

The Kongolese Saint Anthony

Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the
Antoninian Movement, 1684–1706

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Introduction

IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, a Kongolese woman possessed by Saint Anthony led a mass movement to restore the Kingdom of Kongo. The movement was violently suppressed by the religious and political authorities of the country, and she was burned at the stake as a witch and heretic in 1706 – but not before she had drawn thousands of people to her in the ruins of the country's ancient capital.

Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita's religious and political movement is surprisingly little known outside narrow academic circles. Even though the movement has been discussed quite widely by Africanists since the 1960s, its full implications for the history of Africa and the slave trade to America have not been explored in popular history. Dona Beatriz' movement, although primarily aimed at ending a long-lasting civil war and reestablishing a broken monarchy, can also be seen as a popular movement directed against the slave trade in Africa at the time of the export slave trade. Yet up to the present, it has not fired much popular knowledge.

This neglect may be partly because West Africa is still regarded in the United States as the principal place of origin of African Americans, even though recent research shows that as many as one-quarter of all African Americans ultimately derive from central African (and mostly Kongolese) roots. Then, too, Dona Beatriz' movement, with its possessed saint and Christian ideology, often seems too embarrassingly bizarre or too atypical of African culture to appeal to American conceptions. Although

most Americans are comfortable with the idea of Muslim Africans in the slave trade period, they seem much less comfortable with Christian Africans. A literate elite, dressing partially in European clothes, bearing Portuguese names, and professing Catholicism seems somehow out of place in the popular image of precolonial Africa.

In spite of this image, however, Kongo was an important contributor to the population of the Americas, thanks to the civil wars which Dona Beatriz' movement sought to end. Although the great burst of slaves from Kongo directed to North America (and particularly South Carolina) lay about fifteen years later than Dona Beatriz' death, the issues raised in her day were very much a part of the much less well-known period that followed. The Stono Rebellion of South Carolina in 1739, led by Catholic Kongolese slaves, marked the end of the burst and may have involved the working out of some of the issues raised by Dona Beatriz, as did the Haitian revolution in even greater force a half-century later.¹

Whereas Americans might find Dona Beatriz' movement interesting because of its implications for the population of the New World, Dona Beatriz and her followers were not thinking primarily about the slave trade. For them, war spawned many problems besides the slave trade – only one of a host of possibly damaging outcomes to conflict. The problems of war – displaced people, intransigent elites, and the absence of popular checks on rulers – remain with Africa today, even if the specific threat of the slave trade is no longer present. In this way, Dona Beatriz prefigures modern African democracy movements as much as she can be seen as an antislavery figure.

The years of Dona Beatriz' movement are some of the best-documented in Kongo's history, which itself is probably the best described country in Atlantic Africa in the period. This documentation is a product of the convergence of Italian Capuchin mis-

sionaries on the eastern part of Kongo and their production of lengthy and detailed diaries of their lives there. Luca da Caltanissetta and especially Marcellino d'Atri produced two long (more than 500 pages together) diary-type accounts of the earlier periods of Dona Beatriz' life. The two were often independent witnesses to the same events as they frequently served together. When they left in 1701–2, Bernardo da Gallo and Lorenzo da Lucca, who left briefer but nevertheless detailed accounts, took their places. Dona Beatriz' own movement is described in da Gallo's report to the Propaganda Fide, written in 1710, and da Lucca's annual letters to the Capuchin province of Tuscany of 1706 and 1707. In addition to this eyewitness documentation, the archives contain a number of shorter documents that illuminate the period, one of the most important being the report of the Jesuit priest Pedro Mendes written in 1710 and giving historical background from 1665.

In all this mass of documentation, however, there is not a very strong Kongolese contribution. While some periods, notably the first half of the sixteenth century, are almost wholly presented in documents written by Kongolese, only one letter, written by Pedro IV and included in da Gallo's report, survives from a Kongolese author and deals directly with the period of the crisis.

Yet the Kongolese elite was literate, and the Capuchin accounts frequently mention their correspondence and even their recourse to archives. But this material may not have survived, and if it has, at present its location is not known. Eva Sebastýén's discovery of numerous seventeenth- and eighteenth-century documents in private hands and in local archives in the Dembos regions of Angola (just south of Kongo) in 1987–8 gives us hope that there are documents of eighteenth-century date still to be found in northern Angola that might remedy this situation. At present, however, we learn of the movement mostly through Italian priests.

The Capuchin priests were not impartial observers of the Kongolese scene, and indeed their actions helped to precipitate the movement itself. In the current situation, though, the modern scholar has little choice but to try to read between the lines and hope that the Kongolese viewpoint can be surmised. Sometimes

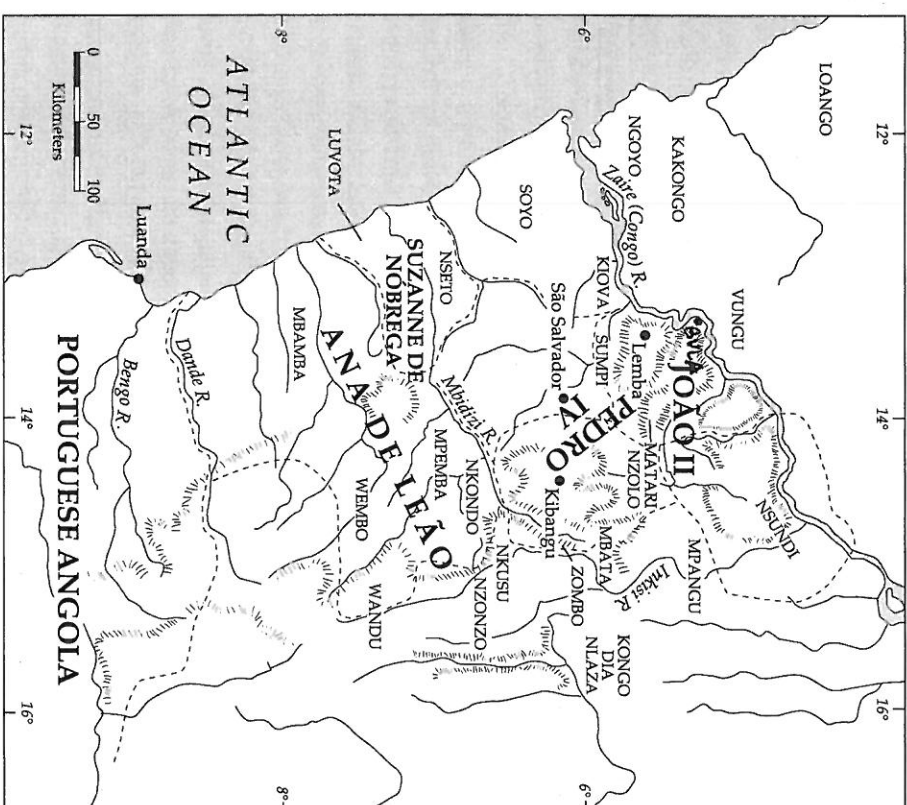
¹ John Thornton, "African Roots of the Stono Rebellion," *American Historical Review* 96 (1991): 1101–13; "I am the Subject of the King of Congo": African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of World History* 4 (1993): 181–214.

A Land in Turmoil

IN AUGUST OF 1704, DONA BEATRIZ KIMPA VITA, a twenty-year-old Kongolese woman, lay deathly ill upon her bed. For seven days she had been sick. Sweat poured from her feverish body and wild visions flashed in her head. She knew now she was dying. Then, suddenly, she became calm, and a clear vision appeared to her. It was a man dressed in the simple blue hooded habit of a Capuchin monk, so real that he seemed to be standing in the room with her. She turned to him, transfixed.

"I am Saint Anthony, firstborn son of the Faith and of Saint Francis," he told her, "I have been sent from God to your head to preach to the people. You are to move the restoration of the Kingdom of Kongo forward, and you must tell all who threaten you that dire punishments from God await them." He told her he had tried for a long time to help Kongo, going from one province to another. "First I had gone into the head of a woman who was in Nseto, but I had to leave as the people there did not receive me well. Then I left Nseto and went to Soyo where I entered the head of an old man. But there was a Reverend Father stationed there, and the people wanted to beat me, so again I fled. Then I went to Bula, and the same thing happened again. I am trying once more, this time in Kibangu, and I have chosen you to do this."

With those words, the vision of the saint moved toward her, entered into her head and merged with her. She felt herself recover. Her strength returned. In fact, she felt in vibrant good health, strong and in good spirits. She rose from her bed, full of



Kongo in 1700. Territories of the major factions.

resolve to complete the mission. Beatriz had been possessed by Saint Anthony.¹

Dona Beatriz, a spiritual leader in the making, was born on the banks of the Mbidizi River, in the eastern end of the Kingdom of Kongo; della Battaglia data dal Rè D. Pietro Quarto; e della vittoria da lui ottenuta contro i Rebelli. Come anche del scisma nella Fede per via d'una donna, che si fingeva S. Antonio, felicemente superato colla di quella," 17 October 1710, fols. 296-96v, published from the original in the Archivio "de Propaganda Fide," Scritture originali riferite nella Congregazione Generale (hence forward APF:SOCG), vol. 576, in Teobaldo Filsei (ed.), "Nazionalismo e religione nel Congo all'inizio del 1700: La

Kongo. Her native town was in the shadow of the mountain of Kibangu – “fortress” in her native language, Kikongo – and a great sacred place. The peak was often shrouded in clouds, which gave it an air of mystery.

Kibangu was regarded locally with something of religious awe – the birthplace of five rivers that flowed out from the mountain and coursed their way in all directions. The Kongolese viewed rivers as sacred places, the boundary between the everyday of This World and the spiritual realm of the Other World. The Mbidizi, the largest of Kibangu's rivers, emerged from a spring near the mountain's summit that was a particularly holy place.

People thought of the stream as an oracle of Lusunzi, a *nkita* or local deity, its turbulence was seen as an indication of failure in war, while a quiet day augured success. Every year the people made sacrifices of goats and left offerings of food at the river's source. A perfectly shaped spherical stone about the size of a cannonball that had been found long ago near there was regarded as a spiritual token from Lusunzi. It was placed in the midst of a field shaded by a holy *nsanda* tree and surrounded by a great thicket of grass and shrubs that formed a sort of cave. A *kilome*, a special minister of the stone, and the Otherworldly guardians of the mountains, served to coordinate the sacrifices and augury of the place.

Mysterious though it seemed from below, the mountaintop plain was thickly inhabited, and for the residents the mist was a *setta degli Antoniani*, “Africa (Roma) 9 (1971): 276–303, 463–508, 645–68. I have cited the folio numbers of the original (marked in this edition, and the separate edition of the same title, published in Rome, 1972, and in the French translation of Louis Jadin, “Le Congo et la secte des Antoniens. Restauration du royaume sous Pedro IV et la Saint Antoine” Congolaise [1694–1718],” *Bulletin, Institut historique belge de Rome* 33 [1961]: 411–615). There is not a specific date given in the sources for her possession. Bernardo da Callo, our witness, who interviewed her shortly afterward, first heard about the movement after returning from a mission trip in August. No more than about two weeks elapsed between his return to Kibangu and Beatriz’ arrival there. Since she stated that she went straight to Kibangu after her possession, it seems likely that the events took place in August or perhaps early September at the latest.

constant nuisance. On the mountaintop there was scarcely a sunny day during the dry season of June to September, and the humidity ruined everything in short order. Local humor said that “morning” in Kibangu was whenever the sun finally broke through the mist, and sometimes morning did not come until noon. The elevation and dampness made it a chilly place in an otherwise tropical climate. But in the rest of the year the climate was delightful, and from the top one had a marvelous view of the countryside below.

Kibangu was at the northern end of the Miongo mia Kanda, the “Mountains of Kanda,” which formed a rugged backbone to Kongo's eastern provinces; sheer drops of over a thousand feet separated it from plains to the north and west. The Mbidizi River, most important of the five whose sources were found there, fell with a thundering roar over a spectacular waterfall two hundred feet high to the valley below, sending up a great permanent cloud of mist, the source of constant rainbows as the sun played on it. From the valley floor the Mbidizi flowed westward for about five miles, then turned south and grew rapidly as it was joined by a dozen smaller streams known locally as Mpangi a Mbidizi or Mwana a Mbidizi – the “Brother of the Mbidizi” or the “Child of the Mbidizi.” The young river, still growing and carving its way southward, was a turbulent stream during this 30-mile course, before making a final bend and heading off westward toward the ocean some 125 miles away, now a stately and mature river too broad to be bridged.²

Dona Beatriz's home, a *mbanza* or small provincial town, was between the two great bends in the broad valley defined by a

² See Marcellino d'Attri, “Giomate apostoliche fatte da me Fra M. d'A... 1690,” in Carlo Toso (ed.), *L'Anarchia Congolese nel sec. XVII. La relazione inedita di Marcellino d'Attri* (Genoa, 1984), pp. 460–2, for the geography of Kibangu, and pp. 483–6, 499 on the religious elements. Fr. Joseph de Munck visited Kibangu in 1660 and reported on the continuing veneration of the rock Lusunzi and its sacred trees: “Quelques clans Bakongo d'Angola,” *Ngonge* 4 (December 1960), no. 14. I have called this deity an *nkita* rather than use the term *simbi*, a synonymous term preferred by modern anthropologist Wyatt MacGaffey in describing modern Kongo-

ridge of low hills on the west and the Kanda mountain ranges that trailed southward from Kibangu on the east. Nearly ten thousand people lived in this valley, in a handful of towns and some forty villages ruled by a king from his town on the mountaintop. By Kongolese standards, the valley was thickly inhabited, and the villages, posted along the banks of the Mbidizi and its "brothers" and "children," were frequent enough that their lights at night could guide a traveler along the road.³

The small town in which Dona Beatriz was born was not an important place. Her own family lived in houses typical of the lesser elite of Kongo, several buildings joined together by walls and small courtyards, and the whole surrounded outside by a stout palisade. Buildings were rectangular with walls of wood and woven grass, and roofs that were thatched with tough grasses from the open fields nearby. They were built in the same style and materials as those of the commoners around them, though the buildings were somewhat larger and more carefully made.

Intricately woven mats, made from fibers drawn from tree bark and pounded to reveal threads, formed the decoration of the walls, which were sometimes planked. Wall hangings such as tapestries, upon which were mounted arms, such as a sword and shield and bow, made up the elite decorations. The cloth, of which Kongolese were justly proud, was attractive enough that much was exported to Portuguese Angola, and smaller quantities, even farther away. The wall hangings and noble weapons like these religions, because *nkita* is used in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources, and in this dialect. See *Religion and Society in Central Africa*, pp. 85-8.

³ On the demography of the region in this time period, see John Thornton, "Demography and History in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1550-1750," *Journal of African History* 18 (1977). On village lights guiding a traveler in the valley, Archivio Provinciale dei Cappuccini da Provincia da Toscana (Montiugi Convent, Florence), Filippo Bernardi da Firenze, "Ragguaglioi de Congo . . .," 2 vols. (1714). Lorenzo da Luca, "Lettera Annua, 1706," vol. 2, p. 296 (Jean Cuvelier edited and translated this text in French, marking the original pagination in *Relations du Congo du P. Laurent de Laques* [Brussels, 1954]).

swords and shields were the marks of wealth and distinction that set nobles even of humble estate off from the common folk.

Commoners' and peasants' houses were very simple affairs made rectangular and composed of only one or two rooms, fenced from each other so that they formed lanes that wove through the town. Dona Beatriz' hometown was made up of perhaps two hundred houses, those of a handful of elite families and the rest the poorer buildings of the ordinary people.

The poorer townspeople, as well as the villagers in the many *villas*, as villages were called in Kikongo, that surrounded the town were mostly farmers. Although men helped clear new fields from forests, once that was accomplished virtually all the agricultural work was done by women. They hoed up their fields in ridges before the rainy season began each September, and then planted them in staggered sessions so the crops would ripen at different times. They planted a variety of crops in the same field, often interplanting them to maximize fertility and minimize total loss from drought or invasions of pests, like locusts. The staggered harvests that resulted from this strategy allowed food to be consumed directly from the fields without having to store crops. By March each year the first plantings were done and a second crop was sown, for final harvests ending when the dry season began in June.

Cooking was done in earthenware pots, and meals consisted of three parts, typically served on three plates. The first was boiled grain, usually corn, which was dried, then pounded, and the flour mixed into boiling water to make *mfundi*, the "daily bread" that the Kongolese asked God to give them each day when they said the Lord's Prayer. The *mfundi* was cooked until quite stiff, and most people rolled it into bite-size balls to eat it. The second plate contained *mwamba*, which was a stew made up of meat if it was available, or fish and numerous vegetable supplements, in a base of palm oil. Balls of *mfundi*, dimpled with the thumb to make a small cup, were dipped into the *mwamba*. In the third plate were vegetables, most commonly *wundu*, probably pigeon peas, which are still called Congo beans in the West Indies today. Fruit was

eaten separately and the whole was washed down with water or palm wine drunk from cups made from gourds.

In those days Kongolese would say that women, as farmers, brought the food to dinner and men would bring the wine. Without the men bringing the wine, women would refuse to bring the food; without the women's food, the men would refuse to bring the wine. To make wine, men cultivated trees, just as the women cultivated fields. Various types of palm trees provided sap and nuts which could be used to make oil for cooking and, if fermented, *malafu*, the wine that everyone drank.

Men produced cloth and clothing from bark stripped from special trees and pounded until tough fibers were revealed. These fibers were then woven, using a simple loom, into strips, which in turn were sewn together to make clothing. Wood, leaves, and grasses were the normal materials for building houses. Hunting and fishing, as well as tending to larger animals such as goats and pigs, fell to men and boys.

Commoners wore a simple cloth that went from the waist to the knees, called a *tanga*. Men normally wore one and women wore two, one on top of their bodies and the other below. Unmarried girls often did not cover the tops of their bodies, and young children often went naked. At night the tanga became a blanket, and in the highlands where temperatures in the cold season could approach freezing, it was needed.⁴

The simplicity of the commoners' material culture did not necessarily mean poverty, however. If the weather was good and the wars had spared the crops, there was always enough to eat, for Kongolese agriculture was productive, at least by the standards of the time. Housing, although of simple construction and not intended for use beyond a few years, took a short time to build and was adequate for protection from the rain or the kind of cold encountered in central Africa.

Unlike commoner women, Dona Beatriz' mother did not work in the fields to produce crops and feed her family. Dona Beatriz' family had slaves and clients who managed the household and

produced its food for her mother. Some of the slaves were Kongolese, and Christians like their masters, but had been captured in warfare in one or another part of Kongo and then shipped far enough away from home that returning was unlikely. The rest were from the east and north, and while many could speak Kikongo, they were not originally Christian and spoke in distinctly different dialects. The clients were local people serving under conditions similar to those of the slaves: they had to obey orders and could be physically punished by beating or by restraint for disobedience or unauthorized absenteeism. Clients could go from time to time to visit their homes and families, but not without their master's permission and only for set time periods.⁵

Dona Beatriz was born in 1684,⁶ and like all Kongolese "*yudia mungwa*" (she ate salt), as they called baptism locally, as soon as a priest passed her town. Baptismal rituals of the time called for the priest to place a small amount of salt on the tongue of the baby when performing the service, hence its name.

Kongolese were proud to call themselves Catholics, and had been so for six generations – nearly two centuries. Christianity set true Kongolese aside from their neighbors, and in their view made them superior to the "heathens," even those to the north and east who spoke dialects of the same Kikongo language. As Kongolese saw it, it was the salt rather than the water that conferred the blessing of baptism, in line with the general belief that evil people or spirits did not like salt and would thus avoid a baptized person.

Priests were scarce, however, so it was not until the vicar Father Luis de Mendonça, a mulatto originally from the Portuguese col-

⁵ On housing styles, see d'Atri, "Giornate," p. 503. The situation of nobles' slaves is taken from numerous references to the conditions of the household servants of Capuchin missionaries with the assumption that they lived more or less the same way as the elite did. See especially d'Atri, "Giornate," pp. 532, 537-8.

⁶ We cannot determine the date of Beatriz' birth exactly; her age at her death was given as between twenty and twenty-two years old. I have opted for an older age simply because she had already done so many things by the time her mission began that there seems to be a need for more time.

⁴ Thornton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, pp. 28-37.

ony of Angola, visited her town that Dona Beatriz was actually baptized.⁷ Teachers, accompanied by a train of students and acolytes, might come on a yearly basis to perform services and instruct the young, but a priest to perform the sacraments might not come every year. Father Luis, who lived with the king on the mountain of Kibangu, traveled out annually, but his parish was so large that he could not visit all the villages each year.

Dona Beatriz, the name she was given by her parents, was what Kongolese knew as a *zina dia nsantu*, a saint's name. These names were in a Portuguese form and followed Portuguese usage, though a curious local feature was that everyone, even commoners, bore the title "Dom" (if male) and "Dona" (if female), titles which in Portugal were usually reserved for nobility. Local pronunciation also changed them so that Dom João was rendered as "Ndozau" and Dom Pedro as "Ndopetelo," while Dona Isabela would be "Ndona Zabela." Dona Beatriz' own name was probably pronounced "Ndona Betelisi" in Kikongo.⁸

In addition to the saint's name, which all Kongolese carried even if they had not yet been baptized, Dona Beatriz also had Kikongo names. These were sometimes namesakes honoring parents or grandparents, or sometimes reflected events of the day. Occasionally, too, when people underwent changes in life, they might take another name. If Dona Beatriz was named Kimpa Vita – the Kikongo name she later carried – as a child, then Kimpa was her given name and Vita was her father's given name. Nobles who were proud of their lineage might add a grandfather's or even a great-grandfather's given name to the list, but normally even kings had just two. Many noble families also had family names that were passed down through generations, and these

⁷ This is a speculation; we only know that de Mendonça was active at the time of her birth and that it is likely he baptized her, but no document actually proves it.

⁸ A good list of the Kikongo forms of these names, which were still regularly given in the early twentieth century, is in Jean Cuvelier, "Lusansu Iua Nsi a Kongo [Knowledge about the country of Kongo]," *Kukitiele* [Dawning] 12 (1930): 105–7. Unfortunately, Beatriz is not among the names on the list.

were either typical Portuguese surnames – da Cruz, de Castro, or da Silva – or names that were unique to Kongo, such as Agua Rosada, Pimenta Raposo, or Valle das Lagrimas.⁹

Dona Beatriz' family were members of the highest group of the nobility, the Mwana Kongo or "child of Kongo," although such a background did not necessarily mean either wealth or political importance. Kongolese extended families were part of what was called a *kanda* in Kikongo, a word which might be translated as "clan" or "lineage" in English but which really refers to a very large social group that was related sometimes by blood and descent, and other times simply through clientage and adoption. Even slaves and their children would be part of a kanda. The Mwana Kongo kandas were those who could claim a king of Kongo somewhere in their past. Over the years the royal kanda had subdivided into many branch kandas, so that Beatriz' family's membership in it was more a source of pride than material or political gain.¹⁰

If Vita was Dona Beatriz' father's given name, then it might have suited the baby Dona Beatriz well, for *vita* means "war" in Kikongo. The year 1684 was one of war at Kibangu and the valley of the Mbidizi, in a period filled with armed turbulence. King João II, a claimant to the throne of Kongo who ruled the district

⁹ For a study of seventeenth-century naming practices in Kongo, see John Thornton, "Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns," *William and Mary Quarterly* 50 (1993): 729–40.

¹⁰ Lorenzo da Lucca gives her ancestry simply as the "highest nobility," which implies membership in the Mwana Kongo. Kongo nobility had three levels: *fidalgos nobiliss*, or people descended from ancient village rulers, who were of little larger importance; *fidalgos Moxikongos*, including all whose ancestors had held higher office or were associated with the founding king and his clients; and finally, the *Infantes* or "Mwana Kongo" descended as just described; see the discussion of the mid-seventeenth century in Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, MS 3533, Antonio de Ternel, "Descripcion Narrativa de la mission serafica de los Padres Capuchinos . . . en el reyno de Congo" (ca. 1664), p. 72; these terms were still in use in the late eighteenth century as well. See Academia das Ciencias de Lisboa, MS Vermelho 296, "Viagem do Congo do Missionario Fr. Raphael de Castello de Vide hoje Bispo de S. Thomé" (MS of 1781–8), p. 202.

of Bula, launched an attack on Kibangu that year, though it was repulsed with heavy losses by the Kibangu's royal claimant, Garcia III.

Wars did not cease with this victory, however, for shortly afterward Garcia III died and was succeeded by André I, who died himself within a year. Manuel Afonso Nzinga Elenke succeeded King André I as ruler of the mountain of Kibangu, but the succession was contested. Two brothers of a former king, Alvaro Afonso Agua Rosada Nimi a Mvemba and Pedro Afonso Agua Rosada Nusamu a Mvemba, refused to accept his power and withdrew from the mountain to the valley where Dona Beatriz' family lived. They won the loyalty of part of the army, a citizen force raised from the villages and serving under local nobles such as Dona Beatriz' father. Using these forces, the brothers made war on Manuel but were defeated and had to retreat back to the valley.

Two years later, in 1688, the brothers raised an army to try again, and as in past conflicts, four-year-old Dona Beatriz' father was probably called to fight. Thanks to support within the king's subjects on Kibangu, the Agua Rosada brothers defeated Manuel and drove him off. The dethroned king fled westward with a body of his followers to Kongo's long disobedient coastal province of Soyo, where he was well received by the prince António II Baretto da Silva.¹¹

Having achieved their objective, the older of the two Agua Rosada brothers, Alvaro, succeeded Manuel as king on the mountaintop. He took the title King Álvaro X of Kongo, though in fact he ruled only the mountain of Kibangu and the upper reaches of its five rivers. Were it not for his rivals farther away – the former King Manuel, rebuilding his strength in Soyo, and another king, João Manuel II Nzuzi a Ntamba, who ruled a region called Bula that lay northwest of Kibangu – there might be a lasting peace for the people of the Mbidizi valley. But thanks to these rivals in a still larger civil war that already had clouded Kongo for more

¹¹ On the brothers' war, Pedro Mendes to General of the Jesuit Order, 1710, in Levy Maria Jordão de Pavia Manso (ed.), *História do Congo (Documentos)* (Lisbon, 1877), p. 351.

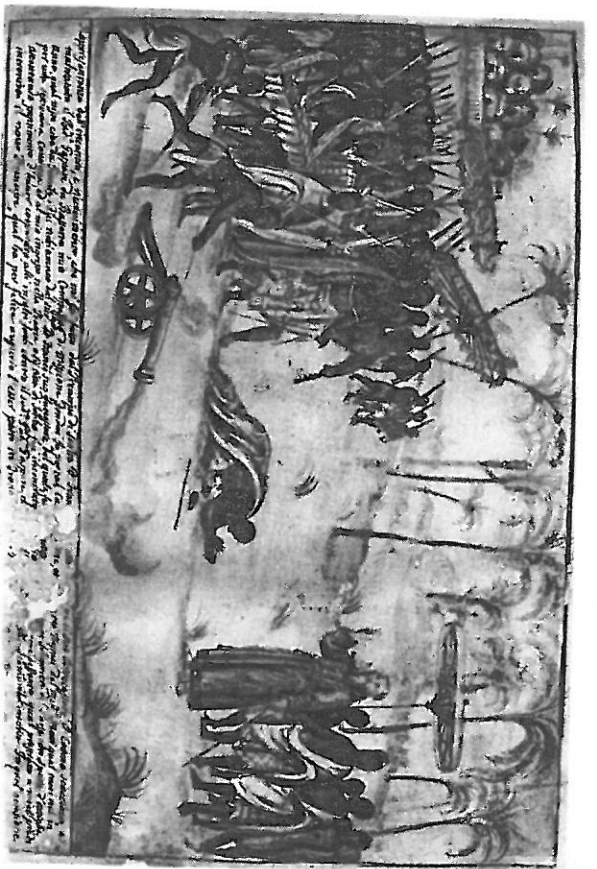
than a generation, there would be only two years of peace to follow.

Dona Beatriz, by virtue of living in a noble household, grew up hearing about the ins and outs of Kongo's complex politics, as news was discussed and rumor reported. News of wars that did not involve the people of the Mbidizi valley might still find its way there.

She was only six in 1690 when the ex-king Manuel, having gathered support from Soyo, once again laid claim to the kingship. Prince Antonio supplied troops, and with their aid Manuel returned, not to Kibangu to face the Agua Rosadas who had originally dethroned him, but to the ruined and abandoned ancient capital of São Salvador beyond the hills that marked the western side of the Mbidizi valley. There, amid the ruins of the once proud capital, Soyo's officials proclaimed him king. But he was a king with no subjects and after the army from Soyo returned home, he had to withdraw, fearing that one of his rivals would attack him.

These events did not trouble Dona Beatriz' family; but in 1691, when Dona Beatriz was seven, once again her father was called for war. A large army raised by King João II of Bula marched toward Kibangu. An earlier invasion by João had been defeated the year of Dona Beatriz' birth, and the people of Kibangu knew to fear his army, for among his troops were Jagas, dreaded mercenaries from beyond Christendom's northern frontier at the Zaire River.

João's army had been responsible for Manuel's withdrawal from São Salvador the year before, but like Alvaro at Kibangu and Manuel, when he announced his claim to be king of all Kongo in 1688, his real power did not extend much beyond a portion of the country. João had found some support from the Church, although Father Girolamo Merolla, the prefect of the Capuchin mission to Kongo, imposed conditions on him for this recognition, including reoccupying São Salvador and reconciling himself with implacable enemies in Soyo. João was unwilling to



The Prince of Soyo with his army greets a Capuchin priest. (From "Missione in Prachtica" ca. 1750)

do this, though, because his defeat by Kibangu in 1684 had made him feel too vulnerable. Nevertheless, he decided to take up the title of King.

Bula, King João's territory, lay to the north of Kibangu, tucked into a bend in the great Zaire River. João's brother, King Pedro III, had founded Bula more than twenty years earlier when he fled São Salvador after having been crowned King of Kongo. Driven from the city by his rivals, Pedro had taken refuge at Bula, where the broken country and wooded hills provided strongly fortified positions. On the strongest of these, he built Lembba, his refuge and capital until he could once more occupy the true capital at São Salvador. The temporary refuge had become a more or less permanent home, and Pedro, then João, had built a regular administrative structure over the dozen smaller territories, known as marquisates, which he controlled.

King João and his army from Bula marched out of the Marquisate of Sumpi, his southeastermost territory, and entered the lands belonging to the mountain of Kibangu. João relied on the

reputation of his Jaga allies as much as their numbers to win their victory, and rumors and stories were a part of this. The Jagas were said to have sold human flesh like meat in the public market when Pedro III led them in the final cataclysmic sack of the ancient capital of São Salvador in 1678. They were also unrepentant pagans who sacked, destroyed, and desecrated São Salvador's dozen churches that day, and João's continued association with them gave him an unsavory though largely undeserved reputation as being sacrilegious himself.

To meet this challenge, King Álvaro sent out a royal *bando*, or order, giving prospective soldiers a specified future time to gather at a predetermined assembly point. They were expected to gather fifteen days' food for the campaign in large *nleles*, or baskets; bring their arms, which might be bows, arrows, or clubs, and, increasingly in this time, also muskets; and report for muster at the *mbanza* of their area. There they were met by their leaders, among them Dona Beatriz' father, who served as commander in the unit raised from their region. The whole army was therefore divided into regionally based military units, which served together in campaigns under their own flags and with their own local officers.

As an officer, Dona Beatriz' father carried a fine sword with either a straight or a curved blade like a scimitar, and a shield. When the army assembled, Father Luis blessed the weapons of the officers and the army as a whole – a particularly significant gesture in a war against the heathen jagas. Then, with the fanfare typical of troops departing for war, Dona Beatriz' father was off to battle for King Álvaro.

Her mother, having a small child, remained at home, even though many women also served the army, not as soldiers but as the supply train. They followed husbands, brothers, perhaps even sons to the field, helped locate food, cooked for the forces, and provided what few comforts could be had on campaign.

As the two armies approached each other, the smaller units began harassing and exploratory engagements, operating almost independently from each other, gradually coming together over a period of days for a battle in which the smaller units formed

into three or four columns or wings of five to six thousand men each for a major battle, sharp affairs that lasted three or four hours and had heavy casualties.¹²

King Álvaro's forces were completely victorious. King João's soldiers broke and fled before the army of King Álvaro, and the valley was safe again. Dona Beatriz' father once again returned home.

Military victory was followed by political recognition from one of the most important people in Kongo, Queen Ana Afonso de Leão. Queen Ana did not claim to rule the country, but she was the eldest important member of the Kinlaza kanda, the branch of the Mwana Kongo that had supplied the most powerful kings of the earlier part of the century when Kongo was united and strong. Queen Ana was the sister of King Garcia II, the last of the great and powerful seventeenth-century kings, and her husband, Afonso II, had ruled briefly in Kongo in the late 1660s. When he died, she moved to the town of Nkondo at the junction of the Mbidizi and Lukunga rivers just below the great bend in the Mbidizi. There she established direct control over an area, at the Marquisate of Nkondo, in her own name, and elsewhere through her junior relatives, who gave her great loyalty and support. These relatives controlled virtually the rest of the Mbidizi valley, including the large Marquisates of Wembo and Mpenba along the river, the County of Wandu along the valley of the Lukunga River, south of her capital at Mbanza Nkondo, and then the Duchy of Mbamba, the largest of Kongo's provinces along the Mbidizi and the Atlantic coast.

When King Álvaro posted his victory over the army of King João, the queen declared her willingness to recognize him as king. It was welcome news in Kibangu, since it moved Álvaro one step closer to being able to reunite the country. More good news followed when two of the queen's allies, Pedro Valle das Lagrimas,

¹² Military details are culled from a number of contemporary sources: d'Attri, "Giornate," pp. 53, 519-21; Luca da Caltanissetta, "Relazione del Viaggio e Missione fatta per me Fra Luca da Caltanissetta . . .," in Roman Rainero (ed.), *Il Congo agli inizi del settecento nella relazione di P. Luca da Caltanissetta* (Florence, 1974), fols. 8v-9.

Duke of Mbamba, and Alexio, the Marquis of Wembo, sent embassies to Kibangu offering their loyalty.

But King Manuel and his allies in Soyo could not allow his rival to outdo him, and moved strongly against Nkondo. Toward the end of 1691 his armies invaded Nkondo, driving the queen away. Her nephew, Pedro Valle das Lagrimas, brought his army up from Mbamba to try to dislodge Manuel, but the ensuing battle in May 1692 resulted in Pedro's defeat. Manuel granted the Duchy of Mbamba to his cousin Alexio, and to his most successful general, Pedro Constantinho da Silva - known as Kibenga, "the Brave" - he gave the Marquisate of Wembo.

Queen Ana and her entourage, refugees, and the remnants of her army retreated north up the Mbidizi valley to seek asylum in Kibangu. Álvaro welcomed them, and the arrival of the haggard troops and the defiant old queen was grounds for much talk and speculation. She was a striking figure, who often wore the habit of a Capuchin monk in a show of piety - in fact she had received a special dispensation from the order permitting her to do this. As an elderly woman, she had substantial facial hair and had to shave to prevent her seeming bearded. But this strange external appearance could not hide her strong will or belittle her mastery of politics; she was fully in charge behind the scenes among her nominally superior nephews.

King Álvaro gave her the right to settle in the Marquisate of Bonga, establishing a makeshift court at the village of Gando a Suka, in the Mbidizi valley not far to the north of her former capital.¹³ From there she and Valle das Lagrimas continued a low-key fight against Manuel, forcing Soyo to keep its army in the field throughout 1692.

Eight-year-old Dona Beatriz might have absorbed the general feeling that the wars had gone on too long and that the motives of the participants had gradually crossed the line from upholding their rights to greed and spitefulness. That feeling was driven

¹³ Details on the war of 1691-2 are drawn from Pedro Mendes, pp. 350, 352; da Caltanissetta, "Viaggio," fols. 10-14; d'Attri, "Giornate," pp. 53-5. I have determined the location of this place from the Bonga River on the "Carta da Colônia de Angola" (Luanda, 1944), scale 1:250,000.

home the next year just before Christmas. Acting in a secret plot, Pedro Constantinho da Silva Kibenga and the new Duke of Mbamba, Alexio, rose up and killed Manuel, cutting off his head and sending it to Álvaro. The king put this grisly trophy in front on his palace in the public square in Kibangu. Kibenga followed this up by sending Álvaro the royal insignia that Manuel had taken when he was driven from Kibangu by Álvaro and his brother Pedro.

Then the rumor spread, and was gradually confirmed, that this stroke of good luck for the king of Kibangu had a sinister other side. To win Álvaro's support for the killing of his rival, Kibenga and his colleagues had extracted a promise that Álvaro would murder the elderly Queen Ana. In the end, Álvaro did not carry out his end of the plot, and the queen remained, dignified and defiant, at Gando a Suka.¹⁴

The scandal of these betrayals and double crosses reached most of the nobles in Kibangu's realm, and for sensitive people like the young Dona Beatriz the telling and retelling of the story helped reinforce the feeling that greed and jealousy had gotten out of hand in Kongo. Manuel's head, which remained fully five years on display at the plaza, served to keep the tale of deceit alive beyond its time and into Dona Beatriz' teenage years. An evolving awareness of these demonstrations of bad faith began to shape a political dimension to her own religious feelings.

At about the time that Manuel was betrayed by his followers, Dona Beatriz began to have visions that would start to establish her personal inclination toward religion. In her vision two children, white in color, came to play with her and gave her gifts. One of their most telling gifts was a beautiful glass rosary that she wore in her vision. To her family and friends these visions were a sign that she was spiritually gifted, and people paid attention to her and treated her as a special person.

The white children of her vision were *nkias* from the Other World rather than Europeans or racially "white." Kongolese

knew well that the colony of Angola, which bordered Kongo to the south, was held by the European country of Portugal, but Portugal had not been much of a threat since the princes of Soyo crushed an invading force from Angola in 1670. As Christians, Kongolese saw Europeans represented as Jesus, the saints, and the Virgin Mary in religious items. A handful of Italian priests who performed the majority of the sacraments were also European. As she grew older Dona Beatriz became aware of this disparity and it would become important for her, but her earlier companions in the vision were another order of beings.

In Dona Beatriz' day the legend circulated that the first Kongolese to see Europeans thought the Portuguese were riding on whales, and hence they gave them the name *mundele*, derived from the Kikongo word for whale, the only way they could describe their ships. It was their craft and not their skin color that marked them as different, and this is why all Europeans were called by this name and not a variant of *mpembe*, which meant "white."

The color white, *mpembe*, was the color of the Other World in Kongolese symbolism, just as black was the color of This World, and so Dona Beatriz' childish companions were not simply imaginary children but visitors from the Other World, and the child visionary soon acquired a reputation for saintliness.¹⁵

During this time, too, Dona Beatriz began to pay more attention to Christian religious life. Aside from Father Luis in Kibangu the nearest priests to her town were far away in Nkusu, where the Italian Capuchin missionaries had a station. But Christianity in Kongo did not depend on priests or missionaries to thrive, because an active laity took their place. At least once a year, a teacher and a group of students would work their way to all the villages and towns under Kibangu's jurisdiction to conduct classes and ensure that everyone learned the rudiments of Christian religion. They could not perform sacraments, but they could answer questions and provide spiritual help.

¹⁴ Da Caltanisetta, "Viaggio," fol. 16v, d'Attri, "Giornate," p. 79; Mendes, p. 353.

¹⁵ Da Gallo, "Ultimo," fol. 304. For an interpretation of the dream in Kongolese cosmology, see Wyatt MacGaffey, *Religion and Society in Central Africa*, pp. 208–11.

Miguel de Castro, one of Dona Beatriz' relatives and a member of her kanda, was such a teacher but also held an important position in Kibangu, that of royal interpreter and secretary. He was a regular visitor in her town, and came to know her fairly well through her family. At court, he was responsible for the king's correspondence and also for a variety of matters including the introduction of strangers. De Castro could speak Portuguese as well as Kikongo, and wrote in Portuguese, the language of official documents. He, along with a number of other such people, was responsible for teaching noble children to read, write, and speak Portuguese and sometimes Latin. Such education was largely for boys, but noble girls often also received this instruction. The students at de Castro's school also provided him, and other teachers, with an entourage when they traveled about.

Dona Beatriz, however, did not manage to go to school, and although de Castro visited her town, she got not much more of an education than memorizing the critical tenets of the Church and the most important prayers. The basis for learning these was an old catechism, first produced in Portuguese in 1556, translated into Kikongo in 1624, and reedited in 1650. Printed copies or handwritten copies of worn-out printed texts provided the model of instruction.

Teaching was in the form of a dialogue, with the teacher asking questions and students repeating the answers in unison. Children of all statuses and classes would assemble before their master, who introduced the lesson by making the sign of the cross, which the students immediately imitated:

"Kuna nima a kinsinu kia Santa Cruz kutukangila e Nfumuêtu Zambi a Mpungu etu, kua ambeniêtu" (By the sign of the Holy Cross our Lord, our Zambi a Mpungu [Kikongo for God] saves us from our enemies). From here followed lessons on the basics of the faith:

"What is a Christian?"

"One who follows the law of Christ."

Non-Christians were "slaves of the Devil, exiles from Heaven" in this formulation. Then came an explanation of the Holy Cross,

in which more specific instructions were given and examples followed on making the sign of the cross.

This was followed by memorization and a dialogue explication of the major prayers, the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and Hail, Holy Queen (the *Salve Regina*). The catechism went on to cover the articles of the faith, the Ten Commandments, the nature of deadly sins and venial sins, the sacraments of the Church, and finally a lengthy section on proper Christian life.¹⁶

The teachers did a good, thorough job. Countless travelers in Kongo commented on the degree to which the basic elements of the faith were known in the country. Everyone could say the prayers, even in rural areas far from the centers of culture, even in sections of the country that had not seen an ordained priest in anyone's lifetime. Many European priests who visited and worked in Kongo thought of them as sinful, sometimes wondered about their penchant for such things as sacred stones and ancestors' graves, even thought them deep in the clutches of the Devil. But they never doubted that the Kongolese knew at least the outlines of the Faith.

Even in the islands and lands of far-off America, across the ocean, where the civil wars had condemned so many Kongolese to serve as slaves, priests who inquired discovered this fund of Christian knowledge. Even there, in such a distant exile, one still met Kongolese saying the prayers they had been taught as children.¹⁷

During the long periods between visits by teachers, the local

¹⁶ The catechism was first printed in Lisbon, and the second edition, in Rome. A modern edition, with Portuguese, original Kikongo, modernized spelling of Kikongo, and French translation has been edited by François Bontinck and D. Ndembe Nsasi, *Le catéchisme kikongo de 1624: réédition critique* (Brussels, 1978) ch. 1, nos. 1 and 6. I have translated the Kikongo directly into English, since it differs somewhat from the original Portuguese.

¹⁷ On Christian knowledge in Kongo and among Kongolese slaves in America, see John Thornton, "The Development of an African Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1491-1750," *Journal of African History* 25 (1984), and "On the Trail of Voodoo: African Christianity in Africa and the Americas," *The Americas* 44 (1988).

community would assemble on Saturdays and say the rosary, their principal regular religious observation. Typically these would be led by the local elite, such as Dona Beatriz' father. Aside from this, everyone took part in certain holidays. Christians all over the world observed Easter, of course, and it was not neglected in Kongo, nor was the larger season of Advent-Christmas-Epiphany, although it took place in the midst of the rainy season when travel was difficult.

But in Dona Beatriz' Kongo, the biggest and most important holidays were Halloween-All Saints' Day and the day dedicated to Saint James Major, 25 July. Both these days were respected because they had special meaning in Kongo rather than because they had such significance in the round of Christian observance.

Halloween and All Saints' Day together formed a special holiday in Kongo because they represented a merging of ancient Kongolese religious belief with Christianity. Long before Portuguese sailors had delivered the first Christian priests to Kongo in 1491, Kongolese believed that when people died they did not go to some distant underworld or to Heaven. Rather, they remained in spiritual form around the grave where they had been buried. There, they used the powers that residence in the Other World gave them to look out for their still-living descendants. People were attentive to the graves of their ancestors for these souls could help them in daily life, or they could punish them with ill luck and sickness if they were displeased.

These beliefs did not disappear with Christianity but continued despite an occasional priestly reminder that in Christian belief souls go to be judged fit for Heaven or damned to Hell, but do not linger on. Father Marcellino d'Atri, who visited Dona Beatriz' valley during this time, devoted a sermon to the concepts of Heaven and Hell because he knew that his parishioners thought either that "no one died" or that "upon their death, everyone went to another world much more pleasant than this one." This did not imply universal salvation but, rather, that the Other World was both immanent in and superior to This World.¹⁸

Halloween and All Saints' Day provided Kongolese with a good opportunity to pay appropriate respect to their ancestors in a Christian tradition, and it was among the most important holidays in the whole country. On Halloween, all the families assembled and recited the rosary together, as they often did on Saturdays. Then, taking up candles, they formed a great procession, which fanned out to the cemeteries of the area, each family going to the place where its own ancestors were buried. In Kibangu, where the royal city was, the king made a special pilgrimage adorned by the ringing of bells to the graves of past rulers buried at the royal chapel. Sometimes a family's ancestors were buried in a church as it was hallowed ground, although in other instances other spots, such as the crosses erected by priests and blessed by them in the countryside, served as places of meeting and Christian worship. The families then placed the candles in a circle around the graves and again said the rosary. Throughout the rest of the night they alternated between processions and vigils at the graves. When night passed, and All Saints' Day dawned, the worshippers again said the rosary; if a priest was available, they would hear Mass.

All Saints' Day was also the occasion to make major offerings to the Church, although dedicated to the ancestors. The main street of Kibangu's town, for example, was thickly lined with worshippers who offered money gifts, as well as large quantities of food. An altar was erected in the public square decorated with an image of a skeleton with a sickle in one hand and an hourglass in the other. A huge mound of offerings in kind, including chickens, piglets, various legumes, and grains, as well as cloth and tobacco, was piled before it. Such offerings were taken by the staff of the Church or its local representatives as a part of Church income. Whatever misgivings priests may have had about the fate of the dead among their parishioners, they were enthusiastic about this day of worship.¹⁹

If Halloween was the primary religious holiday in Kongo, Saint

¹⁸ D'Atri, "Giornate," p. 129.

¹⁹ This account is based on combined notes of practice in Soyo and Kibangu, in Giuseppe Monari da Modena, in Calogero Piazza (ed.), "La missione del Soyo (1713-16) nelle relazioni inedite di Giuseppe da Mo-

James Major was a military saint, often seen in battle dress and on horseback leading the specifically Iberian version of the crusades.

In Kongo, however, the saint was associated most specifically with King Afonso I (ruled 1509-43), who had overthrown his pagan brother in the name of the Catholic Church with the aid of Saint James. In letters to Portugal shortly after the event, Afonso had described the miracle – challenged for the throne by his pagan brother, Afonso was left with only a handful of followers to resist the forces of his rival. Battle was joined, as the archers on both sides loosed arrows at their enemies.

"We were already covered with a great number of arrows," Afonso wrote, describing the first phase of the battle, "and now they wanted to advance upon us with sword and lance." The hand-to-hand phase, fought with sword and lance, would be the decisive one. Believing they were all but lost, Afonso and his men shouted "Santiago!" invoking Saint James Major. Much to their surprise, "miraculously we saw them turn their backs and run away in which ever way they could." The victory became a rout; "in the end, they lost a great number of men without us losing even one."

Bewildered, Afonso and his supporters "questioned those who had survived the fight, asking them why they had fled." They were told that "when we called upon the Apostle Santiago, they all saw a white cross in the sky and a great number of armored horsemen which so frightened them that they could think of nothing else but to flee."²⁰ Saint James' Day, then, became Kongo's national holiday, and the events of the battle were commemorated in Kongo's coat of arms, adopted in 1512 and still seen in Dona Beatriz' day on official documents, seals, the throne, and the royal regalia.

It was this miraculous event rather than the Iberian saint that Kongolese celebrated on 25 July, which might have been called "Afonso's Day" as far as they were concerned. Since Afonso was

²⁰ Afonso to His People, 1512, in António Brásio (ed.), *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, 1st series, 15 vols. (Lisbon, 1952-88), 1:268 (this letter was prepared in Portugal from a now lost letter written by Afonso ca. 1509).



A Christian burial in eighteenth-century Kongo. (From "Missione in Practica" ca. 1750)

James' Day was a more secular and political holiday. Formally, the day commemorated the patron saint of Spain and Portugal and brought to Kongo by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century. Known as "Matamoros" or "Killer of the Moors" in Iberia, Saint

dena OFM Cap, "L'Italia Francescana 48 (1977): 209-92; 347-73, with pagination of original; and d'Atri, "Giornate," pp. 531-2 (1701). There are present-day reminders of the cult of cemeteries and crosses found in tradition and modern observation: see François Bontinck, "Les croix de bois dans l'ancien royaume de Kongo," *Miscellanea Historiae Pontificiae* 50 (1983), pp. 199-213; and Jean Cuvelier, "Lusansu lua nsi a Kongo," pp. 69-70, which gives a list of a number of these burial grounds still recognizable in the Zaire and Nkisi valleys. Excavations in 1938 by Georges Schellings in one "necropolis" of the early eighteenth century have been carefully studied in J. van den Houte, "De Begraafplaats van Ngongo-Mbata (Neder-Zaire), thesis, Hoger Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis en Oudheidkunde, Gand, 1972-3. They contained gravestones from the Order of Christ and grave goods, including images of saints and crucifixes, dating from the early eighteenth century. A similar excavation was conducted at Pângala-velho in Soyo in 1980 by the Laboratório Nacional de Antropologia (Luanda); Abbranches, *Sobre os Basolongo*, p. 47.

widely regarded as the founder of the Church in Kongo (even though, in fact, his father, João I Nzinga a Nkulu, was the first king to be baptized), the day was also considered something of a birthday for the Church.

People often traveled for Saint James' Day, which was held in the middle of the dry season when traveling was easy. It was also an administrative day, for taxes were due then. Because of this, many went to the royal capital, in this case Kibangu, to celebrate the festivals, which went on for three days. The highlight was a military review since the call-up for taxes often involved the techniques of military mobilization and usually touched the same people. But this was unlike military call-ups, for whole families came, and Dona Beatriz undoubtedly accompanied her family all the way to Kibangu on occasion to witness the festival.

The *nsanga* or military review and dance that highlighted Saint James' Day was a great show of color and pageantry. Men came armed with "sword, scimitar, bows, spears, knobby clubs, battle axes." Some carried shields, a symbol of official rank though of considerably less use, as guns had become more prominent on the battlefield. Many, of course, carried guns, which were amply supplied with powder from the royal storehouses. Guns were often overloaded and constantly being discharged, so that the air was filled with their rattle, while billowing clouds of smoke covered the great public plaza.

Some people came attired in animal skins, wearing special caps decorated with lion's teeth, or with bird feathers in their hair. Others were painted in various colors, in order to seem more terrible.

The king himself then appeared, with a gold necklace around his neck set off with coral beads, silver bracelets, and red velvet slippers on his feet, proudly holding his own shield while being covered all the while by an umbrella. He was surrounded by a cavalcade of officials, musicians, hangers-on, and servants or other worthies. The band struck up martial music and his officials bore a great mass of *mpusu* cloth on the tips of their lances while turning in a circle.

A dozen young women dressed in spotless white linen, faces

proud and solemn, took up places on the sides of this mass, breaking through the cloud of gunsmoke that was set up by musketeers from among the soldiers.

Then, swiftly, the crowd formed into squadrons that faced each other for a half-acted, half-danced mock battle. Lieutenants bearing company colors took their places at the flanks. Muskets cracked, weapons were displayed – first one side advanced, than the other, while the musicians kept up a steady rhythm. Finally, the affair ended with a great banquet for all the soldiers at the king's expense, a sort of payment for the soldiers' services and a renewal of vows that the king retained their loyalty.²¹

Given her own training, the Christian emphasis of the spectacles, and the Christianization of much of the more ancient religion as well as the kind of religious instruction she received, Dona Beatriz naturally considered herself a good Christian, and expressed herself in Christian terms. This Christianity was a fundamental part of religion in Kongo, even if in many places it differed from that of Europe. It would be in Christian terms – but drawn from Kongo's own variety of this tradition – that Dona Beatriz would become a human home for Saint Anthony.

²¹ This passage is based on d'Atri's (pp. 520–1) description of the festivities of 1701.

The Rival Kings

IN NOVEMBER 1695, when Dona Beatriz was eleven years old, Queen Ana Afonso de Leão, still living at Gando a Suka in Bonga, just a few miles from her town, announced that she was organizing a "Concert of Kongo" to attempt to resolve the disputes and win universal acceptance of one man as king. Politically active people, like those in Dona Beatriz' family, followed the events with interest, since contemplating another set of wars like those of 1690-3 was a gloomy prospect. To what degree would the royal candidates and their followers be prepared to put aside their personal ambitions for the common good?

Then, around Christmas of 1695, came the news that King Álvaro X, who had been Dona Beatriz' king virtually all her life, had died at Kibangu. He was promptly succeeded on the misty heights by his brother Pedro, now King Pedro IV. King Pedro was a young man of twenty-four when he came to the throne; he had been just a teenager when fighting alongside his brother in their overthrow of Manuel.

Pedro, too, was interested in the future of Kongo now that he was in a position to advance his family's claims. It was a good time – his long-standing rival Manuel was dead, he had recently defeated the armies of his other main rival, João, and Queen Ana, the self-announced peace mediator, was living within his territory and had once put her prestige behind his brother as king of all Kongo. His optimism was evident in his earliest letters, for he announced himself proudly as "Emperor," rather than king, of Kongo, a switch that reflected the difference in Kikongo between

nitinu, the normal word for king, and *ntotelela*, a term derived from the verb "to unite," implying a larger authority. His titles in the same letters gave some idea of the scope of his ambition, for he styled himself ruler not just of Kongo but also of Angola, Loango, Nzonzo, Ngoyo, Malenba, Ngobela, Makoko, and "the marvelous River Zaire."¹

Most of these states had never been under Kongolese authority, although some had been in royal titles, reflecting largely honorary submissions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Pedro certainly had no hope of recovering even such symbolic authority, for it was enough to hold on to his lands at Kibangu and the Mbidizi valley and perhaps to extend his influence eastward into the Inkisi River basin.

As soon as the *Mvula a nene* (Great Rains), the second of Kongo's two rainy seasons, let up in March and April, the peace negotiations began. Queen Ana's ambassadors were busy inviting other players in the field to send their own representatives to her town at Gando a Suka. She even invited Pedro Kibenga and Al-exio, her sworn enemies who now occupied her former lands, to send ambassadors. She interested the missionaries of the Capuchin order – whose base was at Nkusu in the Inkisi River basin east of Kibangu – in the plan on behalf of the Church. As neutral parties, they were prepared to support her in every way in her aim to reach a peaceful settlement to the disputes that were ruining the country.

Many Mwana Kongo nobles would acknowledge that Queen Ana had the right to convene a meeting to reunite the country. Peacemaker was an appropriate role for an elderly woman, especially since she made no claim to rule on her own. Moreover, she was the senior member and "mother" of the Kinlaza kanda, which she felt was the legitimate ruling line of Kongo.

Pedro, however, was quickly disappointed, for Queen Ana decided to throw her support behind the candidacy of João II of Bula, and the king in Kibangu was not invited to come except to pay homage to his rival. She could not forget that Álvaro had

¹ Da Caltanissetta, "Relatione," fols. 22-22v.

supported the plot of Alexio and Kibenga that killed Manuel and drove her from her home. She knew that Álvaro had even entertained the idea of having her killed, though he eventually balked at such treachery. Despite the king's eventual hospitality in allowing her to stay in Gando a Suka, she did not trust the Agua Rosada brothers, neither Álvaro nor his newly installed brother, Pedro, and had regretted her earlier recognition of their claim.

Queen Ana supported João's claim, though, not so much because she disliked the Agua Rosadas as because he was a member of the Kinlaza kanda. In her youth, over the issue of succession Kongo's ruling kanda had split into three: the Kinkanga a Mvika, the Kinlaza, and the Kimpanzu. This break was a crucial period in Kongo's history; even in the twentieth century people still remembered a proverb that said "Kinkanga, Kimpanzu, Kinlaza makukwa matatu malambila Akongo" (Kinkanga, Kimpanzu, and Kinlaza were three stones on which the Kongolese cooked [or operated]).²

The Kinkanga a Mvika took its name from the Kikongo name of its founder, Pedro II Afonso Nkanga a Mvika, crowned king in 1622. They ruled briefly under Pedro and his son Garcia I, and were driven from power by the Kimpanzu faction in 1631, though Kinkanga a Mvika nobles still held titles. The Kimpanzu faction was led by King Álvaro V Mpanzu a Nimi, and took its name from his own Kikongo given name. In Dona Beatriz' time Kimpanzu partisans claimed that the third branch, the Kinlaza, was descended from illegitimate offspring of the venerable sixteenth-century king Afonso I, while they, in turn, descended from the legitimate line – although, in fact, mid-seventeenth-century documents do not support them.

At the time of the split, the Kinlaza were led by two brothers, Álvaro and Garcia, who were brothers in turn to Queen Ana. Cuvelier, *Nkulima*, p. 73. The reference to three stones is widely used to describe items that come in threes. Cuvelier recorded it in reference to the clan history of the Nkanga at Nkondo, a village near Songolo, either orally or from local manuscripts, around 1927. One should not assume that this modern clan is somehow descended from the ancient Kinkanga, but, rather, that they have appropriated a widely used proverb to match their name.

Álvaro overthrew his Kimpanzu rival and became Álvaro VI in 1696; his brother succeeded him as Garcia II in 1641. In 1657, Garcia was able to smash the last remaining members of the Kinkanga a Mvika branch, so that in Queen Ana's day they were said to have been "put totally to the ground."³ Although Garcia also sought to destroy or absorb his rivals from the Kimpanzu branch, they fled to the rebel province of Soyo, where the counts, who dared to take the ostentatious title of grand princes, allowed them refuge and support. Their strength, even in Dona Beatriz' day, sprang from the connection to Soyo.⁴

Queen Ana, the sister of Álvaro and Garcia, had now become the eldest and most important member of the Kinlaza, and therefore felt she had a right to mediate for her younger cousins and nephews, including João, to settle their disputes.

Of course, her concert never seriously considered potential Kimpanzu candidates. The Kimpanzu equivalent of Queen Ana was another former queen named Suzanna de Nóbrega, settled in on the Atlantic coast in Luvota, a province in southern Soyo, the traditional protector and patron of the Kimpanzu. Like Queen Ana, Queen Suzanna was an informal leader by virtue of her age and her relationship to former kings – she was sister of one, wife of another, and mother of three more. At one point, Kimpanzu hopes were pinned on Manuel, but after his death the leadership had passed to Pedro Constantinho da Silva Kibenga, now officially holding the title of Marquis of Wembo and ruling Nkondo as well. It was an uneasy leadership, however, since Kibenga was only a Kimpanzu on his mother's side, but was descended from the ruling kanda of Soyo, the da Silvas, on his father's side.

In Queen Ana's plan for restoration, Pedro Kibenga was now Queen Ana's deadliest enemy and, given his control of virtually the whole Mbidiizi valley south of Kibangu's territories, also her most powerful one.

In Queen Ana's Kinlaza view of the world, the Agua Rosada

³ APF:SOCC 476, fol. 331, Bernardo da Gallo, "Conto delle villacazione missionali."

⁴ On the formation of these factions, Thornton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, pp. 50–53.

brothers were distinctly less legitimate than her favored followers, though not enemies like the Kimpanzu. The Agua Rosadas had originated from fragments of the royal kanda on the mountain of Kibangu a generation later than the Kinlaza. Their mother was a Kinlaza and thus connected to the queen, but their father, Sebastião Mvemba a Lukeni, was a Kimpanzu, although one who had gotten on the wrong side of the princes of Soyo and had been killed by them.⁵

João's supporters in Bula responded favorably to the queen's overtures, and in March the king led a group from Bula to São Salvador to be officially crowned King of Kongo. Although João's brother and predecessor, Pedro III, had been crowned in the old capital before his own troops destroyed the city nearly twenty years earlier, João himself had not been crowned there. His brief occupation of the ruined city marked his official statement of his intent to accept the crown from all Kongo.

To follow up on this initial step, the Church joined in Queen Ana's project. Father Luca da Caltanisetta, representing the Church's interest in the disputes, left Nkusu on 8 April to deliver letters and handle negotiations with King João, accompanied by ambassadors from the queen and her supporters.

The priest arrived in Lemba in time to celebrate Easter with the king, who had since returned from his coronation visit to São Salvador. João received him courteously in his apartments along with his council. The priest met them as they stood around a white sheet with a beautiful red cloth covering. They were anxious to know the details of the Concert of Kongo. Father Luca greeted them by quoting Scripture: "In whatsoever house or city you enter say first: peace be to this house,"⁶ and then went on to say, "I have followed this advice from the start of my mission in Kongo, first at Soyo, then at Mbamba, Nkondo, Mbata, Mpangu, Nsundi, Bula, Ngando, Bonga, and Nkusu," [and] "all the lords

living in all these places want among all the rulers a holy universal peace, for the common repose of the body and soul." But then, to his surprise, the council interrupted him, saying such things were better discussed at another time.

In fact, it turned out that João's court was divided over the whole issue. Although there were few who did not want to see him accepted as king over all, they did not trust Queen Ana. Others were concerned about the snubbing of Pedro, and bore him some loyalty. Many were worried about João's own leadership qualities. He had been a minor when he succeeded his brother in 1683, and for more than five years had been dominated by his mother, Potencia. He even announced himself in letters as one "who tramples the lion [that is, stands on the lion skin that adorns the front of thrones] in the Kingdom of his mother." When Queen Potencia died, however, his strong-willed sister Elena took her place, since João's health was bad and his behavior erratic.

It was symptomatic of the problems at Bula that João (or Elena, acting through her brother) had required many of his nobles to sign an oath of absolute loyalty to him, declaring that if they were to become traitors, they would "be deprived of all aid of the Divinity and of Mary and the Saints, and all of their merits, and be totally given to the Devil, making him the master of their body and soul."⁷ Other Worldly sanctions rarely held people to loyalty, especially in times like those.

While Father Luca was attempting to reconcile these interests and win acceptance of a general peace, Queen Ana was undermining it. In July, her nephew Daniel led an army across the Mbidiizi and captured Mbanza Mvemba from Kibenga's supporters, killing the marquis, Afonso, and turning the office over to Daniel. Then her favorite cousin and closest supporter, Pedro Valle das Lagrimas, combined with Daniel's troops to launch a surprise night attack on Alexio, the Duke of Mbamba chosen by Manuel when he was king. Valle das Lagrimas' troops entered the mbanza on some bluffs south of the Mbidiizi River near the coast, and cut down all resistance, killing Alexio in the process.

⁵ On the Concert of Kongo, d'Atti, "Giornate," pp. 127-8, Mendes, pp. 353 and 355; on Pedro's descent, APF:SOCCG 576, fol. 355, da Gallo, "Conto delle villacazione missionali...."

⁶ Luke 10:10 (but translating from the Latin of the Vulgate as quoted in da Caltanisetta, "Relazione," fol. 23v).

⁷ Da Caltanisetta, "Relazione," fols. 23-25v, on the negotiations at Bula.

The larger body of Kongolese nobles and people who had followed the Concert of Kongo with hope and interest became disappointed by this turn of events. When Valle das Lagrimas captured Mbanza Mbamba, he burned the body of Alexio as revenge for the latter's treachery against Queen Ana. This dramatic humiliation of his opponent might well have won acceptance from those who thought him wronged, but the act was in fact viewed differently.

When news of the war filtered back to the Mbidizi valley, it came accompanied by elaborated rumor. In the more popular version of the events, Valle das Lagrimas had not just burned Alexio's body, he and his supporters had actually disinterred both Alexio and Afonso, removed the heart and liver, roasted them, and ate them.⁸

This type of action goes beyond simple revenge, for in Kongolese thinking such things as eating people, disinterring the dead, and the like are actions appropriate to people known as *ndokis*. The term might be translated as "witch," although *ndokis* are not entirely like witches of Western folklore. Rather, *ndokis* are selfish and greedy people who will stop at nothing to get what they want. They enlist Otherworldly power that has been garnered by like-minded people and "eat" their victims either literally or symbolically, through supernaturally caused disease or induced misfortune. A *loka*, or curse, is the origin of these types of diseases or misfortunes as, indeed, the word *ndoki* is formed from the root *loka*.

The power to carry out a curse was *kindoki*, related linguistically both to *loka* and *ndoki*. But using this power was not necessarily bad; indeed, it might be good. The power of *kindoki* was simply the gift of possessing the ability to operate with the assistance of the Other World, and if it was done for good aims, generously, it was a positive virtue indeed. Thus, the power to curse was conversely also a power to protect, and so there could be good

and bad *kindoki*, depending on what ends the power to curse was used.⁹

This logic was also applied to rulers on the earthly plane, as for them the power to kill (or, by extension, exercise any of the coercive power of state) was analogous to the power to curse. If the power was exercised unselfishly and in the interest of the community, then it was positive; if for selfish ends, it was negative in the same way that bad *kindoki* was. Francisco de Menezes Nkanka Makaya, son of King António I and nephew of the queen, put it very well once when he was asked why he, as a likely candidate for the crown, did not take up his office. He argued that the common people would never accept him. "Why should we have a king who lives so differently from how we do and our ancestors?" This diversity, he explained, was because he had lived a long time in Luanda after being captured by Portuguese forces at the battle of Mbvila, "This one," they would say, "wears a shirt, coat, shoes, sleeps under sheets and eats in the manner of the whites, and does as they do." More to the point, though, it was not just in the matter of clothes that he was different, but in outlook, for, he argued, he was like the Portuguese, accustomed "to *bingar* [go around and beg or demand things] and eat by himself. Therefore," the people might say, "how can we put up with laws that are so different from ours, as we are accustomed to eat everything we have in one day, without leaving anything for tomorrow." Dom Francisco contended, in fact, that a true king should use his power in the interests of the people and not selfishly to increase his wealth, as people perceived the Portuguese were doing in Angola.¹⁰

Ndokis who used the power to curse for selfish ends in private

⁹ On the use of the term *kindoki*, see Bockie, *Death and the Invisible Powers*, pp. 43-57, using his own knowledge and citing a number of other ethnographies written by Kongolese. Most relate to the northern and eastern regions of the Kikongo-speaking zone and not to Kongo proper, but they seem appropriate in this area.

¹⁰ D'Attri, "Giornate," p. 438; for a modern view, based on fieldwork, and twentieth-century Kongolese testimony connecting *kindoki* and royal power, see MacCaffrey, *Religion and Society*, pp. 135-68.

⁸ On the facts of the campaign, d'Attri, "Giornate," pp. 138-9; da Calanissetta, "Relazione," fol. 26v; on the elaborated rumors, Mendes, p. 353.

life were bad enough, but when kindoki was combined with political power, and both were wedded to selfishness, the combination was particularly dangerous, as, indeed, was the implication of the rumors about Pedro Valle das Lagrimas. Although these rumors were not true, they reflected popular belief about the higher reaches of the nobility in Kongo, that their greed knew no limits and would ruin the country.

Yet another piece of news confirmed suspicions that unprincipled people were running the country. The queen decided not to occupy Mbanza Mbamba, and recalled Pedro Valle das Lagrimas back to her, over his protests. As a result, the duchy fell into the hands of an adventurer of the Kinlaza kanda named Pedro Mpanzu a Mvemba. After the overthrow of the queen's forces in the Mbidi valley in 1692-3, Pedro had withdrawn to the south, to the Marquisate of Mbumbé, where he had occupied and fortified a flat-topped mountain. From this impregnable fortress, he raided far and wide, ostensibly in the name of continuing the queen's war against Manuel and Kibenga. But much of his raiding was against travelers who happened along the road to Luanda, which passed beneath his mountain. Throughout 1694 he had raided the caravans of slaves who had been taken when Manuel was attacked and were bound for Luanda, the main port of Portugal's colony of Angola, eventually to be exported to Brazil.

In one raid, Pedro had captured the carriers of a Capuchin priest, Father Marcellino d'Atri, and in the affair the priest had received a wound on his hand – a serious breach of the peace because priests were supposed to be neutral and their followers respected. Although Pedro restored the priest's goods, the idea that he was as much a bandit as a partisan of the queen stuck and was known in Kibangu.¹¹

These developments convinced Pedro IV that he would have to make himself King of Kongo if he expected to make good on any claims. Therefore he decided to go to be crowned king in São Salvador, especially as João had done so earlier in the year. Like

¹¹ On Pedro Mpanzu a Mvemba in 1693, d'Atri, "Giornate," pp. 75-90, 104; da Calanisseta, "Relazione," fol. 16v; on his brief installation as Duke of Mbamba, d'Atri, "Giornate," pp. 138-9.

João and his brother Álvaro X before him, Pedro had not been crowned in the capital, but only acclaimed on his mountaintop. Coronation at the capital was essential to a serious claim to rule the country. The city's ruins, choked with weeds and overgrown with trees, contained the royal palace, the cathedral – dedicated to Jesus the Holy Savior in 1548 – and a dozen lesser churches and chapels, including a small one built on the occasion of the baptism of João I, the first Christian king, in 1491.

Since a coronation needed a priest, Pedro browbeat Father Luis, his personal chaplain, to perform the ceremony. But Father Luis came under protest, maintaining that he did not even know the proper rite. His protests were ignored and he was ordered to accompany the royal train.

The people of the Mbidi valley, including twelve-year-old Dona Beatriz, were particularly involved in the coronation. Pedro ordered that the way from Kibangu to São Salvador be cleared for his train to pass. A great multitude of people started out first, clearing and widening the road leading from Pedro's mountain fortress to the capital.

Half a century earlier, the city and the surrounding countryside had held nearly 100,000 people, virtually all of whom fled when the city was abandoned in 1678. But they had left a strange legacy for Pedro's reoccupation party: an abundance of fruit trees across the wilderness. In the months after the city was abandoned, great herds of elephants had been drawn there to feast upon its thousands of banana trees, and had trampled down the walls of the fairly flimsy housing of the ordinary people. Now citrus, banana, sapodilla, *lamba-lamba*, and other fruit trees, no longer carefully watched or cultivated, had gone wild and tangled the city and the surrounding hills, forming a strange reminder of the dense population that had once lived there. Nearly twenty years had allowed some tropical species full growth even in the once grand public squares and right through the walls of stone buildings of the palace and churches.

As one approached São Salvador from the east, it appeared an impressive site even in ruins. It sat perched on the edge of 200- to 300-foot-high cliffs that overlooked the Luezi River. All along

the edge of the cliffs were the remains of the great city wall – some 20 feet high and composed of dressed hematite stone with limestone mortar. One could still make out the curious round tower in the wall nearest the east side, from which, legend said, the kings had proclaimed law to the people. From a vantage point on the hills across the river one could locate the cathedral, all its walls standing, although its roof, formerly of thatch, was long gone.

Climbing up the steep hillsides to the top brought one into the city. Two great stone-walled enclosures, each a mile in circumference, encircled what had once been the royal compound, inside were the remains of the palace as well as a separate district for the Portuguese who once resided there. Between these two sets of walls, first erected by King Afonso in the 1510s and repaired by Garcia II in the 1640s, stood the great plaza and next to it, the largest church and former cathedral.

Pedro's advance guard decided to clear this square as completely as they could. They felled trees, cleared undergrowth, and cleaned the great squares and ruined buildings. Under the guidance of those who were old enough to remember the geography of the city before its destruction and abandonment, the ruined churches were cleared and the tombs of the old kings revealed. The Church of São Miguel, one of the oldest, held the remains of the great Afonso and some of the kings who ruled after him. Although grass was cleared away, the trees that had encroached on the walls and the altar were not cut down. After a lot of time spent discussing and arguing about the location of old familiar sites, these were discovered and excavated.

The elderly guides, many of them proud Knights of the Kongolese Order of Christ, had not ventured the few miles westward from the Mbidizi to see the old capital since its destruction, and their rediscovery was painful, both because its former glory could still be fathomed in the imagination, and because its present ruins testified to how far the country had traveled since then. Many cried bitter tears to see their beloved city in such a state, some said "they would give money to have the city the way it once was."

Once this sad archeology was completed enough to conduct a ceremony, the coronation began on 2 August. On the great plaza before the cathedral, where generations of Kings of Kongo had been crowned in the past, Pedro and his Vicar General participated in the ritual. Those same old nobles who remembered the geography of the city also reconstructed the rites of coronation for Father Luis, and walked him through it.

It started with the nsanga – in which titled nobles displayed their expertise with the sword and battleax, and the rank and file filled the air with musket smoke as a mock battle was waged by his soldiers. Dona Beatriz' kinsman Miguel de Castro, acting in his capacity as Secretary Major, then read out a formal statement of the history and laws of the country, a major feature of coronations or Saint James' Day festivities.

"*Muna ntele* – in the beginning, there was a noble lady named Ne Lukeni, who lived at Kwimba, north across the River Zaire," he began, referring to the distant ancient time, probably the late fourteenth century, when there was no Kongo and its future ruler lived in a small state across the Zaire River from João's present domains in Bula.

"She wished to cross the river at a ferry, and became impatient at having to wait for so long, and so she began to insist to the boatman that he take her first, ahead of others. She was pregnant and demanded attention," de Castro continued.

"Are you perhaps the queen, or the mother of the king, that you don't want to wait patiently?" the boatman responded. "Wait until the others have passed, and then you too can go."

Ne Lukeni was very angry by this reply and flew into a rage at the boatman, and she went to her son, named Ntinu Lukeni, and told him all that had happened. Ntinu Lukeni, seeing how his mother was so troubled and agitated, consoled her by replying, "Go my dear mother, do not worry yourself, we will fix everything. Have you been called queen or mother of a king? Very well. You can be at least mother of a king, if not a queen, and I will be king, but not without a kingdom."

"Ntinu Lukeni left his homeland," the Secretary Major continued, "taking Ne Lukeni with him and crossed the Zaire. Having reached the shore of Kongo, he began to fight with the people of

the land. He went to the Mount Vunda, or São Salvador today, drained a lake which he found there, and built a royal house for him to live in. In this way he easily conquered the two kingdoms of Kongo and Angola. Then he sent his sister Ne Nkenge, to Angola and ruled Kongo himself, appointing governors to the provinces."

De Castro went on from this founding story to detail the laws of the country, implicitly linking them with the history of the founders of the state. The tale, in some variants, had been a part of coronation stories for more than half a century, and was a history that emphasized royal power and authority.

The arbitrary nature of the conquest, the violent seizure of power, the appointment of provincial rulers – all these were the hallmarks of the highly centralized Kingdom of Kongo of days past. At this stage, the story was intended to justify these matters to King Pedro's subjects, and to reinforce the point that in his own lands, at least, Pedro could still be the court of last resort, that he could appoint and dismiss his officials, demand taxes and military service, without entertaining any discussion. But as everyone present knew, such power was exercised only as the ruler of Kibangu among his much more limited group of subjects, and not more widely as the King of Kongo.

Guided by his senior councillor, the Marquis of Vunda, Pedro went to the Vicar General and received his crown, a cap something like a Turkish fez, called *mpu* in Kikongo. The royal crown was very skillfully made and decorated with Kongo's coat of arms – five mailed arms, each bearing a sword, arranged on a silver background. The coat of arms dated to 1512 and reflected Kongo's earliest political miracle, when King Afonso I had defeated his brother in a civil war through the aid of a blinding vision of Saint James that was celebrated every Saint James Day.

Pedro IV then sat upon his throne before the whole people, who instantly fell to their knees bowing in deep reverence. So great was their respect for the throne itself, that the people were bowing to it as much as to its occupant. Pedro sat for some time, drinking in the feeling of power and majesty that the earlier kings had enjoyed.

But the glory of the moment was short-lived. The very next day nervous messengers brought word that João II had heard of Pedro's daring occupation of the city, and was preparing an army to attack him. The king did not feel up to the showdown, and quickly ordered the city abandoned. The common people, who had labored to clear the city and provided his audience, were sent home; the retainers and the king moved off the next morning to abandon the city, and two days later were back at Kibangu.¹²

If the reoccupation of São Salvador had given King Pedro some feelings of royal splendor, these had been lost on Queen Ana, who was busy advancing the Kinlaza agenda. On 3 September, her armies led by António de Leão Mpanzu Kivangi – son of the late King Álvaro VIII of Kongo – Garcia Makunga, and a nephew, Dom Álvaro, hammered into Nkondo and besieged Pedro Kibenga. Thanks to a "stratagem of war" Kibenga avoided the fate of his other allies, Alexio and Afonso, who had been killed. He managed to flee after pillaging the church in Nkondo of some thirty-four trunks and many boxes of goods, and with this train managed to make his way north to Bula, where he sought asylum with King João.

But the powers in Bula were unable to deal with Kibenga any more than they could deal with Queen Ana's overtures, and he was sent away. Eventually he made his way to Kibangu and

¹² On the occupation, d'Altri, "Giornate," pp. 139–42. The geography of the city is reconstructed from Pigafetta's account of the 1580, and several nineteenth-century descriptions of the ruins; cf. Filippo Pigafetta, *Relazione del Reame di Congo et delle circoscrizioni contrade, tratta dalla scritti e ragionamenti di Odoardo Lopez, Portoghese* (Rome, 1591, facsimile ed. Rosa Capelens with Portuguese translation, Lisbon, 1949–51), p. 40. Modern edition *Relazione del Reame di Congo* (ed. Giorgio Raimondo Cardona, Milano, 1978), with original pagination marked, also marked in the French translation of Willy Bal, *Description du Royaume de Congo et des Contées Environnantes par Filippo Pigafetta et Duarte Lopes* (Louvain, 1963); Adolph Bastian, *Ein Besuch in San Salvador der Hauptstadt der Königreichs Congo* (Bremen, 1859), pp. 122–3; W. Holman Bentley, *Pioneering on the Congo* (London, 1914), pp. 139–41. The coronation story is slightly reworded from the version recorded by Bernardo da Gallo and written down in 1710. The original Italian is published in Calogero Piazza, "Alcuni tradizioni orale nel Regno de Congo," *Annali Lateranensi* 34 (1973): 237–59.

threw himself at the mercy of King Pedro. Pedro, who had no reason to be happy with Queen Ana, accepted Kibenga as a refugee and began heaping honors on him. He proclaimed him Captain General of Kongo, and allowed him and many of his kinsmen to build a separate camp some three miles outside King Pedro's city on Kibangu.

Since Queen Ana reoccupied her old capital of Nkondo, making the commander Garcia Makunga Marquis of Wembo, she was no longer to be counted in Pedro's stretch of the Mbidizi valley, and her opinion could be ignored. But Queen Ana was definitely angry that Pedro had thwarted her revenge on Kibenga, and placed a blockade on the roads leading to Kibangu. Although it was a largely symbolic gesture to indicate her displeasure, the queen was now in an excellent position, for once again she controlled the great Mbidizi provinces of Mbanba, Mpenba, and Wembo.

The queen pressed her advantages further, and early in 1697 her forces had advanced into Wandu, southward along the Lukunga River from her capital in Nkondo. Although the mbanza, or capital, fell to her hands and was granted to Dom Clemente, the old count who had been appointed by Kibenga refused to surrender and withdrew southward, fortifying himself in the steep mountains along the gorges of the river.

At the same time she was utilizing her army to extend her power, Queen Ana continued to speak of peace. In November she began a systematic campaign to placate Soyo. Her followers reviewed the survivors of Valle das Lagrimas' attack on Mbanba and located those connected to Soyo. Alexio had married a wife from Soyo's elite, and his daughter was returned to her maternal relatives. Other highborn Soyolese were located and many promises made, in the hopes of moving the princes to be more supportive of the Kinlaza.

Antônio III Bareto da Silva de Castro, Prince of Soyo, had seized power earlier that year. When electors called a meeting to resolve disputes over the succession, Antônio brought a pistol with him and coolly shot his rival in the midst of the gathering. He was not particularly moved by the display of friendship from Queen Ana – being as thoroughly cynical as she was – although

he did accept the returned prisoners. He did not, however, withdraw his support from the remaining Kimpanzu led by Queen Suzanna in his domains at Luvota.¹³

The situation on the Mbidizi and at São Salvador had come to a standstill, and Pedro now turned his attention eastward, where the rivalries of kingship were less. East of Kibangu the highlands were deeply cut by the valley of the Lefunde River, one of the Mbidizi's cousins, and beyond this deep valley was a broad, high tableland coursed by the Inkisi River and its many tributaries.

The Inkisi flowed northward into the Zaire River and this highly populated region was a critical part of Kongo. Long before, much of the region had been under the fabled "Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza," an ancient state whose territories had been absorbed into Kongo in the sixteenth century.

It was famous now, as it had been for generations, as a region where huge quantities of cloth were made, something on the order of one hundred thousand yards a year solely for export. Iron deposits also abounded, so that the area was a manufacturing heartland for Kongo. The people were reputed to be industrious, hardworking, and deeply divided politically. Pedro's interest in maximizing his control in this wealthy area would certainly bolster his position against the queen and João.

Three Kongolese provinces dominated the valley. In the north, there was the Duchy of Nsundi, once the appanage of the heir apparent to the Kongo throne. The great King Afonso I had governed the province when he was first baptized, and for that reason Nsundians sometimes claimed their province was the real birthplace of the Kongolese Church. In 1668, the Kimpanzu king Alvaro VII had placed a member of his kanda in the ducal seat, and in the confusing civil war that followed those days, no one had successfully recalled him and he remained in hereditary control. As a result, a Kimpanzu line of dukes controlled Nsundi – nominally loyal to the Kingdom of Kongo but not to any of the

¹³ On the peace entreaties, da Calanissetta, "Relatione," fols. 28v–29; on Antonio III Bareto's succession, Antonio Gradisa da Zucchelli, *Relazione del Viaggio e Missione di Congo* (Venice, 1712), 225; da Lucca, pp. 228–9.

kings who had tried to rule since then. By this time Nsundi was a regional power and was expanding southward in a period vaguely remembered later as being dominated by a founder figure called Ne Kiangala.¹⁴

South of Nsundi was the smaller Marquisate of Mpangu. Like Nsundi, it had fallen under the control of a line of marquises who recognized the Kingdom of Kongo but not its kings. In the 1690s, though, this line was divided into rival kandas, and Nsundi had intervened in the struggle to extend its influence southward.

Pedro's interests in the Inkisi basin were not focused on those northern states, whose fates he could not control and whose loyalty was strictly nominal. Rather, he hoped for more influence in the Duchy of Mbata, whose lands lay directly east of Kibangu. Mbata was an ancient province, an independent kingdom even before the rise of Kongo. In those days of the fourteenth century, Mbata had joined Kongo voluntarily, and the dukes had the nominal right to assist in choosing Kongolese kings. Rule of Mbata had always been hereditary, the kings of Kongo exercising no direct appointment powers, and had been held since ancient times by the Nsaku Lau kanda. Under Kongo's auspices, in the sixteenth century Mbata had conquered huge territories to its east, including the famous Seven Kingdoms.

When Kongo's civil war broke out, the rulers of Mbata were not as directly affected as other provinces, since they had always been under the control of the Nsaku Lau. But in the 1690s, the open succession promoted by the absence of a royal influence had led to a split. In March 1696, while Queen Ana was organizing the Concert of Kongo, the split had led to a war between Miguel

¹⁴ The tradition of Ne Kiangala was recalled in the early twentieth century by the Kiangala Masumpu kanda. The version printed by Cuvelier in *Nkutamua*, p. 5, recalls that Ne Kiangala fought a war with Mpangu and Mbata around 1700, and then goes on with some statements about Ne Kiangala and his thirteen crowns while locating modern kandas in their villages. The use of a date is remarkable in traditions, and may have come from the original text, or perhaps from the editorial hand of Cuvelier, who was, after all, knowledgeable about the documentary sources used here.

Kilau and Miguel Ngoma Mpasí. The two dukes fought indecisively for most of the dry season, and in the end managed to split the duchy in half, with Miguel Kilau taking the western districts and Miguel Ngoma Mpasí taking the eastern ones.

Pedro put his support behind Miguel Kilau and the eastern section, although not committing his army wholly to the effort. The interests in the east now became of greater import in Kibangu, for Pedro found there a more satisfying theater of operations, if for no other reason than it took him from the larger and more threatening situation to his west.

The long string of events in 1696 had radically changed the prospects for peace, to the extent that Father Lucada Caltanissetta, who had sought to use the opportunity to help bring peace to Kongo, decided in October that the peace plan was thoroughly dead, and sadly returned to the Capuchin hospice in Nkusu. The priest was convinced now that while everyone wanted to restore Kongo, everyone also only wanted a restored kingdom of their own liking.¹⁵

A twelve-year-old girl living in the Mbidizi valley might well have drawn strong impressions from all this – the restoration of the capital, the grandeur of the old city and its present ruin, the sadness in the old men's voices and their faces, and the fear of attack that caused its abandonment had its impact. So, too, did the increasing belief that true restoration could not take place while evil and selfish people, people possibly dealing in the deadly trade of the ndokis, were making the decisions. Dona Beatriz was not alone in starting to think that it would require more than simply business as usual to make their world whole again.

As Dona Beatriz grew older her interest and abilities in the spiritual side of life and its social consequences increased. It became obvious that she was specially gifted and could be an *nganga*, a medium to the Other World. Nganga derives from a Kikongo root that means "knowledge" or "skill," but specifically the kind of

¹⁵ Da Caltanissetta, "Relazione," fol. 29.

skill that applies to religious matters. Catholic priests were called *ngangas*, as were many people who claimed they could access knowledge and seek assistance from the Other World. Although a Catholic priest received his title through study and training, others normally had to show some demonstrable ability to contact the Other World to be acknowledged as a *nganga*.

Ngangas were possessors of *kindoki*, which gave them many means of contacting the Other World – they could be diviners who read the patterns made by throwing stones or tossed-up strings, or they could interpret dreams that they or other people had. They might see visions or hear voices, all of which were means the Other World used to communicate with This World. *Ngangas* could also be possessed by beings from the Other World. A possessed *nganga*, such as *nganga ngombo*, would go into a trance, either through taking special drugs or, more commonly, through various forms of hypnosis induced by drumming, dancing, or simply rhythmic chanting and hand clapping. Once this state was achieved, some being from the Other World would enter the *nganga's* head, and then use his or her vocal cords to speak. In this way, ordinary people without special gifts could hear the words of those in the Other World. They could ask questions of the spirit and receive answers. They could be advised of the cause of sickness or misfortune, and of appropriate steps necessary to address the problems.

Dona Beatriz began her initiation as an *nganga* when still quite young. She entered a particular category of this office called *nganga marinada*, whose special tasks were to address social problems as much as individual ones. Because it was socially oriented and served the common good, this office was much respected, whereas those offices that dealt more with personal problems were inclined to be suspect. Individualism was likely to be accompanied by greed, the prime ingredient in motivating *ndokis*. The *nganga's* work typically involved helping people with problems that could have origins in the Other World, often on a fee-for-service basis. People who had problems with sickness, bad luck, or economic misfortune went to a *nganga*, such as a *nganga*

ngombo, and asked spiritual entities from the Other World to identify the cause of the problem. Sometimes the Otherworldly entities would suggest that the client had offended some ancestor or broken some taboo established by a *nkita*, a guardian deity of the land, which might be identified with an ancient spirit, a Christian saint, or Guardian Angel. Often, too, they would name another person or people who were working bad *kindoki*, in the form of *lokas*, or curses on them because of jealousy, greed, or anger. This might be done intentionally by *ndokis*, or unintentionally by people who harbored negative feelings. Once the source of cursing was identified, the *ngangas* could guide their clients in taking steps to address the problem, perhaps bringing the *ndoki* to trial, or rectifying the cause of strife or tension between people or families.

Dona Beatriz may have done some of this sort of work, but she was much more strongly drawn to the social aspects of the same set of beliefs, perhaps because her upper-class background gave her a higher awareness of politics and of social problems. Social mediation was similar to the individual mediation that *ngangas* practiced on behalf of their clients. The health, luck, or economic success or failure of a community were investigated in the same way as those of an individual, and often the same sorts of problems were identified – collective violation of a taboo, offending some common ancestor or perhaps a *nkita* like *Lusunzi*, guardian of *Kibangu* and its neighborhood. Alternatively, a *nganga* might use his or her own *kindoki* to identify sources of hostile *kindoki*, often coming from within the community itself.

One remedy for this sort of social *kindoki* was a ceremony called *mbumba kindonga*. After consulting with the Other World, an *nganga* might determine that bickering, social strife, or intercommunal jealousy had created a generalized distress for the community. Guided by the *nganga* and advice from the Other World, the community would have a cathartic meeting in which old jealousies were aired and unspoken anger released, culminating in a decision literally to bury these dissensions and start anew. As a symbol of renewed harmony, each household would

take some personal item from among its possessions, and bury it along with items from all the others in a sort of grave, the *mbumba kindonga*.

Dona Beatriz, as a *nganga marinda*, was involved with another social remedy called the Kimpasi society. The word *kimpasi* means "suffering" in Kikongo, and an important motive for forming one was a feeling that a community was suffering. There were chapters of the Kimpasi society throughout Kongo, but there was no central direction to it, so that each chapter was independent. For all the local independence, though, there was a certain feeling of solidarity between all initiates into the society. A community or group of communities suffering from calamities and problems would call on some *ngangas*, perhaps an *nganga ngombo*, perhaps an *nganga marinda*, to organize the society for their community.

The founders built a large enclosure in an uninhabited area, often in woods or in a wild area – for such places were on the edge of the Other World and far from the troubles or comforts of This World. A large mound was constructed in the middle of a palisade of trees or logs, called the "Walls of the King of Kongo," around the enclosure, circled by a ditch. Special medicinal plants were planted along the inner walls of the enclosure along with thorns and other quick-growing hedges, both to provide some security and to supply special needs of the group.

Then an altar was erected on the top of the mound, with steps leading up to it. In the middle of the altar the builders placed a cross, which was simultaneously an invocation of Christianity and a marker symbolizing the junction of This World and the Other World common to the whole Kikongo-speaking world, both Christian and non-Christian. To stress the Christian connection, Kongolese Kimpasi chapters also placed such specifically ecclesiastical goods as censers and aspirators on the altar. Two *kitekes* – statues in human form that had been invested with the power to "see" wrongdoers, *ndokis*, the jealous, the greedy, or the cruel – flanked the cross. The *kitekes* were surrounded by other empowering items, such as claws of predators to catch wrongdoers symbolically, horns of black (for This World) and red

(for the boundary between worlds), and animal tails, like the *msewa*, or buffalo tail, that symbolized power.

Initiates were then chosen from the community, often young people just entering adolescence, as Dona Beatriz was when she was first initiated. They came to the gate of the enclosure, and were then tied up with a thin string by the *nganga* and the *nganga's* assistants. As the bonds were tied on and redoubled over the initiates' bodies, they gradually lost consciousness, and eventually fell into a deep trance – a catatonic state that people believed was death. Now apparently dead, the initiates were carried inside the enclosure for their initiation.

Once inside, the dead were revived through careful treatment. But as they revived they were aware that they were no longer the same people. Their bodies had been possessed by a *nkita* which worked through them. This possession was not exactly identical to that of the *ngangas*, which was total but transitory because initiates retained much of their own personality. *Nkita* possession was for the rest of their lives. *Nkitas* both calmed the sources of *kindoki*, the troubling power that disturbed the community, and enabled the initiates to repel that type of force.

The initiates remained in the Kimpasi enclosure for some time – houses were built for them in the rear of the compound, and they received secret instructions in occult knowledge. They were taught a new language, like Kikongo, but with subtle changes in grammar and vocabulary which made it sound strange and not always intelligible. They were also required to swear a solemn oath of secrecy – that they would not reveal their occult knowledge, or the location of the Kimpasi enclosure to anyone, and that they would defend the enclosure from all intruders. The rest of the community was warned not to approach the Kimpasi on pain of death.

The rebirth gave them a new identity; as an indication of this new identity, the initiates were said to be exempt from the taboos against incest because their old relatives were in effect no longer their own. At the end of the process they were given a beaded belt to wear around either their wrist or their waist, then sent home. Although they were no longer physically at the Kimpasi,

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they remained important in their communities, above the law and sometimes feared by their neighbors by virtue of the knowledge they had gained in the Kimpasi society.¹⁶ Dona Beatriz came to share in their vision and their lore.

¹⁶ In reconstructing Beatriz' involvement as a *nganga*, one starts with her own story in da Gallo, "Ultime," fol. 304. Contemporary accounts of the Kimpasi are found in d'Atti, "Giornate," pp. 408-12, 442; da Caltanissetta, "Relazione," fols. 69v-70v, 71 for physical layouts. For the religious explanation of the event, the only contemporary sources are in da Gallo, "Ultime." Useful material from somewhat earlier (1650-60), probably applicable for this period, is found in Girolamo da Montesarchio, "Viaggio al Congo," in Calogero Piazza (ed.), *La Prefettura Apostolica del Congo alla metà del XVII secolo*, fols. 61v-62, and Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, *Istoria Descrizione de' tre regni Congo, Matamba ed Angola* (Bologna, 1687), ¶85-6. This interpretation, including an expanded interpretation of the seventeenth-century sources, is buttressed by some modern works, using sources first of the early twentieth century, and then more recent fieldwork from the 1960s; see MacGaffey, *Religion and Society in Central Africa*, pp. 74-8.

WHILE DONA BEATRIZ was undergoing initiation into the Kimpasi society, the Italian Capuchins established a hospice in Kibangu. They had a hospice at the village of Mbambalelo in the Marquisate of Nkusu, some forty miles east of Kibangu across the deep canyon of the Lefunde River, and only occasionally visited the Kibangu region.

It was politics and not religious devotion that brought the Capuchins to Kibangu. At the start of 1698, King Pedro received a letter from Garcia Makunga - who held the title of Marquis of Wembo for Queen Ana - that they would like to recommence the Concert of Kongo. The queen had decided not to support João any longer and was now proposing the coronation of another of her Kinlaza relatives, António de Leão Mpanzu Kivangi, who, as a son of King Álvaro VIII (who ruled briefly in 1668) was eligible for the office.

King Pedro was greatly disturbed by this development, which would put another barrier in his way to full acceptance, and decided he needed to take direct action of his own. He calculated that whatever hopes he might have would probably rest on getting Capuchin support, since he had been a witness to the effectiveness of Father Luca da Caltanissetta in the last Concert.

Therefore, King Pedro sent a big army under his new Captain General, Pedro Constantinho da Silva Kibenga, eastward into Nkusu, attacked the Capuchin hospice, and seized its goods and

people, carrying them back to Kibangu. At the time, all the priests were out on mission and were therefore absent when the army arrived. They would have to come to Pedro if they wished to recover their goods.

Pedro's hopes of gaining wider recognition as king were bolstered by news that reached Kibangu in late May that King João, his rival in Bula, had died and had been succeeded by his sister Elena. It seemed likely that she could not hold formal power, and the tensions between her supporters and those leaning more toward King Pedro were likely to tear Bula apart. Moreover, the Duke of Nsundi, Álvaro Afonso de Santa Maria Maior, had taken the opportunity to attack Bula, perhaps hoping to extend his own virtually independent province's power westward along the Zaire River.

On 9 July Father Marcellino d'Atri arrived at Kibangu to negotiate the return of the goods from Nkusu and to deal with the king. King Pedro was elated that the priest had come to his mountain, but he soon learned that the Capuchins would have their own irksome demands to make, to the detriment of his prestige.

Father Marcellino wasted no time in asserting what he felt were the Church's prerequisites. Finding the quarters offered him by the king's representative who received him inadequate, Father Marcellino pointedly stayed with a secular priest from Portuguese Angola named Father Gaspar Ferreira. Father Gaspar and his assistant, Manuel Rodrigues, were in Kibangu on a commercial venture, and Father Marcellino knew him personally from a visit the Capuchin had made to Angola earlier. That evening, the two priests conferred, and Father Marcellino was particularly anxious to know how Pedro treated the clergy in his court. He asked Father Gaspar how the king had received him on his first arrival.

"I was introduced into the private audience chamber," Father Gaspar related, "and found him seated on his royal throne with a carpet underneath his feet, wearing a cloak of black Baietta, beneath an umbrella held by a nobleman. He approached me with his arms outstretched," he continued, "but never offered me a

seat, and I remained standing." Secular priests received relatively little special respect at court, for as Father Luis de Mendonça, who had served at Kibangu for a number of years, would later relate, they were treated by the kings as "slaves and servants" made to stand in the royal presence and then ignored.

Father Marcellino was not pleased to hear this. "With me, he will have to do differently, if he wishes to see me tomorrow."

Pedro kept the priests waiting for a long time, finally sending them a messenger around noon to tell them he would see them "at dawn." This dawn, Father Marcellino learned, was the special dawn of misty Kibangu, defined to be whatever time of day the sun finally broke through the clouds. At last, a lesser nobleman from the court came and conducted him to the first courtyard of the palace.

Pedro's palace, like all respectable palaces in Kongo, was not a single large building but a complex of buildings arranged within three concentric circular walls, the outer one of which might be as long as two or three miles in circumference. A courtyard bounded by the residences and buildings of various royal officials and servants lay just within the entrance to each of the walls. The courtyards were aligned with the main entrance, so that one had to pass three such courtyards to reach the king's private residence and his private audience chamber housed in a separate building. One's status on the palace staff depended on where one resided, the lowest officials being in the outside circle, and the highest in the interior.

Once Father Marcellino arrived at the outer courtyard, he told his guide, "Go and tell the king that I am in the first courtyard, and will receive him here."

"This cannot be," the guide replied, recognizing that for the king to come to the priest in his outer courtyard would place the priest in a higher position than if he were received in the inner enclosure. "It is not customary."

Here Father Marcellino decided to cite history. "How is it not customary to do so?" he exclaimed. "The first time our Fathers arrived in the country, the kings customarily came out to meet

the missionaries on the road." Such an action, of course, had the effect of giving the missionaries higher status than the kings themselves.

"Not only has this not been done, but he will not even come out to meet me in his own palace, after having given me a house so shabby and dirty that I had to stay with Dom Gaspar."

The Capuchins had been able to claim this high prestige for more than half a century thanks to the politics that had brought them to Kongo in the first place. These politics represented a complicated compromise between Kongo, Portugal, and the Vatican over control of the clergy in Kongo. In the days of King Afonso in the sixteenth century the king of Portugal had tried to use the Church in Kongo as a means to gain political leverage. Although in 1521 Afonso had gotten Rome to elevate his son Henrique as bishop, it had not given Kongo an independent church. Again, in 1596, when King Álvaro II had won Vatican approval for Kongo to have its own bishop at a cathedral in São Salvador, the crown of Portugal had managed to squeeze the right to nominate the bishops of the See of Congo and Angola from the Vatican.

Interminable struggles over the appointment of clergy and control of the bishops in the early seventeenth century finally led to a compromise. While Kongo would not have the right to choose the bishops who now resided in Portuguese Angola and were very reluctant to ordain any Kongolese priests, the Vatican sent missionaries to Kongo to perform the sacraments. These missionaries were to be Capuchins from Italy, a "neutral" European country that would not damage either Kongo's or Portugal's place in international relations. Since Kongo already had a parish organization, the Capuchins established separate hospices and were not allowed to perform the sacraments within five leagues of any practicing secular parish priest without the secular's permission.¹

Father Marcellino's short invocation of this history had its effect; the guide left the priests and went inside for further instruc-

¹ For a survey of the background of the Church in Kongo, see John Thornton, "The Development of an African Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Kongo," *Journal of African History* 25 (1984).

tions. He returned a short time later and repeated, "It is not customary for His Majesty to come out of his palace to receive anyone," he said, "this is not the style of any king of Kongo."

"This is true enough, when speaking of his vassals or other noblemen of the kingdom," Father Marcellino replied, "but false when speaking of Religious Missionaries." In the eyes of Capuchins, and indeed the Vatican itself, *regular* clergy, monks living in apostolic style, were the highest order of humanity and should be treated with special respect even by kings. They should be treated better than secular priests, who did not always share their noble birth and vow of poverty.

"When King Dom Garcia II received us," Father Marcellino continued, reminding them of the first arrival of the Capuchins in 1645, at the height of the reign of Kongo's most powerful monarch, "he came in person to visit the Fathers in their residence, to invite them courteously to come the next day to an audience. Therefore, if King Pedro wants to see me, he would do well to do the same."

The royal ministers politely accepted this argument, but countered by saying, "The king might have received you outside his palace if you had been recently sent by Rome directly to him. But as you are a missionary who has already been in these regions for many years" (Father Marcellino had been in Kongo seven years, in fact), "knowledgeable in the practices and customs of Kongo, it is not necessary to do such a ceremony."

"I am new to you here," Father Marcellino shot back, "and the fact that I am an old missionary is hardly a reason to lose the respect and decorum I am due." To conclude the argument, the priest asserted, "To receive me in this manner is an affront, not to me personally, but to the Holy Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, of which I am a minister."

After negotiations and more bluffing, the two reached a compromise. Father Marcellino entered the third, and inner, courtyard, where the private audience chamber was located, and Pedro met and warmly embraced him at the door.

If the king had let up on his royal dignity, however, it was because he very badly wanted to have the Capuchins on his side

for rounding off the Concert of Kongo and its claims to place one of Queen Ana's loyal kinsmen on the throne. Still, he maintained dignity, for he kept his royal cap, the mpu, on his head.

He spoke briefly with the priest, inquiring about the Capuchins' recent mission to the king of Ngobela, which was beyond Kongo's eastern border near the modern city of Kinshasa, and his success in bringing that country into the fold of Christendom. The king ensured, too, that both he and the priest were seated, an important courtesy in a country where rulers sat on chairs and subjects stood, sat on carpets, or even lay facedown on the floor. The meeting concluded and Father Marcellino returned to his residence.

The next day, Pedro sent his royal secretary, Miguel de Castro, Dona Beatriz' kinsmen, to tell the priest that he would arrange to have his residence built directly in the palace in the inner enclosure, an important honor. When de Castro showed the priest his new quarters, Father Marcellino invited the king to hear Mass.

Mass was the occasion for another showdown of precedence and status. Pedro delayed attending Mass, and sent word to the priest to wait until he appeared. Finally, after a long wait, Father Marcellino felt his dignity was again abused, and threatened to leave Mass to one of the secular priests. Only then, when a crisis was reached, did Pedro arrive.

Following an old tradition, the king entered in high style. His personal guard armed and firing off muskets preceded him, followed by his musicians. A special praise-singer strolled among the musicians, extolling Pedro's greatness, liberality, and prudence, directly followed by two heralds bearing the double clapper bells that were universally regarded as royal symbols in central Africa. Knights of the Order of Christ, wearing their special white tunics emblazoned with the red Templars' cross pierced by an arrow that symbolized the order, accompanied their sovereign. The king himself was carried on a litter with fringed sides and a seat and back cushion of crimson velvet, their fringed poles covered in snakeskin. Another official walked with him carrying a wide silk umbrella.

Leaving his litter and carriers at the door, the king entered the

church, preceded by four pages, one carrying his leopard skin shield and a jeweled scimitar. A second page carried a staff covered in red velvet with a silver head adorned by small bells; a third carried a silver bow with two or three golden arrows; and the fourth carried a white linen over his shoulder. The king himself was flanked by two nobles who fanned him constantly, and was prominently wearing his mpu under the open umbrella of his favorite noble right into the church.

The king advanced across the newly carpeted floor to the two chairs, the only seats in the church, that had been placed for the king and his most favored courtesan. One was of red velvet, the other blue, each with a velvet cushion for him to kneel on before it.

The priest, not outdone by this pomp, sent his interpreter, Bernardo, to tell the king that he should remove his cap upon entering the church and keep it off until he left. Furthermore, Father Marcellino was well aware of claims that the king would make, also of hoary tradition, to participate in the service. Father Marcellino knew that Kongolese kings had long-standing customs which included wearing the mpu in the service, participating in the Mass through kissing the bread plate, holding the priest's hand during the purification of the communion wine, and having their royal umbrellas open during the service. All these, which tended to place the rulers on an equal footing in ecclesiastical matters, were precisely the kind of thing that Father Marcellino hoped to eliminate.

Pedro, however, immediately sent an answer back by Dom Bernardo. "What you ask cannot be, for this is the style and custom of my ancestors."

Father Marcellino continued the service, passing the reading of the Epistle, and saw that the king still wore his mpu as he bowed. He would let pass the open umbrella and the general nature of the king's pomp, but he was going to stick on the issue of the covered head. "Tell His Majesty to take off his mpu," the priest whispered to one of the royal officials who held the Bible, but the official, not moving, replied that he could not do this. Miguel de Castro, who was nearby, joined him in explaining that this was

not the custom in Kongo. Finally, Father Marcellino, losing his temper, said that if the king did not remove his mpu, he could not continue the Mass.

Still, no one would go to the king. One made a threatening gesture to his sword saying, "This is a crown sent to him by the Holy Pontiff, and therefore, he can not take it off."

Father Marcellino was not put off by this. The kings of Kongo had once received a crown from the pope, which was conferred ceremoniously on Garcia II in 1652. But that crown had been lost at Kongo's disastrous defeat by Portuguese armies at the battle of Mbwila in 1665.

"This is a cap and not a crown," he said, "if he does not take it off, he will be a heretic, a Jew, and not a Catholic Christian if he does not submit and disobeys by keeping his head covered." As to the threatening gestures he had seen, Father Marcellino noted that he was prepared to give his life for ecclesiastical liberty. Finally, his friend Father Gaspar came to the priest on his knees, begging him to continue the Mass. Father Marcellino was adamant; at last, when the secular priest went on his knees to appeal to the king, the monarch took off his mpu.

After the Mass, King Pedro commended de Castro and his other officials for standing up for him against the priest. It would be an effort to maintain relations with the Capuchins, but Pedro needed to salvage as much of his royal prestige as he could.

Father Marcellino was running a risk, even knowing that he was needed by the king. The Capuchins had virtually no worldly power in Kongo. They could not count on any effective support from the secular world. After being defeated by Soyo in 1670, even the Portuguese of Angola were uninterested in taking on Kongo again.

The Capuchins owned no land and had only a handful of slaves (technically freedmen known as *nlekes*, or "children") around their hospices who grew them some food, cared for them, and helped transport their goods for them when they traveled. In this situation Pedro could display his superior temporal power to Father Marcellino subtly over the next few days by sending him little food – of poor quality – and infrequently reminding him of

an ancient Kongolese custom of pressuring the Church, known as "local excommunication." As a foil to ecclesiastical excommunication, kings used their power to ensure that priests would receive no wood, water, or food from royal subjects until they resolved their disputes, and disputes of precedence between church and state were long-standing in Kongo.

Pedro had not forced the missionaries to come to Kibangu to argue about precedent, but to assist his larger schemes. In an audience on 15 July, Pedro paid the priest great respect, seating him on the right hand of his throne before all his officials and counselors, a stark and significant contrast to the way Father Luis, the secular, was routinely treated. Then, dismissing all but a handful of his closest advisors, he told the priest forthrightly that he was anxious to have Capuchins at Kibangu permanently. He quoted Jesus' words on the cross repeatedly: "My Father, why have you forsaken me?" Finally, he threw himself at the priest's feet, begging him not to abandon him. If Kibangu seemed remote to the priest, Pedro told him he would soon be transferring his capital to São Salvador. In fact, he noted, he had not ordered the walls of his palace rebuilt the past Holy Saturday, when by custom every year a great host of slaves and workers rebuilt them in a single night. Soon they would fall down, since he fully intended to abandon his palace for São Salvador.

Royal palaces in Kongo were built primarily of wood, thatch, and tough grasses, which deteriorated quickly in the tropical climate, especially in Kibangu's local climate with its misty season that promoted all sorts of growth. To meet the health and hygiene challenges of maintaining wood and grass structures in such a climate, Kongolese simply abandoned or rebuilt their structures often. It meant that houses, palaces, and even whole villages or towns were impermanent and could be abandoned often. Wealth was displayed through furnishings rather than through buildings.

While impressed with King Pedro's desires, the priest said nothing definite, for he was not in a position to make decisions himself about the location of a hospice or where he should or could go.

On 25 July, Saint James' Day, Pedro made a concrete step to-

ward his promise of being king in São Salvador. At the annual festival, he announced with great pomp that he planned to reoccupy the capital permanently, to follow up his coronation of 1696 and make good his claim to be king of all Kongo. Now that João's forces were likely to be in disarray if the rumors of his death were borne out, the occupation could proceed. He ordered people living in the valley of the Mufulenge River, which flowed northward from Kibangu toward Bula and Nsundi, to choose colonists and displace themselves toward São Salvador. The move was like a military expedition and created by the same legal apparatus. Occupation of the capital was not likely to go unchallenged from the north, and only by having a well-emplaced and powerful army already at the city could Pedro hope to make São Salvador his real capital.

At the same time, he sent an army under Pedro Constantinho da Silva Kibenga northward to receive the vassalage of some seven or eight nobles from Bula who had taken this opportunity to pay homage to Pedro as their new king. Kibenga had his own very large quarter in Kibangu, with relatives and an army that was personally loyal to him. His presence on the mountain was problematic, although King Pedro hoped to use his forces and his services as much as possible.

Father Marcellino had additional audiences with Pedro, making further demands: first, on his own dignity; second, that the king pay certain Luanda merchants who had lent him money or goods on credit and had been waiting five or six years for repayment; and finally, that Pedro allow the head of Manuel I, which had decorated the main square of Kibangu for some five years, to be given a proper Christian burial.

In exchange, Pedro demanded firmly that the Capuchins remain with him, and that his decision to seize the hospice in Nkusu had been prompted by the fact that he, as king, had a legal right to demand they reside at his court. To buttress his case, Pedro had Miguel de Castro pull an important document from his royal archives. This was a papal bull, *Celsorum Decorum*, from Innocent XI addressed to King Garcia III, dated 3 January

1677.² Garcia III was the real founder of the settlement of Kibangu, having moved there during the confused period of civil war that followed the death of King António I at the battle of Mbvila in 1665. Several kings presented themselves during that period, and several had been put down. In 1668, Garcia, thwarted at São Salvador, withdrew to the security of Mount Kibangu and relative obscurity while others battled furiously over the city for the next ten years. But the Church recognized Garcia and sought strongly to have him recognized by the other pretenders.³ The bull of 1677 was part of the strongest case Pedro had for papal recognition of him and his line as the rulers of Kongo. As it also contained language ordering the Capuchins remain with the king, it was a strong precedent for his forcing them to come to him.

Father Marcellino countered by arguing that the constant wars of the period had forced the Capuchins to abandon the capital and seek safety and security wherever they could. It was for this reason, he argued, that they had moved to Nkusu, which was also on a mountain and secure. But the force of Pedro's argument and the strength of the papal bull was such that Father Marcellino had to admit the king's claim. He promised to write about it to the prefect of the Capuchin mission, Father Francesco da Pavia, in Luanda.

Over the next few days, more mundane business was settled. Father Marcellino absolved Pedro's brother, Álvaro X, of an excommunication that had been placed on him earlier and technically could have required the priest to disinter the former king from holy ground. He also arranged to bury, at last, that symbol of betrayal, the severed head of Manuel I. The priest absolved Pedro Kibenga of an earlier excommunication as a preliminary to discussing the goods and people from the hospice of Nkusu. Ne-

² Printed in Paiva Manso, *História*, p. 263.

³ António de Oliveira de Cadornega, *História Geral das guerras angolanas* (1680-81), ed. José Mattias Delgado and Mathias da Cunha, 3 vols. (Lisbon, 1940 [reprinted 1972]), 2:416-20. Garcia was also the recipient of an earlier bull, *Magno quoniam*, 11 March 1673, printed in Brasília, *Monumenta*, 13:215-16.

gotiations finally led to a complicated restoration of the property, and on 22 August, Father Marcellino left, bound for Nkusu.

As the priest left, King Pedro summed up the exchange by first commending his own life and that of his people to the Church. Then, he said, "God and Father Saint Francis require me to be the means by which the cathedral of São Salvador is restored, since I am disposed to do so. Since God has given me the good fortune to undertake this enterprise, I ask you to return quickly to encourage my people and implore Divine help in bringing about such a task in His service with confessions, processions, and penances."⁴

News of the Capuchin arrival, and the intricate deliberations of the king and the priest, soon found its way throughout all of King Pedro's domains. Dona Beatriz undoubtedly had a good account because her kinsman Miguel de Castro was in the king's inner circle and had been present at all the deliberations. But Dona Beatriz was much more attuned to the religious than the political consequences of their visit.

For Dona Beatriz the arrival of Capuchins in Kibangu had other implications than it had for King Pedro. Because she was working as an *nganga*, the priests represented a serious challenge to her and all other *ngangas* who were not themselves ordained priests. In his discussions with King Pedro concerning the removal of excommunications from the late King Álvaro so he could be buried in hallowed ground, Father Marcellino had proposed that "witches and priests of idols" had been responsible for misfortunes including these deaths. He proposed that the king announce this, and expose these wrongdoers on the public plaza to receive "the fury of the people" and the penalty of death.

His language could scarcely be lost on the *ngangas* against whom it was directed, including Dona Beatriz. It represented the theological side of the political negotiations between priest and king. In fact, the Capuchins simply charged that all *ngangas*,

⁴ On d'Attri's disputes with Pedro and the politics of the time, see d'Attri, "Giornate," pp. 351-86. A description of his arrival in church and older customs of the kings is found at pp. 515-18, but it relates to another incident in 1701.

whatever their practice, if not ordained by the Church, were *ndokis*, those who worked evil by supernatural means. They called them *fattucieri* in Italian, that is, "witches," and in so doing charged that all their work was selfish and greedy and hence the bad sort of *kindoki*.

Their arguments on this point were rooted in European and not Kongolese theology, and for this reason were never wholly accepted by most Kongolese. In the Kongolese view, various people might possess *kindoki* and use it for either good or evil purposes. It was the purposes and intentions of those using the power that counted, not the simple possession of the power or the nature of the beings in the Other World who were consulted and carried out the work of *kindoki*.

But priests argued otherwise. They contended that although God, Jesus, or the Saints could help those who appealed to them, they would only do so for those who made their appeal through methods approved by the Church and conducted by ordained priests. All other attempts to elicit information and support from the Other World, even if done for the best of reasons, and addressed to Jesus, the saints, or the Virgin, would not be heard by those Christian entities, but instead would be intercepted by the Devil. The Devil might allow the work to be carried out, even if it were beneficial, but for his glory. This, Capuchins argued, was witchcraft, and it could be carried out unwittingly, even if one did not invoke the Devil. Intentions were of no significance. Only the procedure counted.

Since their first arrival in 1645, the Capuchins had made the suppression of what they considered witchcraft their special duty, and they pursued it with a zeal that other religious groups did not. Jesuits, who had been in Kongo since 1619, devoted little attention to witchcraft, although they did not tolerate it and in theory shared the views of the Capuchins. The secular priests were even less inclined to seek out witches, although they might become involved in the workings of *kindoki* in their daily lives. Dona Beatriz knew that these theoretical arguments would soon come to action, and she would not be wrong.

Toward the end of 1698, news reached Nkusu that the prefect



A Capuchin destroys a "Witchcraft House." (From "Missione in Practica" ca. 1750)

had authorized Capuchins to stay with the king, and by the start of 1699, Fathers Marcellino and Salvatore da Lago Negro came to Kibangu to open a hospice. While their initial program called for clarifying with King Pedro their status and their relations with the monarchy, they also wasted no time in attacking what they considered local witchcraft.

On 24 March 1699, some students in the school at Kibangu told Father Marcellino about a Kimpasi society initiation lodge located a few miles from the new hospice, and the priest went along with them to investigate. Taking with him some students and Dom Miguel, the local authority, Father Marcellino snuck up on the enclosure, sending two small boys first to spy the place out. They reported that the area seemed empty, but that some of the younger initiates were playing outside the walls.

The priest stormed into the enclosure and seized the various "instruments" of their worship, then ordered the buildings set on fire. Standing amid the flames, and grasping his crucifix, Father

Marcellino quoted Psalm 68: "God shall arise; His enemies shall be scattered; those that hate him shall flee before his face."

The smoke and flames attracted the initiates who were away from the camp, and they returned, armed, to defend it. The society leader came rushing at the priest, both hands grasping a sword high in the air. Dom Miguel, at the head of his people, rescued the priest, parrying the blow with his own staff of office. Then he ordered the people to disperse, and they obeyed. The priest returned to the hospice bearing the spoils of his work. He entered the chapel and there gave thanks for being delivered from the Devil, for that is precisely how he viewed the Kimpasi and its initiates – devils incarnate, in the most literal way.

The very next day he located a second Kimpasi camp, and found that everyone but the *nganga-in-charge*, an elderly woman, had fled. Again he seized the goods of the Kimpasi camp, including their cross and kites and various other ingredients, had the trees uprooted, and burned all the houses. All the goods were placed together in the chapel for safekeeping, for Father Marcellino decided that he would wait until another companion, Father Luca da Caltanissetta, returned from a mission trip to destroy them.

The next Sunday, the priest preached a fiery sermon on the subject. Declaring that the people had ceased to worship the True God, he turned the crucifix and the images of the two principal saints venerated in Kongo, Saint Anthony of Padua and Saint Francis, on the sides of the altar backward. He then declared all the initiates of the Kimpasi society excommunicated, and especially the leader.

In Kikongo, the word for excommunication was *kumloko*, a word meaning a powerful curse derived from *loka*, the same root that *kindoki* and *ndoki* were. Its use told Kongolese that Capuchins possessed *kindoki* themselves and could locate others who also had it, or use their contact with the Other World to curse and harm others. The Capuchins claimed, in other words, to have the power to name and locate *ndokis*, and to use that power to curse them effectively.

As it happened, the Kimpasi leader was blinded, "deprived of his corporal vision," Father Marcellino wrote later, "as he had already been deprived of the spiritual vision."⁵ Although this type of preaching was a long-standing part of the Capuchin program in Kongo, it was new to Kibangu itself at this point. The question of kindoki was immediately raised for all by the attack on the Kimpasi society, and the Capuchins were putting forth the idea that the Kimpasi society was in fact an organization of ndokis.

Such a view, while a radical one, could be accepted in Kongo, though not by everyone. Certainly those who had been initiated knew that they had not been working kindoki for selfish or greedy ends, and a good many others must have agreed that the priest was simply wrong to imagine that this, or perhaps any other Kimpasi society, was only a means of concentrating selfish kindoki for their own evil purposes. But the possibility existed, and, as all knew, banditry, war, and betrayal had made these evil times.

In any case, it was not long after the Capuchins arrived in Kibangu that Dona Beatriz decided to stop her practice as *nganga marinda*. She concluded that the practice was too close to evil kindoki, and decided to devote herself more fully to private life, perhaps taking their teaching and her own experience to heart.⁶ It was not a rejection of the concepts of kindoki that she turned from, for that remained central to her life and teaching. Rather, she rejected the local and immediate practices of the *ngangas* of her area, which she believed must have become corrupted.

If Capuchin preaching had influenced Dona Beatriz to renounce the Kimpasi society and her own calling as *nganga marinda*, however, she harbored suspicions about the priests as well as about other *ngangas*. Her doubts were heightened by Capuchin behavior in the political and personal realm. Their widely accepted claim to be able to discern and combat ndokis through their own powers of kindoki could be valid, but like all such claims,

Kongolese believed it had to be tested against motivation. If the claim for respect was perceived simply as a claim for self-aggrandizement, then there were grounds for suspicion that the priests were misusing their power for their own goals.

That the priests were accused of being ndokis already by some people suggested that they were failing the test. Father Luca da Caltanissetta, who joined the group in Kibangu in 1699, was himself accused that same April of poisoning, through kindoki, the ruler of Songi dia Zombo, a district in the Duchy of Mbata, and was driven away by the people who scorned him.

For King Pedro, however, the religious side of his situation was less important than the political strength the missionaries gave him. With Capuchin priests in his territory, he was in a good position to outmaneuver Queen Ana and her kinsmen. Indeed, his arguments had been sufficiently impressive that he had won Capuchin opinion over to his side.

Father Luca, in particular, had been greatly disappointed with Queen Ana's behavior during the 1696 Concert, and was now leaning toward Pedro as a better candidate for king. In January 1699, Marquis Miguel of Nkusu brought him news that Queen Ana's favorite cousin, Pedro Valle das Lagrimas, had stormed the city of Mbanza Mbamba and killed Pedro Mpanzu a Mvemba, who had held the duchy in the queen's name but was never very loyal. This time Valle das Lagrimas triumphantly carried the former duke's head to Nkondo, and was installed himself as duke by the queen. On hearing this news, Father Luca remarked sadly to Marquis Miguel, "This is the miserable and deplorable condition of the lords of Kongo, that they all die violently!" To which Miguel replied, "Death is the same for everyone, whether in bed or by the sword." This resignation to the state of constant violence troubled the priest greatly, for he doubted that peace could come from such sentiments.

Encouraged by the support of the Capuchins, King Pedro moved to strengthen his position with the major contenders, beginning with Pedro Kibenga, whose followers were serving in his army. He declared Kibenga to be prince, a possible successor to him.

⁵ D'Atri, "Giornate," pp. 408-12.

⁶ Da Luca, "Relazione Annua del 1706," fol. 267.

This action infuriated Queen Ana, particularly since Kibenga's troops raided her lands just across the Mbidizi so often that there was a virtual state of siege of the villages in the region. Father Marcellino, passing through the region with a group of his nlekes, the freed slaves who carried his goods, on his way from Nkusu to Nkondo to visit the queen in November 1699, came upon one of her villages just at sunset. Surprised by the unexpected arrival of a large number of men, the villagers fled in great haste, leaping walls to get out of the village fast. They reassembled, following a preconceived plan, in the fields outside, bearing arms and prepared to fight. The priest shouted out to them that his was a priest's entourage and not the soldiers of Kibenga. After the strict leader had sent an emissary to determine the truth of the assertion, the people returned.⁷

While Queen Ana's border subjects were suffering under this insecurity, the queen herself, although still officially angry with King Pedro, was more inclined to compromise. Having found few takers, the queen quietly abandoned her plan to have Alvaro accepted as king.

The main negotiator in the new peace initiative was to be the Capuchin prefect, Father Francesco da Pavia, who arrived in Kibangu on 29 March 1700. He had already had discussions with the Prince of Soyo in hopes that he would recognize Pedro IV. He made official the movement of the Capuchin hospice from Nkusu to Kibangu, despite the strong objections and reservations of Father Luca, who was suspicious of reconciliations of this sort. "I tried to dissuade him from this undertaking," Father Luca wrote in his diary, "as this was not a propitious occasion, but he, confiding in God, wanted to press on, not judging that the black lords, while discussing peace were organizing their war machines for abominable treachery."⁸

On 5 June, Father Francesco went to the separate encampment of Pedro Kibenga below the mountain near the border between Kibangu's territory and those belonging to the queen, in order to begin the process of reconciliation with Queen Ana. Again he met

with success, for the queen and Kibenga agreed to forget their differences.

So it came to be that Queen Ana, Pedro Kibenga, and King Pedro IV came together in mid-June at Lusunzi's sacred stone of Kibangu to swear an oath of nonaggression and peace among themselves, and to recognize Pedro IV as their king. Queen Ana, for her part, swore on behalf of herself. Duke Pedro Valle das Lagrimas who held Mbamba for her, Alvaro who held Mpenba on her behalf and had once been her candidate for king, and António, her Marquis of Wembo, as well as others of her followers and relatives whose residences were too far away to be brought to Kibangu, swore through ambassadors.

The sacred stone was a good place to make such a reconciliation: all their lands lay in territory drained by the Mbidizi River, which originated at the stone, and Lusunzi, like all such deities in Kongo, was essentially devoted to harmony and peace. Before the crowd the prefect made a speech devoted to peace and reconciliation. On behalf of the king, Miguel de Castro made a historical speech appropriate to the occasion.

Historical speeches on Saint James' Day in Kibangu, as elsewhere, focused on the all powerful rights of kings over their subjects: the story of Ne Lukeni and her son Ntinu Lukeni stressed these rights. But Pedro IV's newly restored Kongo was not such a state – obedience was strictly nominal, and the king entertained no fond thoughts of controlling appointments of officials to lands held by Queen Ana. Consequently, de Castro's speech focused on a different sort of founder.

"The Kingdom of Kongo," he began, "was founded long ago by a wise and skillful blacksmith who settled differences among the people." By focusing on the original nature of Kongo as a community of consenting powers, ruled through a great mediator, the speech could allow Pedro to play a role like that of this mythical founder. Throughout central Africa, mythical blacksmiths were regarded as representing a principle of peace and reconciliation, and even as representing "feminine" characteristics of government, possibly because the act of creating steel from earth was likened to childbearing.

⁷ D'Atri, "Giornate," p. 441. ⁸ Da Caltanissetta, "Relatione," fol. gov.

In continuing the speech, de Castro evoked the memory of the great sixteenth-century monarch widely regarded as the founder of the Church in Kongo, Afonso I. As de Castro told it, Afonso had two children, the respective founders of the Kimpanzu and Kinlaza kandas, and these two had contended over the throne – a position which was not precisely historically correct, but which nicely simplified the affairs for the present occasion. With the battle of Mbwila, he continued, the latent conflict had broken out into open warfare, which was now being laid to rest.⁹

King Pedro's spokesman was careful to avoid placing any order in precedence to the Kimpanzu and Kinlaza, and since the Água Rosadas were descended from both great kandas, he could pose as the ideal mediator between the factions. Certainly Father Francesco was more than willing to accept this compromise, and, to further the cause of peace and the refoundation of the country, proposed that he persuade the pope to bless a new crown for Pedro.

Kongo's old papal crown, presented in 1652 to Garcia II, had been lost at Mbwila when Kongo's king António's head, crown attached, had been carried to Luanda for display and then sent on to Lisbon. Efforts to retrieve it had failed, and at this juncture a new crown, given in the spirit of reconciliation rather than the raw power that Garcia exercised, seemed singularly appropriate.

From this high point, the prefect then set out for Bula to make the final gesture and win the recognition of whoever ruled there. Alas, the situation in Bula turned out to be a disappointment. King João, although rumored to be dead for nearly a year, turned out to be alive. He had suffered a serious illness, perhaps a stroke, which had kept him out of sight and fed rumors, even in his own court, that he had died. His sister Elena had run the country as

⁹ On Francesco da Pavia's mission, see d'Atri, "Giomate," pp. 463–4; da Calamsetta, "Relatione," fols. 90v–91. The speech is recorded as a historical summary in Francesco da Pavia's report to the Propaganda Fide, undated, but filed after his return to Luanda, Archivio "De Propaganda Fide," *Scritture riferite nelli Congressi, Congo*, vol. 1, fols. 141–42, though the sources do not directly identify de Castro as the speaker, he seems a likely choice.

a regent on behalf of her brother, but she had not been accepted and there was major dissension among the nobles of the country.

Father Francesco found that while Elena could bring her brother out in public to demonstrate that he was alive, he was paralyzed and completely unable to speak. The prospect of recognizing Pedro as king did not appeal at all to Elena or her supporters, who politely but firmly rejected the idea. Their opponents, on the other hand, who had been openly negotiating with Pedro for nearly a year, were well prepared to accept King Pedro's claim and abandon their own ineffective ruler.

The prefect quickly realized both that Bula was not going to recognize Pedro as king and that they were not in a good position to resist him either. It was perhaps still a good time for peace, so he pressed Elena to make peace with Soyo, as Father Giuseppe Merolla had tried to do a decade earlier. Perhaps, since Soyo was favorably disposed to the Concert of Kongo, he could bring in Bula through its reconciliation with Soyo.

The differences between the two went back to 1683, when João's elder brother, Pedro III, had been treacherously killed with Soyo's complicity. Soyo had offered to broker a peace between the Kinlaza King Pedro and his Kimpanzu rival Manuel de Nóbrega, whose brother King Daniel I had been killed by Pedro when he sacked São Salvador in 1678. De Nóbrega had taken refuge in Soyo's southern province of Luvota and was intent on revenge. The Prince of Soyo, a long-standing Kimpanzu partisan, negotiated a truce which was to be sealed by a wedding exchange. But when Pedro came with his wedding train to a pre-arranged meeting place, he found the train from Soyo contained de Nóbrega dressed as a woman pretending to be his new bride. The disguised bride produced a pistol and shot Pedro to death.

João's first official act as prince under the regency of his mother, Potencia, was to attack Soyo and annex its province of Kiowa kia Nza, which lay south of the Zaire River along their common border. João had refused to return the province, which was rich in iron ore and a major source of the best steel in the country, to Soyo in the proposed reconciliation of 1688, as he

also refused when Father Luca approached him about it in 1696. The prefect, for all his goodwill, could not achieve any of his goals and, reluctantly leaving this end untied, set out for the Inkisi valley.

Unfortunately, the situation in the Inkisi turned out to be just as intractable. There was an ongoing war between Nsundi and Mpangu, as the great northern province of Nsundi pushed its claims southward, a war still remembered in tradition in the twentieth century.¹⁰ When Father Francesco sought to visit the Marquis of Mpangu, he was refused solely on the grounds that he had first visited Nsundi, whose duke supported a rival candidate for Marquis of Mpangu. Likewise, Mbata was still torn between two rival dukes, and since one of them was a partisan of King Pedro, he could not proceed any further on that front.

Although Father Francesco had not brought about a real peace and the recognition of Pedro IV, he had at least reconciled Queen Ana, Pedro IV, and Pedro Kibenga, an achievement in itself – at least if Father Luca's deep reservations about the reality of any such negotiated peace were false.¹¹

Before the prefect left on his diplomatic mission, he instructed Fathers Luca and Marcellino to establish the Capuchin hospice at Kibangu. Father Luca visited with King Pedro to establish the guidelines, while Father Marcellino left to go to Prince Pedro Kibenga's fortified camp to keep him involved in the process. The prince put on a good show for the priest – he came to greet him outside of his camp, accompanied by a group of boys singing the "Hail Mary" and "Salve Regina" in Kikongo. He embraced the priest and accompanied him into his camp. The next day, dressed stunningly in a spring overcoat with laced crimson boots, he performed a nsanga for the priest, bearing a crucifix in his left hand and a saber in his right. His subjects filled the air with gunpowder smoke, while a dozen young girls fanned the smoke away from the priest with white linen fans. That evening, fine points of the

peace agreements were worked out, and the priest returned to the king's town.

On 15 July, the Capuchins presented King Pedro with a lengthy document of eighteen points, outlining the rights and procedures for maintaining a permanent establishment of Capuchins at Kibangu. It specified clearly that the Capuchins were to be protected, as were their servants, and never to be harassed for any reason. They were free from all taxation, and could travel anywhere without interference.

The dignity of the Church was to be maintained by specified rules governing the king's behavior in church. He was to appear at a seemingly hour for Mass, not midday, and was to remove his cap in the church and make no special show upon his arrival. The king was allowed to kiss the Bible in the lesson, and at the same time, thanks to possession of the title "Defender of the Faith" (a title conferred on Afonso I in the sixteenth century), he could stand during the reading with a drawn sword in his right hand and a lighted candle in the left.

The king was also enjoined to "search out the magicians, to punish all those who have recourse to them, seek to capture and sell them" as slaves, giving the proceeds of the sale to the Church. Thus, the Capuchins were to receive material and physical support from the king in their project to suppress all the ngangas of the kingdom save those ordained by the Church.

Finally, the king was to preserve the peace. He was to do all in his power to keep the roads safe from thieves and bandits, and, moreover, he was to submit every military project to the priests. They, in turn, were to determine that his ventures were "just wars" and only then could he prosecute them.¹² That being done, the Capuchins moved to Kibangu, confident that they would soon be in control of all religious affairs. But the optimism was ill-founded, as they were soon to discover.

¹⁰ Cuvellier, *Nkulama*, pp. 5–6, attributes the war to a duke of Nsundi known as Kiangala. Contemporary documents cite only the duke's Christian name, Alvaro Afonso de Santa Maria Maior.

¹¹ Da Calanissetta, "Relazione," fol. 103.

¹² D'Atti, "Giornate," pp. 464–8.