent of European trade and especially the slave trade, the king of Loango, and central territorial leaders generally, lost their monopoly on the distribution of wealth (in territory, people, and goods), thus disrupting the traditional balance of power. In the end, the spread of the slave trade and concomitant rise of a “new bourgeoisie” proved a fatal centrifugal force, spinning out of the king’s control in the eighteenth century: by the time of the French dominance in the last half of the eighteenth

⁶⁶ Merlet, *Autour du Loango: XIVe-XIXe siècle*.

⁶⁷ Battell and refusing to let Portuguese be buried for fear will stop the rains, 17. Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 95. Hagenbucher-Sacripanti, *Les Fondements spirituels du pouvoir au royaume de Loango, République populaire du Congo*: 81.

century, Ngoyo, Kakongo, Mayombe, and Mayumba (at the least) are all stated by the French as being independent from the Kingdom of Loango.⁶⁸

By contrast, the king of Kongo never acquired the same magical character ascribed to the king of Loango and, as a result, participated avidly in the Atlantic trade.⁶⁹ The moral (and political) authority of the king of Kongo depended entirely upon the Mani Vunda, the great priest of the ancient kingdom of Vungu who alone had the power to crown a new monarch. The Mani Vunda can be seen to occupy the same political and religious function as the great priest of Bunzi in Loango. Unlike Loango, the king of Kongo was not considered to be a great sorcerer. Even after the adoption of Christianity by the kings of Kongo, the Mani Vunda remained the central ritual authority and even in the late-eighteenth century, according to missionary Dicomano, had the power to

⁶⁸ According to Annie Merlet, the slave trade was the primary factory in the social decomposition of the Kingdom of Loango from its initiation until the fall of the kingdom in 1836. It was the principle cause of the political decadence evident until 1883. The slave trade initiated a period of crisis. Each period of commercial progress translated into the decreased power of the central government. Merlet, *Autour du Loango: XIVE-XIXe siècle*: 56-60.

⁶⁹ Heusch concludes that the king of Loango was imbued with a religious significance that the king of Kongo was not from the myth of Ntinu Wene. His conclusion that Afonso I (King Nzinga Nkuwu) conversion to Christianity in 1491 stemmed from the king's dependence on the ritual authority of the Manu Vunda draws on an argument originally made by Anne Hilton. Wyatt MacGaffey disagrees with Heusch's conclusion that the king of Loango was believed to possess magical powers in a way the king of Kongo was not, noting "If the Kongo king were ever deficient in magical powers, he would, I believe, be unique in Central Africa, where the distinction between political and ritual roles, so important to those for whom the separation of church and state seems obvious, cannot be made." However, what is clear is that the King of Loango is unable, for religious reasons, to participate in the Atlantic slave trade while the King of Kongo suffered no such prohibition. Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 91. Hilton, *The kingdom of Kongo*: 49. MacGaffey, "Changing Representations in Central African History," 194.

overturn decisions made by the king.⁷⁰ According to anthropologist Luc de Heusch, the dependence of the king of Kongo upon the religious authority of the Mani Vunda motivated and explained the kingdom's conversion to Christianity. In order to ascend to the throne, Afonso I needed to defeat the stronger claim of his half-brother, who had the support of the Mani Vunda. In order to circumvent the legitimizing power of the Mani Vunda and empower his own claim, Afonso I embraced Christianity.⁷¹

The ritual importance ascribed to each ruler impacted their ability to participate in Atlantic trade. While the rulers of the Kingdom of Kongo, according to European sources, profited handsomely through direct participation with the trade, rulers on the Loango Coast were forbidden to interact with a trade associated with sorcery and witchcraft. As we will see, the isolation of the king of Loango, specifically the prohibition against his participation in the slave trade, ultimately led to the declension of the monarchy as the influx of foreign capital from Atlantic trade upset the balance of power in the kingdom by creating a new class of wealthy merchants who became the new powerbrokers. This process took place over the course of several centuries, accelerating

⁷⁰ "Elle fut détruit en 1623, du temps du roi de Kongo Pedro II, par des invasions Nsundu et Bwende." Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 115, 76-7.

⁷¹ Ibid., see chapter 4, especially 74-8. Hilton, *The kingdom of Kongo*: 49. The power of the Mani Vunda in the eighteenth century can be seen in the missionary reports of Cherubino da Savona and Dicomano: Louis Jadin, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774," *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome*. 35(1975): 405. ———, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795," *Bulletin des séances* (1957): 330.

after the legalization of the slave trade in Loango in the 1670s, reaching an apotheosis in the last half of the eighteenth century.

The declension of the Kingdom of Loango can be traced using written sources. Beginning in the late fifteenth century, accounts of European travellers provide some evidence about the history of the coastal kingdom of Loango at the time. Early sources provide evidence that the Kingdom of Loango controlled much of the territory north of the Congo River into southern Gabon and that the nature of Loango's control was largely economic. The Kingdom of Loango must have been well established by 1500, because "all the voyagers' accounts of the early sixteenth estuary refer to the Mani Loango and Mbanza Loango by name."⁷² The full extent of the expansion of the kingdom remains elusive; early European writers variously claimed Loango controlled territory until Cape Saint Catherine and even Cape Lopez. The earliest information about the Kingdom of Loango comes from Duarte Lopes⁷³ who wrote around 1583: "Now, another boundary of the Kingdom of Congo begins at Cape Caterina on the north side, and terminates on the east at the junction of the Rivers Vumba and Zaire, a distance of more than 600 miles. Beyond this boundary northwards, and under the equinoctial line, along the sea-shore,

⁷² Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique*, . M'Bokolo, "From the Cameroon grasslands to the Upper Nile," 525.

⁷³ According to Fage, "Lopez, a concerted Jew, went to seek his fortune in the Congo in 1578, and in 1583 was sent by the *Manicongo* as his ambassador to the Pope. In Rome, he was introduced to the courtier, writer and geographer, Fillipo Pigafetta, and out of their collaboration this book emerged. If there ever were a Portuguese original, the MS has not been found." J. D. Fage, *A guide to original sources for precolonial western Africa published in European languages*, Studies in African sources: 2 (Madison, Wisconsin: African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987). 19.

and for about 200 miles inland, including the afore-mentioned Gulf of Lope Gonzales, the people called Bramas inhabit a territory now known as the Kingdom of Loango, and their king is called Maniloango, that is, King of Loango.”⁷⁴ Lopes stated that the king of Loango was no longer the vassal of the king of Kongo, writing, “The King of Loango is at amity with the King of Congo, but it is said was formerly his vassal.”⁷⁵ Lopes also gave some information about the history of Loango, as he understood it: “On the other side of the River Zaire, towards the north, is the Province of Palmar, so called from the number of palm-trees growing there. Other lordships border on the territory of the King of Loango, who formerly was subject to the King of Congo, but in process of time became independent, and now professes to be a friend of that king, but not a vassal. The people of this country were called Bramas in former days, and lived inland eastward, under the equinoctial line, as far as the borders of Anzicana, all along the mountains which divide them from the Anzichi on the north.”⁷⁶ Lopes’ account therefore gave the impression that the Kingdom of Loango had formerly been dependent of the Kingdom of Kongo and that Loango’s inhabitants had migrated from the east, possibly from the mountains of the eastern Mayombe rainforest.

⁷⁴ Lopes and Pigafetta, *A report of the Kingdom of Congo and of the surrounding countries; drawn out of the writings and discourses of the Portuguese, Duarte Lopez, by Filippo Pigafetta, in Rome, 1591*: 24-5.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

Further data about the extent of the Kingdom of Loango, including information about people north and east, comes from the account of Andrew Battell, who claimed to have spent three years in Loango, likely from 1607-1610.⁷⁷ Battell described the extent of the kingdom from south, at the Point of Palmar on the north side of the River Congo, to north. According to his information, Ngoyo and Kakongo, both of whom would be independent kingdoms by the mid-eighteenth century, were part of the kingdom of Loango. The “first province of Longo [Loango]” was Engoy [Ngoyo] who held the port of “Cabenda” [Cabinda], five leagues north of the Point of Palmar.⁷⁸ Battell makes no mention of a province of Kakongo, but he does write that seven leagues north of Cabinda is “the River Cacongo; a very pleasant place and fruitful.” He claimed the “Mombales”, from south of the River Congo, “have a great trade with them [...] and carry great stores of elephant’s teeth to the town of Mani Sonna, and sell them in the port of Pinda [Mpinda] to the Portuguese [.]” Battell goes on to describe the towns of Caya, Mani Loango, Longeri (“where all their kings be buried”), which are presumably all part of the first province of Loango. East of Loango, Battell identifies the “province of Bongo” bordering “Macoke” [Macoco or Tio Kingdom] with plentiful stores of iron, cloth, and ivory. Northeast of Bongo was the “province of Cano, and it is fourteen days’ journey from the town of Longo. This place is full of mountains and rocky ground, and full of

⁷⁷ Jan Vansina, "On Ravenstein's Edition of Battell's Adventures in Angola and Loango," *History in Africa* 34(2007): 325.

⁷⁸ Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes, contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells, by Englishmen and others* (4 vols.).

woods, and has a great store of copper. The elephants in this place do excel. Here are so many, that the people of Longo fetch great store of elephant's teeth, and bring them to the port of Longo [Loango]."⁷⁹ North of Loango was the "Province of Calongo," divided from Loango by the River Quelle, bordering Bongo on the east and in the north, Mayombe, "which is nineteen leagues from Longo, along the coast." The description of Mayombe is interesting because it is possibly the first one: "This province of Mayombe is all woods and groves; so overgrown, that a man may travail twenty days' in the shadow without any sun or heat [...] Here is a great sandy bay, two leagues to the southward of Cape Negro, which is the port of Mayombe. [...] This River [Banna] is very great and has many islands, and people dwelling in them."⁸⁰ North of the Cape Negro "is a great lord, called Mani Seat [Mani Sété]; which has the greatest store of Elephant's teeth of any lord in the kingdom of Longo [Loango]; for, his people practice nothing else but to kill elephant's." He continued "There is another lord to the eastward, which is called Mani Kesock, and he is eight days' journey from Mayombe." Finally, Battell appears to describe pygmies, writing: "To the northeast of Mani Kesock, are a king of little people, called Matimbás; which are no bigger then boys of twelve years old, but are very thick [...] They pay tribute to Mani Kesock, and bring all their elephant's teeth and tails to him."⁸¹ If Battell's information was correct, it seems as though the influence of Loango

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

had indeed spread to Gobbi, Sétte and Mayumba in present-day southern Gabon, albeit in a decentralized fashion.⁸² In addition, Ngoyo and Kakongo are clearly identified as being part of the Loango Kingdom, as is Mayombe. This is significant because Ngoyo, Kakongo, and Mayombe are all clearly identified as being independent by late-eighteenth century European visitors to the coast. According to Lopes and Battell, the Kingdom of Loango controlled most of the territory north of the Congo River at the beginning of the seventeenth century and was the central political institution in the region.

These early sources highlight the fact that economic, rather than military, relationships united this vast region. In Battell's account, he significantly details the economic, rather than the political, structures that connected each with Loango, listing their trade goods and routes rather than political officials or military conquests. Early narratives demonstrate that Loango had developed a complex economy that used an extensive trading network to exchange a diverse array of goods. According to historian Elikia M'Bokolo, the economy was characterized by "A dynamic food-crop agriculture blended with diversified craft production which included the making of palmcloth for clothing and use as currency; the working of ivory, copper and redwood; and salt-making."⁸³ Evidence of this trade can be found in several accounts: Battell mentions ivory, iron, cloth, copper, and dyewood not available in Loango; and seventeenth century Dutch merchants who mention salt that was not available in interior. Lopes's description

⁸² Merlet, *Autour du Loango: XIVE-XIXe siècle*: 7-8.

⁸³ M'Bokolo, "From the Cameroon grasslands to the Upper Nile," 526-7.

gives information about the economy of Loango. He wrote that Loango “abound[ed] in elephants” whose teeth were exchanged for iron. “Many elephants are found in Loango, and also much ivory. Ivory they exchange for iron, and even a nail from a ship is taken in exchange for a whole elephant’s tooth. This must be either because no iron is found here, or the working of it is unknown.”⁸⁴ The iron was used to make “arrowheads, cutlasses, and similar weapons.” Loango produced “cloth from the leaves of the palm-tree” – no doubt a reference to *mbongo* raffia cloth, which was used as currency north of the River Congo in place of the *nzimbu* shells used in the south.⁸⁵ These goods were sold in local coastal markets, notably in the capital of Loango, Buali, as well as in markets far beyond the reaches of the kingdom. Battell described the capital of Loango, which he calls “Mani Longo,” as a major political and commercial center:

The town of Mani Longo is three miles from the waters side, and stands on a great plain. This town is full of palm and plantain trees, and very fresh; and their houses are built under the trees. Their streets are wide and long, and always clean swept. The king has his houses on the westside, and before his door he has a plain, where he sits, when he has any feasting or matters of war to treat of. From this plain there goes a great wide street some musket shot from the place; and there is a great market every day, and it does begin at twelve of the clock.⁸⁶

Battell explained the contents and operation of the market. He described the use of *mbongo*, or raffia cloth as currency: “Here is great store of palm-clothes of sundry sorts,

⁸⁴ Lopes and Pigafetta, *A report of the Kingdom of Congo and of the surrounding countries; drawn out of the writings and discourses of the Portuguese, Duarte Lopez, by Filippo Pigafetta, in Rome, 1591*: 57.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁶ Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes, contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells, by Englishmen and others (4 vols.)*.

which is their merchandizes [...]”⁸⁷ The market sold a variety of foodstuffs “and great store of victuals, flesh, hens, fish, wine, oil and corn.” The market also sold luxury items for ritual or cosmetic purposes, including “very fine logwood, which they use to die withal [...] and Molangos [copper bracelets] of copper.” Battell’s description of ivory suggests that the inhabitants of Loango themselves had little use for it. He wrote that there existed a “great store of elephant’s teeth, but they sell none in the market place.”⁸⁸ Ivory seems to have been an item given in tribute or of such little value that people didn’t mind parting with it. Kesock and Sete were said to have the greatest store of ivory. Alliances between the Vili chiefs of Loango and neighboring people allowed for an extensive trading network to develop, one that stretched from Gabon to the Teke-dominated Malebo Pool.⁸⁹ Battell gives us an idea of these trade relationships. For example, we know that Ngoyo and Kakongo traded with the “mombales” south of the River, largely in ivory. Loango received iron, cloth, ivory, and corn from the eastern and Teke region (Bongo); copper and ivory from the northeastern mountain region (Cango); agricultural goods such as corn and honey from the north (Calongo); logwood from Mayombe.⁹⁰ The Atlantic trade thus

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 1-32. ———, “The Trade of Loango in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Pre-Colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900*, ed. David Birmingham and Richard Gray (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 141-6.

⁹⁰ Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes, containyng a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells, by Englishmen and others (4 vols.)*.

did not create commerce in this region: “it merely gave a new intensity and a new dimension to an already well-established trading system.”⁹¹

The Kingdom of Loango played a central role in the region’s trading system. Indeed, the Kingdom of Loango’s power relied on economic, rather than political influence. The fact that the Kingdom of Loango’s political power derived from its control of regional commercial relations is significant because it meant that economic changes in the region impacted Loango’s political power. When the Atlantic slave trade re-routed trade routes to the coast, the King of Loango was unable to control access to Atlantic trade because he lacked the direct political or military power necessary to do so. Furthermore, the King of Loango was prohibited from directly participating in the slave trade for religious reasons. The King of Loango’s inability to participate in or control participation in the Atlantic slave trade would ultimately cause the erosion of central authority in the Kingdom of Loango. However, this process would take place over the course of several centuries.

The Beginning of the Atlantic Slave Trade

Though the Portuguese’s first forays into West Central Africa took place on the Loango Coast, it remained a relatively unimportant trading partner for Europeans for the next two hundred years. This is largely due to the fact that the Loango Coast did not immediately become a central participant in the Atlantic slave trade. The first period of the Atlantic slave trade in West Central Africa took place at the mouth of the Congo

⁹¹ M'Bokolo, "From the Cameroon grasslands to the Upper Nile," 526-7.

River. From 1472-1483, Portuguese explorers attempted to trade for slaves along the northern Gabon coastline north of Loango but encountered communities that were too small and too decentralized to support foreign trade. In 1483, the Portuguese discovered the Kingdom of Kongo south of the River Congo, “which could easily sustain a systematic trade. There existed a centralized government, a system of rotating markets, and a standard national currency, the *nzimbu*. Institutions for the transport of goods overland were also well developed. [...] All this facilitated contact and a relatively regular trade developed after 1491.”⁹² Beginning in 1491, much of the Kongo trade took place in the Congo River port of Mpinda in the region of Sonyo. This trade included the exportation of slaves, wood, ivory, and rare animals in exchange for the importation of European goods. Mpinda continued to dominate the Kongo’s Atlantic trade throughout the sixteenth century. After the Portuguese founded the colony of Angola in 1575, the nexus of the Atlantic slave trade moved to the port of Luanda.⁹³ By 1600, the center of the slave trade was firmly entrenched in Luanda where a vast network of trade routes reaching as far as the Malebo Pool and the lower Kwango fed the Atlantic slave trade.⁹⁴

⁹² Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 200.

⁹³ Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Soho, Congo, 1600-1675*: 137.

⁹⁴ “Portuguese had used the confusion of the Jaga war to settle there on Kongo land and lay claim to a colony, Angola, in its hinterland. Luanda now became the hub of the slave trade, attracting slaves even from the Malebo Pool and from a new relay, Okango on the lower Kwango, at the head of a route going toward the lower middle Kwilu.” Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 201.

The center of the Atlantic slave trade in West Central Africa shifted once again in the last quarter of the seventeenth century with the rise of the port of Loango.

The Kingdom of Loango's commercial relationship with its extensive hinterland made it an ideal trading partner for European merchants. Following their movement to Luanda, the Portuguese opened regular trade with Loango.⁹⁵ According to Battell who had been sent by the Portuguese governor of Angola to Loango to trade, probably between 1607-1610,⁹⁶ the Portuguese sold European goods for ivory, animal skins, elephant tails, *mbongo* raffia cloth, and redwood used for dye, and copper.⁹⁷ Ivory, copper, and animal skins were exported to Portugal while the other goods were used for trade in the Kingdoms of Kongo and Angola.⁹⁸ Artisans used hairs from elephant tails in jewelry.⁹⁹ The Portuguese trade drew on the pre-existing regional economy, of which the

⁹⁵ Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 33.

⁹⁶ Vansina estimated Battell visited Loango from 1607-1610, revising Phyllis Martin's belief Battell visited in the 1590s. Vansina, "On Ravenstein's Edition of Battell's Adventures in Angola and Loango," 325. Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 35.

⁹⁷ Battell in Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes, contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells, by Englishmen and others (4 vols.)*.

⁹⁸ Re-export described by Cappelle. Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Soho, Congo, 1600-1675*: 221-37. Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 35.

⁹⁹ As they are today. According to Martin, the hairs "were sometimes used for threading beads, or, combined with leopards' claws, they made the costliest decoration of all. The longer the hairs, the higher their value. Usually the hairs were plaited together, the shorter ones being worn about the neck, and the longer ones around the waist as a sort of ornamental belt. The Portuguese took these hairs to Luanga, where 100 ordinary ones were worth 1,000 *reis*, and 50 of the longer ones,

Kingdom of Loango's capital an important end point. During the early part of the century, the Portuguese traded mainly for ivory on the Loango Coast. Beginning in the 1620s, the Portuguese and Dutch traded for copper as well. The Loango ruler early on favored a policy of free trade for Europeans, refusing to allow either the Dutch or Portuguese to establish monopolies.¹⁰⁰

European trade served as a catalyst for the extension of Loango's pre-existing caravan trading system. Indeed, historian Phyllis Martin concluded that the "indigenous economic activities doubtless served as a spring-board for the rapid expansion of foreign trade after 1575. What was required was an acceleration of existing activities rather than a completely new pattern of trade."¹⁰¹ Written documents from the beginning of the seventeenth century demonstrate that a trade network existed between the Loango Coast and the riverine groups of the Congo River including the Solongo of Sonyo on the south bank and Ngoyo, Kakongo, Nzali, and Mboma on the north bank. Interior trade took place by caravan. The caravaneers were called the Vili, a name that would come to be used to refer to all of the people of the coastal region of the Kingdom of Loango.¹⁰²

1,000 reis." ———, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 40.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 40-44.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 35.

¹⁰² Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 202.

Dutch trader F. Cappelle described the caravan trade in a report entitled “Brief relation of the principal places situated in Angola [Central Africa] to know Comma, Goeby, Maiomba, Loango, Cacongo, Malemba, Zarry, Sohio, Congo and other neighboring places and of their *moeurs* and customs” written for the Director of the Dutch West India Company J.M. de Nassau in March 1642.¹⁰³ Cappelle described the people of the Loango Coast kingdoms between the Congo River and Loango as savvy traders. “They are the populations who know how to get themselves out of difficult situations in order to trade” he wrote, “and who are not of disagreeable humor, if only they gain something.”¹⁰⁴ He also chronicled the extent of the trader’s commercial peregrinations and provisions:

They from go away in a group of forty to fifty men towards Pombo [the Malebo Pool]¹⁰⁵ and other places, even in Congo and Loanda to practice trade. They often arrive from thirty to forty miles of the interior of the country, with a load of copper or teeth of elephants weighing eighty to ninety *livres*, that they carry on their heads. They trade food provisions [*vivres*], copper, teeth, slaves, tobacco, all kinds of fabrics, Dutch goods, shells which higher one named *songos*, the *zimbus*, the tails of elephants, the salt and all kinds of articles all the country leaves since the cap Saint-Catherine [Cape Saint Catherine] to the country Goy [Ngoyo].¹⁰⁶

Cappelle’s information states that the caravans covered nearly the entire Kongo Zone from Cape Saint Catherine in the north to the Tio-controlled market at the Malebo Pool

¹⁰³ Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Sohio, Congo, 1600-1675*: 221-37.

¹⁰⁴ “*Ce sont des populations qui savent se tirer d'affaire pour le commerce et qui ne sont pas d'humeur fâcheuse, si seulement ils gagnent quelque chose.* » Cappelle transcribed and translated to French by: *ibid.*, 230.

¹⁰⁵ “*Pombo*, the Kikongo name for Pool people [.]” Vansina, “The Kongo kingdom and its neighbors, based on a contribution by T. Obenga,” 556-7.

¹⁰⁶ Cappelle transcribed and translated to French by: Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Sohio, Congo, 1600-1675*: 223.

all the way south to Luanda in Portuguese Angola. The caravaneers exchanged an array of goods including both the *nzimbu* shells used for currency south of the river and the *mbongo* raffia cloth used for currency north of the river and traded in the south. Salt was important upriver because it was scarce away from the coast. Indeed, Cappelle wrote, “The commerce practices the most [...] more to the north (or upstream) of the Congo [River] is that of salt that one cannot procure but with difficulty in the interior.”¹⁰⁷ Slaves “circulated as a form of wealth among chiefs and freemen.”¹⁰⁸

However, the Atlantic slave trade was slow to take root on the Loango Coast, not least because the Portuguese quickly became deeply involved in the Kingdom of Kongo and then Angola. According to Cappelle, the Portuguese traded with Sonyo and the rest of the Kingdom of Kongo from their base in Luanda, using *nzimbu* to purchase slaves. For example, Cappelle reported that “the commerce practiced the most” in the province of Bamba [Mbamba] in the Kingdom of Kongo was “that of slaves and the *nzimbu*” shells.¹⁰⁹

In addition, Portuguese successfully frustrated Dutch attempts to trade for slaves with riverine groups, especially in Sonyo. Dutch traders from the Dutch West India Company began trading on the North Coast in the beginning of the seventeenth century. They successfully bought slaves on the Loango Coast in Loango and Ngoyo and in the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.," 51.

¹⁰⁹ Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Sohio, Congo, 1600-1675*: 223.

Congo River in Mboma, Nzali, and Sonyo for trade to Brazil.¹¹⁰ In 1600, they established a factory in the Congo River at the Solongo port of Mpinda in the province of Sonyo. However, pressure from the Portuguese succeeded in convincing the Solongo not to trade slaves to the Dutch, who left in 1639.¹¹¹

The Kingdom of Loango's unwillingness (and inability) to provide the commodity (slaves) that principally interested the Portuguese also explains the slower development of the slave trade north of the Kingdom of Kongo. Evidence suggests the Kingdom of Loango simply did not have a large supply of slaves that could readily be sold to the Portuguese in the sixteenth century.¹¹² For example, the ports of the Loango Coast combined exported only around 300 slaves per year between 1630 and 1650. The trade increased slowly, reaching a total of around 1,000 per year by 1660.¹¹³

From 1670, Atlantic trade became the major commercial enterprise in Loango where English, French, Dutch, and Portuguese increasingly traded for slaves.¹¹⁴ The demand of these European traders for slaves is one explanation for the rise of the slave

¹¹⁰ Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.," 50.

¹¹¹ Seen from Dutch point of view in documents translated in: Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Soho, Congo, 1600-1675*: 216.

¹¹² Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 34.

¹¹³ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 202.

¹¹⁴ Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 40-1. Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 55, 71-2.

trade on the Loango Coast. Another is that ivory, which had previously been an important export good, was increasingly hard to procure in Loango by the 1660s. The Maloango ruler of Loango was certainly aware of the detrimental impact of the Atlantic slave trade in the Kingdom of Kongo. This could be one reason why, when the Maloango did acquiesce to demand for slaves from the Atlantic, he did so in a carefully controlled manner. Indeed, the Maloango successfully controlled the Atlantic slave trade initially. Because the Loango capital Buali was only a few miles from the port of Loango unlike the inland capital of the Kingdom of Kongo at Mbanza Kongo, he could provide more oversight. The Maloango's desire to maintain strict control over the trade can be seen in his successful insistence that no Europeans gain a monopoly or construct a fort on the Loango Coast. The King forbid Europeans from acquiring land and even discouraged them from spending the night. The Maloango's success can be seen in a Dutch West India Company report from 1670 that described its trade at Loango was "subject to the African government."¹¹⁵

After 1670, a new era of Atlantic commerce began on the Loango Coast dominated by the slave trade. During this time, European rivals vied for advantage in coastal trade. The Kingdom of Loango initially dominated the slave trade on the Loango Coast and the Maloango profited from taxes and duties leveled on the trade. His

¹¹⁵ ———, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 71-2.

caravaneers extended their inland trade routes, drawing on Loango's vast hinterland to supply European traders.

Conclusion

However, Loango's dominance would fade by the mid-eighteenth century. Ultimately, the rulers of the Kingdom of Loango were unable to maintain control over the Atlantic slave trade – either regional on the Loango Coast or locally within the kingdom itself. The fact that Loango's territorial control was economic rather than political or military was initially an advantage; the Kingdom of Loango was able to draw on commercial networks in its vast hinterland to supply Atlantic trade. However, the commercial and economic advantages of Loango's territorial control eroded as the structural changes initiated by Atlantic trade made the slave trade the new organizing principal of the region's economic system. Coastal inhabitants increasingly traded directly with European merchants. The Kingdom of Loango thereby lost its privileged position as an economic center in the region. Direct access to European trade led to the rise of Loango's rivals, especially Kakongo and Ngoyo who were independent by mid-century, leading to Loango's territorial decline. Internally, the rulers of Loango suffered the disadvantage of being unable, due to religious prohibition, to participate in the Atlantic slave trade. This meant that local elites and merchants profited from coastal commerce in a way the King could not. Coastal commerce introduced a new source of wealth that led to the rise of a new class of coastal elites whose wealth and power would come, by the last half of the eighteenth century, to rival that of the King. Thus, though the rulers of Loango were initially able to control and profit from the Atlantic slave trade, as

we will see in the following chapter, by the middle of the eighteenth century Atlantic commerce led to the decline of the Kingdom's traditional political institutions and territorial control.

Chapter 2: The Loango Coast and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1750-1800

The second half of the eighteenth century saw a dramatic increase in the slave trade from the Loango Coast, which peaked between 1763 and 1793. Despite the reluctance of its rulers to participate in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the seventeenth century, after 1670 the number of slaves exported from the region continued to grow. In the eighteenth century, the ports of Cabinda, Malemba, and Loango served as the most important slave-trading centers in West Central Africa after Luanda. Between 1750 and 1800, over one million captives left the shores of West Central Africa bound for slavery in the Americas.¹ Nearly half departed from the Loango Coast as well as the ports of the Congo River and Ambriz, which were often visited by Europeans during or after their trade at northern ports.² Unlike the case of the Portuguese in Angola, no European power established a monopoly or enjoyed direct control over the slave trade in the kingdoms of the Loango Coast. Nonetheless, the Atlantic slave trade dramatically impacted the structure and stability of the region, initiating a period of dramatic political and economic upheaval for the kingdoms of the Loango Coast.

This chapter investigates the history of the Loango Coast in the last half of the eighteenth century, exploring how coastal polities participated in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the trade's impact on their political institutions and stability. Though the slave trade initially exploited traditional, pre-existing ports, markets, and trade routes under the

¹ The exact number is over 1,100,000. "Voyages: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database".

² Over half a million. Ibid.

control of the King of Loango, it is clear that the Atlantic slave trade had become the central organizing principle of political and economic institutions in the kingdoms by the middle of the eighteenth century. The once vast Kingdom of Loango lost control over the region. Two new kingdoms – the Kingdom of Kakongo and the Kingdom of Ngoyo – gained independence and played an increasingly important role in European trade. Loango Coast rulers succeeded, for the most part, in preventing Europeans from exercising direct influence over the politics and economy of the kingdoms. However, the influx of wealth from the Atlantic slave trade eroded traditional political institutions causing political instability and warfare. Thus, though Loango Coast rulers maintained authority over their polities and trade, the Atlantic slave trade instigated internal conflicts and structural changes within the kingdoms.

The precise details of this history remain poorly understood. Little scholarship is devoted to the Loango Coast kingdoms, especially in comparison with her southern neighbors of Kongo and Angola. Phyllis Martin's 1972 monograph *The External Trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: The Effects of Changing Commercial Relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango* remains the only book-length treatment in English. Her important study, which is essentially an economic history of the Atlantic slave trade based on European archival documents, provides a wealth of information about the external trade relations of the Kingdom of Loango over three centuries. However, her work does not attempt either an in-depth examination of the internal history of the

kingdoms or the last half of the eighteenth century.³ Parts of Susan Broadhead's 1971 dissertation, "Trade and Politics on the Congo Coast: 1770-1870," and Norm Schrag's 1985 dissertation on the Mboma from 1785-1885 touch on the time period in question.⁴ Of these works, Schrag's is the only one devoted entirely to the internal history of the region rather than exclusively to Atlantic trade and interactions with Europeans. Schrag's study, which concerned primarily the nineteenth century, demonstrated how the Mboma created a trading community to become successful participants in the Atlantic slave trade and, in the process, created an ethnic identity and autonomous state. Despite important contributions made by these scholars, much remains unknown about the internal and external conflicts that took place during this time and what they meant for the everyday lives of the region's inhabitants. What impact did the Atlantic slave trade have on the kingdoms of the Loango Coast? How did the Atlantic slave trade impact the political history of the Kingdom of Loango and, following its decline, the kingdoms of Kakongo and Ngoyo? What did these political and economic changes mean for the security and freedom of the kingdoms' inhabitants?

This lacuna stems partly from the dearth of historical sources for the social and political history of the kingdoms. European mobility within the kingdoms was severely limited and few Europeans travelled beyond coastal slave trade factories. In order to

³ ———, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango.*

⁴ Susan Herlin Broadhead, "Trade and politics on the Congo coast : 1770-1870" (Ph.D., Boston University Graduate School, 1971). Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.."

address this problem, this chapter draws on sources from around the Atlantic world to address the history of the region in the last half of the eighteenth century. As we will see in chapter 3, the Loango Coast was extremely important for the French Atlantic system of trade. The French figured as the dominant traders on the Loango Coast, responsible for over half of the slave trade at the time. By the 1780s, between one-half and two-thirds of the French slave trade took place here. Information about the political situation in the kingdoms - especially events such as internal conflicts, succession crises, wars, trade disputes, and epidemic diseases that shut down trade for a period of time – was, therefore, of vital importance to more than just slave ship captains. Saint Domingue slave merchants, French *armateurs*, and government administrators also sought to keep abreast of coastal developments through an Atlantic network of communication. It is therefore possible to find information about the social and political history of the Loango Coast kingdoms at this time in sources from outside the region, especially the French colony of Saint Domingue, where the majority of Loango Coast captives were sold, and France.

This chapter draws on sources from throughout the Kongolese Atlantic world in order to understand how the Atlantic slave trade became a catalyst for political instability in the Loango Coast kingdoms. These changes resulted in new mechanisms of enslavement for their inhabitants (chapter 4) and cultural innovations as the region's population struggled to cope with the political and demographic consequences of Atlantic trade. After 1670, the slave trade on the Loango Coast grew rapidly, initiating a process of structural change that, over the course of the eighteenth century, dramatically altered the political and economic landscape of the region. Atlantic trade upset the Kingdom of

Loango's traditional economic relationship with her neighbors. Other coastal polities' ability to trade directly with Europeans disrupted the central economic role traditionally played by Loango. The Kingdom of Loango's economic displacement led directly to the kingdom's territorial decline while the influx of wealth from Atlantic trade allowed Kakongo and Ngoyo to become independent by mid-century.

The rise of the Atlantic slave trade on the Loango Coast caused, by 1700, a northward shift in inland caravans supplying captives to coastal traders, away from the Portuguese in Luanda. The northward movement of the interior slave trade initiated a period of rivalry between the Portuguese and other European traders operating on the Loango Coast, most notably the French. This rivalry resulted in open conflict during the "Cabinda Affaire" of 1783-4 when the Portuguese attempted to militarily oust European slave trading rivals.

The internal consequences of the economic changes initiated by the Loango Coast slave trade were far greater. The same process of economic realignment that led to the decline of the Kingdom of Loango over time likewise tested the political power of the southern kingdoms of Kakongo and Ngoyo as well. Just as Kakongo and Ngoyo had challenged Loango for access to European trade, inland riverine groups confronted coastal kingdoms in an attempt to gain direct access to Atlantic trade. The result was several decades of warfare beginning in the middle of the century. The entire process of economic change, warfare, and political realignment seems to have reached an apotheosis in the 1780s by which time the incessant warfare frequently closed slave trading in coastal ports of Malemba and Cabinda, either because war had stopped the supply of

captives or because conflict engulfed the ports themselves. As a result, Europeans began trading directly with inland groups both in and south of the Congo River in a joint attempt to cut out the middlemen of the Loango coast kingdoms. Just as this process reached its crescendo, however, the Loango Coast slave trade dropped significantly after 1793 due to the Haitian Revolution, the abolition of slavery in the French empire, the Napoleonic wars, and finally the abolition of the slave trade by Great Britain in 1807.

The Decline of Loango and the Rise of Kakongo and Ngoyo

Despite the absence of direct European involvement in the coastal kingdoms, the Atlantic slave trade nonetheless initiated a process of internal structural changes that resulted in the decline of the Kingdom of Loango and a period of intense political instability in the region. It is no coincidence that the three kingdoms that politically dominated the coast in the last half of the eighteenth century correspond to the three ports that dominated the Atlantic slave trade: Loango in the Kingdom of Loango, Malemba in the Kingdom of Kakongo, and Cabinda in the Kingdom of Ngoyo. According to French slave trader Louis de Grandpré, who lived on the coast from 1786 to 1787, “We ordinarily frequent three ports, dependents of three different sovereigns: Cabende [Cabinda], Malembe [Malemba], Loango; we sometimes send to Ambriz some *fortes chaloupes* to trade a small quantity of slaves; we rarely go to the River Massoula, even more rarely to the Bay of Mayombe [Mayumba], and almost never to the Bay of Sainte-

Catherine [.]”⁵ As discussed in chapter 1, at its height the Kingdom of Loango is believed to have directly controlled the territory from the Congo River north to the port of Mayumba and to have exerted some form of political control north to the Cape Saint Catherine and inland into the Mayombe rainforest. In short, the Kingdom of Loango dominated, political or economically, a vast region north of the Congo River inland to the copper producing regions controlled by the Tio. However, by the mid-eighteenth century the Kingdom of Loango had shrunk considerably in both size and power, becoming the smallest of the coastal kingdoms and losing its ability to control or even access trade routes from the south.

Loango’s territorial losses are reflected in French sources for the third quarter of the eighteenth century. For example, French missionary Jean-Joseph Descourvières gives us a description of the extent of the Loango Coast kingdoms in the 1770: “The kingdom of Loango is situated in lower Guinea close to the Congo. It is bordered at midday by the kingdoms of Caongo [Kakongo], and Goio [Ngoyo] to the setting by the sea [southwest], and in the [northeast] by a vast country known by the name of Mayombé, but who probably encloses many small states each independent from the other.”⁶ The precise extension of the Kingdom of Loango was believed to be from the port of Mayumba in the north to the River Tshiloango that separated it from the Kingdom of

⁵ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: xxv.

⁶ Jean-Joseph Descourvières?, “Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs,” Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.,” in *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*, ed. J. Bishop B. Cuvelier (Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1953), 45.

Kakongo in the south. Kakongo and Ngoyo claimed the territory along the southern coastline and were separated by the River Bele.⁷ Descourvières' description tells us that Mayumba, Kakongo and Ngoyo had all gained independence by 1770, meaning that their leaders no longer sent tribute to Loango nor did Loango have or control access to their economic resources. Though it is unclear precisely when Kakongo and Ngoyo separated from Loango, by 1750 French documents indicate that the Kingdom of Kakongo and Kingdom of Ngoyo had become independent from Loango and were active participants in the Atlantic slave trade. The extent of Loango's economic decline by the mid-1780s can be seen in the description of Grandpré, who wrote, "Loango is the smallest of the three kingdoms; it is however the chief place; the king is suzerain of both of the others who paid him a small tribute in the distant past."⁸ It appears that some form of tribute continued to exist between Loango and her former provinces. Grandpré further observed, "In these three states everything bears the imprint of a very ancient conquest. It seems that the conqueror fixed himself at Loango, at least the constitution of this state seems to indicate it: he is lord of all the country ranging between the Cape Lopez and Ambriz."⁹ Whatever the cultural or spiritual links that existed between Loango and her neighbors, it is clear that Loango had lost actual control over the region's economic resources and trade routes.

⁷ Lous Jadin, "Essais d'évangélisation du Loango et du Kakongo 1766-1775," *Zaire* 7(1953): 1055.

⁸ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: xxvii.

⁹ *Ibid.*

In addition to losing the southern coastline, Loango had also lost most, if not all of the territory to the north, with the possible exception of Saint Catherine. Some French documents referred to the port of Mayumba (written as “Mayombé”) as part of the Kingdom of Loango at the time. For example, French slave trader Listré wrote in 1777 that Mayumba “depends on the kingdom of Loango.”¹⁰ However, information from observers who spent more time in the region contradicts claims by Listré, whose only visit was aboard a slave ship. For example, according to the report of French missionaries, who arrived in the port 28 June 1773: “the kingdom of Maïomba [Mayumba] immediately touches that of Loango” and the inhabitants of “Maïomba” [Mayumba] spoke “the same language as at Loango” despite being separated by 45 to 50 *lieues*.¹¹ They also said that a king, who they met along with his entourage on 1 July 1773, ruled Mayumba, suggesting the latter must have gained a greater degree of autonomy from Loango by that time.¹² Grandpré also referred to “Mayombe” as an independent kingdom. However, according to Grandpré, the Bay of Saint Catherine was still linked to the kingdom of Loango. He wrote that the “adorable” port of Saint

¹⁰ Listré, "l'Histoire de la Révolution et des événements de Saint-Domingue depuis 1786 jusqu'en 1812," [1809], Bibliothèque de Nantes, MS 1809

¹¹ 45-50 *lieues* is the equivalent of 180-200 kilometers. Often inaccurately translated as “league” or “mile,” the French measurement *lieue* was in fact the equivalent of four kilometers, and was a unit of measure used before the adoption of the metric system. For this reason, I have left the word in French. The actual distance is around 175 kilometers. Centre National des Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales

¹² Jean Joseph Descourvieres, 1775, "Relation du voyage et de l'établissement des Missionnaires françois dans le royaume de Kakongo proche de celui de Loango en Afrique", Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 93-4.

Catherine “is the capital of a state which withdrew itself from the kingdom of Mayombe, of which it was formerly a subdivision” becoming “independent under the suzerainty of the king of Loango.”¹³ Thus, French documents demonstrate that the Kingdom of Loango had lost control of virtually all territory north and south, with the exception of Saint Catherine.

The continued interactions between Saint Catherine and the Kingdom of Loango are significant because they suggest a direct relationship between the coastal region’s access to European trade, as in the case of Mayumba, Kakongo, and Ngoyo, and their ability to break away from Loango’s control. As discussed in Chapter 1, economic alliances and trade routes undergirded the Kingdom of Loango’s power in distant regions more than direct political administration. French sources suggest that with the increase in Atlantic trade in the eighteenth century Mayumba, Kakongo, and Ngoyo no longer needed an economic relationship with Loango. On the contrary, the more northerly region of Saint Catherine, which traded infrequently with Europeans, continued to benefit from a direct relationship with the Kingdom of Loango.

The poor quality and occasional shortage of captives available in the port of Loango provides further evidence to support such an economic understanding of Loango’s territorial decline. As Loango lost territory and influence, the kingdom also lost access to trade routes supplying captives, with traders instead choosing to sell their captives elsewhere. This process appears to have been gradual. For example, an account

¹³ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 164; II: 4.

of the Loango Coast slave trade in 1766 stated that Loango was “abundant in captives [.]”¹⁴ By the 1780s, however, Loango had lost access to interior supplies of captives. In 1785, the Comte de Capellis, who commanded the *gabare*¹⁵ *La Lamproie* during the 1784 expedition to Cabinda, wrote that Loango was “more commercial than Mayombe [Mayumba], but much less than Malimbe and Cabinde which are more to the south.”¹⁶ Grandpré wrote that the “insalubrity of the place where the trade is established at Loango, and the inferior quality of slaves that we buy there, pushes the ships away from this port. It is little frequented; one does not sleep on land there, and the bay is difficult to access [.]”¹⁷ Grandpré later specified that “The trade of this country is alternating, sometimes very weak; a large ship should not dock there, except when one knows the other ports are full” and cannot afford the high prices caused by “competition.” Captains forced to trade at Loango should be prepared to extend a lot of “credit and make some sacrifices, to block the roads between himself and the other ports, so that the [slave trading] merchants cannot pass, and are forced to [trade only] with him” and to send canoes to Mayombe to attempt to purchase captives there.¹⁸

¹⁴ "Mémoire sur la Côte d'Afrique, 23 November 1771," ANOM, C/6/24, Sénégal et Côtes d'Afrique

¹⁵ Gabare, une: or transport ship. Centre National des Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales

¹⁶ Hippolyte Capellis, Comte de, "Observation sur la navigation de la Côte d'Angole," 1785, AN, MAR/3JJ/255, Fonds de la Marine, Observations scientifiques et géographiques, dossier 15

¹⁷ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: xxv.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, II: 9-10.

By the 1780s the kingdom of Loango had lost all of her former provinces as well as control over north coast supply routes to the benefit of her southern neighbors, the kingdoms of Kakongo and Ngoyo. In less than a century, it appears that the Kingdom of Loango went from exercising wide-reaching economic power and influence in the region north of the Congo River to, by the middle of the eighteenth century, controlling little outside of her own territorial boundaries. Though the kingdom seems to have retained its spiritual relationship with Kakongo and Ngoyo, Loango clearly lost the ability to control or even access trade routes from the south. The kingdoms of Kakongo and Ngoyo contributed to and profited from the decline of Loango by participating in the Atlantic slave trade. Indeed, they were Loango's two major competitors.

Though not much is known about the history of the Kingdom of Kakongo, French missionaries residing in the kingdom from 1768 to 1770 give us some information about the kingdom at this time.¹⁹ According to missionary letters and reports, the Kingdom of Kakongo occupied the 25 to 30 *milles* of coastline south of the Kingdom of Loango and extended more than 100 *milles* into the interior, where it bordered the Mayombe rainforest. The capital or residence of the king, known to Europeans as Banze-Malimbe and to the inhabitants of Kakongo as Kinguélé, was located 11-12 *lieues* inland from Malemba. Many French traders considered Kakongo's port of Malemba to be a favorite. In 1768, French missionaries reported four French *comptoirs* and three hundred French

¹⁹ Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*; Jadin, "Essais d'évangélisation du Loango et du Kakongo 1766-1775."

sailors in Malemba.²⁰ Those numbers steadily increased as the century wore on and increasing numbers of French and other Europeans slave traders abandoned Loango in favor of her southern neighbor. By the late eighteenth century, Malemba had become a favored slave trading port of many French *négrriers*. Grandpré stated that, in the mid-1780s, the port of Malemba, “furnished the most abundant and the most beautiful species of men [.]”²¹ There were three main reasons for this preference. First, the port of Malemba could hold larger vessels. Second, it was considered to be the “*le plus sain*” or most sanitary of all the coastal ports. Lastly, it reputedly had an abundant supply of captives.²²

The Kingdom of Ngoyo, Kakongo’s southern neighbor, became another favorite destination of French slave traders following the decline of the Loango trade. The Kingdom of Ngoyo had, like Kakongo, gained independence from Loango sometime before the mid-eighteenth century. As in the Kingdom of Kakongo, the capital of Ngoyo was located far from the coast. At an estimated 10 *lieues*, it was a two-day journey from Cabinda.²³ Cabinda, Ngoyo’s principal port, was located “five small *lieues*” south of Kakongo’s port of Malemba.²⁴ Located near the mouth of the Congo River, Cabinda

²⁰ Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 34-8, 47, 94, 103-4. Abbé Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique* (Paris: C.P. Berton, 1776). 242.

²¹ Mémoire sur la Côte d’Afrique, 23 November 1771, Mémoire sur la Côte d’Afrique, 23 November 1771

²² Copy of a letter from Monsieur Joli, Malemba, 25 February 1770, M.E.P., volume 356, p.240 published in Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 43.

²³ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 165.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, II:26.

occupied an ideal location as terminus for riverine supplies of captives to the coast.²⁵ As a result, it quickly rose to prominence. A French slave trade report based on voyages in the 1760s wrote that Cabinda boasted an “admirable trade” and that “it is without contradiction the place of the entire *Guinné* coast the most convenient and the most susceptible” to a profitable slave trade due to its proximity to the “great Congo River” from where “one could pull an immense trade.”²⁶ In 1784, one French slave trader boasted that “the port of Cabind[a] is the best of all of the Angolan coast [.]”²⁷ Writing shortly afterwards, Grandpré reported that Cabinda was called “the Paradise of the coast, and it well merits this name.”²⁸

French documents, therefore, suggest that the Atlantic slave trade contributed to the decline of the Kingdom of Loango and the rise of the kingdoms of Kakongo and Ngoyo. As neighboring regions, especially in the south, began to trade directly with Europeans, they stopped sending captives and other goods to Loango. Trade routes that had previously ended in Loango now routed elsewhere, especially to Malemba and Cabinda.²⁹

²⁵ Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.," 54.

²⁶ "Mémoire sur la Côte d'Afrique [1766]," 1771, ANOM, C/6/24, Sénégal et Côtes d'Afrique

²⁷ "Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d'angole d'après un voyage fait en 1784 ", ANOM, F/3/61, Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry, Documents relatifs à la traite négrière sur les côtes d'Afrique. 1727-1797.

²⁸ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II:26.

²⁹ Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.," 53-4.

French documents also help us establish a timeline of this process of changing trade patterns and resulting political upheavals. The rise of the Atlantic slave trade on the Loango Coast in the seventeenth century initiated a period of conflict between coastal polities and riverine traders. Though the Solongo traded with the Portuguese and, to a lesser extent, the Dutch and English in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, pressure from the Portuguese successfully halted this trade after 1641.³⁰ After that time, riverine people such as the Solongo and Mboma were effectively cut off from the Atlantic slave trade, whose epicenter had moved to Luanda. The Dutch and later the English and French concentrated their trade on the Loango Coast. In response, the Solongo “gained a reputation as river pirates,” attacking the few foreign vessels that entered the river.³¹ The advent of the Atlantic slave trade on the Loango Coast in the 1670s was followed in the next decade by a period of intense rivalry between the rulers of Loango, Kakongo, Ngoyo, and Sonyo. The chief loser was Sonyo, who could not supply better or cheaper slaves than its northern competitors.³² By 1700, competition from the north and pressure from the Portuguese had all but ended Sonyo’s direct slave trade with Europeans.³³

³⁰ Norm Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, C 1785-1885." (Indiana University, 1985), 51.

³¹ Jean Barbot, *Barbot on Guinea : the writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa 1678-1712*, ed. P. E. H. Hair, Adam Jones, and Robin Law, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 0072-9396 ; 2nd ser., no. 175-176 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1992).

³² Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 75-6.

³³ Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.," 52.

The advent of the Atlantic slave trade on the Loango Coast in the late seventeenth century also caused an internal shift of interior caravan routes northward to the Vili traders of Loango and Woyo traders of Cabinda. Evidence of the northward movement of captives appears as early as 1700, when Jean Barbot and John Casseneuve witnessed the British trading for slaves directly with Ngoyo's inland neighbors, the Nzali, on the right bank of the Congo River.³⁴ The Nzali traders, eager to establish trade relations, demonstrated their ability to supply the British with slaves. After meeting with the king, "some of the King's Gentlemen" showed Casseneuve "nine or ten Roads about the Country, leading to several large Towns, well stored with Slaves; as also the high Way to the Kingdom of *Kongo*, by which great Numbers of Slaves are carried yearly to *Kabinda*." These gentlemen assured Casseneuve that further supplies of captives would be forthcoming because "as soon as the *Kongo* People (who were not far from *Zayri*) should be informed, that the Whites had a Factory [there], they would soon resort thither with Slaves, from all Parts, to save themselves the Trouble of a Journey to *Kabinda*, which lies twenty-five or thirty Leagues farther down on the Shore."³⁵ Casseneuve's conversation provides evidence that the Loango Coast, especially the southern port of Cabinda, had indeed become the endpoint of interior caravan routes carrying slaves,

³⁴ James Barbot and John Casseneuve, "Abstract of a Voyage to Kongo River and Kabinda, in 1700," in *A New general collection of voyages and travels : consisting of the most esteemed relations, which have been hitherto published in any language* (London: 1746), III: 205-6. Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.," 53.

³⁵ Barbot and Casseneuve, "Abstract of a Voyage to Kongo River and Kabinda, in 1700," III: 207.

including routes coming from the Kingdom of Kongo south of the Congo River. Despite these assurances, the British abandoned the factory at Nzali and opted to continue trading at Cabinda, whose trade was already established at the time. Nonetheless, the Nzali's attempt to cut out coastal middlemen at Cabinda and lure European traders directly to their lands in the lower Congo River foreshadows a conflict over access to European trade that would cause a period of frequent warfare between coastal kingdoms, inland, and riverine polities.

The Atlantic Slave Trade on the Loango Coast

Throughout the eighteenth century, no European country could establish a monopoly or build forts at any of the major ports of trade north of the Congo River. This resulted from a deliberate policy by coastal rulers, in stark contrast to the Portuguese monopoly of trade in the kingdom of Angola. The king of Loango had established a program of free trade during the early period of Atlantic trade. There were clear benefits in doing so: it allowed a greater variety of European goods to enter the Vili markets, including those such as guns which were restricted by the Portuguese; it also allowed the coastal ruler to maintain a greater degree of control over the trade by exploiting competition between European traders.³⁶ As we will see, the King of Loango became more successful than the rulers of Kakongo and Ngoyo at controlling trade, mainly because of his proximity to the coast.

³⁶ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: xxiv. Martin, "The Trade of Loango in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," 145-6.

All three Loango Coast ports practiced a similar method of trade. Upon arrival, Europeans paid customs and asked for permission to establish lodging and a *comptoir* from the Mafouk or minister of commerce.³⁷ Once a captain had established himself on the coast, he rang a gong to alert coastal brokers (slave traders) he was ready to commence trade. Brokers would come to Europeans, who would advance them merchandise that the brokers would use to procure captives from slave trade merchants. Brokers would return and negotiate with European slave ship captains over the price and quality of slaves.³⁸

European powers did attempt to establish monopolies along the Loango Coast, but ultimately without success. The inability of European powers to build a fort and establish a monopoly is a testament to the success of the local populations in maintaining control of the trade and forestalling European domination. Though the slave trade clearly had many negative impacts on the political institutions of coastal states, they successfully resisted outright European military control or other coercive measures such as price fixing. For example, in 1784 French naval commander Marigny attempted to bully the Mambouk, or heir apparent, of Cabinda into agreeing to price-fixing of the slave trade along the entire Loango Coast. He reported telling the Mambouk that though he had “no authority vis à vis the local inhabitants who were naturally masters of their own country” the King of France had the power to forbid French ships from trading in Cabinda or other

³⁷ Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d’angle d’après un voyage fait en 1784 ", ANOM, F/3/61,

³⁸ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 46-8.

ports who refused to acquiesce to his demands.³⁹ Despite these threats, there is no evidence that French or other European captains succeeded in fixing the price of slaves in Loango coast ports. In fact, letters from slave trade ship captains, merchants, and *armateurs* continually discussed the prices they had been able to negotiate, which seems to have depended on how many European slave traders were in port at any given time. The fewer the ships, the higher the prices. The execution of this strategy can be seen in the complaint of Saint Domingue slave merchant Stanislas Foache on 5 April 1790 that the price of slaves had increased to nineteen *marchandises* per captive because there were only four slave trade ships in port at the time.⁴⁰

Europeans believed the “free trade” of the Loango Coast ports was beneficial to them. It was – but not as beneficial as it was to local coastal traders, who played competing European slave ship captains against one another in order to raise the price of captives on the coast. Grandpré explained that if all Europeans would agree to trade as a block “nothing would be easier than to trade at a good price” which could be accomplished if all slave traders respected the agreed price of trade and refused to negotiate with coastal brokers. In actuality, “each [slave trader] is there for himself, tasked with deceiving his neighbor [...] and often raising” the price “of trade” in the hope

³⁹ Susan Herlin Broadhead, "Trade and politics on the Congo coast : 1770-1870" (Ph.D., Boston University Graduate School, 1971), 81-2.

⁴⁰ "Extract of the journal of Marigny commander of the King's Division on the Angola Coast in 1784," AN MAR/B/4/267, Fonds de la Marine, Service général, Campagnes navales, pages 332-356.

that competing ship captains would not be able to meet it.⁴¹ Thus, European slave traders themselves deliberately raised the price of trade in the hopes of attracting the best captives to themselves and forcing out their rivals. The competitive atmosphere was such that European traders “never tell the truth” to one another and “hide the number of prisoners one has, [how many] packets one pays, and which brokers” are the best to work with.⁴² Brokers benefited enormously from such European competition and actively encouraged it. “Brokers can profit admirably from the discord they sew between” European slave merchants, “in the hopes of drawing advantage from it.” Grandpré concluded, “From there comes the exorbitant price of captives.”⁴³

Loango Coast rulers also succeeded in keeping Europeans largely off of their land. Unlike in the Kingdom of Kongo, European slave traders did not have permanent settlements on the Loango Coast. Local authorities required that ship captains paid for permission to construct a *comptoir*, which would be their base of operations for the duration of the trade. In Loango, Europeans did not, by tradition, spend the night on land but rather slept on their ships. They believed Loango was too unhealthy to allow Europeans to spend much time there. Local inhabitants apparently helped spread this belief. Grandpré wrote, “I am persuaded that this custom to re-embark every night was established by *les Noirs*, who do not like to see Europeans make fixed establishments in

⁴¹ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 45.

⁴² *Ibid.*, II: 45-6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, II: 45.

their country, and that those first accidents which gave the country the reputation of insalubrity was due to poison that they pass for knowing perfectly how to administer.”⁴⁴ Grandpré accused Cabinda of employing the same tactic, writing: “Cabinda, the most beautiful of the three ports, is also reputed the most unhealthy, according to a story told by the locals, who don’t like to see foreigners on their land.”⁴⁵ The perpetuation of rumors about disease by coastal rulers and inhabitants can be seen as one strategy for protecting themselves against European influence.

In addition to rumors about disease, the coastal kingdoms utilized the landscape itself to protect themselves against European domination. Marine commander Capellis wrote: “The largest part of the lands one *lieue* from the sea are covered in woods and impenetrable everywhere one could disembark, they [coastal inhabitants] regard [these woods] as their ramparts against *les blancs*.”⁴⁶ The geographical distance between their settlements in the coastal kingdoms reflected the political distance between European and Loango Coast governments. In all three kingdoms, Europeans slept on board their ships (as in Loango, seen above) or in *comptoirs* built by local inhabitants in specific locations with the permission of the Mafouk. “Upon arriving, the first thing is to provide for one’s lodging; the mafouk procures some *cases*” and orders the construction of slave traders’

⁴⁴ See Battell’s narrative about how Europeans were forbidden from being buried in Loango if they died there and were instead thrown into the sea for fear of their presence stopping the rain. Stanislas Foäche, "Letter of 5 April 1790," AN, 505 Mi 85, Fonds Foäche-Bégouën-Demeaux

⁴⁵ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: xxv.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, II: 11.

lodging and factory.⁴⁷ In Malemba and Cabinda, Europeans lived in their *comptoir*, on the coast, rather than in proper towns. According to Grandpré, this practice was extremely unsanitary, especially in Malemba, where the French lived on the summit of a mountain on the southern coast of the port aptly called French Mountain (*Montagne Française*). The mountain itself was extremely inconvenient and perilous. Capellis wrote the *comptoirs* were only reached by a “very steep and difficult path.”⁴⁸ Grandpré wrote that French Mountain was “very long and very painful to climb” along a path “surrounded by precipices.” French efforts to build a road with slave labor and huge rollers did little to improve the situation. French captains attempted to ameliorate the settlement by constructing an avenue and a square on the edge of the escarpment, protected by banks, used for “promenades and rendezvous in the evening when the affaires of the day were finished.”⁴⁹ However, strong winds and currents battered both ships and *comptoirs*, making communication between them difficult, drowning out the sound of canon fire from ships. Huge tidal waves reached the summit, battering not only the *comptoirs* but especially the African victims who lived beneath them. “The slaves sleeping nude on the planks suffer above all during the tidal waves; they are often very

⁴⁷ Capellis, "Observation....," 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15; Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d'angole d'après un voyage fait en 1784 Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d'angole d'après un voyage fait en 1784

⁴⁸ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 46.

⁴⁹ Capellis, "Observation....," 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

strong [.]"⁵⁰ Thus, it was the African captives who ultimately suffered most from the inconveniences of the French settlement.

The unsanitary conditions created by the high number of Europeans and captives living in a small settlement no doubt contributed (or perhaps caused) outbreaks of epidemic disease.⁵¹ Epidemics in 1775 and 1785 all but shut down trading in Malemba and Cabinda. In 1785, for example, Foache wrote "there reigns an epidemic on the coast among the *nègres* and the *blancs*. Trade is very rare."⁵² Grandpré wrote that the unsanitary geography of French Mountain "have converted this place into a cemetery for the Europeans: which has given it the name of Paradise" presumably ironically.⁵³ The extremely inconvenient placement of the French in Malemba raises the possibility that Kakongo rulers intentionally put the French at the top of a difficult mountain in order to isolate them socially and geographically. Local governments who feared the influence of Europeans encouraged this geographical distancing. The spatial separation of Europeans and coastal rulers was paralleled by a similar separation of the king from both the coast and the slave trade.

⁵⁰ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 20-1.

⁵¹ For epidemic in 1775, see: Capellis, "Observation....," 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15 For 1785, see: Lettre de M. Belgarde à la Propogande Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 111.

⁵² Stanislas Foäche, "Letter 11 February 1785, Saint Domingue," AN, 505 Mi 85, Fonds Foäche-Bégouën-Demeaux

⁵³ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 21.

The Atlantic Slave Trade and Political Change in Coastal Kingdoms

If the geographic separation between central authority and coastal traders had the benefit of curbing European influence in the Kingdoms, it also caused political conflict. The trade became so important by the late-eighteenth century that coastal kingdoms had multiple government Ministers whose positions were directly tied to the Atlantic slave trade. The most important of these was the *m-Fouka* or Mafouk (written in French Mafouque) or the minister of commerce, who controlled external trade.⁵⁴ Unlike the kings, who resided in the inland capitals, the Mafouk resided at the place where the slave trade took place, called the point [*la pointe*], where he exercised “sovereign control” over foreign trade and markets.⁵⁵ Europeans were required to pay customs to the Mafouk and gain his permission to establish a *comptoir* and commence trade.⁵⁶ The Mafouk had vast power over the slave trade: he set the price of European commodities, collected taxes, and presided as judge over trade disputes and quarrels between Europeans and local brokers and merchants.⁵⁷ The Mafouk was also a slave trader—a fact that, when combined with the vast influence the Mafouk wielded of the trade, often resulted in the

⁵⁴ Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 124. Pierre Belgarde and Astelet de Clais, ""Relation du voyage de Mrs Belgarde et Astelet de Clais... Royaume de Loango...[Septembre] 1766", Archives M.E.P., volume 356, pp 179-197," in *Documents Sur Une Mission Française Au Kakongo, 1766-1776* ed. J. Bishop B. Cuvelier (Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1953), 24.

⁵⁵ Grandpré, *Voyage*: 199.

⁵⁶ Ibid. Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d'angole d'après un voyage fait en 1784
Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d'angole d'après un voyage fait en 1784

⁵⁷ ———, *Voyage*: 199-200.

Mafouk being one of the richest people in the coastal kingdoms. Grandpré explained that “the mafoucs always make a great fortune” because they “impose[d]” their captives on coastal brokers and gave tax breaks to interior merchants who gave them the right of first refusal over captives coming from the interior. As a result the Mafouks “become the first brokers [slave traders] of the region: something that rapidly enriches them “in presents and brokerage” (both in the gifts they received as Mafouk and in the money they made as slave traders).⁵⁸

The Atlantic slave trade eroded traditional political institutions by creating a new class of rich ministers and merchants who no longer relied on the King for access to wealth and resources. As we saw in Chapter 1, the king was forbidden from engaging in the slave trade due to religious associations with witchcraft and impurity. The power of the king therefore declined while the power of government Ministers and chiefs who participated in Atlantic trade increased. An uncomfortable division emerged between the king and his counselors, on the one hand, and Ministers and chiefs, on the other. This tension appears to be most pronounced between the King, governor, and heir (*Makaya* or *Mambouc*) on the one side and the Mafouk and rich slave traders on the other. Those who participated in the slave trade no longer depended on the king for access to land, dependents, and therefore power. Kings could no longer be able to maintain control over trade routes and the supply of captives. They also could not control access to European goods, which, according to European sources, had surpassed their status as luxury goods

⁵⁸ Ibid., I: 191.

and become necessary implements of power.⁵⁹ French missionaries noted that coastal inhabitants involved with Atlantic trade were materialistic.⁶⁰ Marine officer Capellis noted, “It is to European commerce that *les Nègres* owe the majority of their vices. The merchandise that they brought have become necessary to Princes [.]”⁶¹ Grandpré likewise blamed instability in coastal kingdoms on “the fruit of luxury and of commerce that we have brought there. The superfluities that we procure for them have become necessities for them, and there is nothing they wouldn’t do to acquire them [.]”⁶² The split between traditional authority on the one hand and the power of the new ministers and merchants tied to the slave trade on the other ushered in a period of political instability and unrest. The influx of wealth from the Atlantic slave trade caused power to concentrate in the hands of those who participated in and controlled the trade, eroding the power of the king to the point that even presumptive heirs to the throne no longer desired the office.⁶³ As the king declined, instances of civil wars increased. Grandpré remarked, “It is very often that his [the king’s] vassals resist him.”⁶⁴ In Kakongo, the governor of Malemba chose not to reside on the coast in order to avoid “conflict” with the Mafouk.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Ibid., I: 217-8.

⁶⁰ Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 78.

⁶¹ Capellis, "Observation...", 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

⁶² Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 214-5.

⁶³ Ibid., II: 20-1.

⁶⁴ Ibid., I: 215.

⁶⁵ Ibid., II: 21.

Wars between neighboring lords likewise became more common. Whereas previously territory and dependents had been distributed to lords and princes by the king, coastal elites now disputed territorial claims. “The result is a war that finished with a cabal.” According to Grandpré, “most often the Europeans seek to bring the two parties to accord” because the first action of the aggressing party would be to “block the roads” and “in this way intercept the [slave] trade” and as a consequence block the supply of captives to the coast.⁶⁶ Further evidence that instability was rooted in the slave trade is found in the fact that internal conflicts occurred most often in kingdoms where the separation between the capital and the coast was greatest. “This happens less at Loango than elsewhere, because the king being close to the ocean and to the commerce, all the officers are around him in the same city, where his power exceeds theirs; but at Malemba and Cabinda these quarrels are very common.”⁶⁷

French documents provide evidence of civil wars in Kakongo and Ngoyo. For example, in October 1768 French missionaries noted that “a type of civil war” had “desolated the Kingdom for a couple of months but now appears entirely appeased.” The war had made travel unsafe and forced missionaries to remain on the coast rather than proceed inland as they had planned.⁶⁸ It appears that civil wars were most common in

⁶⁶ Ibid., I: 173-4.

⁶⁷ Ibid., I: 183.

⁶⁸ Jean-Joseph Descourvières, "Letter from M. Descourvières, actuellement à Malimbe dans le Royaume de Loango [Kakongo] en Afrique, en date du 30 8bre 1768, Archives M.E.P., volume 356, pp 226-226," in *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*, ed. Jean Cuvelier (Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1953, 1768).

regions adjacent to the slave trade. Missionary Descourvières explained “Though there are sometimes types of civil wars in this country [Kakongo] between” Princes and the subjects of the King, “or also between some of the Princes and the King, we will be however in safety à Banze [the capital] because this place is never the theater of these sorts of wars, and moreover wants nothing from whites.”⁶⁹ Descourvières statement suggests that though civil wars were common in regions tied to the trade, they were rare in the capital, where religious prohibitions outlined in Chapter 1 distanced the King from the impact of the slave trade.

Cabinda appears to have likewise suffered from internal conflicts. Grandpré wrote, “The cabals between the princes are so frequent there that the trade routes are often blocked and as a consequence commerce entirely suspended.”⁷⁰ There is evidence that these civil wars sometimes boiled over into warfare between kingdoms. For example, in February 1785, Foache noted an “internal war in Malemba and in Cabinda [...] and then between the two Kingdoms.”⁷¹ In March, Foache reported that “calm” had been re-established at Malemba and Cabinda. In April and May, he noted that the slave trade in Cabinda was “rare” though it was abundant in Malemba. As we have seen that warfare often resulted in supply of captives to the coast being stopped, Foache’s information

⁶⁹ ———, “Lettre de M. Descourvières... 3 février 1769”, in *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*, ed. Jean Cuvelier (Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1953, 1769).

⁷⁰ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II:35-6.

⁷¹ Foäche, Letter 11 February 1785, Saint Domingue

suggests that Malemba may have emerged victorious from the conflict.⁷² This information suggests that the frequency of civil wars in coastal kingdoms, especially Kakongo and Ngoyo, was a result of the erosion of traditional political institutions caused by the uncontrolled influx of wealth by the Atlantic slave trade. As a result, the late eighteenth century was a time of great political instability in the kingdoms of the Loango Coast.

The Atlantic Slave Trade and External Conflicts

The Atlantic slave trade also initiated a prolonged period of warfare between coastal kingdoms and internal polities that appear to have been the result of conflicts over access to interior trade routes and coastal markets. After the turn of the eighteenth century, Kakongo and Ngoyo rose to power and became the endpoints of the internal slave trade. By the middle of the eighteenth century the Solongo and other riverine peoples such as the Mboma and Nzali again sought an entrée into Atlantic trade. However, for most of the eighteenth century, Europeans were mostly uninterested in trading in the Congo River. French missionaries noted in 1766 of the lower Congo River: “In general no one goes there, the area is even avoided and it is unknown.”⁷³ In order for riverine groups such as the Solongo and the Nzali to sell captives to European merchants they therefore needed access to a coastal port. For this reason, by the middle of the

⁷² ———, "Letter 9 March 1785, Saint Domingue," AN, 505 Mi 85, Fonds Foäche-Bégouën-Demeaux; ———, "Letter 25 April 1785, Saint Domingue," AN, 505 Mi 85, Fonds Foäche-Bégouën-Demeaux; ———, "Letter 27 April 1785, Saint Domingue," AN, 505 Mi 85, Fonds Foäche-Bégouën-Demeaux

⁷³ Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,.

eighteenth century, Sonyo and other inland neighbors challenged the coastal kingdoms for direct access to Atlantic trade, initiating another period of warfare in the region. In 1748-9, a Sonyo army crossed the Congo River, attacked the Kingdom of Ngoyo and occupied the port of Cabinda. The Woyo of Ngoyo eventually expelled the invaders. Nonetheless, the Solongo of Sonyo remained a constant threat.

Ngoyo's conflict with Sonyo is a telling example of how Europeans used the slave trade to give them an advantage in inland conflicts. In 1757, the French attempted to establish a monopoly at Cabinda. They sent two ships, the *Saint Michel* and the *Améthiste*, to the Loango Coast where they attacked the ships of European rivals in Malemba, Loango, and Mayumba. Having succeeded in expelling European rivals, the French signed a treaty with the Mafouk Prince Klaus and "governor" Elzina of Cabinda on 1 June 1757. In the treaty, the two parties were described as "ardently desiring to bind their friendship and union and work to establish a mutually beneficial trade, lucrative and sure for both nations." Each side promised to protect the other from attacks and to provide the trade goods the other desired (slaves and food from the Woyo, European merchandise and ships for transportation from the French). In a break with earlier policy, the Woyo leaders "consent[ed] and promis[ed] to give in perpetuity" land to build a fort and house a French guard and not to permit any other European power to do so.

Though the fort was never constructed, the fact that the Woyo leaders agreed to its construction is significant and gives insight into the political and economic situation of Ngoyo in the mid-eighteenth century, specifically the external threat posed by Sonyo. On the surface (or coastal) level, Woyo motivation can be ascribed to the fact that the treaty

was negotiated at a time when war between European powers had brought the slave trade to a standstill. During the Seven Years War, the conflict between the English and the French spread to the Loango Coast, causing a lull in the trade. In 1757, the French ship *Saint Michel* sailed to the Loango coast via Benguela in a French convoy. The captain reported that he sailed to Benguela and Cabinda “without encountering anything.” At Cabinda, they learned that there were two English ships in Malemba.⁷⁴ This is in stark contrast to the journal of *La Flore*, which reported finding fourteen other ships on the Loango Coast in 1742.⁷⁵ Captain Caumont, the commander of the French convoy in 1757, reported that at Benguela there were “few resources at the moment due to the war the Portuguese have with the *nègres* and the drought there has been there for two years.”⁷⁶ However, the Woyo alliance with the French served internal purposes as well as

⁷⁴ "Letter from Captain of the *St. Michel* to the Ministre de la Marine, Martinique, 27 May 1757," AN, MAR/B/4/77, Fonds de la Marine, Service général, Campagnes navales, 4

⁷⁵ "Journal de bord de Johannet Du Colombier, capitaine (original). Campagne de la Flore, armée par Stanislas Foache. 1742-3," AN, MAR/4JJ/71/35, Fonds de la Marine, Journaux de bord

⁷⁶ "Letter from Captain Caumont, Martinique, 1 June 1757 includes copy of treaty made with the Prince of Cabinda 1 June 1757," AN, MAR/B/4/77, Fonds de la Marine, Service général, Campagnes navales, 5 Bontinck writes that historical sources of the 19th century frequently mention the Solongo as “audacious and incorrigible pirates[...].” Already in 1492 a narrative about the Kingdom of Kongo mentioned “rebels of the islands of the River of Padrai” [Zaire]. According to Bontinck, “Fishers by profession, they [Solongo] didn’t resist the temptation to become pirates each time the opportunity presented itself, and this, since the European commerce brought to their territory fire arms, cloth, and so many other ‘riches’, exchanged for slaves and ivory from the interior. Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Sohio, Congo, 1600-1675*: 141-4, 216, 19-20, 30, 36, 42; Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.," 51. In 1700, Barbot and Casseneuve are asked by Prince of Sogno if slaves will be instructed in Catholic faith and says he cannot trade slaves to them without the permission of the Portuguese, in: François Bontinck, ""Les Pamzelungos", Ancêtres Des Salongo," *Annales Aequatoria* 1(1980).

external (European). The promise of steady trade with the French would help Ngoyo step out of Loango's shadow and increase their share of the slave trade, which would in turn bring wealth and power to Ngoyo leaders. The promise of French protection from external attacks can be seen within the context of over a decade of conflict and warfare between the Woyo and the Solongo of Sonyo.

The conflict between the Woyo of Ngoyo and the Solongo of Sonyo continued in the 1760s and beyond. A French report from 1766 noted that the Woyo greatly feared the Solongo and desired a fort to protect themselves and their slave trade.⁷⁷ Another period of warfare began when Sonyo intervened in a succession dispute in Ngoyo. The conflict broke out when the prince who was elected king was forced to defend his crown against the *Ma-nboukou*, a lesser prince who contested the succession.⁷⁸ In order to defeat the royal army, the *Ma-nboukou* made an alliance with the Count of Sonyo. The Count assembled his troops and personally delivered them to his new ally. When the two armies met, the King's forces were defeated. The *Ma-nboukou* took the king prisoner and cut off his head. At this point, the new ruler of Ngoyo attempted to dismiss the Sonyo forces

⁷⁷ Mémoire sur la Côte d'Afrique [1766], Mémoire sur la Côte d'Afrique [1766]

⁷⁸ According to Proyard, the *Ma-nboukou* was the "Prince who is below [the Macaya or successor] in dignity, but who surpasses him in power..." Proyard wrote that while the Macaya was the chosen successor of the King, the succession was always contested in Loango and Ngoyo. In order to empower the Macaya to protect his claim, the King would deed a significant area of land called the Kaya to his successor. This did not guarantee a smooth transition, however. In addition to the war in Ngoyo, Proyard wrote that "No one doubts, in the Kingdom of Kakongo, that after the death of the King, the crown will be disputed by the [Macaya] and the *Ma-nboukou*." Proyard, 130-2. Grandpré, however, disputes this, writing that the throne of the kingdoms were hereditary, not elective, and that the "Mambouc" was the presumptive heir to the throne. Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 168; 97.

only to discover that the Sonyo leader had his own pretensions to the throne. War broke out “and continued several years, during which the commerce with Europeans was interrupted [.]” It is unclear what settled the conflict. French Abbé Proyart was uncertain whether aggressions ceased due to a peace treating “or by the death of one of the two contestants.”⁷⁹ It is difficult to know precisely when this war occurred. Information about it comes from the Proyart’s 1776 work that stated that the war “happened just recently.”⁸⁰ Proyart’s history of the Loango Coast was based on reports and personal letters from the French missionaries stationed on the Loango Coast from 1766 to 1776.⁸¹ The conflict between Ngoyo and Sonyo must have therefore taken place during this time, possibly in the early 1770s.

The Kingdom of Ngoyo continued to be embroiled in warfare in the 1780s. Mentions of conflicts were common in the accounts of French slave traders, who frequently complained about local conflicts when they interrupted trade in the port of Cabinda. For example, in 1783, Jean-Baptiste Candéau of the captain of the French slave trading ship *l’Usbek*, wrote in his journal that the “Prince Mambouq first Prince of Blood of the Country” of Cabinda came to his ship to “take some merchandise and presents to

⁷⁹ Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*: 133-5.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁸¹ Missionary documents housed in the Foreign Mission Archive of Paris (*Missions Étrangères de Paris*). Letters between Proyart and the missionaries can be found in ANOM, C/6/23.

send to a Prince from the lands that had stopped trade with this country [Cabinda] because of some dispute between them.”⁸²

The period of warfare between Kakongo and Ngoyo and inland polities, especially riverine traders, reflects an extension of the same process that led to the decline of the Kingdom of Loango. Just as Kakongo and Ngoyo had challenged Loango for access to the Atlantic slave trade, inland groups, notably riverine traders such as the Solongo, went to war with Kakongo and Ngoyo in an attempt to challenge the power of these coastal middlemen. These conflicts exemplified the impact of the Atlantic slave trade on relations between neighboring African states. The Kingdom of Ngoyo became the site of conflicts with riverine groups and Europeans precisely because Cabinda was the endpoint for caravan routes coming from south of the river. The slave trade in the Congo River and Loango Coast reflected the shift in the interior slave trade in the early eighteenth century away from the Luanda hinterland. Instead, Vili and Woyo traders from Loango and Ngoyo took captives north to the Loango Coast. These traders used superior merchandise offered by Europeans on the Loango Coast to trade for slaves south of the Congo River, to the frustration of Portuguese officials at Luanda. This “trade diaspora” directed captives to the lower Congo River. At the same time, lower river groups such as the Nzali, the Solongo, and the Mboma became increasingly anxious to profit from the slave trade by cutting out coastal middlemen at Cabinda and trading direction with

⁸² Entry for August 23, “Jean Baptiste Candeau Journal de Rade de Gabinde [Cabinde] des mois de Juillet et Août 1783,” CHAN MAR/B/4/267, Service général, Campagnes navales, Fonds de la Marine, Paris, France.

Europeans.⁸³ The conflicts between the Woyo and riverine groups such as the Solongo can be seen as attempts by the latter to get access to coastal trade with Europeans.

The internal and external wars that took place on the Loango Coast in the last half of the eighteenth century with increasing frequency interrupted the slave trade in coastal ports, especially Malemba and Cabinda. By the 1780s, the French had become dissatisfied with the slave trade on the Loango coast and began trading directly with the Solongo of Sonyo and other riverine groups in and south of the Congo River. In doing so, the French followed the example of the English, despite the fact that the latter's attempts to "penetrate into the Zaire [River]" had not been entirely successful.⁸⁴ French documents suggest this was a change from previous decades. For example, in 1754 Marine cartographer Jacques-Nicholas Bellin wrote that he was forced to rely on English and Dutch navigation journals to produce maps of Central Africa because "the French frequent little the coasts of Congo and Angola, and I have almost no journal where the navigation of these areas is detailed."⁸⁵ Reports on the French slave trade in Central Africa in the 1770s, by which time the French had become the dominant traders on the Loango Coast, rarely mention trading in or south of the Congo River. According to a

⁸³Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.," 51.

⁸⁴ "The English excluded from these three principal markets by the price of slaves have tried to penetrate in the Zaire: their efforts have not been crowned a complete success." Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: xxiv.

⁸⁵ Jacques-Nicholas] [Bellin, "Remarques sur les deux cartes des côtes occidentales d'Afrique dressés au dépôt en 1754," 1754, AN, MAR/3JJ/255, Observations scientifiques et géographiques, dossier 1

letter written by a French missionary in 1770, Sonyo was “a country entirely independent of Portugal” and despite the country’s attempts to trade directly with Europeans had “only one *comptoir*.”⁸⁶ In 1770, French slave ship captain Destrais of *La Biche* summarized the French trade south of the Loango Coast. He wrote that there was “no trade in the great river of Zaire” but that “all throw themselves on Ambris” where they are not bothered by the Portuguese but “are erased” by epidemic illness. “Many have abandoned [the port] and do not send [ships] there any longer.” Destrais ruled out trading in the Congo River and at Ambris and instead ordered his ship to search the lands south of Benguela for a suitable location to dock and make trade.⁸⁷ A *memoire* from 1771 stated that the inhabitants of Cabinda “fear the nation *Soignent* [Sonyo] on the other side of [the Congo River]” but makes no mention of having actually travelled south of Cabinda.⁸⁸ Likewise, in a summary of four slave trading voyages made to “the Angola coast” between 1769 and 1776, Captain Jean Baptiste Foutrel Gaugny made no mention of having traded south, or being familiar with the conditions of trade south of the port of Cabinda.⁸⁹ The nautical journals of captains who did visit Sonyo provide information on

⁸⁶ Gabriel Durocher to Cardinal Préfet de la Propogange, 13 May 1770Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 61.

⁸⁷ Jacques Destrais, "Copie de la lettre de M Destrais Cap[itain] de la fregate du roy La Biche à M Mouches et Beaufils, à Cabinde le 24 fevrier 1770," 1770, AN, B/4/115, Fonds de la Marine, Service général, Campagnes navales

⁸⁸ Mémoire sur la Côte d'Afrique, 23 November 1771, Mémoire sur la Côte d'Afrique, 23 November 1771

⁸⁹ “Extrait des journaux de Jn Bte Foutrel Gaugny, pendant le cours des quatre voyages qu’il a commandé la Navire La Marie Seraphique pour faire la traitte des noirs à la côte d’Angole en

the slave trade there. In 1777, Captain Armand Lacoudrais d'Honfleur of the ship *La Babillarde* of Marseille visited Sonyo and Ambriz. He wrote that the French could “not trade in this part without running the risk of interlopers” because the Portuguese claimed exclusive trading rights south of the Congo River. However, Honfleur made it clear that despite Portugal’s territorial claims, they “by no means” controlled the area.⁹⁰

By the 1780s, increasing numbers of French slave traders took risks by trading in regions claimed by the Portuguese. The French gave two reasons for seeking alternatives to the Loango Coast trade. The first was that the flow of captives to Loango Coast ports stopped due to wars between the coastal kingdoms and the interior polities that supplied them. French traders’ second major complaint was the poor quality of slaves due to the long journey from the point of capture. For example, in 1785, Declos Lepelley, brothers from Nantes who outfitted ships for the slave trade, wrote to the French governor of Senegal, François Blanchot de Verley. They complained that the French had been forced to abandon trading at Cabinda, Malemba, and Loango due to the poor quality of slaves found there. They wrote that intense slave trading in the three ports had “greatly diminish[ed] the population” of captives available for purchase and that and that slaves

Affrique,” CHAN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 6, Observations scientifiques et géographiques, Paris, France.

⁹⁰ Armand Lacoudrais d'Honfleur, "Journal de Navigation sur la Corvette La Babillarde de Marseille," 1777, AN, MAR/4JJ/71/52, Fonds de la Marine, Journaux de bord, Extraits des Journaux de bord du capitaine Armand Lacoudrais d'Honfleur

sold there “came from as far as 300 leagues” away and therefore arrived in poor health.⁹¹ For these reasons, by the 1780s, many French merchants and ship captains advocated trading in or below the Congo River. The French believed doing so would allow them to purchase slaves closer to the internal slave markets. For example, one slave trader proposed building a fort on the southern bank of the Congo River because “the majority of the *Negres* who come from the Kingdom of Kongo cross the River of Zaire [...] to go to either Cabinda or Malembe.”⁹² Stanislas Foäche, one of the most important slave trading merchants in Saint Domingue, wrote in 1790 that slave ships should renounce slave trading at Cabinda and Malembe altogether and instead send smaller ships into the Congo River to cut out coastal middlemen.⁹³

The French, therefore, began sending ships into the Congo River to trade at Sonyo and south of the Congo River. In the 1780s, journals of ship captains begin mentioning trading at Ambriz or Mossula at the entrance of what the French called the Ambriz or Loze River. One captain wrote in 1784 that Ambriz was considered the most advantageous port because captives were purchased “at a better price than in any other port.”⁹⁴ While captives at Cabinda and Malembe cost “15 big *marchandises*” captives at

⁹¹ Mémoire Pour Un Nouveau Projet De Traitte Sur La Côte D'afrique," ANOM C/6/23, Sénégal et Côtes d'Afrique, ANOM, Aix-en-Provence, France.

⁹² Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 35-6.

⁹³ CHAN 505 Mi 85, 18 février 1790, Foäche Correspondance Manuscrits, Fonds Foäche-Bégouën-Demeaux, Paris, France.

⁹⁴ “Instructions pour les voyages de la côte d’Angole d’après un voyage fait en 1784.” F/3/61, Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry, ANOM, Aix-en-Provence, France.

Ambriz could be purchased for a mere 11 packets made up of more modest goods. The necessary customs and gifts to local leaders were also much lower at Ambriz.⁹⁵ Another ship captain wrote that French traders frequented Ambriz despite the risk of impoundment by the Portuguese because the “access to slaves was so much better as to warrant trading there.”⁹⁶ Sieur Baudry wrote to the Ministry of the Marine with corrections regarding the location and description of Ambriz on Bellin’s 1754 map of the Angola Coast. He provided information that he said was already widely used by ship captains “going in ships to trade slaves at the River Loze with they wrongly call Ambris.”⁹⁷ Another report submitted to the Minister of the Marine argued that the French should claim trading rights south of the Congo River based on the volume of trade already carried out between the Congo and Bengo rivers, especially at Ambriz and Mossula.⁹⁸ Missionary Cherubino da Savona reported that the province adjacent to Ambriz “made a large trade” in slaves with the French.⁹⁹ Some French slave traders attempted to find new trade opportunities south of Angola. In 1784, Desclos Lepelley wrote that French merchants had already opted in large numbers for trading in Angola

⁹⁵ “Instructions pour les voyages de la côte d’Angole d’après un voyage fait en 1784.” F/3/61, Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry, ANOM, Aix-en-Provence, France.

⁹⁶ [Bellin, Bellin, Remarques..., AN, MAR/3JJ/255

⁹⁷ “Remarques et Observations du Sr Baudry ancien capitaine sur la Carte de la Côte d’Angole.” CHAN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 10, Observations scientifiques et géographiques, Paris, France.

⁹⁸ “Côtes d’Afrique au Sud de la Ligne,” ANOM C/6/24, ANOM C/6/24, Sénégal et Côtes d’Afrique, ANOM, Aix-en-Provence, France.

⁹⁹ “Observations sur la traite des nègres en Guinée,” s.d., AN, M/1030, dossier 7, Mélanges, Paris, France.

along area of the Kunene River, despite running the risk of having their cargos confiscated by the Portuguese. He wrote that he had dispatched the ship *Bailli de Suffren* to explore trading possibilities south of Benguela. Significantly, the official record for the voyage lists Loango as the principal place of slave purchase for the ship, demonstrating the difficulty of knowing precisely where in West Central Africa Europeans purchased slaves at the time.

The French movement to trading for slaves in and south of the Congo River reflected their belief that the slaves being traded on the Loango coast came from the same interior trade routes supplying captives south of the Congo River. The French were not the only ones who believed the same trade routes supplied ports north and south of the river. The Portuguese clearly thought so as well and perceived the French trade as clear competition. The Portuguese responded to this competition through repeated attempts to stem foreign trade north of the Congo River during the last half of the eighteenth century. In 1759, the Portuguese built a fort at Nkoje in the Ndembu province of the Kingdom of Kongo to try to block traders from bringing slaves across the Congo River north to the Loango Coast. They also officially claimed exclusive trading rights on the Loango Coast in decrees in 1758, 1769, and again in 1779. However, the Portuguese governors in Angola were largely powerless to enforce these decrees without naval support from Lisbon, which they finally received in 1779 when Lisbon sent instructions to fortify the ports of Malemba, Cabinda, Mpinda, and Ambriz. Three years later, the order was amended to include only the construction of a fort at Cabinda.

The rivalry between the Portuguese and French over the slave trade in West Central Africa culminated in 1783 with the Cabinda Affaire. In July 1783, a Portuguese expedition of four warships arrived in Cabinda and negotiated exclusive trading rights with the Mambouk. Shortly after the negotiations, however, the Mambouk changed his mind. The French interpreted this reversal as a sign that the Portuguese had been duplicitous in their presentation of the treaty. Conversely, the Portuguese viewed it as the result of French influence, and they ordered the French ships to leave immediately.¹⁰⁰ One of the French ordered to leave, captain of the slave ship the *Affricain*, later reported that the “Prince Mambouk” had been in the boat of the French captain Candeau, under the French flag, organizing “the preparations of the inhabitants of the country for the defense of their liberty” when a Portuguese frigate arrived and captured the Mambouk, treating him “like a captive.” The captain of the *Affricain* wrote that the capture of the Mambouk from under the protection of the French flag necessitated French retaliation.¹⁰¹

The French government *did* retaliate, sending a convoy of naval vessels to Cabinda in 1784, ostensibly to defend the French ally of Ngoyo. In actuality, the instructions given to the convoy’s commander, Sieur Chevalier Barnard de Marigny by the French government show that the crown’s motivations were purely economic. The justification they laid out for Marigny’s mission was that the Loango Coast was the last

¹⁰⁰ Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 87.

¹⁰¹ , ANOM, C/6/24, Sénégal et Côtes d’Afrique, ANOM, Aix-en-Provence, France.

area of “free trade” in Africa, where two-thirds of the French slave trade took place.¹⁰² Marigny’s task was to see whether or not the Portuguese had built a fort and, if so, to enlist the help of the Mambouk in defeating the Portuguese troops there. This was easily done. In fact, the Mambouk had already attacked the Portuguese and cut off supplies to them making them essentially prisoners in their own fortification. When Marigny challenged the Portuguese, they conceded defeat. Also at issue was French trade south of the Congo River. French trade at Ambriz became so common in the mid-1780s that the Ministry of the Marine moved to challenge the monopoly claimed by the Portuguese on all trade south of the Congo River.¹⁰³ Marine documents referred to Portuguese claims as “in question” and “pretended.”¹⁰⁴ The conflict resulted in Marigny being instructed to “assure” the ability of the French to trade at Ambriz. In a convention in Madrid in 1786, free trade was reestablished on the Loango Coast.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² “Mémoire du Roi pour servir d’Instruction particuliere au Sr Chevalier Barnard de Marigny Cap de Vau commandant la frigate la Venus,” MAR/B/4/267, Service général, Campagnes navales, Fonds de la Marine, CHAN, Paris, France.

¹⁰³ “Mémoire du Roi pour servir d’Instruction particuliere au Sr Chevalier Barnard de Marigny Cap de Vau commandant la frigate la Venus,” MAR/B/4/267, Service général, Campagnes navales, Fonds de la Marine, CHAN, Paris, France.

¹⁰⁴ MAR/B/4/267, Service général, Campagnes navales, Fonds de la Marine, CHAN, Paris, France.; “Expedition de Cabinde” ANOM C/6/24, Sénégal et Côtes d’Afrique, ANOM, Aix-en-Provence, France.

¹⁰⁵ Mémoire du Sr Mazois, négociant à l’orient, pour établir les indemnités qu’il est endroit de reclamer envers le Gouvernement Portugais relativement a l’incasion de cette Nation à Gabinde ANOM F/1B/2, Colonies, Aix-en-Provence, France.

Conclusion

The Atlantic slave trade on the Loango Coast initiated a process of economic and political change that over the course of a century dramatically altered the social landscape of the coastal kingdoms. Atlantic trade challenged the central economic position of the Kingdom of Loango, which had for centuries dominated the politics of the region. As a result, by 1750, the economic and political influence of the Kingdom of Loango had declined and the Kingdoms of Ngoyo, Kakongo, and Mayumba had become autonomous. Over the next four decades, the same process of economic realignment that displaced the Kingdom of Loango also posed problems for the rulers of Kakongo and Ngoyo as inland and riverine polities sought militarily to displace the coastal middlemen. These rivalries over direct access to the Atlantic slave trade led to a period of frequent warfare. Despite the absence of direct European involvement in the coastal kingdoms, Atlantic trade eroded traditional political institutions and caused political instability and warfare. By the 1780s, it is clear that the coastal kingdoms were embroiled in near constant internal and external armed conflicts.

Chapter 3: The Kongolese Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century

In this chapter, we cast our gaze west across the sea to examine how the Atlantic slave trade created a Kongolese Atlantic world. In the eighteenth century, the French slave trade bound the Loango Coast and the colony of Saint Domingue together in a system of inhuman bondage. Though thousands of miles apart, the circulation of people, goods, and ideas between West Central Africa, Europe and Saint Domingue drew these seemingly disparate areas of the world into a single, deeply intertwined system of Atlantic exchange. By the apogee of the Atlantic slave trade in the 1780s, Saint Domingue and the Loango Coast were two sides of a single process of enslavement and slavery.¹ The former was the most profitable colony in the world. The latter was the supplier of the majority of African captives for the Saint Domingue slave trade. The result of the French Atlantic trading system was the creation of a Kongolese Atlantic world.

The Loango Coast, Saint Domingue, and the Kongolese Atlantic World

The economic pull of the Atlantic slave trade translated into the enslavement of increasingly large numbers of people who, once purchased by European slave traders, formed a transatlantic human link between Africa and the Americas. This link was at once ‘African’ and ‘Kongolese’ – both categories that would come into being as captive

¹ Broadhead, "Trade and politics on the Congo coast : 1770-1870," 73. "Although the details in many instances remain obscure, it is clear that by 1800 an extensive commercial network linked virtually all of West Central Africa to Europe and America through the ports of Congo and Angola."

men and women forged new bonds of kinship and community in the face of the horrors of the Middle Passage and plantation slavery. The volume of the Atlantic slave trade increased exponentially in response to the seemingly insatiable demand of European colonists for African labor in the Americas. The demographics of Atlantic migration speak for themselves: before the year 1800, three out of every four migrants to the Americas came from Africa.² West Central Africa bore the brunt of the impact of the slave trade: roughly forty-five percent of African captives bound -- literally and figuratively -- for the Americas originated from the area broadly known as the Angolan coast (*la côte d'Angole*) or the Congo.³ This region included the coastline of present day Gabon, the Congo, and Angola, north from the Cape Lopez in modern-day Gabon south to the Kunene River that divides Angola from Namibia. Historians debate how far inland the Atlantic slave trade reached by this point. It almost certainly reached the Congo River Basin and possibly wrought destruction as far as the Zambezi River.⁴ One contemporary French slave trader claimed a captive he purchased in Cabinda originated from the east coast of the continent, writing, "It is clear that she has been at Quiloa or at

² Sweet, *Domingos Alvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*.

³ . In the eighteenth century, the French referred to the entirety of Central Africa as "*la côte d'Angole*." Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: xiv.

⁴ Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830*. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*. Harms, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: the Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500-1891*.

Mozambique.”⁵ By the dawn of the nineteenth century, around one-third of immigrants to the Americas hailed from West Central Africa. This meant that many areas of European colonization in the Americas were not only more African than European; they were also significantly more so, and the Kongolese made up a significant portion of these demographics.

One such area was the French colony of Saint Domingue, where nearly ninety-five percent of the population was either African or of African descent. Among those of European descent, over one-quarter (26%) resided in the colony’s urban centers heightening the demographic dominance of Africans in most of the colony. As a result, on many plantations, the proportion of Africans to Europeans was overwhelming. Indeed, whites comprised only four percent of the colony’s entire rural population. In the North Province parish of Limbé, for example, 300 whites and 200 free people of color lived among 5,000 slaves.⁶ In the neighboring parish of Acul, 3,500 slaves labored among merely 130 free people (of all racial backgrounds).⁷ It is therefore no coincidence that the 1791 insurrection erupted in Acul and important chapters of the Revolution took place in Limbé.

Thus, if the eighteenth century colony of Saint Domingue was technically a European possession, it was demographically an African space. At the time of the Haitian

⁵ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 223.

⁶ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution*: 30.

⁷ ———, *Haiti: the Aftershocks of History* (NY: Henry Holt, 2012). 33.

Revolution in 1791, nine out of every ten people in the colony were enslaved. Two-thirds of those in bondage had been born in Africa, the majority in West Central Africa.⁸ Most had recently arrived: of the estimated 500,000 slaves in 1791, nearly 240,000 had been imported to the colony in the decade preceding the revolution. The high mortality rate spurred the continued importation of increasing numbers of African captives, reaching a crescendo in 1790 when nearly 48,000 were disembarked in the colony. In the eight months preceding the 1791 uprising alone, 40,000 captives arrived. The boom in slave imports in 1790-1 caused “an abrupt 50 percent increase in Africans that was concentrated in the north and was followed by the uprising there of August 1791.”⁹ The result was that, by the eve of the Haitian Revolution, perhaps as many as 180,000 enslaved men and women had arrived in the previous five years, and half of them may only been in the colony for an incredibly short time.¹⁰

The population of Saint Domingue was therefore not only overwhelmingly African, but also largely Kongolese. West Central Africans represented the largest group of Africans in the colony, comprising the majority of the population of the North and

⁸ ———, *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution*: 40-1.

⁹ Geggus, "The French Slave Trade: An Overview," 131. Geggus argues that there was no correlation between either the high proportion of or recent importation of Africans into the colony and the ‘uprising there of August 1791’ because he argues that “the insurrection was led mainly by creole slaves.”

¹⁰ Dubois, "Complications." Numbers from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD): "Voyages: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database".

South Provinces of Saint Domingue.¹¹ Their dominance was most pronounced on coffee plantations, where they were fifty percent more numerous than on sugar plantations.¹² West Central Africans had dominated slave imports to Saint Domingue since the 1750s.¹³ By the mid-1780s, they comprised between one-half to two-thirds of the French slave trade to the colony, reaching a peak of 63% in 1784.¹⁴ In the decade preceding the Revolution, nearly half of the captives purchased by French slave traders came from West Central Africa. These numbers may have been higher. For some years, French records cite thousands more captives than the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD). For example, French slave trade documents cite thousand more captives than the TSTD for the year 1785. A government summary of the slave trade for that year lists 34,045 captives on 90 ships, 46 from the “Angolan Coast” versus 29,835 captives on 83 ships, 36 from West Central Africa listed in the database. Using French documents the percentage of French slave trade in West Central Africa in 1785 rises to 51.6%.¹⁵ Furthermore, the TSTD cannot account for French slave traders who underreported or

¹¹ Geggus, "The French Slave Trade: An Overview," 128.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Arlette Gautier, "Les origines ethniques des esclaves déporté à Nippes, Saint-Domingue, de 1721 à 1770 d'après les archives notariales," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des études Africaines* 23, no. 1 (1989): 31; Fouchard, *Les marrons de la liberté: édition revue, corrigée et augmentée*.

¹⁴ "Voyages: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database". accessed 26 June 2014.

¹⁵ "Etat des Batiments expediés des differents ports du Royaume pour la traite des Noirs sur les Côtes occidentales d'Afrique pendant l'année 1785," ANOM, Colonies, F/1B/2, Police des Noirs, p. 152

failed to report their voyages in order to avoid paying customs duties or escape penalties for illegal trading activities. Slave traders had a new incentive to do so after the 1784 repeal of the highly lucrative (but corrupt) *acquits de Guinée* and again after 1789 when the French government passed a law requiring ships from the Indian Ocean to return to France with their goods and then re-embark for Africa. French legal cases at the time make it clear that French merchants attempted to skirt the new restrictions and tax laws by either underreporting the number of slaves they had purchased, not reporting Indian Ocean trade, or not reporting their voyage at all.¹⁶ Whatever the true numbers, it is clear that “Congos” were the largest group of Africans in the colony.

Colonists responded to the demographic dominance of West Central Africans on plantations through complaint, resignation, and academic study. French scholars in the colony such as Louis Narcisse Baudry de Lozières, Mederic Elie Moreau de Saint Méry, and Etienne Descourtilz cataloged the geographic origins, physical and moral characteristics of “Congos.”¹⁷ The latter were so numerous on Baudry’s plantations that

¹⁶ "Arrêt du conseil du d'état du Roi qui, à compter du 10 Novembre prochain, convertit en Gratifications et Primes l'exemption du demi-droit accordée aux Denrées coloniales provenant de la traite de Noirs. 26 Octobre 1784.," AN, F 12, Conseil et Bureau de Commerce XVII siècle-1790, box 13102, Traite des Noirs et commerce avec les colonies françaises d'Amérique, dossier 76, pièce 4; 30 Juin 1793 Letter from the Minister of the Marine to the Minister of the Interior, Ministère du Commerce 1791-1860, AN F/12/1653. ; De La Perriere, "Mémoire," 1790, A.N., AF/III/103/B, Directoire exécutif, Dossier 463 Traite des nègres (Documents relatifs à la), Commerce d'Afrique, traite de nègres, 1785-1790, document 39; P. Labarthe, *Voyage Au Sénégal: Pendant Les Années 1784 Et 1785, D'après Les Mémoires de Lajaille* (Paris 1803). See, for example, the customs disputes found in the Ministry of Commerce records: ,

¹⁷ Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description... de Saint Domingue*; Descourtilz, *Voyage d'un naturaliste*.

he spent the 1780s studying the language of his “Congo” slaves, writing a *Dictionnaire ou Vocabulaire Congo* so that other “planters” would be able to communicate with the newly arrived “bossals.”¹⁸ Baudry (who incidentally was Moreau’s brother-in-law and escaped from France with him in 1793)¹⁹ believed that many of the newly arrived captives perished “often a short time after their arrival, because they cannot make themselves understood.”²⁰ Unfortunately for Baudry, the Haitian Revolution prevented him from publishing his *Encyclopedie Coloniale*, and so he was unable to establish whether or not linguistic knowledge would address the high mortality rate among the colony’s enslaved Kongoleses.²¹ However, it is an incredibly useful document that bears testimony to the important influence this demographic group had in the colony.

Other colonists responded in less academic ways, instead resigning themselves to the fact that the influx of West Central Africans into the colony was unlikely to end any time soon. This was the case on the Breda plantations, where future revolutionary leader

¹⁸ I would like to thank James Sweet for bringing this narrative to my attention. L.N.B. Lozières, *Second voyage à la Louisiane, faisant suite au premier de 1794 à 1798*, 2 vols. (Paris: Chez Charles, Imprimeur, Rue Guénégaud, N 18, 1803). II: 72.

¹⁹ Fillmore Norflett, "Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Gosport as Seen by Moreau De Saint-Mery in March, April and May, 1794," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 48, no. 1 (1940).

²⁰ I would like to thank James Sweet for bringing this narrative to my attention. Lozières, *Second voyage à la Louisiane, faisant suite au premier de 1794 à 1798*: II: 72. “Ces malheureux esclaves périssent souvent peu de temps après leur arrive, parce qu’ils ne peuvent pas se faire comprendre.”

²¹ Louis Narcisse Baudry de Lozières, "Brouillons et extraits de l’ouvrage intitulé 'La Glossa-Polygène [n.a.f. 9630-9631]', par un secrétaire-traducteur du ministère de la Guerre (1823) 154 feuillets.," BNF, Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises, NAF 22088, Papiers de Louis-Narcisse Baudry des Lozières

Toussaint Louverture was born and enslaved. In 1775, the manager [*procureur gérant*] of the Breda plantation, Bayon de Libertat, complained to his employer that he was unable to purchase any Arada captives for him, which Libertat, like many sugar planters, preferred over other African “nations.”²² Like “Congo,” “Arada” was a general term for African captives who came from the West African port of Allada and those nearby. “For a very long time no *négrière* Arada [slave ship of ‘Arada’ captives] has arrived, the necessity I find myself with at Haut du Cap, has determined me to buy you 12 young Congo [...] I begin to reconcile myself with this nation [Congo], moreover there are no other [nations] coming here, of 20 *négrières* that arrive each year at Cap [Français] there are 19 from Congo. It is the nation that dominates, I see that everyone buys them because of this reason.”²³ Bayon de Libertat’s letter attests to the change in slaving practices, which saw Central Africans become the majority of the population on the North Plain. However, like most plantation documents, de Libertat uses only “Congo” to describe slave origins, which does not help identify where specifically in West Central Africa these slaves came from.

Three types of documents from the French colony of Saint Domingue record the “nation” of African slaves: plantation documents, including bills of sale, inventories, and letters; notarial documents, including baptismal and marriage records; and over 48,000 maroon, or fugitive slave advertisements in the colonial paper *Affiches Americaines*,

²² Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution*: 40-1.

²³ "Letter 6 8bre 1775," Bayon de Libertat AN, Archives Privées, 18 AP, Fonds de Berg de Breda, Box 3, dossier 12

beginning in 1764. However, the “nations” listed by colonists are problematic categories, at best indicating a broad region of origin, port of embarkation, or a linguistic group.²⁴ Nonetheless, the prominent place of “Congos” in the letters and publications of colonists is testament to their important place in Saint Domingue society.

The Kongoleses slaves became central to Saint Domingue’s economy, which was, in turn, central to the economy of France. By the end of the eighteenth century, Saint Domingue had long been the wealthiest colony in the Caribbean, “the centerpiece of the Atlantic slave system.”²⁵ Despite being small in size – Saint Domingue covered only 10,600 square miles or roughly the size of Maryland or Massachusetts - in 1789 Saint Domingue boasted around 8,000 plantations and the colony was still growing.²⁶ At the time of the Haitian Revolution, Saint Domingue produced nearly one-half of both the sugar and coffee consumed by Europeans and Americas, as well as significant quantities of cotton and indigo.²⁷ Saint Domingue was the world’s largest producer of sugar and coffee, exporting more sugar than Jamaica, Cuba, and Brazil combined.²⁸ The exports produced by the colony “generated some two-fifths of France’s overseas trade, a

²⁴ For analysis of the maroon advertisements see: Fouchard, *Les marrons de la liberté: édition revue, corrigée et augmentée*.

²⁵ Quoted by Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution*: 21.

²⁶ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*: 5.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Quoted by Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution*: 21.

proportion rarely equaled in any colonial empire.”²⁹ “The livelihood of as many as a million of the 25 million inhabitants of France depended directly on the colonial trade [...] In 1789, 15 percent of the 1,000 members of the National Assembly owned colonial property, and many others were probably tied to colonial commerce.”³⁰

An apt summary of the French colonial system comes from Saint Domingue colonist Listré, a lawyer who practiced before the *Conseil Supérieur* (appeal court) of Cap Français.³¹ Listré had rare insight into the colonial system because he had experience as both a colonial slave owner and slave trader, having accompanied a slave-trading voyage to Malemba in 1777. “The colonies had need of arms for cultivation and it was in Africa that we went to find the cultivators.” The French, like their European counterparts, had turned to African labor following the sugar revolution of the seventeenth century. Like his European contemporaries, Listre believed that “*Les nègres* alone could suffice for the work in the hot countries.” The demand for labor and the difficulty of the labor required to produce sugar meant that the French “could not do without them [African slaves] without giving up the colonies” therefore “One bought the *nègres* as slaves and introduced them as such to the colonies [.]”

The demand for African slaves in Saint Domingue was insatiable, and French slave traders had trouble keeping up with demand, which was driven by the high

²⁹ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*: 5.

³⁰ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution*: 21.

³¹ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*: 44.

mortality rate as much as by the growth of agricultural production. “One commonly needed for the colony of Saint Domingue alone a recruitment each year of 20 to 25,000 *nègres*, as much to replace the mortalities as to increase the cultivation.” If the cash crops produced by Saint Domingue generated wealth for a significant proportion of the French population, the slave trade itself likewise sustained the economies of port cities. Listré summarized: “The commerce was made mainly by the cities of Nantes, Saint Malo, La Rochelle and le Havre, but the first carried the most. She alone send to Africa more ships than all the other cities in France together and I saw in 1777 at Malemba, Angola coast, of 13 ships, 8 from Nantes. This commerce was the principal basis of the fortune of these *négociants*.”³² The description of Listré provides an apt summary of the circular relationship between the Atlantic slave trade, the French colonies of which Saint Domingue was the crown jewel, and the French economy.

The importance of the Loango Coast slave trade to the entire French economic system can be seen in the active role the French state took in protecting the trade. The Cabinda Affaire of 1783-4 is one example. Following the Portuguese invasion of the port of Cabinda in 1783 and expulsion of French slave ships, French slave traders demanded that the French government intervene. They argued the French crown should do so because the Loango Coast slave trade was necessary for the colonial economy in the

³² “*Les nègres seuls pouvaient suffire aux travaux des pays chauds. On ne saurait en effet s’en passer sans renoncer aux colonies.* » Listré, Listré, *l’Histoire de la Révolution*. Partially transcribed and published in: Gabriel Debien, “Documents sur la traite (XVIIe-XIXe siècles),” in *Enquêtes et documents* (Nantes: Centre de Recherche sur l’Histoire de la France Atlantique, 1972).

Caribbean, especially Saint Domingue, not because the slave trade was important to their own profits. According to a *Mémoire du Roi* written in 1784, “It is from this coast that we have extracted the major part of the *noirs* who have been carried in our colonies, and who have been pulled nearly in entirety from the lone markets of Loande [Loango], Malimbe, and Cabinde.”³³ A letter from the colonial minister Castries cited the importance of the slave trade from “That which one calls the Angola Coast, from the Cap Lopès Gonsalves, until the entry of St. Paul de Loanda, from where our commerce has pulled until present, more than two-thirds of the *Noirs* who have been introduced, each year, in our Isles.”³⁴ A report written later in the decade claimed that the French “had pulled, before the current war, four-fifths of the *nègres* introduced to Saint Domingue.”³⁵ The importance of the Loango Coast slave trade to Saint Domingue’s economy convinced the French government to send a naval convoy to restore “free trade” in the port. French *armateurs* and the French government use the same argument to first demand and then justify government intervention in the conflict in Cabinda. Their logic was as follows: the Loango Coast slave trade was the most important part of the French slave trade; therefore, the French slave trade was necessary to ensure continued production in the

³³ "Mémoire du Roi pour servir d’Instruction particulière au Sr Chevalier Barnard de Marigny Cap de Vau commandant la frigate la Venus, 23 Jer [Janvier] 1784," ANOM, Colonies, F/1B/2, Police des Noirs, p. 42

³⁴ "Copie de la lettre de M. Le Mal. De Castries M Le Ca de Vergennes concernant Cabinde," 5 Mars 1784, ANOM, Colonies, F/1B/2, Police des Noirs, p. 54

³⁵ "Commerce des Noirs, Nottes sur ce qu’il servir important d’acquérir es de conserver de cotes en affrique pour notre commerce," ANOM, Colonies, F/1B/2, Police des Noirs, p. 208

French colonies, especially in Saint Domingue; colonial production was necessary for the French economy. The French government must intervene, therefore, because a disruption to the Loango Coast slave trade would disrupt the entire French economic system. The documents generated by the Cabinda Affaire highlight the intense level of interconnection that existed between the three areas, demonstrating the way in which local events in one place, in this instance Cabinda, impacted the entire system. On a broader level, the Cabinda Affaire indicates the way in which the French slave trade had drawn these geographically distant regions into a single demographic and economic system.

The Loango Coast slave trade was an integral part of the structure of the French economy, of which Saint Domingue was the crown jewel hailed as “the pearl of the Antilles” and “the Eden of the Western World.”³⁶ In the eighteenth century, the French referred to the region as “*la côte d’Angole*” – the Angola coast. Grandpré clarified that “the generic name of the Angolan coast” referred to “all the country situated between the cap Lopez-Gonzalvo and Saint Philippe of Benguela, which is to say, from O° 44’ latitude south until 12° 14’ also south.” The Portuguese, however, were “very jealous of their commerce.” As a result, the first port from the south frequented by the French was “a small place named Ambriz” located north of the Portuguese capital of Saint Paul de Luanda. For this reason, “the trade generally given the name of Angolan” referred to the

³⁶ Pearl of the Antilles quote from Moreau de Saint Méry

coast from Ambriz in the south to Cape Lopez in the north.³⁷ Between 1760 and 1800, West Central Africa embarked nearly a million captive Africans for plantation societies in the Americas.³⁸ Half of all captives left from the Loango Coast, the area extending 160 kilometers north of the Congo River (present-day Angolan Cabinda). The Loango Coast technically encompassed all of the area from the Cape of Lopez Gonsalvo south to the Congo River. According to Grandpré, the local inhabitants spoke the same language, obeyed the same laws, followed the same customs and exercised the same religion. “The Congo language is common to all of them.” While the French referred to the entire area as “the coast of Angola,” the locals were said to call themselves *Congo*.³⁹

Following the Seven Years War in 1763, the Loango Coast became the international hub of the Atlantic slave trade. The majority of this trade was conducted in the ports of Loango, Malemba and Cabinda, though by the 1780s the French began trading further south, in and across the Congo River. Textiles purchased in India or manufactured in France were traded for slaves who provided the human fuel for the French colonies in the Caribbean, especially Saint Domingue. Trade in this area of West Central Africa was particularly attractive to Europeans because it was an area of “free trade” (*traite libre*). By the end of the eighteenth century, sources clearly indicate that

³⁷ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: xiv.

³⁸ "Voyages: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database". The exact number is over 906,000.

³⁹ ———, *Voyage*: I: xiv-xv. “Les naturels... se nomment entre eux *Congo*.”

Loango's now independent southern neighbors, Ngoyo and Kakongo, had adopted the policy of free trade. A 1784 *Mémoire* from the Cabinda Affaire summarized the situation:

the coasts situated south of the [Equinoxiale] line [...] do not belong to any power exclusively[.] [...] The extent of the coasts where the competition for *la traite des noirs* is common to all the powers of Europe, is understood from the *signe equinoxiale* to the Cape Padron and it should even be prolonged until St. Paul de Loanda, though the Portuguese pretend the property of these coasts between the Rivers Zaïre and of Bengo; but the French, the English, and the Dutch have made advantageous trade there. [...] From the River Zaïre until *la ligne Equinoxiale*, the above named powers have always traded there *en concurrence*.⁴⁰

During the Cabinda Affaire, the French cited the tradition of open competition on the Loango Coast as a legal precedent that justified French intervention in Cabinda. Open competition was, in turn, beneficial for Europeans slave traders. Moreover, by the height of the slave trade in the 1780s, the Loango coast was the last area of free trade on the west coast of Africa.⁴¹ Another benefit of the Loango Coast was that European slave traders operated free of European government oversight. Ships from all European nations, upon arrival, would pay duties and customs (*Droits et Coutumes*) to the Prince or Minister of the country, and then establish a *comptoir* and trade with local merchants.⁴²

⁴⁰ 23 Jer [Janvier] 1784, "Mémoire du Roi pour servir d'Instruction particulière au Sr Chevalier Barnard de Marigny Cap de Vau commandant la frigate la Venus", ANOM F/1B/2, Colonies, Aix-en-Provence, France.

⁴¹ Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d'angole d'après un voyage fait en 1784 Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d'angole d'après un voyage fait en 1784 *ibid*.

⁴² There are many descriptions of the method of trade on the Loango Coast, especially from the 1780s, written in response the "Cabinde Affaire": "Mémoire du Sr Mazois, négociant à l'orient," 24 August 1783 ANOM F/1B/2, Colonies, Aix-en-Provence, France.

The Loango Coast was also attractive to French slave traders because many travelled to Africa via what was known as the “Grande Route.” The “Grande Route” was the same path navigated by ships sailing to the Indian Ocean. Sailors followed ocean currents southwest, navigating between the islands and Cape Verde almost until reaching Brazil whereupon ships followed the currents to the coast of Africa, reaching land near “Cape Negro” south of Benguela.⁴³ This was especially advantageous for French ships returning from the Ile de la Réunion and Mauritius, where they purchased cheaply the textiles used to trade for slaves.⁴⁴ French ships returning from the Indian Ocean could trade their textiles for slaves in Central Africa on the return trip, and then sail directly to the Americas.⁴⁵ According to Labarthe, the French officially made this illegal in 1789, requiring that ships from the Indian Ocean return to France to trade their goods, and then reembark for Africa.⁴⁶ In the 1780s, however, these factors made the Loango Coast one of the most attractive coastlines of West Africa for European slave traders, especially the French.

⁴³ Capellis, "Observation...", 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15 Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 1-2.

⁴⁴ ANOM, C6/24 “Memo on the slave trade on the Angola Coast.” Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 112-13; "Voyages: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database".

⁴⁵ Miller also found this practice among Portuguese merchants. Joseph Calder Miller, "The Numbers, Origins, and Destinations of Slaves in the Eighteenth-Century Angolan Slave Trade," *Social Science History* 13, no. 4 (1989). Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*.

⁴⁶ Labarthe, *Voyage Au Sénégal: Pendant Les Années 1784 Et 1785, D'après Les Mémoires de Lajaille*.

The French achieved dominance as slave traders on the Loango Coast in the last half of the eighteenth century.⁴⁷ Though the Loango Coast was technically a space of free trade, the French were responsible for 57% of the total trade there between the end of the Seven Years War in 1763 and the end of the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ Several factors contributed to the French's emergence as the single most important buyer of African captives. After 1763, the French began manufacturing textiles of sufficient quality and price to give them an advantage in trade on the Loango Coast. By the 1780s, French access to cheap textiles enticed African merchants from south of the Congo River to re-route their trade north to the French, away from the Portuguese centers of trade in the kingdoms of Kongo and Angola.⁴⁹ The French also provided guns, something the Portuguese tried to restrict. French traders also established dominance by paying higher prices for slaves in a deliberate attempt to raise prices and block the trade of other Europeans. According to Grandpré, the French "seized exclusively the trade of Angola, because their manufactures provided them objects of trade cheaply, so they could raise the purchase of slaves to a price that did not permit other nation to enter in

⁴⁷ See Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*.

⁴⁸ According to the TSTD the French purchased 279,199 slaves out of a total of 487,137 purchased in West Central Africa between 1760-1800, excluding the Portuguese controlled ports of Benguela and Luanda. "Voyages [electronic resource] : the trans-Atlantic slave trade database".

⁴⁹ Capellis, "Observation....," 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

competition.”⁵⁰ The English were “excluded from the three principal markets [on the Loango Coast] by the price of slaves” forcing them to “try to penetrate into the” Congo River, but without much success.⁵¹ By 1784, the Portuguese complained that the French had succeeded in raising the price by one-third.⁵² French Marine commander Hippolyte de Capellis, who was part of the French expedition to Cabinda in 1784, wrote that the French dominated coastal trade because “The cargos of the French are ordinarily better assorted than those of other nations and they only trade for slaves on this coast, other objects being very inconsiderable.”⁵³ One slave trader went so far as to propose intentionally raising the price of slaves on the Loango Coast to the point that the Portuguese would be unable to purchase captives for their sugar plantations in Brazil, leaving the French “alone” able “to furnish sugar to all of Europe.”⁵⁴ By the 1780s, the French had succeeded in largely forcing out their British and Dutch competitors from the Loango Coast trade.

The French slave trade thus forged a direct link between the Loango Coast and the French colony of Saint Domingue. Nearly all of the slaves purchased by the French and over half of the slaves purchased on the Loango Coast went to the colony of Saint

⁵⁰ Grandpré, *Voyage*: i: xxii-xxiii.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, I: xxiv.

⁵² Capellis, "Observation...", 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Observations, s.d., AN, M/1030, Observations, s.d., AN, M/1030

Domingue.⁵⁵ Most of these voyages ended in the port of Cap Français in the North Province, near where the Revolution began in August 1791, and in Port-au-Prince in the West Province. The direct connection between the Loango Coast and Saint Domingue was not accidental: following complaints by colonists about a shortage of slave labor in the colony, the French crown required all slave ships stop first in Saint Domingue and offered reduced taxes to ship captains who participated in both the slave trade and colonial economy.

The French government had used such incentives to promote the slave trade throughout the eighteenth century. Beginning in 1716-7, the French Crown began passing new regulations in order to insure the supply of “the number of Negroes necessary to maintain and to augment the culture of their lands [in the French colonies].”⁵⁶ The crown offered tax incentives to direct the slave trade to Saint Domingue and the return of colonial merchandise to the metropole. The 1716 *lettres patentes* exempted manufactured French goods as well as some foreign items, including cotton goods from the East Indies, from export taxes if they were to be used for trading slaves. More importantly, they awarded slave traders a 50 percent reduction on entry duties to France of all “sugars and other types of merchandise from the islands purchased from the sale of slaves.” The government also allowed for the transfer of these customs exemptions, or rights, which

⁵⁵ 261,423 or 53.47% of the total of all slaves purchased went to the French colony of Saint Domingue. Thornton, “I Am the Subject of the King of Congo”: African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution.”

⁵⁶ *Lettres patentes*, January 1716 quoted in: Robert Louis Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: An Old Regime Business* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1979). 13-14.

were known as *acquits de Guinée*, leading to a lucrative side trade in which slave traders sold their unused exemptions to merchants bringing in sugar that had not been purchased with the proceeds of a slave trading voyage. In 1767, the French crown abolished the monopoly previously held by *La Compagnie des Indes* on the slave trade as well as the 10-livre license the Company had previously forced slave traders to purchase from them, thus opening the door for more French merchants to participate in the slave trade.⁵⁷

During the American War of Independence, French slave traders struggled to supply slaves to Caribbean colonies, leading to a labor shortage. In the 1770s, maritime *négoçiants* lobbied the French state for a series of “encouragements proper to make flourish” colonial trade, complaining of the high startup costs and risks associated with the trade.⁵⁸ The Minister of the Marine explained that “The object of the *acquits de Guinée* was to exempt from payment of half of the customs taxes on colonial merchandises making the return trip on [French] ships which had been employed in the [slave] trade.”⁵⁹ The French government’s financial incentives made an already lucrative

⁵⁷ "Arrest du conseil d'état du roi, concernant le commerce des Noirs à la côte d'Afrique du 31 Juillet 1767, Extrait des Resitres du Conseil d'État," AN, F 12, Conseil et Bureau de Commerce XVII siècle-1790, box 13102, Traite des Noirs et commerce avec les colonies françaises d'Amérique, dossier 72, pièce 40

⁵⁸ Letter from 'Négoçians Députés Par Les Places Maritimes' to the Ministry of the Interior, 11 Juin 1776, AN, F 12, Conseil et Bureau de Commerce XVII siècle-1790, box 13102, Traite des Noirs et commerce avec les colonies françaises d'Amérique, dossier 73, pièce 1; "Le commerce de Bordeaux, au sujet des encouragemens particuliers qui leur ont été accordés pour le commerce des colonies & la traide des Noirs, 26 avril 1776," AN, F 12, Conseil et Bureau de Commerce XVII siècle-1790, box 13102, Traite des Noirs et commerce avec les colonies françaises d'Amérique, dossier 74, pièce 1

⁵⁹ Letter from the Minister of the Marine to the Minister of the Interior, . « L'objet des acquits de Guiné étoit d'exempter du payement de la moitié des droits les denrées coloniales faissant le

trade even more profitable. Listré explained: “The advantage of this trade which ordinarily doubled the capital when the voyage was happy was that one paid half taxes for colonial products [purchased in the Americas in exchange for slaves] and that the government often granted premiums or remunerations even per capita of each [African slave] as encouragement, which increased the benefit further.”⁶⁰ The tax and customs incentives offered by the French state improved what was already a highly profitable trade. In the 1780s, the French government finally attempted to reform the taxation of the slave trade in order to generate revenue for the nearly bankrupt royal treasury. The French finally abolished the *acquits de Guinée* duty rights on 26 October 1784 following decades of accusations of fraud in French ports and resulting loss of revenue to the tax collectors. Instead, the Act “convert[ed] into subsidies and bonuses the exemption from the half-tax accorded to colonial goods coming from the slave trade.” The crown established a subsidy system based on tonnage whereby all slave traders would simply receive 40 livres per ton of slave ship tonnage.⁶¹ Though the new system meant that slave traders paid more in taxes. Nonetheless, the business was still quite profitable and grew throughout the decade.

retour des batimens qui avoient été employés a la traite...» The *acquits de Guiné* were receipts proving the ship had traded for slaves in Africa before purchasing colonial merchandise. *Droits* refers to the customs taxes paid on return to a French port.

⁶⁰ Listré, Listré, *l'Histoire de la Révolution*

⁶¹ Arrêt..., 26 Octobre 1784, AN, F/12/13102, Arrêt..., 26 Octobre 1784, AN, F/12/13102

The crown continued to encourage the slave trade to areas such as the South Province of Saint Domingue where colonists continued to complain that the slave trade was not enough to supply labor demands. For example, one *mémoire* protested, “It is even rare that the French *négrières* come to [Les] Cayes. The small number of them that do descend [to Les Cayes], bring there only what was scorned in the other ports of the Isle.”⁶² In 1784, an Act was passed to give additional subsidies and bonuses to slave traders who did business in the south.⁶³ The benefit was renewed throughout the decade until the abolition of the French slave trade in 1794.⁶⁴ However, the high growth rate of the number of plantations and the high mortality rate on them meant that Saint Domingue colonists continued to face labor shortages. Furthermore, despite the incentives offered by the French crown, slave trade documents show that few ships descended to the colony’s southern ports. Indeed, in 1785, only two ships carrying 600 captives each were officially destined for the south of the colony. In 1788, only 3,000 of the officially

⁶² "Mémoire sur la proposition faite au Gouvernement de permettre introduire des noirs de traite Etrangère dans la partie du Sud de St. Domingue," [1788?], ANOM Colonies F 1B, Police des Noirs, box 2, p. 83-91

⁶³ "Arrêt du conseil d'état du Roi qui proroge, jusqu'au 1 Auot 1790, les dispositions de celui du 10 Septembre 1786 concernant les Primes accordées à l'introduction des Noirs de traite françoise aux Iles du Vent, à Cayenne et aux Cayes, dans la partie du Sud Saint-Domingue, ainsi que la liberté provisoire de l'exportation à l'étranger des sucres bruts de l'île de Sainte-Lucie.," AN, F 12, Conseil et Bureau de Commerce XVII siècle-1790, box 13102, Traite des Noirs et commerce avec les colonies françaises d'Amérique, dossier 76, pièce 8; "Arrêt du Conseil d'État du Roi, du 10 Septembre 1786," ANOM, Colonies, F/1B/2, Police des Noirs, p. 158

⁶⁴ ———, Listré, *l'Histoire de la Révolution*.

documented 28,405 African captives brought to Saint Domingue were sold in the south.⁶⁵ Official French slave trade documents for the year 1785 stated that out of 90 slave trading ships, “there is not a single one destined for the *Isles du Vent*. Two ships noted for 600 *noirs* were specially destined for the southern part [of Saint Domingue].” The rest of the ships went to either Cap Français or Port au Prince.⁶⁶ It appears that trade in the south may have become more attractive by the end of the decade, either because of French incentives or because of the explosive growth in production and resulting demand for captives in the region. In April 1790, Saint Domingue slave merchant Stanislas Foäche wrote that the market for slaves in Les Cayes was becoming saturated: three slave trade ships were currently in port with colonists “await[ing] nearly 6,000 *Nègres* here in July [...]”⁶⁷

The result of government incentives and colonists’ demand was that, according to official French documents, Saint Domingue was (officially) the first port of call for nearly every French slave-trading voyage by the 1770s. An “*Essai sur l’Introduction des Noirs à St Domingue de 1769 à 1777*” written for the French government claimed that

⁶⁵ Etat des Batiments expediés des differents ports du Royaume pour la traite des Noirs sur les Côtes occidentales d’Afrique pendant l’année 1785, Etat des Batiments expediés des differents ports du Royaume pour la traite des Noirs sur les Côtes occidentales d’Afrique pendant l’année 1785 “Année 1788 Etat des Batimens Expédiés pour la traite des Noirs,” ANOM, Colonies, F/1B/2, Police des Noirs, p. 153

⁶⁶ Etat des Batiments expediés des differents ports du Royaume pour la traite des Noirs sur les Côtes occidentales d’Afrique pendant l’année 1785, Etat des Batiments expediés des differents ports du Royaume pour la traite des Noirs sur les Côtes occidentales d’Afrique pendant l’année 1785. However, it is clear that many vessels would travel to west and southern ports after selling their best captives in Cap Français: Geggus, “The French Slave Trade: An Overview,” 128.

⁶⁷ Foäche, Letter of 5 April 1790

from 1769 until 1777, only 863 of 14363 slaves were *not* sold in Saint Domingue.⁶⁸ This trend continued into the 1780s. In 1787, for example, according to official French records 30,839 of 31,193 African captives went to the colony.⁶⁹ A 1788 report on the “state of ships expedited for the slave trade” stated that all 28,405 Africans purchased by the French as slaves went directly to Saint Domingue.⁷⁰ Indeed, individual slave trade documents show that these official statistics did not accurately reflect reality: French slave traders did sell their slaves to other colonies, even other country’s colonies. However, they do reflect the overall trend in which the vast majority of French slave traders disembarked their slaves in the colony of Saint Domingue in the last half of the eighteenth century, especially at the height of the Atlantic slave trade in the 1780s. Historian Robert Stein accurately summarized the system when he wrote: “The emphasis on Saint Domingue was almost total, with up to 99 percent of all French slaves going there.”⁷¹

However, the new arrivals could barely keep up with the mortality rates decimating the enslaved population. Indeed, surviving the voyage to Saint Domingue was in itself something of an achievement for Africans kidnapped, enslaved, and marched

⁶⁸ "Essai sur l'Introduction des Noirs à St. Domingue," ANOM, Colonies, F/1B/2, Police des Noirs, p. 165 et ss.

⁶⁹ Jean Tarrade, *Le commerce colonial de la France à la fin de l'Ancien Régime: l'évolution du régime de l'Exclusif de 1763 à 1789*, Publications de l'Université de Poitiers. Lettres et sciences humaines ; 12 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1972). 759.

⁷⁰ Année 1788 Etat des Batimens Expédiés pour la traite des Noirs, Année 1788 Etat des Batimens Expédiés pour la traite des Noirs

⁷¹ Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: An Old Regime Business*: 39.

from their homes. Many captives died before setting foot in coastal African slave trade factories and many more died due to the inhumane conditions of the Middle Passage. In 1785 and 1786, the French government assumed that one-sixth of captives purchased in Africa would be lost to “accidents of the trade and the mortality in transport.”⁷² Epidemic illness and bad foodstuffs were only two of the ways captives died en route to Saint Domingue. The letters of Saint Domingue slave trader Foache are rife with matter of fact descriptions of slave ships who lost sometimes upwards of one hundred captives en route to Saint Domingue. In late 1784 and early 1785 an epidemic raged in Malemba and Cabinda among the local and European populations. In February 1785 Captain Duval arrived in Saint Domingue with only 171 of his human cargo of 410, allegedly due to disease.⁷³ The next month, *La Néreïde* arrived in port with 251 of an original 302 captives surviving. Nearly all of the survivors had worms and dysentery.⁷⁴ The month after that, the *Amélie* arrived having lost 142 of 386 captives, 7 in a shipboard revolt and the rest to illness caused by “bad beans.” The *Amélie* was one of two ships who arrived that day. Each had lost “more than 150” captives.⁷⁵ In 1790, Foache reported that a slave ship arrived from Ambriz “killed 300 and some *nègres* out of 514” due to “bad beans

⁷² Essai sur l'Introduction des Noirs à St. Domingue, Essai sur l'Introduction des Noirs à St. Domingue

⁷³ Foäche, Letter 11 February 1785, Saint Domingue

⁷⁴ ———, Letter 9 March 1785, Saint Domingue

⁷⁵ ———, Letter 27 April 1785, Saint Domingue

[*mauvais fèves*].⁷⁶ Foache summed up the reality of the trade in a letter on 25 April 1785: “The two last [ships from the Congo] have thrown more than 100 *Nègres* [into the sea]. This coast always has lots of mortalities.”⁷⁷

In the colony, colonists counted on losing fifty percent of the captives they purchased in the first five years. As a result, despite the fact that the French disembarked over 25,000 African captives a year in Saint Domingue by the 1780s, these new arrivals were barely managing to replace the dead. In 1783, one colonist wrote to the Minister of the Marine that the “around 20 thousand *nègres*” introduced to the colony each year “hardly surpasses the mortalities.”⁷⁸ By the middle of the decade, increasingly large waves of French slave trading vessels brought 30,000 to 40,000 captive Africans each year to the colony, reaching a crescendo in 1790 when nearly 48,000 Africans were sold into slave in the colony.⁷⁹ The 1790 slave imports to Cap Français were so large that they constituted a record for any port in the Americas to that date.⁸⁰ Moreover, these staggering numbers do not include captives who died en route nor do they account for the significant number of captives brought to the colony through the thriving contraband

⁷⁶ ———, “Letter 24 May 1790, Saint Domingue,” AN, 505 Mi 85, Fonds Foäche-Bégouën-Demeaux

⁷⁷ ———, Letter 25 April 1785, Saint Domingue

⁷⁸ Reboul de Villeneuve, “Moyens de remplacer les Negres dans les Colonies occidentales par la moyen de pavillon Etranger,” 25 avril 1783, ANOM, Colonies, F/1B/2, Police des Noirs, box 2, p. 200

⁷⁹ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution*: 39.

⁸⁰ Geggus, “The French Slave Trade: An Overview,” 126, over 19,000. P. 131, 8,000 disembarked in le Cap January-August 1791.

trade. Louis de Grandpré, a French slave trader who lived on the Loango Coast in 1786-1787, summarized the cycle of capture, sale, and likely death: of five hundred slaves bought on the Loango coast in the 1780s, “400 would be sold in Saint Domingue (half of whom would perish in three years).”⁸¹ Those who survived found themselves surrounded by Kongolese.

Conclusion

The French system of Atlantic exchange created a Kongolese Atlantic world. The French economy depended upon colonial production, which required African slave labor, as well as on the profits derived from the French slave trade. Throughout the eighteenth century, the French increasingly turned to the Loango Coast in West Central Africa to satiate the demand of colonial planters for African labor. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the majority of the French slave trade came from this coastal region. Nowhere was demand for slaves higher than in the colony of Saint Domingue, the crown jewel of the French empire and the richest colony in the Western world. As a result, the French government mandated that its slave ships sell their human cargo first in Saint Domingue, thereby cementing the connection between the Loango Coast and the French colony. The French dominance in the Loango Coast slave trade was so pronounced that Saint Domingue was actually the destination of the majority of African captives who left the region in the last half of the eighteenth century. This trend reached an apogee in the 1780s, the height of the Atlantic slave trade, at which time the majority of the French

⁸¹ "Voyages: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database"; Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: xvi-xvii.

slave trade came from the Loango Coast and went directly across the ocean to the colony of Saint Domingue. The French slave trade therefore created a Kongolese Atlantic world.

Chapter 4: Tracing the Origins of Loango Coast Captives I: Documentary Evidence

In 1786, French colonists in Saint Domingue accused an enslaved Central African woman of infanticide and cannibalism. The woman was an *accoucheuse* and *hospitalière*, a midwife and healer, who delivered the children of enslaved women on the plantation. The plantation owner became concerned when he noticed that most of the babies died within the first eight days of birth. He ordered the midwife to be spied on and his spy “surprised her eating one of these children recently buried & she acknowledged” she had caused the infants to perish “in this design.”¹ Martiniquan writer and prominent Saint Domingue jurist and slave owner Médéric Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry recorded the incident in his celebrated history of the colony. Moreau presented the incident as evidence that certain Central African “nations” brought to Saint Domingue as slaves “kept their odious inclination” for cannibalism in the colony. Closer study demonstrates that the enslaved healer was, in fact, the physical victim of discursive violence.

French colonists *could* have easily recognized the fact that the infants died prematurely due to symptoms from the disease *mal de mâchoire*. *Mal de mâchoire* was associated with symptoms including irritability, twitching, convulsions, and death within the first week of life. According to medical historian Karol Weaver, these symptoms

¹ “On a eu à Saint-Domingue des preuves que des Mondongues y avaient gardé leur odieuse inclination, nottamment in 1786, dans une négresse accoucheuse & hospitalière sur une habitations des environs de Jérémie. Le propirétaire ayant remarqué que la plupart des négrellons périssaient dans le huit premiers jours de leur naissance, fit épier la matrong, on la suprit mangeant un de ces enfans récemment inumé & elle avoua qu'elle les saisait périr dans ce dessin.” M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint Domingue* (Paris: Société de l'histoire des colonies françaises, 1958[1797]). I: 39.

indicate neonatal tetany or tetanus. The former was caused by low levels of calcium that was the result of the malnutrition of enslaved mothers. The latter, more fatal disease is bacterial and was often caused by handling of the umbilical cord in the unsanitary conditions of plantation slavery.² Infection could have been caused by cutting the cord with an unsanitary implement or by packing the site with contaminated mud.³ In the eighteenth century, the disease was so widespread in the colony that the French ministry funded a medical report on the disease in 1786. Despite the absence of physical proof that infants in the colony had been cannibalized, white colonists blamed enslaved African women for the *mal de machoir* deaths. The perception of foul play was underscored by the fact that white colonists enjoyed better sanitation, meaning that mainly enslaved infants died of the disease.

The African women's guilt rested upon contemporary European beliefs about African people and societies.⁴ These beliefs were so powerful that they even "infiltrated

² Karol K. Weaver, "'She Crushed The Child's Fragile Skull': Disease, Infanticide, and Enslaved Women in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue," *French Colonial History* 5, no. 2004 (2004): 93-4.

³ Marietta Morrissey, *Slave women in the New World: gender stratification in the Caribbean* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989). 107-8.

⁴ Colonists believed African women were bad wives and mothers; they were sexually promiscuous and lacked maternal instincts. Representations of African women in the eighteenth century, according to historian Barbara Bush, typically fell into the "realm of sexual morality." For example, European misrepresentations of African women as drudges in polygynous marriages were used to justify the European double standard of chastity for women and sexual license for men. It is probably not a coincidence, argues historian Hilary Beckles, that the emergence of this stereotype coincided with two eighteenth-century demographic changes on plantations: females became the majority of labor gang workers and colonists became concerned over the nearly infinitesimal birth rate. Barbara Bush, *Slave women in Caribbean society, 1650-1838* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). 1, 9, 13-4. Bush uses polygyny because it

the conclusions reached by physicians about the disease.”⁵ For example, the foremost expert on slave disease in Saint Domingue, Jean Barthélemy Dazille, attributed mortality of the disease to malicious slave women. In *Observations sur le tetanus*, he wrote that a child died because a jealous enslaved mistress “crushed the child’s fragile skull in order to carry the disease to the child’s brain and entire nervous system to cause convulsions and death.”⁶ In other words, highly educated men like Dazille and Moreau found it more than plausible that enslaved African women were crushing infants’ skulls or cannibalizing them despite the fact that neither relate any evidence of actual marks of physical harm on the infants bodies.

is more specific than polygamy. Polygynous means having more than one wife, polygamous more than one marriage, *ibid*, p. 1 Hilary Beckles, "Sex and Gender in the Historiography of Caribbean Slavery," in *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, ed. Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton, and Barbara Bailey (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 134-5. Cited in Weaver, ""She Crushed The Child's Fragile Skull": Disease, Infanticide, and Enslaved Women in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue." For example, Arlette Gautier calculates that the birth rate in Nippes, Saint Domingue among the enslaved population was 0.6 children per couple and 0.4 children per slave. Arlette Gautier, *Les soeurs de solitude: la condition féminine dans l'esclave aux Antilles du XVIIe au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Editions caribéennes, 1985). 84.

⁵ Weaver, ""She Crushed The Child's Fragile Skull": Disease, Infanticide, and Enslaved Women in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue," 94.

⁶ Jean Barthélemy Dazille, *Observations sur le tétanos* (Paris 1788). 128; Weaver, ""She Crushed The Child's Fragile Skull": Disease, Infanticide, and Enslaved Women in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue," 104; Gautier, *Les soeurs de solitude: la condition féminine dans l'esclave aux Antilles du XVIIe au XIXe siècle*.

The midwife's African origin played a central role in determining her fate. The only evidence Moreau related to condemn the midwife was her supposed origin from the *Mondongue* nation:

Never has been a character more hideous than that of [the *mondongue*], of which the depravity is followed to the most execrable of excess, that of eating one another. One also brings to Saint-Domingue these butcher's of human flesh (because in their land there are butchers where one puts out slaves like calves) & they are here, like in Africa, the horror of other blacks, & notably the Congo, because of being their neighbors, are the most exposed to their cruelty. We recognize them by their incisive teeth, all sawed in the style of canines.⁷

In the eighteenth century, the French believed the *Mondongue* were a cannibalistic society from the interior of Central Africa. However, extensive research by renowned historian and linguistic François Bontinck has shown that the name *Mondongue* widely used by French slave traders and colonists does not correspond to any linguistic, ethnic, or political group in Central Africa.⁸ Moreau's description of the *Mondongue* would have been easily recognizable to Europeans familiar with travel narratives about Central Africa. The identifying characteristics Moreau identified – cannibalism, enemies of the kingdom of Kongo, filed teeth -- derive from English and Portuguese descriptions of the mythical warrior “Jagas” who invaded the Kingdom of Kongo in 1568. Moreau's description of the *Mondongue* draws directly upon European descriptions of cannibals in Central Africa. His statement that the *Mondongue* were butchers of human flesh is a direct quotation of Filippo Pigafetta's sixteenth-century description of the Teke people,

⁷ Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint Domingue*: I: 39.

⁸ François Bontinck, "Les 'Mondongues'," *Studia*, no. 53 (1994).

writing that they sold human flesh “just as Europeans dispenses mutton and beef.”⁹ In the following centuries, many European travelers perpetuated this myth, claiming to have witnessed these butchers in various places among various peoples Europeans identified as “Jagas.” It appears no visit to Central Africa, or narrative of it, was complete without a reference to butchers of human flesh. The story of “Jaga” cannibalism and especially the trope of butchers of human flesh had incredible inertia; it was attributed to the Imbangala by Andrew Battell (1613, 1625), repeated by Girolamo Merolla da Sorrento (1682), attributed to the “Mumbos” by Dos Santos, and repeated in connection with the Teke by Olfert Dapper (1676).¹⁰ In the nineteenth century, A. Bastian even claimed to have seen such butcher shops during his travels in the Congo.¹¹ By the eighteenth century, the story was the child of a genealogy of common European discourse about Central Africa. Through French colonists such as Moreau, the myth of the “Jagas” came to be applied to Central Africans in Saint Domingue and, later, Haiti. It is a well-known incident, one that, must like the story of the cannibalistic “Jaga” warriors, had incredible inertia in Haitian history; it was used by the French during the Haitian Revolution, Europeans in

⁹ Filippo Pigafetta, *Relatione de Regno di Congo et delle Circonvince Contrade tratta dalli Scritti e ragionamenti di Odardo Lopez Portoghese* (Rome 1591).

¹⁰ Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes, contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells, by Englishmen and others* (4 vols.). Merolla and Piccardo, *Breue, e succinta relatione del viaggio nel regno di Congo...* Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique*, .

¹¹ A. Bastian, *Die deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Künste: nebst älteren Nachrichten über die zu erforschenenden Länder : nach persönlichen Erlebnisse* (Hermann Costenoble, 1874).

the nineteenth century, and Americans during the twentieth century occupation of Haiti as evidence of the barbarism of Haitians, especially Vodou practitioners.

The case of the enslaved West Central African midwife presents a powerful argument for the need to study the origins of captives sold on the Loango Coast in the late eighteenth century. Her case reveals the importance attached to African origin in the colony and the material consequences it could have for the lives of the enslaved. The fact that colonists turned to information about Africa to explain the actions of Africans in the colony demonstrates their recognition of the important role that African spiritual beliefs and cultural practices played in the lives of the enslaved population in the colony.

However, the case of the enslaved Central African midwife also demonstrates one of the central challenges in investigating the African histories and backgrounds of captives sold on the Loango Coast. Moreau's description of the *Mondongue* highlights the problematic genealogy of knowledge behind many European sources about Africans in the early modern period. In Saint Domingue, colonists categorized slaves based on European narratives about Africa and information from slave ship captains and merchants. Central Africans were often referred to broadly as "Congos" or "Angoles." Other Central African "nations" included *Mondongue*, *Mousombe*, *Montéqué*, *Mayombe*, and many others. At best, these categories were vague, indicating a broad region of origin, port of embarkation, or linguistic group. At worst, as in the case of the *Mondongue*, categories referred to unsubstantiated myths about interior groups of Central Africans. Documents from French slave traders operating on the Loango Coast often recorded only where captives were purchased. As we saw in Chapter 3, Europeans had no contact with or

control over the interior slave trade to the Loango Coast, nor had any European travelled east of the coastal kingdoms. When slave traders purchased captives, they did so from coastal *courtiers* who represented the last stage of the inland trade. They were therefore not in a position to say from where in Central Africa the captives they purchased originated. The challenge is therefore to disarticulate the interior Central African slave trade at this specific moment in time, the 1770s and 1780s, the height of the Atlantic slave trade, in the absence of eyewitness written reports about the interior slave trade.

In the next two chapters, I will explore the origins and processes of enslavement of captives sold on the Loango Coast in the last half of the eighteenth century. The examples explored in this chapter as well as the historical linguistic evidence explored in the next indicate that people were actually captured and enslaved along the coast and in the Mayombe hinterland. This conclusion contradicts the contention in scholarship on the Loango Coast that coastal inhabitants were not a major source of captives and that inland groups such as the Yombe were simply middlemen in the interior slave trade. For example, historians Phyllis Martin and Susan Broadhead have separately argued that coastal kingdoms would not and could not supply the number of slaves demanded by European traders and only sold criminals as slaves. Both argued that the principal source of captives were caravans from the interior.¹² These caravans traded with groups as far east as the Tio at the Malebo Pool and the Bobangi riverine traders of the Upper River

¹² “Most of those slaves were brought in caravans to the coast from long distances in the interior.” Martin, “The Trade of Loango in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” 149.

Congo and as far south as the Luanda hinterland, including the Yaka of the Kwango River Valley and Lunda states.¹³ The caravan routes thus covered much of West Central Africa. Part of the reason for this discrepancy is that as a result of the dearth of reliable eighteenth century documents Martin and Broadhead are forced to draw conclusions based on nineteenth and even twentieth century sources.

In this chapter, I use contemporary written documents to analyze the meaning of the structural changes and political upheavals in north coast societies as a result of the Atlantic slave trade for the freedom and security of the inhabitants of the region. Europeans claimed that individuals from Loango Coast kingdoms were not enslaved unless they had committed a crime. However, contemporary descriptions of coastal kingdom slavery contradict this claim, indicating that local inhabitants were enslaved and sold to Europeans as a result of kidnapping and warfare in addition to enslavement because of judicial punishment, witchcraft accusations, and debt. This evidence reveals that the coastal kingdoms were indeed a source of captives for the Loango Coast slave trade. This information has important repercussions for the history of the Americas. Some of the captives from the Loango Coast were exposed to European languages and trade goods before departing for the Americas. However, they likely had little or no exposure with Christianity; the lone attempt to evangelize the Loango Coast was a French mission

¹³ Ibid., 66 and ss; ———, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: chapter 6; Broadhead, "Trade and politics on the Congo coast : 1770-1870."

(1766-1776) that ended in failure. They were not, therefore, “Atlantic Creoles” familiar with European religious and cultural practices as some have argued.

This chapter examines the interior slave trade to the Loango Coast. The contemporary evidence explored suggests that by the late eighteenth century the kingdom of Loango had lost access to northern and southern trade routes and instead relied solely on traditional trade routes to the east across the Mayombe rainforest. Malemba and Cabinda appear to have received captives principally from riverine groups, including from Kongo and Solongo south of the Congo River, in addition to Yombe traders. Extant written documents highlight the importance of Yombe, Kongo, and riverine traders, especially the Solongo of Sonyo. However, European documents do not provide sufficient reliable information to address the question of where the captives traded by these groups originated. Coastal rulers severely restricted the movement and influence of Europeans, most of whom rarely left either their ships or factories. Europeans had no contact with the interior slave trade and not traveled inland of the coastal kingdoms. Europeans were, therefore, simply not in a position to know where the men and women they purchased originated. For this reason, in the next chapter I use historical linguistics as a tool to trace the origins of captives sold on the Loango Coast.

Enslavement in Kingdoms of the Loango Coast

As a consequence of the Atlantic slave trade, the second half of the eighteenth century brought a period of social and political upheaval in the kingdoms of the Loango Coast. Chapter 2 showed that the slave trade initially exploited traditional, pre-existing ports, markets, and trade routes under the control of the king of Loango. However, by the

middle of the eighteenth century, the Atlantic slave trade had become the central organizing principle of political and economic institutions in the kingdoms. Loango Coast rulers succeeded, for the most part, in preventing Europeans from exercising direct influence over the politics and economy of the kingdoms. However, the influx of wealth from the Atlantic slave trade eroded traditional political institutions causing political instability and warfare. Thus, though Loango Coast rulers maintained authority over their politics and trade, the Atlantic slave trade instigated internal conflicts and structural changes within the kingdoms. In this chapter, we will see that as a result of these changes, coastal inhabitants were captured and sold to Europeans through a variety of mechanisms of enslavement including warfare, judicial enslavement, witchcraft accusations, debt, and especially kidnapping.

The fact that coastal inhabitants were among the enslaved is not readily apparent because European missionaries and slave traders insisted, perhaps to appease the European public or because they themselves had been deceived by coastal *courtiers*, that captives did not originate from the coastal kingdoms themselves. Some of the earliest writers to articulate this claim were French missionaries sent to the Loango Coast 1766-1775. In 1772, a French missionary in Kakongo wrote that, contrary to popular belief in Europe at the time, “In the kingdoms where the missionaries have been [Mayumba, Loango, Kakongo, Ngoyo], the fathers and mothers never sell their children; it is even forbidden by the laws of the countries to sell to Europeans *negres* native to the same kingdom” even those born as slave, “unless they have deserved this punishment by some

crime.”¹⁴ In a later document, probably from 1775, a missionary wrote “When inhabitants of the interior of Africa have some slaves to sell, they bring them to the coast of the sea in the places frequented by the Europeans.”¹⁵ Abbé Proyard, who wrote a *History of Loango, Kakongo, and other kingdoms of Africa* based on documents of the French missionaries, summarized the situation thusly: “We think that the father sells his son, the prince his subjects; there is only that which has lived among them which annoys that it is not even allowed for a master to sell his slave, if [the slave] were born in the Kingdom, unless [the slave] brought this pain upon himself by certain crimes specified in the law.”¹⁶

The widespread belief, which can be seen in accounts written by slave ship captains, naval officers, and plantation owners, was that the captives purchased by the French on the Loango Coast came from inland. For example, Hippolyte Comte de

¹⁴ The authorship of this *mémoire* is unclear. Cuvelier believed it to have been one of two *mémoires* mentioned in other sources. The first was a *mémoire* composed by Belgarde and Descourvières and the second was a *mémoire* by Descourvières published in Paris in 1772 that was a major source for Abbé Proyard. Jean-Joseph Descourvières and Pierre Belgarde, "Mémoire dans lequel on propose les raisons qui paraissent autoriser une nouvelle tentative dans la mission de Loango et les obstacles qui paroissent s'y opposer, afin de connoître s'il est prudent d'y retourner ou si l'on doit l'abandonner [1772?], Archives M.E.P. Volume 356, pp. 275-283 " in *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*, ed. J. Bishop B. Cuvelier (Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1953, [1772?]), 82, op. cit. 75.

¹⁵ Cas the conscience sur quelques circonstances du commerce des esclaves en Guinée, [no date], Archives M.E.P. volume 356, pp 289-293 Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,.

¹⁶ Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 2. Documents from the French mission are housed in the *Archives des Missions Étrangères de Paris* (M.E.P.). An additional folder of letters consulted by Proyard can be found in the French archives: ,

Capellis, who commanded the *gabare*¹⁷ *La Lamproie* during the 1784 expedition to Cabinda, wrote to the director of the *Dépôt des cartes et plans de la Marine*, Joseph Bernard de Chabert, that the Loango coast slave trading ports of Loango, Malemba, and Cabinda were merely outlets of the interior trade. The ports themselves were “only *comptoirs* where the merchants from the interior bring their slaves, they have very few [slaves] along the [coast] and those they have they sell very rarely.”¹⁸ According to Capellis, “The merchants of the interior driven by the courtiers of the country bring the slaves to their *comptoir* and they send them right away on board the [slave] ships when they have purchased them.”¹⁹ The captives “come sometimes from very far[.]”²⁰ French slave trader Louis de Grandpré agreed with the fact that captives came from far away: “The merchants go to find the slaves very far; but it is remarkable that from whatever place that they come, they always speak the same language, and only differ in their accent and pronunciation.”²¹ Even plantation owners in Saint Domingue believed that captives rarely came from coastal kingdoms. For example, Saint Domingue colonist Baudry de Lozières asserted that the Kingdom of Kongo, like the kingdoms of the Loango Coast, itself “furnished very few captives,” who were known as “*francs-*

¹⁷ Gabare: Loading or transport ship. Centre National des Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales (translation my own)

¹⁸ Capellis, "Observation...," 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

²¹ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 48.

*Congos.*²² The interior provenance of captives was also reflected in French protests about the poor quality of captives available for purchase on the Loango coast, such as Desclos de Lepeley's complaint that captives sold on the Loango Coast "came from as far as 300 leagues" away and therefore arrived in poor health.²³ They believed inland warfare furnished captives— both via conflicts between inland groups and in wars more akin to slave raiding.²⁴ For example, Proyart asserted that "[t]he slaves that we pull from Loango and the other neighboring kingdoms [...] have been taken in war by those who sell them. There are in the interior lands of enemy peoples, irreconcilable" with coastal kingdoms, who "say that they are cruel and ferocious; that they drink human blood, & that they eat" human flesh.

It is by reprisals that they do themselves to them an open war; & they claim that they treat them humanely, while being satisfied to sell them to Europeans, when they could have taken their life. This war, though continual, does not, however, disturb the peace of the Kingdom, because it is only done very far beyond the borders, by some private individuals; &, strictly speaking, it is less a war than a hunt; but one in which the hunter is often exposed to become the prey of the game which it chases. Those who took the captives sell them to the merchants of the country, or bring them to the coast.²⁵

The accounts explored thus far originate from a variety of authors including French missionaries, a Naval commander, slave traders and plantation owners and are largely representative of the extant French archival records. They represent the French belief that

²² Lozières, *Second voyage à la Louisiane, faisant suite au premier de 1794 à 1798*: II, 80.

²³ Declos-Lepeley, "Mémoire pour un nouveau projet de traite sur la côte d'Afrique," s.d., ANOM C/6/23, Sénégal et Côtes d'Afrique

²⁴ Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 149-50.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

captives did not come from the coastal kingdoms except in the case of punishment for a crime severe enough to warrant enslavement. Instead, captives originated from interior warfare and slave raiding.

However, even contemporary descriptions of coastal kingdoms by more reliable Europeans authors contradict these accounts. The most extensive and reliable description of coastal society in the 1780s comes from the narrative of Grandpré, a French slave trader who traded slaves in West Central Africa for thirty years and lived on the Loango Coast for two years in 1786 until 1787.²⁶ He claimed to have traded 1,500 captives in 1787 alone. During those two years, Grandpré's narrative provides evidence that he travelled in all three coastal kingdoms, met with many high ranking members of government, and learned at least a limited amount of the local language. The reliability of Grandpré's narrative is increased by the author's own attempts to establish the veracity of other travel narratives about Central Africa. In his introduction, Grandpré wrote "Modern voyagers finally supply the details we were missing on this part of the world, and their estimable stories replace the absurd fables we were indebted to Merolla, to Battel, Dapper, Purchass, and others [.]"²⁷ Grandpré was especially critical of successive generations of authors' claims to have witnessed cannibals in Central Africa, of which he insisted there was no proof other than the "fables of these first voyagers."²⁸ In the

²⁶ Martin, "The Trade of Loango in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," 150.

²⁷ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: i.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, I: vi.

“Avant-Propos” of his work, Grandpré assessed the claims made by contemporary authors Mungo Park, François Levallant, and Christian Frederick Damberger.²⁹ He was particularly attentive to debunking the claims of Damberger, who he called a “shocking charlatan.” Grandpré provided evidence Damberger never visited many of the places he had claimed to, including Malemba.³⁰

Grandpré’s narrative showed that local inhabitants of the Loango Coast kingdoms were in fact enslaved and sold to Europeans as a result of kidnapping, warfare, judicial enslavement, witchcraft accusations, and debt.³¹ Grandpré wrote that, contrary to the claims of French missionaries, it was permitted under the laws of the kingdoms for Princes, local rulers and lords to sell their dependents to European slave traders. It appears that an increasing number chose to do so in the last half of the eighteenth century. Traditionally, it was often not in best interest of lords to sell their dependents.³² In order to understand why this was not the case, it is necessary to understand how dependents, or slaves, functioned in coastal kingdoms and their relationships with their

²⁹ Mungo Park, *Travels in the interior districts of Africa: performed in the years 1795, 1796, and 1797: with an account of a subsequent mission to that country in 1805 : to which is added, an account of the life of Mr. Park* (London: T. Allman, 1799). François Le Vaillant, *Voyage de M. le Vaillant dans l'intérieur de l'Afrique par le Cap de Bonne Espérance, dans les années 1780 ... [-] 1785* (Paris: L'Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1790).

³⁰ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 17, 15.

³¹ See also: Broadhead, "Trade and politics on the Congo coast : 1770-1870."; Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*.

³² Descourvières?, ""Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs," Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.," 48. Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 106 and after.

masters or lords. According to Grandpré, there were seven main “castes” or classes in coastal kingdoms: the king and his family, the princes of the blood, the husbands of princesses of the blood, the suzerains, the courtiers, the merchants, and “the boys.”³³ (Princes were divided into two categories: those born princes, or princes of the blood, and the husbands of princesses, who ranked below the former.)³⁴ Grandpré, like French missionaries before him, asserted that all subjects were technically the vassals or “slaves” of the king and could be sold at his discretion.³⁵ In practice, however, the king’s “coercive methods were very few”; he did not have the power to exercise his rights over the lives and freedom of his people.³⁶ Ranking just below the king were the princes of the blood who were called “*moëne*”(monsieur) and referred to by the title “*foumou*”

³³ ———, *Voyage*: I: 104.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, I: 109.

³⁵ “Le gouvernement de cet État est monarchique; tous se regardent comme les es[c]laves du roy[.]” Descourvières?, “Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs,” Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.,” 48. Similar passage in Proyart: “Le gouvernement, chez ces Peuples, est purement despotique. Ils dissent que leur vie & leurs biens appartiennent au Roi; qu’il peut en disposer & les en priver, quand il lui plait, sans forme de process, sans qu’ils aient à s’en plaindre.” However, the king had little real “authority” to do so. Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*: 119; 21.

³⁶ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 183; see also I: 208.

(*mfumu*).³⁷ In Loango, princes of the blood were “the only ones who can not be sold.”³⁸

Like the king, they “had the right to sell” anyone who was not a “prince like them.”³⁹

Apart from the king and the prince and princesses of the blood, any other subject was considered a vassal of the crown and could technically be sold by anyone ranking above them. There is evidence that such sales took place. Grandpré related the story of a high-ranking member of Kakongo society sold into slavery purely for the profit of his seller. Sometime in the 1770s or early 1780s, a man named Tati was enslaved in the port of Malemba and purchased by a French slave trader who transported him to the colony of Saint Domingue. According to Grandpré, Tati was a *seigneur suzerain*, or rich landowner; he ranked below only the king and the princes of the blood, who alone had the right to enslave and sell him. Tati’s family ranked even higher than he did: his father was “the Mafouc Vaba, the third person in the country,” and he was “brother of the father of the king of Cabinda [the kingdom of Ngoyo].” However, despite his illustrious family connections, Tati was enslaved and sold to a European trader because, according to Grandpré “the laws of the country are such that the brother of the king of Cabende [kingdom of Ngoyo] had been publicly sold like a slave [.]”⁴⁰ Fortunately for Tati, he was recognized in Saint Domingue by a commercial ship captain named Desponts who had

³⁷ Ibid., I: 110.

³⁸ Ibid., I: 196.

³⁹ Ibid., I: 110.

⁴⁰ Ibid., I: 107-8.

met Tati as a child “at the home of the Mafouc his father [.]” Desponts “was all surprise” to see Tati among the enslaved in Saint Domingue “one day, while driving a two wheel chariot from Cap Français.” Desponts “hastened to buy [Tati] and to return him to his homeland, where he became powerfully rich.” After his return, Tati took the surname of Desponts, after his rescuer, and went on to build a fortune large enough to protect himself against future enslavement. “[H]e enjoys an even greater fortune today,” Grandpré reported, “He is become so powerful, that he openly scoffs at the same prince who formerly sold him, even though the latter has conserved his rights over him, which he would not fail to truly exercise if he were strong enough to do so with impunity.”⁴¹ The story of Tati is notable because it provides evidence that coastal inhabitants could be legally sold to Europeans, even those of high birth, simply for the profit of their sellers.

In practice, however, the only people sold were those lacking protection from their would-be sellers. Grandpré’s narrative gives the impression that, by 1786-7, anyone not protected by a strong community, either as a dependent or lord, risked being captured and sold to European slave traders. The primary means of resisting enslavement among the elite appears to have been accumulating wealth in people, or dependents. The princes’ power derived from the king, who, as “as sovereign lord of the whole country,” appointed them to ministerial positions and assigned territory to them.⁴² The inhabitants of the territory were considered the prince’s vassals. However, according to Grandpré, there

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., I: 185.

were never enough vassals and so the princes increased their number by purchasing “ordinary slaves.” Vassals and slaves were both dependents of the prince but a hierarchy existed between them. Their names reflect this hierarchy: the former were called “*fils de terre*” (son of the land) and the latter “*montou*, captive.”⁴³ The prince continually sought to increase his number of dependents, both by purchasing slaves, and by offering “franchises” to “encourage [...] the vassals of another lord to desert” and move to his lands.⁴⁴ He did so because the territory’s value was derived from its human, rather than natural, resources.

The dependents linked to a prince, governor, or lord were their source of social, political, and military power. They protected their lord against enslavement and sale by his superiors. For example, the governor was an officer who governed a village lacking a lord on behalf of the king and who answered only to the king and the heirs to the throne. Technically, the princes of the blood had the right to sell the governor. In reality, they could not do so because the governor was protected by all of the dependents that lived in the domain he governed. This protection offered the governor so much security that the princes were “without command in his borders” and the governor “did not recognize the

⁴³ Ibid., I: 186.

⁴⁴ “*Le prince fait mettre ce terrain en valeur par le peuple, en encourageant par des franchises les vassaux d’un autre seigneur à deserter pour s’établir chez lui.*” Ibid., I: 115. Grandpré’s use of “*franchises*” could be interpreted as “overtly” or “frankly” however I think the CNRTL definition more accurate given the lord-vassal context: “Droits, privileges, libertés que possédaient par charte ou concession, des villes, des pays et leurs habitants, des corps constitués, limitant ainsi le pouvoir de l’autorité souveraine.” Definition for ‘Franchises’ Centre National des Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales

authority of the princes” in his own territory. The latter “could sell him the moment he becomes destitute” but while he governs the protection afforded by his large number of dependents rendered him untouchable. Likewise, the king or princes of the blood could technically sell a suzerain at any time, “however examples of this are very rare” because the suzerain was protected by all of the vassals attached to his domain.⁴⁵

The more slaves or dependents a particular lord owned, the greater the army he had to protect against enslavement by others. For example, Andriz Samba of Cabinda had as many as 700 slaves on his *petite terre*. As a result of his large number of dependents, “he was reputed unconquerable, and the king treated him” as a man who could do anything.⁴⁶ These slaves served the dual role of being at once “his force and his fortune.” Grandpré explains, “he could sell them, but he guards them well” as long as they do not deserve punishment, in which case the slave would “escape and find refuge in the home of another who would give them asylum [and Andriz Samba] would not be able to recover them except in making a war in which it would be necessary for him to be victorious.” The biggest argument against selling dependents was the protection they offered him: “if he deprived himself of his slaves, he [loses] the means to resist against oppression; in one word, his importance consists of his riches, his state [of freedom] depends on it, and these riches consist in lots of vassals.”⁴⁷ The example of Andriz

⁴⁵ ———, *Voyage*: I: 207-9; 188-9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, I: 187.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, I: 209-10.

Samba of Cabinda illustrates why it was not in one's interest to sell their dependents or slaves. It appears the motive for this forbearance was that traditionally liquidating dependents did not make sense socially or financially. The reason is that the dependents constituted not only a form of wealth, but also a form of protection.

Traditionally, the lord-dependent relationship formed the bulwark of protection against enslavement and sale for both parties. The lowest social category constituted the class described as "vassals," "servants" or "slaves." Some of them indeed were considered "slaves and subjected to the whims of their Master, who sells them according to his will." However, "many others" do not fear "a similar fate" because "either their richness" protects them from sale, "a long filiation in the place of their residence, has naturalized them so much in that place that their master fears to sell them, or would not wish to deprive himself of them." There was "a sort of regulation" that protected the latter category of dependents that socially prohibited a master from selling them. "They say that they are slaves," Grandpré concluded, and while the "Master" technically possessed the right to sell them, in practice he "never exert[ed] it."⁴⁸ As the lord, it was his responsibility to protect his dependents against enslavement by others, a duty he was socially obligated to fulfill. If he failed to do so, he risked his dependents leaving him to serve another lord, who, given the financial and social value of dependents, would no doubt welcome the additional members to his community.⁴⁹ For example, Proyart wrote

⁴⁸ Ibid., I: 104-5.

⁴⁹ Ibid., I: 115.

that “the slaves are not the most mistreated in these states [coastal kingdoms]: the king and the Princes spare those who belong to them [from mistreatment], in the fear that” they would simply join other princes “who always readily seize the occasion to augment their [human] possessions [.]”⁵⁰

Grandpré’s narrative details three primary functions of dependents in coastal societies: they produced wealth by working for their ‘suzerain,’ ‘prince,’ or ‘chief’; they could be converted into wealth to pay a debt if need be; and they served as private armies. It is in their latter role that they functioned as protection for both parties against enslavement. He wrote that slaves who could not own anything themselves, “followed their master to war, established themselves around him, lived under his protection, and formed what one calls his *petite terre* [.]” The master-slave or lord-vassal relationship was a reciprocal one. For their part, dependents “cultivate for [their master], serve him and follow him everywhere, make his procession and defend him [.]” The suzerain or lord, “for his side, lodges them, clothes them, places them near Europeans, if he lives near *la pointe* [the place of the slave trade], in one word does all the good for them that he can.”⁵¹ The lord acted on behalf of his dependents in judicial matters, speaking for them at tribunals and paying punishment debts. Though legally permissible, traditionally

⁵⁰ Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*: 121.

⁵¹ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 209-10.

it was only socially acceptable to sell a dependent into slavery in the case of severe crimes or in the case of repeat offenders.⁵²

However, it appears that this relationship broke down by the middle of the eighteenth century. Thereafter, an increasing number of coastal inhabitants chose to sell their dependents and kidnap their equals for sale to European slave traders. The Atlantic slave trade became a central producer of wealth and method of gaining and consolidating power in the kingdoms. Grandpré argued that by the time he resided on the coast in 1786-7, the luxury goods derived from the trade had become necessary implements of political and social relationships. He wrote: “It is a great misfortune for this country, that one can legally there deprive a man of his liberty [...] This unhappy custom is the fruit of the luxury and of the commerce that we have brought there [the slave trade]. The superfluities that we procure for them have become necessities for them, and there is nothing they wouldn’t do to acquire them [...]”⁵³ Coastal inhabitants also sold others to Europeans to pay for debts incurred through credit from European merchants and as payment for crimes committed.

It appears that instances of judicial enslavement also increased during this time period. The reason for this was that by the late-eighteenth century payment in slaves had come to replace payment in goods or currency (*mbongo raffia cloth*) as compensation for crimes committed. French sources are relatively uniform in their descriptions of the

⁵² Ibid., I: 210-12.

⁵³ Ibid., I: 214-5.

coastal justice system. The guilty party was seized and brought by the plaintiff to the local ruler, who served as judge. A public “cabale” or “tribunal” was held in which each party was able to speak without interruption.⁵⁴ The head of the family was the first judge consulted in rural areas.⁵⁵ Village chiefs, governors of cities, suzerains of territories, Ministers and princes all served as judges of civil and criminal matters for the inhabitants of their jurisdictions.⁵⁶ If a vassal was accused in another jurisdiction, his or her lord went and spoke on their behalf.⁵⁷ All subjects had the right to appeal decisions to the Tribunal of the Governor General of the Province and, finally, to the king.⁵⁸ Traditionally, if the defendant was found guilty he or she was required to make amends to the injured party through payment (*futa*, to pay).

However, by the late eighteenth century, it appears that most crimes were punishable by either death or enslavement. The crimes of murder and poisoning were punishable by death. Other crimes such as stealing, adultery, or assault were punishable

⁵⁴ Ibid., I: 121-3; 211; 16. Capellis, "Observation...", 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15 Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 139. In both the Kingdom of Kongo and in the coastal kingdoms both parties were required to pay a fee to the judge before the tribunal began. Descourvières?, ""Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs," Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.," 49. Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795," 331.

⁵⁵ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 216.

⁵⁶ Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 53. *ibid.*, 139. Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 121-3.

⁵⁷ Capellis, "Observation...", 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

⁵⁸ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 210. Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 139.

by enslavement or paying the value of one slave (known as a packet).⁵⁹ The guilty party had the option to either become enslaved or, if they had the means, to pay the price of a slave in goods or (more often) give a vassal as a slave in their place.⁶⁰ For example, the punishment for drawing blood in a fight was slavery. The person who had drawn blood, Grandpré explained, “paid one packet to the [victim], that is to say, the value of one packet, either in a slave, in merchandises (one names a packet the price of one captive); if the aggressor has neither merchandises nor a slave, he is taken himself and sold.”⁶¹ It appears that substitution was permitted in the case of the death penalty for certain crimes. For example, Grandpré wrote that the penalty for selling someone that did not belong to him or her was “death, or furnishing a vassal in his place.”⁶²

Instances of judicial enslavement were far from insignificant and may have increased dramatically in the late-eighteenth century as a result of the rise of arbitrary laws and witchcraft accusations and debt. There is evidence that cases of judicial enslavement may have increased as a result of laws deliberately designed to entrap people. Proyart complained of the “arbitrary” nature of legislation passed by the kings and councils of the Loango Coast kingdoms that resulted in the enslavement of those who

⁵⁹ Descourvières?, ""Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs," Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.," 49. Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 88-9; 135.

⁶⁰ “Le vol et l’adultère sont punis d’esclavage, a moins que le coupable ne puisse donner un ou deuz autres esclaves en sa place a la partie lezée. »Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 216.

⁶¹ Descourvières?, ""Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs," Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.," 52.

⁶² Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 211.

were unaware they were transgressing a law. For example, any person who “insulted a Prince, or a Minister, even in words” was “condemned to become the slave” of the offended party, unless he could “furnish a slave in nature or in value.”⁶³ Proyart explained the “maxim” of the “politics” behind such laws was to “contain the multitude by severity”; however, each leader applied the laws “more or less with discretion [.]” Princes, even those led by “good intentions,” declared as crimes punishable by death (or enslavement) transgressions that would otherwise have otherwise received “light punishment.” For example, when French missionaries first arrived in Kakongo, they were “troubled” by some people who “affected singing and crying around their” lodging. When the complained to the king, the latter passed an ordinance that it was punishable by death to trouble the missionaries.⁶⁴ According to Proyart, it was up to the judge’s discretion whether to sentence the guilty party to death or enslavement.⁶⁵ However, the fact that the injured party kept the profit from the criminal’s sale into slavery may well have motivated many to sentence defendants to the latter.

A similar situation appears to have existed south of the River Congo in Sonyo and the Kingdom of Kongo. Though traditionally part of the Kingdom of Kongo, by the late-eighteenth century Sonyo “was populous and strong and was independent of central

⁶³ Ibid., I: 216.

⁶⁴ Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*: 136-7.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Kongo authority.”⁶⁶ According to Père Raimondo Da Dicomano who was a missionary in Sonyo from 1791-5, the death penalty was reserved for “*féticheurs*” whom Dicomano defined as poisoners. All other crimes were punished by payment “with slaves, zimbos (*nzimbu*), merchandises (cloth), and pigs.”⁶⁷ The chief, acting as judge, had the power to kill, retain, or sell the criminal, according to what punishment he judged appropriate for the offense. Dicomano specified that it was possible to give the punishment of sale into slavery even to those found guilty of “fetishism.”

Another major cause of enslavement in the coastal kingdoms was debt incurred as a result of participation in the slave trade. Debt often resulted in the enslavement of the debtor or a family member or vassal known as a pawn left as a hostage with French ship captains to guarantee repayment.⁶⁸ As we saw in the previous chapter, French merchants were unable to establish a monopoly over the Loango Coast slave trade or control the price of captives. Historian Jan Vansina concluded that Europeans did not extend credit to slave traders on the Loango Coast.⁶⁹ Unlike other Europeans, it is clear that French slave traders offered credit and advanced merchandise to courtiers and slave merchants.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Ibid., 139.

⁶⁷ Broadhead, "Trade and politics on the Congo coast : 1770-1870," 49-50.

⁶⁸ Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795," 331.

⁶⁹ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 63-4.

⁷⁰ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 206.; Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 47.; Listré, Listré, *l'Histoire de la Révolution*; "Mémoire du Sr Mazois, négociant à l'orient, pour établir les indemnités [...]" [1784?], ANOM, Colonies, F/1B/2, Police des Noirs, p. 19

Capellis wrote that ship “captains advance *marchandises* to courtiers” who go “very far into the interior to the frontier of the slave drivers [*conducteurs d’esclaves*] engage them to come to their Ports.”⁷¹ Some courtiers returned often seeking further advances.⁷² It appears that courtiers, in turn, advanced merchandise to the merchants.⁷³ Once the merchant had procured captives for sale, the courtier took him to the ship captain’s *comptoir* and acted as a middleman in the transaction.⁷⁴ The debt incurred often resulted in the enslavement of the debtor or, more often, a family member or vassal. This was because ship captains were “always careful to make them give some *nègre* for guarantee and sometimes their own son who we kept on board, which we called hostages and that we did not give back until they reimbursed [the advance] by a slave or otherwise.”⁷⁵ This “hostage” was often “his parent, or his friend, or his vassal.”⁷⁶ Sometimes these hostages were told they were being placed on the European ship “to learn the French language and commerce [.]”⁷⁷ Pawns, or hostages, were sometimes enslaved even when the debt was

⁷¹ Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d’angole d’après un voyage fait en 1784 Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d’angole d’après un voyage fait en 1784 ; Capellis, "Observation...," 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

⁷² ———, "Observation...," 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

⁷³ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 61.

⁷⁴ "Cas de conscience sur quelques circonstances du commerce des esclaves en Guinée, Archives M.E.P., volume 356, 289-293," in *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*, ed. J. Bishop B. Cuvelier (Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1953, [s.d.]).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*;

⁷⁶ Listré, Listré, *l’Histoire de la Révolution*

⁷⁷ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 63-4.;

paid. According to several sources, many captains simply set sail for Saint Domingue, selling the pawn for their own profit.⁷⁸ Other times, when the courtier returned with merchandise to repay the debt, ship captains would refuse to accept payment and return the hostage, saying, “I require a slave, because it is slaves and not merchandise that I must bring from this country [.]” The “miserable” courtier was then forced to try to negotiate an exchange with another captive. “When at the departure of the vessel this courtier can not withdraw his hostage, it is clear that the latter is making the voyage to Saint-Domingue.”⁷⁹ Hostages or pawns were therefore enslaved as a result of credit extended by the French to courtiers and slave merchants, even when the latter tried to repay the debt.

Coastal inhabitants were also enslaved as a result of simply being seized by their superiors or outright kidnapped by their equals and sold to European traders. This was called “*poignage*”: “The act of seizing a man, whom it is intended to sell, is termed in the language of the French traders, *poigner*; and it is a right which the princes-born may exercise over all who are not born their equal. The proprietors of land may thus seize the inhabitants of their own lands upon those lands, but not on the domain of another person, without his license”⁸⁰ According to Grandpré, coastal inhabitants did “seize” and sell people who were not their dependents, despite it being illegal to do so. For example,

⁷⁸ Mentioned in below and: Listré, Listré, *l'Histoire de la Révolution*; *ibid.*

⁷⁹ Lozières, *Second voyage à la Louisiane, faisant suite au premier de 1794 à 1798.*

⁸⁰ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 63-4.

Grandpré claimed to have witnessed the trial of a royal soldier who had kidnapped someone who was not his vassal and had sent his nephew to sell him. The family of the victim complained to the Mafouk of the “*petite terre*” where they lived. A tribunal was held in which the “unhappy royal soldier wanted in vain to clear himself” of the crime but “he was crushed” by the Mafouk who served both as plaintiff for the injured family, since they were among his vassals, as well as judge by privilege of his position. “The sentence condemned the delinquent to perish or deliver his nephew in his place: he delivered him, and this unfortunate was torn apart in the blink of an eye.” According to Grandpré, the nephew was torn apart by the members of the crowd in an incredibly violent manner, perhaps indicative of the crowd’s outrage over this particular crime.⁸¹ Grandpré’s example is interesting because it indicates that instances of seizing or kidnapping and selling others into slavery had become a significant problem.

One of the most significant causes of enslavement appears to have been warfare – both during internal and external conflicts. As we saw in great detail in Chapter 2, the late eighteenth century was a time of great political instability and warfare in the Loango Coast kingdoms. We saw how the political instability was tied to the erosion of traditional political institutions caused by the Atlantic slave trade. The power of the king declined because he was forbidden from engaging in the trade. The power of government Ministers and chiefs, however, increased as a result of their participation in the slave trade. The trade was so important by the late-eighteenth century that coastal kingdoms

⁸¹ Ibid., I: 212.

had multiple government Ministers whose positions were directly tied to the Atlantic slave trade. Chapter 3 detailed the emergence of a split between the king and his counselors, on the one hand, and Ministers and chiefs, on the other. This split appears to be most pronounced between the King, governor, and heir (*Macaya/Makaya* or *Mambouc*) on the one side and the *Mafouk* and rich slave traders on the other. Those who participated in the slave trade were no longer dependent upon the king for access to land, dependents, and therefore power. As we have already seen, it does not appear the coastal kings were able to maintain control over trade routes and the supply of captives. They were also not able to control access to European goods, which, according to European sources, had surpassed their status as luxury goods and, sources suggest, become necessary implements of power.⁸²

We also saw how conflict between the central authority, on the one hand, and ministers and merchants who developed great wealth and power from the Atlantic slave trade, on the other, caused numerous cabals and civil wars in the coastal kingdoms. “It is very often that his [the king’s] vassals resist him,” remarked Grandpré.⁸³ “This happens less at Loango than elsewhere, because the king being close to the ocean and to the commerce, all the officers are around him in the same city, where his power exceeds theirs; but at Malemba and Cabinda these quarrels are very common.”⁸⁴ There is evidence

⁸² Ibid., I: 217-8.

⁸³ Ibid., I: 215.

⁸⁴ Ibid., I: 183.

that these conflicts produced captives for the Atlantic slave trade. Grandpré wrote that the soldiers and dependents of the losing combatant were enslaved.⁸⁵ There is also evidence in the documents of French slave trader and merchant Stanislas Foache that periods of warfare were followed by spikes in the availability of captives available in Loango Coast ports.⁸⁶

The widespread French belief, echoed in recent scholarship, that the inhabitants of the coastal kingdoms were not a significant source of captives for the Atlantic slave trade and could not be sold unless as punishment for a crime is contradicted by reliable descriptions of coastal societies in the late-eighteenth century, especially the narrative of Grandpré. It was legal under kingdom law to sell coastal citizens to Europeans purely for profit. It appears that mechanisms and instances of enslavement increased dramatically in the last half of the century. The late-eighteenth century was a time of great political instability, especially in Ngoyo and Kakongo where supporters of losing parties were enslaved and sold. References to civil wars, wars of succession, cabals, and military conflicts with neighbors, especially Sonyo, appear regularly in documents from the 1760s-1780s.⁸⁷ Enslavement as a result of judicial punishment and debt appear to have increased at the time. Unlike other European traders, it is also clear that French slave

⁸⁵ Ibid., I: 183-4.

⁸⁶ Ibid., I: 198-9.

⁸⁷ , Mentions of warfare common in documents written by missionaries and French slave traders, who complained when wars cut off supplies of captives to the coast. ———, *Voyage*: I: 173; 84-6.

traders offered credit and advanced merchandise to courtiers and slave merchants.⁸⁸ The debt incurred often resulted in the enslavement of the debtor or a family member or vassal known as a pawn left as a hostage with French ship captains to guarantee repayment.⁸⁹ Lastly, coastal inhabitants were simply seized by their superiors or outright kidnapped by their equals and sold to European traders. The French called this “*poignage*” and it was said to have been widespread by the 1780s.⁹⁰

Interior Slave Traders and Trade Routes

In the remainder of this chapter, I will investigate the interior supply of captives to the Loango coast using contemporary documents from the late-eighteenth century. Doing so, however, presents more challenges for historians. Unlike the case of the coastal Kingdoms, there are no eyewitness accounts of the interior slave trade to the Loango Coast. If Europeans had little control over the coastal slave trade, they had no contact whatsoever with the inland caravan trade. Furthermore, no European had travelled beyond the coastal kingdoms themselves. Two sources of information, therefore, are useful to study the origin of captives sold to Europeans. The first is the names of

⁸⁸ Descourvières, ""Lettre de M. Descourvières... 3 février 1769"."; Foäche, Letter 11 February 1785, Saint Domingue; Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d'angole d'après un voyage fait en 1784 Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d'angole d'après un voyage fait en 1784 ; Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 47.; Listré, Listré, *l'Histoire de la Révolution*; Mémoire du Sr Mazois, négociant à l'orient, pour établir les indemnités [...], Mémoire du Sr Mazois, négociant à l'orient, pour établir les indemnités [...]

⁸⁹ Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d'angole d'après un voyage fait en 1784 Instructions pour les voyages de la cote d'angole d'après un voyage fait en 1784 ; Capellis, "Observation...", 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

⁹⁰ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 63-4.

categories of captives available for purchase. The second is contemporary information about trade routes to the coast. The latter is particularly scarce for the reasons cited above. The dearth of contemporary sources has led historians to rely on documents from the late-nineteenth and even twentieth centuries to draw conclusions about trade routes a century or more before.⁹¹ This is extremely problematic because trade routes to the coast changed dramatically over time. For example, we saw in Chapter 3 that though ivory was available for purchase on the Loango Coast in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, it was not at the end of the eighteenth, demonstrating the decline of the trade route north to ivory producing regions of Gabon.

The French source that most directly addresses the question of the origin of captives is the narrative of Grandpré, who named the categories of slaves available for purchase at each Loango Coast port. However, Grandpré specified that these names did not refer to the actual origin of the captives but instead to the “peoples who furnished the slaves” or through whose territory they passed en route to the coast.⁹² However, useful information can also be gleaned about trade routes. According to Grandpré, the trade at Loango was comprised of one-quarter *Montekès*, one-sixth *Quibangue*, and the rest *Mayombe*; Malemba of *Mayombe* and *Congue* [Congo] trade; and Cabinda of *Congue* [Congo] trade deviated from Malemba, *Sogne* [Sonyo], and *Mondongue* trade.⁹³

⁹¹ See especially: *ibid.*, I: 212.

⁹² Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 118+.

⁹³ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: xxvi.

Grandpré's information suggests that Loango procured few captives from either northern or southern trade routes and was instead forced to rely solely on her traditional routes to the east across the Mayombe forest to the Teke controlled market at the Malebo Pool and beyond.⁹⁴ This conclusion is consistent with Grandpré's claim that Loango did not have access to caravan routes from the south following the independence of Kakongo and Ngoyo.⁹⁵ Grandpré explained "the beautiful trade doesn't arrive in this port [Loango] but by traversing the countries of Malembe and of Cabende [the kingdoms of Kakongo and Ngoyo], the kings of these two states have found it simpler to stop" the passage of caravans of captives and instead call slave trading vessels to their own ports "to the great regret of the king of Loango, who as sovereign had some preferential rights, but who lacks the power to obtain them by force [.]"⁹⁶ Grandpré's information suggests that the rise of Kakongo and Ngoyo meant that, by the 1780s, Loango was cut off from slave caravans from the south.

The names cited by Grandpré also suggest that Loango procured few captives from the north. This makes sense when seen alongside with the widespread French assertion that ports north of Loango, such as Mayumba, had little or no captives for trade. Contemporary French documents are unanimous in the fact that little to no slaves were traded at the ports north of Loango. A 1771 *mémoire* based on information from 1766

⁹⁴ Ibid., I: xxv-xxvi; II: 14; II: 25; II: 37. 1771 "Mémoire sur la Côte d'Afrique,"

⁹⁵ Capellis, "Observation...", 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15 Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 165-6.. Partially transcribed and published in: Listré, Listré, *l'Histoire de la Révolution*

⁹⁶ Debien, "Documents sur la traite (XVIIe-XIXe siècles)."

explained that “From the *Cap de Lopes Gonsalve* Angola Coast until Mayumba, no trade, here few captives, a lot of wood of a red tint at a good price, very expensive morphil. The English who arm [trade] more often than us carry out this trade nearly alone.”⁹⁷ A 1785 *mémoire* stated that French ships sometimes resupplied at the Cape of Lopes Gonsalvo, finding “excellent water [...] as well as wood, a lot of fish [...] one can trade some wax and some ivory there. [...] but there is no trade in *noirs*.”⁹⁸ South of the Cape, the port of Mayumba occasionally sold captives to Europeans. Saint Domingue colonist Listré, who visited the Loango Coast in 1777, wrote “We trade few *nègres* at Mayombe, but only red wood for dye[.]”⁹⁹ A 1785 *mémoire* by a French naval [Marine] officer wrote that the English traded “some *nègres*, some ivory, some wax and some red wood.”¹⁰⁰ Grandpré gave a slightly more positive depiction of Mayombe [Mayumba]. He wrote that if the “ceaseless need” for the resupply of slaves in Saint Domingue “hadn’t concentrated all trade speculations on this coast in the purchase of *Noirs*, we could have formed a lucrative branch of exchange in the port of Mayombe” and exploited the abundant supply of copper, ivory, and above all, rubber.¹⁰¹ Grandpré’s narrative proved a foreshadowing of things to come. In the late eighteenth century, however, Europeans were only

⁹⁷ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 165-6.

⁹⁸ 1771 "Mémoire sur la Côte d'Afrique,"

⁹⁹ Capellis, "Observation...", 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15. Partially transcribed and published in: Listré, Listré, *l'Histoire de la Révolution*

¹⁰⁰ Debien, "Documents sur la traite (XVIIe-XIXe siècles)."

¹⁰¹ Capellis, "Observation...", 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

interested in slaves and ports north of Loango had few captives to offer European slave traders. The lack of availability of captives for sale north of Loango suggests that captives seldom came from northern trade routes. For example, Grandpré specified that the only time it was possible to purchase captives in “Mayombe” [Mayumba] was “if one finds oneself at Mayombe [Mayumba] during the passage of a hoard destined for one of the three ordinary ports where the trade is abundant, one can trade around one hundred captives.”¹⁰² Unfortunately, it is not possible from Grandpré’s description to know the provenance of the captives transported through Mayumba. He wrote only that the captives were not bad, but that they lacked vitality or vigor of character, were not capable of surviving fatigue, and were more subject than others to scurvy.¹⁰³ However, the fact that captives arrived exhausted and in poor health suggests they had already travelled a significant distance.

The lack of ivory for sale on the Loango Coast supports the conclusion that slave caravans were no longer coming from northern trade routes at this time. During the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, ivory had been a major export commodity from Loango Coast ports. However, ship captains and marine officials in the 1770s and 1780s reported that there was no ivory for trade at any port south of Mayumba, including both

¹⁰² Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 6.

¹⁰³ “This trade is not bad, however *les homes ont la fibre molle, ne sont point propres à la fatigue, et sont plus sujets que bien d’autres au scorbut.*” Ibid., II: 5.

Cabinde and Malimbe.¹⁰⁴ Historian Phyllis Martin found that by the early nineteenth century trade routes to the Loango Coast originated in the ivory producing regions northeast in Gabon.¹⁰⁵ However, French documents from the 1770s and 1780s stated repeatedly that there was no ivory being traded on the Loango Coast or in the Kingdom of Kongo, anywhere south of the northern port of Mayumba.¹⁰⁶ This discrepancy suggests that Mayumba was connected to the nearby ivory-trading regions of northern Gabon but the ports of Loango, Malemba, and Cabinde drew instead on slave trading caravans from south of the Congo River. This distinction highlights the importance of using sources from the 1780s to disarticulate the source of the interior slave trade to the Loango Coast at that time. Though ivory was an important commodity on the Loango Coast before and after the time period in question, it was not available for trade in the late eighteenth century.

The widespread French assertion that ports north of Loango, such as Mayumba, had little or no captives for trade, suggests that Loango procured few captives from either northern or southern trade routes and instead relied solely on her traditional routes to the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., II: 6.; “Extrait des journaux de Jn Bte Foutrel Gaugny, pendant le cours des quatre voyages qu’il a commandé la Navire La Marie Seraphique pour faire la traite des noirs à la côte d’Angole en Affrique,” CHAN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 6, Observations scientifiques et géographiques, Paris, France.

¹⁰⁵ Capellis, "Observation...", 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

¹⁰⁶ Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*: 126.; “Extrait des journaux de Jn Bte Foutrel Gaugny, pendant le cours des quatre voyages qu’il a commandé la Navire La Marie Seraphique pour faire la traite des noirs à la côte d’Angole en Affrique,” CHAN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 6, Observations scientifiques et géographiques, Paris, France.

east across the Mayombe forest to the Tio controlled market at the Malebo Pool and beyond. This would explain Grandpré's use of the terms *mayombe* and *montekè* to describe the trade. Grandpré explained the Mayombe trade as the most abundant but inferior. Their captives, he wrote, "have a narrow chest [are very thin], tightened shoulders [were emaciated], soft fiber [they lacked vitality or vigor of character] and the unpleasant teeth."¹⁰⁷ Those called "*montequés* or *montekès*" were "beautiful, but they spoil the teeth by filing them to make them pointed," which gave them the unfounded reputation of cannibalism.¹⁰⁸ *Mayombe* and *Montèkes* almost certainly referred to the Yombe traders of the Mayombe rainforest and Teke traders who controlled the market at the Malebo Pool, lending further evidence that Loango relied of caravan routes from the east.

Grandpré's use of the term *Quibangue* is slightly more problematic but likely refers to Bobangi traders. Grandpré specifies that the *Quibangue* were "as small people not very many in number from the interior of Africa. They are the most beautiful *Noirs* that one may see [...] but this people have the good fortune to furnish little of the trade."¹⁰⁹ Elsewhere he wrote the *Quibangue* "this last is little abundant, but furnishes individuals of the greatest beauty."¹¹⁰ One interpretation of this term is that it refers to

¹⁰⁷ Capellis, "Observation...", 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

¹⁰⁸ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 13.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

captives from upstream of the Malebo Pool. There is evidence from the following century that Bobangi was a general name for people from the Upper River Congo at this time, of which the River Ubangi was a major artery. French explorers who travelled beyond the Malebo Pool for the first time in the late nineteenth century found that “Boubangui” was used to refer to riverine people inhabiting the banks of the Congo, Almina, Sanda, and lower Ubangi rivers.¹¹¹ Bobangi is believed to have been the lingua franca of the Upper River Congo until the late nineteenth century, when Belgian colonizers introduced thousands of African laborers not indigenous to Central Africa, giving rise to Lingala.¹¹² Historians Robert Harms and Jan Vansina argue linguistic and ethnographic evidence suggests that Atlantic trade spread to the Upper Congo River, causing structural changes to the indigenous trade networks as groups of fishermen became traders and carriers. Vansina believes that fishing villages along the confluence of the Ubangi and Congo Rivers “probably first entered the trade in the seventeenth century. Seeing lucrative opportunities, local big men emigrated to found new villages downstream, closer to the Malebo Pool[.]” By the time the French became the dominant purchasers on the Loango Coast in the mid- to late eighteenth century, Vansina argues the Bobangi were already operating “as far as the middle and upper Almina” River.¹¹³ Harms estimated that “By the

¹¹¹ Ibid., I: xxv.

¹¹² For the emergence of Lingala, see Martin, "The Trade of Loango in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," 150-1.

¹¹³ Eyamba Georges Bokamba and Molingó Virginie Bokamba, *Tósolola na Lingála: A Multidimensional Approach to the Teaching and Learning of Lingála as a Foreign Language* (Madison, WI: NALRC National African Language Resource Center, 2004). Introduction.

1780s the trade reached all the way to the lower Ubangi River, where the Bobangi had become major suppliers of slaves to the coast.”¹¹⁴

However, it is also important to note other possible interpretations of the term. European missionaries south of the River used the term *Quibango* to denote the area of the former Kingdom of Kongo in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The use of the term *Quibango* to refer to an area of the kingdom of Kongo can be seen in Jadin’s publication of Dutch documents from the seventeenth century and seen on a map created based on those sources.¹¹⁵ In the 1790s, Dicomano used the term to describe a category of slave merchants active in the Kingdom of Kongo. *Quibango* merchants “make their commerce in part at Ambuilla [...] and in part in Angola. To obtain *eau de vie*, glassware and certain good clothe, they transport the greatest quantity of slaves and the best for the English. Those that the English do not want, like the savage men and women with fallen breasts and small children, *alors*, they bring them to [Luanda].”¹¹⁶ In sum, sources from the late nineteenth century provide compelling evidence that the term *Quibango* or *Quibangue* likely refers to the Bobangi traders of the Upper River Congo. However, there are no eighteenth century sources to confirm this conclusion. Furthermore, sources

¹¹⁴ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 225-7.

¹¹⁵ Robert W. Harms, "Oral Tradition and Ethnicity," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 10, no. 1 (1979): 70-1.

¹¹⁶ Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Sohio, Congo, 1600-1675*.

written by missionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries appear to use the term to refer to a region of the Kingdom of Kongo.

According to Grandpré's information, the ports of Malemba and Cabinda appear to have received captives principally from riverine groups, including from Kongo and Solongo of Sonyo south of the Congo River, in addition to Yombe traders.¹¹⁷ Grandpré stated that the preferred port was Malemba, "who furnished the most abundant and the most beautiful species of men; this trade is called *Congue par excellence*."¹¹⁸ Malemba's trade was "composed of the flower of the Mayombe trade and of the Congo trade itself."¹¹⁹ The trade available in Cabinda, five *lieues* south of Malemba, was similar, composed of "*Congues*, who deviated from the path of Malembe, of *Sogne* and *Mondongues*, who *les Noirs* name *Mondongoué*."¹²⁰ Grandpré's use of the term "*Congue*" seems to refer to trade from the Kongolese from south of the Congo River. He described the captives supplied by the Kongolese as "magnificent, robust, hard to fatigue, and indisputably the best of our colonies; they are gentle and quiet; adapted to servitude:

¹¹⁷ Descourvières wrote that the people of Kakongo "have a lot of trade with those of Congo" (probably referring to Sonyo), giving some indication of the direction of trade routes supplying slaves to the coast at that time.———, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795," 315, 33.

¹¹⁸ Jean-Joseph Descourvières, "Lettre de M Descourvières Miss[ionnai]re Apostolique à Loango écrite à M férès, supérieur du Sem[inai]re de Nantes De Malimbe le 3 février 1769," Archives M.E.P., Voume 356, pp. 231-233; Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,.

¹¹⁹ Mémoire sur la Côte d'Afrique [1766], Mémoire sur la Côte d'Afrique [1766]

¹²⁰ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II:25.

in Saint Domingue they are highly estimated, and seem content with their lot [.]”¹²¹ This is consistent with missionary Descourvières claim that the people of Kakongo “have a lot of trade with those of Congo” (probably referring to Sonyo), giving some indication of the direction of trade routes supplying slaves to the coast at that time.¹²² *Sogne* referred to Cabinda’s southern neighbor, Sonyo, which inhabited the land south of the River Congo. He wrote that the inhabitants of Sonyo (the Solongo) were traitors and cowards best known for “the fall of some priests who they poisoned or assassinated. Their reputation of perfidy, well or badly deserved, has caused them to be put in irons, when they are sold to some European, and to make their crossing in the chains.”¹²³ The names cited by Grandpré suggest Malemba and Cabinda procured captives from Yombe, Kongo, Sonyo (Solongo) traders. This is consistent with the fact that the kingdom of Ngoyo was engaged in numerous conflicts with external groups over access to the slave trade at the port of Cabinda. The fact that Cabinda was the focus of many conflicts, especially with Sonyo, suggests that it was indeed the endpoint for much of the Riverine trade.¹²⁴

Grandpré’s information, when seen alongside other contemporary sources, allows us to identify the major suppliers of slaves to coastal ports. It is not possible to use these documents, however, to clarify where the captives provided by slave traders originated.

¹²¹ Ibid., I: xxvi; II: 37.

¹²² Descourvières, ""Lettre de M. Descourvières... 3 février 1769".

¹²³ As concluded by Grandpré, *Voyage*: II: 37-8.

¹²⁴ Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.."

One reason is that it appears that regardless of where captives came from, slave merchants from the interior drove them to wherever they thought they would receive the best price and most merchandise for their human chattel. For example, in missionary Dicomano's description of Sonyo in the 1790s, he wrote that the "*Bamba*" and the "*Quibango*" slave merchants traded their best captives to the English in ports such as Ambriz south of the Congo River while routing their "undesirable" captives to the Portuguese at Luanda. The "Lundo" and riverine traders, however, would "sell the slaves aux Mobires [Vili traders from Loango]" who offered the most desirable merchandise for exchange and paid higher prices.¹²⁵ Dicomano's information echoes the earlier statements of missionary Cherubino da Savona, missionary in the Kongo and Angola from 1759 until 1774, who wrote that the Solongo sold slaves to the English.¹²⁶ The French and Portuguese clearly believed they were competing to attract interior merchants to their ports, resulting in the French beginning to trade south of the Congo River and the Portuguese attempting to stem foreign trade north of the river, culminating in the latter's failed attempt to construct a fort at Cabinda in 1783.¹²⁷ These documents highlight the

¹²⁵ Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionaire de 1791 à 1795," 333-4.

¹²⁶ Cherubino also wrote that the inhabitants of the province of Zombo "made a great commerce in pagan slaves" with the Portuguese, French, and English. ———, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774," 374, 80.

¹²⁷ For documents relating to the Cabinda Affaire, see: Correspondence of naval commander Marigny, maps, and journals of ship captains found in AN, MAR/B/4/267; Capellis, "Observation...," 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15; ; Mémoire du Roi pour servir d'Instruction particulière au Sr Chevalier Barnard de Marigny Cap de Vau commandant la frigate

importance of riverine trade, the fluid passage of captives along overland and riverine trade routes from the interior, and the agency of slave merchants in journeying to the ports they considered the most convenient or most profitable.

Likewise, it is not possible to conclude from eighteenth-century missionary accounts that captives sold by Kongo traders came from the Kingdom of Kongo itself. John Thornton found the Kingdom of Kongo was a major source of slaves and attributed this to civil wars taking place in the eighteenth century. He argued that half of all the slaves purchased on the Loango Coast by the British and French in the 1780s came from the Kingdom of Kongo.¹²⁸ While Thornton is certainly correct that some captives from the Kingdom of Kongo entered into the French slave trade in this period, his work draws upon figures that underestimate the total volume of the French trade at the Loango coast in the 1780s by half, and does not take into account the possibility that the slaves sold by the Kingdom of Kongo north of the Congo River could have been bought by the Kongolese at slave markets supplied by captives from other regions.

More recently, Linda Heywood used eighteenth-century missionary accounts to argue that the Kongolese were a major source of captives sold into Atlantic slavery at the end of the eighteenth century. Beginning in the sixteenth century, the Kingdom of Kongo

la Venus, 23 Jer [Janvier] 1784, *Mémoire du Roi pour servir d'Instruction particulière au Sr Chevalier Barnard de Marigny Cap de Vau commandant la frigate la Venus, 23 Jer [Janvier] 1784* ; Diplomatic documents: AN, AE/B/III/381-6

¹²⁸ Thornton, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution."

protected inhabitants from the Atlantic slave trade by law. Heywood found that the civil wars beginning in 1667 ended this protection, making the Kingdom of Kongo again a source of slaves bought by Europeans. By the end of the eighteenth century, she concluded, "every freeborn Kongo risked enslavement by kidnapping or entrapment, and every member of the elite, from the king down to the lowest-level noble, not only owned large numbers of slave soldiers and personal slaves but was in the business of selling freeborn Kongos to foreign traders."¹²⁹ Heywood's eighteenth century sources are the accounts of P. Rosario dal Parco, missionary from 1746 to 1761, Cherubino da Savona, missionary from 1759 to 1774, and Raimondo da Dicomano, missionary to Sonyo from 1791 to 1795.¹³⁰ However, though these sources invaluable reconstruct the political upheavals that took place in the Kingdom of Kongo, they must be used with caution. For instance, it is clear that there were very few missionaries in the kingdoms of Kongo and Angola in the last half of the eighteenth century, and it is not apparent whether those missionaries travelled outside of Luanda often. For example, the *Progpogande* wrote that the bishopric of San Salvador, the capital of the Kingdom of Kongo, had long since been destroyed, and that according to his information, the few missionaries that remained stayed mainly in the Portuguese capital of Luanda and had never extended their missions

¹²⁹ Heywood, "Slavery and Its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo: 1491-1800."

¹³⁰ Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795."; ———, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774." ———, "Les missions du Congo à la fin du XVIIIè siècle," *Aclas tome V from Congresso internacional de historia dos descobrimentos* V(1961); Jadin, "Essais d'évangélisation du Loango et du Kakongo 1766-1775."

to the Kingdom of Kongo.¹³¹ Dicomano criticized previous missionaries precisely for not interacting with the indigenous population during their tenure.¹³²

As we will see in Chapter 6, the reports written by these missionaries were, moreover, highly unreliable. They must be contextualized as documents written to their superiors, the *Cardinaux de la Propogande*, intended first, to glorify the work of the authors themselves, and second, to demonstrate the need for further assistance from Rome. Louis Jadin, who collected and translated the accounts of eighteenth century missionaries to the kingdoms of Angola and Kongo in the mid-twentieth century, has shown that the baptism and population numbers given are clear exaggerations. For example, Cherubino claimed that there were six million inhabitants in the Kingdom of Kongo, a number that “by far exceeds the most generous” population estimates, which are between two and three million people. When compared with the numbers reported by other missionaries, which are already extremely high, Cherubino’s figures of 700,000 baptisms and 37,000 marriages can be seen as almost completely unreliable.¹³³ This is

¹³¹ "Feuille de réponses faites aux questions de Monsieur de Lalanne, supérieur de Séminaire des Missions étrangères" by the Propogande.Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,.

¹³² Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionaire de 1791 à 1795."

¹³³ On the contrary, statistics sent before 1760 by prefects in Angola, including P. Giacinto da Bologna and Parco, estimated between 15,000 and 20,000 baptisms by all of the missionaries present in the region together. P. Raimondo da Dicomano claimed to have baptized 25,000 children and adults in San Salvador between 1791 and 1795. P. Girolamo da Montesarchio, claimed to have baptized 100,000 people in Sundi over the course of twenty years, from 1650 to 1669. P. Franceso da Pavia calculated that 42 missionaries over 28 years conducted 340,960 baptisms and 49,887 marriages. ———, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite

especially true given that, due to the civil wars being fought in the Kingdom of Kongo during his stay, Cherubino was, by his own account, frequently unable to travel or forced to suspend his missions. Parco exaggerated in equal measure: he claimed to have baptized two million souls in Angola. Jadin concluded historians must be “without a doubt very skeptical equally of the population statistics [the missionaries] delivers for the majority of provinces, duchies or marquisates of the Congo.”¹³⁴

Jadin also comes to the opposite conclusion as Heywood regarding the provenance of the captives sold by the Kongolese, though the two scholars for the most part draw on the same missionary accounts. Heywood extrapolates the widespread entry of Kongolese people into Atlantic slavery from missionary statements about the existence of slaves in the Kingdom of Kongo.¹³⁵ Heywood also draws upon Parco’s claim that both princes and vassals in the kingdom of Kongo “seize slaves and sell them to the Portuguese, English, and French at the port of Cabinda, to the great shame of those poor souls who are in the hands of the English. The major part of these slaves are baptized. All

d'éllection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774."

¹³⁴ _____, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795."

¹³⁵ It is true that the missionaries do speak of the high number of slaves held by political leaders in the territories that once made up the Kingdom of Kongo. Parco and Cherubino both complained that priests stationed in the Kingdom of Kongo participated in the slave trade by buying slaves from slave markets, such as Ambuila and San Salvador and sold them for profit. However, according to these missionaries, the slaves purchased at these markets originated from lands east of the Kingdom of Kongo.

of the wars they make are unjust. They make them only to steal from one from the other. While they make war, their only food is the war human flesh.”¹³⁶ However, we have already seen that Parco’s baptism statistics are unreliable. Furthermore, Parco’s cannibalism claim seems to contradict, or at least undermine, his statement that the slaves were baptized. A decade later, Cherubino wrote the Kongolese “make a great commerce in pagan slaves, that they then send to be sold in the ports of Portuguese, English, and French boats, in exchange for merchandise, powder, and arms of all qualities.”¹³⁷ Jadin concluded the slave trade from Angola and Congo in 1800 was extremely high, but slaves “came from the interior or from Angola; the Congolese only represented a limited number.” Furthermore, using Cherubino’s account, Jadin concludes that the slaves being sold at Boma north to the Loango Coast “were not Congolese from the kingdom of Congo” but instead came from the interior.¹³⁸ Jadin’s conclusion is consistent with modern research on caravan routes of the Yombe and Teke, which connected the coastal kingdoms to the Malebo Pool, the central slave trade market of the era, as well as the research presented here that inhabitants of Loango Coast kingdoms were a source of

¹³⁶“Ils s’emparent aussi d’esclaves et les font vendre aux Portugais, Anglais, et Français au port de Cabinda, au grand dommage de ces pauvres âmes qui sont dans les mains des Anglais. La majeure partie de ces esclaves sont des baptisés. Toutes ces guerres qu’ils font sont injustes. Ils les font seulement pour se voler l’un l’autre. Pendant qu’ils se font la guerre, leur nourriture est de manger de la chair humaine.” Jadin, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d’élection des rois en 1775, d’après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774," 372.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 380.

¹³⁸“...provenaient de l’intérieur ou de l’Angola; les Congolais n’y figuraient qu’en nombre limité.” Ibid., 357.

captives for Atlantic trade.¹³⁹ In the end, the missionary documents are simply too unreliable to be used with any certainty. Furthermore, though they do give evidence about the widespread nature of the slave trade in the Kingdom of Kongo, they do not indicate from where the captives sold by Kongo slave traders originated, nor do they assert that these captives definitely came from the kingdom of Kongo itself.

Conclusion

Ultimately, there is no way around the fact that the French and other European merchants who traded for slaves on the Loango Coast in the second half of the eighteenth century simply did not know where the men and women they purchased originated. Coastal rulers severely restricted the movement and influence of Europeans, most of whom rarely left either their ships or *comptoirs*. No European had ever travelled inland. The assertion that captives did not originate from coastal kingdoms is undermined by the numerous causes of enslavement described in the letters and narratives written by missionaries, naval officers, slave trade captains and merchants from the period. Furthermore, though it is possible to glean useful information about political relations and trade routes, this is of limited use given the evidence that interior merchants sold

¹³⁹ Schrag, "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.."; Vansina, *The Tio kingdom of the Middle Congo, 1880-1892*; ———, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*; Miller, "The Numbers, Origins, and Destinations of Slaves in the Eighteenth-Century Angolan Slave Trade," especially page 385; ———, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830*; Daniel B. Domingues da Silva, "The Supply of Slaves From Luanda, 1768-1806: Records of Anselmo Da Fonseca Coutinho," *African Economic History* 38(2010); Georges Miembraon, "Les pistes des esclaves au royaume téké (Congo), du XVIIe au XIXe siècle," in *Les Traités et Les Esclavages: Perspectives historiques et contemporaines*, ed. Myriam Cottias, Élisabeth Cunin, and António de Almeida Mendes (Paris: Karthala et CIRESC, 2010).

captives to whichever group or port they viewed as being the most profitable at the time. Thus, while these documents clearly show the importance of Yombe, Kongo, and riverine traders, they do not address from where the people traded by these groups originated. For this reason, in the next chapter, I will turn to historical linguistics as a tool to trace the origin of captives sold on the Loango Coast in the last half of the eighteenth century.

Chapter 5: Tracing the Origins of Loango Coast Captives II: Historical Linguistic Evidence

*Eh! Eh! Bomba, hen! Hen! Canga bafio té / Canga mouen dé lé / Canga do ki la / Canga li.*¹

Creole lawyer Moreau de Saint Méry recorded this “African song,” probably second hand, in Saint Domingue sometime in the 1780s. Moreau associated the song with a snake cult among the “Arada” or Aja-Fon ethnic group in the colony he called *le Vaudoux*.² Since its publication in Moreau’s 1797 *Description de Saint Domingue* the song has puzzled scholars of Haitian history and culture, particularly historians of slavery in the colony. In the mid-twentieth century, Belgian Redemptorist missionary and scholar Jean Cuvelier first realized the chant was in fact not West African but in a Kikongo language. Cuvelier translated it as “Oh! Mbumba snake/ Stop the blacks/ Stop the white man/ Stop the *ndoki* [witch]/ Stop them.”³ Since then, the chant has been seen as an important source for the history of resistance to slavery in the colony, the Haitian Revolution, and the development of the religion of Haitian Vodou. As we will see in Chapter 7, the song is indeed important for the history of the colony. However, in this chapter I will show how the Kikongo chant is also an important source for African

¹ Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description... de Saint Domingue*: I: 49.

² Ibid., I: 46-50. Geggus, "Haitian Voodoo in the Eighteenth Century: Language, Culture, Resistance," 23.

³ Jean Cuvelier, *L'ancien royaume de Congo* (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946). 290. Rendered in Kikongo as: “*Ee Ee Mbumba! Kanga Bafioti / Kanga Mundele / Kanga Ndoki / Kanga*”

history. The words in this song and in other sources about the cultural practices of Central Africans in Saint Domingue provide evidence about the history of the internal slave trade to the Loango Coast in the late eighteenth century. Furthermore, these sources are all the more valuable for their rarity. In this chapter, I demonstrate that historians can find sources about the Loango Coast slave trade by looking across the Atlantic Ocean to the men and women who as victims of the slave trade were enslaved and sent across the sea. As we saw in Chapter 3, in the last half of the eighteenth century the largest number of captives sold on the Loango Coast ended their journey into slavery in the French colony of Saint Domingue. This is because the French were responsible for the majority of the slave trade on the Loango Coast at the time and nearly every French slave-trading voyage sailed directly to Saint Domingue. The men, women, and children sold by the French in the colony became members of the vibrant Kongoles Atlantic world. The sources left behind by and about these Kongoles men and women provide invaluable evidence about, among other things, where they came from in West Central Africa.

In this chapter, I employ a sociolinguistic methodology to trace the origins of the captives purchased by the French in Central Africa in the last half of the eighteenth century. To do so, I turn to one of the richest sources of linguistic evidence: historical documents about the cultural practices of “Congos” in Saint Domingue. I demonstrate how historical linguistics can be a useful tool to deepen historians’ understanding of the history of enslaved West Central Africans. Historical linguistics permits me to trace the origins of Loango Coast captives with greater specificity than possible with written

documents alone.⁴ As we saw in the previous chapter, it is often not possible to investigate the origins of Loango Coast captives using traditional archival sources due to the dearth of eyewitness reports. Europeans had no involvement in the interior slave trade. Indeed, no European travelled east of the coastal kingdoms of Kongo, Ngoyo, Kakongo, or Loango, until well into the nineteenth century. This dearth of contemporary historical sources has hindered scholars in searching beyond the ports of disembarkation listed in the TSTD.

For my study, I created a list of borrowed Bantu words from three main sources. The first is contemporary narratives and archival documents, usually descriptions of religious assemblies or other cultural practices in Saint Domingue. Especially important are documents relating to the Makandal affaire, the Mayombe Bila ceremony held in 1786, and the Kikongo song recorded in the 1780s by Moreau. The second is the “Congo Vocabulary” Baudry de Lozières created by interviewing his “Congo” slaves in Saint Domingue in the 1780s.⁵ The third is Vodou songs which are in whole or in part composed of Bantu words and which refer to concepts or events that can be tied to the eighteenth century through other sources. These songs derived from the Kongo and Petro

⁴ I am extremely grateful to the SSRC IDRF, which permitted me to learn the methodology and conduct linguistic research at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium with the help of resident linguists, especially Birgit Ricquier. I continued linguistic research in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where I was fortunate to benefit from the guidance and expertise of the faculty and researchers at the *Centre de Linguistique Théorique et Appliquée* (CELTA), a research facility associated with the University of Kinshasa (UNIKIN) in the Democratic Republic of Congo where I was fortunate to benefit from the guidance and expertise of faculty and researchers, especially Daniel Mutombo Huta Mukana and André Nantanta Makokila.

⁵ Louis Narcisse Baudry de Lozieres, *Second Voyage a la Louisiane* (Paris 1803).

nanchons, or nations, of Vodou. The main sources of Vodou songs I consulted were the transcriptions and recordings of Max Beauvoir, Milo and Odette-Menesson Rigaud, and Alan Lomax, in addition to my own recordings and fieldwork from the Vodou sanctuaries of Soukri and Mariani.⁶ Of course, there was no single point of origin for the captives who were enslaved and transported to Saint Domingue in the years preceding the Haitian Revolution. The illicit French slave trade south of the Congo River – especially below the Portuguese stronghold of Benguela in southern Angola – no doubt caused people from differing regions to become enslaved. However, by narrowing down the linguistic roots of Bantu words found in historical documents from Saint Domingue to a single language or group of languages it is possible to establish linguistic and therefore geographic regions of origin.

Linguistic study of these words demonstrates an overwhelming correlation with the Kikongo Group Languages (H10), specifically with Kikongo. The Kikongo Language Group encompasses the area from the Loango Coast south into northern Angola.⁷ The label ‘Kongo’ does not refer to the Kingdom of Kongo or the Bakongo people. Instead,

⁶ Songs recorded during field research carried out by the author in June-July 2012 as well as collections of: Max Beauvoir, *Le grand recueil sacré: ou répertoire des chansons du vodou Haïtien*, Koleksyon Memwa Vivan (Haiti: Pres Nasyonal d'Ayiti, 2008). Milo Rigaud, *La tradition voodoo et le voodoo haïtien: son temple, ses mystères, sa magie* (Paris: Niclus, 1953). Papers of Odette Mennesson-Rigaude, Bibliothèque Haïtienne des Pères du Saint-Esprit, Port-au-Prince, Haïti. Alan Lomax, *The Haiti recordings [sound recording]*, *The Alan Lomax collection* (San Francisco, CA: Harte Recordings, 2009).

⁷ Based on updated Guthrie classifications compiled by Jouni Filip Maho: Maho, "The New Updated Guthrie Online". On the existence of the Kongo language group in the eighteenth century, see: Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*.

Kongo is used as a generic term to refer to the linguistic and cultural area of the Kongo language zone (H10), which includes peoples and languages of the Loango Coast south to Luanda in Angola and east of the Kwango River to the Yaka and Suku of modern Bandundu Province. Because Kikongo is a creole of regional languages it is necessary to disarticulate from *which* language(s) in the Kikongophone zone the words originated. It is possible to do so because a number of contemporary vocabularies and dictionaries of Kikongo and Kimbundu languages exist for the early modern period. They stress the variety among languages spoken in the Kingdom of Kongo, and agree that languages spoken north and south of the Congo River were not mutually intelligible. These sources reveal that significant Bantu words used in Saint Domingue correspond to words found exclusively in Western Kikongo varieties spoken north of the Congo River. These varieties include Kivili, spoken in the Kingdom of Loango, Kiwoyo, spoken in the kingdoms of Kakongo and Ngoyo, and Kiyombe, spoken in the western Mayombe rainforest.

This linguistic evidence suggests many Loango Coast captives originated from north of the Congo River, in the coastal kingdoms, with some evidence of specifically Yombe origin. This information challenges scholars' belief that the inhabitants of the coastal kingdoms and Mayombe rainforest were mere middlemen in the interior slave trade.⁸ It likewise contradicts the belief that captives originated from the Kingdom of

⁸ Broadhead, "Trade and politics on the Congo coast : 1770-1870."; Martin, "The Trade of Loango in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries."; ———, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango.*

Kongo, south of the Congo River, from the Tio-controlled market at the Malebo Pool, or the Bobangi trade along the Upper Congo River.⁹

Historians of the Loango Coast traditionally believed that the inhabitants of the coastal kingdoms and Mayombe hinterland were not themselves enslaved and sold to Europeans.¹⁰ Several inaccuracies underpin this argument. The first is that Europeans did not provide credit to coastal slave merchants on the Loango Coast.¹¹ The second is that it was contrary to kingdom law to sell the kingdoms' citizens, even slaves, to European slave traders. For example, Paul Lovejoy concluded, "[t]he inhabitants of the Loango ports were exempted from judicial enslavement. Anyone born there could not be sold into slavery, no matter what the crime."¹² However, the contemporary sources explored in Chapter 4 do not substantiate either of these claims for the Loango Coast kingdoms in the last half of the eighteenth century. When seen alongside the linguistic evidence presented in this chapter, it is clear that the internal history of the Loango Coast kingdoms and Mayombe hinterland are more significant for the history of the slave trade than

⁹ See, for example: Heywood, "Slavery and Its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo: 1491-1800."; Thornton, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution."; Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*.

¹⁰ ———, "The Trade of Loango in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries."; ———, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*; Broadhead, "Trade and politics on the Congo coast : 1770-1870."

¹¹ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 206.

¹² Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: a History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). 131.

previously considered. Sociolinguistic evidence suggests the inhabitants of the coastal kingdoms and Mayombe rainforest were the victims of the new mechanisms of enslavement created as a result of the erosion of traditional political institutions caused by the Atlantic slave trade explored in Chapter 2. The north coast origin of Loango Coast captives has important repercussions for the cultural history of the Americas. As we will see in Chapter 6, inhabitants from the coastal kingdoms had little or no contact with European religious beliefs and those from the inland forest had none at all. They were not, therefore, “Atlantic Creoles” with prior knowledge of European culture and religion. The information revealed using sociolinguistic analysis of sources from Saint Domingue is therefore significant not only for the local history of slavery on the Loango Coast but for the history of the wider Kongolese Atlantic world.

The research presented in this chapter calls into question the significance of the slaving frontier in generating captives for the Loango Coast slave trade in the last half of the eighteenth century. The concept of the slaving frontier was famously put forward by historian Joseph Miller in his foundational study of slavery in West Central Africa *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (1988). Miller argued that “[b]ecause the richest returns from converting goods into people came from spreading textiles and imports widely into areas where they remained rare, or from employing guns to capture slaves in the regions farthest from home, the transformation of the African political economies acquired an expansive geographical momentum that drove its violence off toward the east.” The Atlantic slave trade thus initiated a process of “political revolutions” that “moved toward the interior” creating “areas of greatest

violence” which “formed a kind of frontier zone.”¹³ The central feature of the slaving frontier was warfare resulting in the deaths of as many “as 90 percent of those involved,” the structural realignment of political and economic systems toward coastal trade, and the depopulation of frontier regions. “The slaving frontier zone,” Miller concluded,

thus washed inland in the sixteenth century and surged east like a demographic wave bearing the sea-borne goods of the Europeans on its crest. It tossed people caught in its turbulence about in wildly swirling currents of political and economic change. Like an ocean swell crashing on a beach, it dragged some of its victims out to sea in the undertow of slave exports that flowed from it, but it set most of the people over whom it washed down again in Africa, human flotsam and jetsam exposed to slavers combing the sands of the African mercantile realms left by the receding waters in the west, displaced from their birthplace but not distantly so compared to the faraway destinations of the slaves carried off to America. By the middle third of the nineteenth century, the wave had tumbled populations all the way to the center of the continent. There it rose to towering heights of chaos [...] Behind it, toward the Atlantic to the west, the turbulence subsided into relatively still demographic pools where quiet-flowing currents of reproduction and debt carried off most of the people sent into slaving, and where only eddies of periodic succession struggles and banditry from the distant sweeping tide continued to disturb the calm surface of politics.¹⁴

Miller’s poetic metaphor of the slaving frontier as a wave rising from the Atlantic Ocean crashing eastward over the African continent captured the devastation and destruction of both individuals and communities caused by the slave trade. However, Miller argued that in its wake, the slaving frontier left regions of stability and that the captives for the Atlantic slave trade continued, throughout the period, to come from increasingly inland frontier zones. Following Miller’s work, studies by Martin Klein, Patrick Manning, John Fage and others linked the increase in demand for slaves to the rise of militarized African

¹³ Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830*: 140.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

states who preyed upon inland decentralized societies in order to gain captives for trade.¹⁵

In the case of the Loango Coast slave trade, Vansina followed Miller in concluding that “[t]he growth in European demand was met mostly by expanding the area affected by the Atlantic trade, not by extracting an ever greater number of slaves from the same region.”¹⁶

Since its publication, Miller’s concept of the slaving frontier has overshadowed local histories of regions of Africa that directly participated in the Atlantic slave trade – especially at the trade’s apogee in the last half of the eighteenth century. However,

¹⁵ J. D. Fage, *A History of West Africa: An Introductory Survey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Claude Meillassoux, *L'Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, Bibliothèque d'Anthropologie (Paris: F. Maspero, 1975); Stephen P. Reyna, *Wars without end: the political economy of a Precolonial African state* (Hanover, NH: Published for University of New Hampshire by University Press of New England, 1990); Martin A. Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies," *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 1 (2001); Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African life: occidental, oriental, and African slave trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); *The Atlantic Slave Trade: effects on economies, societies, and peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe*, ed. Stanley L. Engerman and J. E. Inikori (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992); J. D. Fage, *A History of West Africa: An Introductory Survey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic slave trade*, African studies series ; 92 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Claude Meillassoux, *The anthropology of slavery : the womb of iron and gold*, Meillassoux, Claude. Anthropologie de l'esclavage. English (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Richard L. Roberts, *Warriors, merchants, and slaves : the state and the economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700-1914* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987); Reyna, *Wars without end: the political economy of a Precolonial African state*; *ibid.*; Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies."; *ibid.*; Manning, *Slavery and African life: occidental, oriental, and African slave trades*; *The Atlantic Slave Trade: effects on economies, societies, and peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe*; Fage, *A History of West Africa: An Introductory Survey*; Claude Meillassoux, *L'Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, Bibliothèque d'Anthropologie (Paris: F. Maspero, 1975); Roberts, *Warriors, merchants, and slaves : the state and the economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700-1914.*; Martin A. Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies," *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 1 (2001)

¹⁶ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 207.

linguistic evidence explored in this chapter demonstrates that the idea of the slaving frontier does not accurately reflect the provenance of captives for the Loango Coast slave trade. Recent research on Benguela by Roquinaldo Ferreira and Mariana Candido has likewise questioned the idea of the slaving frontier and subsequent stability for the history of Angola.¹⁷ The research presented here demonstrates the continued need to investigate the history of the regions of West Central Africa directly involved in the Atlantic slave trade. The fact that captives did in fact originate from the coastal kingdoms and immediate hinterland in the late eighteenth century highlights the importance of understanding the political and economic changes initiated by the Atlantic slave trade and what those meant for the lives of the men and women who lived there. It also raises the question of how to write history in the absence of written documents and underscores the importance of drawing on diverse sources and interdisciplinary methodologies.

Linguistics for Historians

How can historians understand the history of Africans in the Atlantic world who spent much, if not all of their lives, outside of or maligned by the gaze of Europeans? It is a question that is at once historical, methodological, and epistemological. If we can only understand history through written sources, then the task becomes a methodological, and therefore an epistemological, impossibility. Fortunately, historians of Africa and the

¹⁷ Roquinaldo Amaral Ferreira, *Cross-cultural exchange in the Atlantic world : Angola and Brazil during the era of the slave trade*, African studies ; 121 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Mariana P. author Candido, *An African slaving port and the Atlantic world : Benguela and its Hinterland*, African studies ; [124] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

diaspora have shown that it is possible to hear voices in silences by combining linguistic, ethnographic, and archival sources. Indeed, historians of slavery are not the only scholars to face the challenge of writing the history of those who left few, if any, written documents. Historians of the early history of equatorial Africa face the challenge of reconstructing the past in the near-complete absence of written documents before Belgian colonization. In response, these scholars have led the way in pioneering interdisciplinary methodologies. Following the groundbreaking work of pre-eminent historian Jan Vansina, scholars have turned to a sociolinguistic methodology - using linguistic analysis in conjunction with contemporary ethnography and traditional oral and written historical sources - to reconstruct the social and cultural history of the region.

Vansina argues that a sociolinguistic methodology is appropriate because African societies are best understood through what can broadly be termed “culture” and that culture is understood and expressed through language.¹⁸ Language itself can therefore be used as a tool to study culture. Vansina proposes using a combination of historical linguistics and comparative ethnography, a methodology he calls “words and things,” to reconstruct the *longue durée* of African history. In the absence of written documents, language itself becomes a historical source. Language is useful, Vansina argues, because it is “an arbitrary, symbolic, and largely unconscious holistic system of communication

¹⁸ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*. Earlier work on historical linguistics and historians: ———, “The Dictionary and the Historian,” *History in Africa* 1(1974).

with a high degree of internal inertia.”¹⁹ In short, languages are useful because they are complete, unified systems and they do not change easily. Linguists describe the latter phenomenon in terms of “constraints on language change.”²⁰ Linguists assume that languages descend from a single parent or ancestor language and that changes in languages stem from identifiable factors: innovation or lexical borrowing due to socio-cultural necessity at a particular historical moment. Lexical borrowing refers to a word, called a loanword, “that at some point in the history of the language entered its lexicon as a result of borrowing (or *transfer*, or *copying*).”²¹ Borrowing is a general term to refer to any process of transfer of copying between languages, whether the transfer was due to native speakers adopting elements from another language or whether foreign words were imposed on native speakers by non-native speakers.²² Because languages change slowly and because changes in languages stem from identifiable influences (borrowing or innovation), linguists are able to “establish a genetic relationship between languages by showing *systematic* phonological morphological, and syntactic correspondences which

¹⁹ ———, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 10.

²⁰ Martin Haspelmath, "Loanword typology: Steps toward a systematic cross-linguistic study of lexical borrowability," in *Aspects of language contact: New theoretical, methodological and empirical findings with special focus on Romancisation processes*, ed. Thomas Stolz, Dik Bakker, and Rosa Salas Palomo (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 1.

²¹ ———, "Lexical borrowing: Concepts and issues.," in *Loanwords in the World's Languages: A Comparative Handbook*, ed. Martin Haspelmath and Uri Tadmor (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2009).

²² *Ibid.* See also: Raymond Hickey, "Language Contact: Reconsideration and Reassessment," in *The handbook of language contact*, ed. Raymond Hickey, *Blackwell handbooks in linguistics* (Chichester, West Sussex ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

cannot result from chance occurrence.”²³ Linguists compare lists of 1-200 vocabulary words among related languages in order to estimate the linguistic similarity between them. This kind of comparative, statistical analysis is called lexicostatistics.²⁴ The relation between languages is of interest to historians because the primary cause of language change is “the sociolinguistic history of the speakers.” When faced with contact between two languages, it is the social history of the contact of the two groups, rather than the internal structure of the their languages, “that is the primary determinant of the linguistic outcome of language contact.”²⁵ In sum, changes in languages do not appear out of thin air. Rather, they come from somewhere identifiable. By studying where and when linguistic changes (borrowings) occur historians can learn about the social history of the people involved.

Vansina proposes using a linguistic methodology for historical purposes by combining comparative historical linguistics with contemporary ethnography and historical documents. According to Vansina, the “most rewarding” field of linguistics for historians is semantics, or vocabulary studies. The study of linguistic meaning is useful “because of the special property of words as joiners of *form*,” what the word looks like,

²³ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 10.

²⁴ R. L. Trask, *Historical linguistics* (London: Arnold, 1996). 361-2.

²⁵ Sarah G. Thomason, *Language Contact, Creolization and Genetic Linguistics*, ed. Terrence author Kaufman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). 36.

“and *meaning*,” the signification of the word.²⁶ “The form is an arbitrary linguistic feature, but the meaning refers to culture or society.” Both the *form* and the *meaning* of words can be useful to historians. Studying the former can help historians understand the latter: “the history of the *form* tells us something valid about the history of *meaning*: the institution, belief, value, or object to which that form pertains.”²⁷ Put simply, the form of a word can be seen as a linguistic artifact that can be studied in terms of its appearance or *form*. On the contrary, the *meaning* of a word is a cultural construct that can only be studied correctly by using contemporary historical and ethnographic evidence, which Vansina refers to as the study of “things.”²⁸ This represents the second part of Vansina’s “words and things” methodology.

It is important to root linguistic analysis in a firm understanding of the contemporary cultural history of the region for two reasons. The first is to avoid anachronism. The second is to avoid misidentifying lexical correlations. For example, linguist Phillip Baker misidentifies the parent of the Lemba Vodou practice in Haiti as the Kimbundu word *lemba* meaning “*dieu president à la generation*.”²⁹ Likewise, Pierre Anglade incorrectly proposes the name of a Congolese “tribe,” a hardwood used in

²⁶ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 11-12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Philip Baker, "Assessing the African Contribution to French-Based Creoles," in *Africanisms in Afro-American language varieties*, ed. Nancy Condon and Salikoko S. Mufwene (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 142.

Kongolese sorcery, or the same Kimbundu definition cited by Baker (probably first identified by Roger Bastide) as the origin of Haitian Lemba.³⁰ Anglade and Baker's mistake is readily apparent to anyone with knowledge of the cultural history of the Kongo zone. The origin of the Haitian practice of Lemba is clearly the socio-religious association of the same name that began in Loango and spread throughout the Kongo and Teke zones by the eighteenth century.³¹ Anglade's inventory is riddled with similar errors, which appear to arise from the fact that he assigned matches based only on *form*, rather than on both *form* and *meaning*. In fact, both must match in order to establish a reliable correlation. Baker and Anglade's errors suggest that historical linguistics should be the domain of historians and anthropologists as well as linguists.

Vansina demonstrates the utility of the "words and things" combination of linguistic and ethnographic data by successfully reconstructing five millennia of equatorial African history. While Vansina, like traditional linguists, limits his lexicostatistic study to basic, or culturally neutral vocabulary, scholars such as anthropologist Luc de Heusch and historian Jean de Dieu Nsondé employ the opposite strategy: using sociolinguistic analysis of culturally significant terms to reconstruct the

³⁰ Pierre Anglade, *Inventaire étymologique des termes Créoles des Caraïbes d'origine Africaine, Sémantiques* (Paris, France: L'Harmattan, 1998). 137. Roger Bastide, *African Civilisations in the New World* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971[1967]). 108.

³¹ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 224-5; 36. Janzen, *Lemba, 1650-1930: a drum of affliction in Africa and the New World*; Jean Price-Mars, "Lemba-Péto: un culte secret, son histoire, sa localisation géographique, son symbolisme," *Revue de la Société haïtienne d'histoire et de géographie d'Haïti* 9, no. 28 (1938).

history of the Kongo Zone.³² Heusch argues that historical sources, written and oral, do not allow historians to reconstruct the genealogy of cultural change over time. Like Vansina, Heusch advocates using comparative linguistics and ethnography alongside traditional historical sources in order to get beyond the limited and extremely biased written accounts of missionaries and slave traders and understand both the indigenous culture of the region and its history.³³ Likewise, for Nsondé the Kikongo words, or lexicon, in early modern sources “represents a veritable gold mine” of information for scholars. “[L]inguistic sources,” he argues, “allow, perhaps more than others, a study based on many quantifiable tangible elements, of which the weaknesses and credibility stand up to criticism.”³⁴ For both scholars, semantics represents an important strategy to address the fact that nearly all historical documents for the time period come from European authors.

Using Sociolinguistics to Establish Geographic Origin

The study of historical linguistics is particularly well suited to Bantu languages as they descend from a single parent language with relatively few outside influences for

³² Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 10-12; Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*.

³³ Those familiar with the heated debate between Heusch and Vansina over the validity of oral history in the 1970s may find it ironic that Luc de Heusch ultimately advocated a method remarkably similar to the one put forward by Vansina 10 years earlier. For Vansina’s take on the debate, see: Jan Vansina, *Living with Africa* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

³⁴ Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 27.

much of their history. Unlike the linguistic variety found in West Africa, Bantu languages are closely related and “generally have 70% or more shared cognates.”³⁵ The Bantu languages form the largest subset of the world’s largest language phylum, Niger-Congo. Scholars are not sure how many Bantu languages exist due to the lack of adequate linguistic studies for the entire Bantu region (fewer than 10% have “a reasonable grammar”), however, estimates range from 400 to 600 languages across nearly half of sub-Saharan Africa.³⁶ Bantu is the predominant language group south of 5 degree latitude North, covering the area from Cameroon to South Africa, Lesotho, and Swaziland.³⁷ Today roughly 240 million people, or one in three Africans, are Bantu-speakers.³⁸

The Bantu language area is divided into sixteen Zones (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, P, R, S), which are in turn divided into decades (A10, A20, A30, ect.) each indicating a group of languages (H10 Kongo Languages), and then a specific numeric classification (H16 Kikongo) referring to a specific language within that group. The classification was first devised by Malcom Guthrie (published between 1967 and 1971)

³⁵ Baker, "Assessing the African Contribution to French-Based Creoles," 125.

³⁶ Derek Nurse and Gérard Philippson, eds., *The Bantu languages* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 5.

³⁷ Koen Bostoen, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Royal Museum for Central Africa Tervuren, "Linguistics for the Use of African History and the Comparative Study of Bantu Pottery Vocabulary."

³⁸ Nurse and Philippson, *The Bantu languages*, 1.

and later revised and updated.³⁹ Within each zone there exists an enormous amount of linguistic variety: 244 distinct languages are identified in the 2012 Linguistic Atlas of the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁴⁰ According to the editor of the Atlas, that number is far from accurate; it does not include the numerous regions where no research has been conducted nor does it enumerate linguistic varieties which may constitute complete languages.⁴¹

In this chapter, I use historical linguistics to research the history of slavery the Loango Coast in the last half of the eighteenth century using Bantu words in historical documents and Vodou songs from the colony of Saint Domingue. The methodology involves compiling a list of borrowed words and trying to identify the parent language with as much regional and historical specificity as possible. To do so, one first identifies the linguistic zone (such as Zone H, Kongo languages, Kimbundu languages, Yaka languages with Yans), followed by the language group (such as H10, the Kikongo language group) to which the borrowed word belongs, and then continues refining the search until able to identify a single parent language of origin.⁴² Both the “form” and the

³⁹ In addition to Nurse and Philippson (cited above), I use: Jouni Filip Maho, "NUGL Online: The online version of the New Updated Guthrie List, a referential classification of the Bantu languages."

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ General Director Daniel Mutombo Huta Mukana, Centre de linguistique théorique et appliquée (CELTA), Université de Kinshasa (UNIKIN), 8 October 2012 2012.

⁴² Guthrie, *Comparative Bantu: an Introduction to the Comparative Linguistics and Prehistory of the Bantu Languages, 4 Volumes*. Updated by: Nurse and Philippson, *The Bantu languages*;

“meaning” of the words must be the same in order to constitute a match. The coastal and inland area identified by previous historians as having been impacted by the Loango Coast slave trade linguistically corresponds to: Zone H, Kongo languages, Kimbundu languages, Yaka languages with Yans; Zone B, north of the Congo River, which includes the Teke languages; Zone C, northeastern DRC languages such as Bobangi; and Zone L, which includes the Pende, Luban, and Lunda languages.⁴³

I commenced my linguistic research with the furthest inland area that possibly supplied captives to coastal slave traders in the 1780s and then systematically worked my way toward the coast. I began with linguistic groups such as the Mongo of the Bangi-Ntomba language group (C30) who may have been sold by the Bobangi. Historians believe traders known as the Bobangi sold captives at the Malebo Pool near present-day Kinshasa, from whence they were transported, overland, by caravan, to the European ‘factories’ on the Loango Coast.⁴⁴ This belief rests partly on Grandpré’s use of the terms

Maho, "NUGL Online: The online version of the New Updated Guthrie List, a referential classification of the Bantu languages."

⁴³ Based on the work of: Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966); Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830*. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*.

⁴⁴ On the Bobangi and the slave trade see: Harms, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: the Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500-1891*.

“Montéké” and “Quibanque” to identify the origins of captives sold on the Loango coast in the 1780s.⁴⁵ I did not find linguistic matches with the C30 languages.

I proceeded to the Bobangi language itself. It is important to note here that though currently the lingua franca of the Congo River, the Lingala language did not exist at the end of the eighteenth century. It is therefore not useful to research eighteenth century words in a Lingala dictionary.⁴⁶ Scholars believe that Lingala arose from Bobangi at the time of colonization in the late nineteenth century due to the Belgian introduction of thousands of African employees who were *not* indigenous to Central Africa. Previous to colonization, Bobangi had been the trade language of riverine trade from the Ubangi and Congo Rivers for 500 miles west to the convergence of the Kasai and Congo Rivers, about 100 miles north of Kinshasa and Brazzaville.⁴⁷ However, the Bobangi language furnished few matches that are not also found in Kikongo languages.

I then moved my focus downriver and investigated, insofar as limited linguistic materials permitted me, the possible parentage of the Teke languages (Zone B70) spoken by the inhabitants of the Tio Kingdom who controlled trade at the Malebo Pool.⁴⁸ I also

⁴⁵ The latter is seen as a derivation of “Bobangi,” though I believe it is important to note that Raimondo da Dicomamo, Italian capuchin missionary in the Congo from 1792-5, uses the toponym “Quibango” to denote the area of the former Kingdom of Kongo. Jadin, “Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795,” 315. Seen on map in: ———, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Soho, Congo, 1600-1675*.

⁴⁶ A common error made by, among others, Max Beauvoir. Beauvoir, *Grand Recueil*.

⁴⁷ Bokamba and Bokamba, *Tósolola na Lingála: A Multidimensional Approach to the Teaching and Learning of Lingála as a Foreign Language*.

⁴⁸ For the Tio Kingdom see: Vansina, *The Tio kingdom of the Middle Congo, 1880-1892*.

looked at the Tiene-Yans Group Languages (B80) spoken in the region directly inland from the Teke and northeast of the Yaka. I hypothesized that the Yans inhabitants of the lower Kasai River of present-day Bandundu province would surely have been victims of these two major eighteenth-century slave-trading confederations. To my surprise, the Yans language was an extremely poor lexicostatistic match. How were the Yans able to avoid being enslaved at the height of the Atlantic slave trade, living near such huge predatory groups? During my research in the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.), I was told during an interview with the grandson of the first Yans “*chef médaillé*” that, in order to avoid enslavement, the Yans moved from their traditional villages in the savanna bordering the equatorial rainforest east into the forest, switching from semi-permanent villages to a near-nomadic existence.⁴⁹ The Yans did not return to agriculture-based settlements on the savanna until forced (or enticed, depending on the version of events) to do so by the Belgians.⁵⁰ This oral account of Yans history appears to be consistent with Vansina’s finding that in the eighteenth century “new Yans principalities were founded” south of the lower Kasai River “by fresh arrivals from the Teke plateaus” who were probably escaping slave raids from their neighbors.⁵¹ This information could explain the

⁴⁹ CICM Priest Daniel Katona, Imprimerie du Diocèse de Boma, Kinshasa, D.R.C., 18 October 2013.

⁵⁰ Annual Reports for 1910 and later housed in the Archives Nationales du Congo (ARNACO) appear to confirm this information. However, further research is needed.

⁵¹ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 230.

geographical dispersion of Tiene-Yans languages, which exist today in distinct pockets in Bandundu province.⁵²

At the end of this process, I was able to identify the Kikongo Group Languages (H10) as the major language parent group of Bantu words found in Vodou songs and historical documents from Saint Domingue. The Kikongo Group Languages encompasses the area from the Loango Coast south into northern Angola and include languages such as Bembe, Kamba-Doondo, Vili from the Kingdom of Loango, Kunyi, Ndingi and Mboka from Cabinda, and the Kikongo languages.⁵³ Amongst that group, the greatest lexicostatistic correlation was with Kikongo. The official Kikongo language (called Munukutuba, Kituba, ékélévé, or Kikongo yà létà – Kikongo of the government) is itself a creole of many regional languages (and their variants). Kikongo is believed to have developed in the late eighteenth century in the Congo estuary (present-day Angolan Cabinda) and neighboring states of Sonyo, Ngoyo, and Kongo as a result of the increased contact between different Kikongo language speakers due to the Atlantic slave trade. Kiyombe is believed to be the major parent language of the Kikongo languages.⁵⁴ It is therefore necessary to disarticulate from *which* language(s) in the Kikongophone zone the borrowings originated. To do so, one locates each borrowed word in contemporary dictionaries for all possible language parents until isolating a single language of origin.

⁵² Maho, "The New Updated Guthrie Online".

⁵³ Current classification from *ibid*.

⁵⁴ Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 226.

This is not always possible because many words derive from proto-bantu forms and are therefore found throughout the area and many languages lack adequate or contemporary linguistic studies.

The Kikongo zone, however, is an unusually privileged area for linguistic research due to the existence of numerous vocabularies of Kikongo and Kimbundu languages written by Europeans in the early modern period.⁵⁵ Most of the vocabularies concern the regions south of the Congo River. These vocabularies concern chiefly the areas of Angola and the Kingdom of Kongo visited by Capuchin missionaries. However, the French Missionaries in Kakongo 1766-1775 wrote several grammar and a dictionaries of the Kakongo language.⁵⁶ Grandpré included a seven-page vocabulary based on his time on the Loango Coast,⁵⁷ and James Tuckey included a nine-page “Vocabulary of the Malemba and Embomma languages” in account of his 1816 voyage.⁵⁸ Contemporary linguistic materials do therefore exist for the northern coastal region. These documents

⁵⁵ The oldest Bantu dictionary dates from 1652 and is in the Bibliothèque Vittorio-Emmanuele, Rome Italy. Published as: Jan Van Wing and C Penders, *Le plus ancien dictionnaire bantu. Het oudste Bantu-Woordenboek. Vocabularium P. Georgii Gelensis* (Louvain: J. Kuyl-Otto, 1928).

⁵⁶ We know of the extant manuscripts of dictionaries created by the missionaries thanks to the exhaustive archival research of Jean de Dieu Nsondé. Existing manuscripts are: Manuscripts 523-525 at the Bibliothèque Municipale de Basançon, France; anon., "Dictionnaire françois et congo with Remarques préliminaires," 1772, British Museum, Grenville Library, XXIV. ADD 33779. ———, "Dictionnaire congo, vocabulaire français-kikongo et phrases usuelles," BNF Man. 899, MS 5 COTE AFRICAINE 5; Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*.

⁵⁷ Grandpré, *Voyage*: 156-62.

⁵⁸ James Kingston Tuckey, *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire: Usually Called the Congo, in South Africa, in 1816* (J. Murray, 1818). 391-99.

show a high degree of linguistic variety between regions. Missionaries sent to the Kongo in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries complained about the linguistic difficulty of mission work in the region. For example, in the early eighteenth century Père Labat echoed Cavazzi da Montecuccolo's complaint decades earlier that one of the greatest difficulties facing missionaries was that they do not speak the different languages in use in the Kingdom of Kongo, where they found different languages spoken even in the same province.⁵⁹ The French missionaries in Kakongo reported that the Solongo of Sonyo, on the south bank of the river, spoke a different language from their northern neighbors in Ngoyo and Kakongo.⁶⁰ However, according to French sailor Jean Barbot and French Missionaries the languages spoken north of the river along the Loango Coast were mutually intelligible.⁶¹ It is these linguistic differences, preserved in the lexicons of early modern dictionaries and vocabularies, that make it possible to use words to locate geographic origin.

Many borrowings stem from proto-bantu forms and are found throughout the Bantu Language region (See Table 1). Perhaps the best example is the borrowed word

⁵⁹ Jean Baptiste Labat, *Relation historique de l'Ethiopie occidentale* (Paris 1732). III, 152. Cavazzi, *Descrição histórica dos três reinos do Congo, Matamba e Angola*; Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 14-15.

⁶⁰ Letter from Missionaries Jolly and Descourvières, Banze Malimbe, 1 July 1769, MEP, volume 356, pp. 243-5. Published in, Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 42.

⁶¹ John Churchill, *A collection of voyages and travels*. (London 1732). V: 468. Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 93.

Zambi meaning God from the Kikongo form *Nzambi*. *Nzambi* derives from a proto-bantu forms *-*yambé* and **-jambe*. In the Kongo area as well as in Saint Domingue, *Nzambi* is often followed by *Mpungu*, meaning “supreme,” “the highest,” “the strongest,” and “the most powerful.” *Nzambi Mpungu* therefore means “God Creator” or “Supreme God.” In Vodou songs *Mpungu*, which can be applied as an adjective to describe anything or anyone as all-powerful, is often rendered *M’Pongwe* or *Pongwamin*. These terms are found in eighteenth century sources for both Saint Domingue and the Kongo region. French Missionaries in Kakongo in the 1760s and 70s wrote the word for God was *Zambi* or *Zambi-a-n-pongou*.⁶² In the 1780s, Grandpré also heard the word *Zambi*. In the 1790s, Dicomano wrote *Zambi ampungo* for “God, creator of all.”⁶³ The word’s existence in Saint Domingue in the 1780s is attested to by Baudry’s Vocabulary: *dieu* (God): *Zanbiam pongou*. – *zambi*; *bon dieu* (Good God): *Zanbiam- pongoé*. The borrowed word *Ganga*, Haitian Vodou priest, from the Bantu word *Nganga*, religious expert, also derives from a starred proto-bantu form **-ganga*, which, according to Vansina, likely derives from **-gang-* (“to tie up”), a reference to one of the main ritual activities in public healing rituals.⁶⁴ The Kongo variant of this stem is *kanga* (“to tie up, to arrest, to stop”), is another word often found in Vodou songs, most notably in the much discussed song to

⁶² Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*.

⁶³ Jadin, “Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795,” 318.

⁶⁴ Appendix: Comparative Lexical Data, Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 298.

the diety *Mbumba*, recorded before the Revolution. The same proto-bantu meaning, “to tie up,” is also likely the root of the Bantu word for charm, **bwanga*, which is also related to the word for “root,” **-ganga*, because many medicines (*bilongo*, *malongo* in Kikongo dialects, also listed in Baudry) and power objects (*nkisi*, *minkisi*) are made from roots.⁶⁵ *Bwanga* is certainly the parent word of the term *wanga* used in Haiti.⁶⁶ The word *Doki* found in the Kikongo song recorded by Moreau and in present-day Haitian Kreyòl meaning witch or sorcerer derives from the Kikongo word *Ndoki*, from the Proto-Bantu forms **dogi* and **-dogo*, both meaning “witchcraft.” Because these words derive from Proto-Bantu forms they are therefore not useful for the task of determining geographic origin. Their survival and use in Saint Domingue does, however, attest to these words’ cultural importance.

Table 1: Sample Borrowed Bantu Words Stemming from Proto-Bantu Forms⁶⁷

Meaning	Kikongo word	Meaning	Proto-Bantu Form	
<i>Zambi</i>	God	<i>Nzambi</i>	God	CS 1917 - <i>*yambé</i> and CS925 <i>*-jambe</i> , both variants of the same ancestral form
<i>Ganga</i>	Vodou priest, religious expert	<i>Nganga</i>	Religious expert	CS 786 <i>*-ganga</i> , according from Vansina, derived from CS 785 <i>*-gang</i> (“to tie up”) and its variant CS 1007
<i>Canga</i>	In Kikongo	<i>Kanga</i>	To stop, to	CS 785 <i>*-gang</i> (“to tie up”) and

⁶⁵ Appendix: Comparative Lexical Data, *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Appendix: Comparative Lexical Data, *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Information on Proto-Bantu Forms from Vansina’s Appendix Comparative Lexical Data Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*: 298.

	song recorded by Moreau		tie, to bind	its variant CS 1007, likely a reference to the way medicines and rituals were performed.
<i>Wanga</i>	Sorcery, Poison	<i>Bwanga</i>	Charm, sorcery	Same as 2 & 3
<i>Doki</i>	Witch, sorcerer	<i>Ndoki</i>	Witch, sorcerer	* <i>dogi</i> and * <i>-dogo</i> , both meaning “witchcraft”

For words that can be singled down to a single origin, my research indicated a large proportion of borrowed words came from Kikongo languages spoken north of the Congo River. One indication is the presence of prefixes and words exclusive to north coast languages in the vocabulary Baudry created by interviewing his Kongolese slaves in Saint Domingue. For example, the nominal prefix “li” which is used north of the Congo River in place of the southern “di”⁶⁸ is seen in Baudry’s vocabulary. For example, under ‘canon’ Baudry lists “*litenda – matenda*.”⁶⁹ Another indicator is the presence of words only found among northern languages in Baudry’s vocabulary such as entries for: Banana: *Tébé, likondo, makondo*; brother, *konba*; sister, *Komba kint’*; stone, *magnian*; to bite, *tébéla*; nose, *illou*; to speak, *linganézé toubá*; and black, *Fioté, fiota*.⁷⁰ Many of Baudry’s entries are only used western varieties (Yombe, Vili, Woyo, Zali) spoken in the Loango Coast kingdoms and western Mayombe rainforest. According to Bostoën, these

⁶⁸ On prefix differences north and south of the river, see: Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*.

⁶⁹ As seen in: *Dictionnaire Français-Fiote: dialecte du Kakongo* (1890). 25. Canon: li tenda, pl. ma-

⁷⁰ Listed in the eighteenth century *Dictionnaire congo, vocabulaire français-Kikongo et phrases usuelles* Origin and timeperiod identified by Nsondé, 25. anon., *Dictionnaire congo, vocabulaire français-kikongo et phrases usuelles*.

languages share distinctive lexical cognates and form a “distinct cluster manifesting affinities with B40.”⁷¹ For example, the word Baudry lists for stone, *magnian*, is particularly useful for identifying linguistic region of origin because its Kikongo equivalent (*li*)*manya* ‘stone’ is only used among the northwestern languages of Yombe, Vili, Woyo as well as in B40 languages further north in present-day Gabon (Lumbu, Punu, Sangu, and Shira). According to linguist Koen Bostoen, *manya* is not used by even the neighboring riverine Mboma or Solongo of Sonyo nor by Kikongo speakers south of the Congo River, who use the form *tadi*, as do speakers of languages from the northern or eastern Mayombe rainforest such as Manyanga, Sundi, and Laadi.⁷² The word *Manya* must therefore have travelled to Saint Domingue by a speaker of Vili from the Kingdom of Loango, Woyo from the kingdoms of Kakongo and Ngoyo, of Kiyombe from the western Mayombe rainforest. Likewise, Baudry’s entry *tébéla* for ‘to bite’ refers to the Kikongo word *tebila* used only by Yombe, Vili, Woyo, and Zali speakers.⁷³

Table 2: Western Kikongo Varieties in Baudry's Congo Vocabulary

Baudry Entry	Kikongo Word	Distinctive lexical isoglosses⁷⁴	Loango Dictionary 1773⁷⁵	1652 Capuchin Vocabulary of Kisolongo⁷⁶
---------------------	---------------------	--	--	---

⁷¹ Bostoen, Koen. "Kikongo Dialect Continuum: Internal and External Classification." In *Niger-Conference*. Paris, 2012.

⁷² Bostoen, Koen. "Kikongo Dialect Continuum: Internal and External Classification." In *Niger-Conference*. Paris, 2012.

⁷³ As well as B40, Punu. Bostoen, Koen. "Kikongo Dialect Continuum: Internal and External Classification." In *Niger-Conference*. Paris, 2012.

⁷⁴ From: Bostoen, Koen. "Kikongo Dialect Continuum: Internal and External Classification." In *Niger-Conference*. Paris, 2012.

Black	<i>Fioté, Fiota</i>	<i>mfiote</i>	West: Yombe, Vili, Mayumba, Woyo B44: Lumbu	<i>Fioté, fiota</i> ⁷⁷	
Fire	<i>Bazou</i>	<i>mbasu</i>	West: Yombe, Vili, Woyo, Zali North: Bembe, Kunyi B40: Lumbu, Bwisi, Sanu H30: Yaka, Suku H40: Hungan	<i>inbazu</i>	<i>Tubhia</i>
Nose	<i>illou</i>	<i>Liyilu</i>	West: Yombe, Vili, Woyo, Zali B40: Lumbu, Bwisi, Ibongo	<i>liilu</i>	<i>luzunu</i>
Stone	<i>Magnian</i>	<i>(li)manya</i>	West: Yombe, Vili, Woyo B40: Lumbu, Puni, Sangu, Shira	<i>Limanïa/ mamaniã</i>	<i>etari</i>
To Bite	<i>Tébéla</i>	<i>tebila</i>	West: Yombe, Vili, Woyo, Zali B40: Puni (-	<i>tebila</i>	<i>cutatica</i>

⁷⁵ "Dictionnaire congo et français," 1773, Bibliothèque Municipale de Besançon, MS 525, 'Mission de Loango'

⁷⁶ According to Bostoën, vocabulary is Kisolongo from Sonyo or Kisikongo from Mbanza Kongo, the capital of the Kingdom of Kongo, though phonologically it is more similar to Kisolongo. Wing and Penders, *Le plus ancien dictionnaire bantu. Het oudste Bantu-Woordenboek. Vocabularium P. Georgii Gelensis*. Reedition of 1651-1652 Latin to Spanish and Kikongo dictionary by Flemish Capuchin missionary Joris van Gheel.

⁷⁷ "African **u m'fiote**, **pl. ba-fiote**: a black person, black people; Africa **si è fiote** country of black people" "*Africain u m'fiote, pl. ba-fiote: un Noir, des Noirs; Afrique si è fiote, pays de Noirs*" anon., "*Dictionnaire kikongo-français*," s.d., *Manuscrit 524, Bibliothèque Municipale de Besançon, Doubs, France*. Quoted in: Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Kongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 19.

			<i>rabila)</i>		
To speak	<i>linganéze</i> <i>touba</i>	<i>tuba</i>	West: Vili, Woyo, Zali, Yombe B40: Lumbu	<i>tuba</i>	<i>cúbhobha</i>

The word *fiote* is likewise linguistically significant because its Kikongo equivalent *mfiote* is only used in western Kikongo languages of the Loango Coast kingdoms and western Mayombe rainforest: Mayumba, Vili, Yombe, and Woyo.⁷⁸ Furthermore, *Fiote* deserves special attention because it was used in numerous sources in Saint Domingue including Baudry’s vocabulary and the Kikongo song recorded by Moreau. *Fiote* (plural *bafiote*) was the word used by Europeans during the time of the slave trade to mean “black”⁷⁹ and was used refer to inhabitants and language of the Loango Coast, present day Angolan Cabinda. The word, *mfiote* actually means “little,” “small,” or, in the context of warfare or the slave trade, “weak.”⁸⁰ The word *Mfiote* only exists in the north coast western Kikongo languages of Woyo, Vili, Mayumba, and Yombe, where it denotes “little,” “small,” and, especially in eighteenth century, “black.” *Fiote* does not correspond to any cultural or ethnic group, and is today considered

⁷⁸ Bostoën, Koen. "Kikongo Dialect Continuum: Internal and External Classification." In *Niger-Conference*. Paris, 2012.

⁷⁹ By Baudry, De Grandpré, Dennet, ect.

⁸⁰ Whenever and wherever I asked about it during my fieldwork, my informants were quick to admit that the word, in my source, meant “black” but that it actually meant “little, small” and using it to refer to people North of the river would be seen as offensive. During my field research in Mayombe, I most often heard the word in response to the question “how are you?”: “*mboté fiote*” (OK, a little/ Ca va un peu) or “*fiote fiote*” (a little, a little/ un peu un peu).

derogatory in Cabinda. However, the ubiquitous usage of *fiote* in eighteenth century sources from the Loango Coast suggests that coastal inhabitants as well as Europeans used it at the time. *Fioté* appears in several eighteenth century dictionaries from the Loango Coast.⁸¹ The usage of *fiote* in eighteenth century Saint Domingue, notably in the song to the diety “Bomba” or *Mbumba* recorded by Moreau, suggests captives originated from north of the Congo River in the Loango Coast kingdoms and western Mayombe rainforest.

Further linguistic evidence comes from three words in Baudry’s vocabulary that are of particular importance in Haitian Vodou – *ina*, *bazou*, and *laouka* – which all derive from words found in Western Kikongo varieties spoken only north of the Congo River. At the Vodou sanctuary of Soukri, a Kongo Pantheon of loa are believed to have descended from Manbo Ina, the Kongo Queen and mother of 101 children, and Bazou Mennen (or Bazou Minnin), commander of the army of Kongo Nation.⁸² Their firstborn is Laoka (also written Lawoka). Manbo Ina’s name derives from the word *ina*, meaning the number four. *Ina* is only used in Kikongo languages north of the Congo River. South of the River it is pronounced with a ‘y’ – *iya*.⁸³ The northern form *ina* is found in both

⁸¹ Grandpré, *Voyage*. anon., Dictionnaire françois et congo with Remarques préliminaires; ———, Dictionnaire congo, vocabulaire français-kikongo et phrases usuelles; ———, Dictionnaire kikongo-français On use and meaning see: Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*.

⁸² Oral interview with Serviteur Constant, 3 July 2012, Soukri, Haïti.

⁸³ *Ina* is found in Grandpré’s vocabulary. Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*.

Baudry's dictionary from Saint Domingue and Grandpré's vocabulary from the Loango Coast.⁸⁴ The number four could be a reference to the number of children Manbo Ina had. According to oral tradition, Manbo Ina gave birth to triplets -- Laoka, Jati Bwa Kantou, and Simbi Ganga – though during field research my informants included Lemba as one of Manbo Ina's quadruplets.⁸⁵ Laoka, her first-born child, also bears a northern name: *Lauka* (from Portuguese), meaning crazy, incensed, and furious. In Kikongo languages south of the river, the word is *laruka*. However, there is no 'r' in the Yombe language (indeed most cannot even pronounce it).⁸⁶ Abbé Proyart noted the same in 1776.⁸⁷ An eighteenth century dictionary from the Loango Coast gives the word *lau*.⁸⁸ Baudry, however, gives *laouka*, the Yombe form, for crazy (*fou*), which alongside its usage at Soukri provides evidence of Yombe origin. The word Bazou is a rendering of *mbazu*, a word that exists in western language variants Yombe, Vili, Woyo, and Zali and means "fire" as well as "heat."⁸⁹ The form appears in several eighteenth century dictionaries

⁸⁴ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 162. Baudry de Lozieres, *Second Voyage a la Louisiane*: 140.

⁸⁵ Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 380.

⁸⁶ Personal communication, Makokila, Doctorant en Linguistique Africain André Nantanta Makokila, Chercheur au CELTA, Kinshasa, D.R.C., 11 October 2013.

⁸⁷ Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 174.

⁸⁸ anon., Dictionnaire kikongo-français; Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*.

⁸⁹ As well as some northern, B40, H30 and H40 languages. See Appendix, Distinctive lexical isogloss. Bostoen, Koen. "Kikongo Dialect Continuum: Internal and External Classification." In *Niger-Conference*. Paris, 2012.

from the Loango Coast. Grandpré gives *bazou* for “fire, heat.”⁹⁰ Similarly, it appears as *inbazu* in the anonymous manuscript of a dictionaries found in the Municipal Library of Besançon, France, probably written by French missionaries sent to Kakongo.⁹¹ Proyart gave *n'bazou*.⁹² Significantly, the word appears several times in Baudry’s dictionary, thus confirming its meaning in Saint Domingue: to light, *sia m'bazou*; a lighter, *sisi m'bazou*; to heat, *bazou*; overheat, *iangola bazou*; fire, *bazou*; fever, *m'bazou*. The linguistic origin of the names of Bazou Minnin, Manbo Ina, and Laouka is the western Kikongo language varieties and therefore indicate captives originated from the Loango Coast kingdoms and western Mayombe rainforest.

Further evidence of northwestern origin comes from words found in documents generated by the arrests of Makandal and the participants of the Bila ceremony in Saint Domingue. Makandal’s name likely derives from the Yombe word *makanda*. In Mayombe, *makanda* is used to refer to packets of animal, vegetable, or mineral matter wrapped in a leaf. The word *ma-kanda* refers to the name of the leaf in which the packet is wrapped and ritually tied (*kanga*). The leaf’s name refers to the fact that it is large and flat, like the palm of the hand (hand, *kanda*). According to *nganga nkisi* Mbuta Nsamu,

⁹⁰ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 157.

⁹¹ According to my reading, the word is written as 'i nbazu,' so possibly 'inbazu' or 'nbazu.' Bostoën reads it as 'inbazu': anon., *Dictionnaire kikongo-français*. Quoted by Bostoën, Koen. "Kikongo Dialect Continuum: Internal and External Classification." In *Niger-Conference*. Paris, 2012. On authorship see: Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 19-20.

⁹² Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 184.

each *makanda* or *funda* is ritually empowered by an *nkisi* spirit, invoked by an *nganga nkisi* priest, and was named after the spirit or the power of the packet. Some packets were created for luck or protection. Others were aggressive; merely placing one in or near someone's house could cause them to fall ill. Synonyms for *makanda* are (*li-*) *funda* and *gris-gris*.⁹³ *Funda* are also packets made from leaves.⁹⁴

These Yombe bundles are similar to those created and sold by Makandal in Saint Domingue in the 1750s, also known as "*macandals*" or "*gris*," as well as to the "sacs called *fonda*" sold by Jérôme Poteau during a ceremony called "Mayombe or Bila" in Marmelade in 1786.⁹⁵ A 1773 dictionary from the Loango coast defined *li funda*, plural *ma* as a "packet which contains the prize."⁹⁶ South of the Congo River, these packets are referred to as *nkisi* (*minkisi* plural). North of the river, however, an *nkisi* (*bakisi* plural) is a spirit, and though power statues are sometimes referred to as an *nkisi* after the spirit that empowers them, packets or bundles, along with bottles, shells, and pots filled with substances are given specific names which refer to their action or power.⁹⁷ Significantly, according to the Courtin's *mémoire* about Macandal, the "allegedly magic" packets he

⁹³ Oral interview with Mbuta Nsamu, *nganga nkisi*, village of Patu, Mayombe, D.R.C. 30 November 2013.

⁹⁴ Léo Bittremieux, *Mayombsch idioticon* (Gent: Drukkerij "Erasmus," 1922).

⁹⁵ 27 AP 12, AN, Paris, France; F/3/88, ANOM, Aix-en-Provence, France; Saint-Méry, 274-5.

⁹⁶ anon., Dictionnaire kikongo-français; Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*.

⁹⁷ Hersak, "There Are Many Kongo Worlds: Particularities of Magico-Religious Beliefs among the Vili and Yombe of Congo-Brazzaville."

sold each received a specific name.⁹⁸ The assignment of individual names to each bundle both indicate Yombe origin. “Nearly all the *Nègres* have some *garde-corps* [talismans],” Courtin wrote, the most secret of were these “mysteriously prepared” packets.⁹⁹ The names and practices associated with the packets called *macandals* and *fonda* created by Makandal and Jérôme Poteau in Saint Domingue can be tied linguistically and ethnographically to the Mayombe region.

The names of Makandal’s accomplices present further ties to the Mayombe region. Makandal reportedly had two accomplices, Mayombe and Teysselo.¹⁰⁰ The name Teysselo correlates to the kiyombe word *tesolo*, the causative passive of the verb *tesa*, itself causative of the verb *ta*.¹⁰¹ *Tesolo* describes the action of a diviner (*nganga tesa*) who ritually “smells” the illness or sorcery by singing and dancing until he “inspires” his *nkisi* to tell him (or her) “who is the cause of the illness.”¹⁰² *Tesa* was the specialty of certain *nganga* and was often associated, in the Mayombe rainforest, with the use of the Mbumba Luangu *nkisi*, a “detective” power object renown for searching out guilty

⁹⁸ Courtin, *Mémoire sommaire sur ... François Macandal*, 1758

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ See: *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Léo Bittremieux, "Grammaire pratique du Kikongo Mayombien. Manuel pour les classes supérieures. Texte Yombe - Woyo - Français [Manuscrit]," 1944, Archive of Kangu Mission of Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae, Kangu, Mayombe, Democratic Republic of Congo. Léo Bittremieux, *La société secrète des Bakhimba au Mayombe* (Bruxelles: Institut royal colonial belge. Section des sciences morales et politiques, 1936). 190.

¹⁰² ———, *La société secrète des Bakhimba au Mayombe*: 141, 64; Aug de Clercq, "Grammaire du Kiyombe," *Anthropos* 2, no. 3 (1907): 53.

members of the community.¹⁰³ Teyssele's name therefore indicates his profession as an *nganga tesa* much in the same way that Makandal's name indicates his role as an *nganga nkisi*, a creator of objects by *nkisi* spirits known in Mayombe and Saint Domingue as, among other names, "macandals." The name of Makandal's second accomplice, Mayombe, presents another clear link to the Mayombe rainforest. The name of the 1786 ceremony in Marmelade that Jérôme Poteau participated in likewise attested to its ties to the Mayombe region. A slave name Dimanche told prosecutors that the nocturnal "assemblies" that had taken place on more than one occasion "were named Mayombe or Bila." The court's summary of evidence referred to the ceremonies by "the name of Magnetism of Mayombo or bila[.]"¹⁰⁴ The name of Makandal's accomplices and of the Marmelade ceremony both have overt ties to the Mayombe region.

The Kikongo song to the deity Mbumba recorded by Moreau also provides evidence of northwest, particularly Mayombe, origin. Moreau rendered the words to the chant as: "*Eh! Eh! Bomba, hen! Hen! / Canga bafio té / Canga mouen dé lé / Canga do ki la / Canga li.*"¹⁰⁵ Cuvelier transliterated the song into Kikongo¹⁰⁶ and English: Oh! Mbumba snake/ Stop the blacks/ Stop the white man/ Stop the *ndoki* [witch]/ Stop

¹⁰³ Bittremieux, *La société secrète des Bakhimba au Mayombe*: 173.

¹⁰⁴ "Procès... au sujet des assemblées de nuit tenues au Quartier de la Marmelade," 18 AP 3, dossier 12, Fonds de Berg de Breda, A.N., Paris, France.

¹⁰⁵ Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description... de Saint Domingue*: I: 49.

¹⁰⁶ See epigraph to chapter. For modern scholars takes on the translation of the song, see: Thornton, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution."; Geggus, "Haitian Voodoo in the Eighteenth Century: Language, Culture, Resistance."

them.”¹⁰⁷ Mbumba is the central mythic figure in Yombe cosmology who presides over the society’s two main initiation rites Bakhimba and Lemba.¹⁰⁸ Though known south of the Congo River, at the beginning of the twentieth century Mbumba was only found amongst the Woyo and Yombe.¹⁰⁹ The words *kanga* and *ndoki* used in the chant derive from Proto-Bantu forms. The word *mundele* was used throughout the region for Europeans or white people.¹¹⁰ The word *bafiote*, however, as previously discussed, is only used in the Yombe, Vili, Mayombe, and Woyo languages and therefore indicates origin from the Loango Coast kingdoms and western Mayombe rainforest.¹¹¹ The combined used of Mbumba and *bafiote* therefore strongly suggest a linguistic link with the Western Kikongo varieties of the Loango Coast kingdoms and western Mayombe rainforest.

During my field research around Kangu, Mayombe, two separate informants recognized the well-known “Eh Eh Mbumba” song recorded in Saint Domingue as part

¹⁰⁷ Cuvelier, *L'ancien royaume de Congo*: 290.

¹⁰⁸ *La société secrète des Bakhimba au Mayombe*; Doutreloux, *L'Ombre des fétiches, société et culture yombe*.

¹⁰⁹ Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*.

¹¹⁰ On the possibly etymology of *mindele/mundele* see: François Bontinck, "Les Mindele, hommes d'étoffes," *Annales Aequatoria* 16(1995).

¹¹¹ Maureen Warner-Lewis speculates “it is possible that Fiot or Vili coastal peoples from Loango came to be closely identified with Europeans and were therefore viewed with suspicion by non-Fiot groups. The meaning of **bafiote** in the Haitian context could therefore have been ‘treacherous blacks’ or even ‘mulattos’.” Maureen Warner Lewis, *Central Africa in the Caribbean : transcending time, transforming cultures* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2003). 321.

of the *Bibezi* ritual, “*malédiction pour toujours*” (malediction or curse forever). In the *Bibezi* ritual, a person or group come together to call upon Mbumba to curse a specific person or group of people. For example, one could ask that a certain person might never become chief or that they would remain a slave forever.¹¹² In this case, hair or articles of clothing belonging to the person would be put into a knot in a baobab tree and secured with nails (Bittremieux calls these nails *bibezi* for “nails of malediction/curse”.)¹¹³ To affirm the *Bibezi*, the articles were thrown into the fire (*mbazu*), which marked the end of the ceremony. Marie Fatuma, the *chef du groupement* of ex-Mboma Simbi, Mayombe, claimed to recognize the purpose of the “Eh Eh Bomba” song by its phrasing. The use of the verb “*kanga*” (to stop, to arrest, to bind) indicated the ceremony was being used to stop “all who go against the group.” The ceremony ensured the unification of the group – both by invoking protection against outside groups and by cursing any member of the group would try to betray them. She said that the words of the song of the *bibezi* were not fixed but changed according to the purpose of the ceremony.¹¹⁴ Though the Mbumba diety was generally associated with water, *maza*, Mbumba was also invoked in times of hardship or war, at which time he would be associated with fire (*mbazu*). “Ah *Mbumba luangu*, strike, kill!” implores one such song recorded by Bittremieux.¹¹⁵ There are also

¹¹² Oral Interview with Sese Babako, Nsioni, Mayombe, D.R.C., 23 November 2013

¹¹³ Bittremieux, *La société secrète des Bakhimba au Mayombe*.

¹¹⁴ Oral interview with Marie Fatuma, chef du groupement, ex-Mboma Simbi, Mayombe, D.R.C. 24 November 2013

¹¹⁵ Bittremieux, *La société secrète des Bakhimba au Mayombe*: 173.

examples of Yombe vengeance power objects in Vodou songs – *Mavungu* and *Kosi* (*nkosi*): “Go get *Mavangou*, if I’m angry I don’t play!”¹¹⁶ According to Bittremieux, *Mavungu* was an “avenger God.”¹¹⁷ The term also referred to a chief’s ritual staff, so called because historically the Ma-Vungu (or Mani-Vungu) was the chief of the important region of Vungu, which was the center of religious power in for Kongo peoples north and south of the Congo River.¹¹⁸

Table 3: Bantu words in Eighteenth Century Saint Domingue

Makandal, macandals	Name of famous spiritual leader in Saint Domingue, later used to refer to spiritually charged packets or bundles or to sorcerers and poisoners.	<i>makanda</i>	Packets of animal, vegetable, mineral matter wrapped in a leaf. Name refers to the large, flat leaf that is like the palm of a hand (<i>kanda</i>). South of the Congo River referred to as <i>nkisi</i>
Teyello	Makandal’s accomplice	<i>Tesolo</i>	Causative passive of the verb <i>tesa</i> , itself causative of the verb <i>ta</i> . Describes the action of a diviner (<i>nganga tesa</i>).
Mayombé	Makandal’s accomplice	Mayombe	Mayombe rainforest
Gris	Another name for packets sold by Makandal	<i>Gris gris</i>	Synonym for <i>makanda</i> or (<i>di</i>) <i>funda</i> packets, south of the Congo River referred to as <i>nkisi</i>

¹¹⁶ Song 1592, GRS

¹¹⁷ Bittremieux, *La société secrète des Bakhimba au Mayombe*.

¹¹⁸ It was the Mani-Vungu who crowned the king of Kongo and conferred power upon important Mayombe chiefs. Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*. These functions of the Mani Vungu seen in: Jadin, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774." And ———, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795."

Ouanga	Meant “poison” according to judge Courtin’s report on Makandal. ¹¹⁹	<i>Bwanga</i>	Charm, from proto-bantu form
Fonda	Bundles sold by Jérôme Poteau in Marmelade in 1786	<i>(li)funda</i>	Synonym for <i>makanda</i> or <i>gris gris</i>
Bomba	Deity invoked in Kikongo song recorded by Moreau	<i>Mbumba</i>	Deity known throughout Kongo zone but of central importance on Loango Coast, central mythic figure among the Yombe
Bafio té	Kikongo song recorded by Moreau	<i>Mfiote</i>	Black, small, weak. In Early modern usage, language and inhabitants of the Loango Coast. Only used in western Kikongo varieties and Yombe.

Though many of these words are common to western Kikongo varieties (Vili, Woyo, and Yombe), there is linguistic and ethnographic evidence that point to Yombe in particular. One reason it is possible to narrow down linguistic parentage to Yombe (H16c) is because Yombe along with Vili (H12, Kingdom of Loango) are lexicostatistically quite different from Kikongo, possessing 65% shared vocabulary with Gabonese B-40 languages. In fact, Vili was traditionally not even classified as a Kongo language. Differences between the western variety languages can be used to further narrow down linguistic origin. For example, in Kivili, ‘ki’ becomes ‘tsi. Kiyombe speakers cannot pronounce the letter ‘r’. Kiyombe speakers also do not pronounce the first consonant of a double consonant pairing at the beginning of a word, thus saying “Bumba” instead of Mbumba, “Bazu” instead of “*mbazu*,” which could help explain why

¹¹⁹ Courtin, Mémoire sommaire sur ... François Macandal, 1758

the first consonant seems to have been dropped in Saint Domingue, as well. Likewise, Kiyombe speakers also drop the final syllable of a word when a word beginning with the same syllable follows it: example *Lemba (m)bazu* would be pronounced *Lembazu*.¹²⁰ Another factor that points to the Mayombe rainforest as a likely region of origin is that geographically, the coastal kingdoms were small in comparison to the expansive Mayombe forest. In 1770, French Missionary Descourvières wrote that the Kingdom of Kakongo did not extend “more than 25 or 30 miles” along coastline and around 100 miles inland. Ngoyo (Woyo) occupied less than half that amount of territory. Descourvières described Mayombe, on the other hand, as “a vast unknown country known by the name of Mayombé, but which truly contains many small states independent each from the others.”¹²¹ The Mayombe forest comprises the entire area from the estuary of Cabinda to the savanna of Manianga and the River Tombe in the East.

Though not conclusive, these linguistic and geographic factors provide further evidence that the among the north coast region, the Mayombe rainforest was likely a significant geographic region of origin for captives sold on the Loango Coast in the last half of the eighteenth century. This information challenges the standard belief that most or all captives purchased at the time originated from the Kingdom of Kongo, south of the Congo River, from the Tio-controlled market at the Malebo Pool, or the Bobangi trade on

¹²⁰ My thanks to Abbé Alphonse Marichal for sharing the CICM Kiyombe grammar books with me as well as his expertise on the language, gained during his 50 years in Mayombe. Clercq, "Grammaire du Kiyombe."

¹²¹ Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*, . 47, 45.

the Upper Congo River.¹²² It also contradicts information in contemporary written documents and modern historiography which states that the inhabitants of the Mayombe forest acted as middlemen.¹²³ If these linguistic findings contradict the sources written by slave traders, they help explain why enslaved people themselves used the term “Mayombe” in Saint Domingue. For example, one of Makandal’s accomplices was named Mayombe and the 1786 nighttime assembly that took place in Marmelade was “named Mayombe or Bila.”¹²⁴ Furthermore, Vodou songs are replete with references to “Yaya Mayonmbe” (Yaya is a term of respect for an older woman), “Tata Mayombe” (Tata, father), and “Ganga Mayombe” (Ganga, religious expert, from *nganga*).¹²⁵

Conclusion

In order to study the social and cultural history of enslaved Central Africans in Saint Domingue, historians must first understand their lives in Africa: who they were, where they came from, and what cultural tools they brought with them across the sea. Historians must therefore first investigate the origin of the captives purchased by the French in Central Africa in the decades preceding the Haitian Revolution originated in

¹²² See, for example: Thornton, ““I Am the Subject of the King of Congo”: African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution.” Martin, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*.

¹²³ ———, *The external trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*; Grandpré, *Voyage. Janzen, Lemba, 1650-1930: a drum of affliction in Africa and the New World*.

¹²⁴ Fonds François de Neufchâtel, 27 AP 12, AN, Paris, France

¹²⁵ Beauvoir, *Grand Recueil*.

order to investigate how and why certain cultural practices were used in the colony and what impact they had on Saint Domingue plantation society. In this chapter, I use a sociolinguistic methodology to research the history of slavery on the Loango Coast in the last half of the eighteenth century. The sociolinguistic methodology advocated by Vansina, Heusch, and Nsondé provides a way for historians to use sources from the wider Atlantic world to research African history. Drawing on a wider base of sources can allow historians to investigate the cultural history of specific regions of Africa at a particular time. For example, I use Bantu words in historical documents and Vodou songs from the colony of Saint Domingue to investigate the origins of captives sold on the Loango Coast. Historical linguistics allows me to identify with greater specificity and certainty than heretofore possible the geographic origin of captives sold to the French on the Loango Coast and shipped to the colony of Saint Domingue. Of course, there was no single point of origin for the captives who were enslaved and transported to Saint Domingue in the years preceding the Haitian Revolution. However, my study does allow me to establish the broad linguistic and therefore geographic region of origin: the Kikongo language zone. By narrowing down, when possible, the linguistic origin of Bantu words used in Vodou songs and historical sources to a single language or group of languages, I am able to establish specific geographical regions of origin. Western Kikongo varieties spoken in the Loango Coast kingdoms and Mayombe rainforest north of the Congo River supplied the greatest number of borrowed words, with some evidence that the Mayombe rainforest had been home to a significant number of Kongolese captives in Saint Domingue. As we will see in the following chapters, this information is

of vital importance to understanding the cultural history of the Kongolese in Saint Domingue.

Chapter 6: Christianity and the Cultural History of the Loango Coast and Kongo Region, 1750-1800

The sociolinguistic evidence presented in the previous chapter forces a reorientation of scholars' geographic focus north to the Congo River, Loango Coast, and Mayombe rainforest, away from the southern Kingdom of Kongo. This shift has implications for the cultural history of Saint Domingue because these captives originated from a region with little exposure to Christianity. For example, in 1776, a French Capuchin missionary, probably Jean-Joseph Descourvières, submitted a report to the Paris Foreign Mission Seminary (*Missions Étrangères de Paris*) entitled "Reasons that have determined the Missionaries of Loango to quit the place of their mission."¹ The primary reason for abandoning the mission was the deaths of several of the missionaries and frequent illnesses and general ill health suffered by the surviving priests. The second reason, however, was that the missionaries had grown disillusioned with their ability to convert the inhabitants of the Loango Coast following their visit to "a colony of Christian *nègres*" living just north of the Congo River in the Kingdom of Kakongo.

Beginning with his arrival in Malemba in 1768, Descourvières had relayed reports of the existence of baptized Kongolese Christians from Sonyo in the Kingdom of Kakongo. Initially, Descourvières was told to go to the capital, Kinguele (called Banza Malimbe by Europeans) because "[t]here is a quantity of *Noirs* baptized in the Congo there. We have seen several of them here among the servants of the *Mangoffe*

¹ "Raisons qui ont déterminé les Missionnaires de Loango à quitter le lieu de leur mission, Archives M.E.P. volume 356, pp 251-257," in *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*, ed. Jean Cuvelier (Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1953, 1776).

[Mangovo].”² Upon his arrival in the capital, however, Descourvières discovered that reports of Christians were incorrect. The Christians he had been told of in fact resided in the “Kingdom of Sogno [Sonyo], which is on the other side of the Zaïre [Congo River], where a great number have made profession of Christianity, [however] absolutely lack priests [.]”³ Over the following years, the French Missionaries failed to find “any trace of Christianity” in the Kingdom of Kakongo.⁴ Finally, in 1774, Descourvières learned that a colony of Christian Solongo from Sonyo “passed, a few years ago, the river of Zaïre, and came, with the agreement of the King of Kakongo, to establish themselves in [...] a little province separate from the others, of which Manguenzo⁵ is the capital village. The number of these Christians, as far as I can judge, from the report of those I have seen, could rise to around four thousand.”⁶ According to Descourvières’ informant, “all the inhabitants of Manguenzo & those of the surrounding villages, were still sincerely attached to the Faith” and “they ask God every day to send them some Ministers; & that

² Descourvières, "Letter from M. Descourvières, actuellement à Malimbe dans le Royaume de Loango [Kakongo] en Afrique, en date du 30 8bre 1768, Archives M.E.P., vumbe 356, pp 226-226," 35.

³ ———, "Copie d'une lettre de Mrs Jolly et Descourvières, datée à Bane Malimbe, le 1 juillet 1769, Archives M.E.P. volume 156 pp 243-245."

⁴ Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 315.

⁵ “Manguenzo, elongated 24 *lieuës* from Kilonga [.]” Pierre Belgarde, "Lettre de M. Belgarde au Cardinal Castelli sur l'embarquement pour la côte de Kakongo 25 avril 1775, Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura rigerite nei congressi, volume 5," in *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*, ed. Jean Cuvelier (Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1953, 1775).

⁶ Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 318.

in waiting the day of their mercies, they are tasked to encourage one another to live as Christians [.]”⁷

Finally, in August 1774⁸ Descourvières managed to visit the reputed Solongo Christians of Kakongo, where they found “the dispositions completely opposite of those that they had initially” expected to find.⁹ The missionaries reported that the four months they spent around Manguenzo “taught them more” than all of their previous years in Kakongo. What they learned disappointed and disillusioned them. Throughout their time in Kakongo, the missionaries had interpreted local and regional leaders’ desire for missionaries to settle in their jurisdiction as a sincere desire to convert to Christianity. Once they actually encountered the so-called Christians of Kakongo, however, the missionaries came to the conclusion that “the real motive” in desiring missionaries was “pride: because they see the advantage in having priests in their home as an honor that puts them above all of their compatriots.” Moreover, the seigneurs of the villages they visited “were opposed with all their forces that one of [the missionaries] should go to their neighbors even for a short time, protesting that they would like it better if all the missionaries would entirely abandon their country to return to their homes than to suffer

⁷ Ibid., 319-20.

⁸ Descourvières and Quiliet d’Aubigny visited the Solongo from 7-22 August, 1774. Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 14. Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*: Chapter XVII, 315+.

⁹ "Raisons qui ont déterminé les Missionnaires de Loango à quitter le lieu de leur mission, Archives M.E.P. volume 356, pp 251-257," 126.

that they communicate to other villages of Christian *nègres* the advantage of possessing them [the missionaries].”¹⁰ As for the sincerity of their faith, the missionaries concluded:

As for the rest it is extremely dubious if these *nègres* baptized and instructed in the truth of the religion believe these truths; they protest that yes; a few of them even seem touched; but otherwise they practices nothing [of Christianity], we have often seen those who had appeared to add the most to the faith [Christianity], to mock it and then turn against it in derision [.] [...] As for the manners [*moeurs*] one noticed nothing in them which distinguished them from the infidel *nègres*; they are all strongly attached to their superstitions [.]¹¹

In the end, the missionaries concluded that the Solongo of Manguenzo were not Christians. Their professed desire for missionaries to reside among them stemmed not from ardent faith but instead from the desire to augment their community’s regional power and prestige. Contact with priests and baptism seemed to be desired because they conferred higher status in the local community. In all of the villages of the region, however, villagers refused to learn catechism or to attend mass. “They have remarked everywhere the same distance from the exercise of Religion and the word of God, and the same attachment to their superstitions and their vices.”¹² The reputed Christians of Sonyo were not true believers but instead used the rites and presence of Christian missionaries for their own purposes. They professed faith when it suited them but did not alter their lives or practices in any way. For this reason, the French missionaries became convinced of the “uselessness” of the evangelization they had carried out “for a long time” in

¹⁰ Ibid., 127.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 128.

Kakongo. They argued that not only were those they had supposedly converted not true believers, but also that further efforts would be futile. They abandoned the mission, departing Malemba in December 1775.

Descourvières account of his visit to the Christian villages of Kakongo raises two important issues pertaining to the history of Christianity in the Kongo Zone in the eighteenth century. The first is the reliability and biases of documents created by missionaries. The pessimistic report quoted above dates from 1776, the year after the missionaries left the Loango Coast for good. The tone and frankness of the report differs greatly from the account written in the immediate aftermath of their journey. The earlier report makes no mention of the missionaries' suspicions or frustrations with the local Christian population. On the contrary, it presents the visit as an unmitigated success. For example, in the earlier account of the visit to Manguenzo, the missionaries claimed that the inhabitants listened carefully to the catechism after baptisms were performed. "These poor people listened to me with an attention, or better said, an avidity that I cannot express: it seemed to me that I could read in their eyes that they feared to miss a word of that I said."¹³ This eloquent and emotive account contrasts greatly with the later report's conclusion that it was "extremely dubious" if the baptized "believe these truths" as they "practice nothing" and "mock" the missionaries behind their back.¹⁴ The earlier report gives no hints of the missionaries' reservations about the sincerity of the population's

¹³ ———, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 336.

¹⁴ "Raisons qui ont déterminé les Missionnaires de Loango à quitter le lieu de leur mission, Archives M.E.P. volume 356, pp 251-257," 127.

Christian faith. Moreover, the early report insists that not only that Christianity flourished in the region, but also that the indigenous religious beliefs were not important. For example, they claimed that the village of Guenga was comprised of both Christians and “Idolaters.” The “pagans” were, however “so little attached to their superstitions, that if the Christians were instructed well enough in their Religion to make them understand, they would renounce without difficulty their Idols to embrace it [Christianity].”¹⁵ However, after the missionaries departed, Descourvières wrote that not only were the pagans strongly attached to indigenous “superstitions” but also that the nominally Christian were as well: “As for the manners [*moeurs*] one noticed nothing in them which distinguished them from the infidel *nègres*; they are all strongly attached to their superstitions [.]”¹⁶

The discrepancy between the two reports highlights the important question of audience in missionary documents. It also underscores the material consequences of the reports missionaries submitted to their superiors. The missionaries depended on continued support from Europe to survive in Central Africa and that support was in large part dependent upon Church authorities favorable opinion of the mission. Reports written during missionaries’ tenure had the ability to materially impact their living situation in a way those written after their return to Europe did not. The two previous expeditions to the Loango Coast had been hampered by lack of material support from the Paris Foreign

¹⁵ ———, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*: 343.

¹⁶ “Raisons qui ont déterminé les Missionnaires de Loango à quitter le lieu de leur mission, Archives M.E.P. volume 356, pp 251-257,” 127.

Mission Seminary. The reports submitted by missionaries during their tenure on the Loango Coast must be seen at least in part in the context of missionaries' continual demands for more missionaries, medicine, goods, and money from their superiors in Europe.

Descourvières ultimate disillusionment with the sincerity of the purported Christian's faith calls into question the existence and nature of Christianity in the northern Kongo zone this time. Sonyo was the first place to adopt Christianity following the arrival of the Portuguese in 1491.¹⁷ By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, however, the French missionary's 1776 description of the Kongolesse Christians from Sonyo appears to contradict the widespread idea among Europeans that the Kingdom of Kongo and especially Sonyo were Christian nations. The report raises the question of who decides what a 'Christian' is, whether priests, the church, practitioners themselves, or modern scholars. The experience of French missionaries in Kakongo, especially their demoralizing encounter with Solongo Christians living in the Kingdom of Kakongo, demands a reassessment of the state of Christianity in the Kongo zone at the end of the eighteenth century.

The impact of Christianity has been a contentious issue in the historiography of early modern West Central Africa. Arguably the most influential contemporary work on the religious history of the region is that of historians John Thornton and Linda Heywood. According to Thornton and Heywood, the arrival of Europeans in Central

¹⁷ Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Soho, Congo, 1600-1675*: 137.

Africa was followed, in the next two centuries, by the widespread conversion of the inhabitants of the kingdoms of Angola and Kongo to Christianity. The introduction of Christianity into Central African polities had a dramatic impact on the cultural history of the region. “The relationship between West Central Africa and Europeans” that began in the late-fifteenth century, Thornton and Heywood argue,

resulted in a unique blend of African and political practices and cultural synthesis that Ira Berlin aptly named “Atlantic Creole.” In addition to the engagement with European culture, West Central Africans shared quite similar linguistic, social, cultural, and political forms, making for a much more uniform set of beliefs and practices than any of the other regions of Atlantic Africa. It was this shared heritage and the long and complex interactions of Central Africans with the Portuguese and later with the Dutch that made for the emergence of a distinct Atlantic Creole culture in Central Africa.¹⁸

Thornton further argues that the Kingdom of Kongo “was the center of Central African Christianity” and that “[b]y the early seventeenth century, and probably even earlier, most of the people in Kongo identified themselves as Christians and were usually accepted as such by visitors.”¹⁹ In the case of Angola, Heywood contends, “by the beginning of the eighteenth century, a Creole culture had emerged in Portuguese Angola and Benguela [.]”²⁰ Thornton and Heywood argue that early modern West Central

¹⁸ Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*: 49.

¹⁹ John K. Thornton, "Religious and Ceremonial Life in the Kongo and Mbumbu Areas, 1500-1700," in *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, ed. Linda M. Heywood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 83.

²⁰ Linda M. Heywood, "Portuguese into African: The Eighteenth-Century Central African Background to Atlantic Creole Cultures," in *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, ed. Linda M. Heywood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 91.

Africans were therefore “Atlantic Creoles,”²¹ borrowing the term from Ira Berlin.²² They argued that there was a “marked contrast” between captives from West Central Africa who dominated the slave trade in the first half of the seventeenth century and the captives from Upper Guinea or the Lower Guinea coast who dominated the trade in earlier and later periods. Heywood and Thornton, in particular, emphasized the “thoroughness of popular conversion to Christianity in the Kongo kingdom in the sixteenth century [.]”²³ According to this argument, the “Atlantic Creole” culture made the transition to enslavement in the New World easier and formed the basis of African American culture before 1660.

Thornton and Linda Heywood’s concept of the “Atlantic Creole” has become an influential paradigm in the field. Since its publication, scholars have applied the concept of the Atlantic Creole widely to groups of West Central Africans from various regions and for various time periods, including the Central Africans who went to Saint Domingue

²¹ Thornton and Heywood first developed their use of the category of Atlantic Creole in their 2002 edited volume on Central Africans in the Americas. They further elaborated on the idea in their 2007’s monograph. *Central Africans and cultural transformations in the American diaspora*. Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*.

²² Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African- American Society in Mainland North America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (1996). ———, *Many Thousands Gone: the First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

²³ Joseph C. Miller, "Central Africa During the Era of the Slave Trade, c. 1490s-1850s," in *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, ed. Linda M. Heywood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 48.

in the years preceding the Haitian Revolution. For example, Hein Vanhee²⁴ and Terry Rey²⁵ use Thornton and Heywood's concept to explore how the "Atlantic Creole" nature of the Kingdom of Kongo influenced Haitian Vodou and popular Catholicism. However, it is important to note that Thornton and Heywood's work focuses on different regions of West Central Africa – the southern Kingdom of Kongo and Angola – in earlier time periods than those that supplied captives for Saint Domingue. In this chapter, I investigate the nature of Christianity in the northern Kingdom of Kongo, Sonyo, and Loango Coast in the last half of the eighteenth century using contemporary written documents and linguistic evidence. I find that written sources from missionaries and others do not provide evidence of widespread influence of Christianity in the northern Kingdom of Kongo. Furthermore, Christianity had made little impact on the Loango Coast kingdoms.

Christianity in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1750-1800

Despite the expeditions of Portuguese missionaries in the Kingdom of Kongo in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the apostolate languished in later time periods. In the seventeenth century, bishops abandoned the episcopal seat of San Salvador in favor of Luanda in Angola after the war between the Portuguese and the Kingdom of Kongo,

²⁴ Hein Vanhee, "Central African Popular Christianity and the Making of Haitian Vodou Religion," in *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, ed. Linda M. Heywood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²⁵ Terry Rey, "Kongolese Catholic Influences on Haitian Popular Catholicism: A Sociohistoric Explanation," in *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, ed. Linda M. Heywood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

particularly the bloody battles of Ambuila (1665) and Sonyo (1670). From 1645, Italian Capuchin missionaries alone served in the Kingdom.²⁶ Upon their arrival at the cathedral of San Salvador, the Capuchins found the religion being maintained by a number of canons [*chanoines*] and secular priests who also served churches in the interior. The last of the canons, who still bore the title of General Vicar [*vicaire general*] but ministered little, died in 1687.²⁷ Capuchin missionaries complained repeatedly about the local clergy, questioning their efficacy. Outside of the Capuchin mission, the Battle of Ambuila in 1665 began “a period of political and ecclesiastical disintegration” in the Kingdom of Kongo.²⁸

The eighteenth century was marked by a rivalry between the bishopric of Luanda and the Capuchin missionaries over who was responsible for the mission in the Kingdom of Kongo. During this time, secular priests played an important role in the region. In 1716, the Bishop of Luanda sent several secular priests to the Kongo under the title of general vicars and ecclesiastical inspectors [*vicairese generaux et d'inspecteurs ecclésiastiques*]. The Capuchins protested that the apostolic prefecture as established by *la Congrégation de la Propogande au Congo* in 1640 gave them a monopoly over mission work in the Kingdom of Kongo. They opposed sharing their ministry with

²⁶ Jadin, "Les missions du Congo à la fin du XVIIIè siècle," 207.

²⁷ ———, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795," 307.

²⁸ Adrian Hastings, "The Christianity of Pedro IV of the Kongo, 'The Pacific' (1695-1718)," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, no. 2 (1998): 146.

secular clergy who they accused of being more concerned with participating in the slave trade than spreading the gospel.²⁹ In 1726, Pope Clement XI settled this dispute by dividing the region into two jurisdictions. Under the new division, the bishops of Kongo and Angola could continue to send members of the secular clergy around the Kongo – to San Salvador, to Bamba, then to Saint José d’Encoge. The Capuchins, for their part, could continue to minister to their apostolate and administer the sacraments, and were at liberty to minister in regions situated outside of those where the secular clergy were established.³⁰

Following the compromise, local members of the secular clergy increasingly became responsible for maintaining the ministry in the Kingdom of Kongo. Throughout the century, the governors of Angola warned that the dearth of European missionaries in the Kingdom of Kongo jeopardized the continuation of the faith.³¹ With the diminution of European missionaries came an increased reliance on the same local secular priests they opposed. Some evidence suggests that these local lay priests were not effective ministers. According to historian Louis Jadin, “The ministry of these isolated priests does not appear to have been very fruitful and the criticisms of the Capuchins in connection with

²⁹ Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795," 308.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Papeis avulso de Angola, letters of 22 March 1723; 12 June 1734; 20 March 1735; 28 November 1736; 2 April 1755 *Arquivo historico ultramarine*, Lisbon, Portugal. Cited by *ibid.*, 309n1.

them were often acerbic and severe.”³² After the middle of the century, however, the number of both missionaries and local priests diminished greatly. The recruitment of local secular priests fizzled out following the suppression of the Jesuits and the seminary of Luanda.³³

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the missions in the Kingdom of Kongo were all but abandoned. According to a questionnaire completed by the superior of the Paris Foreign Mission before the French mission to Loango (1766-1775) the bishop of San Salvador “no longer resides at San Salvador, destroyed for a long time” but in Luanda, the capital of Angola. He reported that Portuguese missionaries rarely left Luanda and that only the Italian Capuchins, of whom he had no news, remained within the borders of the Kingdom of Kongo.³⁴ In fact, local developments had forced the Capuchins to quit their missionary activities. The Marquis of Pombal’s opposition to Italian Capuchin missionaries forced them to abandon the nine hospices and missions they maintained in the Kongo.³⁵ After 1762, the Marquis’ opposition extended to all foreign missionaries impeded the reestablishment of missionaries in the Kongo. Beginning in 1759 and certainly by 1765, the entirety of the Kongo had been, for all

³² Ibid., 308.

³³ ———, "Les missions du Congo à la fin du XVIIIè siècle," 207-8.

³⁴ Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 9-10.

³⁵ Jadin, "Les missions du Congo à la fin du XVIIIè siècle," 208.

intents and purposes, abandoned by the Capuchins.³⁶ In 1777, Queen Maria I of Portugal called for new missionaries to be appointed to the Kongo, confirming the abandonment of the Kongo mission.³⁷

In response to the Queen's entreaty, missionaries were sent once again to the Kongo. Sonyo received a missionary for the first time in eighteen years when Bonaventura da Ceriana spent one month in the Diocese in 1785. It was the first time since 1642 a Bishop had entered the interior of the Diocese.³⁸ The renewed effort to send missionaries to the Kingdom of Kongo in the 1780s and 1790s was driven by a commercial imperative. Bonaventura da Ceriana passed a long tenure as Apostolic Prefect (*Préfet apostolique*) of Kongo-Angola. He warned the Propoganda of the deterioration of the missions in 1785 and wrote a long relation of his mission (1779-1792) in 1794. He spent most of his mission at Luanda but visited Sonyo three times in the context of tension between religious authorities in Luanda and Italian Capuchin missionaries. Bonaventura's visits to Sonyo were in response to the political and commercial objectives of Luanda officials, namely to reestablish trade between Angola and Sonyo. It is for this reason that during Bonaventura's third trip in 1787 he was accompanied by the Portuguese merchant Manuel Bernardo Pires de Oliveira and

³⁶ ———, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795," 309. Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*, : 41n2-3.

³⁷ Jadin, "Les missions du Congo à la fin du XVIIIè siècle," 208.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 216.

mandated by the Governor to influence the Mani Sonyo to recommence trade. After the 1787 trip as after the previous one, Bonaventura was accused of not devoting enough energy to obtaining Portugal's commercial objectives in regards to Sonyo.

Bonaventura did not give a favorable report of the ecclesiastical life in the Province of Sonyo when he asked for a replacement in 1790. He diplomatically refrained from denouncing the real motivations behind the Portuguese mission to the Mani Sonyo. Historian Kabolo Iko Kabwita speculates part of the commercial imperative behind the trip may have been to combat the growing presence of Protestant English and Dutch slave traders who, as we saw in Chapter 2, like the French increasingly traded directly with the Solongo in the Congo River in the 1770s and 1780s.³⁹ The commercial motivation behind Bonaventura's three trips to Sonyo compelled him to spend his short visits with political leaders, namely the Mani Sonyo. Bonaventura therefore had limited exposure to the religious life of the region's inhabitants. His report must be read in the contest of the commercial motivation and short duration of his trip as well as the fact that most of his contact was with political elites.

Dicomano and the Decline of Christianity

In contrast to Bonaventura's account, the report of Italian Capuchin missionary Raimondo da Dicomano provides more detailed and reliable information and calls into question the impact of Christianity in the Kingdom of Kongo in the 1790s. From 1792

³⁹ Kabwita Kabolo Iko, *Le royaume kongo et la mission catholique, 1750-1838 : du déclin à l'extinction*, Mémoire d'églises (Paris: Karthala, 2004). 264-5.

until 1795, Dicomano undertook the first sustained religious mission in the region since the Capuchins' departure. Dicomano's report is significant because he was the first missionary to return to San Salvador since its abandonment by the Capuchins. Unlike his contemporaries, Dicomano spent a prolonged amount of time in the Kingdom of Kongo. Furthermore, political or commercial agents did not mediate his interactions with local inhabitants nor did he spend the majority of his time with political elites.

Dicomano's report is significant because, unlike his contemporary Rafael Castello da Vide (missionary in the Kongo 1780-88), Dicomano did not have the advantage of traveling with the help, escort, or protection of either the Church or government. Dicomano was initially dispatched with two other missionaries. However, when they arrived at Mbamba, sick and without their bags, the other two missionaries opted to return to first to Luanda and then Brazil, forcing Dicomano to continue the mission on his own.⁴⁰ He did not have a political mission to negotiate with local leaders, as did Bonaventura, whose mission was in part the product of the Governor of Angola's desire to reestablish trade with Sonyo.⁴¹ Unlike Vide and others, Dicomano depended on the charity and support of the local inhabitants of the regions he visited and had no political benefits to offer in return. As a result, his reception and experience was vastly different from his predecessors and the pessimism of his report stands in stark contrast to that of Vide.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 266.

⁴¹ Jadin, "Les missions du Congo à la fin du XVIIIè siècle," 216.

Unlike the reports of his contemporaries, Dicomano's report was pessimistic. Moreover, Dicomano's pessimism is all the more striking because scholars have traditionally seen Sonyo and San Salvador as the strongholds of Christianity in the Kingdom of Kongo following the Battle of Ambuila in 1665.⁴² Dicomano began by reiterating the fact that Sonyo had, in 1492, been the first place in the Kingdom of Kongo converted to Christianity during the reign of Afonso I. "However," he wrote, "a day came when things completely changed aspect. The religion currently in the Kongo, is no more than a simple appearance, one discovered there only a few remainders of Christianity and religion."⁴³ Those remainders were, according to Dicomano, limited to vague notions about the Supreme Being. "They have the idea that there exists a God," he wrote, "creator of all and Lord who after death rewards the good and punished the wicked, however this is not but an extremely superficial idea." Dicomano noted that he found some who knew the word for God to be "*Zambi ampungo*"⁴⁴ but claimed, "they do not know anything exactly about what this word means. They know that it is a big thing and confirm this notion to themselves because they have heard it said by elders and because they have then seen at certain places, the ruins of churches."⁴⁵

⁴² Such is the view of Hastings: Hastings, "The Christianity of Pedro IV of the Kongo, 'The Pacific' (1695-1718)," 145-6.

⁴³ Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795," 318. Dicomano's account, in Portuguese, found in the Biblioteca nacional de Lisboa, MS F.G. 8554, folio 102-115.

⁴⁴ Rendering of Kikongo *Nzambi Mpungu*. Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 319.

On the contrary, Dicomano judged the local understanding of Christianity to be extremely limited as were the Christian sacraments people were interested in receiving. Christianity itself, he wrote, was seen as good and desirable: “They esteem and desire to be Christians and said themselves honored with what one does not dare to call them by contempt pagans [.]”⁴⁶ However, despite this professed desire to become Christian, “they want only the baptism of Christians.” However, the local understanding of the Christian sacrament of baptism did not align with Catholic doctrine, a fact easily overlooked by missionaries eager to interpret interest in baptism as evidence of belief in and understanding of the Christian faith. “In effect,” Dicomano explained, “a missionary is taken by emotion when in passing by a *Banza* [village], they see a multitude of people presenting their children to him to be baptized. They demand with high voices *Anamungoa* baptism, all being prostrate with their hands joined demanding the Father he baptize them.” Dicomano noted that “*Anamungoa*” used in this context meant “salt blesses or salt of the Lord, because in their language *mungoa* [*mu-ngwa*] is the salt and in demanding *anamungoa*, they mean to ask to be baptized.”⁴⁷ According to historian Anne Hilton, missionaries early on introduced salt into the Catholic sacrament of baptism in order to conform to the indigenous practice.⁴⁸ Dicomano wrote that missionaries could not interpret the desire for baptism as evidence of Christian faith. Outside of the

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Hilton, *The kingdom of Kongo*: 98.

sacrament of baptism, Dicomano found little interest in the catechism and occasionally downright hostility to it. However, if a missionary refused to baptize their children due to their lack of understanding of the Christian sacrament, the person or people refused would consider themselves dishonored, with possibly violent results. “The salt suffices, then if the missionary does not pay attention, once he baptizes, as soon as he gives them the salt, they flee and do not wait for the water.”⁴⁹ Following baptism, “if the Father invites them with charity or asks to teach them the catechism and to instruct them in *les saints mystères*, so that they know what they have to believe and what they have to do, they do not want to come and do not want to hear and if for this [reason], the Father refuses to baptize them, they enter into furor and turn with ferocity against the Father and his *porteurs* and we find ourselves in danger of losing our lives.”⁵⁰ Historian Jadin notes that Capuchin documents from the sixteenth century beginning in 1619 reported the same occurrence during baptism.⁵¹

As with the catechism, Dicomano found little interest in the local population for other sacraments, which were viewed with suspicion and disinterest. Dicomano reported there was no interest in confirmation. The reasons for this were that it had been a long time since confirmation had been administered “but equally because they do not want to

⁴⁹ Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795," 319.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 319n1.

learn the Christian doctrine.”⁵² As for the Eucharist, “they have some confused idea, because they believe that in the Host, there is *Amoana Zambi ampungo* [*Mwana Nzambi Mpungu*], the Son of God Jesus Christ, however no one in the population has regard for the Eucharist, nor are they disposed to receive it.” Only great *fidalgos* wanted the Eucharist, though without having either confessed their sins or given up polygamy beforehand. Dicomano deduced that their desire to take the Eucharist stemmed not from an ardent faith nor an understanding of the sacrament, but instead from the fact that they had heard from their elders that missionaries gave communion to chiefs after mass. They therefore desired to be given communion like other powerful men and “considered themselves offended” if the priest refused. The repercussions of refusal could be deadly. “In these cases, to revenge themselves, they give a fetish [poison] to the missionary.”⁵³ Dicomano claimed to have been the victim of just such a poison attack.⁵⁴

Dicomano likewise had trouble administering the sacraments of penance, extreme unction, and marriage. He found that people understood that the sacrament “returns sins.” As a result, “all run to confess themselves, but only, it suffices for them to present

⁵² Ibid., 320.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Dicomano understood “fetish” to mean poison. In a note he wrote “Fetish, it is nothing other than a poison. The sorcerers are those who understand the herbs, the roots, and the animal venoms and other venoms and they prepare them. These products taken in proportion of greater or lesser quantity kill or produce illnesses. For these reasons, they gave me a fetish, three times, and I was sick from one for more than a month, the whole body trembled and one [I] became pale like a cadaver. What saved me in this circumstance, it was vomitories and purgatives that I took, one time that I spent four days without speaking. It was this that cured me.” Ibid. For more on the association between power objects referred to by Europeans as “fetishes” and poison, see Chapter 7.

themselves at the feet of the missionary and to say some sins to the interpreter, if they are interrogated, for [the interpreter] to say to the Father. They know nothing however of the catechism, if the Father wants to teach them, instead of staying, they flee and do not appear any more. It suffices to them to present themselves to the Father. When they rise and that the father gives them the blessing, they make numerous *signes de fête*, raising in their arms that which had confessed themselves, in [making] great cries and beating the hands.”⁵⁵ As for extreme unction, Dicomano reported the Kongolese “still have a very bad idea.” When sick, the Kongolese did not wish to confess, be anointed, or even have the priest appear in their home. Dicomano believed the negative opinion of extreme unction existed because “they remark that those who receive the unction die and they have formed the idea that this sacrament causes the sick to die.” In three years, Dicomano performed extreme unction only once, on a young slave woman who knew something of Christian doctrine.⁵⁶ As for the sacrament of marriage, the Kongolese “do not have a better” opinion than of the sacrament of extreme unction. Dicomano only succeeded in marrying “ten or twelve slaves of the Church and only four *fidalgos* and the prince [Prince Garcia de Quibango, the future King Garcia V].” Resistance to Christian marriage practices appear to have been based in adherence to local marriage practices. According to Dicomano, the Kongolese opposed Christian monogamous marriage for four reasons: the prestige and economic value attached to marrying multiple women and producing a

⁵⁵ Ibid., 321.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

large family, the importance of the dowry, the irrevocability of Christian marriage, and inheritance practices whereby nephews inherited from maternal uncles. Dicomano reported that of the 25,000 souls he baptized, only 42 were children of Christian marriages.⁵⁷ Dicomano's inability to overcome local marriage customs is testament to the important role marriage (and local culture) played in Kongolese social structure and the lack of purchase Christianity had attained.⁵⁸

One of the most interesting aspects of Dicomano's report is his repeated complaint that the Kongolese not only were not interested in hearing mass, but that they would flee if the priest tried to preach the catechism. For example, he claimed that parents would "disappear" after baptism if he attempted to teach them Christian doctrine.⁵⁹ There appears to have been less resistance to the teaching and ministry of local lay preachers. Dicomano reported that in general the Kongolese had little interest in Saints days. San Salvador alone retained the custom of reciting the litanies of the Virgin

⁵⁷ Ibid., 322.

⁵⁸ On marriage in Equatorial Africa, see: Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*. Among the Bakongo: Anne Hilton, "Family and Kinship among the Kongo South of the Zaïre River from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries," *The Journal of African History* 24, no. 2 (1983). Wyatt MacGaffey, "Lineage Structure, Marriage and the Family amongst the Central Bantu," *The Journal of African History* 24, no. 2 (1983): 30-1; John K. Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983). The Bayombe: Janzen, *Lemba, 1650-1930: a drum of affliction in Africa and the New World*: 41-4. Also Doutreloux, *L'Ombre des fétiches, société et culture yombe*.

⁵⁹ Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795," 320.

Mary on Saturdays because several secular catechists were paid to preform them.⁶⁰

However, when the Catholic priest attempted to go to the Church service to say mass and teach the catechism, the local population “fled and it was not possible to reach them.”⁶¹

According to Dicomano, the occurrence of fleeing if Catholic priests attempted to conduct mass happened “not only in Kongo [San Salvador], but equally in the other regions and generally, it is” the practice of the local population.

According to Dicomano, the local population was unwilling to consider any teaching contrary to Kongolese customs. Dicomano concluded by stating that he had been wholly unsuccessful in changing the local attitudes and customs. Furthermore, he wrote that he did not believe it was possible to do so.

Voilà, Excellency, the state of the religion in this vast country of Kongo, however the worst is that it is so difficult to bring them back to the good path, only, this it seems to me, could only be obtained by a miracle. They are so persuaded in their ideas and so attached to their customs, that it is not possible to separate them from them [their ideas and customs]. When one explains to them and one instills in them a true idea of the holy commandments, they are doing us a favor, if they listen to us, however, at the end they answer that they [the commandments] are not the customs and the laws of the Kongo and that the priest is not well informed.⁶²

⁶⁰ Jadin notes that before 1747, priests established a master in each village to keep the Christian calendar and alert the population when a vigil or feast day approached. They were tasked with assisting in feast days, reciting Christian exercises, and singing litanies in local Kikongo languages. Ibid., 323n1. From: Bologna Giacinto da, *La pratique missionnaire des PP. Capucins Italiens dans les royaumes de Congo, Angola et contrees adjacentes : brievement exposee pour eclairer et guider les missionnaires destines a ces saintes missions* (Louvain: Editions de l'AUCAM, 1931). 54-5.

⁶¹ Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795," 323.

⁶² Ibid., 324.

The unwillingness of local interpreters to translate such teaching further compounded the problem, Dicomano realized. He wrote that they “do not dare to repeat that which the missionaries will say against their customs, because it is a matter of offence, *mucano* for the interpreters to contradict that which is universally done and they rise to be punished or poisoned [.]” Dicomano explained that the *mucano* was a crime or offence and that even if the translator were speaking on behalf of the missionary, they would be held responsible for the words they were saying.⁶³ This is because the words were considered powerful and akin to treason or blasphemy.⁶⁴ To Dicomano’s “great displeasure and shame, often” he was told he had “not been well informed” because he “corrected” a local practice or belief contrary to Christian doctrine.

Dicomano clearly expressed his frustration in his report, even going so far as to take the Lord’s name in vain to do so. “My God!” he wrote, “how many times in these circumstances I would have done, that which *Révérèndissime* Père José de Torres, monk, one of my predecessors who, recognizing in spite of his talents [he was] not able to draw fruit [make progress], no longer wanted to baptize [.]” José de Torres was a Portuguese monk of the order of Saint Augustine who accompanied Castello da Vide to San Salvador from 1785-1788. In 1790, he submitted a long report on his forty-year tenure in Angola

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ On the power of words or *la parole* in Kongolese ontology, see: Kimpianga Mahaniah, *La Maladie et la guèrison en milieu kongo : essai sur kimfumu, kinganga, kingunza et kitobe* (Kinshasa: EDICVA, Département de la recherche, Centre de vulgarisation agricole, 1982).

in which he gave a very pessimistic account of the religious situation in the Kongo.⁶⁵ However, unlike Torres and Vide who travelled in a well-supplied and protected convoy, Dicomano traveled alone. Dependent upon the goodwill of his hosts, he was therefore unable to make such a principled stand. Dicomano stated the material reality plainly: “if I don’t baptize, I don’t eat.”⁶⁶ Furthermore, since baptism was the only sacrament the local population was interested in receiving, it was the only thing Dicomano could provide in exchange for supplies. Dicomano’s reliance on local charity was especially acute because he had been robbed after his initial departure from Luanda and arrived in the Kongo with nothing. Not only was Dicomano therefore unable to alter local customs and beliefs, but by his own admission he was also forced to acquiesce to the demands of the local population and alter Catholic practices to suit their desires.

Like the French missionaries in Kakongo cited at the beginning of this chapter, Dicomano came to have a skeptical view of the requests of villages and towns for missionaries. “If those of the Kongo,” he reported, “request a missionary, it is not properly by desire to be Catholic, but rather for a vile interest.” This was due to the fact that local leaders profited from the priests’ missionary activities. Services such as burials, official blessings, and ecclesiastical ceremonies required payment. Everything the priest earned was shared with the local lords, who collected the fees and then remitted him “the

⁶⁵ Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795," 325n1. Torres’ report found in the *Arquivo historico ultramarine*, Lisbon, Portugal, Papeis avulso de Angola, Caixa 14, Relation de juin 1790.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 325.

smallest portion, when the whole was not stolen.” Dicomano was likewise forced to share provisions arriving from Luanda. “These ridiculous advantages,” he concluded, were “the reason why they request missionaries [.]” Dicomano was even required to request permission to leave, which he was only granted after he won the favor of powerful lords with gifts.⁶⁷

Dicomano’s report attests to the continued importance of native priests and the persistence of indigenous spiritual practices including the use of power objects, divination, and the poison ritual. More importantly, it documents how local communities appropriated Christian beliefs and sacraments such as baptism for their own purposes, interpreting them in ways consistent with Kongolese ontology. Dicomano’s complaints about his translators are especially telling; they suggest that the Kongolese selective use of Christian rituals and objects was not a misunderstanding of Christianity but a deliberate choice to interact with objects considered useful or powerful. The insistence of Dicomano’s translators that he not speak and the instances of people fleeing his presence when he did so, provide further evidence that the local population was not interested in being taught the “correct” understanding of Christian doctrine. Furthermore, Dicomano’s alleged poisoning suggests that the local population considered him – and his words – to be not only powerful but a threat akin to sorcery.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 326.

Cherubino da Savona and the Reliability of Missionary Documents

The pessimistic reports of Dicomano in the Kongo and the French missionaries in Kakongo highlight the importance of using contemporary sources from the end of the eighteenth century to write the cultural and religious history of the region. They also show that it is equally important to evaluate the relevance and reliability of missionary documents. Addressed to the *Cardinaux de la Propogande*, they must be contextualized as documents intended first, to glorify the work of the authors themselves, and second, to demonstrate the need for further assistance from Rome. The material goal of the missionary reports – to solicit further aide from Catholic authorizes – is a key factor that must be taken into account when assessing the reliability of missionary documents. The negative descriptions of the state of the mission or the state of Christianity in these reports are all the more powerful because they went against the best interest of the authors.

A good example of a missionary report that appears to present an overly-optimistic account of the state of Christianity is that of Cherubino da Savona, missionary in the Kongo from 1759 to 1774. In his report, Cherubino insists on the widespread nature of Christianity and success of his mission despite presenting evidence to the contrary. For example, in 1775, Cherubino wrote that the Christian faith remained alive in the Kongo and that the missionaries were welcomed wherever they went.⁶⁸ Cherubino insisted that “the number of Catholics is great” estimating that “the figure could arrive at

⁶⁸ _____, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774," 353.

two million” Christians. However, Cherubino qualified that “the Catholic faith” was highly “decadent” due to the “way of life of the whites.”⁶⁹ Cherubino further admitted that “without a doubt, they are content with only baptism and nothing more” of Christianity.⁷⁰ Like Dicomano, Cherubino reported that it was necessary for missionaries to conduct baptisms in order to survive. “These missionaries,” he explained, “live from the alms of the *noirs* themselves who have the custom to bring [alms] when they come to baptize their children. Without this, the missionaries could not live. If the missionaries did not take the alms of baptism, the *noirs* would let the missionary die of hunger, because they are not in the habit of providing alms.”⁷¹ Like Dicomano, Cherubino complained that the Kongolese were not interested in any other sacrament and refused to hear mass or catechism. “[T]he priests, as much in Luanda as outside, never explain the Gospel at mass and the people still live disadvantaged in ignorance of the ways of the Holy Faith.”⁷² The material importance of baptism, and missionaries’ complaints that baptism was the only aspect of Christianity the Kongolese population was interested in, undermines the use of baptism statistics as proof of Christian faith in the Kingdom of Kongo.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 364.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 361.

⁷² Ibid., 364.

Furthermore, upon closer scrutiny, the baptism statistics themselves provided by Cherubino and other missionaries appear highly unreliable. Louis Jadin, who collected and translated the accounts of eighteenth century missionaries to the kingdoms of Angola and Kongo in the mid-twentieth century, has shown that the baptism and population numbers given are exaggerations. For example, Cherubino claimed that there were six million inhabitants in the Kingdom of Kongo, a number that “by far exceeds the most generous” population estimates, which are between two and three million people. When compared with the numbers reported by other missionaries, which are already high, Cherubino’s figures of 700,000 baptisms and 37,000 marriages can be seen as unreliable. This is especially true given that, due to the civil wars being fought in the Kingdom of Kongo during his stay, Cherubino was, by his own account, frequently unable to travel and forced to suspend his missions. Rosario dal Parco, missionary from 1746 to 1761, exaggerated in equal measure: he claimed to have baptized two million souls in Angola. On the contrary, statistics sent before 1760 by prefects in Angola, including Giacinto da Bologna and Parco, estimated between 15,000 and 20,000 baptisms by all of the missionaries present in the region together. Dicomano claimed to have baptized 25,000 children and adults in San Salvador between 1791 and 1795.⁷³ Under the reign of Garcia II, Jérôme de Montesarchio, claimed to have baptized 2,000 people in two days alone and

⁷³ _____, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795."

100,000 people in over the course of twenty years, from 1648 to 1668.⁷⁴ Père Francesco da Pavia calculated that 42 missionaries over 28 years conducted 340,960 baptisms and 49,887 marriages.⁷⁵ That would mean that roughly 33 baptisms and 5 marriages were conducted every day for 28 years. Jadin concluded historians must be “without a doubt very skeptical equally of the population statistics [the missionaries] delivers for the majority of provinces, duchies or marquisates of the Congo.”⁷⁶

Cherubino’s own descriptions of Christian practices in the kingdoms undermined his claim that the Kingdom of Kongo and Angola were entirely Christian. Much of Cherubino’s report concerned Angola, where his descriptions of Christianity cast serious doubt on his depiction of Angola as a Catholic kingdom. In the Province of Bengo, Cherubino wrote that “all are Catholics” despite the fact that “the *noirs* little frequent[ed] the Church,” “the *féticheur* has returned again” to “his office,” polygamy was widely practiced, and missionaries conducted “only baptisms of poor children.”⁷⁷ In Massangano, Cherubino reported there were around 200,000 inhabitants, “all baptized Catholics.” However, he also reported the existence of “many superstitions with the

⁷⁴ Jean Cuvelier and Olivier de Bouveignes, *Jérôme de Montesarchio : apôtre du Vieux Congo* (Namur: Grand Lacs, 1951). 4, 27. Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 84.

⁷⁵ Jadin, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774."

⁷⁶ ———, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795."

⁷⁷ ———, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774," 366.

invocation of a demon and circumcision exist” as well as polygamy. He lamented that local priests “do not insist on accomplishing their obligations, they only say mass on Feast Days and never say the catechism to these poor *noirs*. Their goal is only to make commerce in slaves and they worry little about the [state] of souls.”⁷⁸ In the neighboring Kingdom of Dongo, Cherubino likewise reported, “nearly all the inhabitants are *noirs*, but baptized Catholics. Their number climbs to more than around a million people.”⁷⁹ Cherubino then followed his claim by lamenting that, due to the lack of missionary presence in the “vast jurisdiction” that “many infants die without baptism.” Even worse, “the *noirs* observe the superstitions and have recourse to *féticheurs* in illness.” They also resort to “ordeals” by poison and fire. According to Cherubino, given the vastness of the country and the dearth of missionaries, the best he could do was to baptize the children.⁸⁰ Cherubino’s description of the Christian faith in Angola highlights the persistence of indigenous religious beliefs and undermines his insistence that all of the Kingdom’s inhabitants were Christians, as Europeans understood the term.

Cherubino’s account of Christianity in the Kingdom of Kongo in 1760 was less enthusiastic than in Angola. The missionary first visited “Ambuela” [Ambuila or Ambwila]. As with everywhere else he visited, Cherubino began by insisting the population were numerous and Christian. “In this jurisdiction,” he wrote, “the greatest

⁷⁸ Ibid., 367.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 367-8.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 368.

part of the people, even nearly all, are Catholics, reserving a few pagans [...] The number of Catholics could rise to around 800,000.” Cherubino admitted that though there was a permanent hospice in the region, it had been abandoned for eight years upon his arrival. As with Angola, Cherubino’s actual description of Ambuila belied his assertion that the region was entirely Christian. His complaints revolved around the prevalence of the slave trade and the persistence of superstitions. “It is a market place where one buys slaves.”⁸¹ Local religious beliefs were so powerful, he wrote, that even white Portuguese called on “*féticheurs*” to treat illnesses and carry out trade. “The whites do nothing other than call on the *féticheurs* to know how to conduct their negotiations and know if they will have good fortune in buying slaves.” The local inhabitants

all likewise devote themselves to the superstition [...] They publicly invoke the demon, without ever being corrected by the whites. On the contrary, [the whites] themselves invite them to invoke the demon. While I was there, a white priest who practiced commerce [in slaves] became gravely ill and called the *féticheurs* to heal him and, in his presence invoked the demon for obtain [his] health. He obtained it [his health] and paid these *noirs* for the grace they had obtained from the demon. He said himself that the demon could do more than God.⁸²

Cherubino blamed the white population for not only allowing the Kongoleses to continue to consult “*féticheurs*” but also for encouraging them to do so by themselves practicing “superstitions.” The situation was so bad that “if a missionary wants to have zeal and defend the honor of God, he is scorned by the whites themselves and the priests. They say

⁸¹ Ibid., 369.

⁸² Ibid.

[...] that the office of the missionary is only to confess and to baptize [...]"⁸³ Cherubino concluded on a pessimistic note, writing that "superstitions" had "triumphed" and could be practiced openly, "without anyone being able to make them know the wrong that they do to their souls. It is in the custom, without possible reform."⁸⁴ Thus, Cherubino ended his description of Ambuila by asserting that it would be hopeless to try to change the religious beliefs of the region's inhabitants. Such hopelessness undermines Cherubino's original claim that the population was almost entirely Christian.

Cherubino's description of Christianity in the region surrounding San Salvador is equally problematic. Cherubino wrote that local priests had sustained the bishopric of San Salvador. These local priests, however, far from maintaining the faith, had caused "the decadence of the fervor of these Catholics" and it "would be preferable that the Bishop did not send any of these priests."⁸⁵ Cherubino claimed that the King of Kongo and his court had Christian marriages, though they all continued to live "*en concubinage*" or polygyny. "When a missionary passes in their region, many marry and confess." He claimed that the faith had been maintained by the Kongo elite, claiming, "Nearly all these princes keep several *maestri* who know the Portuguese language and habitually teach the catechism even in the language of the Congo. Then, when the missionary arrives in their country, he finds these populations already initiated in the mysteries of our holy faith and

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 370-1.

can confess and marry them. In this goal, the missionary or the superior of the old mission have to teach with care the doctrine and the principle mysteries of the faith to all these masters, who know well how to read.”⁸⁶ It appears that Cherubino described the ideal way the Christian faith could be maintained by local secular priests and “masters.” This conclusion is supported by his own complaints about the local priests he encountered as well as the subsequent complaints of Dicomano.

Unlike Dicomano, Cherubino lacked prolonged contact with the inhabitants of the region. It appears that Cherubino’s impressions were heavily mediated by information fed to him by the Kongolese nobility and that Cherubino himself did not travel widely. Cherubino’s own observations in the Kongo further undermined his initially rosy portrayal of the religion. For example, like Dicomano after him, Cherubino complained of the unreliability of local translators, who could not be counted on to accurately translate between the priest and the populace. As in Ambuila, Cherubino complained about the persistence of “superstition” such as divination and the poison ordeal, writing “the *noirs* give credit to monkeys, to songs of birds and to a thousand other superstitions. Many also address themselves to demons to divine *ses méchancetés* [their malice, the malicious].”⁸⁷ Despite the fact that the King punished “*féticheurs*” with death, “these *noirs* are inveterate in their pagan rite, they do their best so that they are not discovered, neither by the King, not by the missionary. Some are so attached to the demon, that they

⁸⁶ Ibid., 371.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 372, 71.

adore him and venerate him as if he were God himself.”⁸⁸ In contrast to Cherubino’s report that the King, princes, and local priests and masters maintained Christianity in the Kingdom of Kongo, what he actually witnessed was that the local population of the Kongo continued to practice the indigenous religion when not being observed by the King or a missionary.

Cherubino observed as much in the other regions of the Kongo he visited with the exception of Sonyo. In Nsuku, for example, a one day walk from San Salvador, Cherubino began with his standard insistence that the population “are all Catholics” before noting “However, they also follow the superstitions” as well as the poison ritual in the abandoned mission. In the case of Sonyo, however, even Cherubino was forced to admit from the outset that the state of Christianity was seriously in question. When Cherubino arrived, the Sonyo mission had been abandoned for thirteen years. Cherubino wrote, “the Catholic faith among the Prince especially as well as among his vassals is heavily deteriorated, due to the lack of missionaries.” Though in the past “this mission was the flower of the Christianity of this Kingdom, actually it is heavily fallen from its first splendor [.]”⁸⁹ He wrote that the Prince of Sonyo desired a missionary to reside at his court, “where he lived more as a pagan than a Catholic,” but would not allow the missionary to travel outside of the capital or preach to his vassals or slaves. As in other regions, Cherubino reported, “one likewise adheres to the superstition. They believe in

⁸⁸ Ibid., 371.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 373-4.

the monkeys, in the songs of birds and even invoke the demon for their unjust wars.” They also practice the poison ordeal and polygyny. Likewise, in Bamba, Cherubino wrote that “the Duke and all his vassals profess the Catholic faith” but that “this mission is the most disadvantaged of all other missions” having been abandoned for fifteenth years.⁹⁰ According to letters written to Cherubino by the Duke of Bamba, the inhabitants lived in paganism, without any instruction in the Christian faith.

In Cherubino’s report, there is a pattern in which he would initially state that a place or region was Christian before describing the deplorable state of the Catholic religion. In his conclusion about the state of the religion, however, he ultimately presents a much more pessimistic description. Overall, Cherubino concluded:

in all these states of the Kongo, Sohio [Sonyo] and other provinces, the principle vices are four: idolatry, superstition, theft and the plurality of wives. It seems therefore that these vices require a good number of workers, otherwise the faith will go further into degradation and they will all become pagans. Already actually there are numerous parts of the Kingdom of Kongo, where they were Catholic before. Following the dearth of missionaries, there is no more the Catholic faith and they do not even want to hear the faith preached by the missionary.⁹¹

Cherubino’s conclusion that “there are numerous parts” of the Kongo where “there is no more the Catholic faith” nor even the desire or willingness to hear the religion preached by missionaries stands in stark contrast to his initial claim that there were two mission Catholics in the Kingdom of Kongo. Cherubino’s own overall assessment of the state of the Catholic faith in the Kingdom of Kongo was therefore far from positive. Rather,

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 376.

Cherubino warned that the Catholic faith was so degraded it did not exist in large areas of the country and that, furthermore, the local population was not willing to hear Catholic doctrine preached by missionaries. Cherubino's conclusion therefore makes it difficult to accept at face value his claims that the population was in fact Christian.

Christianity on The Loango Coast, 1750-1800

Unlike the southern Kingdom of Kongo, the kingdoms of the Loango Coast had no sustained contact with or conversion to Christianity. A report written by the superior of the Paris Foreign Mission Seminary before the French mission to Loango summarized the situation: "As far as we know, the bishop [of San Salvador, residing at Luanda] does not send any missionary to the Kongo, therefore much less to the Kingdom of Loango, which is further away." The superior speculated the Bishop did not send missionaries north because "he does not find anyone who wishes to go there, given that the Portuguese priests laymen as well as regulars do not distance themselves from Saint Paul de Luanda and its environs."⁹² Europeans who visited the Loango Coast in the last half of the eighteenth century agreed that the kingdoms were not Christian nations. For example, Grandpré reported that the population was "idolaters."⁹³

The French mission to the Loango Coast from 1766 to 1775 represented the sole sustained attempt to convert the inhabitants of the region to Christianity. The mission took place in three expeditions. The first consisted of Belgarde, Astelet de Clais, and

⁹² Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 9-10.

⁹³ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 47.

Sibire who arrived at Loango in September 1766. Astelet de Clais died in March 1767. In June, the two remaining missionaries established themselves at Loubou, one *mille* from the port of Loango.⁹⁴ In March 1768, Belgarde and Sibire departed for Saint Domingue after falling ill. The second expedition began in August 1768 when Descourvières and Joli arrived at Cabinda in the Kingdom of Kakongo. Soon after, they established themselves in the Kingdom of Kakongo, first in a village near the port of Malemba, and then in the capital Kinguele. The mission lasted until the beginning of 1770 when Descourvières, gravely ill, left in January, followed soon after by Joli. The third and final expedition began in June 1773 when six priests and six laymen arrived in Mayumba, north of Loango. Among them were Belgarde, who had organized the new undertaking and Descourvières, named prefect of the Mission of Loango. They arrived in the Kingdom of Kakongo later that summer where they established themselves at Kilonga. In April 1774, Belgarde departed for Europe after falling ill. In August, Descourvières and Quiliel d'Aubigny visited the Solongo living north of the Congo River. The third group of missionaries, like the two before them, was decimated by illness. In June 1775, of the

⁹⁴ *Un mille* in French had several possible meanings but likely meant the equivalent of one mile. Accordint to the *Centre National des Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales* the word has three possible meanings. It could refer to the “unite of measure valuing one thousand feet [or steps].” Which referred to the ancient Roman measure, *mille*, valuing 1482 meters, or just over nine-tenths of a mile. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the word *mille* was used as to refer to the English measure of a mile. The maritime definition of *mille* values 1852 meters. However, as the French missionaries used *mille* to refer to land measurement it is likely the equivalent of one mile. Centre National des Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales

original twelve, only five priests and one layman remained. All were ill. They left the Loango Coast for the final time the 30th of December 1775.⁹⁵

The mission's success was inhibited by numerous difficulties. The most debilitating was disease; the missionaries spent much of their time sick or recovering from illness. They complained that constant illness delayed the establishment of a mission. At least one of the missionaries, for example, "had been sick half the time and unable to work."⁹⁶ Alongside illness, another major challenge facing the missionaries was their lack of knowledge of the local language.⁹⁷ In 1770, French missionary Jean-Joseph Descourvières remarked "One must not be surprised that the religion [Christianity] has not yet made effective progress in this country, if one pays attention to the difficulty that there is in learning a language that does not have any relation with ours [.]” "One cannot" he continued, "preach usefully if one can not make oneself understood clearly, and if one cannot understand those to whom one speaks, to respond to their questions and their objections."⁹⁸ As a result, studying the language was "the principle occupation of the missionaries."⁹⁹ Another challenge was the lack of support of both political elites and the

⁹⁵ Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 12-15. See also, Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: chapter 3.

⁹⁶ Descourvières?, ""Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs," Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.," 57.

⁹⁷ Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 358.

⁹⁸ Descourvières?, ""Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs," Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.," 57.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

local population. The missionaries found that despite continual promises of support from the King of Kakongo, none was forthcoming. Local lords were likewise kind to the missionaries when they met but provided no real help in allowing them to preach to the population. Descourvières reported that some of the “notables of the country who had received the missionaries well at their homes, but did not want to permit them to preach to their people, under the pretext that it would be a useless exercise, because they [the population] were too mean and one [the missionaries] would not win” them over.¹⁰⁰

More information about the unsuccessful mission comes from Grandpré, who witnessed the efforts of French missionary Joli.¹⁰¹ According to Grandpré, Joli “filled his ministry with zeal; but the picture of eternal life, as brilliant as he could paint it, did not seduce the Kongolese [of Kakongo].”¹⁰² “The sojourn in paradise” promised to them by conversion to Christianity appeared “insipid.” The local population was more interested in material benefits the missionaries could provide them with, especially alcohol (*eau-de-vie*) and transportation to France. Joli “did not make [any] proselytes.” It appears that

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 57.

¹⁰¹ Joli (or Joly) was part of the second mission to the Loango Coast by the Paris Foreign Mission Seminary. In March 1768, he embarked with Descourvières from Nantes arriving at Cabinda in Ngoyo in August of the same year. In September 1768, the missionaries travelled to Malemba in the Kingdom of Kakongo where they established themselves in a village three or four *lieues* from the port. In February, 1769 the missionaries moved to Kinguele, the capital where in September they began preaching, having finally learned enough of the local language to do so. In October, Descourvières fell gravely ill. After failing to recover, Descourvières departed for Europe in January 1770. The next month, Joli wrote that he would depart as well if he did not receive reinforcements in three months times. In April, Abby Herbet embarked to join Joli, but when he arrived found that Joli had already left. Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 13.

¹⁰² Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 91.

Joli's difficulty converting Kakongo's inhabitants stemmed from both cultural and linguistic factors; the Christian concept of eternal life did not make sense in either context. Take, for example, Joli's conversation (as reported by Grandpré) with one potential convert. "Finally" someone, "overcome by the requests of the priest, agreed" to convert and "promised him to go to paradise, while asking [the missionary] how much that [journey] would be worth in goods to him." None, the priest replied.

Explain to us, retorted the *Noir*: I am asking you how many goods [*marchandises*] you will give me for the voyage that you propose to me. The missionary reiterated with unction [*avec onction*] the negative response, while accompanying it with all that could seduce him. The other answered in his bad French: *Haben qui ça. Toi croire moi va courir là pour rien, baille marchandises*. [You think I am going to run there for nothing, give goods.] The missionary insisted on baptism at the least, but he could not obtain any other response than *baille marchandises, baille l'eau de vie* [give goods, give alcohol].¹⁰³

It is worth noting that "Paradise" was also the (ironic) name given to the European settlement outside Malemba in the Kingdom of Kongo (see Chapter 2). Despite Joli's best efforts, he was unable to interest the people of Kakongo in conversion to Christianity. During his two years in the Kingdom, the missionary baptized only one man, a "defective slave" who, because of some "deformity" no one "wanted to purchase."¹⁰⁴ Of Joli and Descourvières mission in Kakongo, Grandpré concluded: "Never a mission had less success."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Ibid., I: 92.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., I: 93.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., I: 92.

Grandpré believed that the missionaries would not succeed in the region not only because of their lack of linguistic knowledge, but because they did not approach conversion to Christianity in a way that culturally appealed to their prospective converts. He criticized missionaries for their lack of knowledge about the local population, mocking them for believing myths about cannibalism. On the contrary, Grandpré wrote, “upon consideration, the *Noirs* do not have perhaps as many faults as it seems at first glance.”¹⁰⁶ He wrote that the missionaries were convinced that through persuasion and a strategy of targeting children over time their “patience” would be rewarded with success.¹⁰⁷ Grandpré disagreed: “But, *non*: speaking with difficulty a few words of the language of these peoples, not being able to explain anything to them, as a result reason with them about anything, they [the missionaries] begin by imposing on them [prospective converts] the most significant deprivations, out of the desire to subjugate them at first with all the characteristics of worship, with the rigidity of the times of the primitive church.”¹⁰⁸ The missionaries’ attitudes towards local customs such as polygyny offended the local population. Grandpré accused the missionaries of attempting “to employ violence” to separate husbands from their wives in the name of “apostolic zeal.” “It is not surprising that the *Noirs* did not want to suffer” or put up with the missionaries. Nor was it hard to imagine that the locals’ impression of the missionaries was as “people who came to their

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., I: 96.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., I: 97.

home only to torment them, to impose on them the most subjugating practices, who did not speak but to scold them, and finally who wanted with all force to bring trouble and disorder to their families, in forcing them to repudiate their spouses, and deprive their children of their mothers.”¹⁰⁹ Grandpré insisted “that it is easy to civilize the peoples of the Kongo, but it is necessary to gain their trust with good works” such as bringing doctors to heal them and agronomists to teach them agriculture.¹¹⁰ Grandpré remained convinced that the mission’s failure was the result of its methods rather than a reflection on the local peoples’ cultural traditions. Grandpré’s relation of the French missionaries’ time on the Loango Coast is important because it provides a counter narrative to the letters and reports written by the missionaries themselves. According to Grandpré the mission was a complete failure and the reason was the methods of the missionaries’ themselves. The missionaries’ total ignorance of the local language, customs, and culture as well as their arrogant insistence on the superiority of Christianity offended potential converts and ensured the failure of the mission. The result of the mission was to instill in the local population, particularly in Kakongo, a negative association with Christianity and European missionaries.

Translation, Sources, and the History of Kongolesse Christianity

The relationship between indigenous religious beliefs and Christianity after the arrival of Europeans has been a central question in the cultural history of the region.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., I: 98.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Many historians and scholars of Kongolese religious history dispute Thornton's insistence on the perfect integration of Catholicism into the traditional religious beliefs.¹¹¹ In some respects, the issue is one of interpretation. At the heart of the debate between Thornton and other scholars are the questions surrounding translation and sources. Can a Kongolese word represent a Christian belief? Are missionary sources reliable documents to assess the place of Christianity in the Kingdom of Kongo? For example, sociologist George Balandier concluded that Christianity was "badly established and always threatened."¹¹² For scholars such as Balandier and, more recently, Luc de Heusch, Christianity and Christian "instruments" entered into categories of indigenous religion (*nganga*, *minkisi*, ect.) and were, for a time, perceived to be more powerful spiritual tools than Kongolese ones. Under Afonso, "The Christian *minkisi*, recognized as more effective, replaced certain older 'fetishes'."¹¹³ For political reasons, Christianity was, during this time, "partially integrated in the traditional [religious] system." However, by the nineteenth century, when the second evangelization began, there was "no trace" of Catholicism in the Kingdom of Kongo.¹¹⁴ Scholars of Kongolese religious history Wyatt MacGaffey and John Janzen reached a similar conclusion, writing: "It is clear that during

¹¹¹ Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718*: chapter 5, especially 61-3.

¹¹² "mal implanté et toujours menacé." Georges Balandier, *La vie quotidienne au royaume de Kongo du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1965). 60.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹¹⁴ Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 87.

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries European Christian influence on the Bakongo was marginal or non-existent except at certain centers of international trade, at San Salvador and on the coast.”¹¹⁵

Thornton acknowledges the coexistence of Christianity and indigenous religious beliefs but gives primacy to Christian ontology or understanding of the world.¹¹⁶ For example, Thornton concludes: “In the end, Christianity, albeit in its syncretic form along Kongo lines, had made deep inroads into all regions, though only in Kongo and areas under Portuguese administration and was a deeply held part of the local identity.”¹¹⁷ At the same time, Thornton acknowledges “The Kongo mission never had sufficient priests to allow regular services for all” and that teaching about Christianity “was usually restricted to a relatively small handful of elite families [.]”¹¹⁸ Thornton likewise allows, “Conversion to Christianity rarely involved any fundamental religious change.”¹¹⁹ Thornton resolves this tension – arguing for the primacy of Christianity while admitting the persistence of indigenous religion - by asserting that the two religions co-existed peacefully. He argues Afonso I succeeded in doing “the hard intellectual and

¹¹⁵ John M. Janzen and Wyatt MacGaffey, *An anthology of Kongo religion: primary texts from Lower Zaire*, University of Kansas publications in anthropology ; no. 5 (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1974). 32.

¹¹⁶ Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718*: 61-63. ———, "Religious and Ceremonial Life in the Kongo and Mbumbu Areas, 1500-1700," 85.

¹¹⁷ ———, "Religious and Ceremonial Life in the Kongo and Mbumbu Areas, 1500-1700," 85.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 83-4.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

philosophical work of creating a marriage between Kongo religion and Christianity.”¹²⁰ This was accomplished through the “careful use of terminology in making translations” of Christian concepts and beliefs.¹²¹ Catholic priests adopted “key Kikongo religious terms – such as *nganga* for ‘priest’ and *nkisi* for ‘holy, or *Nzambi Mpungu* for ‘God.’”¹²² The “Catholic priests” were “placed in the same class with *nganga*” or traditional priests. Like their Kongolese counterparts, the Catholic *nganga* used *minkisi* or power objects to combat sorcery. The Catholic priest’s armory of *nkisi* power objects included the cross, church, and images. “To say that one believed in Nzambi Mpungu, that the priest was an *nganga*, and that his religious paraphernalia (cross, church, images, ect.) were all *nkisi* (which missionaries translated as simply “holy”) was not to change one’s religion much.”¹²³ The use of these terms paved the way, discursively, for the adoption of Christianity by integrating Christian concepts with pre-existing Kongolese ones.

The result, according to Thornton, was that the Kingdom of Kongo was, by the seventeenth century, a Christian country. Thornton rejects the argument that Christianity was “an ephemeral part of Kongo’s religious structure” even though “it is clear from the research of Wyatt MacGaffey and Anne Hilton that Christianity was thoroughly Africanized, in that there was a more or less direct translation of Kongo cosmology and

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., 84-5.

¹²² ———, *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718*: 63.

¹²³ Ibid.

religious categories into Christianity.”¹²⁴ Thornton does not see an analytic tension between the expressions of Christian beliefs in Kongolese terms. He dismisses modern scholars’ view that the conversion to Christianity of the Kongolese “did not constitute a true conversion” or that “missionaries were deluded in their notions about their parishioners’ beliefs” as being “predicated on the modern missionary definition of Christianity [.]”¹²⁵ Instead, Thornton insists that by the standards of the time – the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – “there was then never any real doubt that Christianity was the official religion in Kongo, and the Popes accepted itself as such. Most missionaries themselves accepted the Kongo as Christians even though they often denounced them as superstitious.”¹²⁶

However, the research presented in this chapter suggests that Thornton’s conclusions may not apply to the northern Kongo zone in the late eighteenth century, the region where captives enslaved in Saint Domingue originated. For example, contemporary French commentators north of the Congo River remarked on the *lack* of Christian adherents in the Kingdom of Kongo, especially in light of the Portuguese claims of conversion to Catholicism. For example, Abbé Proyart wrote that the French missionaries were surprised, on arriving on the Loango, to find “the sojourn made by the Portuguese in the Congo, has not notably altered the innocence and the simplicity of the

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 64.

moeurs there.”¹²⁷ Part of the reason for their surprise was that Cardinal Giuseppe Maria Castelli,¹²⁸ Prefect of the Propaganda in Rome, had informed the missionaries before their departure that there were “presently several hundred thousands of Christians in” the Kingdom of Kongo.¹²⁹ Recalling Castelli’s statement, Proyart remarked: “But the Capuchins,” he retorted, “who since the dissolution of the Jesuits have alone remained charged with this vast & pathetic mission, beginning to lack themselves Subjects [.]”¹³⁰ Grandpré lamented that Christianity had “made vain efforts to penetrate there. The novelty could have decided the *Noirs* to welcome the first missionaries; but this success has not been constant.” He explained, “The Portuguese themselves, despite the advantage of being established in the country, have succeeded so little in propagating the Christian faith there, that the inhabitants have developed more of an aversion and less of a confidence for them.”¹³¹

For the northern Kingdom of Kongo, the most optimistic report of the last half of the eighteenth century is that of Cherubino. However, Cherubino’s outright assertion that the entirety of the kingdoms of Angola and Kongo were Christian is undermined by his actual description of the religious practices in the region – both in the persistence of

¹²⁷ Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*: 61-4.

¹²⁸ Cardinal Giuseppe Maria Castelli, Prefect of the Propaganda from April 1763 until his death in April 1780. Kabolo Iko, *Le royaume kongo et la mission catholique, 1750-1838 : du déclin à l’extinction*: 330.

¹²⁹ Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*: 316.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 61-4.

¹³¹ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 47.

indigenous beliefs and practices and the complete lack of understanding or teaching of Christian doctrine. Furthermore, the reports of subsequent missionaries such as Dicomano further contradicted Cherubino's insistence that the Christian faith continued to thrive in the Kingdom of Kongo. For example, according to the Portuguese missionaries who sojourned in the Kongo from 1780 to 1788, the Kongo had been without a priest for eighteen years.¹³² The only evidence Cherubino used to support his claim that the kingdom's inhabitants were Christian was the number of baptisms he claimed to have performed. However, as previously mentioned, Jadin has convincingly argued that these numbers are highly unreliable. Furthermore, Cherubino and subsequent missionaries such as Dicomano claimed that the Kongolese did not understand the Christian doctrine associated with the sacrament of baptism.

The popularity of the Catholic sacrament of baptism in the last half of the eighteenth century, alongside missionary's repeated complaints that the Kongolese did not understand and were not interested in understanding the Christian doctrine of baptism, raises the question of how the local population *did* understand baptism and why it was attractive to them. Anthropologist Luc de Huesch argues that the sacrament of baptism was popular among the Kongolese because it aligned with traditional beliefs about the sacred nature of water. Monarchs desired baptism, especially during coronation ceremonies, because "The purifying water was a decisive element in the traditional

¹³² Jadin, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774," 353.

coronation.”¹³³ Heusch explains that the Catholic practice of baptism was similar to the way the Mani Vunda “sprinkled the new sovereign with lustral water by means of a fly swatter called *nsese*. ” Water itself was important as “the *séjour par excellence* of nature spirits. The Kongolese did not have any difficulty therefore to admit the magical virtues of baptismal water, held by these white albinos, water spirits incarnate, emerged from the depths of the ocean.”¹³⁴ For Heusch, Christian rites such as baptism were “perfectly integrated” into indigenous beliefs. “The crucifix, the medals, the saints images and host were assimilated as charms, they entered in the category of protective *fétiches*, the *minkisi*.”¹³⁵

Like Heusch and Hilton, Kongolese historian and linguist Jean de Dieu Nsondé questions the apparent popularity of baptism as a marker of Christianity. Nsondé looks at the way missionaries translated the practice of baptism into Kikongo languages. He notes that “many inhabitants of the Kongo believed that the essential of baptism consisted of ‘eating salt: *ku-dià mungwa*.”¹³⁶ Both Cavazzi and, in the eighteenth century, Dicomano report as much.¹³⁷ A Loango Coast dictionary translated “baptism” as *sukula mina a li*

¹³³ Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 82.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 83. Heusch draws on the work of Hilton: Hilton, *The kingdom of Kongo*: 94-98.

¹³⁶ Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 176.

¹³⁷ Cavazzi, *Descrição histórica dos três reinos do Congo, Matamba e Angola*; Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795."

zina lia nzambi or “wash according to the precepts of God.”¹³⁸ According to Nsondé, such a translation communicated the act of purification by water but little else. “This ambiguity,” he concludes, “and the incomprehension that could result from it, permits an explanation, among others, two contradictory attitudes of the population.”¹³⁹ These contradictory attitudes were the population’s general hostility to missionaries that coexisted with the population’s desire to receive baptism. Baptism, Nsondé concludes, is a “very significant” case for evaluating the nature of religion in the region because “the witnesses are fairly numerous and concordant. All gives us to believe that it [baptism] could know a great public success on certain occasions, but not that one can analyze this as a qualitative advance for Christianity.”¹⁴⁰ Nsondé investigated changes in the kikongo lexicon of traditional religious terminology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and concluded: “It seems today increasingly certain that Christianity was not perceived in its specificity, but as a supplementary cult, able to bring a spiritual, magical, and perhaps material advantage, particularly to political dignitaries.” Of the conversion of Kongo’s inhabitants to Christianity, Nsondé concludes: “Nothing is less sure.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ anon., *Dictionnaire françois et congo with Remarques préliminaires* cited in Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 177.

¹³⁹ ———, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 177.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁴¹ Jean Nsondé, "Christianisme et religion traditionnelle en pays koongo aux XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 32, no. 128 (1992).

The work of Heusch and Nsondé on the translation of concepts such as baptism highlights the problem of translation in Christianity in the Kingdom of Kongo. The expression of Christian beliefs in Kongolese spiritual terms highlights the importance of the *meaning* attached to these terms. At stake is whether or not the Kongolese understood, believed in, or cared about Christianity. In the case of baptism, these scholars argue that the Kongolese were merely accepting a Kongolese spiritual practice from a European *nganga*. Furthermore, the ambiguous nature of the Kikongo translations used by Christian missionaries does not allow scholars to conclude that Christian concepts were expressed or understood by the terms used. On the contrary, written evidence from the eighteenth century documents the persistence of indigenous knowledge and practices attached to Kongolese terms used by Catholic missionaries as well as the lack of interest and sometimes downright hostility of the local population of Christian teaching. Furthermore, the discussion of missionary reports in this chapter demonstrates the highly unreliable nature of these documents.

Conclusion

The point of this chapter has been to reassess the state of Christianity in the Kongo zone in the last half of the eighteenth century by evaluating the existence and nature of Christianity in the northern region of the Kingdom of Kongo, especially Sonyo, and the Loango Coast kingdoms for the last half of the eighteenth century. The evidence presented here challenges Thornton and Heywood's conclusion about the "prior emergence of West Central African Christian traditions" and finds no evidence of

“adaptation and cultural synthesis among certain West Central Africans” in the Kingdom of Kongo or especially in the Loango Coast kingdoms in the last half of the eighteenth century.¹⁴² Regardless of the history of Christianity during earlier periods, there is no contemporary evidence that “hundreds of thousands of central Africans practices a local form of Christianity” or that there was a “dynamic local [Christian] church”¹⁴³ in the Kingdom of Kongo in the last half of the eighteenth century. On the contrary, the sources written by missionaries and non-missionary visitors to the region at the time commented on the lack of Christian churches, Christian practices, and the lack of interest and occasional hostility of Kongolese populations to Catholic teaching. Furthermore, the documents written by missionaries are found to be highly unreliable. The numbers of baptisms missionaries claimed to have performed have been shown to be especially suspect. Moreover, the Kongolese who were baptized by missionaries appear, according to multiple sources, to have understood the sacrament of baptism fundamentally differently from Catholic doctrine and were uninterested in learning the catechism or receiving other sacraments. Baptism therefore cannot be seen as a marker of “authentic” conversion to Christianity. This information suggests that scholars must instead focus on indigenous categories of knowledge and ways of being that, we will see in the next chapter, were central to the way Kongolese men and women negotiated slavery in the Kongolese Atlantic world.

¹⁴² *Central Africans and cultural transformations in the American diaspora*: 14.

¹⁴³ Thornton, "Religious and Ceremonial Life in the Kongo and Mbumbu Areas, 1500-1700," 72.

Chapter 7: ‘Kongo Help Me Cry’: Kongolese Cultural Practices in Saint Domingue

In this chapter, I follow Kongolese captives from the Loango Coast across the Atlantic Ocean to the French colony of Saint Domingue in the last half of the eighteenth century, querying how and why certain cultural practices were used and what impact they had on plantation society. The history of the Kongolese in Saint Domingue furnishes an exceptional opportunity to understand how enslaved Africans used cultural practices to mediate the experience of slavery in the Americas. This phenomenon permits us to investigate how specific cultural practices allowed enslaved Africans and their descendants to survive, create a community, and ultimately, overthrow colonial slavery in the context of the most successful slave revolt in history – the Haitian Revolution. To date, much scholarship on religion and spiritual practices in Saint Domingue has emphasized its connection with slave rebellion or resistance and debated whether its origins lay on the plantation or in Africa. This work has been illuminating, but it has led to an underappreciation of the transatlantic nature of the lives of Africans in the colony, many of whom had spent relatively little of their lives enslaved on plantations. Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, historians such as Gabriel Debien and Jean Fouchard drew scholars’ attention to the dominance of “Congos” in the colony.¹ More recently, scholars such as Claude Auguste and John Thornton have explored the role of “Congos” in the

¹ Debien, *Une plantation de Saint-Domingue. La sucrerie Galbaud du Fort (1690-1802)*; ———, *Études antillaises: XVIIIe siècle*. Debien and Houdaille, "Les Origines Africaines des Esclaves des Antilles Françaises."; Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles*. Fouchard, *Les marrons de la liberté: édition revue, corrigée et augmentée*.

Haitian Revolution.² Thornton's foundational work on the role of Kongolesse military tactics and political ideology in the Revolution insists that any understanding of the political culture of the Haitian Revolution requires reconstructing the perspectives of the Central African majority.³ Less work, however, has been done on the history of this important group in pre-revolutionary Saint Domingue.

What was the social and cultural impact of the Kongolesse in Saint Domingue? How did Central African men and women use Kongolesse knowledge and spiritual technologies to mediate the experience of slavery on both sides of the Atlantic world? Historians can only understand the meaning of the cultural practices of Africans in the Americas by understanding where Africans came from and what cultural and linguistic tools they brought with them across the Atlantic Ocean. Through this approach, we gain a more in-depth knowledge of African cultural history and move beyond generalizations about African culture and beliefs. Central Africans are often described as broadly culturally homogenous. However, there are also "remarkable local variations" in culture and language.⁴ This is even true among the Kongo groups. Within the Kongo zone there are important regional variations regarding religious concepts, especially concerning *nkisi*, *simbi*, and *nkita*. South of the Congo River, different regions define *simbi* as

² Auguste, "Les congos dans la Révolution Haïtienne."

³ Thornton, "African Soldiers in the Haitian Revolution."; ———, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution."

⁴ Hersak, "There Are Many Kongo Worlds: Particularities of Magico-Religious Beliefs among the Vili and Yombe of Congo-Brazzaville."

protective, local nature spirits who inhabit rivers or two types nature spirits who inhabit rivers (*bisimbi bi masa*) or land (*bisimbi bi nseke*),⁵ who are seen in opposition to terrestrial spirits, *nkita*, who are themselves variously considered to be either the spirits of people who died a violent death or the spirits of founding ancestors.

Many aspects of religious beliefs and practices, even regarding these three concepts, differ greatly north of the Congo River. According to recent research by Dunja Hersak, neither the Vili nor the Yombe, for example, refer to themselves as Kongo, nor do they venerate their ancestors. Instead, they focus on ancient nature spirits, *nkisi si*, such as Mbumba. Mbumba, the central mythic figure of the Yombe, is unimportant now south of the Congo River. And though the Yombe recognize the words *nkisi*, *simbi* and *nkita*, they mean radically different things to them. For example, south of the river, *nkisi* (pl *minkisi*) are power objects. North of the river, they are powerful nature forces that occupy the central position in the spiritual hierarchy.⁶ North of the river, it is these terrestrial gods, the *bakisi ba nsi* (*nsi* among the Yombe, *tsi* among the Vili, meaning ‘terre’, earth, land), who are the principal focus of religion. In Ngoyo, the *simbi* are merely emissaries of local, terrestrial *bakisi ba si*. Both the *simbi* and the *nkita* disappear completely among the Vili of Loango. Only the Yombe, occupants of the rainforest inland of the coastal kingdoms of the Loango coast, recognize the *bakisi ba nsi* of the

⁵ Joseph Van Wing, *Etudes Bakongo. II, Religion et magie* (Bruxelles: G. van Campenhout, 1938). 19.

⁶ Hersak, "There Are Many Kongo Worlds: Particularities of Magico-Religious Beliefs among the Vili and Yombe of Congo-Brazzaville."

Loango coast and the *simbi* and *nkita* seen south of the river.⁷ These regional differences highlight the problem with a scholarly focus on the cultural homogeneity of Central Africans and general inattention to the early modern cultural history of the northern half of the Kongo cultural zone. Such a perspective ignores regional differences which are not only visible today but also, as well will see, were visible amongst “Congos” in Saint Domingue in the eighteenth century and the wider Kongolesé Atlantic world.

In this chapter, I explore the history of the Kongolesé in Saint Domingue from the vantage of the Loango Coast and Mayombe regions in order to produce new insight into the cultural practices of the enslaved. I focus on Kongolesé spiritual practitioners such as François Makandal, Dom Pèdre for whom the Petro rite of Haitian Vodou is named, Marie Kingué and others. My goal is to understand how enslaved Kongolesé men and women used what we can broadly term cultural practices as tools to negotiate the experience of slavery on both sides of the Atlantic world. I show how knowing where Loango Coast captives came from raises new questions about the use of African cultural formations in the Americas. In chapter 5, we saw that linguistic research on Bantu words from cultural practices in eighteenth century Saint Domingue suggests a strong correlation with the region north of the Congo River, specifically the Mayombe forest. This information makes it possible to glean new information about the practices and worldviews of “Congos” in Saint Domingue by studying them alongside appropriate contemporary linguistic, ethnographic, and documentary evidence from the Loango Coast

⁷ Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: Chapter 9.

and Mayombe regions. When seen in this light, I find enslaved West Central Africans used identifiable Kongolese cultural practices across the Atlantic in Saint Domingue and later Haiti. They drew on specific instrumental knowledge and spiritual technologies such as divination, possession, trance, and power objects to address the material problems of plantation life. I argue this demonstrates a remarkable durability of Kongolese ontology on both sides of the Kongolese Atlantic world.

Makandal and Kongolese Spiritual Practitioners and Practices in Saint Domingue

Among the African spiritual leaders who practiced in Saint Domingue, none attained either the renown or the infamy of François Makandal. In the words of one colonist, “Of all the leaders of the maroons none had a reputation more grand or more merited than François Macandal executed in 1758.”⁸ Indeed, Makandal is a figure of legendary proportions. His life and especially his death loom large in the myth and history of slavery in Saint Domingue. Accused of attempting to poison the white population of Saint Domingue, eighteenth century French colonists reviled and feared him. For the white population, Makandal symbolized and embodied fears of poison, slave uprising, and the danger of African knowledge about plants, medicine, and religion. For the free and enslaved population and their Haitian descendants, Makandal has been

⁸ "Mémoire pour la création d'un corps de gens de couleur levé en mars 1779 à St Domingue," 1779, ANOM C/9/B/29, Correspondance générale St. Domingue, 2^e série transcribed and quoted in Fouchard, *Les marrons de la liberté: édition revue, corrigée et augmentée*: 388. John D. Garrigus appears to have located a signed copy of the *mémoire*: Laurent François Le Noir Rouvray, marquis de, "Mémoire pour la création d'un corps de gens de couleur levé en mars 1779 à St Domingue," 1779, ANOM, DFC, pièce 103

lauded as a hero, his actions see as a precursor to and inspiration for the Haitian Revolution. The actual history of Makandal is both simpler and more complicated than these two competing narratives. The historiography has traditionally understood Makandal as an Arabic-speaking Muslim, a sorcerer, a poisoner, and a revolutionary figure in the history of resistance to slavery in Saint Domingue. Closer investigation of documents generated by the arrest of Makandal and his accomplices tells a different story.

By studying the judicial material generated by Makandal's arrest, rather than the mythical descriptions written about him in later decades, I show that Makandal was, in fact, a Kongolese spiritual practitioner. In Chapter 5, I used historical linguistics to show that Makandal was a Kongolese *nganga nkisi* or Kongolese priest who created powerful packets for his followers. Though both the white and black population of the colony associated these packets with poison, there is no evidence that Makandal was guilty of a conspiracy to poison the white population of the colony. Furthermore, no evidence supports the claim that Makandal was a revolutionary leader in the region or the colony. Rather, his followers appear to have been local. Makandal's was a spiritual rather than a military or political leader. Indeed, at least one of his "accomplices" was an *nganga tesa* or diviner. According to sources, the enslaved population turned to the spiritual technologies provided by Makandal and his "accomplices" such as power packets and divination for reasons including luck, protection, aggression, and to identify guilty parties.

The rumors and myths that circulated in the wake of Makandal's death mean that studying the history of the famous African requires the difficult task of separating fact from fiction. According to numerous sources, François Makandal was born in Africa. Captured and brought to Saint Domingue, he was a slave on the le Normand de Mézy plantation in Limbé, in the North Province of Haiti. On the plantation, Makandal worked in the dangerous sugar mill, where he lost one of his arms, after which he was made guard of the plantation's animals.⁹ At the time of his arrest, he was said to have been a maroon, or runaway, for variously ten¹⁰ or eighteen years.¹¹ By that time, Makandal was already well known in the area. During his time as a maroon, Makandal was said to have amassed a huge number of followers and carried out the murder, by poison, of an "innumerable" number of people. According to a letter written by the colonial intendant

⁹ For claims that Makandal had been a slave on the le Normand de Mezy plantation, see: Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description... de Saint Domingue*: I: 651.; Mémoire pour la création d'un corps de gens de couleur levé en mars 1779 à St Domingue, Mémoire pour la création d'un corps de gens de couleur levé en mars 1779 à St Domingue transcribed and quoted in Fouchard, *Les marrons de la liberté: édition revue, corrigée et augmentée*: 388.

¹⁰ Bart and Laporte, "Letter from M[onsieurs] Bart and Laporte to the Minister on the essay of poisons. 27 February 1758," 1758, ANOM F/3/88, Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry, p 227-30

¹¹ anon., *Rélation d'une conspiration tramée par les nègres dans l'Isle de S. Domingue, défense que fait le Jésuite confesseur, aux nègres qu'on suplicie, de révéler leur fauteurs & complices* (1758). 2. Document cited by Gisler, Fouchard, and others can be found in Colonial archives: "Relation d'une conspiration tramée par les nègres dans l'île de Saint Domingue," 1758, ANOM C/9/B/29, Correspondance générale St. Domingue, 2^e série Antoine Gisler, *L'esclavage aux Antilles françaises (17e-19e siècle) : Contribution au problème de l'esclavage*, Studia Friburgensia : Nouv. sér. ; 42. (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1965). 54. Fouchard, *Les marrons de la liberté: édition revue, corrigée et augmentée*.

and governor dated 27 February 1758¹², the poison had been used against blacks more often than whites and was responsible for the deaths of more than “6,000 *nègres*” in and around Cap Français in the preceding three years.¹³ Decades later, Moreau wrote, “During his desertion he [Makandal] made himself famous by his poisonings which spread terror among the *nègres*, & who all submitted to him. He openly maintained a school in this execrable art, it had agents in all parts of the Colony, & death flew at the least signal that he made.”¹⁴ Moreau’s description is an example of the mythic and monstrous character ascribed to Makandal by French colonists.

For many, Makandal was not only guilty of maroonage and poisoning, but also of planning to eradicate the entire white population of the colony. For example, Moreau asserted, “In the end in his vast plan, he had conceived the infernal project to make disappear from the surface of Saint Domingue all the men who were not black [.]”¹⁵ Despite “The vigilance of the magistrates” and “that of the government,” no one had, for many years, been able to apprehend Makandal.¹⁶ Laurent François Lenoir, the marquis de Rouvray, a veteran of the Seven Years’ War and Charles d’Estaing’s 1779 expedition

¹² Pluchon and subsequent authors transcribe the date as 27 January 1758. In my reading of the original document, it is clearly dated from 27 February 1758, not January. Pierre Pluchon, *Vaudou, Sorciers, Empoisonneurs: de Saint Domingue à Haïti* (Paris: Karthala, 1987). 168.

¹³ Bart and Laporte, Letter from M[onsieurs] Bart and Laporte to the Minister on the essay of poisons. 27 February 1758

¹⁴ Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description... de Saint Domingue*: I: 651.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

against the British at Savanna during the American Revolution, described Makandal in similarly chimeric terms. He wrote that during Makandal's maroonage, he found "refuge in the mountains where soon he made the most extraordinary ascendance over his companions. Outside of his very beautiful qualities of command, he possessed, in effect, all that was necessary to seduce and fanaticize the credulous and primitive beings who surrounded him." Rouvray expounded at length on the attributes that made Makandal such a powerful leader. Rouvray quoted "a contemporary" who said Makandal "predicted the future," and "had revelations and an eloquence which had nothing to do with this eloquence of imitation of our orators, and which was not but stronger and more vigorous. He joined with is the greatest courage and the greatest firmness of heart, that he knew how to conserve in the middle of the cruelest torments and tortures." Above all, Rouvray described Makandal as a spiritual leader: "He had persuaded the *nègres* that he was immortal, and he had impressed upon them such a terror and such a respect that they considered it an honor to serve him on their knees and to adore him with a cult that one owes only to the Divinity, of whom he said himself the envoy."¹⁷ Other colonists attributed revolutionary aspirations to Makandal. "One certain fact is that Macandal was more and better than a simple chief of a maroon band," wrote one colonist. Not content to merely pillage plantations and steal from colonial troops, Makandal aspired to make "maroonage the center of a resistance organized by the *noirs* against the whites."¹⁸

¹⁷ Rouvray, *Mémoire pour la création*

¹⁸ "Notes historiques," ANOM F/3/136, p 198 Quoted in: Fouchard, *Les marrons de la liberté: édition revue, corrigée et augmentée*: 388.

Much of Makandal's legend was fueled by the stories and rumors that circulated about his capture and death. After years of evading colonial authorities, colonial authorities finally apprehended Makandal in January 1758, sparking a series of events that would become the subject of myth as well as history. According to Moreau, the events leading to Makandal's downfall began during a *calenda*¹⁹ on the Dufresne plantation²⁰ in Limbé, in the North Province of Saint Domingue. Makandal, having "grown accustomed" to visiting plantations with "impunity," went to take part in the dance. Upon seeing Makandal, a "young *nègre*" warned two colonists on the plantation, Duplessis and Trévan, perhaps motivated to do so because of "the impression that the presence of [this] monster" had on him or perhaps because of the promise of more material rewards. The two Frenchmen hatched a plan to capture the infamous runaway using an unexpected weapon: alcohol. They "spread the *tafia* [rum] so profusely, that the *nègres* all got drunk, & that Makandal, despite his prudence, found himself deprived of his reason." The colonists arrested Makandal in the slave quarters and took him a back room of the big house. Having no irons to bind him with, they tied his hands behind his back with *enverges* for horses. The two colonists sent word to the capital of their arrest and settled in for the night to guard Makandal with the help of two house slaves [*nègres domestiques*]. In the room with them were, on a table, two loaded pistols and a lamp. When the two Frenchmen fell asleep, Makandal, perhaps aided by the two *domestiques*,

¹⁹ Fouchard, "One named as such the dances that the slaves had permission to [attend] Saturdays and Feast Days." ———, *Les marrons de la liberté: édition revue, corrigée et augmentée*: 385n3.

²⁰ Dufresne de Pontbriand was the son-in-law of Trévan, inhabitant of Limbé. *Ibid.*, 385n2.

“untied his hands, put out the light, opened a window,” and jumped to the freedom of the “savanna” below. After jumping from the window, Makandal was said to have “reached the coffee trees jumping like a magpie.” Precisely how Moreau knew of this latter feat is hard to say as, presumably, the two colonists were still asleep at the time, though we are told they did not remain so for long. They were awakened by the sound of the window latch rattling in the breeze. When they realized their prisoner had escaped the search for Makandal began anew among “great rumor”. With the help of search dogs, Makandal was soon apprehended again. Moreau pointed out that Makandal’s plan of escape was a poor one; “if he had made use of the two pistols instead of fleeing [he would have been] sure to escape.” Having not done so, Makandal was retaken and transported to the capital Cap Français for trial, sentencing, and finally, execution in what was to be the setting of Makandal’s most daring and successful escape yet.²¹

During his time as a fugitive slave and spiritual leader, Makandal had become reknowned for his ability to evade arrest. Indeed, he had often claimed, “if the whites took him he would escape them [by transforming himself into] various forms [.]”²² The 20 January 1758, he was condemned to make “honorably amend” for his crimes: to kneel in front of the door of the main church of Cap Français, nude but for a shirt, holding in his hands a burning wax torch, wearing a sign inscribed with the words “Seducer, Profaner and Poisoner.” He was then to be attached to a post, burned alive until his ashes

²¹ Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description... de Saint Domingue*: I: 651-3.

²² *Ibid.*

scattered in the wind.²³ Colonial authorities wasted no time in carrying out his sentence: the execution was scheduled for that same day at five o'clock in the afternoon. Makandal remained defiant: he “declared that he would take [the form] of a fly to escape the flames.”²⁴ Makandal was attached to a post in the middle of the pyre with iron chains. According to a letter written months after the events in question, “As soon as he smelled the fire, he made gruesome screams; but he made efforts so prodigious and so superior to the force of man, that the collar and chain detached from the Post; so that he was saved from the fire [his] body partly burned.”²⁵ According to Moreau, Makandal’s escape was due to “chance” rather than miracle: the post to which Makandal had been chained was “rotten.”²⁶ Whether caused by superhuman force or by “rotten” luck, Makandal’s escape was witnessed by a large crowd. “The *nègres* cried: Makandal saved!” Panic ensued. Soldiers guarding the execution emptied the square. The jailer wanted to kill Makandal

²³ Pluchon, *Vaudou, Sorciers, Empoisonneurs: de Saint Domingue à Haïti*: 171-2. M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix constitutions et règlements de la Colonie de Saint-Domingue*, 6 vols. (Paris: Chez l'auteur, [1784-1790]).

²⁴ ———, *Description... de Saint Domingue*: I: 651-3.

²⁵ “Il a fait des hurlements effroyables; mais il a fait des efforts si prodigieux et si supérieurs aux forces de l’homme, que le collier et la chaîne se sont détachés du Poteau; en sorte qu’il s’est sauvé du feu le corps en partie brûlé.” anon., *Rélation d’une conspiration*: 3. Also found in the French archives. Transcribed and quoted in Fouchard and Pluchon. *Relation d’une conspiration tramée par les nègres dans l’île de Saint Domingue*, *Relation d’une conspiration tramée par les nègres dans l’île de Saint Domingue* Pluchon, *Vaudou, Sorciers, Empoisonneurs: de Saint Domingue à Haïti*: 172. Fouchard, *Les marrons de la liberté: édition revue, corrigée et augmentée*: 387.

²⁶ Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description... de Saint Domingue*: I: 651-3.

with his sword but on order from the Attorney General, Makandal was tied to a plank and thrown back into the fire where he burned to death.²⁷

Few people, however, had witnessed Makandal's death and many had witnessed his escape, sparking rumors that Makandal's promised flight had succeeded.²⁸ According to one contemporary, "all" of the blacks who had been in the crowd, while being cleared from the square, "shouted [loudly] that François Macandal was [a] sorcerer & incombustible; that he had been right to tell them that no one was capable of stopping him, & that as soon as one placed a hand on him, he would change into a gnat [*Maringouin*]."²⁹ The rumors of Makandal's magical transformation did not diminish with time. Four decades later, Moreau reported, "Though the body of Macandal was incinerated, many *nègres* believe even now that he did not perish in the torment." Whatever position one takes on Makandal's escape, it is clear that he lived on in the legends and language of the colony. "The memory of this being for whom the epithets" are not enough, wrote Moreau "still awakens such sinister ideas, that the *nègres* call poisons and the poisonings *Macandals* et that this name has become one of the cruelest insults that they can address to one another."³⁰ Indeed, Makandal's name became

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ A point well made by Laurent Dubois: "Few had seen him die, and many believed he had indeed escaped and was once again in the hills, plotting a new rebellion." Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution*: 51.

²⁹ anon., *Rélation d'une conspiration*: 3-4.

³⁰ Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description... de Saint Domingue*: I: 651-3.

synonymous in the colony with poison and poisoners, sorcerers, talismans and powerful packets.

These sources highlight how the story of Makandal's life and death became embellished and mythologized in the decades and centuries since his death. For this reason, studying the life of Makandal requires separating fact from fiction, history from legend in order to understand the meaning of the spiritual practices he took part in the colony. One pervasive claim is that Makandal was an Arabic-speaking Muslim from West Africa. Makandal's supposed Muslim origin appears to stem from a passage in the 1758 *mémoire* written by the judge who presided over Makandal's trial (discussed below) in which he wrote that to create his illegal packets Makandal used the word "alla." Courtin wrote, "The sorcerer, who composes [the *macandals*], says some words during his *opération*.³¹ François Macandal, during his interrogation at the *Conseil*, declared these words which appeared [to come] from the Turkish idiom, and where the word *alla, alla*, was repeated several times, and while he spoke in French, he said that he invoked God and the Lord Jesus Christ."³² Historian Pierre Pluchon concluded, based on this passage,

³¹ French *opération* roughly translates to the English 'operation' however the two have different meanings. In French, the meaning is associated with the mysterious and the unknowable: "Action of a power, of a capacity which produces a physical or moral effect." For example, "The operations of God." In a religious context, it refers to the "Operation of the Holy Spirit." For example, "Mysterious means by which the Holy Spirit acts, operates." "Opération"Centre National des Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales

³² "*Le sorcier, qui le compose, dit quelques paroles pendant son opération. François Macandal, pendant son interrogatoire au Conseil, a déclaré ces paroles qui ont paru tenir de l'idiome turc, et où le mot *alla, alla*, était plusieurs fois répété, et lorsqu'il parlait en Français, il a dit qu'il invoquait Dieu et le Seigneur Jésus-Christ.*" Courtin, *Mémoire sommaire sur ... François Macandal*, 1758

that Makandal likely recited a verse of the Koran in Arabic.³³ Makandal is also associated with Islam in Rouvray's 1779 *mémoire*: "One can see [*On croit voire*], in truth, Mahomet at the head of one hundred outlaws taking refuge in the deserts of Arabia, therefore meditating in his head the conquest of Universe [...]"³⁴ David Geggus appears to have been the first historian to challenge Makandal's Muslim origin. In 1991, he suggested, "a Bantu origin seems much more likely" because the packets Makandal created "seem clearly to belong to that Kongo tradition in the Americas described by Robert Farris Thompson and others." In addition, Geggus noted that Makandals name "seems to be a corruption of the Kongo word for "amulet" *makunda/makwanda*." He concluded the "protective *paquets* in late colonial Saint Domingue and independent Haiti were called *macandals* not just in memory of the famous poisoner. More correctly, he himself was named for them."³⁵ More recently, Hein Vanhee, a historian of Central Africa, suggested "probably Makandal administered a kind of poison ordeal to detect witches."³⁶ Despite

³³ Pluchon, *Vaudou, Sorciers, Empoisonneurs: de Saint Domingue à Haïti*: 210n28.

³⁴ "*On croit voir, en vérité, Mahomet à la tête de cent bannis réfugiés dans les deserts de l'Arabie, méditant dès lors dans sa tête la conquête de l'Universe [...]*" Rouvray, *Mémoire pour la création* Quoted in: Pluchon, *Vaudou, Sorciers, Empoisonneurs: de Saint Domingue à Haïti*: 180.

³⁵ Geggus, "Haitian Voodoo in the Eighteenth Century: Language, Culture, Resistance," 32-3. See also: Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*: 75.

³⁶ Vanhee, "Central African Popular Christianity and the Making of Haitian Vodou Religion," 251.

Geggus and Vanhee's preliminary conclusions, historians have continued to refer to Makandal's Muslim origin.³⁷

My own historical linguistic research presented in Chapter 5 demonstrates that Makandal's name indicated that his origin and occupation were Kongolese, not West African. Historical linguistics reveals that Makandal's name did indeed refer to a Kongolese term. More specifically, Makandal's name derived from the Yombe word *makanda*, used to refer to packets of animal, vegetable, or mineral material wrapped in a leaf. Each *makanda* was ritually empowered by an *nkisi* spirit, invoked by an *nganga nkisi* priest, and was named after the spirit or the power of the packet. Some packets were created for luck or protection. Others were aggressive: merely placing one in or near someone's house could cause them to fall ill. Synonyms for *makanda* are *(li-) funda* and *gris-gris*.³⁸ It is possible to narrow down the origin of the term *makanda* to the region north of the Congo River because south of the Congo River, these packets are referred to as *nkisi* (*minkisi* plural). North of the river, however, an *nkisi* (*bakisi* plural) is a spirit, and though power statues are sometimes referred to as an *nkisi* after the spirit that empowers them, packets or bundles, along with bottles, shells, and pots filled with

³⁷ Most recently articulated by: Malick W. Ghachem, *The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). 175.

³⁸ Oral interview conducted by the author with Mbuta Nsamu, *nganga nkisi*, village of Patu, Mayombe, D.R.C. 30 November 2013.

substances are given specific names which refer to their action or power.³⁹ Makandal's name therefore indicates, first, that he was an *nganga* or Kongolesé priest.

The *nganga* held a central position in early modern Kongolesé society.

Documents written by visitors to the Kongo zone in the early modern period indicate that the *nganga* were "the most frequent and most influential experts in the population."⁴⁰ The variety of social and ritual functions performed by *nganga* is reflected in the sources.

Proyart wrote:

The doctors [*médicins*] are revered as invaluable men, & even [as] necessary for the society: their art belongs to the religion. They bear the name of *Ganga* [...] one consults them to know the future, & discover the most secret things: one asks them, as the King, rain & good weather; one believes that by the virtue of their enchantments, they can make themselves invisible, & pass through doors, be they made of the hardest wood, or even of iron.⁴¹

"There is among them," Proyart added, those "who exercise Medicine, & made a trade in curing, by blowing [*soufflés*] and enchantments."⁴² Grandpré defined the *nganga* as a "conjuror"; "One consults the great Gods on important occasions, in imminent danger, before a great voyage and for the trials of a culprit."⁴³ Often translated as "priest," the term *nganga* referred to a wide variety of Kongolesé spiritual experts. According to

³⁹ Hersak, "There Are Many Kongo Worlds: Particularities of Magico-Religious Beliefs among the Vili and Yombe of Congo-Brazzaville."

⁴⁰ Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Kongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 123.

⁴¹ Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 99.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 194.

⁴³ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 47; 51.

historian and linguistic Jean de Dieu Nsondé, who studied the use of the term *nganga* in the early modern Kongo zone, “In effect, this generic term covers a multiplicity of realities and indicates several types of experts of very different specialties.” The main thing they had in common was “their situation as mediums [...] their role as spiritual intermediaries between the living and the surrounding world, notably with the invisible.”⁴⁴ The specialty of an *nganga* was indicated by the second word of their title. For example, an *nganga nkisi* was a “specialist in ordinary practices and rites” and an *nganga ngombo* was a “specialist in divination.”⁴⁵

Makandal’s name indicated his profession as an *nganga nkisi*, a ritual priest who performed rites and rituals and created spiritually charged objects by invoking the power of an *nkisi* spirit.⁴⁶ Drawing on contemporary sources, Nsondé defines *nganga nkisi* as “experts in the traditional medicine having recourse to plants and to *nkisi*. The latter [...] are of material objects of vegetal, animal or mineral origin supposed to conceal a power of occult magic, an acting force, *ngolo*.”⁴⁷ According to Kongoles scholar Kimpianga Mahaniah, the *nganga nkisi* played three roles, all of which he was able to perform

⁴⁴ Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Kongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 128.

⁴⁵ Nsondé, "Christianisme et religion traditionnelle en pays kongo aux XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles," 707.

⁴⁶ Kimpianga Mahaniah, II, "The Background of Prophetic Movements in the Belgian Congo: A Study of the Congolese Reaction to the Policies and Methods of Belgian Colonization and to the Evangelization of the Lower Congo by Catholic and Protestant Missionaries, from 1877 to 1921" (Ph.D., Temple University, 1975), 102.

⁴⁷ Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Kongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 131.

thanks to an *nkisi*. First, he neutralized the power of forces of the invisible or occult world to do harm - witches, ghosts, displeased ancestors. Second, he acted as a medical expert using magico-medical remedies to heal illnesses. Last, he used the *nkisi* to act as a prophet or seer in order to see events happening far away and learn the causes of diseases, deaths, and disasters.⁴⁸ Early modern sources connected the *nganga nkisi* with medicine as well as the creation and use of power objects and knowledge of medicine and healing. For example, Grandpré defined the *nganga nkisi* as the “conjurator” of “little idols”: “These little idols [*Kissy* or *nkisi*] influence health [*la santé*]; their conjurator is named *Ganga'm Kissy*; among them he is what doctors [*médicins*] are among us.”⁴⁹ Likewise, French missionary Descourvières wrote “They have ministers, that they call *ganga mkissi* to administer these superstitions to them: they often unite with them the use of some simples or of some ointments by the use of which, they sometimes succeed.”⁵⁰ A dictionary created by French missionaries translated *nganga nkisi* as “Minister of superstitions (they are the doctors of the country).”⁵¹

Both the name and associations with *nganga nkisi* existed in Saint Domingue. For example, in the Congo Vocabulary Baudry created in Saint Domingue he defined

⁴⁸ Mahaniah, "Mahaniah, The Background of Prophetic Movements in the Belgian Congo," 103.

⁴⁹ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 51.

⁵⁰ Descourvières?, ""Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs," Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.."

⁵¹ Dictionnaire congo et français, Dictionnaire congo et français Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 131.

“*gangan kizi*” or *nganga nkisi* as “surgeon” [“*chirurgien*”].⁵² One of the principle roles of the *nganga nkisi* was the composition and use of powerful objects. It is therefore not surprising that it is precisely with this crime that colonial officials charged Makandal. Indeed, despite Makandal’s association, among colonists, with a widespread poison conspiracy, at the time of his arrest, he was in fact known for the powerful packets for which he was named. Court documents generated by his arrest show Makandal was in fact convicted of creating of “allegedly magic packets.” For example, according to the *Arrêt du Conseil to Cap* published against Makandal, he was charged and convicted with:

making himself formidable among the *Negres*, and to have corrupted and seduced them by *prestiges* [Illusion produced by magic or a magic spell; diabolic artifice⁵³], and made [them] devote themselves to impieties and profanations [...] by mixing holy things in the composition and use of allegedly magic packets [*paquets prétendus magiques*], and tending to evil spells, that he made and sold to the *Negres*; to have moreover composed, sold, and distributed poisons of all type [.]⁵⁴

In other words, Makandal’s crime was making powerful packets using holy items that he sold to others and in so doing not only corrupted them but also made himself into a powerful leader. Makandal’s crime was therefore not plotting to kill the entire white population of the colony. Indeed, contrary to the claims of colonists in later decades, colonial authorities failed to find any evidence of a colony-wide conspiracy to poison white colonists. Their failure to do so was not for lack of trying. According to a letter

⁵² Baudry de Loziers, *Second Voyage a la Louisiane*: II: 117.

⁵³ According to *Centre National des Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales: Prestiges*, literary and most often in the plural, “Illusion produite par magie ou par un sortilege; artifice diabolique.”

⁵⁴ Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix constitutions des nègres de la Martinique* *vent*: IV: 217.

written from Cap Français 24 June 1758, colonists had burned alive four or five slaves a month since Makandal's execution, "there has already been twenty-four slave *Nègres* or *Nègresses*, & three free *Nègres*, who have suffered the same thing."⁵⁵ The jail cells of Cap Français's swelled with prisoners because each time a suspect was "put to the question" (Fournier la Chapelle's *Mémoire*, discussed below, specifies they were tortured⁵⁶) the *Maréchaussée* would inevitably arrest "nine to ten others that they declared to be their accomplices."⁵⁷ Despite the widespread arrests, tortures, and executions that were carried out in the wake of Makandal's execution, no evidence of a conspiracy emerged. Indeed, the colonial intendant at the time concluded that there was no colony-wide conspiracy to poison white colonists.⁵⁸ Instead, Makandal and his accomplices were executed for the packets that were considered to be "a sacrilegious desecration, by the abuse of the Holy things that they use and that use alone is criminal."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ anon., *Rélation d'une conspiration*.

⁵⁶ Charles Fournier de la Chapelle, "Mémoire pour servir à l'information des procès contre les nègres devins, sorciers et empoisonneurs," 1758, ANOM F/3/88, Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry, p 236-237 verso

⁵⁷ anon., *Rélation d'une conspiration*.

⁵⁸ Bart and Laporte, Letter from M[onsieurs] Bart and Laporte to the Minister on the essay of poisons. 27 February 1758; Hilliard d'Auberteuil in 1776 likewise concluded there had been no conspiracy. Historian Pierre Pluchon follows these two sources in concluding the same. Michel-René Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations sur l'état présent de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue. Ouvrage politique et législatif; présenté au ministre de la marine*, 2 vols. (Paris: Grangé, 1776). I: 137-8; Pluchon, *Vaudou, Sorciers, Empoisonneurs: de Saint Domingue à Haïti*.

⁵⁹ Courtin, *Mémoire sommaire sur ... François Macandal*, 1758

Both the black and white population of the colony associated these packets with poison. However, their understanding of what poison was and how it operated differs from our modern understanding of the term.⁶⁰ Makandal and others were charged with creating and possessing packets and other *garde-corps* or talismans. Indeed, many colonists truly believed these objects capable of causing harm to others. They considered them to be dangerous due to the power of “sorcery” and “evil spells,” which, for many colonists, were very real threats. For example, in a letter written one month after Makandal’s execution, the colonial intendant and governor stated that the poisoners were sorcerers. They wrote: “These *nègres* [poisoners] have chiefs and these type of chiefs were people reputed to be sorcerers, and who by superstitious practices persuaded them that they could do anything with impunity. It was also them who were the great composers of poisons. And, in selling them different doses, they added to them the secret of not being discovered in the usage that they made of them.” The poisons sold by sorcerers were none other than the packets sold by Makandal and others. “There were sometimes teeth, jaws, but more often still packets containing powders, mixes of [finger or toe] nails, the hairs of *Nègres* and some grasses [.]”⁶¹

⁶⁰ See: Garrigus, John D. “Le Secret Qui Règne Parmi Les Nègres”: Revisiting the Testimony of Makandal and His “Accomplices”, 1757-1758.” Conference Paper for workshop on “*Les résistances à l’esclavage dans le monde atlantique français à l’ère des Révolutions*” Montréal, Canada, May 3-4, 2013.

⁶¹ Bart and Laporte, Letter from M[onsieurs] Bart and Laporte to the Minister on the essay of poisons. 27 February 1758

This belief is reflected in the two major sources – two *mémoires* written in 1758— created in the wake of Makandal’s arrest and execution. The first is a report written by Sébastien Jacques Courtin who presided over the trials of Makandal and his accomplices. Courtin served a number of government positions, including royal prosecutor at the high court of Cap Français, notary general, and interim *sénéchal* or trial judge at the time of Makandal’s arrest. In an extract from a letter written by Courtin dated 25 February 1758, he is described as “ civil and criminal seneschal [trial judge] of the Royal Seat of Cap [Français].”⁶² Following the trial, Courtin penned a report meant to be a handbook or manual on the “allegedly magical practices and poisonings” written for uninformed colonial officials.⁶³ Charles Fournier de la Chapelle, Attorney General at the high court of Cap Français, wrote the second *mémoire* after leading an investigation into the use of poison in Saint Domingue. Fournier’s report drew on extracts from court proceedings, transcriptions of interrogations carried out by torture, the last will and testaments of the condemned, as well as Courtin’s own observations.⁶⁴

Both Courtin and Fournier argued that the arrest of Makandal and others had revealed the real danger posed to the colonial population by African spiritual practices,

⁶² Courtin. Sébastien Jacques Courtin, "Extrait of the letter of M. Courtain Sénéchal juge civil & criminel du Siege Royal du Cap, a Monsieur le Procureur Général en Datte du 25 fevrier 1758," 1758, ANOM F/3/88, Collection Moreau de Saint Méry, p 238; Pluchon, *Vaudou, Sorciers, Empoisonneurs: de Saint Domingue à Haïti*: 208.

⁶³ Courtin, *Mémoire sommaire sur ... François Macandal*, 1758

⁶⁴ Fournier de la Chapelle, *Mémoire pour servir à l’information des procès contre les négres devins, sorciers et empoisonneurs*

namely divination, sorcery, and poisoning. For example, Courtin began by outlining two longstanding beliefs he believed had been proven false by the revelations of the Makandal trial. The first was that “all of the slow illnesses” that had killed so many whites and *nègres* were caused by scurvy and the “climate of Saint Domingue.” The second error was to have “scorned for a long time all the superstitions of the *nègres*, their *garde corps* [talismans, literally “body guards”], their *fétiches* and the rest that the whites have seen as a continuation of their idolatry [.]” The evidence uncovered following Makandal’s arrest had, Courtin argued, “proven with the last evidence that the slow poisons are the real cause of almost all the chronic illnesses that attack the whites and the *Nègres*, and that are almost incurable.” It was therefore necessary for colonists to cease to “view with indifference” the “alleged superstitions” of the African population. Instead, “one must not neglect anything to stop their course.”⁶⁵

Fournier likewise concluded that African spiritual practices not only continued to exist in Saint Domingue, but also that they posed a grave danger to public safety. Fournier began by stating that the “transplantation” of Africans to Saint Domingue “and knowledge of the truth of the Christian Religion which should have destroyed their superstitious practices, seems on the contrary to have fortified them; and slavery, far from serving as a break on their vices appears to have added to them.” Some of the “meanest and most enlightened” Africans were known by “the mysterious title of diviners and sorcerers.” Their “practices” were “the most absurd, the most odious, and the most

⁶⁵ Courtin, *Mémoire sommaire sur ... François Macandal*, 1758

criminal, in order to procure themselves impunity, maintain their vices, serve their vengeance & arrive even at independence.” The reason that their spiritual practices were so dangerous, according to Fournier, was that in addition to “these two qualities of diviners and of sorcerers, is always joined a third, that of poisoners, as” had been demonstrated by the trials of Makandal and others.⁶⁶

Both Courtin and Fournier associated the ability of the packets or bundles created by African spiritual practitioners to cause harm with the power of magic or spells. For example, Fournier explained:

The macandal by itself does not cause death, even taken internally, but if those who possess them wish ill on someone, after having bound [the macandal] always with a piece of yarn, and made imprecations [cursed, cast a spell against⁶⁷] against [the person] they wish to harm, they put it under a rock, and they are persuaded that as long as it stays there, [it will cause the cursed one to feel] pain in the stomach, and the belly, and fall in danger, they are also persuaded that doing about the same thing, they can make the animals die.⁶⁸

Courtin explicitly stated the connection between poison and “*ouanga*” - a *sortilege* - magic spell or charm. He wrote, “To cause bodily harm, it is necessary to, following their expression, to approach him, that is to say to make him take *ouanga* or poison, which is a synonym among those we interrogated.”⁶⁹ Courtin’s use of the word *ouanga* is significant

⁶⁶ Fournier de la Chapelle, Mémoire pour servir à l’information des procès contre les négres devins, sorciers et empoisonneurs

⁶⁷ *Imprécation*: “Solemn prayer calling (on the enemy, the culprit) the anger of the infernal divinities (especially of furies).”; “Solemn curse, uttered against somebody.” Centre National des Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales

⁶⁸ ———, Mémoire pour servir à l’information des procès contre les négres devins, sorciers et empoisonneurs

⁶⁹ Courtin, Mémoire sommaire sur ... François Macandal, 1758

because in Haitian Kreyòl *ouanga* (*wanga*) literally means a *sortilège* or magic spell. Indeed, Pluchon points out “In the literal sense, the *ouanga* is a magic spell. We will not the equivalence between magic spell and poison. The *ouanga* in question here could be a powder or a liquid with magic or malefic virtues.”⁷⁰ In addition to Courtin and Fournier, *Mémoires* on poison written in Saint Domingue in the 1760s likewise claimed poison could take the form of “talismans” or “sacs of herbs” which might only need to be placed in or around the house of the intended victim.⁷¹ Indeed, the widespread nature of this belief among the colonial population is what led Hilliard d’Auberteuil in 1776 to explicitly state that “The poison... it is not a secret, an evil spell (*Ouanga*) as the people of the colony idiotically believe it to be.”⁷²

Both the word *ouanga* and its association with poison originate from the Kongo zone in Central Africa. “*Ouanga*” or *wanga* in present-day Kreyòl is a derivation of the proto-Bantu word *bwanga*,⁷³ meaning charm. The association between charms and poison can also be found in early modern descriptions of the Kongo. For example, Raimondo da

⁷⁰ Pluchon, *Vaudou, Sorciers, Empoisonneurs: de Saint Domingue à Haïti*: 212n32.

⁷¹ "Mémoire sur les poisons qui règnent à Saint-Domingue," 1763, ANOM C/9B/15, Correspondance générale St. Domingue, 2^e série. Quoted in Pierre de Vaissière, *Saint-Domingue : la société et la vie créoles sous l'ancien régime (1629-1789)* (Paris: Perrin, 1909). 242.

⁷² Auberteuil did see Makandal as a poisoner but of blacks, not of whites. He blamed deaths on the use of arsenic rather than sorcery. Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations sur l'état présent de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue. Ouvrage politique et législatif; présenté au ministre de la marine*: I: 137.

⁷³ As noted in Chapter 5, while the word to describe poison or sorcery, *bwanga*, is found throughout Bantu languages, the names and practices associated with the packets called *macandals* and *fonda* created by Makandal and others in Saint Domingue can be tied linguistically and ethnographically to the Mayombe region.

Dicomano, missionary to Sonyo in the Kongo from 1791-5, likewise associated charms with poison, writing, “Fetish, it is nothing other than poison.”⁷⁴ As in Saint Domingue and later Haiti, *wanga* or *bwanga* was used increasingly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to describe sorcery and poisoning in the Kongo zone. In both places, it was sometimes used as a synonym for *ndoki*, witchcraft (*Doki* in Vodou songs). In the eighteenth century, missionary Dicomano cited the weakness of the central authority of the Kingdom of Kongo, which had all but dissolved by the 1790s, with the widespread nature of ‘fetishes,’ which he defined as the administration of poison, and nighttime assemblies held by supposed diviners.⁷⁵ At the end of the nineteenth century, English missionary Richard Edward Dennet blamed colonization’s disruption of the traditional social system in Loango for the rise of accusations of poison, witchcraft, and the manufacture and sale of power objects.⁷⁶ In the twentieth century, even Belgian colonizers remarked upon it in their annual regional reports.⁷⁷

Dicomano and Dennett’s accounts are extremely interesting to read alongside Saint Domingue colonists’ assertions about the widespread nature of power objects

⁷⁴ “*Fétiche, ce n’est rien d’autre qu’un poison.*” Jadin, “Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795.”

⁷⁵ Jadin, “Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795.”

⁷⁶ Richard Edward Dennett, “Laws and Customs of the Fjort or Bavili Family, Kingdom of Loango,” *Journal of the Royal African Society* 1, no. 3 (1902).

⁷⁷ For Saint Domingue, see example in Descourtilz. Barthelemy and Casimir discuss the role of *wanga* in the lakou. For Central Africa, see the work of Bittremieux. Example cited from *Rapport Annuel* for 1925, consulted in the *Archives Nationales du Congo* (ARNACO). Also found in reports entitled *Affaires des Indigènes et Main d’Oeuvres*, especially for period of 1920s.

poison in the decades preceding the Haitian Revolution. Doing so highlights the similarity of the spiritual practices used in both places. Reading these accounts alongside one another furnishes new information about the social role of poison, power objects, and witchcraft in Kongolese communities on both sides of the Atlantic. According to documents written by European missionaries and merchants, the use of power objects and poison flourished on the Loango Coast and Kingdom of Kongo. Most European visitors described “fetishes” used by the indigenous population, which took the form of statues, packets or bundles, staffs, weapons, and other objects. For example, according to Dutch trader F. Cappelle’s description of the people of the Loango Coast, written for the Dutch West India Company in March 1642: “They have their *moquises* in which they believe. They have been made by their *féticheurs* and consist of small stones, small bones, feathers, grass and others rubbish [*saletés*] without utility, with which, entire nights and days, they practice magic and address themselves to the devil, as if mad or possessed. All do the same, those of the nobility as well as those of the commoners or people.”⁷⁸ Several elements of Cappelle’s description, we will see, parallel descriptions of the power objects used in Saint Domingue: the objects were made by “*féticheurs*,” the ingredients, their use in ceremonies that included divination or possession. As demonstrated above, these objects were associated with the power to cause harm or poison enemies through association with witchcraft or sorcery. These examples highlight the necessity of studying

⁷⁸ F. Cappelle report for the Dutch West India Company, March 1642. “Of Loango, Cacongo, Goy, Zarry and of their beliefs, laws and commerce.” Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Soho, Congo, 1600-1675*: 231.

the cultural practices of the Kongolese in Saint Domingue alongside appropriate contemporary linguistic, ethnographic, and documentary evidence about the cultural practices of the Kongolese on the Loango Coast and Mayombe regions

When viewed from the vantage of the Loango Coast, it is clear that the practices surrounding the creation and use of the powerful packets in Saint Domingue drew heavily on Kongolese spiritual technologies and ritual knowledge. The documents created by the arrest of Makandal and others give a great deal of information about the packets and the practices and beliefs associate with them. Both Courtin and Fournier claimed that the use of *macandals* was widespread and gave similar accounts of their composition, sale, and use. According to Courtin, “Nearly all the *Nègres* have some *garde-corps* [talismans or “body guards”], such as an end of cotton, that a sorcerer sells them very expensively, or other trifles [*bagatelles*] that, in themselves, are unimportant, but that are dangerous in what is a first step towards profanity, sacrilege, poisoning.”⁷⁹ The most secret *garde-corps* were “mysteriously prepared” packets that were believed to have “magic” powers. Created using bones from the cemetery, nails, and crushed roots they were hidden “with great care.”⁸⁰ The bundles could only be composed by “a first rate sorcerer.” He made the bundles from “bones from a cemetery, preferably those of baptized children” joined with some nails, crushed roots of trees such as plantain or fig, Holy water, and blessed incense and consecrated bread. He then tied it by wrapping it with string to form a packet two to

⁷⁹ Courtin, *Mémoire sommaire sur ... François Macandal*, 1758

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

four inches long.⁸¹ Fournier similarly wrote, “these *nègres* allegedly diviners or sorcerers” sold “compositions.” “The most renown of these compositions among them” Fournier explained, “is made with bones taken from cemeteries, & above all those of baptized children, holy bread, blessed incense, blessed wax, Holy water and some nails, the [put it all in] a packet tied with a string from both ends, where there is a quantity of knots; this packet is sometimes as large as the four fingers of the hand [.]”⁸² The “sorcerer” empowered the bundles by “invoking the powers of the sky and of the earth, and praying them to regard it with a favorable eye, and to cooperate with what they are doing.”⁸³ The owners of the bundles were required to “nourish” them every day with various substances and to themselves abstain from eating certain food such as fish or fresh beef. Each macandal had “a particular name” given to it by its creator.⁸⁴ Courtin and Fournier listed many uses for the packets: they were used for vengeance and personal disputes, to procure manumission promised them by their masters, for good luck, to make their masters like them, to protect them against punishment, to make them powerful within the slave community, to be made strong in combat, to win at gaming, to be loved by women, to not be beaten for maroonage, to cause the plantation owner to become

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Fournier de la Chapelle, *Mémoire pour servir à l’information des procès contre les nègres devins, sorciers et empoisonneurs*

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ “*Chaque Macandal a un nom particulier que lui donne celui la composé oju fabrique, comme charlot, laurence, daine, grand chemin, marie jeanne & a, et cest du nom de ces macandals quils appellent ceux qui les possèdent et nou pas, du veritable nom sous lequel ils sont connus des autres nègres.* » Courtin, *Mémoire sommaire sur ... François Macandal*, 1758

blind or ill. The macandals could also be consulted directly and would give knowledge to their possessors.

Though Christian objects were sometimes used in the composition of these packets, both Courtin and Fournier make it clear that their usage was anything but Christian. Indeed, Fournier began his *mémoire* by explicitly stating that exposure to Christianity had not “destroyed their superstitious practices” but had instead “fortified” them. Fournier’s statement suggests that the Kongolese turned to Kongolese ritual knowledge and spiritual technologies to mediate the experience of slavery in Saint Domingue. Christian objects appear to have been used alongside traditional Kongolese ingredients in the composition of power objects. For example, Fournier wrote: “When they can have crucifixes they insert them in these packets also composed which are communally called *garde corps* or *macandals* [.]” Another reason that Christian religious paraphernalia was used was to hide African spiritual practices. According to Fournier, “In these assemblies they always have a crucifix or rosary [*chapelet*], because in the case where they were surprised, they promptly [hid] the Macandals, & went to their knees around the table as if they were in prayer.”⁸⁵ Fournier’s description provides evidence that Christian objects were used in Saint Domingue in the same way that they were in the

⁸⁵ Fournier de la Chapelle, *Mémoire pour servir à l’information des procès contre les négres devins, sorciers et empoisonneurs*

Kongo (see chapter 6); they had entered into the indigenous religious category of powerful objects and were used to compose spiritually charged bundles or packets.⁸⁶

Many of the practices described by Courtin and Fournier parallel Kongoese practices found in early modern descriptions of the Loango Coast and Kingdom of Kongo. In Saint Domingue as in the Kongo zone, ritual specialists known as *nganga nkisi* composed spiritually powerful objects usually referred to as “*fétiches*” by European observers. Europeans most often described the “idols” made primarily from wood.⁸⁷ Smaller objects and packets of objects, though less often noted by Europeans, were also important. Some descriptions do exist. For example, Descourvières wrote, “Almost all of them wear some small idol suspended at their side. It is ordinarily some coarsely worked human figure, out of wood or in ivory, of fish teeth, sometimes of plants similar to leeks, ect.”⁸⁸ Abbé Proyard similarly wrote, “Many also carry on their belt small *marmouzets* [figures], of fish teeth, or some bird feathers, as preventatives against accidents of which they make, or believe themselves to be threatened.”⁸⁹ French naval commander Hippolyte

⁸⁶ See chapter 6. For proponents of this argument, see the work of Balandier, Heusch, and Nsondé. Balandier, *La vie quotidienne au royaume de Kongo du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle*; Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*; Nsondé, “Christianisme et religion traditionnelle en pays kongo aux XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles.”; Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Kongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*.

⁸⁷ See: Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 47-9. Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*: 183; Descourvières?, “Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs,” Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.,” 53.

⁸⁸ Descourvières?, “Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs,” Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.,” 53.

⁸⁹ Proyard, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*: 192.

compte de Cappelis wrote "Almost all and above all the Princes and rich people have in their house monstrous figures, grotesquely made, ordinarily decorated with feathers and weapons; sometimes they are only of feathers, bits of wood or of iron. They call them *fétiche*, they have a lot of respect for them and attribute to them the power to save their life and bring them happiness in all cases; they wear them on [their body] in war and believe that if the *fétiche* is good they cannot be killed."⁹⁰ These objects were created, ritually empowered,⁹¹ and sold by ritual specialists called, among other things, *nganga nkisi*. On the Loango Coast as in Saint Domingue, these powerful objects were used for personal protection and were also consulted to gain insight or knowledge.⁹² As in Saint Domingue, they were nourished or fed by their owners who observed ritual abstinences from certain foods.⁹³ For example, Descourvières wrote "When they want to drink, they have the simplicity to present a little of their drink to their idol, or to spill a part on the ground before tasting it."⁹⁴ When seen alongside contemporary descriptions from the

⁹⁰ Capellis, "Observation...", 1785, AN MAR/3JJ/255, dossier 15

⁹¹ Description of dance in Sonyo: Lucca Lorenzo da, *Relations sur le Congo du père Laurent de Lucques (1700-1717)*, ed. J. Bishop Cuvelier, Collection in-8o ; t. 32, fasc. 2 (Bruxelles: Institut royal colonial belge, 1953). 147-8.

⁹² Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 192-3. Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 50-1.

⁹³ On abstinences, see: Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 182-3. Descourvières?, ""Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs," Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.," 53.

⁹⁴ Descourvières?, ""Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs," Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.," 53. See also, Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 50-1.

Loango Coast, it is clear that the spiritually powerful packets or bundles created and sold by Makandal and others drew on Kongolesse spiritual technology and ritual knowledge.

According to historian and linguistic Jean de Dieu Nsondé, in the early modern Kongo zone, power objects were often used or owned individually, consisted of animal, vegetable, and mineral ingredients, and were believed to possess a magical force. They were worn for everyday personal protection as well as on specific occasions such as hunting, war, or childbirth. Power objects were also used to protect material goods against robbery. The overall theme that emerges from (rare) early modern descriptions of power objects is that of protection – of the physical body and material goods – against visible (human) and invisible (witchcraft or sorcery) threats.⁹⁵ For the Kongolesse of the Loango Coast and Mayombe rainforest, these objects and the spirits that empowered them were especially important because, unlike the Kongolesse south of the Congo River, they do not venerate ancestors. Rather, they relied on nature spirits, *nkisi nsi*, such as Mbumba (referred to as ‘Bomba’ in Loango by Cappelle and Dapper and ‘Bomba’ in Saint Domingue by Moreau de Saint Méry).⁹⁶ For the Vili and Yombe of the Loango Coast and Mayombe rainforest, *nkisi* spirits were forces of nature. These spirits could be

⁹⁵ Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Kongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 136-7.

⁹⁶ Hersak, "There Are Many Kongo Worlds: Particularities of Magico-Religious Beliefs among the Vili and Yombe of Congo-Brazzaville," 615. F. Cappelle report for the Dutch West India Company, March 1642. "Of Loango, Cacongo, Goy, Zarry and of their beliefs, laws and commerce." Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Soho, Congo, 1600-1675*: 231. Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique*, ; Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description... de Saint Domingue*.

invoked to spiritually empower an object.⁹⁷ North of the Congo River, these bundles were called *makanda* and (*li funda*).⁹⁸ South of the Congo River, these packets are referred to as *nkisi* (*minkisi* plural). North of the river, however, an *nkisi* (pl. *bakisi*) is a spirit, and though power statues are sometimes referred to as an *nkisi* after the spirit that empowers them, packets or bundles, along with bottles, shells, and pots filled with substances are given specific names which refer to their action or power.⁹⁹ Significantly, according to the Courtin's *mémoire* about Makandal, the "allegedly magic" packets he sold each received a specific name.

The descriptions of Kongolese power objects from the Loango Coast in the eighteenth century mirror those of the packets created and sold by Makandal in Saint Domingue in the 1750s, also known as "*macandals*" or "*gris*." Furthermore, it is clear that Makandal was not the only creator of either spiritually charged bundles or power objects in Saint Domingue. Indeed, their use appears to have been widespread in the colony in the last half of the eighteenth century. Further examples include the bundles sold by a man named Sim or Dompète in Nippes in 1781, the talismans sold by Marie Kingué, and the "sacs called *fonda*" sold by Jérôme Poteau during a ceremony called

⁹⁷ Hersak, "There Are Many Kongo Worlds: Particularities of Magico-Religious Beliefs among the Vili and Yombe of Congo-Brazzaville," 618.

⁹⁸ See Chapter 5.

⁹⁹ Hersak, "There Are Many Kongo Worlds: Particularities of Magico-Religious Beliefs among the Vili and Yombe of Congo-Brazzaville."

“Mayombe or Bila” in 1786.¹⁰⁰ When seen together, it is clear that Kongolesse spiritual practitioners such as Makandal drew on Kongolesse ritual knowledge and used Kongolesse spiritual technology to compose powerful objects to mediate the experience of slavery in Saint Domingue. It is also clear that Makandal was merely the most famous of many Kongolesse spiritual practitioners popular in the colony in the last half of the eighteenth century.

For this reason, it is possible to gain new insight into the use of power objects and poison in Saint Domingue by studying them from the vantage of the Loango Coast. As in Saint Domingue, the fear of both poison and sorcery appears to have been widespread throughout the Kongo zone in the late-eighteenth century. This fear can be seen among Europeans as well as among the Kongolesse of the Loango Coast and the Kingdom of Kongo. For example, Grandpré wrote that the high mortality rate among Europeans in Loango, which had created the impression of Loango as an unhealthy place, was actually the result of “poison that they pass for knowing perfectly [how] to administer.”¹⁰¹ He wrote that Sonyo was likewise associated with poison following the deaths of two priests.¹⁰² The Kongolesse attributed sudden illnesses or deaths to poison and sorcery. Part of the reason was that the Kongolesse believed that illnesses that were too short or too long – with sudden onset or chronic duration —did not occur naturally and therefore were

¹⁰⁰ 27 AP 12, AN, Paris, France; F/3/88, ANOM, Aix-en-Provence, France; Saint-Méry, 274-5.

¹⁰¹ Grandpré, *Voyage*: II:11.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, II: 38.

caused by an unnatural cause such as sorcery or witchcraft. According to Kongolesse scholar Kimpianga Mahaniah:

Among the Kongo, illness is always the manifestation of a cause. Thus, the patient is not regarded as a biological machine put out of order, [or] a simple malfunctioning organ, but as an individual with all the various influences that implies: past, personality, familial context, social role, cultural environment, cosmological and religious beliefs which, as well as the physiological state, are the interdependent aspects of health. In other words, illness is not simply the result of the malfunctioning of an organ, provoked by a material cause, but could be also due to an 'intangible force': Gods, local spirits and ancestors. Thus, the treatment must utilize not only material substances but equally resources borrowed from the cosmic or immaterial world.¹⁰³

In the case of a natural illness such as a headache, stomachache, or cold an *nganga* treated the patient with medicines made mostly from plants.¹⁰⁴ However, illnesses that did not respond to medical treatment, that were chronic or had a sudden onset, or that appeared following other misfortunes were considered abnormal and unnatural – *kimbevo kia nza*. Unnatural illnesses were seen as the result of social conflicts or of disequilibrium between the visible world of the living and the invisible world of the dead and spirits.¹⁰⁵ The possible causes included "God, the ancestors, a ghost, a witch, the clan or an active *nkisi*." In order to identify the cause of the disease and cure it, the Kongo performed both socio-medical and magical religious rites. These were both individual and collective. In collective rites, the entire community was mobilized to perform a public healing

¹⁰³ Mahaniah, *La Maladie et la guérison en milieu kongo : essai sur kimfumu, kinganga, kingunza et kitobe*: 27.

¹⁰⁴ Mahaniah, "Mahaniah, The Background of Prophetic Movements in the Belgian Congo," 116.

¹⁰⁵ Mahaniah, *La Maladie et la guérison en milieu kongo : essai sur kimfumu, kinganga, kingunza et kitobe*: 28.

ceremony to purify the community, pacify the causal agents, and neutralize the *nkisi*-empowered object causing harm. Unlike collective rites, in which the entire community assumed responsibility for the illness, in individual rites, the goal was to identify the specific person who had caused the sickness. In order to do so, the Kongoleses used divination as well as trials by poison and fire.¹⁰⁶

The belief that certain illnesses and deaths to be the result of unnatural causes, namely poison, can be seen in eighteenth century documents. In the case of a death caused by poison or sorcery, the Kongoleses used spiritual technologies to determine the cause of the illness or death. The most important was divination. Trials by poison or fire were also used to determine the guilt of suspects. For example, Descourvières, French missionary to the Loango Coast, wrote,

It is claimed that poisonings are more common here. What is certain, it is that if someone dies suddenly, or of a violent disease, one readily suspects that they were poisoned. If one believes to have discovered the author of poisoning, one makes him take an amount of a weak poison; if his temperament succumbs to the dose he is considered to be guilty, but if he is enough vigorous to resist [the poison], he is declared innocent, and goes triumphant in front of the judge to be made a reparation of honor, and to condemn the indicter with a fine to the profit of the defendant.¹⁰⁷

Descourvières description provides evidence that sudden or violent illnesses or deaths were considered unnatural and therefore the result of poison and that a poison trial or ordeal was used to ascertain the guilt of the accused party. Proyard further explained that

¹⁰⁶ Mahaniah, "Mahaniah, The Background of Prophetic Movements in the Belgian Congo," 117.

¹⁰⁷ Descourvières?, ""Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs," Archives de la Propagande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.."

the poison ordeal was used when a crime had been committed which could not be proven or disproven using material evidence, such as an accusation of poisoning, witchcraft, or sorcery. The poison was prepared by infusing the bark of the *kassa* tree in water, producing “a veritable poison.” Proyart wrote that if the accused resisted, he was declared innocent and his “accuser condemned as a slanderer.” If the crime was not punishable by death, then the accused would be given an antidote to the poison as soon as it had been established whether or not he would have succumbed to the poison. The inhabitants “had the greatest confidence in this ordeal.” Proyart related the story of a Prince of the Kingdom of Kakongo who, around 1773, suspected that someone was trying to poison him. The prince therefore made his entire household drink the *kassa* poison. Many of them died, including some of his closest advisors who were widely considered to be among the most honest men in his service.¹⁰⁸

These accounts show that the Kongolese living on the Loango Coast and in Sonyo, like those living in Saint Domingue, considered certain types of illnesses or deaths to be the result of poison or witchcraft.¹⁰⁹ These two concepts – poison and witchcraft – were seen as interconnected as evidenced by the use of the word *fétiche* for both poison and curses. The connection can be seen in the accounts of Raimondo da Dicomano, missionary to Sonyo in the Kongo from 1791-5, and Grandpré, slave trader

¹⁰⁸ Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 141-3.

¹⁰⁹ Further evidence of the use of the poison ordeal in Sonyo comes from Cherubino da Savona, who wrote “they equally admit the trial or ordeal *cassa in cassa* in order to know their *méchancetés*.” Cherubino also Jadin, “Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774,” 374.

who spent two years on the Loango Coast in the 1780s. Dicomano wrote, “The *noirs* have the custom of attributing all illnesses and deaths to *féticheurs*”¹¹⁰ Despite the fact that Dicomano claimed to have been poisoned three times, he was skeptical of the widespread nature of accusations, attributing them to personal quarrels and jealousy. He explained that “if a family cultivates and sows enough” crops and livestock, they would inspire envy among those who “do not wish to work.” “If it happens that someone became sick or died, immediately they accused [the person] who had worked to have given him [the sick or dead person] a *fétiche* and that he is a *féticheur*.” Note that Dicomano defined *fétiche* as “to give some poison or curse [*jeter un mauvais sort*].”¹¹¹ The accused was taken in to the chief in the village and given the “*incassa*” or poison ordeal. Dicomano was highly skeptical of the poison ordeal, calling it a “great injustice.” Dicomano pointed out that the accused, if convicted, stood to lose all of their possessions to the benefit of the parents of the dead and the chief of the village and the priest who prepared the poison for the ordeal. “It is however certain that these [aforementioned parties] in order to steal everything [he accused] has, prepare the trial in such a way that he can not vomit it and therefore kill him and take everything.” If the (alleged) victim were a child or a *fidalgo* the entire family of the accused *féticheur* would be enslaved.¹¹² Grandpré compared the use of ordeals in criminal trials to those

¹¹⁰ ———, “Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795,” 331.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 332n2.

¹¹² Ibid., 332.

previously used by Europeans. Rather than using water, however, the inhabitants of the Loango Coast used poison and fire. In the first case, the suspect would “purge themselves with the *fétiche*.” Significantly, Grandpré wrote that the word *fétiche* was used to signify poison. For example, he wrote that the poison ordeal was named “to swallow the *fétiche* (*noua'm Kissy*).”¹¹³ These beliefs and trials appear to have been widespread throughout the Kongo zone in the eighteenth century.¹¹⁴

There is evidence that the poison ordeal was used in Saint Domingue as well. Specifically, there is evidence that Makandal and other spiritual practitioners like him used the poison ordeal. A letter written the month after Makandal’s execution claimed that the vast majority of Makandal’s victims had been members of slave communities on plantations in the area.¹¹⁵ In 1776, Auberteuil concluded that Makandal had been a poisoner but of blacks, not of whites. He blamed deaths on the use of arsenic rather than sorcery.¹¹⁶ If true, the reason the majority of Makandal’s victims were black could be that Makandal administered a poison ritual. Makandal was not the only Kongolese spiritual leader to be associated with using poison. Dom Pèdre, who was active in Petit Goave in

¹¹³ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 52.

¹¹⁴ Cherubino provides evidence of the belief that certain illnesses and deaths were the result of poison and witchcraft, as well as the use of trials in Congo and Angola. Jadin, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774," 363, 68, 71.

¹¹⁵ On the fact that Makandal’s victims were black, see: Bart and Laporte, Letter from M[onsieurs] Bart and Laporte to the Minister on the essay of poisons. 27 February 1758

¹¹⁶ Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations sur l'état présent de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue. Ouvrage politique et législatif; présenté au ministre de la marine*: I: 137.

1768, was said to “to tyrannize the uncertain whose lack of confidence is punished with the poison that is familiar to them, and in the hands of *Dompète*, of a daily and unpunished usage.”¹¹⁷

Another Kongolese ordeal used to determine the guilt of innocence of an accused party was trial by fire. According to Grandpré, the trial by fire “consists in holding in the hand a glowing coal [*un charbon ardent*]; if it does not leave any trace of burn behind, the accused leaves triumphant.” In the case of acquittal, the accused was believed to have been defended by a power object [*“fétiche”*]. It is clear that some did emerge victorious from the fire trial. Grandpré wrote “whatever the method that the priests employ to preserve the skin from the action of the fire, it is certain that they know how to make it incombustible [.]”¹¹⁸ The use of trials by poison and fire appear to have been widespread throughout the Kongo zone, both north and south of the Congo River, in the eighteenth century as well as in later times.¹¹⁹ Baptist missionary Richard Edward Dennet witnessed a similar trial with a heated knife (*mbele ku mbazu*) in Loango at the turn of the twentieth century.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Descourtilz, *Voyage d'un naturaliste*: III: 182.

¹¹⁸ Grandpré, *Voyage*: I: 53.

¹¹⁹ For the poison and fire trial in the Kongo, see: Jadin, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774," 368.

¹²⁰ Dennett, "Laws and Customs of the Fjort or Bavili Family, Kingdom of Loango."

Mbazu, or fire, was associated with warfare in the Kongo zone. It was also associated with witchcraft among the Yombe. Léo Bittremieux, twentieth century missionary and expert on the Yombe culture, described *mbazu wola* as the “fire of sorcerers” who use a powerful packet *funda* to burn, invisibly, the skin of their victim.¹²¹ These examples of the ordeal by fire are interesting to read alongside Descourtilz’s account of *Dompète* (or *Dom Pèdre*) in Saint Domingue who, according to Descourtilz’s informant Finette, ordered a member “to take in his hands the lit coal which was presented to him, and seemed not to burn him.”¹²² Several people I spoke with in Mayombe told me that it was well known that people who became possessed by a certain spirit could handle fire without being burned. One priest I interviewed claimed it was also possible for those in possession to eat fire.¹²³ He told me a proverb (also found in Léo Bittremieux’s work) that describes the connection between *mbazu*, fire, and destructive power: “*Mbazu lubota, simbidi muna, vidi*” (Literally: Fire of *lubota*, touches you, burns you). *Lubota* (or *bobota*) is a tree with very hard wood that, as a result, burns very slowly rather than with open flames. One may think that the fire is extinguished but in fact when one touches the wood one is burned. To call someone “*mbazu bobota*” is to say that they

¹²¹ Léo Bittremieux and [translated by Schermers?], "Dictionnaire Français-Kiyombe, traduit de l'idiocon du R. P. Bittremieux, fini le dimanche 16 Nov[embre] 1952," 1952, Archive of Kangu Mission of Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae, Kangu, Mayombe, Democratic Republic of Congo

¹²² Descourtilz, *Voyage d'un naturaliste*: III: 181.

¹²³ Oral interview, Abbé Olivier, cure de Loango, Nzo Dikanda, Kinshasa, D.R.C. 6 November 2013

are very dangerous because they will hide their anger, like invisibly burning *bobota* wood, biding their time until the opportunity presents itself to express their anger, at which point they catch their adversary completely by surprise. Once their anger is released, it scorches everything in its path, much like the white-hot fire it takes to burn the *bobota* wood.¹²⁴

In the absence of documentary evidence, one can only speculate whether or not Yombe captives in Saint Domingue thought of *mbazu bobota*, biding their time until the opportunity presented itself to reduce their enemy to flames. Bazou Mennen's description in Vodou songs as a military commander suggests that this may indeed have been the case:¹²⁵ "Call Bazou Minnin [...] After God it is for Bazou to command. After God it is for Bazou, all of the Congo Nanchon, to command!"¹²⁶ According to Soukri Oungan Serviteur Constant, all of the Kongo loa are "guards" who protect those who serve them and actively appear in times of need.¹²⁷ Chief among them is Bazou Mennen, commander of the army and father of Manbo Ina's children. His commanding role is described in songs. For example, Odette Mennesson-Rigaud recorded the following song: "Bazou

¹²⁴ Oral interview, Abbé Olivier, cure de Loango, Nzo Dikanda, Kinshasa, D.R.C. 6 November 2013.; Léo Bittremieux, *Mayombsche Namen* (Leuven 1934). 165. Archive of CICM Kangu Mission, Kangu, Mayombe, D.R.C.

¹²⁵ Oral interview with Serviteur Constant, 3 July 2012, Soukri, Haïti.; Papers of Odette Mennesson-Rigaud, Bibliothèque Haïtienne des Pères du Saint-Esprit, Port-au-Prince, Haïti.

¹²⁶ Song recorded by Odette Mennesson Rigaud. Translation my own.

¹²⁷ Oral interview with Serviteur Constant, 3 July 2012, Soukri, Haïti.

Minnin, it is I who command! Papa Bazou! It is I who command the Loa!”¹²⁸ Baudry gives *méné* as definitions for ‘do, done, and passed’; suggesting Bazou Mennen is the doer or bringer of fire. This makes sense in the context of Bazou as a Revolutionary military commander because warfare in the Kongo, indeed in all of West Central Africa, was associated with fire – an association preserved in the linguistic association between the two words.¹²⁹ In the eighteenth century, French Missionaries in Kakongo as well as Dicomano in Sonyo and Cherubino da Savonna in the Kongo describe setting fire to the enemy’s village or settlement as being the main tactic of warfare at the time.¹³⁰ Bazou’s place alongside Manbo Ina at the head of the Kongo pantheon of loa, however, and his place in the Congo-Péto pantheon of loa associated with fire, blood, and warfare suggests that the Yombe concept of fire, with its associations with warfare, revenge, and sacred power, might indeed have been relevant in Saint Domingue.

The *nganga nkisi* was not the only type of Kongolese ritual specialist found in Saint Domingue (such as Makandal). The *nganga tesa* (*nganga ngombo*) or diviner can likewise be seen in Saint Domingue. Divination was one of the central spiritual

¹²⁸ “*Bazou Minnin, cé moin qu’ap coumandé! Papa Bazou! Cé moin qu’ap coumandé Loas yo!*” Papers of Odette Mennesson-Rigau, Bibliothèque Haïtienne des Pères du Saint-Esprit, Port-au-Prince, Haïti.

¹²⁹ Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*.

¹³⁰ Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*; Jadin, "Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795."; ———, "Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774." Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*.

technologies used by the Kongolese. According to Nsondé, “Of all, they [the *nganga ngombo*, the diviner] seem to be the *nganga* the most solicited and the most influential” because they were “versatile” and “concerned with a very large range of domains. They were charged with the detection of the causes of an evil or a death, primarily by divination, their great specialty, and also the remedy certain cases.”¹³¹ The existence of the diviner in the eighteenth century is attested to in dictionaries and descriptions of the region from the era. For example, one Loango Coast dictionary translated “magic” as “*m’kombo*,” which Nsondé suggests could be an incorrect rendering of *ngombo* (divination, diviner) or a regional variation of the same. The same dictionary translated “Magician” as “*nganga a m’kombo*.”¹³² Another dictionary from the region records “*Gombo – sorcery – Ganga a ngombo*”¹³³ while a third likewise translates “*nganga ngombo*” as “sorcerer Ministers.”¹³⁴ European descriptions from the era likewise highlight the important role played by the diviner. For example, Descourvières wrote: “There is also among these people, people who pass for diviners or magicians, that they believe capable of divining hidden and distant things. They have the habit of saying of a

¹³¹ Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 128.

¹³² anon., *Dictionnaire françois et congo with Remarques préliminaires* Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 128.

¹³³ *Dictionnaire congo et françois, Dictionnaire congo et françois* ———, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 128.

¹³⁴ Dictionary quoted in: ———, *Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 128.

man who passes for magician, that he can enter in a rock and exit from it.”¹³⁵ Proyart wrote that the “*Ganga*” were “diviners, magicians.”¹³⁶ Dicomano described nighttime assemblies in Sonyo where “some imposters” claimed to speak with a spirit who told them the cause of illnesses, their remedies, and who were *féticheurs*.¹³⁷ The diviner (*nganga ngombo*) played an important role in Loango Coast society in the eighteenth century. They used divination to discover the (natural or unnatural) cause of deaths and illnesses, how to cure them, and to discover who was guilty of poison, witchcraft, or sorcery.¹³⁸

Divination played an important role in the spiritual life of the Kongolese in Saint Domingue as well.¹³⁹ For example, the name of Makandal’s “accomplice” Teysello itself indicates that he was an *nganga tesa* (or *nganga ngombo*) - a diviner. Teysello’s name refers to the Yombe word for diviner, *nganga tesa*, referred to as *nganga ngombo* south

¹³⁵ Descourvières?, “Relation de la mission des prestres séculiers pour le royaume de Loango et les environs,” Archives de la Propogande, Scrittura riferite nei Congressi, Volume 5.,” 53.

¹³⁶ Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*: 194.

¹³⁷ “Ils ont également une autre case où se réunissent la nuit quelques imposteurs qui trompent les populations ignorantes, disant qu’ils parlent à Cariampemba au diable et que celui-ci leur fait connaître les maladies, les remèdes et les féticheurs.” Jadin, “Relations sur le royaume du Congo de P. Raimondo da Dicomano missionnaire de 1791 à 1795,” 335.

¹³⁸ On divination in the Kongo and Angola, see: ———, “Apperçu de la situation du Congo en 1760 et rite d’élection des rois en 1775, d’après le Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774,” 371.

¹³⁹ Debbasch concurs: Yvan Debbasch, “Le crime d’empoisonnement aux îles pendant la période esclavagiste,” *Revue d’histoire d’outre-mer* 52, no. 137-188 (1963): 169.

of the Congo River.¹⁴⁰ In addition of Teyssele, Dom Pèdre and Jérôme of the 1786 Bila Mayombe ceremony were both reported to be diviners, reputedly able to divine who “macandals” or poisoners were. For example, Dom Pèdre was said to have “the power to discover with his eyes, and despite all material obstacle, everything that takes place no matter at what distance [.]”¹⁴¹ Marie Kingué claimed to be able to “discover the *macandals*” on plantations and “finding poison everywhere, make known the allegedly guilty.”¹⁴² These examples of divination in Saint Domingue are consistent with Kongolese ritual beliefs. Divination was used to identify poisoners and sorcerers who were referred to by Kongo terms of *macandals*, *ndoki*, the use of *ouanga*. These were believed to cause physical, social, or psychological problems in plantation communities. This suggests that the Kongolese in Saint Domingue, like the Kongolese of the Loango Coast, perceived certain material problems such as illness, death, epidemic disease, and violence as spiritual problems and that they responded to them by calling on Kongolese ritual specialists such as Makandal, Dom Pèdre, Jérôme, and Marie Kingue who drew on specific spiritual technologies including power objects, poison ordeals, and divination.

Another Kongolese spiritual technology that appears to have been widespread in Saint Domingue was the use of alcohol to induce trance or possession, known as *fula kimanga*. Alcohol was used in this way by Dom Pèdre and in the “Mayombe or bila”

¹⁴⁰ See Chapter 5.

¹⁴¹ Descourtilz, *Voyage d'un naturaliste*: III: 181-2.

¹⁴² AN 27 AP 11- 12, Archives Privées, Fonds François de Neufchâteau

ceremony. For example, Moreau noted that during the “*Danse à Dom Père*” in Petit Goave “*les nègres* put in the tafia they drink while they dance canon powder [gunpowder] well ground.”¹⁴³ Similarly, a witness to the 1786 “Mayombe or Bila” ceremony told colonial officials that Jérôme dit Poteau gave participants “tafia to drink in which he had put pepper, garlic, and *du blanc d’Espagne*, that this drink made them fall down.”¹⁴⁴ The affidavit of colonist Sieur Gressier de la Jalousière specified that Jérôme poured cannon powder into the liquor “to rouse them to a fury.”¹⁴⁵ In the Petro rite of Haitian Vodou, the priest or priestess will vaporize (*foulah*) an alcohol (*kimanga*) from their mouth to invoke the presence and possession of a spirit.¹⁴⁶ In fact, the term “*fula kimanga*” refers to a nearly identical concept and practice in the Kongo zone. *Fula* means ‘boil, blow, spew from the mouth.’¹⁴⁷ *Kimanga* means “miracles” or “mysteries” (words synonymous with spirits in Central Africa and Haiti). In the context of a religious ritual, “*fula kimanga*” means to vaporize alcohol from the mouth to call upon (*mbila*) spirits or ancestors in order to provoke possession or trance, which “occupied a central position” in

¹⁴³ Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description... de Saint Domingue*: I: 51.

¹⁴⁴ AN 27 AP 11- 12, Archives Privées, Fonds François de Neufchâteau

¹⁴⁵ Jalousière, ANOM F/3/192, Fonds Moreau de Saint-Méry, quoted in Gabriel Debien, “Assemblées nocturnes d’esclaves à Saint-Domingue, 1786,” *Notes d’histoire coloniale*, no. 147.

¹⁴⁶ In Petro, *Kiman* or *Kimanga* is a “ritual alcoholic liquid used especially in Vodou Petwo served, usually vaporized from mouth.” Rigaud, *La tradition voodoo et le voodoo haïtien: son temple, ses mystères, sa magie*: 202. Bryant C. Freeman, *Haitian-English dictionary*, ed. Jowel C. Laguerre, Jan Mapou, and Jean-Bénito Mercier (Lawrence, Kan.; Port-au-Prince: Institute of Haitian Studies, University of Kansas; La Presse Evangélique, 2004).

¹⁴⁷ Baudry lists “foulah” for “to blow.”

Kongo religious practice.¹⁴⁸ For this reason, Bittremieux's kiyombe dictionary also lists, for *fula*, "to arouse, to recall to life, to resuscitate."¹⁴⁹ Hot or fiery ingredients such as pepper, hot peppers, or gunpowder were often added to the alcohol. The result of *fula kimanga* was *mayembo*: the "state of enthusiasm or ecstasy of the *nganga*" experiencing trance or possession, which manifested itself in the "sensation of convulsive movement in the muscles, shivers and shocks."¹⁵⁰

There is evidence that alcohol was used in the same way in Saint Domingue during the ceremonies of Dom Pèdre and Mayombe or Bila. For example, Moreau characterized the "Danse à Dom Pèdre" a "convulsive exercise" in which "electrified" participants used alcohol and dance to "accelerate" a state of "crisis" among them.¹⁵¹ Descourtilz described how participants of "vaudou" would "*tombent en crise*" and called their gatherings a "theatre of their convulsive grimaces."¹⁵² Likewise, Jérôme's use of alcohol mixed with canon powder and other hot ingredients in order to "rouse [participants] to a fury" and make "them fall down" suggests that he was also using the practice of *fula kimanga* to induce trance or possession. These descriptions, when seen alongside the material and linguistic evidence from these practices, are highly suggestive

¹⁴⁸ Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III*: 220.

¹⁴⁹ Bittremieux, *Mayombsch idioticon*.

¹⁵⁰ Mahaniah, *La Maladie et la guèrison en milieu kongo : essai sur kimfumu, kinganga, kingunza et kitobe*: 48, 51.

¹⁵¹ Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description... de Saint Domingue*: I: 51.

¹⁵² Descourtilz, *Voyage d'un naturaliste*: III: 181-2.

that colonists were witnessing the use of *fula kimanga* to induce a trance or possession. The accounts of the Danse à Dom Pèdre and the Bila Mayombe ceremony highlight the use of alcohol to induce trance and possession that resulted in convulsive or frenetic movements among participants. Understanding the Kongolese spiritual technology of *fula kimanga* to induce *mayembo* lends new insight into the ‘nighttime assemblies’ and ‘dances’ sources say were so common in eighteenth-century Saint Domingue.

The use of dancing, singing, and community ceremonies in Saint Domingue is once again consistent with Kongolese public healing rituals. Dancing and singing were themselves spiritual technologies. Indeed, they played a central role in the “therapeutic drama” of public healing rituals, a fact often commented upon by European witnesses. European missionaries and slave traders were often struck by the fact that singing and dancing were used in many contexts other than celebrations. “Dance,” according to Proyart, was “most often a religious ceremony. *Les Negres* dance when they are in sadness, as when they are in joy; at funerals of their father, as on the day of their wedding [.]”¹⁵³ In times of hardship, grief, or sadness, however, singing and dancing were a primary tool expression for both the individual and the group. “Singing and dancing enters into all of their ceremonies not only to witness their joy, but more to mark their sadness. [...] As soon as they begin to cry, they begin to sing and to dance.”¹⁵⁴ Singing and dancing, especially in times of sorrow, had a ritual function as well. The ritual

¹⁵³ Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d’Afrique*: 113-16.

¹⁵⁴ Cuvelier, *Documents sur une mission française au Kakongo, 1766-1776*,: 54.

function of singing can be seen in the linguistic connection between the words “to sing,” “to call” or “to invoke,” and “to bawl”: *mbila*. The word could be used to describe the invocation of a spirit or ancestor for the purpose of possession and divination. Laman defines *mbila*, from *bila*, as “call, cry to make come, convoke.” *Booka* or *tele mbila* means to make come, ask, call tell, proclaim, convene, call upon.¹⁵⁵ In the Kongo, the ritual purpose of invocation was often divination (*ngombo*). It is this function of *bila*, divination (*ngombo*) that explains why Bittremieux listed its ritual definition as cause, reason, or motive.¹⁵⁶

The use of singing and dancing in nighttime assemblies in Saint Domingue bears striking resemblance to Loango Coast and Yombe public healing rituals. The use of the word *bila* survived in Saint Domingue and later Haiti. For example, the name of the 1786 ceremony in Marmelade could be translated as *Bila Mayombe* “calling Mayombe” or “crying to make Mayombe appear.” The formulation shows up in many Vodou ritual songs. “Bila, Bila, Bila Kongo o!” begins one Vodou song. Another invokes Mbumba with *tele mbila*: “Boumba Makasi, Tele Boumba Koumbele...” [Strong/Angry Mbumba, make Mbumba come/appear...]. The connection between singing, crying and invocation is expressed in one song: “Kongo, Kongo, Kongo, help me cry! I don’t have a mother, I

¹⁵⁵ K. E. Laman, *Dictionnaire kikongo-français, avec une étude phonétique décrivant les dialectes le plus importants de la langue dite kikongo* (Ridgewood, N.J., Gregg Press, 1964., 1964).

¹⁵⁶ Léo Bittremieux, *La société secrète des Bakhimba au Mayombe* (Bruxelles: Librairie Falk fils, 1936); Bittremieux, *Mayombsch idioticon*.

don't have a father, You will help me cry!"¹⁵⁷ This song is an example of the way in which Kongolese men and women cried, sang, and called upon the Kongo – both literally and figuratively – in the context of slavery in Saint Domingue.

Conclusion

These examples demonstrate the necessity of studying the cultural practices of West Central Africans in Saint Domingue alongside sources about cultural practices from their specific region of origin West Central Africa – the Loango Coast and Mayombe rainforest north of the Congo River. This methodology lends new insight into the spiritual leaders, nighttime assemblies, and dances common in eighteenth-century Saint Domingue. Scholars of Kongolese public healing rituals have shown how these practices played a crucial social role by addressing community health, ensuring social harmony, and transmitting embodied knowledge through dance, song, possession, and other rituals. In Kongolese cosmology, the worlds of the living and the dead, the past and the present, the individual and the community, the religious and the political, were not discrete spheres but were instead interactive and interdependent. Social and physical ills were both considered as sicknesses, and were always seen as “the manifestation of a cause.” Physical and material problems – illness, drought, epidemic, social turmoil, and interpersonal conflicts – all fell under the category of “illness.” Illness was, in turn, seen as more than merely the product of biological or material causes, but also of social disharmony and “intangible forces”: gods, local spirits, and ancestors. The goal was not

¹⁵⁷ Beauvoir, *Grand Recueil*: 281, 701, 327.

only to treat the physical illness but also to “recreate the order characterized by a social harmony and ritual equilibrium.”¹⁵⁸ Healing rituals therefore simultaneously addressed medical, social, and spiritual problems, and for this reason they were always public and participatory. All of the members of the community were mobilized in order to achieve the ritual purification necessary to heal both the individual and the community.

The research presented in this chapter reveals that the Kongolese used and transmitted specific instrumental knowledge and expertise in Saint Domingue. They drew on what Jane Guyer and Samuel Eno Belinga call a “wealth in knowledge.”¹⁵⁹ Since the early 1990s, scholars of equatorial Africa have sought to reformulate social theories about African society in light of the rejection of older theoretical models, especially the primacy of kinship in segmentary societies and concept of accumulation by “wealth in people.” They have sought to understand the relationship of culture to society based on indigenous African categories of knowledge and to produce new social theories that more accurately reflected this relationship. Guyer and Belinga argue “that Equatorial knowledge has been particularly difficult to fit into a Western analytical vocabulary” because Equatorial knowledge was not “diffuse” or “just ‘culture’” able “to be studied with the techniques of cultural analysis. Nor was it “specialist, in the sense of a closed

¹⁵⁸ Mahaniah, *La Maladie et la guérison en milieu kongo : essai sur kimfumu, kinganga, kingunza et kitobe*: 27, 29.

¹⁵⁹ Guyer and Belinga, "Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa."

esoteric system [.]” Instead, they argue that knowledge existed in a multiplicity of ways. Specifically, knowledge was “composed” in both people and things in Equatorial Africa.

I argue that we see the embodiment of certain forms of Kongolese knowledge in both people and things in Saint Domingue, such as in the powerful packets sold by Makandal. We see the transmission and use of certain spiritual technologies such as *fula kimanga* to induce trance or possession for the purposes of divination. By contextualizing the history of the Kongolese in Saint Domingue within the deeper history of Loango Coast and Mayombe rainforest, it is clear that the Kongolese in Saint Domingue drew on specific instrumental knowledge and spiritual technologies including: participatory public healing rituals involving dancing, singing, and drumming; divination; the ritual use of alcohol to induce trance and possession; the use and sale of powerful objects. This knowledge was not used in a vacuum but instead within the specific context of the lived reality of the plantation world. For example, divination was used to identify poisoners and sorcerers. These activities were referred to by the Kongo terms: *macandals*, *ndoki*, the use of *wanga* or charms or sorcery. These were believed to cause physical, social, or psychological problems in plantation communities. This suggests that enslaved Central Africans perceived the material problems of life in Saint Domingue as spiritual problems as well and that they responded to the problems of plantation life with specific Kongolese spiritual technologies. Such an interpretation would have been in line with Kongolese ontology as can be studied in sources from the other side of the Kongolese Atlantic at this time. It therefore represents another form of the persistence of a Kongolese worldview across the Atlantic.

Conclusion: “I’m a Creole-Kongo”

In the over two centuries since Haitian independence, the history of Haiti’s Kongolesse ancestors has largely been unwritten. Instead, it has been sung. “I am a Creole-Kongo,” chants one Vodou song, concluding, “The sun rises in Kongo country!”¹ The “Creole-Kongo” self-identification expressed in the song encapsulates the transatlantic nature of the lives of the Kongolesse men and women who created the Republic of Haiti. Indeed, on the eve of the Haitian Revolution, the Kongolesse represented the largest group of Africans in the French colony of Saint Domingue, comprising the majority of the population of the North and South provinces. Most had recently arrived in the colony and lived in majority Kongolesse communities. However, historians have yet to appreciate the significance of the social and cultural history of this important group of people who are perhaps the true founders of post-independence Haitian society.

The Haitian Revolution has traditionally been seen as derivative of the ideology of the French Revolution circulating in the Atlantic world or the culmination of centuries of resistance to plantation slavery. Such frameworks fail to explain the emergence of the three cultural creations that characterized post-independence Haitian society: the Kreyòl

¹ Rigaud, *La tradition voodoo et le voodoo haïtien: son temple, ses mystères, sa magie*: 120. According to historian Laurent Dubois, the song was transcribed by French anthropologist Odette Menneson-Rigaud in papers now preserved in the Bibliothèque Haïtienne des Pères du Saint-Esprit in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Dubois, *Haiti: the Aftershocks of History*: 373n8.

language, the Vodou religion, and the *lakou* system of land ownership.² Indeed, Laurent Dubois argues that during the Revolution, the Haitian population “created a new culture and way of life driven by an unceasing emphasis on independence and personal freedom.”³ The nexus of this new Haitian culture was the *lakou*, a social system of decentralized land ownership formed representing “the intersection between land, the extended family, and spirituality.”⁴ Far from being a European derivative, the *lakou* was the antithesis of the plantation system: a “counter-plantation system” existing “outside the dominant system” of the state.⁵ The *lakou* encompassed more than an economic system; it was a spatial expression of beliefs about the interconnection of land, social organization, and spirituality. The widespread existence of the *lakou* and practice of Vodou in the early nineteenth century Haiti suggests that a large number of Africans and their descendants chose to create a new life outside of the plantation system.⁶

² ———, *Haiti: the Aftershocks of History*: 17, 33.

³ Ibid.

⁴ <http://sites.duke.edu/lawandhousinginhaiti/historical-background/lakou-model/religious-life-in-the-lakou/>

⁵ Jean Casimir Michel Hector, "Le long XIXe siècle haïtien.," *Itinéraires, Université d'Etat d'Haïti, Faculté des Sciences Humaines, Centre de Recherches Historiques et Sociologiques (CREHSO), Edition spéciale Bicentenaire* Déc 2004(2004); Yves Sainsiné, *Mondialisation, développement et paysans en Haïti : Proposition d'une approche en termes de résistance* (Presses Univ. de Louvain, 2007). 109. Jean Casimir, *The Caribbean : one and divisible*, Cuadernos de la CEPAL ; 66 (Santiago de Chile: United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1992).

⁶ Samedy argues that the creation of the “petit paysannerie” in Haiti dated from the colonial, not post-independence, period: Jean-Baptiste Mario Samedy, "Classes, strates sociales et émergence de la " Petite paysannerie " à Saint-Domingue-Haïti (1640-1835)," *Anthropologica* 23, no. 1 (1981).

Scholars have also failed to account for the fact that new cultural forms emerging from the Haitian Revolution were created by a remarkably homogenous demographic group: West Central Africans. In this dissertation, I have argued that Kongolese men and women used cultural practices to mediate the experience of slavery on both sides of the Kongolese Atlantic world. In Saint Domingue, they used and transmitted Kongolese instrumental knowledge and spiritual technologies such as public healing rituals, divination, trance, possession, trials by poison and fire, and power objects. Kongolese knowledge was embodied in both people and things, most notably the powerful packets sold by Makandal and others in the colony. These spiritual technologies addressed the physical, social, psychological, and epidemiological challenges of plantation life. They did so because the material problems of plantation life were, according to the Kongolese worldview, spiritual problems as well. Illnesses of all kinds – whether biological or social – were perceived as the result of disharmony either between members of the community or between the worlds of the living and the dead. Kongolese rituals therefore sought to address not only the symptoms of the illness but also the root of the problem.⁷

⁷ On Kongolese ontology see: Mahaniah, *La Maladie et la guérison en milieu kongo : essai sur kimfumu, kinganga, kingunza et kitobe*; Mahaniah, "Mahaniah, The Background of Prophetic Movements in the Belgian Congo."; Gérard Buakasa Tulu Kia Mpansu, *L'impense du discours : "kindoki" et "nkisi" en pays kongo du Zaïre*, Collection Thèses en sciences humaines ; no 1 (Kinshasa: Presses universitaires du Zaïre, 1973); Fu-Kiau kia Bunseki, *N'kongo ye nza yakun'zungidila; nza-Kôngo* (Kinshasa: Office national de la recherche et de développement, 1969); Wyatt MacGaffey, *Art and Healing of the Bakongo, Commented By Themselves* (Bloomington: University of Illinois Press, 1991); ———, *Religion and Society in Central Africa: the BaKongo of Lower Zaire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Janzen and MacGaffey, *An anthology of Kongo religion: primary texts from Lower Zaïre*; Janzen, *Lemba, 1650-1930: a drum of affliction in Africa and the New World*; Heusch, *Le roi de Kongo et les*

Given the fact that a largely Kongoles population created Haitian society, it is not surprising that Kongoles cultural practices made central contributions to the cultural forms that characterized post-independence Haitian society. Using sociolinguistics, it is possible to identify connections between the *lakou* system of social organization and land ownership, and the Vodou religion, specifically the Kongo and Petro rites of Haitian Vodou and the Loango Coast and Mayombe rainforest in West Central Africa. The lexicon of Haitian Kreyòl and the ritual language of Vodou songs preserve these connections. Scholars such as Gérard Barthélemy and Jean Casimir have long detailed the central role of the Vodou religion and specifically beliefs about *wanga* in the formation and “self regulation” of the *lakou* in post-independence Haiti. Barthelemy characterized the *lakou* as an “egalitarian system without a state.”⁸ They have also highlighted the way in which these communities, which Casimir rightly terms a “counter-plantation system,” were fundamentally “antagonistic” to the dominant European culture and extraverted, plantation economy that survived the Revolution. This antagonism can be seen in the refrain of “*kreyen move*” (Christian bad) or “*kreyen pa kreyen ankò*”

monstres sacrés : Mythes et rites bantous III; Hagenbucher-Sacripanti, Les Fondements spirituels du pouvoir au royaume de Loango, République populaire du Congo.

⁸ Gérard Barthélemy, *Le pays en dehors: essai sur l'univers rural Haïtien* (Port-au-Prince, Haïti: Editions Henri Deschamps: CIDIHCA, 1989). 22.

(Christian, not Christian anymore) in many Vodou songs:⁹ “*Ganga kimanga e*, Christian not Christian anymore!” begins one such song, which then adds:

E I’m going into the woods, *Zila Moyo*, to get *kimanga*,
Christian not Christian anymore, I’m going into the woods o,
Going into the woods again, I’m going into the woods and I’m going to find the leaf,
I’ll take what is good, I’ll leave what is bad for them!¹⁰

This song illustrates the connection between Kongolesse cultural practices and concepts, Haitian Vodou, and the *lakou*. All of the borrowed words in this song come from Kikongo languages, and the concepts present locate it firmly within the cultural practices of the Kongo zone. In Kikongo dialects, *nzila* means “road” or “path.” Its usage in eighteenth century Saint Domingue is recorded in Baudry’s *Vocabulaire Congo*; *chemin*, *Monzila*. *Moyo* means “soul” or “spirit” in Kikongo and Kiyombe.¹¹ A similar variation is listed in an 1890 dictionary of the ‘Fiote’ dialect of Kakongo: *m’ogno*, plural *mi-ogno*.¹² *Moyo* also referred to the heart or chest, the part of the body associated with

⁹ Beauvoir, *Grand Recueil*: 665, 1165, 539, 540. “Chanpak Oke, Kretyen pa Kretyen anko” Lomax, *The Haiti recordings [sound recording]*.

¹⁰ Translation my own. “*Ganga kimanga e kretyen pa kretyen ankò! [...] E male nan bwa, Zila Moyo, Tchetché kimanga, Kretyen pa kretyen ankò, m ale nan bwa o, Ale nan bwa ankò, m ale nan bwa e m al chache fèy la, M pran sa ki bon an, m kita move a pou yo!*” Beauvoir, *Grand Recueil*: 539.

¹¹¹ Found, with slight variations, across Kikongo dialects. For example, in Bittremieux, *Mayombsch idioticon*. Joseph van Wing, *Études Bakongo; sociologie, religion et magie*, Museum Lessianum. Section missiologique ; no 39 (Bruges: Desclée, De Brouwer, 1959).

¹² *Dictionnaire Français-Fiote: dialecte du Kakongo* 9.

life.¹³ This association is documented in Baudry, who gives “*moïo*” as the definition for intestine (unsurprisingly, Baudry did not ask his slaves about the word for ‘soul’). *Zila Moyo* therefore means the “path of the soul” in Kikongo dialects, and Ee is “yes.”¹⁴ A full translation of the line is: ‘Yes, I’m going into the woods, the path of the soul, to find *kimanga*.’ *Kimanga* means “miracles” or “mysteries.” Both words are synonymous with spirits in the Kongo zone and Haiti. *Ganga kimanga* means figuratively “create the mysteries” or “create the miracles.” The phrase refers to a priest, *nganga*, ritually invoking the spirits during a religious ceremony, usually for the purpose of divining the cause of a problem, illness, or guilty person or to activate a ritual power object or medicine.¹⁵ The association between the forest and the path of the soul, *nzila moyo*, can be seen in the accounts written by French missionaries in Kakongo, narrated by Abbé Proyart. When asked their “opinion on the soul,” the missionaries were told, “that all believe that the soul was spiritual and that it survives the body” after death “flying in the airs of the woods and forests, in the manner that pleases the Divinity.” One’s body “might be in the earth; but one’s soul, being a spiritual substance, is incapable of

¹³ Laman, *Dictionnaire kikongo-français, avec une étude phonétique décrivant les dialectes le plus importants de la langue dite kikongo*: 572.

¹⁴ Words found across Kikongo dialects (Laman, Van Wing, ect). My thanks to André Nantanta Makokila, Doctoral Candidate in African Linguistics and researcher at CELTA, Kinshasa, D.R.C, for explaining the meaning and significance of the terms in this song, 11 October 2013. Baudry de Lozieres, *Second Voyage a la Louisiane*.

¹⁵ Makokila, 11 October 2013.

dissolution and subsists forever.”¹⁶ The song describes the forest as a spiritual place, the path of the soul, where the spiritual and material ritual ingredients for spiritual and physical health -- divination *ngombo* or *m'kombo*¹⁷, medicines *bilongo*, *malongo*¹⁸ – are located.

All of the borrowed terms in the song (*ganga*, *kimanga*, *zila*, *moyo*) situate them firmly within both the Petro and Kongo¹⁹ rites of Haitian Vodou. The association between Kongo rite of Haitian Vodou and the forest is expressed in another song: “*Danse Kongo a sous bwa*” (“The Kongo dance is in the woods.”) Several songs identify *Zila* as the wife of Dan Petro: “*Manbo Zila bèl fanm, Fanm Dan Petro*” (“Manbo Zila is a beautiful woman, wife of Dan Petro.”)²⁰ Another song states “*Zila lan peyi Kongo*” (*Zila is in the country of Kongo*).²¹ In Petro Vodou, *Kimanga* or *Kimanga* is a “ritual alcoholic liquid used especially in Vodou Petwo served, usually vaporized from mouth.”²² The

¹⁶ Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique*: 197-8.

¹⁷ See Nsondé, *Langues, culture et histoire Kongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : à travers les documents linguistiques*: 128.

¹⁸ Found in Baudry

¹⁹ Rigaud places “Zilah Moyo” in the Congo pantheon. Rigaud, *La tradition voodoo et le voodoo haïtien: son temple, ses mystères, sa magie*: 155.

²⁰ Beauvoir, GRS, 996, 1035, 36.

²¹ “Zila lan peyi Kongo,” Sosyete Boumba, Marileanne Joseph.Lomax, *The Haiti recordings [sound recording]*.

²² Freeman, *Haitian-English dictionary*.

word used to describe the vaporization of liquid, *kimanga*, from the mouth is “*foulah*,”²³ also a Bantu word, *fula*, “to blow” or “to arouse.” In the Petro rite, the priest or priestess will vaporize (*fula*) an alcohol (*kimanga*) from their mouth to invoke the presence and possession of a spirit. As we saw in Chapter 7, *fula kimanga* is in fact a Kongolese spiritual technology. In the Kongo zone, the term “*fula kimanga*” refers to a nearly identical concept and practice. In the context of religious ritual it means to vaporize alcohol from the mouth to provoke or call upon (*mbila*) the ancestors or a spirit. These examples demonstrate the Kongolese contributions to the formation of Haitian society, especially the cultural creations of the Lakou, Vodou, and Kreyòl. These connections between Kongolese and Haitian practices are significant because these cultural forms, especially the Petro rite of Haitian Vodou, have traditionally been understood as being “Creole,” or created wholly in the Americas, without African antecedent, as the result of creolization.

The Kongolese contribution to these Creole cultural forms suggests that “African” and “Creole” were not mutually exclusive categories. In the past two decades, much of the scholarship on Africans in the Atlantic world has fallen into what could be described as a “Creole” versus “African” or “Creole” versus “retention” debate over whether or not it was possible to recreate African cultural practices in the Americas. The debate is characterized by the model of creolization proposed by Sidney Mintz and Richard Price and the criticisms leveled by Africanist historians of the diaspora, most notably John

²³ Rigaud, *La tradition voodoo et le voodoo haïtien: son temple, ses mystères, sa magie*: 202.

Thornton, Paul Lovejoy, James Sweet, and Walter Hawthorne.²⁴ Mintz and Price argued that when enslaved Africans arrived “they could only become communities by processes of cultural change.” For Mintz and Price, it was precisely this process of cultural creation, of creolization, that was the origin of African American culture.²⁵ In opposition to Mintz and Price’s model of creolization, Africanist scholars argued for the retention of African culture.²⁶ For example, historian James Sweet proposed viewing African culture as being “re-created” in Brazil rather than retained, synthesized, or creolized. In Sweet’s recent work on the life of Domingos Alvarez, he argued for an additive African epistemology that, at its core, remained indelibly “African.”²⁷ In Walter Hawthorne’s study of African captives from the Upper Guinea coast sent to Amazonia in Brazil, he argued the Atlantic slave trade caused a new Atlantic identity among West Africans that overlay smaller, regional identities. He contended that Africans arriving in Brazil saw themselves as a homogenous community and used African cultural practices to affirm this community

²⁴ Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: an Anthropological Perspective*; Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*; Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770*; ———, *Domingos Alvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*.

²⁵ Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: an Anthropological Perspective*: 22, 51, 82-84.

²⁶ Lovejoy, "The African Diaspora: Revisionist Interpretations of Ethnicity, Culture and Religion under Society," 1.

²⁷ Sweet, *Domingos Alvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*: 6-7.

and their West African identity.²⁸ Hawthorne stressed how enslaved Africans actively created their identity through transatlantic dialogues. He saw the origin of this process as being in Africa and saw the cultural practices used in the New World as being fundamentally African. Even when cultural practices were changed or even invented, Hawthorne, like Sweet, viewed them as the product of African cultural tools already at their disposal.

The central problem of these studies, as in my own, is accounting for continuity and change in the way Africans used cultural practices in the Atlantic world. The question of how Africans responded to dislocation and demographic disaster – whether under the conditions of colonialism in Africa or slavery in the Americas – constitutes perhaps the central issue in historiographical debates in both the fields of African and Atlantic history. The crux of these debates has been defining culture in a way that encapsulates both broad similarities over time and space and is sensitive to fluidity, change, and creativity, or whether such a definition is even possible. Despite the call of historians of slavery to move beyond debates over “creolization,” historians of both Africa and the diaspora remain divided over whether or not cultural practices could survive social rupture or whether, conversely, the destructive was productive of cultural change.²⁹ The work of scholars such as Sweet and Hawthorne provided a necessary

²⁸ Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1830*: 6.

²⁹ Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*.

corrective to the historiography. However, the terms of the debate forced them into a false dichotomy of arguing for continuity versus change, retention versus creolization.

I argue that the example of the Kongolese in Haitian history shows that “Creole” and “African” were not necessarily opposed. The founders of independent Haiti, after all, were both. Indeed, the transatlantic nature of the lives of the Kongolese in Saint Domingue undercuts two key assumptions that undergirded the study of creolization.³⁰ The first is the perceived heterogeneity of the plantation world, which is seen as a kaleidoscope of African peoples, cultures, and languages. The second is the assumption that slaves spent most of their lives as slaves, and the plantation was therefore the biggest or only influence on their ideas and culture. Neither assumption holds true for the population of colonial Saint Domingue. On the contrary, the majority of the enslaved population had been born in Africa – specifically in West Central Africa - and had arrived in the colony in the 1780s. In 1791, the Haitian Revolution began and, in 1793, slavery was abolished. The transatlantic nature of the lives of Africans in Saint Domingue force us to reassess the concept of creolization and challenge the historiographical divide between scholarly works that focus on creolization in plantation slavery and those that are centered in Africa.

The overlapping and interconnected nature of these two categories can be found in the Vodou song cited at the opening of this chapter: “I am a Creole-Kongo.” The “Creole-Kongo” self-identification suggests that historians need to understand both the

³⁰ Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: an Anthropological Perspective*.

African and the Creole histories of Africans in the Americas. Historians must therefore resituate the lives of Africans in the Atlantic world within wider chronological and geographical lens. In order to move beyond the false dichotomy that culture originated in either Africa or on the plantation, scholars must include both Africa and the Americas in their field of study. I argue that the research presented in this study highlights the need for historians to look at the history of specific Africans and groups of Africans in particular times and places rather than relying on generalizations about Africans or African cultural practices. In my study, a sociolinguistic methodology allows me to shed new light on practices and worldviews of “Congos” in Saint Domingue, and show how enslaved West Central Africans used Kongolesse instrumental knowledge and spiritual technologies as survival tools in the context of slavery. Using sociolinguistics, I identify connections between the Loango Coast and Mayombe rainforest and the Haitian cultural forms that characterized post-independence Haitian society, including the *lakou* system of social organization and land ownership, and the Vodou religion, specifically the Kongo and Petro rites of Haitian Vodou. I argue that Kongolesse cultural practices therefore constituted the building blocks of independent Haitian society, a society that was at once Kongo and Kreyol.

Bibliography:

Archival Sources

Archives Départementales Loire-Atlantique, Nantes, France (ADLA)

Centre Historique des Archives Nationales, Paris, France (AN)

Séries anciennes:

M 1030 (Mélanges)

T 356, 398-9, 481, 547-8, 561, 574, 589, 606, 650, 1007, 1008, 113, 1282, 1283 (Papiers séquestrés)

V 7, 487-9 (Commissions extraordinaires du Conseil)

Fonds de la Marine (MAR)

Série B: Service Général:

B 2, 384 (Ordres et dépêches)

B 4, 73, 77, 103, 115, 118, 149, 166, 252, 267 (Campagnes Navales)

B 7, 502, 505 (Pays étrangers, commerce et consulats)

Série C : Personnel :

C 7, 23, 158, 183 (Dossiers Individuels)

Série G : Documents Divers

G, 51-6, 82, 102

Série JJ : Service Hydrographique

2JJ 104 (Papiers d'hydrographes)

3JJ 254, 255, 257 (Observations scientifiques et géographiques)

4JJ 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 144G (Journaux de bord)

6JJ 35-63 (Cartes)

AE B III 381-6 (Fonds des Affaires étrangères, Consulats : mémoires et documents)

Séries modernes :

DXVI 3 (Comité de la Marine)

DXXV (Comité des colonies)

F 7 4344, 6266 (Ministère de la Police générale)

F 12, 549-50, 553, 1653-6, 2175, 2618-20, 13102 (Conseil et Bureau de commerce XVII siècle-1790, Statistiques de commerce colonial, Ministère du Commerce 1791-1860)

AA 53-4

AF III 103, 210, IV 1213 (Pouvoir exécutif, Révolution et Empire, Directoire exécutif)

Archives Privés :

18 AP 3 (Fonds du Berg de Breda)

27 AP 11-12 (Fonds François de Neufchâteau)

107 AP 127-130 (Fonds Gallifet)
562 AP (Fonds d'Estaing)
505 Mi 85-6 (Fonds Foäche-Bégouën-Demeaux)

Archives de France, Centre des Archives d'Outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence, France
(ANOM)

C 6 11-13, 15, 20-35 (Correspondance générale, Sénégal et côtes d'Afrique)
CC 9 A 5-8 (Correspondance général, Saint Domingue)
CC 9 B 20, 27 (Correspondance général, Saint Domingue)
F 1B 2 (Police des Noirs)
F 3 (Collection Moreau de Saint Méry)
DPPC (Greffes)
DPPC NOT (Notariat)
SUPSDOM (Saint Domingue Supplément)
DFC (Dépôt des fortifications des colonies, Mémoires)

Archives Nationales du Congo, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.)
(ARNACO)

Bibliothèque de Nantes
MS 1809

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France (BNF)
Manuscrits Occidentaux, France – Nouvelles Acquisitions 14878-9, 22084-8

Centre de linguistique théorique et appliquée, University of Kinshasa, D.R.C. (CELTA)

Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Archives, Kangu, Mayombe, D.R.C.
(CICM)

Hagley Library, Wilmington, Delaware, USA (HL)

John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island, USA (JCB)

Library of Congress, Washington D.C., USA (LOC)

Missions Etrangères de Paris, France (MEP)

Royal Central Africa Museum, Linguistics Library, Tervuren, Belgium (RCAM)

Published Sources:

- Abrahams, Roger D. *The Man-of-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.
- Africa and the Caribbean: The Legacies of a Link*. edited by Margaret E. Crahan and Franklin W. Knight Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.
- Anglade, Pierre. *Inventaire Étymologique Des Termes Créoles Des Caraïbes D'origine Africaine*. Sémantiques. Paris, France: L'Harmattan, 1998.
- Apter, Andrew. "Herskovits's Heritage: Rethinking Syncretism in the African Diaspora." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 3 (1991): 235-59.
- The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe*. edited by Stanley L. Engerman and J. E. Inikori Durham: Duke University Press, 1992.
- Atlas Linguistique De La République Démocratique Du Congo, 2ème Édition*, edited by Centre de linguistique théorique et appliquée (CELTA) and Centre International de Recherche et de Documentation sur les Traditions Orales et pour le développement des Langues Africaines (CERDOTOLA), 1 June 2012
- Auguste, Claude B. "Les Congos Dans La Révolution Haïtienne." *Revue de la Société haïtienne d'histoire et de géographie* 46, no. 168 (1990): 11-42.
- Baker, Philip. "Assessing the African Contribution to French-Based Creoles." In *Africanisms in Afro-American Language Varieties*, edited by Nancy Condon and Salikoko S. Mufwene. 123-55. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993.
- Balandier, Georges. *La Vie Quotidienne Au Royaume De Kongo Du Xvie Au Xviiiè Siècle*. Paris: Hachette, 1965.
- Barbot, James, and John Casseneuve. "Abstract of a Voyage to Kongo River and Kabinda, in 1700." In *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels : Consisting of the Most Esteemed Relations, Which Have Been Hitherto Published in Any Language*. London, 1746.
- Barbot, Jean. *Barbot on Guinea : The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa 1678-1712*. Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society, 0072-9396 ; 2nd Ser., No. 175-176. edited by P. E. H. Hair, Adam Jones and Robin Law London: Hakluyt Society, 1992.
- Barry, Boubacar. *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*. African Studies Series ; 92. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

- Bastian, A. *Die Deutsche Expedition an Der Loango-Künste: Nebst Älteren Nachrichten Über Die Zu Erforschenden Länder : Nach Persönlichen Erlebnisse*. Hermann Costenoble, 1874.
- Bastide, Roger. *African Civilisations in the New World*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971 [1967].
- Baudry de Lozieres, Louis Narcisse. *Second Voyage a La Louisiane*. Paris 1803.
- Beauvoir, Max. *Le Grand Recueil Sacré: Ou Répertoire Des Chansons Du Vodou Haitien*. Koleksyon Memwa Vivan. Haiti: Pres Nasyonal d'Ayiti, 2008.
- Beckles, Hilary. "Sex and Gender in the Historiography of Caribbean Slavery." In *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, edited by Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- Berlin, Ira. "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (1996): 251-88.
- . *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Bittremieux, Léo. *La société secrète des Bakhimba au Mayombe*. Bruxelles: Institut royal colonial belge. Section des sciences morales et politiques, 1936.
- . *Mayombsche Namen*. Leuven: 1934.
- . *Mayombsch Idioticon*. Gent: Drukkerij "Erasmus," 1922.
- Bokamba, Eyamba Georges, and Molingó Virginie Bokamba. *Tósolola Na Lingála: A Multidimensional Approach to the Teaching and Learning of Lingála as a Foreign Language*. Madison, WI: NALRC National African Language Resource Center, 2004.
- Bontinck, François. "Les 'Mondongues'." *Studia*, no. 53 (1994): 59-79.
- . "Les Mindele, Hommes D'étoffes." *Annales Aequatoria* 16 (1995): 135-52.
- . ""Les Pamzelunguos", Ancetres Des Salongo." *Annales Aequatoria* 1 (1980): 59-86.
- Bostoen, Koen. "Kikongo Dialect Continuum: Internal and External Classification." In *Niger-Conference*. Paris, 2012.

- Bostoën, Koen, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Royal Museum for Central Africa Tervuren. "Linguistics for the Use of African History and the Comparative Study of Bantu Pottery Vocabulary."
- Brathwaite, Kamau. *Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica*. London: New Beacon, 1981 [1970].
- Broadhead, Susan Herlin. "Trade and Politics on the Congo Coast : 1770-1870." Ph.D., Boston University Graduate School, 1971.
- Brown, Vincent. *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- . "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery." *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1231-49.
- Bush, Barbara. *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- Candido, Mariana P. author. *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World : Benguela and Its Hinterland*. African Studies ; [124]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Cavazzi, Giovanni Antonio. *Descrição Histórica Dos Três Reinos Do Congo, Matamba E Angola*. Lisboa: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1965 [1687].
- Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*. edited by Linda M. Heywood Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Césaire, Aimé. *Toussaint Louverture : La Révolution Française Et Le Problème Colonial*. Paris: Présence africaine, 1981.
- Churchill, John. *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*. London 1732.
- Clercq, Aug de. "Grammaire Du Kiyombe." *Anthropos* 2, no. 3 (1907): 449-66.
- Comaroff, Jean. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- Curto, José C., and Paul E. Lovejoy. *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil During the Era of Slavery*. Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2004.
- Cuvelier, Jean. *Documents Sur Une Mission Française Au Kakongo, 1766-1776*, . Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1953.

- . *L'ancien Royaume De Congo*. Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946.
- Cuvelier, Jean, and Olivier de Bouveignes. *Jérôme De Montesarchio : Apôtre Du Vieux Congo*. Namur: Grand Lacs, 1951.
- Dapper, Olfert. *Description De L'Afrique, Contenant Les Noms, La Situation & Les Confins De Toutes Ses Parties, Leurs Rivieres, Leurs Villes & Leurs Habitations Leurs Plantes & Leurs Animaux; Les Moeurs, Les Coûtumes, La Langue, Les Richesses, La Religion & Le Gouvernement De Ses Peuples*. Amsterdam: Wolfgang, Waesberge, Boom & van Someren, 1668.
- Dazille, Jean Barthélemy. *Observations Sur Le Tétanos*. Paris: 1788.
- Debbasch, Yvan. "Le Crime D'empoisonnement Aux Îles Pendant La Période Esclavagiste." *Revue d'histoire d'outre-mer* 52, no. 137-188 (1963).
- Debien, G., and J. Houdaille. "Les Origines Africaines Des Esclaves Des Antilles Françaises." *Caribbean Studies* 10, no. 2 (1970): 5-29.
- Debien, Gabriel. "Documents Sur La Traite (Xviiie-Xixe Siècles)." In *Enquêtes Et Documents*. 185-226. Nantes: Centre de Recherche sur l'Histoire de la France Atlantique, 1972.
- . *Études Antillaises: Xviiiè Siècle*. Cahiers Des Annales ; 11. Paris: Librairie A. Colin, 1956.
- . *Les Esclaves Aux Antilles Françaises, Xviiie-Xviiiè Siècles*. Basse-Terre: Société d'histoire de la Guadeloupe, 1974.
- . *Une Plantation De Saint-Domingue. La Sucrierie Galbaud Du Fort (1690-1802)*. Caire: Les Presses de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1941.
- Declos-Lepeley, "Mémoire Pour Un Nouveau Projet De Traite Sur La Côte D'Afrique," s.d., ANOM C/6/23, Sénégal et Côtes d'Afrique
- Dennett, Richard Edward. "Laws and Customs of the Fjort or Bavili Family, Kingdom of Loango." *Journal of the Royal African Society* 1, no. 3 (1902): 259-87.
- Descourtilz, M.E. *Voyage d'un naturaliste*. Dufart, 1809.
- Doutreloux, Albert. *L'ombre Des Fétiches, Société Et Culture Yombe*. Éditions Nauwelaerts, 1967.
- Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004.

- . "Complications." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2011): 224-26.
- . *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*. NY: Henry Holt, 2012.
- Ellis, Stephen. "Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa." *The Journal of African History* 43, no. 1 (2002): 1-26.
- Fage, J. D. *A Guide to Original Sources for Precolonial Western Africa Published in European Languages*. Studies in African Sources: 2. Madison, Wisconsin: African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987.
- . *A History of West Africa: An Introductory Survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- Feierman, Steven. *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Ferreira, Roquinaldo Amaral. *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World : Angola and Brazil During the Era of the Slave Trade*. African Studies ; 121. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Fouchard, Jean. *Les Marrons De La Liberté: Édition Revue, Corrigée Et Augmentée*. Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Editions Henri Deschamps, 1988.
doi:<http://library.duke.edu/catalog/search/recordid/DUKE000838663>.
- Fournier de la Chapelle, Charles, "Mémoire Pour Servir À L'information Des Procès Contre Les Nègres Devins, Sorciers Et Empoisonneurs," 1758, ANOM F/3/88, Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry, p 236-237 verso
- Frazier, Edward Franklin. *The Negro Family in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939.
- Freeman, Bryant C. *Haitian-English Dictionary*. edited by Jowel C. Laguerre, Jan Mapou and Jean-Bénito Mercier Lawrence, Kan.; Port-au-Prince: Institute of Haitian Studies, University of Kansas; La Presse Evangélique, 2004.
- Garrigus, John D. "'Le Secret Qui Règne Parmi Les Nègres': Revisiting the Testimony of Makandal and His 'Accomplices', 1757-1758." In *Atelier sur "Les resistances à l'esclavage dans le monde atlantique français à l'ère des Révolutions" organisé par le Groupe d'histoire de l'Atlantique Française*. Montréal, Canada, May 3-4, 2013.
- Gautier, Arlette. "Les Origines Ethniques Des Esclaves Déporté À Nippes, Saint-Domingue, De 1721 À 1770 D'après Les Archives Notariales." *Canadian Journal*

- of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des études Africaines* 23, no. 1 (1989): 28-39.
- . *Les Soeurs De Solitude: La Condition Féminine Dans L'esclave Aux Antilles Du Xviiie Au Xixe Siècle*. Paris: Editions caribéennes, 1985.
- Geggus, David. "The French Slave Trade: An Overview." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2001): 119-38.
- . "Haitian Voodoo in the Eighteenth Century: Language, Culture, Resistance." *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas* 28 (1991): 21-51.
- Geggus, David Patrick. *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- Ghachem, Malick W. *The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Giacinto da, Bologna. *La Pratique Missionnaire Des Pp. Capucins Italiens Dans Les Royaumes De Congo, Angola Et Contrees Adjacentes : Brievement Exposee Pour Eclairer Et Guider Les Missionnaires Destines a Ces Saintes Missions*. Louvain: Editions de l'AUCAM, 1931.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Gisler, Antoine. *L'esclavage Aux Antilles Françaises (17e-19e Siècle) : Contribution Au Problème De L'esclavage*. Studia Friburgensia : Nouv. Sér. ; 42. Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1965.
- Grandpré, Louis de. *Voyage à la côte occidentale d'Afrique fait dans les années 1786 et 1787*. Paris: Dentu, 1801.
- Green, Toby. "Building Slavery in the Atlantic World: Atlantic Connections and the Changing Institution of Slavery in Cabo Verde, Fifteenth–Sixteenth Centuries." *Slavery & Abolition* 32, no. 2 (2011/06/01 2011): 227-45.
- . *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589*. *African Studies* ; 118. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Guthrie, Malcolm. *Comparative Bantu: An Introduction to the Comparative Linguistics and Prehistory of the Bantu Languages, 4 Volumes*. Farnborough, Gregg, 1967-71.

- Guyer, Jane I., and Samuel M. Eno Belinga. "Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa." *The Journal of African History* 36, no. 1 (1995): 91-120.
- Hagenbucher-Sacripanti, Frank. *Les Fondements Spirituels Du Pouvoir Au Royaume De Loango, Rèpublique Populaire Du Congo* [in Undetermined]. Paris: O.R.S.T.O.M. [Office de la recherche scientifique et technique outre-mer], 1973.
- Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Identity: Community, Culture, and Difference*, edited by Johnathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.
- Harms, Robert W. "Oral Tradition and Ethnicity." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 10, no. 1 (1979): 61-85.
- . *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: The Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500-1891*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Haspelmath, Martin. "Lexical Borrowing: Concepts and Issues." In *Loanwords in the World's Languages: A Comparative Handbook*, edited by Martin Haspelmath and Uri Tadmor. 35-54. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2009.
- . "Loanword Typology: Steps toward a Systematic Cross-Linguistic Study of Lexical Borrowability." In *Aspects of Language Contact: New Theoretical, Methodological and Empirical Findings with Special Focus on Romancisation Processes*, edited by Thomas Stolz, Dik Bakker and Rosa Salas Palomo. 43-62. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008.
- Hastings, Adrian. "The Christianity of Pedro Iv of the Kongo, 'the Pacific' (1695-1718)." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, no. 2 (1998): 145-59.
- Hawthorne, Walter. *From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1830*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Hersak, Dunja. "There Are Many Kongo Worlds: Particularities of Magico-Religious Beliefs among the Vili and Yombe of Congo-Brazzaville." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 71, no. 4 (2001): 614-40.
- Herskovits, Melville J. *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958[1941].
- Heusch, Luc de. *The Drunken King, or, the Origin of the State. African Systems of Thought*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.

- . *Le Roi De Kongo Et Les Monstres Sacrés : Mythes Et Rites Bantous Iii*. Paris: Gallimard, 2000.
- Heywood, Linda M. "Portuguese into African: The Eighteenth-Century Central African Background to Atlantic Creole Cultures." In *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, edited by Linda M. Heywood. 91-116. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- . "Slavery and Its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo: 1491-1800." *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 1 (2009): 1-22.
- Heywood, Linda M., and John K. Thornton. *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Hickey, Raymond. "Language Contact: Reconsideration and Reassessment." In *The Handbook of Language Contact*, edited by Raymond Hickey. Blackwell Handbooks in Linguistics. Chichester, West Sussex ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Hilliard d'Auberteuil, Michel-René. *Considérations Sur L'état Présent De La Colonie Française De Saint-Domingue. Ouvrage Politique Et Législatif; Présenté Au Ministre De La Marine*. 2 vols Paris: Grangé, 1776.
- Hilton, Anne. "Family and Kinship among the Kongo South of the Zaïre River from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries." *The Journal of African History* 24, no. 2 (1983): 189-206.
- . *The Kingdom of Kongo*. Oxford Studies in African Affairs. Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Hunt, Nancy Rose. *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Jadin, Louis. "Apperçu De La Situation Du Congo En 1760 Et Rite D'élection Des Rois En 1775, D'après Le Cherubino Da Savona, Missionnaire Au Congo De 1759 À 1774." *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome*. 35 (1975): 343-419.
- . *Le Congo Et La Secte Des Antoniens: Restauration Du Royaume Sous Pedro Iv Et La "Saint-Antoine" Congolaise (1694-1718)*. Institut historique belge de Rome, 1961.
- . "Les Missions Du Congo À La Fin Du Xviiiè Siècle." *Aclas tome V from Congresso internacional de historia dos descobrimentos V* (1961): 207-31.

- . "Relations Sur Le Royaume Du Congo De P. Raimondo Da Dicomano Missionnaire De 1791 À 1795." *Bulletin des séances* (1957): 307-37.
- . *Rivalités Luso-Néerlandaises Au Soho, Congo, 1600-1675*. Rome: Academia Belgica, 1966.
- . "Essais D'évangélisation Du Loango Et Du Kakongo 1766-1775." *Zaire* 7 (1953): 1053-65.
- Janzen, John M. *Lemba, 1650-1930: A Drum of Affliction in Africa and the New World*. New York: Garland Pub., 1982.
- Janzen, John M., and Wyatt MacGaffey. *An Anthology of Kongo Religion: Primary Texts from Lower Zaïre*. University of Kansas Publications in Anthropology ; No. 5. Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1974.
- Johnson, Walter. "On Agency." *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 113-24.
- Kabolo Iko, Kabwita. *Le Royaume Kongo et la mission Catholique, 1750-1838 : du déclin à l'extinction*. Mémoire D'églises. Paris: Karthala, 2004.
- Klein, Martin A. "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies." *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 1 (2001): 49-65.
- Labarthe, P. *Voyage au Sénégal: pendant les années 1784 et 1785, d'après les mémoires de Lajaille*. Paris 1803.
- Labat, Jean Baptiste *Relation historique de l'Ethiopie occidentale*. Paris: 1732.
- Laman, K. E. *Dictionnaire Kikongo-Français, Avec Une Étude Phonétique Décrivant Les Dialectes Le Plus Importants De La Langue Dite Kikongo*. Ridgewood, N.J., Gregg Press, 1964., 1964.
- Landers, Jane. *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Le Vaillant, François. *Voyage de M. Le Vaillant dans l'intérieur de l'Afrique par le Cap De Bonne Espérance, dans les années 1780-5*. Paris: L'Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1790.
- Lewis, Maureen Warner. *Central Africa in the Caribbean : Transcending Time, Transforming Cultures*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2003.

- Lomax, Alan. *The Haiti Recordings [Sound Recording], The Alan Lomax collection*. San Francisco, CA: Harte Recordings, 2009.
- Lopes, Duarte. *Report of the Kingdome of Congo, a Region of Africa : And of the Countries That Border Rounde About the Same. 1. Wherein Is Also Shewed, That the Two Zones Torrida & Frigida, Are Not Onely Habitable, but Inhabited, and Very Temperate, Contrary to the Opin.* [S.l.]: Printed by Iohn Wolfe, 1597 [original Portuguese 1571].
- Lopes, Duarte, and Filippo Pigafetta. *A Report of the Kingdom of Congo and of the Surrounding Countries; Drawn out of the Writings and Discourses of the Portuguese, Duarte Lopez, by Filippo Pigafetta, in Rome, 1591.* edited by Margarite Hutchinson: New York, Negro Universities Press, 1969 [1591].
- Lorenzo da, Lucca. *Relations Sur Le Congo Du Père Laurent De Lucques (1700-1717).* Collection in-8o ; T. 32, Fasc. 2. edited by J. Bishop Cuvelier Bruxelles: Institut royal colonial belge, 1953.
- Lovejoy, Paul E. "The African Diaspora: Revisionist Interpretations of Ethnicity, Culture and Religion under Society." In *Studies in the World History of Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation Ii*. 1-23, 1997.
- . "Identifying Enslaved Africans: Methodological and Conceptual Considerations in Studying the African Diaspora." In *UNESCO/SSHRCC Summer Institute*. York University, Toronto, 1997.
- . *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Lovejoy, Paul E., and David Vincent Trotman, eds. *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora, The Black Atlantic*. New York: Continuum, 2003.
- Lozières, L.N.B. *Second Voyage à la Louisiane, Faisant Suite Au Premier De 1794 À 1798*. 2 vols Paris: Chez Charles, Imprimeur, Rue Guénégaud, N 18, 1803.
- M'Bokolo, Elikia. "From the Cameroon Grasslands to the Upper Nile." In *Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, edited by B.A. Ogot. Unesco History of Africa: J. Currey, 1999.
- MacGaffey, Wyatt. "Changing Representations in Central African History." *The Journal of African History* 46, no. 2 (2005): 189-207.
- . "Lineage Structure, Marriage and the Family Amongst the Central Bantu." *The Journal of African History* 24, no. 2 (1983): 173-87.

- . "The Religious Commissions of the Bakongo." *Man* 5, no. 1 (1970): 27-38.
- Mahaniah, Kimpianga. *La Maladie Et La Guèrison En Milieu Kongo : Essai Sur Kimfumu, Kinganga, Kingunza Et Kitobe*. Kinshasa: EDICVA, Département de la recherche, Centre de vulgarisation agricole, 1982.
- Mahaniah, Kimpianga, II. "The Background of Prophetic Movements in the Belgian Congo: A Study of the Congolese Reaction to the Policies and Methods of Belgian Colonization and to the Evangelization of the Lower Congo by Catholic and Protestant Missionaries, from 1877 to 1921." Ph.D., Temple University, 1975.
- Maho, Jouni Filip. "The New Updated Guthrie Online." <http://goto.glocalnet.net/mahopapers/nuglonline.pdf>.
- Manning, Patrick. *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Martin, Phyllis M. *The External Trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: The Effects of Changing Commercial Relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- . "The Trade of Loango in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." In *Pre-Colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900*, edited by David Birmingham and Richard Gray. 139-62. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Martinez-Ruiz, Barbaro. *Kongo Graphic Writing and Other Narratives of the Sign*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013.
- Matory, James Lorand. *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Mbembe, Achille, and Jean Comaroff. "Africa in Theory: A Conversation between Jean Comaroff and Achille Mbembe." *Anthropological Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (2010): 653-78.
- Meillassoux, Claude. *The Anthropology of Slavery : The Womb of Iron and Gold*. Meillassoux, Claude. Anthropologie De L'esclavage. English. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- . *L'esclavage En Afrique Précoloniale*. Bibliothèque D'anthropologie. Paris: F. Maspero, 1975.

- Merlet, Annie. *Autour Du Loango: Xive-Xixe Siècle*. Centre culturel français Saint-Exupéry-Sépie, 1991.
- Merolla, Girolamo, and Angelo Piccardo. *Breue, E Succinta Relatione Del Viaggio Nel Regno Di Congo...* Napoli: Francesco Mollo, 1692.
- Miembraon, Georges. "Les Pistes Des Esclaves Au Royaume Téké (Congo), Du Xviiè Au Xixe Siècle." In *Les Traités Et Les Esclavages: Perspectives Historiques Et Contemporaines*, edited by Myriam Cottias, Élisabeth Cunin and António de Almeida Mendes. Paris: Karthala et CIRESC, 2010.
- Miller, Joseph C. "Central Africa During the Era of the Slave Trade, C. 1490s-1850s." In *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, edited by Linda M. Heywood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Miller, Joseph Calder. "The Numbers, Origins, and Destinations of Slaves in the Eighteenth-Century Angolan Slave Trade." *Social Science History* 13, no. 4 (1989): 381-419.
- . *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.
- Mintz, Sidney Wilfred, and Richard Price. *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992[1976].
- Moreau de Saint-Méry, M. L. E. *Description Topographique, Physique, Civile, Politique Et Historique De La Partie Française De L'isle Saint-Domingue. Avec Des Observations Générales Sur Sa Population, Sur Le Caractère & Les Moeurs De Ses Divers Habitans; Sur Son Climat, Sa Culture, Ses Productions, Son Administration, &C.* Philadelphia: Chez l'auteur, 1797.
- . *Loix et Constitutions des colonies Françaises De l'Amérique sous le vent*. 6 vols Paris: Chez l'auteur, [1784-1790].
- Morrissey, Marietta. *Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989.
- Norflett, Fillmore. "Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Gosport as Seen by Moreau De Saint-Mery in March, April and May, 1794." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 48, no. 1 (1940): 12-30.
- Nsondé, Jean. "Christianisme Et Religion Traditionnelle En Pays Koongo Aux Xviiè-Xviiiè Siècles." *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 32, no. 128 (1992): 705-11.

- Nsondé, Jean de Dieu. *Langues, Culture Et Histoire Koongo Aux Xviiie Et Xviiiè Siècles : À Travers Les Documents Linguistiques*. Paris: Harmattan, 1995.
- Nurse, Derek, and Gérard Philippon, eds. *The Bantu Languages*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Palmié, Stephan. *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Park, Mungo. *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa: Performed in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797: With an Account of a Subsequent Mission to That Country in 1805 : To Which Is Added, an Account of the Life of Mr. Park*. London: T. Allman, 1799.
- Pechüel-Loesche, Eduard *Die Loango-Expedition Ausgesandt Von Der Deutschen Gesellschaft Zur Erforschung Aequatorial-Africas, 1873-1876 : Ein Reisewerk in Drei Abtheilungen*. Leipzig: P. Froberg, 1907.
- Pigafetta, Filippo. *Relatione de Regno Di Congo Et Delle Circonvince Contrade Tratta Dalli Scritti E Ragionamenti Di Odardo Lopez Portoghese*. Rome 1591.
- Pluchon, Pierre. *Vaudou, Sorciers, Empoisonneurs: De Saint Domingue À Haïti*. Paris: Karthala, 1987.
- Portail lexical : un ensemble de ressources et de données*. Centre National des Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales.
- Price, Richard. "On the Miracle of Creolization." In *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*, edited by Kevin A. Yelvington. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2006.
- Price-Mars, Jean. "Lemba-Péto: Un Culte Secret, Son Histoire, Sa Localisation Géographique, Son Symbolisme." *Revue de la Société haïtienne d'histoire et de géographie d'Haïti* 9, no. 28 (1938): 12-31.
- Proyart, Abbé. *Histoire De Loango, Kakongo, Et Autres Royaumes D'afrique*. Paris: C.P. Berton, 1776.
- Purchas, Samuel. *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes, Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells, by Englishmen and Others (4 Vols.)*. 1625.
- Rebecca J. Scott. "Public Rights and Private Commerce: A Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Creole Itinerary." *Current Anthropology* 48, no. 2 (2007): 237-56.

- Rey, Terry. "Kongolese Catholic Influences on Haitian Popular Catholicism: A Sociohistoric Explanation." In *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, edited by Linda M. Heywood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Reyna, Stephen P. *Wars without End: The Political Economy of a Precolonial African State*. Hanover, NH: Published for University of New Hampshire by University Press of New England, 1990.
- Rigaud, Milo. *La Tradition Voodoo et le Voodoo Haïtien: Son Temple, Ses Mystères, Sa Magie*. Paris: Niclaus, 1953.
- Roberts, Richard L. *Warriors, Merchants, and Slaves : The State and the Economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700-1914*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987.
- Schoenbrun, David. "Conjuring the Modern in Africa: Durability and Rupture in Histories of Public Healing between the Great Lakes of East Africa." *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (2006): 1403-39.
- Schrag, Norm. "Mboma and the Lower Zaire: A Socioeconomic Study of a Kongo Trading Community, 1785-1885.", Indiana University, 1985.
- Schuler, Monica. *"Alas, Alas, Kongo": A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.
- Scott, David. "That Event, This Memory: Notes on the Anthropology of African Diasporas in the New World." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 3 (1991): 261-84.
- Sidbury, James, Jorge Canizares-Esguerra, Laurent Dubois, Pekka Hämäläinen, Karen B. Graubart, and James H. Sweet. "Forum on Ethnogenesis." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (April 2011).
- Silva, Daniel B. Domingues da. "The Supply of Slaves from Luanda, 1768-1806: Records of Anselmo Da Fonseca Coutinho." *African Economic History* 38 (2010): 53-76.
- Stein, Robert Louis. *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: An Old Regime Business*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1979.
- Sweet, James H. "Defying Social Death: The Multiple Configurations of African Slave Family in the Atlantic World." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2013): 251-72.

- . *Domingos Alvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.
- . *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- . "Reimagining the African-Atlantic Archive: Method, Concept, Epistemology, Ontology." *The Journal of African History* 55 (2014): 147-59.
- Tarrade, Jean. *Le Commerce Colonial De La France À La Fin De L'ancien Régime: L'évolution Du Régime De L'exclusif De 1763 À 1789*. Publications De L'université De Poitiers. Lettres Et Sciences Humaines ; 12. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1972.
- Thomason, Sarah G. *Language Contact, Creolization and Genetic Linguistics*. edited by Terrence author Kaufman Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*. New York: Random House, 1983.
- Thornton, John K. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- . "African Soldiers in the Haitian Revolution." *Journal of Caribbean History* 1, no. 1 and 2 (1991): 58-80.
- . "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution." *Journal of World History* 4, no. 2 (1993): 181-214.
- . *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983.
- . "Religious and Ceremonial Life in the Kongo and Mbumbu Areas, 1500-1700." In *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, edited by Linda M. Heywood. 71-90. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Trask, R. L. *Historical Linguistics* London: Arnold, 1996.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. "Culture on the Edges: Creolization in the Plantation Context." *Plantation Society in the Americas* 5 1 (1998): 8-28.
- Tuckey, James Kingston. *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire: Usually Called the Congo, in South Africa, in 1816*. J. Murray, 1818.

- Vaissière, Pierre de. *Saint-Domingue : La Société Et La Vie Créoles Sous L'ancien Régime (1629-1789)* [in French]. Paris: Perrin, 1909.
- Vanhee, Hein. "Central African Popular Christianity and the Making of Haitian Vodou Religion." In *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, edited by Linda M. Heywood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Vansina, Jan. "The Dictionary and the Historian." *History in Africa* 1 (1974): 149-52.
- . *Kingdoms of the Savanna*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.
- . "The Kongo Kingdom and Its Neighbors, Based on a Contribution by T. Obenga." In *Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, edited by B.A. Ogot. Unesco History of Africa: J. Currey, 1999.
- . *Living with Africa*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.
- . "On Ravenstein's Edition of Battell's Adventures in Angola and Loango." *History in Africa* 34 (2007): 321-47.
- . *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- . *The Tio Kingdom of the Middle Congo, 1880-1892*. London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1973.
- Villeneuve, Reoul de, "Moyens De Remplacer Les Negres Dans Les Colonies Occidentales Par La Moyen De Pavillon Etranger," 25 avril 1783, ANOM, Colonies, F/1B/2, Police des Noirs, box 2, p. 200
- "Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database." Emory University, slavevoyages.org.
- Weaver, Karol K. "'She Crushed the Child's Fragile Skull': Disease, Infanticide, and Enslaved Women in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue." *French Colonial History* 5, no. 2004 (2004): 93-109.
- Whitfield, Harvey Amani, and Bonny Ibhawoh. "Problems, Perspectives, and Paradigms: Colonial Africanist Historiography and the Question of Audience." *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 39, no. 3 (2005): 582-600.
- Wing, Jan Van, and C Penders. *Le Plus Ancien Dictionnaire Bantu. Het Oudste Bantu-woordenboek. Vocabularium P. Georgii Gelensis*. Louvain: J. Kuyl-Otto, 1928.

Wing, Joseph Van. *Etudes Bakongo : Histoire Et Sociologie* [in French]. Bruxelles: Goemaere, 1920.

———. *Etudes Bakongo. Ii, Religion Et Magie* [in French]. Bruxelles: G. van Campenhout, 1938.

Biography

Christina Mobley was born on 8 September 1985 in Mons, Belgium. In February 2008, she graduated from McGill University in Montréal, Canada with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Honours History. In May 2010, she was awarded her Masters of Arts degree in History from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill following completion of her thesis, entitled “Make a Common Cause: Negotiation and Failure to Compromise in the Haitian Revolution, 1791.” She has obtained a number of competitive grants, fellowships, and awards including: Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship (FLAS), Mellon Summer Travel Awards from the Duke Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, the Albert J. Beveridge and Bernadotte E Schmitt Grants from the American Historical Association, the Summer Research Fellowship and James B Duke International Research Travel Fellowships from Duke University, a Fulbright Fellowship for France, and a Social Science Research Council International Dissertation Research Fellowship (SSRC IDRF). These grants allowed her to conduct archival, ethnographic, and linguistic research in the United States, Haiti, France, Belgium, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Her dissertation is entitled “The Kongoles Atlantic: Central African Slavery & Culture from Mayombe to Haiti.”