

THE EXTERNAL TRADE OF THE LOANGO COAST
AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE VILI, 1576-1870

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A B S T R A C T

The Loango Coast is a useful term to describe the West African Coast which lies between Cape Lopez in the north and the Congo River in the south. In the sixteenth century, the region was divided into three kingdoms, Loango, Kakongo and Ngoyo.

This study discusses two interrelated themes. The first concerns the changing patterns of external trade; here, four main phases may be differentiated. The first was a pre-slave trade period, from about 1576 to 1630 when indigenous African commercial activities expanded under the impetus of European contact; between 1630 and 1670 the products of legitimate trade decreased in importance and the trade in slaves gained momentum; the years from 1670 to 1793 have been called the Slave Trade Era; from about 1793 to 1870, the slave traders faced mounting problems until their activities were finally ended and a legitimate trade was reestablished.

The second theme deals specifically with the Vili kingdom of Loango, which, as the term "Loango Coast" implies, dominated the region until its fortunes changed in the eighteenth century. The discussion suggests how the Vili were affected by the changing patterns of external trade. Chapters 1 and 8 are primarily concerned with this subject, although it is also touched on at

various other points. The Maloango and the traditional aristocracy, who dominated the sixteenth and seventeenth century Vili kingdom, were forced to share power with a class of nouveaux-riches thrown up by the slave trade, by the late eighteenth century. The final demise of the old kingdom occurred in the nineteenth century, when the order and unity of traditional society was lost amid the unstable conditions brought by the rule of petty chiefs. The last chapter attempts to show that these changes were a positive response to varying circumstances, not mere decay.

P R E F A C E

Loango has been much neglected by historians, especially compared to other large kingdoms on the West African Coast. In the Congo area, attention has largely focused on regions south of the River, on the Kongo kingdom based on San Salvador and the Mbundu kingdom which the Portuguese encountered in the area of modern Angola. The continuous contact of these African states with European merchants, missionaries and administrators since the late fifteenth century, has ensured a large body of materials for researchers in European archives. Even before the interest in African Studies of the last two decades, works on Kongo and Angola had appeared. Before the Second World War, the books of Paiva Manso, Felner, Cordeiro and Ihle were published. To these have been added the volumes of documents published more recently by Jadin, Brásio and Cuvelier.

No major work on Loango history has been attempted. This is no indication of the importance of the kingdom in the history of the region. In some respects, it was as influential as Kongo itself. Rather it is a reflection of the spasmodic and impermanent contact that Europeans had with the Vili kingdom in pre-colonial times. The Histoire de Loango, Kakongo et Autres Royaumes d'Afrique published by the Abbé Proyard in 1776 is a valuable work with a misleading title. It is an account of Loango as it was found by

French missionaries in the years 1766-1776, with only a few references outside that period. Perhaps the most important studies of the area were published following the visit of a German scientific expedition in 1873-1876. The works of A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste, and E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde von Loango, are particularly valuable since they contain many oral traditions.

This study has relied mainly on accounts by traders on the Loango Coast and the archives of Dutch, French and English trading companies. Of the published works, the most useful are those by Battell, Broecke, and Brun, for the early seventeenth century, and Degrandpré for the late eighteenth century. A thorough search of Portuguese archives might reveal further materials for Loango history, but they have not been used here, since the area was generally only of peripheral interest to the Portuguese. The major published works in Portuguese, and especially the collections of documents by Brásio, have been consulted.

The work of the Dutch scholar, Olfert Dapper, Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche Gewesten, Amsterdam 1668, deserves special mention. This study covers large areas of Africa, but contains a long and detailed account of Loango. It was based on most of the known European sources at that time. The account of Loango seems to be particularly reliable because of the contacts that Dutch traders had had with the Vili kingdom since the beginning

of the seventeenth century. Dapper appears to have had access to the reports of the Dutch West India Company, for part of his account is corroborated by documents in the company archives in The Hague.

The attraction of Kongo and Angola resulted in the neglect of the Loango Coast by missionaries. In the seventeenth century, the longest mission was that of the Capucin, Bernardino Unghero, who died after only a year in Loango (1663-1664). Some of his letters have been published by Cavazzi. The only other missionary effort of consequence, that was attempted in the period covered by this study, was that reported by Proyart. Some other documents on the same mission have been published by Cuvelier, Documents sur une Mission Française au Kakongo, 1766-1776.

Given the nature of the source material, it has seemed wise to concentrate in this study on the commercial relations of the Vili and to assess how these affected their society. A traditional dynastic history of the Loango kingdom seems possible, however. Conversations with Vili in Paris have suggested that lively oral traditions exist in the region. The Maloango and his family would be an important source of information. There must also be a great deal of material on the kingdoms of Kakongo and Ngoyo which deserve independent study. M. Raymaekers at Lovanium has initiated some research into the history of Ngoyo.

I should like to thank the many friends, librarians and

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The Scottish Education Department were kind enough to award me a Major Scottish Studentship and a travel grant to allow me to work in Dutch and French Archives. Dr. Richard Gray advised me during my first year at the School of Oriental and African Studies. Students benefit from his wide knowledge of the field of African Studies and his original and stimulating comment. Most thanks are due to my supervisor Dr. David Birmingham who first introduced me to the Vili and directed me to the relevant archives. Dr. Birmingham's incisive and rigorous approach to history is matched by an imaginative understanding of African problems. I especially appreciated the personal concern which he has for his students. A final word of gratitude to my family who have at times suffered gross neglect but whose enthusiasm for this work has almost surpassed my own.

C O N T E N T S

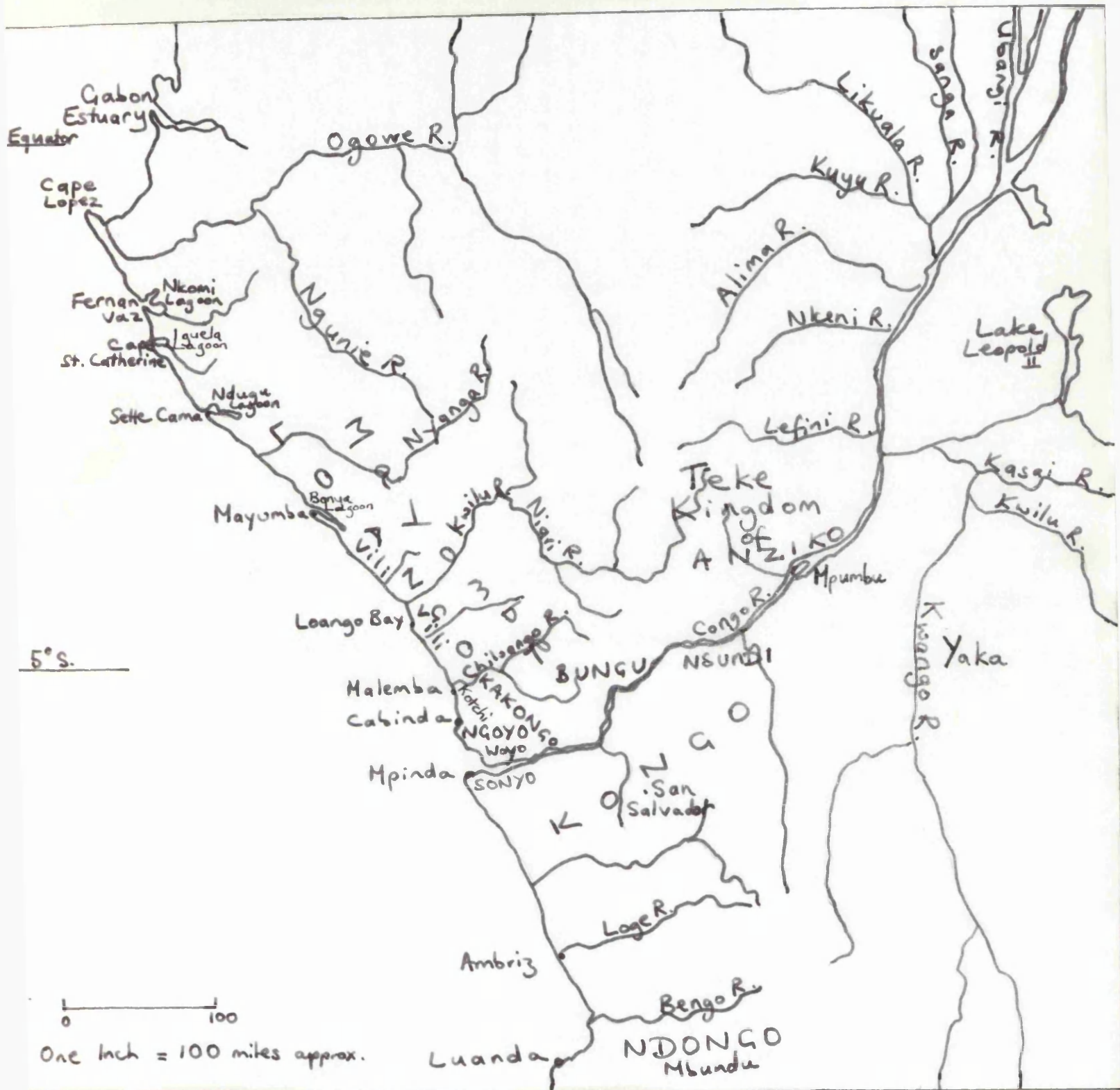
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ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Archives des Colonies, Paris.
ADIV	Archives Départementales d'Ille-et-Vilaine, Rennes.
ADLA	Archives Départementales Loire-Atlantique, Nantes.
AM	Archives de la Marine, Paris.
AN	Archives Nationales, Paris.
AOM	Archives Outre-Mer, Paris.
ARA	Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague.
BARSC	Bulletin de l'Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales.
BIHBR	Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome.
BIRCB	Bulletin de l'Institut Royal Colonial Belge.
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
BPP	British Parliamentary (Sessional) Papers.
DFC	Depots des Fortifications des Colonies, Archives Outre-Mer, Paris.
GAR	Gemeente Archief, Rotterdam.
JAH	Journal of African History.
MCC	Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie, Middelburg.
MMA	Monumenta Missionaria Africana.
NBKG	Archief van de Nederlandse Bizzittingen ter Kuste van Guinea, The Hague.
OWIC	Oude West Indische Compagnie.
RAC	Royal African Company
TWIC	Tweede West Indische Compagnie.
T/70	Treasury Records, Public Record Office, London.
X	Directors of the Second (Tweede) Dutch West India Company.
XIX	Directors of the First (Oude) Dutch West India Company.



WEST CENTRAL AFRICA

Chapter 1

THE VILI KINGDOM OF LOANGO AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

The variegated features of the Loango Coast allow approaching ships to chart their course with relative ease. After Cape Lopez, the coastline follows a general south-easterly direction as far as the mouth of the Congo river, about 460 miles away. Prominent among the landmarks, are the many lagoons and bays. These have been formed by the contact of the Benguela current with the alluvial deposits brought to the sea by rivers such as the Nyanga, Numbi, Kwilu-Niari, Loeme and Chiloango. Long sand-spits which project from the coast in a north-westerly direction enclose lagoons such as those of Fernan Vaz (also called Nkomi), Sette-Cama (Ndugu), Iguela (Ngove or Ngobe) to the east of Cape Saint Catherine, Mbanya at Mayumba, and Cayo near Pointe-Noire. There are also sheltered bays at Loango, Pointe-Noire and Cabinda. These provide good anchorages, but usually on the Loango Coast ships have to anchor about one to three miles off shore. The great surf is largely due to the shallowness of the water near to land. A Continental shelf stretches out to sea for a distance of 35 miles in some places. Underground sea-quakes can produce waves of almost tidal proportions, another dangerous feature of this not altogether hospitable coast.

The voyager might also note the changing vegetation and elevation. From Cape Lopez, as far as Mayumba to the south, a marginal

fringe of the equatorial forest of central Africa extends to the coast. The littoral is low and forbidding with many mangroves. According to the seventeenth century trader Andrew Battell, "the province of Mayombe (Mayumba) is all woods and groves, so overgrown that a man may travel twenty days in the shadow without sun or heat".¹ South of Mayumba, there is a change of scene and a more attractive, open country. The low land gives way to rugged sandstone cliffs which, in particular, mark the anchorage at Loango Bay. The coastal plain varies in width, from about 6 to 35 miles. It is dotted with rolling hills and valleys, and covered with savannas and light woods. The latter may be the remnants of a much thicker forest in the past. South of Cabinda, and towards the Congo estuary, the low land and thick vegetation reappear.

Inland, the plain gradually gives way to ranges of heavily wooded, steep hills, which run parallel to the coast, and rise to heights of 2,600 feet. This region is called the Mayombe. It marked the bounds of knowledge for most of the coastal dwellers. Although the hills only extend inland for a distance of 30 to 40 miles the nature of the terrain makes them a serious obstacle. One nineteenth century traveller wrote of "the terrible region of the

¹E. G. Ravenstein (ed.), The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell in Angola and the Adjoining Regions, Hakluyt Society, London, 1901, 53.

Mayombe which combines the difficulties of mountains with those of equatorial forests" - jagged peaks, deep ravines, torrents and waterfalls, lianas and fallen trees.¹

The principal rivers which flow into the Atlantic Ocean on the Loango Coast do not provide much help for the traveller who wants to advance into the interior. The Numbi and Loeme rise only a short distance inland. Two of the major rivers, the Kwilu-Niari and the Nyanga, have bars at their mouth and rapids and falls in their middle reaches. Only the Chiloango can be navigated for most of its course and was useful as a route by which trade goods could reach the coast; yet, the Chiloango also has a difficult bar at its entrance.

East of the Mayombe is open plateau country, through which passes the Niari river. The region towards the Congo river was an important metalliferous area, especially rich in copper. North and east of the Niari valley, the land rises in terraces towards the Central Gabon Massif and the Teke plateau north of Stanley Pool.²

¹Colonel Baratier, Au Congo; Souvenirs de la Mission Marchand: de Loango à Brazzaville, Paris, n.d., 15.

²Accounts of the main geographical features of the Loango Coast and its hinterland can be found in G. Bruel, La France Équatoriale Africaine, Paris, 1935, 61-64, 70-72; M. Soret, Les Kongo Nord-Occidentaux, Paris, 1959, 2-4. Comments on the coast from the sailor's point of view are contained in J. K. Tuckey, Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire, New York, 1818, 120-125,

At its zenith, Loango's influence touched this whole region, either through direct political control or through commercial contacts. The Vili heartland was the coastal plain that lay between the Chiloango river in the south and Banda Point in the north, a distance of some 120 miles. This region, in particular, combined several ecological factors that aided the rise of a strong and united kingdom. The land was very fertile; the savannas and forests sheltered much wildlife; the long coastline and many rivers and lagoons encouraged fishing and salt-making; there was relative ease of communication by land and, for the practised Vili, by canoe along the coast. The Mayombe hinterland was an advantage. It discouraged raiders, so that Loango was not troubled by invasions from the interior like the Kongo kingdom; yet the Mayombe could be penetrated by experienced Vili traders who were familiar with the traditional routes.

Linguistic evidence shows that the Vili¹ of Loango are a branch of the large Kongo family of the West Central Bantu. Their

128-130, 279-281, 287-288; E. Bouët-Willaumez, Commerce et Traite des Noirs aux Côtes Occidentales d'Afrique, Paris, 1848, 161-166; W.F.W.Owen, Narrative of Voyages to Explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia and Madagascar, New York, 1833, II, 169-171, 175-176.

¹The term Fioti (Fjort, Fiotte) has been used to describe the Vili, the inhabitants of the Loango kingdom at its widest point, all Kongo peoples living north of the Congo river and for the Kongo language. In Kikongo, Fioti means "black", "black-skinned" or "Black Man's speech". Its misuse probably originated in an error of interpretation by Europeans; see, E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde von Loango, Stuttgart, 1907, 1, and W. H. Bentley, Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language, London, 1887, ix. The term is confusing and will not be used here.

language is a dialect of that spoken in San Salvador, the capital of the Kongo kingdom. The Vili have little difficulty in understanding the Kikongo spoken south of the Congo river.¹ The oral traditions that provide some clues to the early history of the Loango kingdom derive from two main sources; those which are recounted by the Vili themselves, and those told by other Kongo groups about Vili migrations. These traditions vary and are at times contradictory in their details, yet it is possible to discern two main themes. Some traditions tell of the arrival of the main body of the people on the Atlantic coast; others tell of the first Maloango² and the foundation of the Loango kingdom.

Traditions suggest that the Vili, having broken away from other Kongo groups on the north side of the Congo river, passed through the Mayombe to reach the coast where they settled. Some traditions indicate that they arrived in the Cabinda region from where they moved northwards to settle beyond the Chiloango river. A Nsundi and Laadi tradition tells of a man, Mbakala Nzondo, who lived at a place called Zimba, with his children. Following "God's will", he left his people and crossed the Congo river from the Boma side to a place called Nsada a Nzondo. After his departure the inhabitants of Zimba had a dispute and scattered. Some followed

¹W. H. Bentley, Dictionary, xi; M. Guthrie, The Classification of the Bantu Languages, London, 1948, 33-35, 50-51.

²In Loango, the title "Muene" or "Mani" meaning a person in authority, often a ruler or local chief, was usually shortened to "Ma".

Mbakala Nzondo and founded the Kongo kingdom in the south, while others went westwards to the Mayombe and the coast, to found Loango, Kakongo and Ngoyo.¹ Other Nsundi traditions suggest a principal point of dispersion in the rich copper mining region south of the Niari valley. Owing to a rapid growth of population famine and conflict, Kongo groups migrated westwards and founded kingdoms in the Mayombe and on the Loango Coast.² Yombe traditions suggest that the ancestors of the Vili and Yombe approached the coastal region from the north. Having reached the Chiloango river, the Yombe turned east into the Mayombe forests, while the Vili remained behind in the coastal savannas.³ Some Vili traditions also claim that their ancestors came from the north.⁴

Another Vili tradition suggests a common origin for the Teke, Kongo, Woyo and Vili. These originated in a country situated "very far away, in the centre of Africa". A woman called Nguunu had four sons, Mouteke, Moukongo, Mooyo and Movili. These were the progenitors of the peoples who later bore their names. The

¹J. Cuvelier, "Traditions Congolaises", Congo, II, 4, 1930, 470, 472.

²K. Laman, The Kongo, Stockholm, 1953, I, 17; II, 137.

³A. Doutreloux, L'Ombre des Fétiches: Société et Culture Yombe, Louvain, 1967, 36. According to Doutreloux, Vidi or Vili means "those who were lost" or "those who were left behind", see 36 fn. 17.

⁴E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 165.

four related groups lived together for a long time in the same region which became too small for their subsistence. They were obliged to separate. At first, the Woyo and Vili remained together in the Cabinda region. Then, a continued land shortage caused the Vili to move northwards along the coast.¹

The traditions surrounding the person or kingdom of Nguunu may hold the key to a further understanding of the origins of the Vili. Laman wrote that a kingdom called Nguunu had once existed along the Loango coast and had extended into the interior. The dialects of the inhabitants of this region, including that of the Vili, Kunyi and Bembe have a strong trace of Teke influence.² Anderson found that the term "Nguunu" or "children of Nguunu" could refer to the Vili, Yombe, Kunyi, Lumbu, Punu, Bwisi, Tsangi, Yaka and Lali, although it was less applied to the Teke and Bembe.³ Common origins for the peoples of the Loango coast and the interior are also suggested by Dapper's comment that "all the people who live on the coast have derived their laws, customs and privileges

¹ R. Lethur, Étude sur le Royaume de Loango et le Peuple Vili, Pointe-Noire, 1952, published as Les Cahiers Ngonge, II, 1960, 2-4.

² K. Laman, The Kongo, I, 17; Dictionnaire Kikongo-Francais, Brussels, 1936, vi.

³ Cited by B. Söderberg, Les Instruments de Musique au Bas-Congo et dans les Régions Avoisinantes, Stockholm, 1956, 16.

from those of Pombo".¹ Professor Vansina has suggested that this evidence may indicate that the kingdoms of Loango, Kakongo, Ngoyo, Kongo and Anziko all derived from a prototype north of Stanley Pool. They were founded after the diffusion of the various peoples from this earlier kingdom of Nguunu.²

Recent Vili traditions have claimed that the first settlers arrived peacefully in the coastal region since they found it uninhabited. One tradition tells that, having arrived in the region of Cabinda with the Woyo, the Vili sent out a reconnaissance expedition led by a young woman of great beauty, Ponzou Nzinga. These pioneers found a great uninhabited plain where the leader chose the site of the future Loango capital.³ This account certainly allowed the Vili an undisputed claim to the land.

There is evidence, however, that the Vili were by no means the first to inhabit the coastal region. Archaeological excavations near Pointe-Noire have yielded evidence of a population which used stone tools. Bifaced hand-axes and cutting instruments, finely sharpened laurel leaf and foliated points, chips and rejects from

¹O. Dapper, Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche Gewesten 2nd edn., Amsterdam, 1676, 219. Pombo in this context means the region north of Stanley Pool, also called Pumbu.

²J. Vansina, "Notes sur l'Origine du Royaume de Kongo", JAH, IV, 1, 1963, 37-38; with R. Mauny and L. V. Thomas (eds.), The Historian in Tropical Africa, Oxford, 1964, 96.

³R. Lethur, Étude sur le Royaume de Loango, 22.

the stone industry, have been uncovered under several layers of sand.¹

The Vili may have been directly preceded by another population, if indeed they did not displace them. According to Lopes, the area between the Equator and the Congo river had formerly been inhabited by people called Bramas.² This may have been a reference to a small group of people, the Barama, who now live to the north-east of the Nyanga river and who are related linguistically to the Eshira of Gabon.³ There is little evidence to substantiate the point, however. Probably, the incoming Vili displaced groups of pygmies who were scattered through West Central Africa before the coming of the Bantu. The Loango Coast groups may have been pushed into the Mayombe forests. Seventeenth century sources tell of pygmy hunters who lived in the Mayombe. They provided Loango traders with ivory and animal skins.⁴ Laman and Wannyn refer to some Kongo traditions that the first inhabitants of the region between Stanley Pool and the sea were the Bongo or Mbaka-Mbaka, the pygmies.⁵ Laman also points to the great respect shown

¹G. Droux and H. Kelly, "Recherches Préhistoriques dans le Région de Boko-Songho et à Pointe-Noire (Moyen Congo)", Journal de la Société des Africanistes, IX, 1939, 71-83.

²Willy Bal (ed.), Description du Royaume de Congo et des Contrées Environnantes par Filippo Pigafetta et Duarte Lopes (1591), Louvain, 1963, 31, 64.

³H. Deschamps, Traditions Orales et Archives au Gabon, Paris, 1962, 18, 20; A.R.Walker, Notes d'Histoire de Gabon, Brazzaville, 1960, 8.

⁴Andrew Battell, 59.

⁵K. Laman, The Kongo, I, 8-9; R. L. Wannyn, L'Art Ancien du Metal au Bas-Congo, Brussels, 1961, 10.

to the pygmies in the courts of the Manikongo and the Maloango. This may indicate honour paid to the original inhabitants of the region, for in other respects the pygmies were regarded as inferior to the Kongo and Vili.¹ According to Dapper, the oldest Loango inhabitants said that at some time in the past the region had been inhabited by people who were hunters and gatherers.²

A different theme in Vili traditions concerns the appointment of the first Maloango and the unification of the Loango kingdom under him. Again, there are different strands within this theme. One group of traditions links the appointment of the first ruler with the affairs of the Kongo kingdom. At one time the Loango Coast was part of the greater Kongo kingdom. Finding the region too large to govern himself, the founder, Nimi a Lukeni, gathered together his "nieces and nephews" and entrusted them with the newly conquered regions. These included Loango, Kakongo and Ngoyo. Distance and the difficulties of communication across the Congo river allowed the people to the north great freedom. Finally, the governor of Loango rebelled and established himself as king of an independent country.³ In the nineteenth century, Pechuël-Loesche and Dennett

¹ K. Laman, The Kongo, I, 9; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 166.

² O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 143.

³ J. Cuvelier, "Traditions Congolaises", 480-484, 487; J. Merolla, A Voyage to Congo and Several Other Countries in Southern Africa, trans. from the Italian in a Collection of Voyages and Travels, compiled by A. Churchill, London, 1732, I, 651; G. Cavazzi, Istorica Descrizione de'tre Regni Congo, Matamba et Angola, Bologna, 1687, 564.

recorded Vili traditions about their early associations with Kongo. According to Dennett's informants, "Tumu Kongo sent his sons, Kakongo and Loango, to govern these provinces and together with these two sons, the Manikongo sent a priest or rain doctor called Ngoyo. Even to this day when the rains do not come at their proper season, the princes of Kakongo and Loango send their ambassadors to Ngoyo with presents for Nganga Ngoyo". Pechuël-Loesche and Dennett also give similar traditions on the coming of the first Maloango. When Kongo's sons arrived at the banks of the Chiloango river,¹ a ferryman, Nsau, helped the Maloango to cross and had his wife prepare a great feast of welcome. In Dennett's time, it was still possible to trace the route which the Maloango took from San Salvador, for the ground where the Maloango rested became blessed and shrines marked the way.² Such traditions may not record actual events, however. They may simply be an expression of the ties, sometimes mythical, which all Kongo peoples feel with the Manikongo and San Salvador. This feeling existed even in recent times.³ If the Maloango could claim that his authority derived from the founder, Nimi a Lukeni, he would greatly reinforce his authority.

¹The Chiloango river was the boundary between Kakongo and Loango. It is sometimes referred to as the Kakongo river or the Loango Luize river.

²R. E. Dennett, Notes on the Folklore of the Fjort, London, 1898, 1-2; Seven Years among the Fjort, London, 1887, 50-57; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 167-169, 184.

³G. Balandier, Sociologie Actuelle de l'Afrique Noire, Paris, 1955, 285.

Dapper gives a different tradition. He identifies Zarry, a territory on the north side of the Congo river and an eastern province of Kakongo as the source of Loango rulers.¹ It seems very probable that Zarry was adjacent to Bungu, the small kingdom which was the place of origin of the first Manikongo.² Zarry, before its conquest by Kakongo, may have been founded about the same time as Bungu, by Kongo clans who migrated into the area after the general dispersion from the Stanley Pool region. If the Maloango was indeed closely related to the Kongo royal family, it is understandable that he should claim his place of origin from the same region of the southern Mayombe.

Other traditions recounted more recently, suggest that the appointment of the first Maloango was a voluntary action by the chiefs of Vili clans who had settled in the coastal region. It was an action born of expediency, for the well-being of the people was threatened by constant rivalry between the various groups. The most powerful oracle on the Loango Coast, Bunsu, in Ngoyo was consulted. One tradition relates that the priest gave the Vili delegation a young girl, Mani Mafouka, who was married to the delegation leader. Two children were born from the union, Ntumba

¹ O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 143.

² The most recent discussions have generally accepted that Bungu was the birthplace of the first Kongo ruler. See J. Vansina, "Notes sur l'Origine du Royaume de Kongo", 33-38; D. Birmingham, Trade and Conflict in Angola, Oxford, 1966, 5-8; W. G. L. Randles, L'Ancien Royaume du Congo des Origines à la Fin du XIX^e Siècle, Paris, 1968, 17-18.

and Poaty. The latter was elected and consecrated Maloango at Kondi in Pili. The ruling dynasty took the name of Kondi.¹ Another tradition tells that the earliest Loango rulers were members of the Buvandji family. In a short time, nine of its members died and the priests saw this as a divine act. Again an assembly of chiefs decided to send to Bunsu for advice. He consecrated a young girl, Nombe. She married a prince from the village of Kondi, and founded a new dynasty with that name. A second son founded an alternative line called Nkata.² Another Vili source claims that only the Kondi family can legitimately provide a Maloango.³

There was apparently some rivalry among the various Vili leaders before the first Maloango finally was recognised as paramount ruler. Dapper's account gives the name of various local rulers who opposed the Maloango and who were finally overcome by force and by diplomacy. The Maniwansi gave most trouble, while two campaigns were necessary to subdue the Manipili and the Manichilongo. Awed by such power, the Maniyumba submitted peacefully, as did the rulers of Sette and Doecke (?). The victorious Maloango then divided the conquered territories among the members of his family and his

¹J. Sinaid-Tchilimbou, "Fondation de Bouali ou Diosso", Liaison, LXI, Jan.-Feb., 1958, 51-53.

²R. Lethur, Étude sur le Royaume de Loango, 23.

³J. Pouabou, "Le Peuple Vili ou Loango", Liaison, LIX, Sept.-Oct., 1957, 57-59.

most faithful advisers. He had lived in Loangomongo province, but he now moved to live in Pili. He became dissatisfied, however, because of the mountains and the distance from the sea. He therefore moved to the capital of Loangiri province called Buali. The inhabitants of Pili (or Piri) were called Moutsie Pili, meaning the people of Pili, and this became shortened to Mouvili.¹

A tentative dating of the foundation of Loango may be attempted, through its connections with the Kongo kingdom. Recent efforts at dating the establishment of the Kongo founder, Nimi a Lukeni, in San Savador, have tried to ascertain the number of rulers who succeeded him up until the reign of Nzinga a Nkuwu, who was the ruler at the end of the fifteenth century when the Portuguese first arrived in the region. Estimates range from two to six intervening rulers. A date in the second half of the fourteenth century has therefore been deduced for the founding of Kongo.²

If the first Maloango traced his authority to the Manikongo, the second half of the fourteenth century may have also been the period in which Loango was founded. If the Vili were part of a wider migration of Kongo peoples, the arrival of the first settlers in the coastal regions was probably some time before, perhaps in the thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries. The independence which

¹0. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 143-144. An "l" and "r" are interchangeable in Kikongo.

²For discussions of this problem see, G. Balandier, La Vie Quotidienne au Royaume du Congo du XVI^e au XVIII^e Siècle, Paris, 1965, 22, 270; W.G.L.Randles, L'Ancien Royaume du Congo, 18, 234.

Loango had achieved from her Kongo overlord by the early sixteenth century, also suggests that a considerable period of time had elapsed both since the founding of Loango and since its successful breakaway from Kongo. Loango was apparently not a burning issue for the Manikongo when the Portuguese arrived in 1483. He requested help against the Teke and other rebels, but not against the Vili. Probably the winning of Loango independence was already a fait accompli. The many domestic and foreign problems which preoccupied the Kongo rulers in the sixteenth century, further assured Loango's independence. By 1535, the Manikongo had given up even a nominal claim to Loango. He did not mention that kingdom among his titles, although he continued to call himself king of other regions north of the Congo river, such as Bungu, Kakongo, Ngoyo and the Teke kingdom of Anziko.¹ Later in the sixteenth century, the relations of Kongo and Loango were good. According to Lopes, who reported the situation in the 1570s, the Maloango who was once a subject of the Manikongo was now his friend and no longer his vassal. The Maloango even asked the Manikongo for aid when the Vili were at war with the Teke.²

The earliest detailed accounts of the Loango kingdom are found in early seventeenth century sources. The core of the kingdom was

¹ A. Brásio, Monumenta Missionaria Africana: Africa Occidental, Lisbon, 1953, first series, II, 38, Afonso I to Paulo III.

² Pigafetta and Lopes, 31, 64, 65.

the coastal region between the Chiloango river and the province of Mayumba which extended south as far as the southern end of the Banya lagoon. This area was divided into four provinces - Loangiri, Loangomongo, Pili, and Chilongo. The boundaries of these provinces are not clear, but their approximate position can be given.¹

Loangiri (sometimes called Loango) stretched along the coast from the Chiloango river to the Kwilu river. It was an important province since it contained the royal capital at Buali² and the main coastal trading point at Loango Bay.³ The capital had a fine situation on some high ground. It was described by Dutch traders as "an extremely pleasant place" and "like Paradise".⁴ Andrew Battell wrote:

... The town of Mani Longo [Loango] is three miles from the waterside and standeth on a great plain. This town is full of palm and plantain trees and very fresh, and their houses are built under the trees. The streets are wide and long, and always clean swept. The King hath his houses on the west side, and before his door he hath a plain [square] where he sitteth when he has any feastings or matters of war to treat of. From this plain there goeth a great wide street, some musket-shot from the place; and there is a great market every day....⁵

¹This account of the Loango provinces is based on Dapper and Battell. Nineteenth and Twentieth century sources tend to subdivide the four Loango provinces; in particular they split up Loangiri and Loangomongo into smaller provinces. This may have been due to a weakening of the central authority. See chapter 8.

²The site of Buali is at present identifiable with the village of Diosso; Buali is now a district near Pointe-Noire. The incident which brought about this change in name took place between about 1850 and 1883. For the details, see J. Sinald-Tchilimbou, "Fondation de Bouali ou Diosso", 53.

³There is much confusion about the use of the word "Loango", since it has been used to refer to the kingdom, the province and the port. Here, for the sake of clarity, Loango Bay describes the harbour,

Dapper compared the size of Buali to that of Amsterdam.¹ In the eighteenth century, the population was estimated at 15,000, housed in about 500 compounds and each with a piece of cultivated land round about.² This was a sizeable city compared to an average Vili village of 100 inhabitants or an important centre of 500 people.³ In the seventeenth century, the king's court occupied about half the town. There were three or four large houses and about 250 smaller ones, all surrounded by an enclosure formed by palm trees.⁴ Great prestige was attached to living in the capital. Thus, the most trusted followers of the Maloango and many of the most notable people in the land had houses in Buali.⁵ Another important place, situated only a few miles from the capital, was Loangele (or Loangiri) where Maloangos were buried. Their graves

Loango the kingdom, and Loangiri the province.

⁴K. Ratelband (ed.), Reizen naar West-Afrika van Pieter van den Broecke, 1605-1614, The Hague, 1950, 64; S. P. l'Honoré Naber (ed.), Samuel Brun's Schiffarten (1624), The Hague, 1913, 9.

⁵Andrew Battell, 43.

¹O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 144.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage à la Côte Occidentale d'Afrique... 1786 et 1787, Paris, 1801, I, 68-69.

³ibid., I, 190; J. Falkenstein, Afrikansches Album: Die Loango-Küste, Berlin, 1877, 12.

⁴Broecke, 64.

⁵Benoît Gnaly, "Diosso, Capital du Royaume des Vili, se meurt", Liaison, XXXVI, June 1953, 6-8.

were marked by circles of elephants' tusks.¹ Eighteenth and nineteenth century sources also mention Lubu where princes of Loango were buried.² Loangiri was well-populated. The people were fishermen, salt-makers, weavers; the fertile and well-watered land encouraged agriculture.³

A second Loango province, Loangomongo, was probably situated to the east of Loangiri, towards the Mayombe foothills. The word means "hilly" or "high" Loango. The people were weavers and traders. Loangomongo produced more palm-oil than any other Loango province.⁴ The province of Pili was situated on both sides of the Kwilu river, north-east of Buali. This was a well-populated fertile and flat land. The people were farmers and kept cattle and poultry.⁵ The fourth province, Chilongo, lay between the Kwilu river and the Mayumba boundary. It was the biggest province and also well-populated. Farming and honey-collecting were important occupations. There was also a plentiful supply of ivory, probably acquired both through trade to the north and east, and by hunting.⁶

¹Andrew Battell, 51.

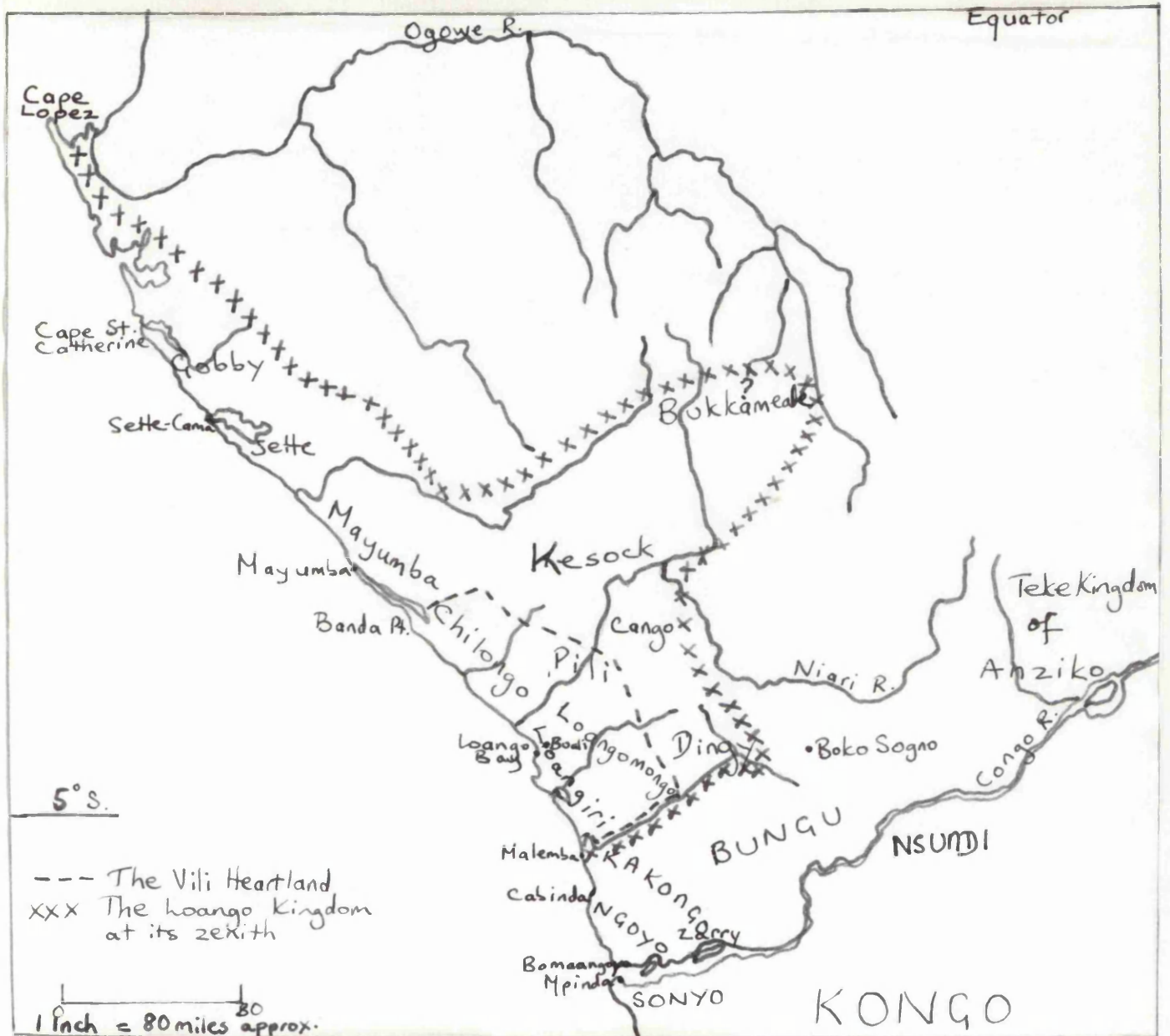
²L. B. Proyard, Histoire de Loango, Kakongo et autre Royaumes d'Afrique, Paris, 1776, see map; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste, Jena, 1874, I, 265.

³O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 143, 159.

⁴ibid., 143, 159; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 147.

⁵O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 143-144, 159; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 250, 251.

⁶Andrew Battell, 52-53; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 143, 146.



Loango and its Neighbours in the Seventeenth Century.

The many references to fertile farming land and the thriving Vili population deserve some comment. Population growth must have been due in part to the good food resources of the region. Farming, fishing, hunting, and salt-making were important activities.

The cultivation of the fields was entirely done by women. Their only implements were mattocks and hoes.¹ By the beginning of the seventeenth century, a relatively wide range of crops could be found in Loango. Several of the foodstuffs had been introduced from regions outside the African Continent. Battell enumerated no less than four types of "corn".² These seem to include two types of millet (masanga and luku), a sorghum (masembala) and maize which was introduced by the Portuguese called massamamputo. This was probably the American maize, first imported into Europe and then introduced into Kongo and Angola. One suggestion has been that the Portuguese encouraged the growing of maize in order to provide a staple from which to feed slaves. Once introduced, the use of the new grain spread quickly to other Kongo regions including the Loango Coast.³

Another important crop introduced from America was cassava.

¹Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 11; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 149.

²Andrew Battell, 67, 67 fns. 1, 2, 3, 4. For a useful discussion of the various types of millet, sorghum and maize, and their Kikongo names, see W. Bal, Pigafetta and Lopes, 193-195.

³M. P. Miracle, "The Introduction and Spread of Maize in Africa", JAH, I, 6, 1965, 42-46.

This was known in Loango by the early seventeenth century.

Samuel Brun referred to "casavy" growing "as thick as a man's leg".¹ According to him it was prepared by pounding and drying and then made into bread. Cassava may also have reached the Loango Coast from Angola. Dierick Ruiters wrote that the Portuguese in Brazil, loaded their ships with flour made from "mantiocque" which was used to make bread. They took it to Angola where it became very popular and was exchanged for slaves.² Yet, in the early seventeenth century, it had not overtaken maize as the staple. Samuel Brun is the only source which refers to cassava in Loango, while in the Kongo kingdom the missionary Jean-François de Rome appears to have been the first writer to give a detailed description of cassava and its uses.³ There was a large variety of other food stuffs apart from these basic items: groundnuts, bananas, plantains, pineapples, citrus fruits, beans, Benin pepper, sweet potatoes, yams, sugar cane, and the all-important palm tree which yielded wine and oil.⁴

Fishing was carried on in the sea and in the many lagoons and rivers. Broecke witnessed about 300 canoes going out to sea

¹ Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 6.

² S. P. L'Honoré Naber (ed.), Toortse der Zee-Vaart door Dierick Ruiters (1623), The Hague, 1913, 13, 15.

³ F. Bontinck (ed.), Brève Relation de la Fondation de la Mission des Frères Mineurs Capucins... au Royaume de Congo, Louvain, 1964, 90, 90 fn. 134.

⁴ Andrew Battell, 67-68; Broecke, 67, 70.

every morning and returning about midday. The canoes were made from trees hollowed out by fire; they could carry about 30 people. In the open sea, the fish were usually caught in great nets made from the fibres of trees such as the banana tree. Plaited baskets were used in secluded bays or arms of the sea. On their return the fishing boats were met by a great crowd of people who awaited the sale of the fish. It was not salted, but dried in the sun or smoked, before being taken off to the markets.¹

Seventeenth century accounts which tell that salt was a major trade product, say little about its preparation. Later sources, however, describe the traditional methods of salt production. This was a widespread industry on the Loango Coast, especially on the shores north of the Kwilu river, in Chilongo province. The salt was such good quality that it was preferred to imported European salt. There were also salt-works on lagoons and at inland marshes.²

The traditional process involved the evaporation of sea-water over a fire. The beaches were dotted with rough sheds where the salt-making took place. Inside, stoves made of clay or the stuff of termite mounds were set up with the fire kindled inside. Fuel was pushed through holes in the sides of the stoves. On top of each was

¹Broecke, 69; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 132-133; L.B. Proyart, Histoire, 50-51; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 158.

²L. B. Proyart, Histoire, 108; J. Cuvelier, Documents sur une Mission Française au Kakongo, 1766-1776, Brussels, 1953, 96, 98; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 42, 273.

a hole, on which a brass or copper pot containing sea-water was placed. This was boiled until only the salt remained. Sometimes the operation was a family affair; the children helped to collect the sea-water and firewood. The salt was packed in long cylindrically-shaped baskets and sold to inland traders such as the Yaka who came to the coast to buy it. Sometimes the salt-works were in the hands of a group of individuals. These worked at the salt preparation for two or three weeks, until enough had been collected to fill the baskets which they themselves carried to the inland markets. Others then took their place at the salt-works.¹

The influence of Loango extended far beyond the four central provinces. Some seventeenth century accounts give Cape Lopez as the northern limits of the Vili kingdom,² while others suggest Cape Saint Catherine.³ The latter seems the more realistic limit at this period. Dutch traders who visited the ruler of Cape Lopez suggest by their comments that he was an independent ruler rather than the vassal of the Maloango. He lived in a town called Olibatta,

¹P. Güssfeldt, Die Loango-Expedition, 1873-1876, Leipzig, 1879, I, 186; AOM, Gabon IV/11, Report from M. Ehrmann, Mayumba, 31.10.1887. Other Loango industries such as cloth-weaving, redwood and ivory trading, and smithing are discussed in Chapter 2.

²A. Brásio, MMA, VI, 479, 481, Account of the Loango Kingdom, 1620; A. de O. de Cadornega, História Geral das Guerras Angolanas, Lisbon, 1940-42, III, 231; OWIC 46, Summary of the Situation on the Angola Coasts by Pieter Zegers, 1643. The document is published in L. Jadin, "Rivalités Luso-Néerlandaises au Soûb, Congo, 1600-1675", BIHBR, XXXVII, 1966, 237-244.

³O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 143.

a few miles from the coast. There were about 200 houses in the place.¹

The Maloango's rule may have extended as far as the small estate called Gobby or Goebby in contemporary Dutch sources. The name may be a corruption of the name Ngove or Ngobe which describes both the lagoon south-east of Saint Catherine and the people who live in the area. Abbé Walker has suggested that the Ngobe, part of the Eshira group, arrived in the region about 1700 from the north-east and pushed the Vili south.² Cappelle's report suggests that the Ngobe had already reached Cape Saint Catherine by 1642.³ In the seventeenth century, the principal town where the chief lived was a day's journey from the coast. The country and the people were inhospitable. The inhabitants sent their ivory, the main product, to Mayumba or Loangiri to sell. The Maloango may have retained influence in the region through this trading relationship.⁴

The extent of the Maloango's power towards the north-east is also uncertain. By the nineteenth century, groups of Vili had settled on the upper Ngunie and on the Ogowe where they were middle-

¹ Broecke, 25-26; S. P. L'Honoré Naber (ed.), Beschrijvinge ende Historische Verhael van het Gout Koninckrijk van Guinea... door P. de Marees, The Hague, 1912, 246-249.

² A. R. Walker, Notes d'Histoire de Gabon, 12, 14, 16.

³ OWIC 46, F. Cappelle to OWIC directors, March, 1642. A part of this document has been published by L. Jadin, "Rivalités Luso-Néerlandaises", 221-237.

⁴ O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 147.

men in the ivory and salt trade.¹ One theory is that these Vili were remnants from a period when Loango power extended over the region. Most Vili were then pushed south by incoming groups such as the Eshira, Fang and Kele.² An alternative explanation of these pockets of Vili was given by Pechuël-Loesche. He maintained that these were emigrants from the Loango kingdom in the eighteenth century. They had a disagreement with the Vili ruler and settled in the northern regions.³

On the coast south of Gobby, Battell names Sette as a Loango province. The region was especially known for the large quantities of redwood and ivory which it exported. The Sette inhabitants could communicate by canoe both with the Ogowe to the north and Mayumba to the south. The Maloango's representative levied a 10⁰/o tax on the redwood which was brought to Mayumba for sale. Since the people of Sette were not great traders they preferred this system rather than organise the export trade themselves.⁴ If they were originally brought under the Maloango's rule by force, economic self-interest may have cemented the attachment.

Mayumba was the largest and most important of Loango's northern territories. The village of Mayumba was situated at the

¹A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 110: II, 109; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 3.

²A. R. Walker, Notes d'Histoire de Gabon, 10.

³E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 3.

⁴Andrew Battell, 58; Broecke, 48; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 146-147.

northern end of the Banya lagoon, which was about fifty miles long. The floor of this lagoon was covered with oysters. They were easily collected in the dry season and provided a principal means of subsistence for the whole area. The thick forests sheltered all kinds of wildlife, including elephants. Ivory was the principal export. Traditions related that Mayumba had been conquered by the ruler of Chilongo province and then had submitted to the Maloango without resistance.¹

Towards the east, most of the Mayombe north of Bungu was controlled by the Maloango. The Niari valley was probably a no-man's land between Loango and Anziko, and also the scene of Vili-Teke wars.² Battell refers to three Loango provinces which seem to have been in the Mayombe. In the northern part of the region, about eight days journey east of Mayumba was the province of Kesock. Traders from Mayumba and Loangiri came to trade, especially in ivory and the tail hairs of elephants. The Manikesock received tribute from pygmies who lived in the north-east of his province. These were very shy people who shunned any contact with foreign traders such as the Vili. They would not enter the houses of the people of Kesock or allow them to come into the region where the pygmies lived.³ This sort of relationship, where the pygmies lived

¹ Andrew Battell, 53-54; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 144, 145-146, 148; P. Güssfeldt, Die Loango-Expedition, I, 186.

² Pigafetta and Lopes, 32, 65; G. Sautter, De l'Atlantique au Fleuve Congo, une Géographie du Sous-Peuplement, Paris, 1966, II, 620-621.

³ Andrew Battell, 58-59.

in a state of semi-dependence on their Bantu neighbours, paying tribute in return for protection, was very common in the Congo regions. The dependence was not the result of force but based on mutual understanding. Sometimes their trade was silent; they removed the goods and left others in exchange.¹

South of Kesock and fourteen days journey from Buali was "the great province of Cango.... This place is full of mountains and rocky ground, and full of woods, and hath a great store of copper. The elephants in this place do excel".² It is doubtful if there were copper deposits in Cango; perhaps the region was situated on the east side of the Mayombe and had access to the Boko Sogno-Mindouli copper mines. East of Loangiri and west of Anziko was the province of Bongo.³ The geographical vagueness of Battell is not surprising, for this was probably another reference to pygmies who were scattered through the whole Mayombe and often called Babongo.

A fourth Loango province which was situated in the Mayombe was Dingy. According to Laman, this was the name of a Nsundi clan which settled in the Mayombe.⁴ Dingy was located on the upper

¹E. de Jonghe, Les Formes d'Asservissement dans les Sociétés Indigènes du Congo Belge, Brussels, 1949, 23-26, 32; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 138-143, 252.

²Andrew Battell, 52.

³ibid., 52.

⁴K. Laman, The Kongo, I, 20.

reaches of the Chiloango river; it adjoined Bungu. Dapper tells that it was a large province with many towns and villages. Although it paid tribute to Loango, the inhabitants reserved the right to choose their own ruler.¹

The greatest extension of Loango's power was to a province called Bukkameale. This was situated about 200-300 miles from the Loango Coast and north-east of the Loango capital. The journey there and back took three months. Although its exact location is unknown, Bukkameale lay beyond the Mayombe, for Dapper refers to the very desolate area full of great woods and wild beasts that lay between the coast and Bukkameale.² A tentative geographical location, suggested by Dapper's comments, might be the southern edge of the Massif du Chaillu. Avelot has suggested that the word may be derived from Mboko or Mbuku meaning a vassal, and Meale, the name of a village now unknown.³ Alternatively, this may be a reference to a small group of people called Boumoueele. These are related to the Nzabi and live at present in the southern part of the Massif du Chaillu.⁴

¹O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 145, 147; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 251; II, 69.

²O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 216, 217.

³R. Avelot, "Recherches sur l'Histoire des Migrations dans le Bassin de L'Ogooué et la Région littorale adjacente", Bulletin de Géographie, Historique et Descriptive, XX, 1905, 366.

⁴H. Deschamps, Traditions Orales, 20.

The latter explanation seems unlikely, however, if the inhabitants were Jaga, as Dapper informs.¹ The frequent use of the term Jaga in sixteenth and seventeenth century accounts suggests that it was a general term for those who threatened the Kongo and Ndongo kingdoms from the east.² It was often a term of abuse, although the tales of cannibalism and infanticide were probably exaggerated by their Kongo enemies who were often the informants of Europeans. The origins of the Jaga are uncertain but they seem to have been started on their westward migration by the upheavals in the Luba-Lunda regions in Katanga.³

Following their sack of San Salvador in the reign of the Manikongo, Alvaro I, they were expelled from the capital by a combined Kongo-Portuguese force in 1574. Some Jaga returned east of the Kwango; others crossed the Congo river and spread through the Niari valley. The territory of Bukkameale may have been founded by the Jaga who crossed the Niari river to its right bank. This state seems to have been an attempt by the wandering Jaga to lead a settled life. Their descendants, the Yaka, have all the cultural traits of the Yaka of the Kwango, reflecting their common origin.⁴

¹O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 216.

²M. Plancquaert, Les Jaga et les Bayaka du Kwango, Brussels, 1932, 54.

³J. Vansina, Kingdoms of the Savanna, Wisconsin, 1966, 67.

⁴M. Plancquaert, Les Jaga, 73-74.

By 1642, the Jaga were a threat to the trade contacts of Loango traders in the region east of the Mayombe and especially in the copper-mining areas. The Maloango tried to bring the Jaga under his control whenever possible.¹ Relations with Bukkameale clearly represented one such successful attempt. Not only did the Jaga of Bukkameale recognise the sovereignty of the Maloango, they also paid him tribute and helped him in war. Such an ally must have been of great value to the Vili ruler. Bukkameale was rich in ivory; it was also a bulwark on Loango's eastern frontier. The Jaga of Bukkameale may at first have come under the Maloango's rule by force, but like other peripheral territories of the Vili empire, they were probably in alliance through self-interest. The coastal traders brought the Bukkameale inhabitants essential products such as salt and palm-oil. In exchange, they took ivory back to the coast.²

The Maloango was the key figure in the political structure of this powerful kingdom. He was the supreme Lawgiver and Protector of the people, the ultimate sanction of all administrative activities on a local and national level. The Vili believed that he had a semi-divine status, because of a unique relationship with Nzambi, the Creator. The Loango ruler's position was exemplified in such titles as Ntotela, the Supreme Ruler, Nganga Mvumbi, the

¹OWIC 46, Cappelle Report, March 1642; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 158.

²O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 216-217.

Guardian of Spirits and Ntinu, the Supreme Judge.¹

The divine nature of the Maloango is a recurrent theme in Loango traditions. When the first Maloango crossed the Chiloango river and entered his kingdom, the earth became green, fires burned more brightly, water gushed forth and crops ripened, wherever he went. It was as if the new Maloango were a Messiah. When the Maloango died, the world stood still. Strong prohibitions called Xima came into force. All fires were extinguished, all work stopped, markets ceased: there could be no noise, no merrymaking. The nearer one lived to the capital, the stricter the Xima.²

Tradition concerning fire reveal the vitality and life which the Maloango imparted to everything and everyone in the kingdom. At the coronation ceremony of a new Maloango, a state fire, which burned until his death, was lit. From this fire, other fires were kindled. These were carried ceremoniously through the kingdom by envoys and handed over to the local rulers. The acceptance of the fire and the lighting of a local fire was an act of recognition of the new ruler. Those who rejected it were declared rebels. The people were then able to kindle their house fires from that lit

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 155; R. E. Dennett, At the Back of the Black Man's Mind or Notes on the Kingly Office in West Africa, London, 1906, 24; J. Pouabou, "Le Peuple Vili ou Loango", 57. For the sake of uniformity, the spelling of Kikongo words is that given by W. H. Bentley, Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Languages.

²E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 155, 167.

by the local chief. The tradition is confirmation of the Maloango's authority in the political sense.¹

Seventeenth century accounts of Loango show the strength of Vili belief in the king's quasi-divine nature. For example, once a year, in December, at the beginning of the season of heavy rains, there was a great festival when the people gathered to thank the ruler for his protection and to ask him to command rain to fall: "After they have sported and shewed the king pleasure, he ariseth and standeth upon his throne, and taketh a bow and arrows in his hand, and shooteth to the sky; and that day there is great rejoicing, because sometimes they have rain".²

European observers were always extremely impressed by the secrecy surrounding the Maloango's eating and drinking habits:

... When the king drinketh he hath a cup of wine brought, and he that bringeth it hath a bell in his hand, and as soon as he hath delivered the cup to the king, he turneth his face from the king, and ringeth a bell; and then all that be there fall down upon their faces, and rise not till the king have drunk. And this is very dangerous for any stranger, that knoweth not the fashions, for if any seeth the king drink he is presently killed... whatsoever he be... Likewise for his diet, when it is dinner-time, there is a house of purpose, where he always eateth, and there his diet is set upon a

¹ ibid., 170-174, 184. Pechuël-Loesche gives many details about the state fire.

² Andrew Battell, 46-47; other sources suggest that the Maloango made rain through the mediation of his priests, a procedure less taxing on his own reputation; or that he sent to the Bunsu oracle in Ngoyo. See OWIC, Cappelle Report, March 1642; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 119-120; R. E. Dennett, At the Back of the Black Man's Mind, pp. 67-68.

bensa, like a table. Then he goeth in, and hath the door shut. So when he hath eaten, then he knocketh and cometh out. So that none see the king eat nor drink. For it is their belief, that if he be seen eating or drinking, he shall presently die...¹

The Maloango lived a secluded life in his palace at Buali. He attended to most of the public business at meetings and audiences which were held in the large square in front of the royal court. He arrived accompanied by the nobles and announced by the royal trumpeters who played instruments carved from elephant tusks. He sat in great splendour on a throne on a raised dais. Here, he received homage and tribute from Vili leaders who came from all parts of the kingdom; he welcomed foreign ambassadors; he celebrated the killing of a leopard² or some unusual event. The Maloango also conducted some of his daily business in public. This included adjudicating disputes or criminal cases, discussing affairs of war and peace, promulgating new laws, nominating officials, and discussing matters of trade.³

¹ Andrew Battell, 45-46; for other accounts of the same custom, see, Broecke, 64-65; Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 14-15; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 161-163.

² The leopard was the royal animal; the skins were worn only by the king and nobles. The killing of the leopard was a special event; if it happened near the capital the king himself was carried out on an elaborate portable throne to inspect the dead animal; see O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 168; R. E. Dennett, Folklore of the Fjort, 10.

³ O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 164-167; OWIC 46, Cappelle Report, 1642; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 139; Andrew Battell, 44.

The administration was strictly hierarchical: all power derived from the Maloango who appointed officials. Posts were often reserved for his most trusted followers or the members of his family who were not in line to succeed to the throne, such as his sons, brothers and sisters. The principal advisers of the Maloango were the four provincial governors. Chief of these was the Maboma who combined the governorships of Loangiri and Mayumba provinces. The Maboma was the chief judge in the kingdom, after the Maloango. The three other governors were the Manimamba of Loangomongo, the Manikinga of Pili and the Manibeloor of Chilongo. The latter was also responsible for certain matters concerning religion, especially the identification of sorcerers by ordeal. Other royal councillors were the Makaka who was commander of the royal guard and the army; the Manidonga, who was the guardian of the king's wives; four Mavunden, who were the royal cup-bearers; the Buton Ambamma who was a servant of the Maboma; and several other less important nobles.¹

Once decisions were taken, they were made known throughout the kingdom by envoys called Manibeles. The Maloango's Manibele was a greatly respected figure, and everyone honoured his word. The mark of his position was a long copper ceremonial knife. Other messengers carried some token of their master that could be recognised by others.²

¹O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 146, 159; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 126, 139; Andrew Battell, 59; Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 8-9. Dapper calls the army commander Manimatta, but Makaka was the more usual name.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 203-204; Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 8.

The chief function of local administrators was to collect tribute, mete out justice and provide an armed force in time of war. The people believed that the Maloango had the land in trust from Nzambi and ensured the well-being of his subjects. The ruler was therefore entitled to everything in the kingdom. Tribute was paid both in work and in kind, and in proportion to a man's possessions. The wives of the king's subjects prepared the Maloango's land for sowing, working along the fields for two hours in length and one hour in breadth. The Maloango sometimes appeared to give encouragement, and in the evenings there were great festivities. This presumably happened on the land near Buali. A special court was held when the lands were harvested, and the local chiefs collected a tribute of crops from the people and brought it to the king.¹ In some regions, the Maloango may have received tribute according to the products of the region. The 10⁰/o redwood tax paid by the people of Sette may have been an example of this. Similarly Bukkameale, a remote region with little else to offer the Maloango may have paid its tribute in ivory. In this way, the ruler could assure himself of a diversified income.

The Maloango was the Supreme Judge in the kingdom. Courts existed at the family, village, town and provincial level, but in all cases there was a right of appeal to the Maloango.² A special

¹O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 163-164, 167; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 119-120, 121; J. Pouabou, "Le Peuple Loango ou Vili", 57.

²L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 53.

feature associated with the judicial system in Loango was the sanctuary provided by certain roads called Nzila (or Njila) Si Nzambi or Nzila Ivanga Nzambi, literally "paths of God" or "God-created paths". These roads converged at Buali. They went in four directions; the road to the east which led to Teke country was the Nzila Xintetchi, the road west to the sea, Nzila Mbu; the Nzila Kakongo went south and the Nzilu Balumbu went north.

Anyone who wanted to appeal to the Maloango for justice, whether freeman or slave, innocent or criminal, citizen or foreigner, could make his way to one of these roads and be assured of a secure access to the capital. Where the roads came to rivers, the Maloango guaranteed a free and easy crossing through the ferrymen whom he appointed.¹ These roads not only underlined the sovereignty of the ruler, they also encouraged stability in the kingdom. Local chiefs, who counted their power by the number of their followers, would hesitate to act in an arbitrary fashion, if the people to whom they denied justice could go to the Maloango. On the other hand, a subject might hesitate to create such a situation, for to leave the village and family and to face the uncertainties of a flight to the capital by a Nzila si Nzambi, was a serious undertaking.²

In spite of the conquests of the Loango rulers and the size

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 163; R.E.Dennett, At the Back of the Black Man's Mind, 45.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 191-192.

of their kingdom, there was no standing army. There was only a royal guard who were present when the Maloango gave audiences.¹ When a force was needed, the Maloango sent orders to local chiefs to muster some armed men and proceed to a rendezvous. The Maloango did not go to battle himself, as he might be injured. The Makaka, a man who had distinguished himself by his acts of bravery was the commander-in-chief.

Large scale wars were unusual. An army of 200 was a considerable size. There was seldom a pitched battle. Vili armies preferred to use surprise and ambush. Once prisoners were taken, they could be used as a bargaining counter by the fortunate side. Campaigns seldom lasted more than few days, for the soldiers did not like to go far from their home ground. They usually carried sufficient food for a few days, or if they were close to home, they were supplied by the women.² Traditional weapons were long-handled spears, bows and arrows, broad throwing-knives, and for defence, large buffalo-hide shields which protected almost the whole body.³

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Loango government was strong and stable. The homage which the Maloango daily received from Vili leaders who came to Buali was not just a symbolic

¹ Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 14.

² L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 163-167; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 136-141, 187-188, 218; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 200-202, 218.

³ Pigafetta and Lopes, 31-32, 65; Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 8; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 147.

gesture, but a measure of the true situation. Broecke, one of the most acute observers of the Loango scene, remarked on the great control which the Maloango had over his subjects and on the respect which they showed him.¹ The ruler's authority was further evidenced as Europeans tried to open up trade. All had to have the Maloango's permission before they could start their business. No one was allowed ashore without a Vili escort,² This shows a considerable royal authority not only over foreign businessmen but over the Maloango's own subjects.³

One of the most influential figures in Loango was a woman called the Makunda.⁴ Her special responsibility was for Vili women, especially when their husbands had abandoned them or physically mistreated them. Husbands and wives could appeal to her to hear their cases. The Makunda's authority had a broader application, however, for anyone could come to her, as they came to the Maloango, by the Nzila si Nzambi to ask her protection. They then became part of her household although they retained

¹Broecke, 64, 65-66.

²Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 7-8; Broecke, 29-30.

³For other examples of the Maloango's authority in relation to European traders, see Chapters 2 and 3.

⁴Battell (page 50) and Broecke (49) refer to a woman called the Manilombo. Lombo is a male name, or it means the house of a chief. They may have mistaken the name of the woman's residence for her title; see Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 162.

their free status. Another duty was to advise the Maloango on the appointment of officials. Dapper even suggests that the Makunda could plot against the ruler if he resisted her. The Makunda did not live in the palace, but came there when required to do so. This must also have aided her freedom of action.¹

The Makunda was a princess by birth, but her exact relationship to the Maloango is uncertain. Battell and Broecke say she was the mother of the heirs to the throne, that is the Maloango's sister.² Dapper related that she was chosen from among the Maloango's wives.³ Pechuël-Loesche says that she was neither the Maloango's mother, nor related to him by marriage, which might also suggest that she was his sister.⁴

The succession to the throne had both elective and hereditary features. The heirs were chosen from a certain clan, usually that of Kondi,⁵ and from among the nephews of the ruling Maloango. The man who aspired to be ruler had to be blameless in his life and without physical defect; he must never have shed blood nor have broken a Xima.⁶ According to Proyard, the Maloango nominated

¹Broecke, 49; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 160; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 162-165.

²Andrew Battell, 50; Broecke, 49.

³O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 160.

⁴E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 165.

⁵See above, p. 23

⁶Broecke, 64; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 128; OWIC 46, Cappelle Report, 1642; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 158.

his successors.¹ Seventeenth century writers are silent on this question, but given the extensive power of the Maloango, it seems likely that Proyard's statement applied to the earlier period, too. Other sources which suggest that a Regency council or a council of elders chose the new ruler, refer to times when the Maloango's power had already declined.²

Those who were chosen as the heirs to the throne were appointed to four lordships with the titles of Manicaye, Manibock, Manisalag and Manicabango. When the Maloango died, his heir, the Manicaye became the new ruler. Then, the Manibock became Manicaye, the Manisalag became Manibock, the Manicabango became Manisalag, and a new Manicabango was appointed. The nearer the claimant to the throne, the nearer he lived to the capital.³ The coronation preliminaries took about one year to complete since the prospective Maloango had to show himself to the people, and complete many traditional ceremonies en route to Binkosse, the coronation place. The final ceremony was the funeral of the deceased ruler who could only be buried by his successor.⁴

¹L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 130.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 169; J. Pouabou, "Le Peuple Vili ou Loango", 59.

³Andrew Battell, 50; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 160-161, gives the lordships as Manikay, Maniboecke, Manicellage, Manikat, and adds a fifth, Maniinjami.

⁴E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 158-162, gives many more details on these coronation ceremonies.

Contemporary Europeans refer to the leaders of Vili society in the early seventeenth century as "nobles" or "princes". Among the Vili, they were mfumu, a word suggesting both that the man was free and that he had power.¹ The most important members of this traditional aristocracy were called mfumu nssi, literally "lords of the earth". This implied the territorial and spiritual basis for their authority. They had been entrusted with the land by Nzambi; the Maloango was, therefore, the mfumu nssi of the whole kingdom.² These nobles probably derived from the leaders of the first Vili clans who settled in the Loango area, and who had been rewarded by the Maloango for their loyalty to him. Land was first divided on the basis of the clan, each one possessing its own unit, called libuku. At first a village might correspond to a clan. With the passage of time, people broke away to found their own settlements, and newcomers arrived. Clans fragmented and villages or groups of villages became the basic social unit, with their own chiefs.³

The traditional aristocracy apparently exploited their position in society to the full. Land belonged to the community, but the

¹A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 194; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 191; G. Balandier, Sociologie Actuelle de l'Afrique Noire, 322.

²E. Pechuel-Loesche, Volkskunde, 175, 194.

³ibid., 198; K. Laman, The Kongo, II, 130-133; J. Pouabou, "Le Peuple Vili ou Loango", 57-58, gives the names of the most important Vili clans.

local ruler enjoyed the right of usufruct. As the Maloango received tribute on a national level, so the mfumu nssi were the local recipients. Tribute included work in the nobles' fields, a basket of the first harvest produce, the first-born of a domestic animal, the tail hairs of elephants and buffaloes and parts of certain hunted animals. Nobles had privileges of riding in a hammock, of wearing special distinguishing clothing and furs, of eating special food and of carrying special staffs and sceptre-like knives.¹

The nobles exhibited their wealth when they came to the capital for festivals and audiences with the Maloango. They arrived accompanied by their servants who carried fans and calabashes of palm-wine for their master. On one occasion there were 3,000 people present, made up of 200 nobles and their followers. They aped the Maloango in their daily lives, maintaining their own "wine-houses" in which they gave audiences. They were shown great respect by the ordinary people, who fell on their faces and turned their heads away, being unworthy to look on such august personages.² Princes did not marry princesses, but their children were treated with respect.³

¹O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 149-150, 167; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 176, 186-188, 218; R. E. Dennett, At the Back of the Black Man's Mind, 43-45; J. Pouabou, "Le Peuple Vili or Loango", 57.

²Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 9, 13-14; Broecke, 66; Andrew Battell, 44; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 169.

³A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 197-198; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 187.

Princesses were another important social group, for in the long run, power derived from them. A Vili's status, whether freeman or slave, depended on his mother.¹ Unlike women in general in Vili society, princesses were treated with great respect. They had a voice in political matters and could become a mfumu nssi. A princess could choose and divorce husbands at will. The position was not sought after, however, since the husband could look at no other woman. When he went out, he was preceded by a servant who rang a gong, at the sound of which, all other women had to disappear.²

The principal division in Vili society seems to have been between the traditional aristocracy and the rest of the population. Very little is said in seventeenth century sources about the Vili majority, since the Maloango and nobles monopolised attention. According to Dapper, there was little to distinguish the slaves from the common people except that the latter were free.³ This comment suggests that a class of slaves did exist in traditional Loango society, that their position was not necessarily intolerable, and that the free man was not always better off than a slave.

¹ O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 154; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 95.

² L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 90-93; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 111-113; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 187-188.

³ O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 169.

The free man, however poor in the material sense, was a full member of the community in which he lived. He had some land, animals and might have some slaves.¹ He could travel freely around the country. Yet, in a sense he was tied to the land by the services which he had to give to the local chief and to the Maloango. There were opportunities for advancement through occupations such as weaving, smithing and salt-making, but it seems unlikely that a man outside the privileged aristocracy could amass wealth on a significant scale.

The existence of a group of slaves, that is people who were unfree and looked on as investment by others, seems certain. Both Broecke and Dapper state that slaves were regarded as a form of wealth.² The nobles who came to Buali usually had their following of slaves. Samuel Brun makes an interesting distinction between servants and slaves. The noble's servants accompanied him fanning him and carrying his carpet; his slaves followed behind bearing calabashes of wine.³

Walter Rodney has issued a timely warning against back-dating accounts of African slavery that were written in the period after the European slave trade was established. He has suggested for

¹L. B. Prøyart, Histoire, 121-122.

²Broecke, 66; O. Dapper. Beschrijvinge, 158.

³Broecke, 66; Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 13-14.

Upper Guinea, that slaves did not exist; that enslavement for certain crimes was encouraged by the European slave trade, rather than a traditional punishment.¹ As Rodney himself comments, the situation in a hierarchical society such as Kongo may have been different from the Upper Guinea Coast, where the society was less structured.² Cuvelier and Jadin state that slaves existed in the Kongo kingdom when the Portuguese first arrived.³ Little work has been done on this specific subject, however, and the point is by no means proven.

For Loango, it seems likely that the existence of a class of nobles at one end of the social scale may have encouraged the growth of a class of slaves at the other. Professor Fage has suggested that in West Africa there was a close correlation between economic development and the growth of the institution of slavery.⁴ The traditional Loango economy was relatively sophisticated and this may have encouraged the use of slaves.⁵ One clear example is given by Dapper in connection with the ivory trade. He said

¹Walter Rodney, "African Slavery and other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave Trade", JAH, VII, 3, 1966, 431-443.

²ibid., 443.

³J. Cuvelier and L. Jadin, L'Ancien Congo d'après les Archives Romaines, 1518-1640, Brussels, 1954, 85.

⁴J. D. Fage, "Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History", JAH, X, 3, 1969, 396-397.

⁵See below, pp. 65-67

that the Vili sent slaves into the interior to buy slaves and ivory, so that the ivory was carried back to the coast without expense.¹ He was writing at a time when the slave trade with Europeans was in its early stages. In the days before slaves were brought from the interior to sell on the coast, the use of Vili slaves as porters in the ivory trade must have been just as necessary. It seems likely that if this system was used for ivory, it would also be used in the mining and transport of copper from the interior to Loango.

How a man became a slave is unclear; following Rodney, one hesitates to backdate later sources. Perhaps the largest group were those who were born as slaves through matrilineal inheritance. As Dapper suggested, slaves were not necessarily worse off than free men.² Since they were counted as part of a man's wealth, he would hesitate to alienate them by ill-treatment. That might result in their flight to seek the protection of a new master, or even in their going to the Maloango by the "paths of God". Probably a good slave lived as a member of his master's household, as he did at a later period, sharing the same housing, wearing the same sort of clothes and eating the same food as free members. If he was energetic, he might rise in the household and

¹ O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 158.

² ibid., 169.

in the community to a position of responsibility.¹

Since a large part of this work is concerned with the whole Loango Coast, including Kakongo and Ngoyo, the situation of Loango's southern neighbours deserves some mention.

Both Kakongo and Ngoyo were considerably smaller in area than Loango. The Kakongo seacoast, from the Chiloango river in the north to the Mbele river in the south, was only a matter of some 25 miles. The western frontier then followed the Ngoyo boundary, curving south to meet the Congo river at the present day Punta de Lenha; the eastern frontier turned south, through the Mayombe, then west of Bungu and also ended at the Congo river somewhere near Boma. This gave Kakongo a stretch of territory on the north bank of the Congo river. Malemba, the chief Atlantic harbour of Kakongo was situated a few miles south of the mouth of the Chiloango river. Kinguele, the capital was about 35-40 miles inland from Malemba. An important eastern province of Kakongo on the Congo river was Zarry. This area was restless under Kakongo, and one whose situation was a potential source of annoyance for the Manikakongo, for Zarry was in a good position to open up an independent trade on the Congo river. Kakongo was described as a populous and pleasant land. The Chiloango river system, which

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, 107-108; K. Laman, The Kongo, 99, 131, 134; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 236.

penetrated the Mayombe and which linked up with the Congo river in the rainy season was advantageous for trade.¹

Ngoyo was the smallest of the three kingdoms. Its coastline ran from the Mbele river to the Congo estuary and then followed the north bank of the Congo as far as the Kakongo frontier. The harbour at Cabinda provided a deep anchorage, the safest on the Loango Coast. Another landing place was at Bomaangoy, a village on the north side of the Congo river, and a point where boats, which crossed the Congo river from Sonyo on the south bank, often came to land. The Ngoyo capital, Bansa Ngoyo, was about two days' journey inland from Cabinda. The many rivers that drained into the Congo made the country very fertile. The people had a reputation for aggressiveness, so that they were feared by their larger Kakongo neighbour.²

The people of Ngoyo, Kakongo and Loango were closely related. The three kingdoms had similar systems of government, laws and social customs. They spoke very similar dialects of Kikongo.³

¹O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 182-183; J. Cuvelier, Documents, 34-35, 47; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 165; James Barbot and John Casse-neuve, An Abstract of a Voyage to the Congo river or the Zaire, and to Cabinda in the Year 1700, in a Collection of Voyages and Travels, by A. Churchill, V, 505.

²O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 183-184; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 165.

³O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 183; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 167.

The traditions of the Woyo of Ngoyo and the Kotchi¹ of Kakongo reveal their early connections with the Vili. Some traditions suggest that they broke away from other Kongo groups about the same time and migrated together into the coastal regions.²

Traditions which relate the Maloango's authority to the Manikongo, also refer to the appointment of rulers for Kakongo and Ngoyo.³

The smaller kingdoms seem to have maintained their Kongo connections later than Loango. Even in the mid-seventeenth century, the Manikongo claimed sovereignty over Kakongo and Ngoyo, although they were already independent by that time.⁴ Proyard wrote that when the Manikongo asserted claims to Kakongo the Manikakongo retaliated by calling himself Manikongo.⁵

¹There is some confusion in the nomenclature of the North-West Kongo, see M. Soret, 1-3. This appears to be the case for the inhabitants of the old Kakongo kingdom. Either, they are ignored in modern studies, or they are called "Kakongos" or "Cabindans" (after the Portuguese enclave of that name). The inhabitants of the coastal region, who were probably the founders of Kakongo, are called Kotchi; see R. Lethur, Étude sur le Royaume de Loango, 7; R. E. Dennett, At the Back of the Black Man's Mind, 4, 61; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, II, 90.

²For example, K. Laman, The Kongo, II, 137; R. Lethur, Étude sur le Royaume de Loango, 21.

³For example, R. E. Dennett, Seven Years among the Fjort, 73; J. Cuvelier, "Traditions Congolaises", 487.

⁴O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 205.

⁵L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 162. "Kakongo" means "little Kongo".

The superior power of Loango over her southern neighbours by the end of the sixteenth century was evident. Some contemporaries thought that the Loango kingdom extended as far as the Congo river, evidence of the great authority of the Vili ruler.¹ Lopes referred to Ngoyo in passing and ignored Kakongo.² The power of Loango was acknowledged by the smaller kingdoms. The Loango ruler married princesses of Kakongo and Ngoyo. His Ngoyo wife did not share the privileges of a Loango princess, thus emphasising her inferior position. The rulers of Kakongo and Ngoyo paid homage to the Maloango at the time of his election and at his death; at this ceremony, the Ngoyo representative was given precedence. They also paid Loango a small tribute.³ The superiority of the Maloango was further emphasised by the titles of the three rulers. The king of Loango was called Nunu, meaning husband, the Manikakongo was called Mokassi, meaning consort or wife, and Maningoyo was called Itemma, or priest.⁴ Loango continued to dominate the coast in the mid-seventeenth century, through her military power which was much respected by Kakongo and Ngoyo.⁵

¹ Andrew Battell, 42; L. Cordeiro, Questões Histórico-Coloniais, Lisbon, 1935-36, I, 204.

² Pigafetta and Lopes, 64.

³ L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 91; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, xxvi-xxvii, 166-167.

⁴ A. Bastin, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 238.

⁵ O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 159.

Kakongo and Ngoyo appear to have lived in a state of mutual animosity in the early seventeenth century. Although the latter was smaller, the Woyo were known to be good fighters and might have crushed Kakongo if it had not been that they feared that Loango might intervene on the Kakongo side.¹ Their hostility may have partly resulted from their history, for Ngoyo had once been a part of Kakongo. Merolla related a tradition on how Ngoyo won her independence. A certain chief in Ngoyo married a mulatto girl, the daughter of a rich Portuguese trader. The latter, anxious to increase his power, encouraged his son-in-law to rebel against his overlord, the Manikakongo. This he successfully accomplished.² The Portuguese element in the tradition suggests that these events took place in the sixteenth century.

¹O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 183.

²J. Merolla, A Voyage to Congo, Churchill, I, 651.

Chapter 2

THE EARLY EXPANSION OF LOANGO'S EXTERNAL TRADE,

1576 - c.1630

In 1576, following the foundation of Luanda, the Portuguese opened up a regular trade with Loango.¹ This marked the beginning of a new phase in Vili history, for those early contacts with Europeans rapidly expanded with important consequences for the Loango kingdom. The Portuguese had known of Loango for almost a century before. By 1481 explorers from Lisbon had reached Cape Saint Catherine. From there, they sailed further down the Loango Coast, even before the more famous voyage of Diogo Cão in 1483.² Having passed Mayumba Bay, Cão's fleet arrived off the coast at Loango Bay. It must have pleased the Portuguese, for they named it Praia Formosa de Santo Domingo on their charts.³ The Portuguese did not delay on the Loango Coast, however, but pressed on southwards in their bid to find the sea-route to India and the kingdom of Prester John. They soon came to the mouth of the Congo river

¹Broecke, 66 fn. 2, 71.

²D. Pacheco Pereira (ed. G. Kimble), Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis, Hakluyt Society, London, 1936, 3; L. Cordeiro, Questões Histórico-Coloniais, II, 41.

³i.e. "the beautiful beach of Santo Domingo", see E. Ravenstein, "The Voyages of Diogo Cão and Bartholemew Dias, 1482-1488", The Geographical Journal, XVI, 6, 1900, 629, 650. He cites a chart drawn by Cão on his return from his first voyage; a copy which was made by a Venetian cosmographer, Christoforo Soligo, is in the British Museum.

where they had their first encounter with the people of Sonyo, the Kongo province on the south bank. In the following years contacts were established between the courts of Kongo and Portugal. These evolved into the close relationship of the two kingdoms in the sixteenth century.¹

While Portuguese traders, missionaries and diplomats were forging links with the Kongo kingdom, their interest in the coastal kingdoms to the north of the Congo river remained slight. When official interest was occasionally aroused, it was motivated by an attempt to embarrass the Manikongo. In 1549, for example, the Portuguese considered opening up trade north of the Kongo, in order to arouse the fears of the Manikongo about African rivals.² The idea came to nothing, however. Some traders may have visited Loango spasmodically from São Tomé, which in 1500 was granted the right to trade on the African coast from the Rio del Rey "as far as the land of the Manicomgue". Other traders sailed to Loango from their base at Mpinda.³ It seems that these efforts remained peripheral to Portuguese interests in Kongo and Angola. In 1584 when the Maloango asked that missionaries should be sent to Loango, it was reported that he "only recently" had news of Christianity.⁴

¹For details on Luso-Kongo relations at this time see, W.G.L.Randles, L'Ancien Royaume du Congo, Chapters 7 and 8.

²A. Brásio, MMA, VII, 237, Francisco de Barros de Paiva to the King, São Tomé, 18.2.1549.

³J.W.Blake, Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560, Hakluyt Society, London, 1941, I, 90; A. de A. Felner, Angola, Coimbra, 1933, 69, 104, 116.

⁴A. Brásio, MMA, IV, 400, Account of the Kongo by Scalsi, a Carmelite monk, 1584.

There were probably two main reasons why the Portuguese neglected the Loango Coast for almost a century after they had first discovered the region. In the first place, having been attracted to the Congo river by their illusions of finding the kingdom of Prester John, they became deeply involved in the affairs of the Kongo kingdom. They were encouraged by the willingness of the Manikongos, João I (?-1506) and Afonso I (1506-1543), to receive traders and missionaries. There was also a ready supply of slaves for the São Tomé plantations and later for Brazil. The contact with Kongo brought knowledge of the Ndongo kingdom and led to the growing interest in Angola after 1560. The resources of the Portuguese were always limited. It seems likely that once involved in the region south of the Congo river, they preferred to concentrate their efforts there, rather than overreach themselves by attempting a new venture on the Loango Coast.

Loango may also have been positively less attractive as a trading partner than the Kongo kingdom. In Loango, the Portuguese were confronted with a strongly centralised kingdom which was probably at the peak of its power in the sixteenth century. Loango was more difficult to infiltrate than Kongo. Furthermore, there was almost certainly no ready supply of slaves in Loango in the sixteenth century; as late as the 1640s, the slave trade was small.¹

¹See below, p. 104

The commencement of a regular trade between Luanda and Loango had official support. Andrew Battell was one trader who was sent by the Portuguese governor of Angola to the coast north of the Congo river, some time in the 1590s. He sailed for Loango with a cargo of European manufactured goods - cloths, rugs, beads and mirrors. These the Vili exchanged for ivory, skins, the hairs from elephants' tails, palm-cloth and redwood.¹ The first two articles the Portuguese reexported to Portugal from Luanda, the last three had a ready sale in Angola. Together with copper, these products remained the staple exports of the Loango Coast in the period covered by this chapter.

These goods were an integral part of the Vili economy. Writing towards the end of the sixteenth century, Andrew Battell described the market in the Loango capital as follows:

... and there is a great market every day, and it doth begin at twelve of the clock. Here there is a great store of palm-cloth of sundry sorts, which is their merchandizes; and a great store of victuals, flesh, hens, wine, oil and corn. Here is also very fine logwood, which they use to dye withall... and molangos [bracelets] of copper. Here is likewise a great store of elephants' teeth, but they sell none in the market place...²

Although this account was written some 20 years after regular trade was started by the Portuguese at Loango, it seems reasonable to suppose that such a market flourished in Buali before there was

¹ Andrew Battell, 7, 9; Pigafetta and Lopes, 32; Broecke, 72.

² Andrew Battell, 43-44.

much European contact. Every article mentioned had a use in everyday Vili life. Weaving, smithing, copper-mining, elephant-hunting and trading, as well as farming, fishing and salt-making, were all traditional occupations. Trade was carried on at a local level and also across the considerable Loango kingdom. Products such as redwood, ivory and copper were transported to Buali over long distances. There was apparently specialisation in regional production and in occupation, before the first substantial trading contacts with Europeans. These indigenous economic activities doubtless served as a springboard for the rapid expansion of foreign trade after 1576. Clearly the incipient sub-structure for economic growth already existed. What was required was an acceleration of existing activities rather than a completely new pattern of trade.

Alongside the large markets, the small local markets which were more orientated to supplying subsistence needs continued. In the late eighteenth century, Proyard described these markets which were a central part of Vili life. They sold items such as smoked fish, vegetables, fruits, palm-nuts, sugar-cane and salt. There was never any fraud in the market which was strictly organised according to custom. A mother could send her six year old son and be sure that he would not be cheated. Goods were divided into portions of a standard value, each portion being worth one macoute, a unit of Vili currency.¹ A fine or even death was the penalty for

¹L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 159.

those who disturbed the peace of a market place. While the market was in progress, the area was a place of refuge where anyone could seek asylum. No one was allowed to carry a gun or knife. Any armed person was required to make a detour. Officers were appointed to enforce the regulations, and to protect the buyers and sellers.¹

Thus, the old subsistence-orientated activity which the first Vili farmers probably knew, co-existed with the newer commerce.² The latter probably only affected a small group, principally the Maloango and the nobles who had the power to organise the market-orientated trade to their benefit. The "opening and closing" of roads was one of the principal subjects for discussion at the royal court of Buali.³ Other steps were probably taken to control trade in important commodities. The absence of ivory at the Buali market contrasted with houses full of tusks in the royal compound. It suggests some sort of royal monopoly or at least some limitation on the general marketing of ivory. The Maloango also had store-houses full of copper and palm-cloth, two other important trading items, whose supply and value he might try to control.⁴

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 231-232.

²For a stimulating discussion of this question in its African context, see R. Gray and D. Birmingham, "Some Economic and Political Consequences of Trade in Central and Eastern Africa in the Pre-Colonial Period", in Pre-Colonial African Trade (R. Gray and D. Birmingham, eds.), Oxford, 1970, Chapter 1.

³OWIC 46, Cappelle Report, 1642.

⁴Andrew Battell, 44; Broecke, 64.

Vili cloth excited the admiration of Europeans who likened it to velvets, satins, taffetas and damasks.¹ The cloth was woven from the leaf fibres of two types of tree, the fan palm (nteva or Hyphaene Guineensis) and the wine palm (ntombi or Raphia Vinifera). The material made from the leaves of the former were considered to be of a finer and stronger quality than that of the ntombi.² The industry was in the hands of Vili men, who tended the trees, prepared the laves and wove the cloth. When the leaves measured an arm's length, they were pulled from the branches, cleaned, dried and rubbed to make them supple. The fibres of the leaves were carefully drawn out; they were smooth like flax. This process was followed by the close inspection of the fibres or "threads", the finest and cleanest being reserved for the production of the best quality cloths, while the remainder were used to weave tapestries, mats, poor quality cloths and caps.³

Once woven, the cloth itself was carefully standardised. The finest material was called Bondo and worn only by the Maloango and those favoured by him. No weavers were permitted to sell this cloth, on pain of death. A second type which was also of fine quality was

¹ Andrew Battell, 69.

² O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 149, 199; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Die Loango Expedition, III, 162-164, 166-168; W. H. Bentley, Dictionary, 272, 398.

³ Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 9-10, 13; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 149.

called Kimbo; this was worn by nobles. The Kimbo cloth bore different designs, each piece was about two feet square and took the weaver about 14 to 15 days to make. A piece of Sokka was about half the size of a Kimbo, and of such good quality that it could be mistaken for the better cloth. Six pieces were needed to make a garment, and they were died red, black or green. Two poorer grades of cloth were worn by the common people; one was a closer weave than the other, and they bore no design.¹

The familiarity of all levels of the population with the palm cloth may have encouraged its use as a form of currency. The leaves of the ntombi were woven into pieces called libongos. The same name was used for the cloth currency of Kakongo, but in Ngoyo it was called panos or panos sambes.² The use of the words libongo and panos are sometimes confused in contemporary European sources; they are used to mean any cloth currency and are used interchangeably.

The development of this palm-cloth currency also shows that Loango's economy had achieved a measure of sophistication by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Professor Bohannan has stated that money is probably the most important single factor in the changing of an economy. The Vili palm-cloth, which was a general-

¹O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 149; OWIC 46, Cappelle Report, 1642, gives the names of the cloths made in Kakongo and Loango as Kimbi, Insuelas, Insacki, Orilas and Infulas.

²O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 149, 158, 184; J. Cuvelier, Documents, 47.

purpose money, might do at least three things. It could be a standard for the evaluation and comparison of different goods. In the Loango context, it was in use in transactions in Buali market; these involved a variety of goods - copper, redwood, salt and farming produce. It could be a means of payment; this factor was increasingly important in an economy where there was specialisation of occupation. It could be a means of facilitating exchange. Palm-cloth, like the nzimbu shells of Kongo, had the additional advantage that it was comparatively durable, and could be used as a means to store wealth.¹

Palm-cloth was produced within the confines of the Vili heartland. This gave it additional attraction over copper or ivory, which were either produced outside the four central provinces or were substances whose supply might be depleted. The careful standardisation of cloth and the fact that the Maloango and the nobles monopolised the best kinds, may have had two effects. It underlined the superior status of the aristocracy and it ensured that the quality of the cloth was maintained. The Maloango himself may have been the chief guarantor of the currency.

The fine quality of Loango cloth and the prestige of the Maloango probably contributed to its wide circulation in West Central Africa. A cloth currency was in general use in a wide area

¹P. Bohannon, Africa and Africans, New York, 1964, 218; G.S. Belshaw, Traditional Exchange and Modern Markets, New Jersey, 1965, 9-10.

of the Angola interior. The Portuguese used imported Loango cloth to pay their men in inland forts such as Massangano; there, the soldiers were able to exchange the cloth for food and supplies.¹ They were paid four libongos (200 reis) and one bushel of flour per month.² In the eastern provinces of Kongo, palm-cloth and salt were preferred to nzimbus which were used in the central provinces.³ In the 1640s, the Dutch found that palm-cloth was an essential item in the slave trade 200-300 miles in the interior of Luanda.⁴ In the late seventeenth century, the Luando traders who came to Kasange to buy salt brought palm-cloth in exchange.⁵

The Portuguese probably became involved in the palm-cloth business without choice. The most valuable currency in Angola was the salt mined in Kisama, south of the Kwango river. The Portuguese were not able to gain control of these resources, however.⁶ Palm-cloth therefore became an important alternative. In Luanda, the cloth was used in three different units. The least in value, which was also that most in use in the interior, was the libongo. In the

¹Broecke, 45.

²A. Brásio, MMA, IX, 376 fn. 10.

³O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 203; W.G.L. Randles, L'Ancien Royaume du Congo, 72-73.

⁴OWIC 56, Elias Moet to Brazil Council, Luanda, September, 1641.

⁵D. Birmingham, Trade and Conflict in Angola, 166, 127.

⁶D. Birmingham, "Early African Trade in Angola and its Hinterland", in Pre-Colonial African Trade, 164-166.

mid-seventeenth century, five libongos could buy one pound of ivory, and seventeen libongos could buy one piece of Silesian cloth (the best quality linen which the Dutch traded in the region). The libongos were unmarked. The second unit of currency was stamped once with the arms of Portugal, while the most valuable was stamped twice and called a macoute.¹ In 1666, a macoute measured one yard in length. Ten macoutes were worth 100 reis, and one macoute was equal to 2,000 nzimbus.²

The Portuguese cloth trade with Loango was at first small. The privilege of organizing the trade with the Vili was in the hands of a contractor in Lisbon who appointed a factor at Loango. Every year two or three ships were sent from Luanda to the Loango Coast to collect the palm-cloth. They returned laden with about 6,000-7,000 pieces of the cheapest cloth, the infulas (or exfulas). They also obtained about 300 pieces of the valuable insacki (sokka or ensaca) annually. These were worth about 1,200 reis each.³ Palm-cloth may have become more important to the Portuguese by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Not only did they fail to gain access to the salt-mines, but nzimbus were decreasing in popularity. The Portuguese had aided the debasement of the traditional Kongo currency by interfering with nzimbu production on

¹0. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 157, 233. The macoute was also a unit of currency in Loango, but with a different value.

²Michael Angelo of Gattina and Denis de Carli of Piacenza, A Curious and Exact Account of a Voyage to Congo in the Years 1666 and 1667, trans. in A. Churchill, A Collection of Voyages and Travels, I, 561-562.

³0. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 233; A. Brásio, MMA, VI, 52, Account of Pedro Sardinha, 1611.

Luanda Island and by introducing substitutes, such as shells from Benin, Brazil and India. By 1619, the Manikongo's income had been reduced by two-thirds because of the declining value of nzimbus.¹ The Portuguese had an alternative supply of cloth from Teke markets which indeed was their main source in the early seventeenth century. As the situation in the Kongo kingdom deteriorated, the cloth acquired by the direct sea-route to Loango was probably easier to obtain.

The staple for the redwood trade was Mayumba, where a Portuguese traded under licence from the Portuguese king. Much of the wood on sale came from Sette. This important product, called tacula by the Portuguese was used as a dye or a cosmetic. In the latter case, the wood was pounded to a fine powder, mixed with palm-oil and then smeared on the body. It was mainly used at festivities or by nobles and rich women such as the king's wives. Mayumba redwood was sold in pieces five to six feet long, nine inches wide and three fingers deep. Demand was great. Redwood was sold on the whole coast between Cape Lopez and Benguela; for example, it was exchanged in Ngoyo for panos, on the Congo river for ivory, or taken to Luanda where Mayumba and Benguela redwood were exchanged for slaves in the interior.²

¹W.G.L.Randles, L'Ancien Royaume du Congo, 137.

²Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 22; Broecke, 22, 43-44, 57, 64, 66, 72; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 146-147, 155, 200, 234.

In the early seventeenth century, the principal Portuguese trade in Loango was in ivory.¹ This was also much prized among the Vili. Ivory bracelets were worn by the wives of the Maloango; knives, dishes and musical instruments such as trumpets were carved from tusks; tusks surrounded the graves of the Maloangos.² Tusks varied in size, but some of the large ones weighed 100 pounds. Loango ivory was very fine and white. According to Samuel Brun, the elephants' tusks sometimes fall off as new ones grow in. Usually, however, ivory was acquired by experienced hunters. They located a waterhole and nearby dug a great pit, "about ten men deep", which they covered with branches. When the elephant fell in, the hunters came running and killed it with long spears.³ Elephant meat was very popular among the inhabitants of Mayumba province.⁴

The tail hairs of the elephant were prized as jewelry. They were sometimes used for threading beads, or, combined with leopards' claws they made the costliest decoration of all. The longer the hairs, the higher their value. Usually the hairs were plaited

¹Broecke, 72.

²ibid., 64; Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 12; Andrew Battell, 51; OWIC 46, Cappelle Report, 1642.

³Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 12; L. B. Proyart, Histoire, 38.

⁴Andrew Battell, 53.

together, the shorter ones being worn about the neck, and the longer ones around the waist as a sort of ornamental belt. The Portuguese took these hairs to Luanda, where 100 ordinary ones were worth 1,000 reis, and 50 of the longer ones, 1,000 reis.¹

Lopes reported that there were numerous elephants in Loango and that ivory was available in large quantities.² In the early seventeenth century, the principal sources of supply were the northern districts of Sette and Mayumba, and the eastern Mayombe districts of Congo and Kesock.³ These resources were sufficient to satisfy Vili needs and to provide ivory for export in the initial stages of European contact. As demand increased, especially after the Dutch opened up trade, the Vili traders were forced to go further inland as the more accessible supplies were depleted. By the mid-seventeenth century, supplies at Mayumba were reported to be poor.⁴ Vili caravans were searching out ivory in Nsundi territory, probably in the southern Mayombe and the Niari valley, at the Teke markets around Stanley Pool, and in the Kongo kingdom. Tusks weighing 80-90 pounds were carried back to the coast on the

¹ Andrew Battell, 9, 58; Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 12; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 158; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 164.

² Pigafetta and Lopes, 65.

³ Andrew Battell, 42, 52, 53, 58-59.

⁴ O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 146.

heads of porters; caravans might number 40 to 50 men.¹ Vili caravans also went as far as Bukkameale which became the ivory staple in the mid-seventeenth century.²

Perhaps the best example of a developed pre-European trade organisation was the trade in copper. It was not until the 1620s that the Portuguese and Dutch appreciated the potential of copper as an export from the Loango Coast.³ There was already an inter-African copper trade by the end of the sixteenth century. Early European traders remarked on the fine copper jewelry which was worn by the Vili. These were usually armrings weighing between 1¹/₂ and 14 lbs.⁴ Dutch traders at Cape Lopez noted the copper rings of the inhabitants.⁵ These probably derived from the same sources as Vili copper, and may have reached Cape Lopez through Vili traders.

The source of Vili copper was the great metalliferous region between Boko Songo and Mindouli in the Niari basin, an area that extends for about 100 kilometres. In the early seventeenth century, the region was probably the western extremity of the Teke kingdom which was based on the plateau north-east of Stanley Pool. In 1612

¹O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 158; OWIC 46, Cappelle Report, 1642.

²O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 158.

³See below, pp. 89, 91, 92.

⁴Broecke, 70: Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 12-13.

⁵Paludanus, Beschrijvinge van de Gantsche Cust van Guinea, Manicono, etc. C.P.Burger and F. Hunger (eds.), The Hague, 1934, 7.

the Teke held the region, but there must have been some mutual arrangement whereby the Vili were able to mine the copper.¹

By the middle of the century, the region was occupied by the Nsundi, or Sondy, as Dapper calls them.² These were various Kongo groups who migrated from the south side of the Congo river, into the relatively empty lands between the Niari and Congo rivers.³

According to Dapper, the mining, smelting and transporting of copper to the Loango coast was entirely in Vili hands. Large caravans of smiths, traders and their helpers left Loango for the mining regions in September. There, the Vili workers dug out the copper from the mines and took it to centres where it was smelted by the smiths who moulded¹² into the shapes in which it was brought to the coast. They were not very skillful and usually the finished product contained many impurities. They remained until May when the dry season began and wars often broke out. Then they returned home with the smelted copper.⁴ This was usually sold in the form of bars or rings in Loango and Kakongo.⁵ The whole operation had

¹ Broecke, 70.

² O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 158.

³ M. Soret states that in this context, the term Nsundi includes all those whom he calls the north-west Kongo, excluding the Vili, Woyo and perhaps the Bembe; that is, the Laadi, Fumbu, Kongo, Sundi, Gangala, Nyanga, Kenge, Dondo, Kamba, Kunyi and Yombe. See Les Kongo Nord-Occidentaux, 2, 21.

⁴ O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 158.

⁵ A. Brásio, MMA, VII, 520, Fernão de Souza to the King, 15.11.1627.

doubtless grown in size by the period in which Dapper was writing, under the impetus of trade with Europeans. Yet it seems very likely that the operation of the copper trade was similar at a much earlier period, although on a smaller scale.

In the early twentieth century, the Vili still provided a large part of the labour force in the copper areas. The ancient workings could still be seen. At Mindouli in the north-east, the pits tended to be shallow, but at Boko Songo in the south-west, the workings were like large quarries open to the sky.¹ According to Laman, the pits were usually round and went straight into the ground with footholds in the sides for the workers to climb in and out. The ore was hoisted up in baskets; then it was washed in clear water before it finally went to the smelting pits.²

The Portuguese presence on the Loango Coast was still very weak at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Thus, when traders from the United Provinces awakened to overseas trade opportunities and began their challenge to the Portuguese, the Loango Coast appeared a likely area for Dutch expansion. Dutch trade was at that time in the hands of individual merchant companies which did not have the resources to sustain a challenge where the Portuguese were determined to resist. In the 15 years, 1593-1607, more than 200

¹ Jean-Marc Bel, Rapport sur une Mission au Congo Français, 1906-1907, 113-116; Bel was the engineer who surveyed the route of the Brazzaville-Pointe-Noire railway.

² K. Laman, The Kongo, I, 122-124.

ships set out from the United Provinces for the West African coast, breaking the century old trade monopoly of the Portuguese.¹ Several of these vessels visited the coasts of Loango and Kongo. The first known Dutch trading expedition to the region was that of Cornelis Vrijver of Medenblik who in 1593 returned from "Angola".²

In 1600, the Dutch captain, Pieter Brandt, arrived in Mpinda harbour, having crossed the Atlantic from Brazil. He was well-received by the Sonyo ruler. The latter was predisposed to welcome the Dutch, for trade at Mpinda had declined since the foundation of Luanda and the withdrawal of many Portuguese merchants from Kongo territory. The Dutch soon became popular with the Sonyo inhabitants, for they offered a larger variety of trade goods than the Portuguese, they were prepared to pay higher prices, and initially, they did not trade in slaves.³

The Dutch position in Mpinda remained tenuous, however. The Manisonyo was not a free agent. The Portuguese were quick to assess the threat of rival European traders in the area: through

¹J. K. de Jonge, De Oorsprung van Neerland's Bezittingen op de Kust van Guinea, The Hague, 1871, 10.

²G. Brandt, Historie der Vermaerde Zee-en Koopstadt Enkhuisen, Enkhuisen, 1666, 195. "Angola" is used here meaning the whole coast from Cape Lopez to Benguela. This is how the term is used in Dutch, English and French sources until the nineteenth century. In this case, it seems that the Loango Coast or Mpinda is meant, since the Portuguese dominated the Luanda region. In this work, the term "Angola" is used in its loose Portuguese sense of the region around Luanda, unless it appears in inverted commas.

³L. Jadin, "Rivalités Luso-Néerlandaises au Soho", 137-138, 142.

their influence on the Manikongo, they brought pressure to bear on Sonyo to eject the Dutch. Another hostile element were the Catholic missionaries at Mpinda - in 1608, there were no less than eight to ten schools teaching Portuguese. These sought to persuade the Manisonyo that he must not trade with heretics.¹

Dierick Ruiters, who visited the area in the first decade of the seventeenth century, reported that the Dutch were preferred to the Portuguese at Mpinda, and that the Manikongo said openly that he would rather trade with the Dutch. Portuguese influence at San Salvador was strong, however, and the African rulers feared them too much to support the Dutch.² Mpinda, therefore, was not attractive as the site for a Dutch trading base on the West Central African coast. In this respect the Loango Coast proved to have a positive advantage over the better-known trading areas south of the Congo river.

From Mpinda, Pieter Brandt traded along the Congo river and sailed northwards to Loango where he established relations with the Vili. Here the position was quite different, for the Maloango feared neither the Portuguese nor the Manikongo. The Loango ruler favoured a policy of free trade for Europeans. The Dutch were in a good position to steal the advantage from the Portuguese because of their superior trade goods. The Portuguese supply of goods such

¹Broecke, 31.

²Dierick Ruiters, 89.

as cloth was limited and costly since they did not manufacture these items themselves, but had to import them from northern Europe, the Mediterranean lands and India.¹ The United Provinces on the other hand were fast becoming one of the leading manufacturing countries in Europe, producing cloth of all kinds in Leiden and Haarlem, and also importing it from Silesia; hardware - mirrors, knives, scissors, bells, pots, padlocks - was also manufactured by Dutch industry.²

The Maloango was determined to retain his freedom of action in the face of either Dutch or Portuguese threats. An incident in Loango harbour which happened shortly before 1608 was significant. Some Portuguese traders had determined to kill Pieter Brandt whom they regarded as the spearhead of the growing Dutch activity in the area. They invited him with two other Dutch captains to dine with them. At the last moment, Pieter Brandt fell ill and was unable to go. The two other Dutchmen went, and one of them borrowed Brandt's hat for the occasion. As the canoe carrying the guests approached, the Portuguese fired at this man, mistaking him for Brandt, and killed him. The other Dutch captain and his crew were taken prisoner with the intent of taking them to Luanda. The Vili were so angry

¹D. Birmingham, "Early African Trade in Angola", 171.

²For examples of the goods most popular on the Loango Coast, and in Kongo and Angola, see OWIC 46, Cappelle Report, 1642, published in L. Jadin, "Rivalités Luso-Néerlandaises", 228-229, 236-237.

at the incident, that with the approval of the Maloango, they seized the Portuguese captain who was responsible for the incident and beat him to death with elephants' tusks. The other Portuguese were forced to pay a large fine. The Dutch took this as a sign of friendship.¹ It was probably much more a display of anger that the Portuguese should dare to attack men to whom the Maloango had given permission to trade.

During the years 1608-1612, the Dutch established themselves on the Loango Coast on a firm footing. Factories were set up in Mayumba and Loango Bay, while other traders were active in Kakongo and Ngoyo, and along the Congo river. Dutch success was in part due to the personal triumph of Pieter van den Broecke, who in this period made three voyages to Loango and stayed a total of 30 months. He established excellent relations with the ruling Maloango which was the main condition for successful trade.

On his ~~fifth~~^{first} expedition, Broecke was soon given permission to trade at Loango Bay and to go to Mayumba province for the trade in ivory and redwood. On his arrival for his second visit, Broecke was allowed to trade freely and was invited to stay with the Manimacaso, a great nobleman. In November 1610, he was asked to visit the king's sister, mother of the heir to the throne, and a most notable woman. On his departure from her house, Broecke received presents of ivory and fruit, and was provided with an escort of

¹Broecke, 28-29.

18 men to carry him back to the capital, half a day's journey from her house. Perhaps the most significant mark of friendship was shown to the Dutch trader when he went to the Maloango to announce his impending departure after 15 months in Loango. The king presented him with 12 Bondos, a leopard skin and 16 tusks weighing 1,000 lbs.¹ The Maloango's subjects were astonished at the richness of the presents; they were a mark of the greatest respect. The Vili were further amazed when their ruler went with his retinue to bid farewell to Broecke at his lodgings and brought him two more tusks. The Dutchman, himself, was surprised, for in all the time that he had been in Loango, the Maloango had not moved more than a musket shot from his palace. Again, when Broecke arrived in Loango in March 1612, for his third visit, the Maloango came with his nobles to welcome him. The Vili were once more surprised, for the ruler had never done this before. On Broecke's departure a few months later, he received from the Maloango 35 tusks weighing 1,905 lbs. As long as this ruler remained on the throne, and perhaps even after, the Dutch were able to exploit a fund of goodwill won for them by Broecke.²

The Dutch also tried to open up trade with Kakongo, but were less successful. A trader sent by Broecke to Kakongo was killed

¹For the significance of leopards and Bondos see above, pp. 68, 43

²Broecke, 29-30, 44, 49-50, 57-58, 60.

after he had completed his business with the king. The details of the incident are not known, however.¹ The Kakongo ruler may have been more interested in establishing relations with the Portuguese. In 1606 an envoy from the Kakongo ruler was received in Luanda. He carried a gift from the king to the bishop of Luanda and brought a request that priests should be sent to baptize the king and all his people.²

Broecke was better received in Ngoyo. He had an audience with the king at the capital Banza Ngoyo. The ruler was a very old man who was a great enemy of Loango; he was also at war with the Teke. He was pleased with the present of eight ells of cloth which Broecke took him and allowed the Dutch trader to stay in the house of one of his noblemen. The next day Broecke was given an escort to carry him by hammock to the banks of the Congo river, from where he crossed to Sonyo.³ The Maningoyo's uncertain relations with his powerful neighbours, like Loango and Sonyo, may have caused him to welcome an alliance with the Dutch.

Trade arrangements at Loango in the early seventeenth century were a simple matter. Permission could only be granted by the

¹Broecke, 47, 71.

²A. Brásio, MMA, V, 241, Extract about the affairs of the Angola Mission, 1606-1607, from A. Viegas, Relação Anual das Coisas que Fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus nas suas Missões nos Anos de 1600 a 1609, pelo Padre Fernão Guerreiro, Coimbra, 1931, II, 413-415.

³Broecke, 58-60. Broecke refers to Ngoyo at war with the Insicussen which usually meant the Teke kingdom of Anziko.

Maloango. On arrival at Loango Bay, the trader was escorted to the royal court at Buali where the king received the visitor. Presents were given by the European and frequently returned by the Maloango. The European gifts were quite small. In 1610, Broecke presented the Maloango with a piece of red and black cloth.¹ In 1612, the leader of the expedition in which Samuel Brun took part, presented the Maloango with two peacocks, two white dogs and a Dutch drum.² These were considered by the Vili to be very kingly presents. The main expense for European traders was, therefore, the actual cost of paying for the trade goods such as ivory. The high overhead charges which were part of every transaction in the eighteenth century were as yet unknown.

The most important Dutch trade was in ivory. The demand for ivory in Europe was high since it came back into fashion in the late sixteenth century and in the seventeenth century, especially in the Netherlands and Germany. Ivory was used to inlay furniture, draughtboards, musical instruments, weapons, tankards, and to make all kinds of religious artifacts. The affluence of seventeenth century Amsterdam, for example, created a large demand for such

¹Broecke, 44.

²Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 7-8.

objects.¹ On Broecke's three expeditions, he took home cargoes of ivory weighing 37,213 lbs., 65,000 lbs. and 96,000 lbs. respectively. The last cargo was obtained in only two months at Loango. Broecke reckoned that the Dutch ivory trade at Loango averaged 50,000 lbs. annually in the years 1608-1612.² At the same time prices were rising. In 1608 Broecke paid 9.45 florins for 120 lbs., while he paid 12.60 florins for the same quantity in 1610.³ At first, prices were low and fixed since ivory was obtained through the Portuguese licence holder. With rising competition, the Vili began to play off one European against another. On his arrival in 1610, Broecke tried to make a price-fixing agreement with another Dutch captain whom he found in Loango harbour to prevent price inflation.⁴

The Dutch also began to buy Mayumba redwood; some they traded locally, some they exported to Europe. Ironically it was the Portuguese licence holder who illicitly sold to Broecke the first tacula which he bought. In 1611, Broecke arrived back in

¹The information is taken from English and Dutch encyclopaedias.

²Broecke, 33, 51, 62, 70.

³The figures are Ratelband's based on Broecke's accounts, see Broecke, xlv, 29 fn. 7.

⁴ibid., 46.

Amsterdam with 1,800 pieces of redwood which proved to be very good for dyeing cloth. The Portuguese complained bitterly in the Spanish court that the Dutch were undercutting their Brazilwood trade.¹ The Dutch, by 1612, were also engaged in a local West African trade, for example, sending redwood, elephant tail hairs and indigenous cloth from the Loango Coast to the Mina coast.² This trade was encouraged by the establishment of the first Dutch West African fort at Mouree in the Gold Coast in 1612.

The Portuguese regarded the Dutch presence on the Loango Coast with increasing apprehension. They feared a general threat to their own interests in Kongo and Angola. By 1612, the Dutch almost monopolised the ivory trade at Loango. The Portuguese trade in palm cloth, elephants' tail hairs and redwood became more valuable than their trade in ivory. One report suggested that the Portuguese were in danger of being squeezed out of the Loango trade altogether.³ Sometimes rivalry flared into open conflict; Mpinda was the scene of several incidents involving Portuguese and Dutch shipping.⁴

¹ Broecke, xciii, xcv, 43-44, 51.

² Arquivos de Angola, III, 19-21, 1937, 85, André Fonseca to the King, Luanda, 28.2.1612.

³ ibid., 85, 88; A Brásio, MMA, VI, 104, Memorandum of Pedro Sardinha, 1612.

⁴ Lopes de Lima, Ensaio sobre a Statistica das Possessões Portuguezas, Lisbon, 1846, III, xxii, 91, 93.

The Portuguese considered two ways of countering Dutch influence. There was the possibility of using force. One idea was to build a well-defended fort at Mpinda which could be a base from which to menace the Loango Coast.¹ The Angola Governor, Bento Banha Cardoso, suggested in 1611 that the Portuguese should build two forts, one at Mpinda and one at Loango Bay. He predicted that the Maloango would not negotiate, and would bitterly oppose such a move. The Portuguese should if necessary consider a new military conquest in Loango and force the ruler to concede. If such plans failed, the Portuguese ships should be stationed in Mpinda harbour to drive off Dutch shipping.²

An alternative Portuguese plan was to send missionaries, as the Loango and Kakongo rulers had requested on several occasions. This might be a more subtle and perhaps a more successful way of countering Dutch influence.³ Yet here too, the Portuguese failed to act decisively. A combination of concern and ⁱⁿaction was typical of their response to the Loango Coast situation. The Mpinda fort was never built; another fifty years were to pass before the first Capucin began his Loango mission.

¹L. Cordeiro, Questões Histórico-Coloniais, I, 172-173.

²A. Brásio, MMA, VI, 19-20, Discussion of the Contract of Congo and Angola by Bento Banha Cardoso, 10.8.1611.

³L. Cordeiro, Questões Histórico-Coloniais, I, 177; A. Brásio, MMA, V, 82, letter from the Angola Mission, 1603; V, 408, King to Angola, 16.9.1608.

In the early 1620s the Dutch and Portuguese continued to co-exist at Loango. The Dutch had three factories which traded in ivory and also in copper. The Portuguese were limited to their trade in local items. The Maloango continued to welcome all traders, but if anything he favoured the Dutch who brought him the valuable manufactured articles which the Portuguese could not supply cheaply.¹

In 1621, Dutch activities entered a new phase with the founding of the first Dutch West India Company, which combined several West African trading companies. The charter gave the company a monopoly of trade from the Tropic of Cancer to the Cape of Good Hope.² In 1623, a Director was appointed for West Africa, resident at Mouree. At the same time, the new company turned its attention to the lucrative Portuguese empire in Brazil where Dutchmen were already involved in an illicit trade.³

In 1623, the West India Company planned its first major attack on the Portuguese. There was a two-fold plan; first, an attack on the stronghold of Bahia, then an attack on Luanda where two Dutch

¹ A. Brásio, MMA, VI, Account of the Loango Kingdom, 1620; VII, 211, Account of Antonio Bezerra Fajardo, 24.2.1624; L. Cordeiro, Questões Histórico-Coloniais, I, 204, 315.

² The first Dutch West India Company lasted from 1621-1674, after which it was reorganised in a second company. The first company is called the Oude (Old) West Indische Compagnie. There was a Council of nineteen directors (XIX). The Company was organised in five chambers, the Minutes of the Amsterdam and Zeeland chambers will be cited here.

³ OWIC 1, Minutes of XIX, 24.7.1623.

fleets (one from Europe and one from Brazil) were to rendezvous.¹ A blow at Luanda and the disruption of the slave trade would have disastrous repercussions for the Portuguese in South America. The Dutch plans were encouraged by letters from the Company representatives in Loango. These were communications that had been received from the Sonyo ruler in 1622. They were sent with the knowledge of the Manikongo who asked for Dutch help against the Portuguese in Kongo and Luanda. He promised payment in gold, copper and ivory. At the time, there were not enough ships at Loango to give help and so the letter was forwarded to the Company directors.

In 1624, Bahia fell to the Dutch fleet, but the expeditions of van Zuylen and Piet Heyn to Luanda and Sonyo failed. Luanda was much better fortified than had been anticipated. The Governor, who had received advance warning of the Dutch fleet, brought soldiers from Massangano to defend the city.

Heyn, arriving at Mpinda in November 1624, also met with disappointment. The Manisonyo, António de Souza, expressed great surprise at the Dutch offer of assistance and disclaimed all knowledge of the letter. His secretary explained to Heyn that the letter

¹There are accounts of the expeditions of van Zuylen and Piet Heyn in Johannes de Laet (S.P. L'Honoré Naber and J. C. H. Warsinck, eds.), Iaerlijck Verhael van der Verrichtingen der Geoctroyeerde West Indische Compagnie, The Hague, 1931-37, I, 10-14, 51-69; K. Ratelband (ed.), De West Afrikaanse Reis van Piet Meyn, 1624-1625, The Hague, 1959, 4-10; "Journaal van de Reis van Piet Heyn naar Brazilie en West Afrika, 1624-1625", introd. by L. M. Arkveld, Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap, LXXVI, 1962, 85-170.

had only been sent because of the insistence of the Manikongo. Since that time, the Kongo ruler, Pedro II, had died, and his successor, Garcia I, had made his peace with the Portuguese. Instead of receiving payment, Heyn had to give the Sonyo ruler presents before he was allowed to leave. In Loango, Heyn and van Zuylen were well-received. They found Dutch trade was flourishing. In the late 1620s Dutch aggression continued; their ships cruised off the Angola Coast and attacked Portuguese ships.¹

During the governorship of Fernão de Souza (1624-1630), the Portuguese made a new attempt to arrest the growing Dutch influence on the Loango Coast. Doubtless Souza was disquieted about events in Brazil and the threat to Luanda. He was also envious of Dutch trade. Their annual export in the late 1620s from Gabon, Cape Lopez, Mayumba and Loango was 80,000 lbs. of ivory and 2,000 lbs. of copper. Souza reckoned that if the Portuguese spent the same amount on Loango as they did in Benguela, the return would be higher. He also thought that trade at Loango would be more profitable than at Mpinda.² First, the Dutch had to be expelled, however.

Towards the end of 1624, Souza wrote to the Maloango, asking him to close the Dutch factories and to expel the heretics. He promised that the Portuguese would buy all the ivory and copper

¹ Lopes de Lima, Ensaio, III, 97.

² A. Brásio, MMA, VII, 319, Souza to Government, 10.2.1625; VIII, 134, Souza to King, 23.2.1632.

which the Vili could supply; they would bring better quality goods than the Dutch; they would provide protection against the enemies of Loango; as a final incentive, Jesuit priests would be sent to baptize the Maloango. The latter replied firmly that he intended to continue trading with the Dutch and Portuguese on equal terms and that he had no desire to become a Catholic.¹ Clearly, the Angola Governor had chosen an inopportune time to approach the Loango ruler who was probably impressed by the Dutch fleet that had arrived in the harbour in 1624. Furthermore, he must have realised that the Dutch were his best allies, not only from the point of view of trade goods, but because they were more reliable since Loango was their main base in the whole region.

Having failed by these direct overtures at Loango, the Portuguese tried to promote their interests in Kakongo. Souza explained his three aims in a letter to the Portuguese king. He hoped to establish a profitable trade in ivory and copper, to hinder the Dutch in Loango by diverting trade from there, to arouse the jealousy of the Manikongo who might then be persuaded to open up his copper mines to the Portuguese.² Portuguese traders could reach Kakongo by crossing the Congo river from Mpinda. It was also planned to open a direct sea link with Luanda. This would avoid the taxes which the Manikongo imposed on traders who passed

¹A. Brásio, MMA, VII, 643, Report of Souza, 1624-1630; VIII, 134, Souza to the King, 23.2.1632. See also, K. Ratelband, Piet Heyn, lxxxii, xcii, xcii fn. 3.

²ibid., VII, 492, Souza to the King, 25.12.1626.

through his territory.¹

A Portuguese trader, Manuel Barbosa, was well-received by the Kakongo ruler in March 1627. He sent word to Luanda that he could obtain slaves, palm-cloth, elephants' tail hairs, parrots' feathers, ivory and copper. He advised that a strong factory should be built and that missionaries should be sent to the Kakongo king. Souza then instructed Barbosa to obtain samples of the copper. He should obtain information on its price, the quantity that might be obtained annually and the trade goods in demand in Kakongo.²

Kakongo and Loango copper came from the same source. Whereas the Vili traded it directly, the Kakongo inhabitants seem to have obtained it through Bunu. In 1623, Bunu was destroyed by people called Jagas. According to Cuvelier, these were migrants from the south side of the Congo river, probably Sundi or Buende.³ They were probably the peoples whom Dapper called Sondy.⁴ The Maloango agreed to the invasion of Bunu, but the reasons for his interest and consent are not known. By 1627, Barbosa reported that Bunu was peaceful and that a new ruler had been appointed.⁵

¹A. Brásio, MMA, VIII, 135, Souza to the King, 23.2.1632.

²ibid., VII, 503, Souza to Barbosa, 9.3.1627; VII, 652, Report of Souza, 1624-1630.

³ibid., VII, 295, Letter from a canon of the See of Kongo to Father Manuel Rodrigues, n.d., 1624; J. Cuvelier, Documents, 8.

⁴See above, p. 77

⁵A. Brásio, MMA, Souza to Barbosa, 9.3. 1627.

By 1630, Portuguese trade with Kakongo was established, although missionaries had not been sent to the area as promised. It was planned to close the factory at Loango and to transfer the Portuguese factor to supervise the Kakongo trade. The Portuguese king had authorised that 5,000 cruzados of copper should be traded annually. Before the end of Souza's governorship, Kakongo copper had arrived in Luanda where it was stored in warehouses. From there it was to be taken to Bahia. New artillery was to be made for the defence of Angola and Brazil.¹

The external trade of the Loango Coast had expanded rapidly in the early decades of the seventeenth century. The Dutch were active in Loango and Ngoyo; the Portuguese were established in Kakongo. The thriving coastal trade was paralleled by increased ~~in~~ activity on trade routes to the interior, where the Vili searched out new sources of ivory and intensified the exploitation of the Boko-Songo-Mindouli copper mines. In 1627 Barbosa noted that slaves were available in Kakongo. After 1630 there was a determined effort by Europeans to open up the trade in slaves which eventually superceded other trade items.

¹ A. Brásio, MMA, VIII, 93-95, Souza to the King, 7.12.1631; 120, 123, Report on Angola by ex-Governor Souza, 21.2.1632.

Chapter 3

SLAVE-TRADE BEGINNINGS; c. 1630 - c. 1670

The aggressive policy which the Dutch West India Company Directors adopted in 1624 yielded quick results. Between 1630 and 1636, Dutch forces captured most of northeastern Brazil, including the large sugar-growing regions of Pernambuco and Paraiba.¹ In 1634, the island base of Curaçao was occupied. Contemporary accounts spoke enthusiastically about the potential riches of the new conquest; they described how the Portuguese had sent shiploads of sugar and brazilwood to Portugal every year. Yet all were concerned about how to provide the considerable labour force necessary to cultivate and process the sugar. This problem the Portuguese had partially solved by importing large numbers of slaves, chiefly from Angola.² Accurate estimates for the Atlantic slave trade are difficult to find. A recent survey has suggested that something in the region of 50,000 slaves were imported into Brazil from the African coasts in the years 1451-1600.³ Another source suggests that between 10,000 and 13,000 slaves were exported

¹For a full account of events in South America, see C.R.Boxer, The Dutch in Brazil, 1624-1654, Oxford 1957. An important work in German is by A. Wätjen, Das Holländische Kolonialreich in Brasilien, The Hague, 1921.

²Johannes de Laet, Iaerlyck Verhael, II, Book 7, 135-140; IV, Book 12, 119-127 describes the Captaincies of Pernambuco and Paraiba.

³P.D.Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census, Wisconsin 1969, 116.

annually from Angola to the Americas in the first two decades of the seventeenth century.¹ In 1641, the Dutch estimated that the Portuguese exported 15,000 slaves annually from Luanda.²

Until this period, the Dutch had only been active in the Atlantic slave trade in a small way. In the late 16th century, individuals participated indirectly as contractors or sailors, but there was no systematic trade on a large scale. The journals of traders such as Ruiters, Marees, and Broecke do not refer to a Dutch slave trade. The trade at Loango was typical of the Dutch trade elsewhere. The Portuguese do not seem to have traded in slaves in Loango either. None of the sources which mention the items traded between Loango and Luanda in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries refer to slaves. Indeed, the Governor of Angola reported in 1611 that slaves were never traded on the Loango Coast although they might be available, since supplies to Angola might be affected.³

The desirability of the slave trade had been discussed by the Directors of the West India Company at its foundation, but the idea was rejected by a majority on religious grounds. Economic arguments were not very persuasive at the time since there was no

¹

D. Birmingham, Trade and Conflict in Angola, 79-80.

²OWIC 56, Enclosure with report of Brazil Council to XIX, 9.11.1641.

³A. Brásio, MMA, VI, 18, Discussion on the Contracts of Congo and Angola, Bento Banha Cardoso, 10.8.1611.

market for slaves in Dutch-held territories.¹ These attitudes appear to have changed following the attack on the Portuguese in Brazil in 1624.

The oldest mention of slave-trading in the archives of the West India Company appears in 1626, when the Zeeland Chamber authorised the dispatch of a ship to trade in slaves in "Angola" and to transport them to the Amazon region.² This was almost certainly a reference to trade on the Loango coast. It was the capture of Pernambuco, however, that marked the turning point in the policy of the Company directors. The anti-slave trade lobby was overwhelmed by the necessity of making the Brazil possessions pay. The more scrupulous Directors could believe that African slaves would be saved from heathenism and popery if they were put to work on Dutch lands.³

Dutch interests in West Africa were still weak. The centre at Mouree was supported by scattered interests around the Gambia, on the Upper Guinea coast, and in the Gulf of Guinea. Loango, therefore, had great significance. It was a potential source of slaves and a base from which the Portuguese slave ships from Luanda

¹W. S. Ungar, "Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Slavenhandel: I. Beknopt Overzicht van de Nederlands Slavenhandel in het Algemeen", Economisch Historisch Jaarboek, XXVI, 1956, 135-137; K. Ratelband (ed.), Vijf Dagregisters van het Kasteel Sao Jorge da Mina (Elmina) an de Goudkust, 1645-1647, The Hague, 1953, lxxx.

²OWIC 20, Minutes of the Zeeland Chamber, 21.12.1626.

³A. van Dantzig, Het Nederlandse Aandeel in de Slavenhandel, Bossum 1968, 30; K. Ratelband, Vijf Dagregisters, lxxx fn 1.

could be attacked. In 1635, the Director at Mouree received instructions to send four ships to "Angola" which were to intercept Portuguese shipping and to transport captured slaves to the Dutch possessions in Brazil.¹ In the years 1635-40, Dutch and Portuguese ships repeatedly clashed off the Congo and Angola coasts.²

Dutch efforts in the Loango region were encouraged by a letter received from the Manisonyo in 1635. He again expressed his dislike for the Portuguese and offered to expand trade relations with the Dutch in return for help.³ In fact, the Sonyo ruler who had embarked on an aggressive policy against his African neighbours was probably anxious to have European support for that reason.

Sonyo at this time was rebelling against Kongo rule and indulging in expansionist activities. In 1631, a Sonyo army crossed the Congo River and invaded Ngoyo on the north bank. The small kingdom was entirely overrun and the Manisonyo's son established himself in place of the deposed king.⁴ The Sonyo army then proceeded to invade Kakongo, overthrowing the ruler and sacking the capital.

¹OWIC 8, XIX to the Director at Mouree, 12.11.1635.

²Lopes de Lima, Ensaio, III, 99; Johannes de Laet, Iaerlyck Verhael, IV, 194-195.

³OWIC 14, Minutes of the Amsterdam Chamber, 13.9.1635; 8, XIX to Mouree, 12.11.1635.

⁴A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 218, names Kanga as the first Sonyo king of Ngoyo.

The reason for these attacks is not known. In 1636, the Sonyo ruler attacked his overlord, Alvaro IV of Congo. The Manikongo was taken prisoner.¹ Spasmodic fighting continued between Sonyo and the Kongo ruler for the next ten years; from this time the independence of Sonyo was assured.

The Dutch were anxious to extend their trading activities on the Loango Coast and in Sonyo by the mid-1630s. In 1636, Johan Maurits of Nassau was appointed Governor-General of Brazil. Since he was determined to make a financial success of the Dutch Brazilian territories, he initiated a policy to increase the supply of slaves from West Africa. Within six months of his appointment, a fleet was sent against Elmina, which was taken in 1637. In the same year, Maurits advocated the dispatch of a fleet to take Luanda.² The XIX were unwilling at this point/ to support a full-scale attack and instead attempted to increase the supply of slaves from the Loango Coast.

In 1637, Hendrickx Eyckhout was appointed to a new post in Loango. He was charged with special responsibility to increase the trade in slaves within his area. Two Portuguese-speaking assistants were appointed with him.³ On arrival in Loango, Eyckhout

¹ O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 211.

² OWIC 52, Brazil Council to XIX, 2.6.1637; Elmina Director to Brazil Council, 15.9.1637.

³ OWIC 23, Minutes of the Zeeland Chamber, 5.1.1637.

found that the Company's agent had 36 slaves which he had bought following orders received from Elmina. He informed Eyckhout that 500 slaves could be had in a short time, but this proved to be an over-optimistic assessment.¹ In November of the same year, the Dutch rebuilt their Sonyo factory and in 1638 a new factory was opened at Zarry in Kakongo. This was a fertile region which supplied provisions for the Dutch traders at Mpinda, as well as ivory, copper, and some slaves.² Eyckhout was unable to solve the basic Dutch problem, for the Loango region furnished slaves only in small numbers. In 1639, the Loango agents informed the XIX that only about 200 slaves could be bought in Loango annually, and 100 could be acquired at Malemba. As for Zarry, in just over two years, the Dutch trader Capelle bought 23,000 lbs. of ivory and copper, but only 34 slaves.³

In June 1639, Eyckhout was transferred from Loango. He was held responsible for the failure to establish the factory at Sonyo on a firm footing and for the lack of success in increasing the supply of slaves. In October 1640, Cornelis Hendrickx Ouwman arrived to take Eyckhout's place at Loango.⁴

¹OWIC 53, Brazil Council to XIX, 6.10.1638.

²OWIC 56, Report on events on the Congo River, 1637-1641. This document is unsigned but the author seems to be Capelle, judging from the context. This document has been published by L. Jadin in "Rivalités Luso-Néerlandaises", 215-220.

³OWIC 8, Report to the XIX on the African situation, 22.9.1639; 56, Report on the events on the Congo River, 1641.

⁴OWIC 8, Report to the XIX on the African Situation, 22.9.1639; Report on events on the Congo River, 1641.

Ouwman found that there had been trouble at Loango itself. One of the Dutch traders had instigated the seizure of a Portuguese vessel in Loango Harbour. This event had caused a commotion and the Maloango had shown great displeasure. Ouwman had the ship repaired and moved to the Congo River. Calm again prevailed in Loango, but the Maloango was by no means satisfied. The incident was reminiscent of that in which Pieter Brandt had been involved thirty years before. It is clear that the Maloango was no more prepared to accept Dutch domination in 1640 than he had been prepared to accept a Portuguese monopoly earlier in the century.¹

At Mayumba the Dutch maintained a factory where 7,000 to 8,000 tusks were obtained annually. The Portuguese continued to send ships from Luanda to trade in redwood. The Brazil Council of the West India Company also expressed interest in tacula, perhaps wanting to compare it with Brazilwood. In 1641 Ouwman sent 20,000 lbs of Mayumba redwood to Brazil for their inspection.²

The Dutch position on the Congo River was still at the mercy of Sonyo. Arriving at Mpindain October 1640, Ouwman found the factory destroyed and the Dutch agent, Zegers, gone with his trade

¹OWIC 56, Ouwman to Brazil Council, Loango 12.3.1641; Luanda Directors to Brazil Council, 16.1.1642; 57, Ouwman to Brazil Council, Loango, 26.2.1642.

²OWIC 56, Ouwman to Brazil Council, Loango, 2.3.1641; 46, Summary of situation on Angola Coast by Zegers, 1643. This document has been published by L. Jadin, "Rivalités Luso-Néerlandaises", 237-244.

goods to an island in the Congo River. The Manisonyo blamed the Manikongo and the Portuguese who had forced him to act in this way. As usual he promised an improvement in relations, but added that he could give no assurance about the actions of the Manikongo. The slave trade in Sonyo, as on the Loango Coast, was disappointing for the Dutch. The estimate of the Loango agents in 1639 that Sonyo could provide only about 100 slaves annually was probably too low. Yet Sonyo, no more than Loango, could provide the slaves needed by the Brazil sugar industry. Ouwman was interested in developing trade contacts at Zarry, which had been temporarily abandoned in 1641.¹

The Brazil directors complained bitterly of the lack of slaves. The cargoes of two ships sent from Loango and the Congo River to Brazil early in 1641 were still of the "mixed" type - 95,556 lbs. of ivory, 39,613 lbs. of copper, 20,000 lbs. of red-wood and 205 slaves. The Dutch warships which cruised between Luanda and São Tomé could provide more slaves by their attacks on Portuguese shipping than the Loango and Sonyo factories.² A stalemate had been reached. Ouwman advised that only the occupation of Luanda could remedy the situation. The Dutch agent expressed optimism over the success of such an operation for four reasons.

¹OWIC 56, Ouwman to Brazil Council, Loango, 2.3.1641; Report by Zegers to XIX, 6.5.1641; Report on events on the Congo River, 1641.

²OWIC 8, XIX to Elmina Director, 4.4.1640; XIX to Brazil Council, 4.4.1640; 55, Brazil Council to XIX, 13.9.1640; cargoes of ships from Angola arriving in Brazil, 27.4.1641.

First, he gave an account of Portuguese military strength which he thought could be overcome by a strong Dutch fleet; second, Ouwman thought that the new Manikongo, Garcia II (1641-61), was well-disposed to the Dutch. It was widely believed that the Portuguese had supported the poisoning of the Manikongo's predecessors, Alvaro IV (1630-1636) and Alvaro VI (1636-1641). In respect to the slave trade, the Dutch had no doubt that supplies in Luanda were plentiful. Lastly, products such as redwood and palm-cloth which aided the buying of slaves, could be readily obtained through the Dutch factories on the Loango Coast.¹

Ouwman's letter arrived in Brazil in March 1641, together with two Company agents from Loango and Sonyo to argue the case. Maurits already believed that Elmina and the other Dutch sources in Guinea could not supply sufficient slaves for Brazil. Ouwman's letter finally convinced him. In May 1641, the Brazil directors informed the XIX of their decision to send a fleet under Jol to Luanda. Luanda capitulated to the Dutch in August 1641.² In September, Jol's fleet set out for São Tomé (which they took in October). En route they anchored in Loango harbour. News of the Dutch-Vili disturbances had reached Brazil earlier in the year. The show of Dutch navalpower seems to have impressed the Vili and in

¹OWIC 56, Ouwman to Brazil Council, Loango, 28.2.1641.

²OWIC 56, Brazil Council to XIX, 1.5.1641, 31.5.1641; Luanda Directors to Brazil Council, 10.9.1641.

October 1641 the situation was sufficiently stable in Loango for Ouwman to leave for Luanda. Almost immediately he was sent by the Dutch directors at Luanda as an envoy to the Manikongo at San Salvador. He received a cautious but friendly welcome.¹

Pieter Mortamer, who was a director of the Angola administration from 1641 to 1642, made a lengthy report to the Company directors. Commenting on the slave trade, he noted that there were four types of slaves called Loangos, Kongos, Ambundos and Xingas.² These were references to slaves bought at Loango, those from Kongo bought at Mpinda or Luanda, the Mbundu bought at Luanda and slaves from Matamba, ruled at that time by Queen Nzinga, which were also bought at Luanda. Mortamer wrote that the number of Loangos and Kongos were small. The kingdom of Queen Nzinga, on the other hand, was "overflowing with slaves". She obtained them from the Jaga who waged war far in the interior; 12,000-13,000 could be obtained annually. The slaves from Matamba and Ndongo were preferred to those from Loango and Kongo since they were more robust for agricultural work. The highest death-rate on board slave ships was among the slaves from Loango.² Nieulandt, who became an Angola director in 1642, also noted that the supply of slaves from Loango was poor.³

¹OWIC 46, Mortamer Report, 29.6.1643. This document together with an introduction by Naber has been published in Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Historische Genootschap gevestigd te Utrecht, LIV, 1933. For details on the Dutch capture of Luanda and relations with Kongo, Matamba and the Portuguese, see C.R.Boxer, Salvador de Sá and the Struggle for Brazil and Angola, 1602-1686, London, 1952.

²OWIC 46, Mortamer Report, 29.6.1643; 58, Mortamer to Brazil Council,

Although the centre of Dutch activity had moved south, they did not neglect their interests on the Loango Coast. In January 1642, Ouwman returned to Loango. His mission was twofold. He had to ensure that relations with the Vili had not deteriorated following the closure of Portuguese factories; and he had to see that trade continued despite the shift of Dutch interest to Luanda. He found the Maloango prepared to negotiate. Some of the Vili traders were hostile, perhaps those who had previously traded with the Portuguese. Ouwman reported to the Brazil directors that the situation would probably improve, since the Maloango was prepared to promote Dutch interests. He found a good cargo ready for dispatch. This included 53,367 lbs. of ivory, 22,050 lbs. of copper and 139 slaves.¹ Zegers, the Dutch agent at Sonyo, estimated that Loango could supply annually 70,000 lbs-80,000 lbs. of copper and ivory, but only a few slaves.²

Ouwman next went to Kakongo, where he had previously established a factory after several requests from the ruler. He found that in eight months, 11,000 lbs. of ivory and copper and 42 slaves had been obtained. Cappelle, who was the Dutch agent at Zarry

25.10.1642.

³OWIC 58, Nieulandt to Brazil Council, Luanda, 17.12.1642.

¹OWIC 57, Ouwman to Brazil Council, Loango, 26.2.1642.

²OWIC 46, Piet Zeger's Report 1643.

in eastern Kakongo for over two years, commented on the increasing trade of Kakongo and the rising importance of the port of Malemba. Judging from Cappelle's comments, slaves were more easily bought in Kakongo than in Loango, although the supply in Kakongo was still small.¹

While Ouwman was in Kakongo, ambassadors arrived from the Ngoyo ruler. They reminded Ouwman that on a previous visit to Ngoyo, when he had crossed the Congo river from Sonyo, he had assured the Maningoyo of Dutch friendship. Now, the Ngoyo ruler wanted a Dutch factory to be set up in his kingdom. A Portuguese ship had arrived in Cabinda in the previous year but had failed to establish a factory on account of Woyo opposition.² Clearly, the rulers of the Loango Coast were finding it in their interests to cement their alliance with the Dutch in this period.

During their occupation of Luanda, 1641-1648, the Dutch became involved in an overseas export trade on three different but interrelated levels. First, there was the trade with Brazil and Europe. Ivory, copper and slaves from the Loango-Angola regions were sent to Brazil. Ships then carried produce such as sugar, hides, tobacco, fruits, dyewoods, copper and ivory to Europe.

¹OWIC 46, Cappelle Report, 1642; 57, Ouwman to Brazil Council, Loango, 26.2.1642.

²OWIC 57, O^Uwman to Brazil Council, Loango, 26.2.1642.

Secondly, there was the local trade between Luanda and the Loango Coast. The Dutch found that they were forced to operate this local network which they had inherited from the Portuguese. Loango Coast palm-cloth, redwood and elephants' tail hairs were essential in the trade of the Luanda hinterland. Like the Portuguese, the Dutch found that it was best to pay their soldiers in palm-cloth which could be exchanged locally for food.¹ In 1642, the Brazil directors provided 20,000 florins to establish the Luanda trade. The Luanda directors replied that the Africans of Angola preferred to reckon in palm-cloth and nzimbus, rather than in money whose value they did not understand.²

The Dutch quickly appreciated how they could exploit African tastes and habits. According to Mortamer, the palm-cloth trade was a potential "gold-mine" for the West India Company. There was a great range in its value in different regions. In Loango, the value had dropped by half since the Dutch started to trade there. At first, European goods had been sold for palm-cloth; ivory and copper had likewise been exchanged for the local currency. The transactions in terms of palm-cloth then took place. By the mid-seventeenth century, however, palm-cloth was no longer used in European trade, and it had deteriorated in value. At Luanda, however,

¹OWIC 46, Pieter Zegers' report, 1643; OWIC 46, Mortamer Report, 1643.

²OWIC 57, Mortamer and Nieuwlandt to Brazil Council, Luanda, 16.9.1642.

and in the interior, the value of palm-cloth remained high, perhaps because the Portuguese had adopted its use in the capital and because European interference in the interior was still minimal.¹ An undated Portuguese source said that the contractor paid 20 reis for one libongo in Loango and in Angola it was worth 50 reis.²

Since the art of making the cloth was in African hands, great care was taken to maintain good relations with the inhabitants of the Loango Coast. In 1645, the West India Company directors sent presents of a chair, drums and trumpets to the Maloango, expressly hoping to encourage the palm-cloth trade "as it was in the time of the Portuguese".³ The Dutch were even more dependent on the Loango Coast sources than the Portuguese. They had no experience of organising the trade from Luanda to Teke markets, as the Portuguese and their pombeiros had done for over a century. A Dutchman, Jan de Herder, travelled from Luanda to San Salvador about 1642. He found the route to Stanley Pool blocked by Jagas; instead he managed to continue his journey to Okango, an eastern province of Kongo on the river Kwango.⁴ Herder was considered as a pioneer, however. The Dutch probably had more confidence in their

¹OWIC 46, Mortamer Report, 1643; OWIC 57, Mortamer and Nieulandt to Brazil Council, Luanda 1642; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 158.

²A. Brásio, MMA, IX, 376 fn. 10.

³OWIC 9, XIX to Luanda directors, 6.7.1645.

⁴O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 157-158, 217; R. Avelot, "Une Exploration

established contacts with the rulers of the Loango Coast.

The Dutch also had to provide redwood and nzimbus for the Angola slave trade. In 1644, they reopened their Mayumba factory which had been temporarily abandoned in 1641. They also bought redwood in Benguela and sold it in Luanda, as the Portuguese had done. In 1641, Piet Zegers returned to Sonyo, and sought permission from the ruler to put a Dutch agent on Luanda Island to supervise the nzimbu industry. At the same time, the Brazil directors were asked to investigate the trade in shells at Rio de Janeiro. This was difficult since the Portuguese controlled that region.¹

A third trade network operated between the Loango and Angola Coasts and the Guinea Coast, especially with Elmina and São Tomé. The Dutch had operated a local trade from the Loango to the Mina coasts since the early seventeenth century.² When they captured Luanda, Elmina and São Tomé from the Portuguese, they took over a larger and more complex trade organisation. The journals of the Dutch governors of Elmina³ and the reports of the Luanda directors indicate some of these contacts. Ships from

Oubliée: Voyage de Jan de Herder au Kwango (1642)", La Géographie, XXVI, 5, 1912, 319-328.

¹OWIC 9, XIX to Luanda directors, 9.8.1643, 30.11.1644; 57, Ouwman to Brazil Council, Loango, 24.1.1642, 26.2.1642; Luanda directors to Brazil Council, 24.1.1642.

²See above, p. 87

³K. Ratelband (ed.), Vijf Dagregisters van het Kasteel Sao Jorge da Mina (Elmina) aan de Goudkust, 1645-1647.

Elmina often left for Brazil and Europe via São Tomé, Cape Lopez (an important centre for picking up wood, water and supplies), the Loango Coast and Luanda. Ships from Brazil sometimes crossed to Luanda and Loango, before heading north for São Tomé and the Guinea Coast. In 1642, the Luanda directors expressed delight at the capture of São Tomé, because of the important local trade between the island and Luanda.¹ Small craft also operated a coastal trade, usually from the main bases at Elmina and Luanda, which in 1642 became the Dutch administrative centres for the North and South Coasts of Africa, respectively.²

Local West African trade was carried on at two levels. Some activity was primarily part of the European trade organisation. This involved the transport of small quantities of trade items from scattered points on the coasts to the main centres for transport to South America or Europe. For example, the cargoes of two ships anchored off Mouree in 1638, included products from the Gold Coast and Benin, and also ivory, copper and redwood from the Loango Coast.³ Secondly, there were the African products which were popular on other parts of the coast. Palm-oil and Benin cloth were important items which were taken from São Tomé to Luanda.

¹OWIC 57, Mortamer and Nieulandt to Brazil Council, Luanda, 17.12.1642.

²OWIC 58, Nieulandt to Brazil Council, Luanda, 17.12.1642.

³OWIC 53, Cargoes of the ships "Witte Heemel" of Amsterdam and "Schoolen" of Zeeland, off Fort Nassowe, 22.1.1638.

Benin cloth was of two kinds. One was plain blue and the other had blue and white stripes. It was sold in pieces made of five cloths sewn together and was about two to two and a half ells broad. The striped cloth was very popular in the Angola slave trade.¹ This same cloth was sold on the Loango coast where it was brought from Elmina and exchanged for elephants' tail hairs.² Poor quality Mpemba copper was taken to Luanda where it was made into arm-rings; then it was taken for sale in the Calabar and Rio del Rey regions.³ These were only a few examples of the kaleidoscopic local trade patterns on the West African coasts.

The Dutch occupation of Angola ended in failure. Only seven years after they had taken Luanda, it was recaptured by the Portuguese under Salvador de Sá in August 1648. The slave trade never reached the annual figure of 15,000 which the Dutch had hoped to achieve. There were two main reasons for this failure. Firstly, the Dutch West India Company had completely outreached its resources in its grandiose overseas projects. In 1642, the Dutch directors at Luanda were already complaining about the weakness of

¹0. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 233; OWIC 58, Nieulandt to Brazil Council, Luanda, 31.10.1644; São Tomé Directors to Brazil Council, 14.12.1642. For further details on the Benin cloth trade, see Alan Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897, Ibadan, 1969, 93-95.

²Vijf Dagregisters, 348 fn.

³0. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 198.

their position, their lack of supplies, the lack of reinforcements. There were over 1,000 Dutchmen in Angola and only about one quarter were fit.¹ There were near enough ships or trade goods to supply the Africans of Angola and Loango with the products which they liked. The Dutch probably never realised the intricacies of the trade network which the Portuguese had established over 150 years, until they had to operate it themselves.² Secondly, the Portuguese won in the long run because of their tenacity. After the Dutch occupation of Luanda, they withdrew into the interior, to the Bengo river and to Massangano. Their presence meant that African rulers were cautious of committing themselves to the Dutch in case the Portuguese might one day expel them. Also, the Portuguese were able to interrupt the slave trade from Ndongo and Matamba to Luanda, cutting off the full potential of this trade for the Dutch.³

Having retaken Luanda, the Portuguese forced the Dutch to evacuate Angola and Kongo territory. A treaty was concluded with the Manikongo, Garcia II. This contained clauses which prohibited the Dutch from using Kongo ports and revived plans for the fortification of Mpinda.⁴ Neither of these provisions were effective.

¹OWIC 57, Henderson to Brazil Council, Luanda, 4.3.1642; Nieulandt and Mortamer to Brazil Council, Luanda, 16.9.1642.

²Almost every report from the Luanda directors to Brazil refers to the shortage of the correct trade goods, see for example, OWIC 56, Mortamer and Nieulandt to Brazil Council, Luanda, 17.9.1641; OWIC 57, Walbeck to Brazil Council, Recife, 19.6.1642.

³OWIC 57, Nieulandt and Mortamer to Brazil Council, Luanda, n.d., 1642.

⁴Paiva Manso, História de Congo: Documentos, Lisbon, 1877, 201-202.

The first was a dead letter since the Manikongo's authority over Sonyo was nominal; the second proved to be as abortive as similar projects had previously been. The Dutch did suffer some immediate setbacks, however. Salvador de Sá dispatched four ships from Luanda in 1648, which attacked the Dutch factories at Mpinda, Cabinda and Loango, and forced their evacuation.¹ The Maloango welcomed the return of the Portuguese. In October 1650, Salvador de Sá could report with satisfaction, that the Portuguese trade with Loango had been reestablished and that the Maloango was more friendly with the Portuguese than with the Dutch.²

Apart from wanting to counteract Dutch influence, the quick return of the Portuguese to Loango was connected with the palm-cloth trade. In 1649 the main Luanda currency was palm-cloth.³ Nzumbu shells had continued to decline in value. It was significant that the indemnity which the Portuguese negotiated with the Manikongo in 1651 was paid in palm-cloth.⁴

The Portuguese were aware of the inherent dangers of having the main Luanda currency "minted" at second-hand and by sources beyond their direct control.⁵ At the beginning of 1649, Salvador

¹ Arquivos de Angola, 2nd series, II, 8, 1944, 204, Historical Resumé of Angola and Brazil, 1647-1648; Lopes de Lima, Ensaio, III, Part i, xxix, 103.

² Arquivos de Angola, 2nd series, V, 19-22, 1948, 85, Letter of Salvador de Sá to the King, Luanda, 6.10.1650.

³ OWIC 65, Account of the Kingdom of Angola since its Restoration, intercepted by the Dutch and appended to a letter from Recife to XIX, n.d. 1649.

⁴ Paiva Manso, História, 21.

⁵ OWIC 65, Account of the Kingdom of Angola since its Restoration.

de Sá supported a demand by the Luanda Council to introduce copper money, especially for the payment of soldiers, since supplies of palm-cloth were low. A new system of copper currency, which was to supplement the libongos rather than replace them, was worked out. The whole scheme was rejected by the Overseas Council in Lisbon in 1650. It was feared that Africans might discover the value that Europeans placed on metals, with adverse results. Also, if copper deposits in Angola were exploited, the Overseas Council wanted the copper exported to Europe rather than used locally. In 1662, the Angola Governor, André Vidal de Negreiros, reported that the value of libongos had declined; he again advised a copper currency was the solution.¹ It was not until 1694, however, that copper officially replaced palm-cloth as the main Luanda currency. The cloth-money remained in circulation until the eighteenth century.²

Although the Dutch were acutely embarrassed by the Portuguese success, they were not excluded from Loango for long. By April 1650, a Loango cargo of ivory and copper had arrived in Zeeland.³ Indeed, while the conflict between Portugal and the

¹A. Brásio, MMA, IX, 376 fn. 10; A. de O. de Cadornega, História Geral, II, 484; F. Mauro, Le Portugal et l'Atlantique au XVII^e Siècle, 1570-1670, Paris, 1960, 397, 426.

²Lopes de Lima, Ensaio, III, Part I, 54, 81-82.

³OWIC 17, Minutes of XIX, 24.9.1650.

the United Provinces lasted, Loango remained an important base for Dutch attacks on Portuguese shipping as it had been in the 1630s.¹ The Dutch also maintained a small factory at Kakongo in the 1650s. These factories received support from Elmina. Small boats could sail from the Gold Coast to Loango, exchange a cargo and return in two months.²

The Dutch trade with Loango remained poor throughout the 1650s. Cargo records suggest that ivory and copper were still the important trade goods and that slaves were only traded in small numbers.³ The records of the West India Company's trade are very incomplete for this period and do not account for all the business on the Loango Coast. Also the West India Company had granted the right to trade on the Loango Coast to the inhabitants of New Netherlands in 1648 and again in 1652.⁴ There must also have been interlopers trading on the coast. There seems little doubt, however, that trade remained sluggish. In December 1658, the factor, Swanenburg, who had been at Loango for over half a year, had bought only three slaves. He sent back a cargo that had arrived from Elmina with the news that the Loango trade was so poor that he still had sufficient goods for a further year.⁵

¹ARA, Aanwinsten 1898, XXII, Dammaet's Diary, 27.4.1656; Lopes de Lima, Ensaio, Part I, 103; OWIC 66, Brazil Council to XIX, 22.6.1651.

²NBKG 81, Loango Factor to Elmina Director, 8.12.1658; OWIC 10, XIX to Elmina, 16.8.1656; ARA, Aanwinsten XXII, Dammaet's Diary records three such expeditions from Elmina to Loango in 1654.

³ARA, Aanwinsten XXII, Dammaet's diary, entries for 12.11.1653, 8.3.1654, 24.7.1655, 5.5.1656.

⁴E. Donnan, Documents Illustrative of the Slave-Trade, Washington,

The poor state of trade was further confirmed by the worried reactions of the West India Company directors, in the face of competition. In 1651, permission had been granted to two Zeelanders to trade at Loango. This followed a resolution allowing free trade on the African coasts under special licence granted by the Company. By 1652, the competition from the factory, which had been set up by the two Zeelanders for trade in slaves and other goods, was so serious a threat to the Company interests that the Directors ordered its immediate closure.¹ In 1655 and 1660, the poor trade at Loango was again under discussion and the directors resolved that licences to trade freely at Loango could not be granted.²

In the 1650s relations between the Loango government and Dutch merchants were poor. The main disagreement centred on the question of "presents" which had to be paid, above the costs of trade goods.³ In 1653, the factor sent detailed instructions to Elmina about the goods that had to be paid to the king of Loango before trade could commence.⁴ In 1654, a ship arriving in Loango

1932, III, 412, 412 fn. 1. Permission was granted for trade in "Angola"; with the recent expulsion of the Dutch from Luanda it seems safe to assume Loango is meant.

⁵NBKG 81, Loango Factor to Elmina Director, 8.12.1658.

¹ARA, Aanwinsten 1905, XXXVI, Resolutions of Zeeland Chamber, 27.2.1651. OWIC 10, XIX to Elmina, 8.8.1652.

²OWIC 10, Minutes of XIX, 31.8.1655; XIX to Elmina 1.9.1655; OWIC 17, Minutes of XIX, 20.9.1660.

³The meaning of terms such as "presents" and "customs" in their Loango Coast context is discussed in Chapter 6.

⁴ARA, Aanwinsten 1898, XXII, Dammact's Diary, 12.11.1653.

harbour from Elmina was met with demands for "presents" as soon as it anchored. The captain at first refused since this was unusual. He was not even allowed to take on fresh water until the Vili received satisfaction; he was forced to give way in the face of what he called Loango "tyranny".¹ The agent, Swanenberg, also complained about the demands of the Maloango and important dignitaries for "presents" in 1658.² Complaints about the practice of taking "presents" above the costs of trade goods were frequent in reports of European captains and merchants on the African coasts. Sometimes there was exaggeration to cover up the trader's own inadequacies or failure to do business. There may have been some truth in these Dutch complaints from Loango however. The growing importance of European trade may have meant that it was providing a larger share of the income of Vili leaders than previously. By the 1660s Dapper reported that traders at Loango were obliged to give presents in order to obtain permission to trade. He listed the recipients as the Maloango, his mother, his principal wife, two nobles who were overseers of the factory called the Manibas (Manibanze?) and Manikinga (Maquimbe?), two other servants, the Maboma ("the greatest official who governs Mayumba"), and some Vili whom the Europeans used as brokers.³

¹ARA, Aanwinsten 1898, XXII, Dammaet's diary, 18.3.1654.

²NBKG 81, Loango Factor to Elmina Director, 8.12.1658.

³O. Dapper. Beschrijvinge, 159.

Although the West India Company's demand for ivory and copper continued, it became more involved in the slave trade. The loss of Brazil to the Portuguese in 1654 did not end the Dutch demand for slaves; Curaçao began to grow as a depot for the slave trade in the mid-seventeenth century, and became a central slave market for English, Spanish and French colonies in the Caribbean area, for the New Netherlands and for the English plantations in North America. Also, in 1657, the Dutch acquired Essequibo and in 1667, Surinam, which in the eighteenth century became their most important American possession.¹ The growing Dutch slave trade was clearly shown in their acquisition of Asiento rights in 1662. In that year, Spain granted the Asiento contract to two Genoese, Grillo and Lomelin, to provide 35,000 slaves in seven years to the Spanish colonies. The Genoese made an important sub-contract with the Dutch West India Company to provide 2,000 slaves per year at Curaçao. In 1668-1669 the contract was renewed, the Dutch agreeing to supply 3,000 slaves in six months. These contracts established the Dutch as the leading slave trading nation, a position which the United Provinces held for the rest of the seventeenth century.²

¹W. S. Unger, "Beknopt Overzicht: I", 143-144; A. van Dantzig, Het Nederlandse Aandeel in de Slavenhandel, 44-45.

²W. S. Unger, "Beknopt Overzicht: I", 145-146; G. Scelle, Histoire Politique de la Traite Negrière aux Indes de Castille, Paris, 1906, I, 501-503, 524, 546, 571-572.

The rising demand for slaves gave a considerable impetus to Dutch trading efforts in West Africa. Their main bases were along the shores of the Gold Coast. These factories and forts, however, were principally concerned with the trade in gold; the slave trade did not flourish on the Gold Coast until the eighteenth century. In Upper Guinea and Senegal, there was a mixed trade in ivory, gum, wood, pepper and some slaves. The main slave trading base was at Ardra, where the Dutch had established themselves at the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹ Loango, therefore, was viewed as a potential source for slaves.

A West India Company report of about 1670 estimated that 3,000 slaves were traded annually by the Company at Loango. The Dutch also maintained small factories at Malemba and Cabinda; after Loango the most important factory in the region was at Sonyo. Ivory and copper were traded in small quantities, but the slave trade was now the main activity of the Dutch on the Loango Coast.² The increased slave trading activity of the 1660s was confirmed by the Minutes and Resolutions of the West India Company directors. There are many references to ships being dispatched to Loango, and to slaves from the Loango Coast being

¹ A. van Dantzig, Het Nederlandse Aandeel in de Slavenhandel, 32-33, 48; I. A. Akinjogbin, Dahomey and its Neighbours, 1708-1818, Cambridge, 1967, 21, 29-30.

² GAR, 802 OWIC, Report on the trade of the West India Company; published by S. van Brakel, "Een Memorie over den Handel der West Indische Compagnie omstreeks 1670", Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap gevestigd te Utrecht, XXXV, 1914.

sold in the West Indies.¹

The growing volume of the Loango Coast slave trade attracted the attention of the Portuguese administration in Luanda. In 1669, the procurator of the Luanda Council, Paulo de Escoriel, who was well-informed on Kongo questions, declared that all the trade of Sonyo and Loango was dominated by the Dutch. More Kongo slaves were being sold at Cabinda and Malemba than at Sonyo, which was much closer to the Kongo sources. In 1670, the Overseas Council at Lisbon recognised the Dutch trading successes on the Loango Coast as a real threat to the Portuguese slave trade. Portuguese subjects were partly to blame since they were doing business with the Dutch. The Council therefore considered a plan to prohibit Portuguese subjects from trading with foreigners.²

The Portuguese at Luanda were initially disinterested in the possibilities of a trade in slaves north of the Congo river. By concentrating their trade on Luanda and Benguela, they could more easily control taxes which were levied on the export of slaves. When slaves were acquired on the Loango Coast, they were, at least in theory, sent to Luanda, or dispatched to Brazil on ships that called at the Loango Coast en route from Angola to Brazil.³ By

¹See, for example, OWIC 6, 7.9.1663; OWIC 28, 19.5.1664, 6.11.1664, 11.2.1666; OWIC 15, refers to the dispatch of five slave ships to Loango between March and July of 1668; OWIC 37, 16.3.1663, 19.5.1664, 4.3.1669, 12.5.1669, 21.10.1669, 28.7.1670.

²F. Mauro, Le Portugal et l'Atlantique, 178; L. Jadin, "Rivalités Luso-Néerlandaises", 59-160.

³Sá da Bandeira, Faits et Considérations relatifs aux Droits du Portugal sur les Territoires de Molembo, de Cabinda, et d'Ambriz, Lisbon, 1855, 6.

1670, the pitfalls of this neglect of their Loango Coast interests were evident.

Firstly, other Europeans were able to establish themselves, not only at Loango but at Sonyo. In 1670, a Kongo-Portuguese army was routed by a Sonyo force who were armed with Dutch weapons and munitions.¹ The official Portuguese weakness on the northern coasts also meant that Luanda could not control Portuguese traders; the complaints of the Lisbon Overseas Council show this. In the course of the seventeenth century, some Portuguese traders had established themselves with their families on the Loango Coast and had attained some independence from Luanda.² An increase in their number may have been connected with events in the Kongo kingdom. Portuguese families had lived permanently in San Salvador and at Mpinda in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. An exodus started in 1622 when Kongolese reprisals followed the invasion of Bamba by João Correia de Souza, the Luanda Governor. The growing disintegration of Kongo continued to make the kingdom less attractive in the latter part of the seventeenth century. After the defeat of Kongo at Mbwilla in 1665 and the sack of San Salvador in 1669, the last Portuguese merchants fled. A similar

¹L. Jadin, "Rivalités Luso-Néerlandaises", 160-162; J. Merolla, "A Voyage to Congo", Churchill I, 621.

²Ibid., 651, 655; P. Hildebrand, "Een Vlaamsche Kongomissie in 1672-1675", Bijdragen tot de Geschiednis, XXIX, 1938, 15.

fate attended the Portuguese at Mpinda after Portuguese troops aided Kongo against Sonyo, 1669-1670. From that time they were hated in Sonyo.¹

Professor Jadin has concluded that the Portuguese who previously inhabited the Kongo kingdom retreated to the relative security of Luanda. It is worth considering, however, whether some may not have crossed the Congo river to settle on the Loango Coast. The growing slave trade and the freedom from the economic control of Luanda must have made the area attractive. The Portuguese failed to act decisively in 1670 to defend their interests on the Loango Coast. The problem of competition on the northern coasts continued to be a source of trouble to Luanda in the eighteenth century.

In the period between 1630 and 1670, the Vili won a reputation for their ubiquitous and effective trading activities. According to the Dutch trader Cappelle, the people of Loango were good men of business who never lost their temper when there was a profit to be made. They traded food, copper, ivory, slaves, tobacco, cloth of all kinds, Dutch merchandise, shells, elephants' tails, salt and all sorts of articles in all the region between Cape Saint Catherine and Ngoyo. They were well-established south of the Congo river in Kongo and travelled as far as Luanda.² In

¹L. Jadin, "Rivalités Luso-Néerlandaises", 157-157, 162.

²OWIC 46, Cappelle Report, 1642.

1647, the Capucin missionary, Antonio di Monteprandone, employed porters called Mubiri to carry him on a journey from San Salvador to Nsundi.¹ These were the Vili from Loango. By 1651 Loango traders were regular visitors to the Kongo capital.² Apart from their business acumen, other factors aided Vili success as itinerant traders. In Kongo they probably benefitted from their non-involvement in the internal political disputes of the Kongo states. This may have provided them with a certain degree of immunity from attack. The Kongo must have welcomed the Loango Coast traders, for they traded firearms which they bought from Dutch, English and French traders; the Portuguese at Luanda prohibited their sale. Cadornega provides an important insight into the reputation of the Vili among the Kongo. Like Cappelle, he emphasised their expertise as traders. He likened them to gypsies who went wherever they could find trade. The Mubiri were feared and respected, because other people believed that they were great sorcerers; "when one says that something belongs to

¹G. Cavazzi, Istorica Descrizione, 482, 483. The traders from the Loango Coast were often referred to as Mubiri or Mubires. See L. Jadin, "Aperçu de la Situation du Congo ... d'après le Père Cherubino de Savona", BIHBR, XXXV, 1963, 408. Dapper wrote that the inhabitants of Loango are called Mouviri, page 144. The word Mubiri is explained by the fact that a "b" and a "v" and an "r" and an "l" are frequently interchangeable in Bantu languages.

²J. Cuvelier, "Contribution à l'Histoire du Bas-Congo", BIRCB, XIX, 1948, 895-921. Cuvelier quotes Father Antonio di Monteprandone who in 1651 wrote of "the pagans from Loango many of whom come every year to San Salvador to trade and very often I preach to them at the capital".

a Mubiri, nobody touches it".¹

Reviewing these early developments of the slave trade on the Loango Coast, it appears that after forty years of European effort a substantial slave trade had developed. Some reasons for these trends may be tentatively considered.

The influence of European demand was one important factor. By 1670, there was a more persistent Dutch demand for slaves. Also, by 1670 English slave ships had arrived on the coast. The charter of the Company of Royal Adventurers, granted in 1663, was the first in England to contain specific references to a slave trade objective.² In 1664, the founding of the Compagnie des Indes Occidentales, which was granted a monopoly of trade on the West African coasts between Cape Blanc and the Cape of Good Hope, laid the foundation for the French slave trade by chartered companies. These English and French merchants were primarily concerned with finding slaves for their colonies in the West Indies.

Yet to see the increase in the Loango slave trade merely in terms of an African response to European demand is to simplify the issue. The Vili were also influenced by the depletion of the easily accessible supplies of ivory. Dapper indicated that Bukkameale had become the staple by the 1660s, when he was writing; he wrote

¹ A. de O. de Cadornega, História Geral, II, 271.

² K. G. Davies, The Royal African Company, 1672-1713, London, 1957, 41; E. Donnan, Documents, I, 88.

that supplies of ivory at the coast were decreasing because of the great difficulties in obtaining it. Certainly, since each expedition to Bukkameale took three months to complete, the profit from ivory must have declined. Dapper also reported that another reason for the decrease in the ivory trade was that the Vili found the trade in slaves more profitable.¹ Thus, the growth of the Loango slave trade by 1670 may have occurred because the rise in European demand for slaves was paralleled by increasing difficulties in obtaining ivory.

The decision to trade in slaves may in the last analysis have been a conscious economic and political decision made by the Loango rulers.² At first, the Maloango may have resisted the demands for slaves if he thought it detrimental to the kingdom. There were close connections, both traditional and commercial, with the Kongo kingdom south of the Congo river. The rulers of Loango must have been well aware of the adverse effects of the slave trade in the kingdom of the Manikongo. In the Kongo kingdom, itself, Afonso I. had appreciated the result of the trade in slaves, how it introduced new social and economic values and threatened his own power.³ In Loango, the rulers were much

¹0. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 158.

²For a discussion of this question in the West African context, see J. D. Fage, "Slavery and the Slave Trade", 398, 400-401.

³Paiva Manso, História, 53-55; the relevant passage has been translated by B. Davidson in The African Past, Penguin, 1966, 194-195.

better placed to control the trade of their kingdom than Afonso had been. Buali was only a few miles from Loango Bay and the Maloango could be kept informed of developments there. This contrasted with the Manikongo's inland capital at San Salvador. The Sonyo ruler was well placed to act independently at Mpinda. The Maloango's strength was shown by the fact that no Europeans were able to gain a monopoly of the Loango trade, with the possible exception of the years when the Dutch ruled Luanda. Nor were Europeans able to acquire land to build permanent forts. About 1670 the Dutch West India Company noted that it was only allowed to trade at Loango "subject to the African government".¹

From the Maloango's point of view, it was probably easier to control the trade in traditional products such as copper, ivory and palm-cloth, which could be easily stored and counted, than slaves. There was an element of risk in transferring to a new "product". By 1670, however, the Maloangos may have decided that the advantages of the slave trade outweighed the disadvantages. European demand was rising; ivory was less profitable; his rivals, Kakongo and Ngoyo were trading in slaves; and perhaps the pressures from his influential subjects who supported the slave trade made it advisable to change the trading policy.

¹GAR, 802 OWIC, Report on the Trade of the West India Company.

By about 1670 a new trading era was established on the Loango coast. An era dominated by the slave trade; a time when Dutch and Portuguese merchants faced increasing competition from the French and English. In the slave trade era, the hegemony over external trade which Loango had enjoyed for a 100 years, ended, and Kakongo and Ngoyo became serious rivals.

Chapter 4

THE SLAVE TRADE ERA, c. 1670-1793:

EUROPEAN RIVALRY AND AFRICAN POLICY

Two major themes run through the history of the eighteenth century Loango Coast slave trade. One concerns the struggle between the different European merchants to assert their predominance on the coast. This theme was generally worked out in the cut and thrust of commercial competition; but the period is punctuated by more aggressive attempts to attain authority through the sending of warships and, on two occasions, the building of forts. The second theme is closely related to the first. It concerns the policy of African governments in the face of European trading activity. The three states of Loango, Kakongo and Ngoyo resisted almost all European efforts to exert a monopoly. By following a free trade policy the Africans were able to benefit from European competition which reached its peak in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The Dutch continued to be the most active traders in the last three decades of the seventeenth century, although they came under increasing pressure from English and French rivals. In 1674, the West India Company was reconstituted, primarily as a slave trading organisation. The following year, a new agreement was reached with the Asiento contractor, Antonio Garcia, to provide 4,000 slaves

per year.¹ Between May and November, in fulfilment of this and other commitments, ships were sent to the main West India Company bases on the West African coast for 5,400 slaves. The three ships which were dispatched to Loango were to collect 1,350 slaves, that is 25⁰/o of the total.²

In 1679, the Directors discussed ways of augmenting the Company's slave trade, and designated the Loango Coast as a principal area for development. Apart from the Loango factory, plans were drawn up for larger factories at Malemba and Cabinda, which would be run by a factor, an assistant, a deputy-assistant and two clerks. It was proposed to send a warship to the Loango Coast, where the Company claimed a monopoly, to seize interlopers.³ The Minutes of the Directors continued to show their hopes for the Loango Coast slave trade. Between June 1679 and April 1681, it was planned to send 17 ships to the Loango Coast for 8,500 slaves, or about 4,000 slaves per year.⁴ This shows an increase over the estimated figure of 3,000 for 1670. Such projects could only have been entertained by the Dutch if they had reason to

¹W. S. Unger, "Beknopt Overzicht: I", 146.

²TWIC 831, Minutes of the X, 12.4.1675. (The Second West India Company had ten Directors.)

³TWIC 832, Minutes of X, 20.6.1679, 28.6.1679.

⁴TWIC 832, Minutes of X, 23.6.1679.

believe that the slave trade of Loango and her neighbours was a profitable concern.

The policy of the Dutch Company, like that of all Africa Companies, was subject to continual pressures and fluctuations, however. In 1684, the West India Company decided to close its LoangoCoast factories and to trade directly from Company ships. By 1686, this had been done.¹ It was the last time that the Dutch maintained a permanent Loango Coast factory; from this period they traded from ships, constructing only temporary trading houses, and directing their business through experienced ships' captains. The closure of the Loango factory does not seem to have resulted from a decline in Loango trade, however. The Directors were at the same time considering the closure of their Ardra factory. A reorganisation of Dutch interests seems indicated. At the same time, the overheads above the price of slaves were causing concern. The value of a cargo dispatched for 500 slavex at Loango was 5,000-10,000 florins more than a cargo sent to Ardra for the same number.² By 1698, the Dutch found trade at Loango increasingly difficult. Their slave trade at Whydah and Ardra and on the Gold Coast increased, while their Loango interests were neglected.³

¹TWIC 832, Minutes of X, 13.4.1682; 833, Minutes of X, 3.5.1684; 834, Minutes of X, 25.11.1686.

²TWIC 832, Minutes of X, 28.8.1682, 1.9.1686; 834, Minutes of X, 20.10.1688; 836, Minutes of X, 16.10.1695.

³TWIC 836, Minutes of X, 8.9.1698.

In the eighteenth century, English and French competitors were more active south of the Equator, and the Dutch did not regain their earlier predominance at Loango.

By 1672, traders of the English Royal African Company, which was chartered in the same year, had reached the coasts of Sonyo and Loango.¹ By 1678, the Company officials were considering the possibilities of setting up a factory in the area. The idea was abandoned, however, and it was decided that experienced captains should organise trade. They were allowed to keep 25⁰/o of any copper or ivory bought.² With certain exceptions, such as the Gold Coast, forts were considered of little value by the Company since servants had to be paid to maintain them. This meant a cut in trading profits.³

The activities of English traders in the last part of the seventeenth century were partly a response to the situation on the Loango Coast. In this period, there was considerable rivalry among the rulers of Loango, Kakongo, Ngoyo and Sonyo, as they sought to attract European merchants to their coasts. In 1685, the Royal African Company directors received a letter from the Manikakongo. This announced the death of his predecessor and invited

¹ E. Donnan, Documents, I, 193.

² T70/78, fols. 17, 19, Minutes of the Court of Assistants, 1678; fols. 11, 114, Minutes of the Court of Assistants, July, 1680.

³ K. G. Davies, The Royal African Company, London, 1957, 121-122.

English traders to Malemba. The new ruler wrote that he intended to give equal trading rights to all European merchants.¹ About the same time, the Kakongo king was also trying to promote trade with the Portuguese at Luanda, promising to receive missionaries and to be converted to the Christian faith, if trade with Luanda was forthcoming. The Portuguese showed little enthusiasm, however. They were probably too concerned with their economic problems at Luanda and considered the Malemba trade to be insignificant.²

The Ngoyo ruler was also active in welcoming merchants to Cabinda. He promised cooperation to English traders. At the same time Dutch and Portuguese ships could be found at Cabinda all the year round.³ Clearly the slave trade was becoming well-established at Malemba and Cabinda. In 1687, an English captain reported that the Loango Coast was full of shipping; at Malemba alone he found eight ships, five Dutch, one Spanish and two English.⁴

¹T70/50, fol. 56, RAC Directors to King of Kakongo, February 1687; T70/61, Instructions to Captain Woodfine, 1687; cited by E. Donnan, Documents, I, 363-364.

²J. Merolla, A Voyage to the Congo, Churchill, I, 655-656; D. Birmingham, Trade and Conflict in Angola, 134.

³J. Merolla, A Voyage to the Congo, Churchill, I, 651; T70/1216, Journal of the "Carlyle", 9.2.1687.

⁴T70/1216, Journal of the "Carlyle", March 1687.

The chief loser in the trading rivalry among African states was Sonyo. Having gained virtual independence from the Manikongo, Sonyo attempted to recover the slave trade which Mpinda had lost to Luanda in the latter part of the sixteenth century. In 1674, the Sonyo ruler appealed to Dutch missionaries to intercede with the West India Company and encourage traders to come to Mpinda for slaves and ivory. In 1686, the Manisoyo, António Baretto da Silva, wrote two letters to the Dutch Company directors asking that ships should be sent to Sonyo for trade.¹

These requests fell on deaf ears, however, for Sonyo could only have won a major share of the slave trade by providing more attractive conditions than her northern neighbours. Instead, it was found that slaves were fewer and charges higher at Mpinda than on the Loango Coast. In 1686, a French report estimated that 200-300 slaves could be obtained per month at Sonyo and 500 at Loango.² The Portuguese and Catholic missionaries, who had a common interest in excluding the English and Dutch from Mpinda, actively promoted the uncertainties of the Sonyo situation. While the Portuguese wanted to prevent the sale of firearms and the extension of non-Portuguese influence, the missionaries wanted to stop

¹P. Hildebrand, "Een Vlaamsche Kongomissie", 56; TWIC 834, Minutes of X, 11.4.1686.

²T70/1216, Journal of the "Carlyle", February 1687; BN, PIII/Div.2/ no. 12, 1, Manuscript map of the Guinea Coasts by Monsegur. It is not clear whether the figure is meant for the trade of Loango or for the trade of the Loango Coast.

the sale of slaves to heretics. The Sonyo ruler was often impervious to such arguments, for his main concern was to buy firearms to wage war against the Manikongo. Occasionally, however, missionary and Portuguese influence made conditions difficult for the Dutch and English, and they preferred to trade on the Loango Coast.¹

Commercial rivalry may have been an ingredient in the outbreak of war between Ngoyo and Sonyo in the late 1680s. The Woyo had already tried to interfere with Sonyo's trade. For example, they stopped a French ship off the coast of Cabinda and advised the captain not to go to Npinda. They said that the people of Sonyo were great enemies of Europeans and added that if the captain wanted to proceed along the Congo river, they, the Woyo, would act as his guides.² About 1687, a Sonyo army invaded Ngoyo, burning and looting the capital, and forcing the king to flee into the forest. The Kakongo king hoped to profit from the hostility of Sonyo and Ngoyo. He had previously married a sister of the Sonyo ruler, thinking that he might benefit from the alliance. He hoped, for example, for better trade relations with the Portuguese since he thought that the Manisonyo had influence at Luanda.³ The

¹ J. Merolla, A Voyage to Congo, Churchill, I, 621; James Barbot and John Casseneuve, Abstract of a Voyage to the Congo river, Churchill, V, 504-505.

² J. Merolla, A Voyage to Congo, Churchill, I, 680.

³ ibid., 715, 717, 720; J. Cuvelier, Relations sur le Congo du Père Laurent de Lucques (1700-1717), Brussels, 1953, 84.

Sonyo victory had little effect on the pattern of trade, however. The reputation of Cabinda was already established and the drift of the slave trade to the ports north of the Congo river a fait accompli.

Like the Dutch, the English did not find the conditions of trade on the Loango Coast easy. In the 1670s and 1680s, the conventional price of an African slave was three pounds. "Angola" slaves were reckoned to be more expensive, however, about four guineas each.¹ In their reply to the letter from the King of Kakongo in 1687, the Royal African Company directors complained of the high costs of slaves compared to other parts of Guinea. They claimed this was because African governments were running the slave trade for their own benefit. A particular grievance was that African traders raised their prices after part of a cargo of slaves was already on board an English ship. The captain was then forced to pay, so that he could collect the remainder of his cargo. The Royal African Company warned the Loango Coast rulers that their trade would only continue if there was more encouragement from the African side.²

After a brisk beginning in the 1680s, English trade with the Loango Coast declined in the last decade of the seventeenth

¹ K. G. Davies, The Royal African Company, 236-237.

² T70/50, fol. 56, RAC Directors to King of Kakongo, February, 1687; T70/61, Instructions to Captain Woodfine, 1687.

century. When the monopoly of the Royal African Company came under attack in Parliament, the directors were first prepared to compromise and open the trade south of Cape Lopez. The difficulties of trade in the area were exacerbated by a European war and the risk of attacks by French warships on trading vessels.¹ The English traders also experienced difficulties in providing the correct trade goods on the Loango Coast. Through their long-established contacts with Dutch and Portuguese traders, the Loango Coast traders favoured Dutch and East Indian textiles. Thus, English and French merchants had to buy cloth in Holland before dispatching ships to Loango Coast.²

French traders were also active at Mpinda and on the Loango Coast by the last two decades of the seventeenth century. The acquisition of Asiento rights acted as a spur to French interests. In 1701, a French Asiento Company was formed and charged with providing 48,000 pièces d'Inde³ for the Spanish colonies in the space of ten years. These slaves were to be obtained on any part of the Guinea Coast except for Cape Verde and Mina.⁴ When French

¹K. G. Davies, The Royal African Company, 128, 232-233.

²ibid., 234; AC, F2A/13, Memo. on the Guinea Company, 5.11.1701.

³A pièce d'Inde was the ideal slave, who was between the age of 15 and 30, healthy, well-built and with no physical defect. All slaves were judged against this "standard"; for example, three children of 10 years of age would together equal two pièces d'Inde;

see, Savary des Bruslons, Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce, Paris, 1723-1730, II, 860, 1082.

⁴AC, F2A/7, Asiento Contract of the Guinea Company, 27.8.1701.

merchants petitioned against the latter clause in 1703, they were informed by Seville that slaves from Cape Verde and Mina were considered to be rebellious and wild by Spanish colonists. It was not until 1708, when it was clear that the Asiento Company could not fulfil its contract that Spain revoked the provision on condition that Cape Verde and Mina slaves were used in the fields and not in towns.¹

Taking advantage of the state of war that prevailed in Europe, the French dispatched warships to the Loango Coast in 1702-1703. These gave chase to a Dutch ship south of Cape Lopez and attacked another off Loango. Two English ships were captured off Loango and at Cabinda, while two Portuguese ships in Cabinda harbour were also attacked.² The aim of the French was to clear the Loango Coast of rival shipping and to establish a trade monopoly. One of the French captains recommended that a warship of 30 cannon would be sufficient to secure the Cabinda trade and that others posted at Malemba and Loango Bay would have the same success. These ships could be relieved by others so that French traders in the area would be permanently protected. At the same time, two directors and four factors should be appointed to supervise commerce. The report estimated that if such steps were

¹AC, F2A/7, Memo. presented to the King of Spain by the Asiento Company, 1703; G. Scelle, Histoire Politique de la Traite Negrière, II, 294-298.

²TWIC 98, Elmina to X, 10.10.1703; AM, B7/502, Report of M. Hayes, to Asiento Company Directors, Cabinda, 27.10.1702; J. Cuvelier, Relations sur le Congo, 63, 70.

taken, 2,000 slaves could be bought at Cabinda annually and the same number at Loango Bay and Malemba.¹

The inhabitants of the Loango Coast welcomed the French traders who were willing to give larger "presents" than their European rivals in return for trading privileges. The Dutch blamed the French for rising prices and the length of time which it took to acquire a cargo of slaves - nine to eleven months compared with two to three months at Whydah.² The French could possibly have excluded their competitors by peaceful means. Trouble arose, however, when they tried to use force which brought a hostile reaction from the ruler of Ngoyo.

In 1702, M. Hayes, a French captain, arranged an audience with the Ngoyo ruler, through the Mafouk³ of Cabinda. He was well-received after he had paid the customary dues and had given assurances that he would not land cannon from his ship at Cabinda. The French captain also agreed that he would compensate the king for any English or Dutch ships which were prevented from trading at Cabinda, by paying the dues that they would normally have paid. When an English ship arrived, the French tried to force it to leave

¹AM, B7/502, Report of M. Hayes, 1702.

²TWIC 98, Elmina to X, 10.10.1703, 31.8.1704.

³For a discussion of the various trading officials on the Loango Coast, see below, pp. 166-171

Cabinda. At this juncture the Ngoyo ruler seems to have reconsidered his position and to have realised the disadvantages of granting the French an outright monopoly. He sent men to surround the French factory and destroy it. The French were forced to abandon their trading house and take flight in their ship. French traders were also involved in a skirmish at Loango Bay where several people were killed. The exact causes of the latter incident are not clear.¹ Since no other ships arrived on the Loango Coast to reassert the French presence, the attempt to gain a monopoly was short-lived.

The years following were lean ones for the Loango Coast trade. The defeat of French sea-power in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713) impeded their African trade. At the beginning of 1706, a Dutch ship reported that no Dutch, English or French ships had visited the Loango Coast in the previous nine months. There were large quantities of slaves available at all three ports. The coastal traders sent an urgent request to the Dutch West India Company directors to send vessels.² The Dutch were much more interested in the lively Slave Coast trade in this period, however. The Royal African Company also reported that slaves were available in the Loango area, although few English ships went so far south at

¹AM, B7/502, Report of M. Hayes, 1702; TWIC 99, Extract from the journal of the "Waekende Craen", 26.1.1706-15.2.1706; J. Cuvelier, Relations sur le Congo, 70.

²TWIC 99, Journal of the "Waekende Craen"; Elmina Director to X, 12.4.1706.

this time.¹ In 1712-1713, French ships again found their way to the Loango Coast. The Mafouk of Loango said that no English or Dutch ship had been seen on the coast for eight months. The French captain was able to buy slaves at Loango where they were plentiful and to set sail within two months.²

By about 1717, the slave trade of non-Portuguese merchants had revived sufficiently to cause concern at Luanda where the Portuguese blamed the decline in the slave trade on the increased activity to ^{Ku}north of the Congo river.³ After the War of the Spanish Succession the possibilities of trade south of the Equator again attracted the attention of the Royal African Company. The Directors had concluded an agreement to supply slaves to the South Sea Company which administered the Asiento rights won by England in 1713. Cabinda was earmarked as a suitable base from which to promote this trade.⁴ English interests in the area were not firmly entrenched and the new activity did not interfere with the established interests on the Gold Coast and Slave Coast. This plan was a recognition of the volume of slaves reaching the Loango Coast.

¹E. Donnan, Documents, II, 56, 59 cites a Report on the Trade of Africa, 1708-1709.

²AM, B4/36, Report on a Voyage to Guinea and Angola, 6.8.1712; AC, F2A/10, Extract from the journal of the "Roi d'Indien", 27.2.1714.

³D. Birmingham, Trade and Conflict in Angola, 137.

⁴E. Donnan, Documents, II, 261-262, cites T70/123 fol. 15-20, Minutes of the Committee of Trade, 14.3.1721.

In 1721-1723, the Royal African Company made the first major effort by Europeans to establish a monopoly on the Loango Coast by means of a fort. In February 1721, an expedition was dispatched under Captain Nurse Hereford, who was appointed Governor of the new fort. Various ships were to proceed to Cabinda with supplies and materials in the following months. One ship which left England in March 1721 carried some Company servants including three factors, five clerks, a chaplain, six soldiers and two surgeon mates.¹

On arrival at Cabinda, Captain Hereford concluded an agreement with the Ngoyo ruler who granted to the English the land on which to build a fort. The reasons why the Maningoyo permitted the fort and changed his free trade policy are not known. The English argued that the fort was necessary to protect them from thieves during the course of trade. Later events showed this was merely a pretext and that the fort was built to strengthen the English in relation to other European traders.² By March 1723, the fort was almost completed. It was built on a hill overlooking the anchorage at Cabinda Bay. There were four bastions, each about 100 feet long and 20-24 feet thick. The fort was not walled but surrounded by a palissade and by a ditch 18-20 feet broad and 10 feet deep. Twenty cannon defended it from within and another 10 were mounted along the beach. French traders who arrived at

¹E. Donnan, Documents, II, 296-297, cites Add.Ms.25556, fols. 51, 99, South Sea Company to Lord Carteret, 20.2.1723.

²AC, C6/7, Memo. of Captain de Rhuays of Nantes, 4.9.1723; ADLA, B4581, Report of a Nantes Captain on his experiences at Cabinda, 4.9.1723.

Cabinda in 1722 found two armed ships in the harbour, the larger one being the residence of the Governor; it was armed with 36 cannon. It was learnt that the English planned to build a second fort at Malemba and that masons, carpenters and supplies were aboard one of the ships for that purpose.

The English quickly ran into trouble from both African and European opponents. A French captain had his factory attacked and burned down; several shots were fired and two Frenchmen were wounded. The English Governor then declared that he would allow no French merchants to trade within the range of his cannon. This meant that they were virtually excluded from the Cabinda trade. Trouble arose from a different quarter about two months later, when two English vessels arrived in the harbour and attempted to start trading without paying the customary dues to the Ngoyo king and officials. In reply to Woyo protests, the English Governor declared that such payments were no longer necessary since he was master of the territory where trade was taking place. The Ngoyo ruler had obviously not foreseen such developments when he made the agreement with Captain Hereford. He launched an attack on the fort with an army of 5,000 soldiers armed with guns and bows and arrows. The English second-in-command was killed and the Governor had to barricade his men in the fort and fire his cannon in order to drive the Woyo back.¹

¹AC, C6/7, Memo. of Captain de Rhuays, 1723.

Dutch, Portuguese and French trade was threatened by the English fort. The Dutch, like other Europeans, were affected by the decline of the Slave Coast trade due to the wars between Whydah and Allada.¹ The activities of Jan Konny on the Gold Coast had also had an adverse effect on trade.² In 1722, the Dutch West India Company were considering the reestablishment of a Loango factory with a small staff of a sub-factor and a few soldiers. In the years 1722-1723 the Company planned to increase the number of ships sent to the Loango Coast.³

The Portuguese were even more concerned about the position. They could not afford to see the English or any other non-Portuguese traders est^aablish themselves permanently at Cabinda where they might divert slaves from the Luanda market. The Portuguese, therefore, revived their pretensions of sovereignty over the Loango Coast. This they claimed because Portuguese explorers were the first Europeans to reach the area in the fifteenth century. In May 1723, an expedition was dispatched from Lisbon under Captain Joseph de Semedo Maya. It arrived off Cabinda in October 1723. Two English ships which were anchored in the harbour were attacked;

¹I. A. Akinjogbin, Dahomey and its Neighbours, 53-58.

²K. Daaku, "John Konny: The Last Prussian Negro Prince", Tarikh, 1967, I, 4, 55-64; TWIC, 106, Elmina Director to X, 8.5.1724.

³TWIC 839, Minutes of X, 13.4.1722; for plans to send ships to the Loango area, see TWIC 839, Minutes of X, 27.4.1722, 23.7.1723, 10.11.1724, 21.11.1724.

one was set on fire and the other forced to withdraw. The fort itself was attacked for 48 hours before the garrison surrendered. It was then razed to the ground.¹ The Woyo played an important part since they supported the Portuguese. They had realised that an English monopoly was against their interests.²

If the Portuguese had not acted, the French would have done so. In 1724, before the news of the Portuguese expedition had reached Europe, the French were planning to send warships to Cabinda to attack the English fort.³ With the Senegal Company jealous of its monopoly, English and Dutch traders dominant on the Gold Coast, and the Slave Coast trade at a low ebb, the free trade of the Loango Coast was increasingly attractive to traders from Nantes, La Rochelle and Bordeaux. By the 1730s the Loango Coast harbours had begun to figure prominently among the African markets frequented by the traders of Nantes, the principal French slave port. Between 1738 and 1745, when the French slave trade was expanding rapidly, almost a third of the ships from Nantes went to Loango, Malemba or Cabinda.⁴ After the War of the Austrian

¹ Sá da Bandeira, Faits et Considerations, 5-8; Lopes de Lima, Ensaio, III, Part 1, 2-3; Part 2, 23.

² Boston News Letter, 30.4.1724. This report tells of the "destruction of the said fort and guardship by the natives of Angola [Ngoyo], assisted by a Portuguese Man of War...". E. Donnan, Documents, II, 296, cites Add. Ms. 25556, fols. 50, 97, Daniel Westcomb to Captain Smith, 20.2. 1723 (1724).

³ AM, B3/298, Memo. on Cabinda, Versailles, 17.8.1724.

⁴ Gaston-Martin, Nantes au XVIIIe Siècle: L'Ère des Négriers, 1714-1774, Paris, 1931, 206-207, 212, 218-219; E. Garnault, Le Commerce Rochelais au XVIIIe Siècle, La Rochelle, 1888-1900, IV, xi.

Succession (1743-1749), the French West Indies were desperate for slaves; the necessary annual replacement was reckoned at 18,000-20,000.¹ The Loango Coast again attracted French traders. The area was chosen as the scene for the operations of the short-lived experiment of the Society of Angola.

This was a company of individuals who joined together to exploit the markets of the Loango Coast and who organised their company for the specific needs of the region. Unlike other African companies, it was not sponsored by a government, nor did it have any privileges. The statutes which set up the company made provision for a specialised fleet of ships. Three large vessels were to serve as "floating factories" off Loango Bay, Malemba and Cabinda; five slave ships were to collect slaves from these entrepôts and carry them to Santo Domingo; two other vessels were to operate between France and the West Indies, and carry back to Europe the excess produce which the five ships could not collect after the sale of slaves.² The vessels anchored off the Loango Coast were to be manned by captains who were familiar with the coasts and who knew the best African traders with whom to do business. The ships were never to be without a store of trade goods for 1,000 slaves. It was hoped that these floating bases would

¹ E. Garnault, Le Commerce Rochelais, IV, xi.

² A copy of the Constitution of the Society of Angola is to be found in ADIV, Fonds Vignols, 1F/1933; the Constitution has been published by Gaston-Martin, L'Ere des Négriers, 244-252.

allow slave ships to remain only a short time on the coast and avoid a high death-rate among crews and slaves.¹ The Society of Angola was an attempt to reconcile the African resistance to permanent bases ashore and the European desire to exploit the commercial possibilities of the area more fully than temporary slave ships allowed.

In its lifetime from 1749 to 1756, the Society of Angola transported more than 10,000 slaves to Santo Domingo. It functioned almost as its founder, Antoine Walsh, intended. Two large ships, the "Roi de Louangue" at Loango Bay and the "Roi de Gabingue" at Cabinda (the latter, an enormous vessel of over 500 tons), acted as entrepôts; a third and smaller vessel was stationed off Malemba, and small craft linked the three ports. The Society ended with the coming of the Seven Years' War in Europe; but it had already run into financial difficulties due to the over-ambitious schemes and the mismanagement of its directors.²

Another French effort to secure the trade of the Loango Coast was made in 1757. The French government supported an effort to oust other European traders who were appearing in the Loango region in greater numbers. In 1752, for example, ¹/₈ of the slaves carried on Liverpool ships from the African coasts came from

¹AC, C6/12, Memo. on a letter from A. Walsh, 12.11.1748.

²AC, C6/14, Decree of the Council of State concerning the Society of Angola, n.d.; Gaston-Martin, L'Ere des Négriers, 254-257.

"Angola"; that was 3,150 slaves from the Loango region.¹

Cabinda was again chosen as the main point for attack. By the end of the 1750s it was reckoned that 5,000-6,000 slaves could be obtained annually there, and that trade was also good at Malemba. From Cabinda, two warships were to sail northwards to Malemba, Loango Bay and Mayumba, attacking rival shipping en route.² When they arrived off the Loango Coast in March 1757, the French succeeded in clearing the area of Dutch and English traders.³

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this episode was the treaty which the French commander concluded with Prince Klaus, the Mafouk of Cabinda, and with Elzina, whom the French called Governor of Cabinda. This treaty, which ran to eight articles, promised mutual peace and friendship. The French were granted in perpetuity a piece of land on which to build a fort; no other Europeans were allowed to construct forts at Cabinda; the Woyo promised to protect the French from attacks which might hinder trade. The French, on their side, agreed to defend the Cabindans against attacks, to send ships every year to trade in slaves and to provide all the merchandise that the Cabindans wanted.⁴

¹G. Williams, A History of Liverpool Privateers and an Account of the Liverpool Slave Trade, Liverpool, 1896, 675-677.

²AM, B4/73, Memo. for Captain Caumont, November 1767; AC, F3/61, Memo. for Captain Herlye on the Cabinda Expedition of 1757, 23.6.1763.

³AM, B4/77, Letters from Captain Caumont, Martinique, 27.5.1757, 1.6.1757. An English account of the incident has been published by G. Williams, Account of the Liverpool Slave Trade, 482-484.

⁴AM, B4/77, Franco-Cabinda Treaty, 7.4.1757.

This was clearly a French attempt to establish a monopoly. The motives which persuaded the Woyo to sign the treaty are also evident. In the first place, the treaty was concluded at a time when a European war had significantly diminished the numbers of trading vessels on the Loango Coast. The agreement with the French seemed to assure the Woyo of a steady outlet for their slave trade and a regular supply of European goods. This would give them an advantageous position in relation to their Loango and Kakongo rivals. An even more important reason for Ngoyo consent was the promise of French protection against their enemies. The Woyo in this period were again under attack from the Solongo of Sonyo.

The spasmodic enmity between Sonyo and Ngoyo continued in the eighteenth century. By the middle of the century, Sonyo had finally lost her struggle to conduct a large slave trade south of the Congo River, and instead sent most of her slaves to Cabinda.¹ At the same time Sonyo remained a military threat to Ngoyo. For example, in 1748-1749, a Sonyo army crossed the Congo and captured Cabinda itself. Although the Woyo were able to repulse the invaders after a few months, such attacks caused a considerable disruption of trade. The Woyo could ill-afford these troubles which drove European traders to the rival ports at Loango Bay and Malemba.²

¹ La Pratique Missionnaire des PP. Capucins dans le Royaume de Congo, Angola et Contrées Adjacentes, J. Nothomb (ed.), Louvain, 1931, 135.

² MCC 486, Journal of the "Groot Proyen", 15.3.1748; MCC 455, Journal of the "Grenadier", 20.1.1749; 459, Captain of the "Grenadier" to MCC Directors, Malemba, 12.2.1749; AC, C6/24, Memo. on the African Coasts, 1766.

The Ngoyo-French treaty seems to have been a dead-letter, however. This was probably due to the decline of French interest after the defeat of her seapower in the Seven Years' War.

The 30 years from about 1763 were a time of great activity in the Loango Coast slave trade, and marked the peak of the slave trade era. The French established their domination over other European traders. The main reason for their success was that the Loango Coast remained an area of free trade. According to French reports, it was the only major slave trading area on the West African coast, where all Europeans could compete with each other in open trade.¹ The African authorities retained their independence; if the French gained predominance, it was because they appeared in the greatest number, paid the higher prices and supplied the best trade goods. Successful peaceful competition was clearly the most effective way to gain control of the Loango Coast slave trade and it succeeded where forts and warships failed.

While Dutch and English ships continued to visit the region their numbers dwindled in the face of the powerful French competition. Reports of the 1780s suggested that by this period about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the French slave trade was with Loango, Kakongo and Ngoyo.²

¹ADLA, C738, Memo. of M. Cadou, 1762; ADIV, C3928, Memo. presented by S. de Foligne to the Estates of Brittany, 12.10.1776; AC, C6/24, St. Malo traders to Minister of Marine, 26.12.1783.

²AC, F1B/2, M. de Castries to M. de Vergennes, 5.3.1784; AC, C6/24, St. Malo traders to Minister of Marine, 26.12.1783; AC, C6/24, Memo. on the Coast of Angola, n.d. 1784.

The trade varied from about 10,000 to 15,000 slaves annually according to French sources. These estimates did not take into account the small English, Dutch and Portuguese slave trade.¹ English reports suggested a figure of 13,000 to 14,000 slaves per year as the total trade of the Loango Coast.² A Portuguese estimate, probably designed to alarm the Lisbon government, and perhaps too high, gave a figure for the Loango Coast trade as 20,000 annually.³

The development of the Loango Coast trade was watched by the Portuguese at Luanda with growing apprehension. An attempt to block the flow of slaves to the north was made in 1759, with the construction of a fort at Nkoje in Ndembu territory. The efficacy of this move only lasted a few years, however; and, ironically, it was at a time when few European ships were frequenting the Loango Coast anyway.⁴ The superior trade goods offered on the coasts north of the Congo river, especially the firearms and cloth, were the determining factor in drawing the slave traders from Luanda. While the Portuguese continued to claim the Loango

¹AC, C6/24, Report on the African Slave Trade, 1762-1778; AC, C6/24, Le Havre Traders to Minister of Marine, 21.12.1783; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, xvii.

²Accounts and Papers, XXVI, Evidence of James Penny to the Committee ... considering the Trade in Slaves, 1789.

³D. Birmingham, Trade and Conflict in Angola, 157.

⁴ibid., 150, 154.

Coast (for, example, in decrees of 1758, 1769 and 1779), they did little to enforce their sovereignty. Even Portuguese traders were few, since they could not compete openly with the French.¹ By 1779, however, Portugal at last decided to make good her claims. The time was opportune since France, England and Holland were involved in the American wars. In the same year, the Angola Governor received instructions from Lisbon to fortify the ports of Malemba, Cabinda, Mpinda and Ambriz. In 1782, the order was modified and it was decided only to build a fort at Cabinda. The Portuguese maintained that this plan was designed to secure their subjects from possible African attack and to protect their trading rights; it was not intended as a threat to other European traders.²

In July 1783, a Portuguese expedition of four warships arrived in Cabinda harbour. The Portuguese commander had two parties to consider, other European traders and the Woyo. From his actions it became clear that the Portuguese equated protecting their interests at Cabinda with the establishment of a monopoly. At first, the French were allowed to continue to trade, although they were not allowed to land guns, in case they were arming the Woyo against the

¹ Sá da Bandeira, Faits et Considerations, 8-9; Lopes de Lima, Ensaio, III, Part 1, xxxiii-xxxiv.

² DFC, Côtes d'Afrique, 2/146, Portuguese Report on their actions at Cabinda, n.d., 1784; AC, C6/24, S. Raou to Nantes, April 1784.

Portuguese. After a few weeks, conditions had become so difficult that French traders decided to leave and complete their trade at Malemba and Loango Bay. Other ships which arrived at Cabinda found the entrance barred by a frigate with 40 cannon, and entry impossible.¹ At the same time, the Portuguese began to construct their fort, which by the middle of 1784 had been completed on the seaward side. The fort was large enough to hold about 550 men, and had several buildings, including the Governor's House, a Chapel, a Magazine and a Hospital.²

The attitude of the Woyo was an important factor in the situation. At first, the leading officials do not appear to have been completely hostile, to the Portuguese. The Mambouk³ and several other officials went aboard the Portuguese ships on their arrival according to custom. There the Mambouk signed a paper welcoming the Portuguese and allowing them to establish themselves on shore providing that the French were allowed to trade freely. The Ngoyo leaders seem to have been persuaded by the very extravagant present which they were given and by the fact that they were somewhat intimidated aboard the warship. A few days later, some Portuguese officers visited the Mambouk's house. They were informed

¹AM, B4/267, Journal of Captain Cadeau, Cabinda, 1783; AC, C6/24, Account of the Portuguese action at Cabinda by M. Marois, n.d., 1783; Captain Deschalonge to Nantes, Loango, 3.11.1783; Baumann to Nantes, Malemba, March 1784.

²AM, B4/267, Plan and description of the Portuguese fort at Cabinda, n.d., 1784.

³See below, pp. 168-169

that permission for the construction of a permanent establishment would only be given if it was erected at one end of Cabinda Bay. This was an attempt to restrict the extent to which the Portuguese could dominate Cabinda.

The Portuguese proceeded to disregard the Ngoyo terms and to land some of their cannons. They fired shots at African traders to drive them from the French trading houses. Following these actions, and the departure of the French ships, many of the brokers, merchants and European servants at Cabinda fled into the interior. By November of 1783, relations between the Portuguese and the Ngoyo leaders had deteriorated badly. The Portuguese had brought African traders from Luanda to start trade, but they could not compensate for the loss of French trade. The Makaye and Mambouk of Ngoyo explained that they were not violently opposed to the Portuguese, but that they must have freedom to deal with all foreigners. They asked that at least 10 French ships be allowed to trade at Cabinda harbour. The Portuguese would not agree. By December 1783, the Woyo had stopped bringing the Portuguese supplies.¹

By the beginning of 1784, the closure of Cabinda harbour was having a serious effect on the balance of trade on the whole

¹AC, C6/24, Account of M. Marois, n.d., 1783; Captain Gayot to La Rochelle, Malemba, 10.8.1783; AM, B4/267, Journal of Captain Cadeau, 1783. For some Portuguese documents on their relations with the Woyo, see M.A.F. de Oliveira (ed.), Angolana (Documentação Sobre Angola), I, 1783-1883, 1-24.

Loango Coast. The existence of three large markets within easy reach of each other and with freedom of movement between them was essential to the equilibrium of commerce in the area. At the end of 1783, 22 ships were competing with each other at Malemba alone and there was also great competition at Loango Bay. The rise in prices was so great that captains whose ships were equipped for 600 slaves found that they only had sufficient trade goods to buy 400. The period required to secure a cargo of slaves had lengthened and slaves and crews fell ill and died in greater numbers. To add to the general consternation, rumours came from Luanda that a fleet was preparing to sail north and fortify Malemba and Loango Bay.¹

This situation seriously jeopardised the supply of slaves to French colonies. In 1784, therefore, an expedition was commanded by Bernard de Marigny was dispatched to the Loango Coast. Marigny's instructions made the French position clear. The coast from the Equator to the Congo River was free for all Europeans; the Portuguese claims between the Congo and Bengo rivers were no better founded. The chief objective of Marigny was to reestablish the French trade at Cabinda, and to ensure that trade at Loango Bay and Malemba was also free for all. The expedition was to go first

¹AC, C6/24, Bumann to Nantes, Malemba, March 1784; Captain Dubois to Bordeaux, Loango, 18.10.1783; Captain Vivien to Nantes, Loango, 11.10.1783 and 3.11.1783; ADLA, C738, La Rochelle traders to Nantes, 20.3.1784; Memo. of Nantes traders, 6.4.1784.

to Cabinda to verify the nature of the Portuguese establishment. If it was a fort designed to prevent other European ships entering the harbour it was to be destroyed; if it was merely a large trading house to secure Portuguese trade, Marigny was to undertake the construction of a similar French building.¹

Arriving off Cabinda in June 1784, Marigny found that the Portuguese were established in their fort and that the harbour was guarded by warships. Again, the attitude of the Woyo was an important factor in assessing the situation. Through a well-known French trader, M. Baumann, at Malemba, the French were able to make contact with the Ngoyo Mambouk. Marigny asked Baumann to find out if the Woyo could be relied on to give aid to the French. If not, he hesitated to attack, since the French were fewer in number than the Portuguese. Marigny received word that the Mambouk would supply an armed force of 800 men who would join with the French when they landed at Cabinda. Following this communication French troops were put ashore to join the Woyo force. A letter was sent to the Portuguese fort commander, asking him to agree in writing that the French and other Europeans would be allowed to trade freely. If this was agreed on, the French proposed to build an establishment to defend their trade; if not, they proposed to attack the Portuguese fort. A request for time from the Portuguese

¹ AC, F1B/2, Royal Memo. to serve as Instructions for Marigny, 23.1.1784.

governor, while he contacted Luanda, was refused. As Marigny prepared to attack, the Portuguese conceded defeat. The evacuation of the garrison to Luanda and the destruction of the fort followed within 20 days.

Clearly the situation would have been different if the Ngoyo Mambouk had not promised to support the French. The Portuguese governor, Luis Candido Pinheiro Pintado, claimed that the French did not have Woyo support, but in the same letter his words belied him. He requested that the French should act as mediators to establish good relations with the Woyo, and that the Portuguese should be allowed to retain their weapons until the good conduct of the African inhabitants of C^abinda was assured.

Through M. Baumann, Marigny asked the Mambouk to see that there was no looting or bloodshed at the Portuguese fort. In the future, the Portuguese should be allowed to trade on equal terms with the French, English and Dutch. The Portuguese claimed that the evacuation of the fort was made necessary through the ill-health of the garrison. Yet, poor relations with the Woyo were a crucial factor. The Portuguese alone could not act as satisfactory trading partners; this caused relations to deteriorate so that one French report even claimed that the Portuguese garrison hardly dared set foot outside the fort. Thus, a stalemate in which successful trade was impossible had emerged.¹

¹AC, C6/24 and AM, B4/267, Correspondence of Marigny, 1784; AM, B4/267, Journal of Marigny, Feb.-July, 1784.

A Luso-French Convention of January 1786 restored the situation on the Loango Coast as it had previously been. While the French agreed to pay compensation for the destruction of the fort, the Portuguese agreed not to impede the trade of Cabinda. Non-Portuguese traders were also interested in the possibilities of trade south of the Congo river, especially at Ambriz, by this period. The French, however, would not concede the Portuguese claims of sovereignty. They agreed to stop trading in the area only if the Dutch and English did likewise.¹ This in fact meant that non-Portuguese traders continued to operate in the whole area.

The French victory at Cabinda was followed by a great upsurge in their trade on the Loango Coast. With free trading conditions reestablished, they virtually ousted their English and Dutch ompetitors. This was the swan-song of the Loango Coast slave trade, however, at least in the form and volume in which it existed in the eighteenth century. By 1793, the French traders had withdrawn from theregion, following the influence of the Revolution.

¹AC, C6/24, Luso-French Convention, 30.1.1786.

Chapter 5

THE CONDUCT OF TRADE

The expansion of slave trading on the Loango Coast necessitated a more complex organisation than that which had administered the copper and ivory trade. This was true for Europeans and Africans, on the coast and on the long routes to the interior markets. The new situation demanded some innovations, but on the whole, the eighteenth century organisation grew out of the old. It was a more sophisticated system brought about by the greater volume of trade and the change in the principal "export".

The organisation of the caravans from the interior to the coast was a matter of prime importance. Indeed, without an efficient system, the Atlantic slave trade would have been in danger of collapse. These caravans involved a considerable number of people, often as many as 20 guards to three or four slaves.¹ These armed men prevented slaves from escaping and deterred attackers. They probably acted as porters on the other leg of the journey from the coast to the interior.

No doubt, the Mubiri continued to use their reputation as sorcerers to good effect in the slave trade era. Yet their success as traders was also due to other factors. They were renowned in the nineteenth century for their skill and stamina in the manning

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 48.

of a caravan and for their willingness to go far from home, into hostile territory if necessary.¹ The journey was seldom a pleasant one. The following is an extract from the testimony of a Vili, Koubedika, who was recruited as a porter in 1891; he describes the route from the Loango Coast to the interior:

... Interminable, wearing, hallucination-making, the splendid 'caravan road' seemed like a rope which dragged us along unyieldingly. We went up and down mountain after mountain; valleys, water courses, savannas with sharp-edged grasses and a stifling atmosphere, were traversed in turn. Huge, shadowy, terrifying, the hostile forests of the Mayombo waylaid us; and once under their canopy we were soaked by a continuous deluge of rain. In the semi-darkness of the undergrowth we slid over the soft and muddy ground; we tripped on enormous tree trunks blown down by the hurricanes. At every turn we had to unload our burdens to release a comrade bogged down and to help another, slipping in the mud, to replace his load on his shoulder or head...²

For the slaves, the journey was even worse. Those who made no trouble were allowed to go unbound, and sharing the same hazards as their guards, sometimes became their friends. There was no mercy for those who resisted. Their hands were tied behind them, often so tightly that it took two days to restore

¹For nineteenth century accounts based on personal experience of travelling with Loango caravans, see Colonel Baratier, Au Congo, 14, and P. Güssfeldt, Die Loango Expedition, I, 153; J. Dybowski, La Route du Tchad: du Loango au Chari, Paris, 1893, 15-19, 35-49, 78-80, tells how the Vili were going as far as the Ubangi river with Europeans in the 1890s and reckons that 7,000 porters were provided from the Loango region annually.

²Elie Gandziami, "De Loango à Tandala par la Piste de Caravanes", Liaison, XLIX-L, 1955, 26-30, recounts an interview with the old man, Koubedika.

circulation when they were unbound. A slave who tried to escape was further secured by means of a forked piece of wood. The branches were opened precisely to the thickness of his neck; then, ends of the wood were pierced by two holes through which an iron pin was pushed so that it lay across the nape of the neck. This "collar" fitted so tightly that the slave was sometimes in danger of being choked. An escort took the end of the fork of wood and marched in front forcing the captive to follow. At night, the "fork" was tied to a tree. This bois mayombe, as it was called by the French, remained on the slave until he was sold.¹

The caravan leaders were frequently men of the Loango Coast.² They were often men of considerable ability. They had to be first-rate organisers and command the respect of their men. They had to ensure that sufficient trade goods and supplies were carried along. The main food item was usually cassava. A portion was often left with friends en route and collected on the return journey. Inexperienced porters had to be disciplined; they were often tempted by the comforts of a village, or could cause trouble by unwittingly offending a fetish en route. Caravan leaders had to be knowledgeable about the territory through which they passed. They had to be cognisant of local customs and to negotiate legitimate tolls and taxes.

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 48-50.

²E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 222.

The customs of different regions made it easy for an inexperienced leader to find himself in trouble. In Loango itself, for example, if a caravan met a funeral procession, the mourners could claim half of the goods that the traders carried. Another hazard was the chance of meeting a group of hunters who had killed a leopard; again, the caravan had to hand over half of its possessions. In these circumstances if forewarned, the traders tried to travel by night; this was allowed only after permission had been granted by the local ruler (to guard against smugglers). Trade caravans that wanted to deviate from customary paths also had to have permission from the chief of the region. Sometimes a local event such as a crime could close the road completely. Then, the caravan organiser had to decide whether to wait or to try and find an alternative path. It was fortunate for the traveller that news of such events spread quickly.¹

Caravan leaders preferred to negotiate rather than to force their way through an area. The travellers were not usually on their home ground and the thick vegetation, whether forest or savannah, made defence difficult. The successful ambush of a caravan burdened with trade goods or potentially rebellious slaves would have been an easy affair, even if the caravan was well-armed.²

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 219, 220, 221, 222.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 187; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 200.

Guns and powder had entered West Central Africa through the Loango Coast since the seventeenth century; local chiefs could have at least as much firing-power as a caravan. Negotiation with local rulers or their representatives was therefore a crucial part of the leader's function. Tolls and taxes were the subject of much discussion. Taxes were often levied according to the value of goods which the caravan carried. Ivory was considered particularly valuable. Caravans travelling inland from the coast had to pay in items such as salt, gunpowder and cloth.¹

Sometimes the head of the caravan would go in advance to investigate conditions and to discuss tolls. These negotiations could take days. When difficulties arose the caravan leader must know when to call a chief's bluff by threatening to turn back; when to try his luck elsewhere; when to give in, recognise his weakness and pay. Once the agreement was completed, the local ruler might send one of his officials before the party to sound his master's double iron bell, and to escort the traders to the next region. Traders used to go to considerable lengths to cultivate friends among the chiefs whose territory they frequented. This was the easiest way of ensuring a safe passage. Sometimes merchants would contract marriages on their journeys, thus establishing new allies.²

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 219; K. Laman, The Kongo, II, 135.

²E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 222; K. Laman, The Kongo, I, 154-155.

A local ruler was in a strong position with regard to the passing traveller, but there were limitations on arbitrary behaviour. Taxes from trade became an important part of a chief's income; he could not afford to alienate caravan leaders and acquire such a bad reputation that they stopped passing through his territory. If chiefs attacked caravans, they made enemies not only of the traders, but also among their neighbours. Other rulers wanted to profit from the caravans and they would not tolerate a neighbour who interrupted the passage of traders. Local chiefs sometimes competed among themselves to attract merchants to their territories.¹ Energetic rulers sent envoys into the interior, especially in the dry season which saw the peak of caravan activity. These ambassadors sought to persuade traders to take the route through their territory. They tried to conclude agreements to expedite matters, sometimes offering delayed payments until their return journey as an incentive. The envoys would come bearing their master's credentials, such as bells, staffs, knives, animals' tails and other insignia of high rank. They had a small following and were usually articulate and clever men. Sometimes chiefs would send presents or come in person, as a token of friendship.²

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 222.

²ibid., 221.

Caravan leaders were at their weakest when there was no alternative route; local rulers took advantage of such places to erect barriers. There, they could insist on tolls before a trouble-free passage was ensured. Such a situation existed on the eastern boundary of Loango, where in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the frontiers ran through the mountainous afforested Mayombe. Paths were few; barriers called Nsilu by the Vili blocked the way and watchmen were appointed.¹

Several nineteenth century reports refer to these barriers. One account noted 12 such "gates" between Kakongo and the neighbouring Yombe states, where caravans and their goods were inspected.² Even more impressive is a description of a wooded fence between eastern Loango and the Mayombe. It extended from the Kwilu River to the Lueme River, and could only be traversed at three points. Loango officials sat in the gate-houses and collected tolls on incoming and outgoing goods. Armed men and religious shrines also guarded these border check-points. Customs' barriers existed at the eastern side of the Mayombe as well. Long negotiations might take place before the local ruler commanded the opening of the "gate".³

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 221.

²A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 239-240.

³ibid., I, 256; P. Güssfeldt, Die Loango Expedition, I, 115-117, 176, describes his meeting with the Mani Mbanschi, a Yombe chief, who commanded the "gate" into Kunyi territory. After a long discussion and the payment of a toll, the chief allowed the barrier

The caravan leader was also at a disadvantage at rivers where there were few crossing points. Ferrymen were often in charge of negotiations on behalf of the local ruler. In Loango, ferrymen were respected. The position was linked to traditions about the arrival of the first Maloango, since he had to cross several rivers, and ferrymen played important roles in these events. Another responsibility was to prevent princes from crossing the frontier rivers and leaving Loango; this was traditionally forbidden. With the growth of commerce, ferry places became lucrative points. The position of ferrymen was put in the hands of the most trusted followers, and often the post was inherited in a family.¹

The toll places probably increased in number as the large kingdoms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gave way to smaller breakaway states. Loango's control of Mayumba and the Mayombe had failed by the second half of the eighteenth century. The Solongo infiltrated Ngoyo and Kakongo, and by the nineteenth century had reached the left bank of the Chiloango river, where they forced tolls from traders. Further inland, the migration of Kongo groups along the Niari valley and the disintegration of

to be lifted. A. Veistroffer, Vingt Ans de la Brousse Africaine, Lille, 1931, 57, reports the fighting that took place when he forced his way through a barrier that was closed; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 208.

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 166, 177, 221.

the Kongo kingdom continued in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹ Taxes and tolls at strategic points were taken by the Kongo rulers.²

Having arrived at the coast, the traders became involved in the administrative network that surrounded the conduct of trade at the three major ports of the Loango Coast. A similar organisation developed at each place. As the people of the interior jealously guarded their right to tax caravans, so the coastal inhabitants insisted that they must act as middlemen between the African slave traders, and the Europeans. The responsibilities and privileges of the slave dealers on the coast were quite clearly defined.

In all three kingdoms, the official in charge of the overall management of trade was entitled the Mafouk.³ He was a royal appointee. The sale of offices was one of the principal sources of revenues of the Maloango by the late eighteenth century. The position of Mafouk was especially valuable because of its various commercial and political powers. The man who could afford to buy the office had to be already someone of considerable means. He did not belong to the class of princes, but he could marry a princess and attain

¹For more details, see below, pp. 211-212, 215-217, 222-223, 271-273

²O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 146, 182, 183, 184; A. Brásio, MMA, VIII, 135, Souza to the King, 23.2.1632; E. Dupont, Lettres sur le Congo, Paris, 1889, 151.

³The following account of the various officials connected with the coastal trade is chiefly based on L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 124-125 and L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 121-122, 189-191, 199-205. These accounts are substantiated by passing references to the officials and their functions in Dutch, English and French journals and account books.

the privileges of the princely class.

The Mafouk not only paid the ruler an initial fee, but also a sum of money annually. This was paid from a tax on trade which he received on behalf of the king. The amount which was paid to the Maloango was not fixed and it could become an issue between them. Theoretically, the ruler could exact what he wanted, and dismiss a recalcitrant Mafouk and sell the office to another. Yet, the power depended on the ability of the king to take such action against one of his most powerful ministers.

Once in office, the avenues which the Mafouk had for making money were many. He was in an advantageous position to promote his own private trade with Europeans and was usually one of the main brokers. He probably knew more about the total trade picture at any given time than any other person. He had the sole right to appoint African brokers who were the middlemen in the coastal trade.

The Mafouks lived in the villages at Loango Bay and Cabinda Bay; at Malemba, he lived in the trading village on top of Malemba hill.¹ In the trading area he had full control. He alone settled the payment of taxes with Europeans, discussed and fixed the initial price of slaves and goods, held tribunals to adjudicate disputes that arose between European and African traders. He was charged with ensuring that the Maloango received

¹See below, pp. 201-202

the correct payments from Europeans and with the general policing of markets. An energetic and able Mafouk, such as Candy of Malemba in the 1780s, punished French captains who displeased him by forbidding them to trade. Since few brokers would risk dealing with one whom the Mafouk had made a persona non grata, the goodwill of the Mafouk was indispensable for successful trade.¹

Lesser Mafouks were appointed by this principal Mafouk in villages that were trading centres, often by rivers, lakes or on the coast. In Loango, for example, there was one at the Chilongo River in the northern part of the kingdom, where Europeans sometimes sent small boats to collect a handful of slaves, from their ships anchored at Loango Bay.² These were very minor positions, however, compared to the Mafouk at Loango Bay who dealt with Europeans and organised their trade. His potential power was far greater than that of a mere trade official, for he was also a member of the royal council. Indeed, only one other minister, the Maboma, came between him and the Maloango in terms of authority.³

In Kakongo and Ngoyo, although the Mafouks retained their authority in relation to external trade, they had apparently been

¹J. Cuvelier, Documents, 22; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 20.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 190 , 200.

³ibid., I, 171, 182, 195; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 131-132.

superceded in overall power by the official called the Mambouk. The latter was traditionally second-in-line to the throne. An example of the Mambouk's power at Cabinda was shown in the way he conducted negotiations with the French and Portuguese in 1783-1784. The rulers of Kakongo and Ngoyo may have found it prudent to have a second official at the coast to supervise negotiations with Europeans since their capitals were some distance inland. The Mambouks at Cabinda and Malemba were important brokers and therefore wealthy individuals.¹ The office of Mambouk was not unknown in Loango; but there he was the governor of the frontiers with Mayombe.² The Loango Mambouk's isolation from the profits of the coastal slave trade may have been a factor in his relative insignificance in the kingdom.

Another official whose authority doubtless grew with the increasing number of Europeans on the Loango Coast was the Mangove; his assistant was called the Mapoutou. The Mangove introduced foreigners at the royal court. These visitors would include the envoys from ships in the harbour, coming to make the customary visit to the ruler. The Mangove was also a powerful broker and a wealthy man.³

¹L. B. Proyart, Histoire, 131-132; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 182, 196-198; AM, B4/267, Marigny Journal, 1784.

²A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 191; R. E. Dennett, At the Back of the Black Man's Mind, 26.

³L. B. Proyart, Histoire, 124; J. Cuvelier, Documents, 34; MCC 932 and 210, Accounts Books of the "Philadelphia" (1762) and the "Aurora" (1774) at Loango.

Under the Mafouk were other officials who were primarily concerned with matters of trade. The Manibanze was appointed by the Mafouk and was dependent on him. His responsibilities were akin to those of a royal treasurer. He was in charge of the royal coffers, and responsible for the receipt of taxes and the payment of the ruler's debts. He also travelled widely about the kingdom. The Maquimbe was governor of the trading area at Loango Bay. He had to provide Europeans with canoes and men to transport goods from the ships to the factories. He was a broker in the slave trade, like the Manibanze. There is some disagreement as to the limits of the Maquimbe's authority. Where Degrandpré suggests that his activities were confined to the coastal area, Proyard says that the Maquimbe (Ma-Kinba) had other responsibilities. He supervised the use of forests and waters and received the produce of fishing and hunting from the people on behalf of the king. On the coast, he had the right to adjudicate in matters concerning Africans only, but the Mafouk was the final authority. Only he could judge cases where Europeans were concerned.

Several other officials were involved in the conduct of trade. The Manibele, for example, retained his special importance as the royal messenger and probably added to it, with the increase in traffic across the kingdom. The Matiente was directly involved with trade organisation. His village was situated near the trading area at Loango Bay. The Mafouk delegated to him any business

concerning European factories. Two other trading officials mentioned in eighteenth century sources were the Makossa and Markedoor. Their functions are not clear, however. All these officials received small payments from Europeans at the conclusion of their trade; they were usually important brokers.

The brokers were the middlemen in the slave trade. They were appointed by the Mafouk and only they had the right to trade directly with Europeans. They lived close to the trading area. Brokers were responsible for the day-to-day working of the trade, ensuring that the regulations of the king and the Mafouk were kept; especially that only people who were legitimately classified as slaves were sold.¹ With the expansion of the slave trade, the position became more lucrative and one which men sought to attain. Europeans and Africans alike did much to inflate the importance of this group. Europeans treated them with more respect than any others, since these were the key figures in the conduct of trade; on the African side, brokers were considered the most important class of people after princes. The goodwill of brokers was essential for an easy trade. The Dutch blamed their declining position on the Loango Coast in the 1770s on the fact that they were unable to entertain the brokers on the same grandiose scale as the French, who literally

¹This account of the position of broker is chiefly based on L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 106-107, and L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 150, 157-158.

wined and dined these African trading partners.¹

Anyone could become a broker; princes, officials, free men, even servants. The most influential were often those who were important administrators - the Mafouk, the Mambouk, the Mangove, the Matiente, and others. These officials frequently provided the major part of a cargo of slaves.

A broker actively encouraged traders to bring slaves to him. He might try to outmanoeuvre his rivals by going to meet caravans himself, or by sending servants with presents for the leaders. Having concluded a transaction, the broker escorted merchants and slaves to the European factories. In Kakongo, this was always done in daytime since the Mafouk prohibited night trading in order to prevent fraud or violence. In these negotiations on the coast, the African trader might find himself at a disadvantage in relation to the broker, especially if he was inexperienced. The broker could speak the European language and was the interpreter and the negotiator of prices. Also, the European captain and the broker were sometimes familiar with each other from previous meetings. The broker and the European could thus combine to outwit the African merchant. It seems unlikely, however, that a merchant or caravan leader, who could traverse the many obstacles on the journey from the interior could be as gullible as some

¹MCC 1285, Letter from the "Watergeus" to Company Directors, Malemba, 14.8.1776.

of the sources suggest.¹

From the European viewpoint, the purchase of the slave was the end of the first stage of the journey from Europe. The surest route to the Loango Coast was also the longest. Ships leaving Europe made for the Canary Islands, then, on to the equator and from there, the ship was navigated in a south-westerly direction towards Brazil; on nearing the South American coasts, the sailors turned eastward towards the Cape of Good Hope. The westerly winds then carried the ship across the southern Atlantic usually bringing it to the African coast on the latitude of Cape Negro south of Benguela. From there, the voyage northwards along the coast was aided by the Benguela current and a southerly wind. This long voyage took on an average about four months. Some ships preferred the more direct but uncertain route from the Windward Coast across the Gulf of Guinea to São Tomé and from there south along the Loango Coast. Good fortune could reward the gamble with the adverse currents of the Gulf of Guinea and the Loango Coast, and the worse equatorial calms, by cutting the journey from one to three months.² Adverse conditions meant that the sailors were weakened for the stay on the Coast and the Middle Passage across the Atlantic.

¹James Barbot and John Casseneuve, Abstract of a Voyage to the Congo River, Churchill, V, 511; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 158; J. Cuvelier, Documents, 115-116.

²Among the voyages made by MCC ships to the Loango Coast, the longest was that of the "Prins Willem de Vijfde" which took over

On arrival off the Loango Coast, it was customary to give a salute of several cannon shots for the dignitaries of the country; this also warned the Mafouk of the arrival of a new ship. Often the Mafouk and his retinue might come on board to welcome the captain and to open discussions on trading arrangements. Once the latter were agreed on, the captain went ashore to make more specific arrangements with the brokers for the sale of slaves. He also investigated the number of competitors, the state of trade and the supply of slaves. It was always useful for him to ascertain the situation at the other Loango Coast ports, so as to know the possibilities of moving his trade to an alternative place. The officers, meanwhile, supervised the other preliminaries of trade. They made arrangements with the Maquimbe for the hire of canoes and porters to transfer the goods from the ship to the trading houses and for servants to guard the factory. The strength of the African administrators in these initial contacts was suggested by John Atkins who wrote that captains were "forced to employ about 20 servants" for these tasks.¹

The trading house, or quibangue, was sometimes quite a substantial building; particularly at Malemba where the captains often

seven months in 1757 (MCC 984); the shortest voyage, by the same ship, took three months in 1759 (MCC 989). There was little point in even attempting the "short route" between May and September. The best time to leave Europe was between the end of November and March, but it had the disadvantage of bringing the ship to the Loango Coast in the rainy season.

¹John Atkins, A Voyage to Guinea, London 1737 (2nd edition), 174.

lived ashore for the duration of their trade. The building was usually raised several feet off the ground by wooden supports. The latter were joined together and enclosed the prison for slaves underneath the factory. The trading house itself was made of a simple thatch. It might have a balcony with some guns mounted on it to discourage thieves. Round about, other huts might act as a store-house for goods, a kitchen, a hospital, a barn, and so on. The whole compound was enclosed by a palissade. While the carpenter supervised the construction of the factory, a senior officer, sometimes the captain himself, went to visit the king. He carried "presents" and dues previously negotiated with the Mafouk. Finally, the gong-gong was sounded in the regions surrounding the trade areas, to announce the arrival of a new slave ship. Trade could begin.¹

Business was often slow at the start since the African brokers tended to play on the fears of the captains who had been on the coast longest; they were most anxious to complete their cargoes and set sail. Higher prices were often paid for the last few slaves bought. Captains were especially vulnerable when a disaster such as an epidemic of smallpox hit their crew and slaves. This might start ashore in the European-African community; it

¹ This account of the organisation of the buying and selling of slaves, is based on Instructions, Journals and letters of French and Dutch captains. There is important information in P. D. Rinchon, Pierre-Ignace-Lievin van Alstein, Dakar, 1964, 108-109, 156-163, 249-251, and in L. Degrandpre, Voyage, I, 65-67; II, 46-56, 63.

quickly spread in the appalling conditions in which slaves were kept on board ship.¹ Under less harassing circumstances, the supply of slaves could vary enormously. Several days could pass without any slaves being offered for sale; sometimes as many as 20 could be bought in one day.

Supply was influenced by a great variety of factors, many of which were out of the control of European traders. The dry or rainy season affected the state of trade routes; war between different peoples could interrupt the passage of caravans; the number of European competitors at a single port and on the whole Loango Coast influenced demand; the experience of a European captain with the coast and his past experience with a particular official could bring quick success; the popularity of his trade goods and the amount he had to give in dues and "presents" affected his business; these were only a few of the conditions that influenced the duration of time needed to acquire a cargo. Figures for Dutch ships ranged from a good trade of 465 slaves in six weeks and 479 slaves in two months, to an adverse trade of 352 slaves in nine months and 302 slaves in eight months.²

¹ An epidemic of smallpox caused the death of 83 slaves aboard the "Grenadier" at Malemba in 1748; 156 out of 352 slaves died before Surinam was reached (MCC 455). In similar conditions, 100 slaves aboard the "Middelburgs Welvaren" died in Malemba harbour in 1761 and a further 108 died on the Atlantic crossing to Curaçao (MCC 800).

² MCC 984, Journal of "Prins Willem de Vijfde", Oct.-Nov. 1757; MCC 989, Journal of "Prins Willem de Vijfde", Sept.-Nov. 1759; MCC 455, Journal of the "Grenadier", Jan.-Oct. 1749; MCC 518, Journal of the "Haast U Langzaam", March-Nov. 1767. All four ships traded at Malemba.

When the slave trade was completed by a ship, the gong-gong was rung to advise all the brokers to come for the payment of their fees. This was often a time of much hard bargaining on both sides and the Mafouk and other captains might be needed as mediators. The adjustment of payments in relation to advances and to hostages was a particularly thorny problem. A broker frequently asked for advances in order to commence the purchase of slaves from inland merchants, and captains usually had to comply since they would be outplayed by their competitors if they did not. Sometimes a captain was able to insist on hostages as surety and the broker, if he was in debt, might have trouble in recovering a member of his family or a friend detained by a European.

However weary and dejected the slaves were by the time they reached the Loango Coast, their miseries were only beginning. Their sale was preceded by a degrading examination before the ship's surgeon. They were prodded like animals, made to run and jump and evaluated according to their age, sex and strength.¹ Captains tended to favour certain groups who had a reputation for being strong and manageable. Slave traders used to falsify tribal marks and then wait for them to heal before bringing the slave for sale.

¹In the early days of the slave trade, before there was a hardening of attitudes, Africans were astonished and embarrassed at the examination of slaves. James Barbot tells how the ruler of Zarry requested for decency's sake that the examination be held in private; see, Abstract of a Voyage to the Congo River, Churchill, V, 507.

Hair, skin, and teeth were cosmetically treated to simulate youth.¹ Once in the hands of the European buyer, the slave was usually kept overnight in the prison below the factory, and then transferred by canoe to the ship the next morning. For the slave, this was the beginning of a new round of fears. The horrors of the Middle Passage have been well-documented.² The slave had ceased to be a human being for those who controlled his life. He was merely an article of trade from which the maximum profit must be derived. Indeed, the conduct of the slave trade on the Loango Coast confirms what other accounts, more detailed than this, have shown: that the Atlantic slave trade encouraged chicanery and denied human feelings on every level, between African and African, European and European, and between the races.

An understanding of financial arrangements was necessary for the success of any trading venture on the Loango Coast. By the eighteenth century, various payments apart from the actual price of a slave were accepted as an integral part of the trading system. These payments were crucial to the African brokers and administrators, since their income was largely derived from such sources. The actual sum paid for the slave was given to the trader

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 4, reported an interview with a former slave trader in Loango.

²For example, John Newton, Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade, London, 1788; A. Falconbridge, An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa, London, 1788, 19-32; D. P. Mannix and M. Cowley, Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518-1865, New York, 1962, Chapter 5; W. S. Unger, "Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Slavenhandel", II. De Slavenhandel der Middelburgsche

who sold him to the coastal broker.¹ Thus the overhead payments were not comparable to bribes or extortions as indignant Europeans generally classified them. They were fees paid to brokers for their services and taxes like customs and excise duties paid to the administration. When presents, as such, were given, this was according to African custom in return for an audience with the king or at the time of departure. These presents were usually returned by the Loango Coast rulers according to custom. Frequently, the present was several slaves. This was indeed a fine gift for the European, could sell the slaves at a handsome profit in the New World.²

By the second half of the eighteenth century, the account books of slave traders show that the various payments were reasonably standardised from voyage to voyage; that is, in the type of payment, the actual amount varied. Firstly, a tax was paid on arrival, a sort of port fee for the right to anchor; then, payments were made for the audience with the king and top officials, at which permission to trade was granted. The "customs" were chiefly

Commercie Compagnie, 1732-1808", Economisch Historisch Jaarboek, XXVIII, 1961, 50-66, gives some extracts from ships' journals. Using Unger's figures (110-113), the death-rate of slaves traded on the Loango Coast was 10.56%.

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 106.

²Many Dutch accounts refer to presents of slaves, e.g. MCC 378, 455, 518, 800, 808, 936, 978, 1307.

paid to the ruler and seem to have been a tax in return for the right to trade freely; at the time of departure, presents were exchanged.¹

Other recognised fees were paid to brokers and to African servants and porters, for their services during the trading period. The broker's fee depended on his status and the number of slaves that he provided. In 1784 at Malemba, for example, it was usual to pay five to six pieces to the small merchants and eight to ten pieces for those who provided 10 or more slaves.² In addition, in the face of increasing European competition, the brokers were frequently able to secure an extra payment. Thus, the account books and journals of the last decades of the eighteenth century refer to a "goodwill" present or an "under-the-table" payment.³ The French seem to have encouraged these extra payments in order to outbid their rivals. It was not a demand initiated by African brokers. An old Mafouk even asked that French captains should not buy slaves above the fixed price, since he feared that costs would become so high

¹ See account books of MCC ships, i.e. MCC 456, 533, 803, 825, 795; also P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 108-110, 158, 174, 175; P. Labarthe, Voyage à la Côte de Guinée, Paris, 1803, 195-196.

² AC, F3/61, Instructions for the trade at Malemba. For explanation of a piece, see below, p. 182.

³ These payments seem to have been paid chiefly in hardware. The French referred to "droit de canettes" while the Dutch called it "panewerk".

for European traders, that they would stop trading altogether.¹ In the 1770s, it was these extra payments that finally forced the Dutch to withdraw from the Loango Coast.

The use of cloth as a standard for reckoning continued in the Loango Coast trade of the eighteenth century. The palm-cloth unit of currency, the macoute, continued in use in local markets, and no merchant could refuse to pay in macoutes for the goods which people brought to sell. Goods were divided into equal portions, each one being worth one macoute.²

Karl Polyani, agreeing with K. G. Davies, has suggested that "the conditions in which the Guinea trade was carried out were dominated by the Africans' ways and needs. Indeed not only did the Europeans' trade follow the Africans' pattern of staple trading and of employing staples as conventional standards, but whenever African and European standards were to be related, as a rule the African standard prevailed". Polyani, discussing the situation at Whydah, shows how the African custom of barter, usually in a one to one ratio, and the European aim of monetary gain were combined in the sorting and "ounce trade"; how the African staples of gold dust and cowries were adopted as a standard in trade by Europeans.³ Although the details were different, the

¹L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 157.

²ibid., 98, 108, 160.

³Karl Polyani, "Sortings and 'Ounce Trade' in the West African Slave Trade", JAH, V, 3, 1964, 381-393, see pages 382-383.

same general system evolved in the Loango Coast slave trade.

In Loango an attempt was apparently made at first to adapt the macoute to the slave trading system. Both goods and slaves were valued in this medium of exchange and then their relative value was worked out. The value of a slave was first reckoned in units of 10 and then by macoutes, one macoute being equal to 10. Thus, if a slave was worth 3,500, it was necessary to give 350 macoutes of merchandise in exchange. Goods were also valued in macoutes. In the early eighteenth century, for example, one gun = 30 macoutes, one 10 lb. barrel of powder = 30 macoutes and one Annabasse = 3 macoutes. With these recognised values, the slave and the correct amount of merchandise could then be exchanged.¹ This system, although it used a cloth measure in the traditional manner, was obviously somewhat complex and could cause difficulties as the volume of trade increased. An intermediate step which might be eliminated was present in the reckoning.

By 1700, an easier means of reckoning was employed at Malemba and Cabinda. This used a cloth measure called a piece, by which goods and slaves were evaluated. Originally the piece was directly related to a piece of cloth. In 1700, at Cabinda, it was worth six yards of material and could be subdivided into four fathoms of

¹ Savary des Bruslons, Dictionnaire, I, 1069; II, 603. He also refers to a variable measure of cloth called a pau, see II, 1007. An Annabasse was a cheap blue and white cotton cloth.

twelve sticks. It had also become a standard unit employed to value all trade goods. At Cabinda, for example, one gun = one piece, 10 Annabasse = one piece, one barrel of powder = one piece, two Dutch cutlasses = one piece.¹ By the mid-eighteenth century, the Loango traders had also adopted the piece as a standard in trade.²

The device used to allow the exchange of a slave for a variety of goods, while at the same time satisfying the one to one ratio of the traditional African ~~slave~~^{trade} system was called a "bundle" on the Loango Coast.³ This was the total amount paid for a slave; its value was assessed in pieces. Thus, as the value of a slave fluctuated, so the value of the bundle changed as well.⁴ A bundle contained so many items or "goods". For example, it might be decided that 16, 18, or 20 items should be in a bundle for a slave. The types of items or "goods" were then classified

¹James Barbot and John Casseneuve, Abstract of a Voyage to the Congo River, Churchill, V, 511, 513; Savary des Bruslons, Dictionnaire, I, 1069, 1072.

²MCC, 488; Account Book of the "Groot Proyen", Loango, 1748; MCC 335, Account Book of the "Drie Gezusters", Loango, 1757-1758; see also, L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 58 and L. B. Proyart, Histoire, 151-152. The cloth measure continued into the nineteenth century. In 1873, the standard used in trade in Loango Coast factories was still the piece, also known as the cortado or the "long". It equalled six English yards and was valued according to a piece of cotton of medium quality. See P. Gussfeldt, Die Loango Expedition, I, 62-63; a similar system operated south of the Congo river, see J. J. Monteiro, Angola and the River Congo, London, 1875, 59.

³L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 211; P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 147-148. The French term was pacquet.

⁴Unlike the "sorting" whose value remained constant, at Whydah it

according to "large and small goods". This method of reckoning was especially favoured at Malemba and Cabinda, but it was known at Loango Bay as well. The term "large goods" described the various types of cloth in a bundle, and these items were indispensable; "small goods" referred to other items such as arms, powder, spirits and trinkets.¹ This nomenclature shows that cloth retained its traditional importance as an article of trade.

The introduction of these subdivisions within the bundle probably arose when the African trader wanted to ensure that there was a good variety of articles in a bundle, and that he received an adequate amount of cloth. Indeed, the bundle usually took its value from the amount of "large goods" that it contained. A typical statement about the price of a slave on the Loango Coast reads: "slaves are at present 25-26 pieces at Loango, and one pays 7-8 large goods".² A further indication of its value was the presence of favourite cloths such as the "blue Guinea" in the bundle. In order to avoid chicanery on the part of the European trader,

was the seller who had to accommodate the buyer, for example, by offering two slaves for one "sorting" if they were of inferior quality; see K. Polyani, 383-385.

¹ AC, F3/61, Instructions for Trade on the Angola Coast, 1784; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 211; P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 56, 147; P. Labarthe, Voyage, 291-293. French traders used the terms "grandes et petites marchandises".

² P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 56.

the cloth was of a specified length. The chief standard measure in use was apparently derived from the measurements of a waist-cloth. This was about two yards of material; the cloth sold on the Loango Coast in the late eighteenth century was usually of seven to nine waist-cloths.¹ Another measure given in Dutch sources was the fathom, which in the Loango Coast context was about one and a half yards.²

Proyart's suggestion was that the system of reckoning in the Loango trade was different from that of Kakongo and Ngoyo, is somewhat misleading.³ The major devices such as the piece and the bundle were in use in all three ports. The only significant difference was that cloth prices varied. Thus, some cloth worth three pieces at Loango Bay was worth two and a half pieces at Cabinda. Other goods, the "small goods", were the same value at all three ports.⁴ This was merely a reflection of the popularity

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 47, 57-59 says there were three waist cloths in a piece which was six yards; P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, says there were four waist-cloths in a piece, but he does not give his source. See also, J. Fourneau and L. Kravetz, "Le Pagne sur la Côte de Guinée et au Congo du XVe Siècle à nos Jours", Bulletin d'Institut d'études Centrafricaines, VII and VIII, 1954, 5-22. The "blue Guinea" was perhaps the most popular cloth of all. Made in India, it was a fine blue and white striped cotton and probably received its name from its popularity in the Guinea slave trade.

²MCC 961, Letter from the "Prins Willem de Vijfde", Malemba, 24.10.1755.

³L. B. Proyart, Histoire, 151-152.

⁴P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 49-50.

of certain cloths at different places. Slaves who were brought to the coast at Loango Bay were often of a different origin from those who arrived at Malemba and Cabinda.¹ Conversely, European goods were imported to inland regions as far apart as the Ogowe basin and the Lunda empire, and were satisfying the varying tastes of the inhabitants of these regions. In 1755, a Dutch captain sent an urgent letter to the directors of the Middelburg Commercial Company asking that long fine English and East Indian niconeesen with two wide blue and one narrow white stripes be dispatched immediately to Malemba. This cloth was essential for the purchase of Kongo slaves, he wrote; without it only Mayombe slaves could be acquired.²

Two further questions deserve consideration, concerning the contents of a bundle - how far the price of each item changed in the slave trade era, and how far the items in a bundle were open to negotiation. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the price of cloth was still fluctuating. The traders of the French Asiento Company who were on the Loango Coast, 1702-1713, reckoned that the value of cloth dropped by a quarter in that period; the price of guns and other items remained unchanged.³ In the course

¹See below, Chapter 6.

²MCC 961, letter for the "Prins Willem de Vijfde", Malemba, 24.10.1755.

³Savary des Bruslons, Dictionnaire, I, 1072.

of the century, the value of goods in terms of pieces became fixed, and apparently no negotiation was possible. Thus, at Cabinda and Malemba, comparing prices between 1733 and 1787, one finds that a gun = one piece, a standard barrel of powder = one piece, a length of "blue Guinea" = three pieces, of tapsel = two pieces, of long nicanees = two pieces, of limenaas = three pieces.¹

Given these accepted values of the individual trade goods, the contents of a bundle were partly a matter of custom and partly a matter for negotiation. Certain items were included in any transaction for a slave, for example, a variety of the most popular cloth, a gun and some powder. The remainder of the goods in a bundle, such as spirits, hardware, more guns or cloth, were open to negotiation. The supply of these items was probably influenced by the availability of specific goods in a ship's cargo and the demands of the individual African merchant.

Since the price of established items in terms of pieces did not alter, the profits of the European depended on his being able to obtain the same goods more cheaply in Europe, and on his skill

¹The figures are based on a comparison of the following sources: MCC 575, Accounts of the "Hof van Zeeland", Cabinda, 1733; MCC 456, Accounts of the "Grenadier", Malemba, 1747; P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 49-50, quotes the "Type of Cargo needed to trade 350 slaves on the Angola Coast", 1754; MCC 1019, Accounts of the "Prins Willem de Vijfde", Malemba, 1771-1772; MCC 1286, Accounts of the "Watergeus", Malemba, 1776; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 57. Tapsel was a blue cotton cloth; Limenaas was a European-made cloth, blue with small white stars.

in introducing new items into the African market. In the long run, the cheap production of staples such as cloth was what mattered. An examination of the contents of a bundle shows that Africans were essentially conservative in their demands. Exotic items such as European clothes and furniture were usually included in the dues and presents paid to the king and high officials; they were not part of a normal bundle exchanged for a slave.¹ A high tax was imposed on an African who imported these luxury items.² This restriction may have been enforced by the administration as a deterrent so that these goods, which were also status symbols, remained in the hands of the most important men. Yet, they were also protecting the African traders from fraud by Europeans who wanted to unload worthless articles on some inexperienced merchant.

The trade in firearms has often focused attention because of the potential repercussions in African politics. The Portuguese prohibition on the sale of firearms at Luanda, and their availability on the Loango Coast helped to syphon off trade from the Angola markets to the northern ports.³ The Dutch West India Company were at first reluctant to export firearms in case they

¹L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 155; P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 52, 148.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 190.

³D. Birmingham, Trade and Conflict in Angola, 137, 139.

were used against them.¹ Guns and powder do not appear in Cappelle's list of goods which were regularly traded in 1642.² It seems that the only firearms which reached the area, at least through official Dutch sources, in this period were those which were given as presents to the Maloango himself.³

By 1680, when the trade in slaves was well-established, guns were a regular part of every slave-ship cargo. Fifty guns and 400 lbs. of powder were included in a cargo sent to the Loango Coast for 500 slaves, in that year.⁴ By the beginning of the eighteenth century, arms and powder were even more significant in the slave trade. In 1703 and 1706, Dutch ships included 300 guns among their trade goods.⁵ By the 1720s a gun and powder were a recognised part of every bundle exchanged for a slave at Cabinda.⁶ Finally, in the second half of the eighteenth century, two guns were often included in a bundle, and arms and powder were among the dues and presents paid to the rulers and important officials.⁷ Indeed, firearms had become so widespread in the coastal states that

¹OWIC 1, Minutes of XIX, 15.4.1624.

²OWIC 46, Cappelle Report, 1642.

³ARA, Aanwinsten 1898, XXII, Daemnaet's Journal, 15.1.1654.

⁴OWIC 832, Minutes of X, 15.4.1680.

⁵OWIC 98, Calculations for an Angola cargo by the Director-General at Elmina, August 1703; NBKG 26, X to Elmina Director, 17.11.1706.

⁶John Atkins, A Voyage to Guinea, 166.

⁷MCC Account Books, e.g. 456, 575, 1019, 1285; P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 166-168; AC, F3/61, Instructions for Trade on the Angola Coast, 1784.

Proyart reported that a boy went hunting at the age of 15 or 16 since he then had the means to buy a gun.¹ It is more difficult to determine when firearms became significant in the affairs of the interior. By the 1880s the gun had replaced other weapons among the Yaka and Teke-Lali, but this may have been the situation for many years before.² The guns favoured by the Loango Coast merchants were at least six inches longer than those in common use in Europe, and they were also much heavier. The powder had to be of the coarsest kind and the shot of the biggest size.³ This was probably necessary for hunting large animals such as elephants.

The ability of European traders to supply a large and varied selection of cloth may have been just as important in determining their popularity as their readiness to supply guns. The Africans of the Loango Coast were expert judges of materials. In the course of their trade with Europeans they probably transferred their sophisticated appreciation of indigenous fabrics to those manufactured abroad.

The importance of cloth as an article of trade had been established by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. In Capelle's

¹L. B. Proyart, Histoire, 98.

²P. S. de Brazza, "Voyage dans l'Ouest Africain, 1875-1887", Le Tour du Monde, LVI, July-Dec., 1888, 60.

³P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 51. A picture of caravan guards carrying these large heavy guns is to be found in Degrandpré, Voyage, II

list of trade goods, 50⁰/o of the items were cloth.¹ Although the English and French at first had difficulties in supplying the correct items,² by the eighteenth century they had adapted to W_est African demands. They facilitated the carrying of Indian goods to Europe and reexported them to Africa, or they manufactured substitutes themselves. Indian and East Indies cloth was very important in the Loango Coast trade. Cloth provided some 80⁰/o of the cargo of the "Telemaque" bound for C_abinda in 1763, and 75⁰/o of the cargo of the "Prince de Conty" which traded on the Loango Coast in 1755.³ French success in the area in the second half of the eighteenth century could not have been achieved if they had not managed to satisfy the demand for cloth. At first materials were brought to France from India through the Indies Company. They were kept in bonded warehouses and not subject to customs duties. During the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), however, an English blockade intercepted the India trade. This was an opportunity for French manufacturers and, within a few years, the cloth-makers of Rouen had learned to counterfeit Indian cloth so well

¹OWIC 46, Cappelle's Report, 1642.

²See above, p. 136

³P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 120; Gaston-Martin, L'Ere Négriers, 18.

that it was accepted on the Loango Coast. Only the beauty of the "blue Guinea", the chasselas and the coutis eluded them.¹

A further advantage of the French in the Loango Coast trade was the geographical proximity of the Mauritius and Réunion Islands, where Indian cloth could be bought cheaply. Several captains showed the commercial possibilities when instead of sailing to the Loango Coast from Europe, they called on their return journey from the Indian Ocean Islands. One captain who stopped at Malemba and Cabinda was able to provide cloth so cheaply that, in the space of six weeks, he bought 900 slaves. The African merchants gave this ship their full attention with the result that other captains' trade came to a standstill; crews and slaves became victims of an epidemic that was raging on the coast. The incident spread such consternation that the French traders petitioned their government to forbid trade directly between Mauritius and the Loango Coast.² An English rival blamed the cheap cloth provided by French ships en route from Mauritius as one of the principal reasons for their success on the Loango Coast.³ By 1789, the French government had forbidden the direct trade since

¹AC, C6/24, Memo. on the Slave Trade on the Angola Coast, n.d.; P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 102-103. The chasselas was a white twill from Coromandel; the coutis was a white cloth from Bengal.

²AC. C/24, Memo. on the Slave Trade on the Angola Coast, n.d.

³Accounts and Papers, XXVI, Evidence of James Penny to the Committee... considering the Trade in Slaves, 1789.

it was damaging to French cloth manufacturers.¹

The price of slaves, in terms of pieces, rose considerably on the Loango Coast in the course of the eighteenth century. The factors which affected the supply and demand of slaves also affected their price.² The steady rise in prices however can be chiefly attributed to the increase in the number of European competitors on the coast and the apparent inability of supply to keep pace with this demand.

In 1700, Barbot and Casseneuve wrote of their Cabinda experiences: "We esteem slaves here at a reasonable price when they are seven to eight pieces per man and six to seven pieces per woman".³ The French Asiento Company (1702-1713) noted that the price of slaves varied from 10 to 15 pieces according to demand and supply, and that a woman was valued at two pieces less and boys and girls in relation to their age.⁴ By the middle decades of the eighteenth century, prices had risen to as much as 20-30 pieces per slave (with the exception of the years of European war, 1756-1763, when the fall in demand caused a fall in prices also); by 1770, prices

¹P. Labarthe, Voyage, 199.

²See above, p. 176

³James Barbot and John Casseneuve, Abstract of a Voyage to the Congo River, Churchill, V, 511.

⁴Savary des Bruslons, Dictionnaire, I, 1069, 1071.

of 30 pieces were not unusual.¹ In the following year competition among European traders became tougher and this was reflected in rising prices. In 1776, a statement to the Estates of Brittany noted that, "it is unanimously recognised in all places of commerce and by all who sail to the Angola Coast for the slave trade that for the past five years the price of slaves on the coast has risen considerably; that trade is difficult and takes a long time".² Van Alstein, in 1774, found that slaves cost 48 pieces at Malemba and reckoned that prices had doubled since 1769. In the same year a Nantes captain reported that slaves at Cabinda and Malemba cost up to 50 pieces.³ After the American war the recovery in trade again brought a price rise. In 1784, an official French report estimated that the average slave price at Malemba and Cabinda was 54 pieces.⁴ This was higher than the figure of Labarthe who suggested 40-50 pieces for the year 1789.⁵ These figures

¹P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 56, 172, 253; ADLA, C738, Memo. on the Angola Coast, 1762; P.D.Rinchon, Les Armements Négriers au XVIIIe Siècle, Brussels, 1956, 36, 40, 41, 43, 46, 47, 56.

²ADIV, C3928, Memo. presented by S. de Foligne to the Estates of Brittany, 12.10.1776.

³P.D.Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 310; Les Armements Négriers, 61, 64. Prices in this range were paid by the 12 ships of the MCC which visited the Loango Coast, 1770-1776.

⁴AC, F3/61, Instructions for the trade on the Angola Coast, 1784.

⁵P. Labarthe, Voyage, 194-195, 196.

included the cost of the slave only; they did not give account of the increasing taxes and dues paid to the administration and brokers.

The conduct of trade on the Loango Coast in the slave trade era was essentially a situation where the Africans called the tune; not only in matters such as trade goods and reckoning, but in the general working of the trading system as well. It was within a framework largely initiated by Africans that business took place. Any attempt to bypass this organisation either by an African or by a European had the effect of jeopardising the smooth sale of slaves. At Cabinda, in 1755, for example, a French trader was approached by a prince of Ngoyo, Muene Poukouta Pandy Massigne. The prince suggested a private trade arrangement whereby the captain would set up his factory on the prince's land which was only a few miles from Cabinda. The French captain agreed, and advances were given to the prince in return for hostages. The prince, however, was unable to keep up a supply of slaves for he was acting outside the trading organisation at Cabinda and without the permission of the Mafouk. The only way for him to obtain slaves was by seizing them from others. When the French trader left Cabinda for Malemba, retaining his hostages as slaves, the prince retaliated by attacking some Europeans. The resulting confusion brought the Cabinda trade to a standstill. It was a warning to other captains that such independent action could only slow down rather than benefit their

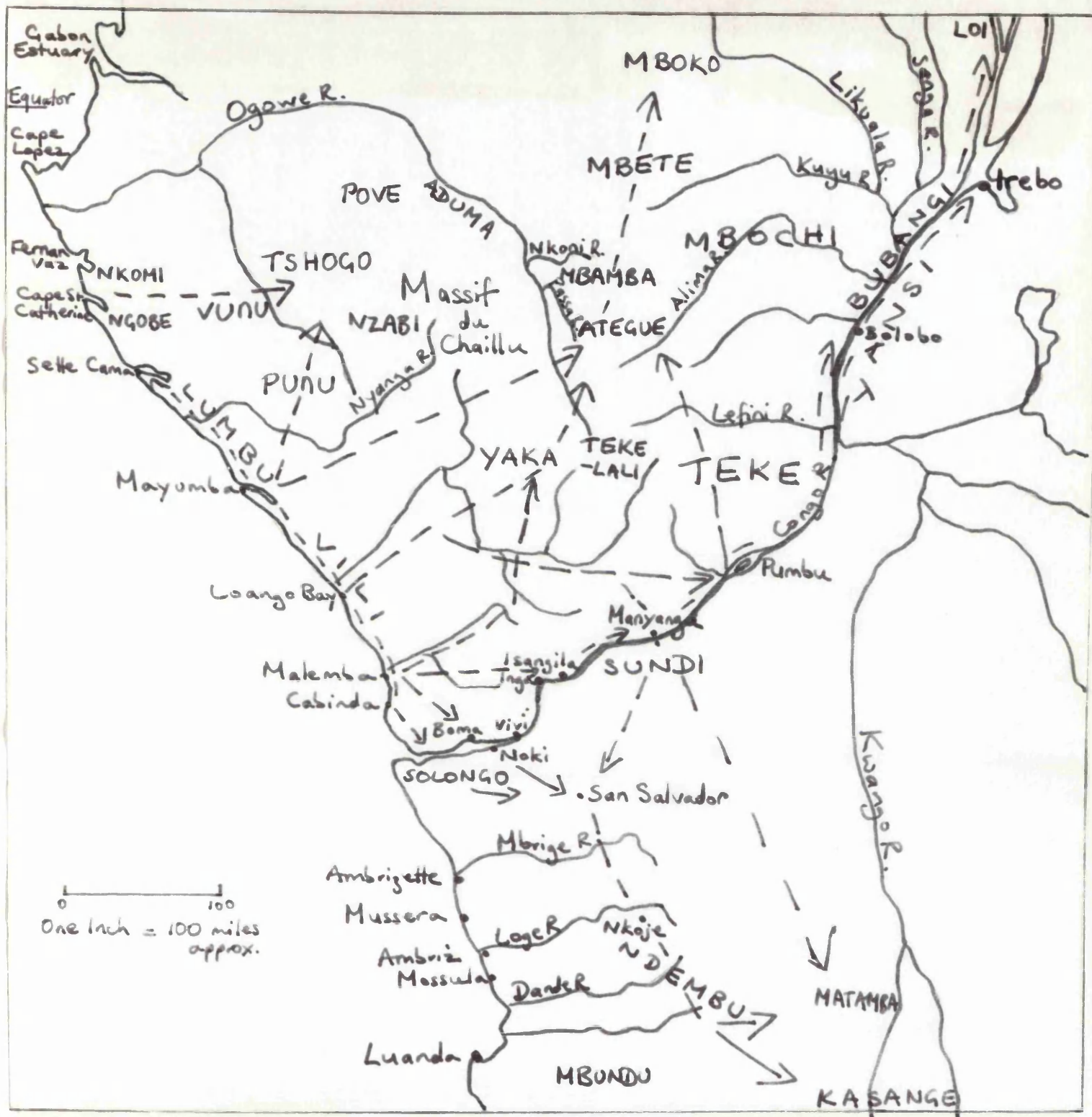
trade.¹ An even worse fate awaited an American crew who had seized some freemen at Loango and transported them as slaves. On their next voyage in 1807, the Vili retaliated by blowing up the American ship as it lay anchored in Loango Bay.²

The success of the eighteenth century slave trade on the Loango Coast from the African point of view, rested on two main conditions. One was the intensive European competition; the other was that no European gained a permanent footing ashore, and if the French gained something of a monopoly by the late eighteenth century, they did so through peaceful competition. Thus, European captains were always insecure. On other parts of the Guinea coast, there were forts and factories which could establish permanent interests and act as depots where slaves were collected in advance. Each journey to the Loango Coast was a new gamble. Each individual trading enterprise had to be summed up on its own merits. No European trader took a sufficiently long-term view to consider acting in concert with other European captains. A price-fixing arrangement was frequently admitted to be the answer, but it was seldom attempted. Instead European rivalled European, concealing the state of their trade and making private agreements with the African brokers to outwit their competitors.

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¹ADLA, C740, Letters from French captains at Cabinda to Captain Baumann, Cabinda, 20.6.1775, 23.6.1775; letter from M. Mallet to M. Doucaudray at Nantes, Cabinda, 23.6.1775.

²Cited by E. Donnan, Documents, IV, 516 fn. 3.



SLAVE TRADE ROUTES and SOURCES OF SUPPLY.

Chapter 6

THE SUPPLY OF SLAVES

The slave trade era was a period of great rivalry for the merchants of the Loango Coast kingdoms. Various factors might influence a captain in his preference for a certain harbour - the convenience of the anchorage, food and water supply, conditions of war or peace, familiarity with African traders. The two most important criteria were the quality of slaves available at each port (which affected the selling price in the New World) and the supply of slaves (since the speedy buying of the cargo was important). One of the attractions of the Loango Coast was the nearness of the three major ports to each other. Europeans could be informed on the situation elsewhere. The African merchants were aware of the competition from their rivals; they sometimes attempted to detain European ships which were passing along the coast, promising quick supplies of slaves and exaggerating the number of ships in other harbours.

Few slaves were available north of Loango Bay. The regions of Sette Cama and Cape Saint Catherine were infrequently visited in the eighteenth century, except when it was necessary to stop for water and provisions. Sometimes small quantities of ivory and wax were offered for sale; the sloop that went ashore for supplies might return with a few slaves.¹ In general, however, the people of these

¹AC, C6/14, Report on the African Trade, 13.10.1762; MCC 929, Journal of the "Philadelphia", July-August 1762.

parts did not have slaves for sale. The population around Saint Catherine was small. It does not seem to have been organised as effectively for trade as the harbours to the south.¹

Mayumba, which had once been as important in the trade of the Loango Coast as Malemba and Cabinda, if not more so, did not retain the position in the eighteenth century. It could not compete with the other Loango Coast ports either in the number or the quality of slaves for sale. Mayumba became the victim of circumstances, for being unable to offer a sizeable quantity of slaves, it did not attract large slave-ships. Thus, when slaves did arrive at Mayumba, they were usually sent overland to Loango Bay, Malemba or Cabinda. It was only when the passage of caravans coincided with the arrival of a ship for supplies, that some slaves could be acquired.²

The trade of Mayumba did not die out, since it maintained its traditional commerce in redwood and ivory. English traders were especially interested in the redwood trade. The Royal African Company found this a profitable commodity. At the end of the seventeenth century redwood bought in West Africa for goods valued at three pounds per ton, sold in London for at least 40 pounds.

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, xxiii; II, 4.

²ibid., II, 5-7, 10, 20; BN, P114/D2/P18, Map of the Loango Coast 1775.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, two or three ships were sent from Liverpool to Mayumba annually to trade in redwood and a little ivory. The dyewood was presumably used in the textile industries of northern England.¹ At the same time Mayumba redwood continued to circulate widely among neighbouring peoples. It was also taken to regions south of the Congo river; traders from Kongo, Sonyo and Ensalo (?) visited Mayumba and brought slaves to exchange for redwood and salt.² Ivory was chiefly traded by the Dutch. The tusks that were sometimes on sale at Loango Bay, Malemba and Cabinda, often originated from the Mayumba region. Degrandpré noted the possibilities of opening up a trade in copper and gum at Mayumba, but as long as the slave trade dominated the coast European traders were attracted to the slave entrepôts to the south.³

All the important trade of the Loango kingdom was centred on the main trading point at Loango Bay in the eighteenth century. European traders traditionally established their factories at the "Point" which was situated on top of a low hill close to the shore. Most Europeans preferred to sleep on board ship since the

¹K. G. Davies, The Royal African Company, 181; Accounts and Papers, XXVI, Evidence of James Fenny to the Committee... considering the Trade in Slaves, 1789; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 159.

²Accounts and Papers, XXIX, Evidence of James Fraser to the Select Committee... on the Slave Trade 1790. Fraser referred to traders from Congo, Selongo and Ensalo.

³L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 6; BN, P114/D2/P18, Map of the Loango Coast, 1775.

area had a reputation for being unhealthy. According to one report, however, the climate was not as insidious as the Loango traders would have Europeans believe. Such tales were often a ruse to discourage Europeans from trying to establish more permanent factories ashore.¹

A little to the south of the Chiloango River lay Malemba, of little significance in the seventeenth century, but a focal point for traders in the eighteenth century, reflecting the rise of the Kakongo slave trade. European traders built their factories on top of Malemba Hill, which rose abruptly from the shore to a height of 100 feet, before it levelled out in a plateau which stretched into the interior. Two steep paths led up the hill; the one on the northern side was called "Dutch Hill", and the other on the southern slope called "French Hill". The trading houses were more permanent in their design than those at Loango Bay, often being surrounded by yards for animals and by large gardens. They were built round a large square. Some captains had planted an avenue of trees which led from the square to the edge of the hill. There were benches, and in the evening when business was finished, the traders would promenade or sit and talk. The Mafouk and other African traders also lived on Malemba Hill. John Adams became so enthusiastic about the situation and climate that he suggested that

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 164-165; II, 10-11; J. Cuvelier, Documents, 100.

of all points on the coast between the Senegal and Congo Rivers, Malemba was the best place to found a colony.¹

Cabinda had the most roomy and safe anchorage on the Loango Coast. The sea was deep close to the shore, the Bay was sheltered, wood and water were plentiful. This was the most convenient place for a base for the repair and refitting of ships. There was a village called Cabinda, but around the Bay were other smaller settlements which were also part of the Cabinda complex. The only disadvantage of Cabinda was that the climate was not as good as that of Malemba and most captains preferred to sleep on board ship.²

Although there was rising competition from Kakongo and Ngoyo, Loango maintained her position as a favourite trading point on the Loango Coast in the first half of the eighteenth century. The traders of Nantes, who dominated the French slave trade at that time, frequented Loango Bay. In the period 1729-1733, almost half of the ships that went to "Angola" left for Loango. In the period 1738-1745, 22 ships went to Loango, nine to Malemba, eight to Cabinda and 10 to a general "Angola" destination. In 1749-1755 the Society of Angola chose Loango Bay and Cabinda for its main entrepôts.³ By the 1760s, however, there were complaints that

¹J. Cuvelier, Documents, 48, 102; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 14-15, 19, 20; E. Bouët-Willaumez, Description Nautique des Côtes de l'Afrique Occidentale, Paris, 1859, see Appendice Descriptive, par M. A. Fleuriot de Langle, Paris, 1846, 18; John Adams, Remarks on the Country Extending from Cape Palmas to the Congo River including Observations on the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants, London 1823 (Cass 1966), 157.

²ADLA, C738, Memo. on the Angola Coast, 1762; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I,

the slaves at Loango were of a poorer quality than those at Malemba and Cabinda.¹ By the 1780s French traders, who by this time dominated the Loango Coast trade, were insistent that they disliked the trade at Loango Bay where the slaves were inferior and little valued in French colonies.² Another more serious complaint was that the trade at Loango Bay was fluctuating and slow compared to that of the other two ports; in spite of the fact that fewer ships frequented Loango Bay than Malemba and Cabinda by this period.³

As the popularity of Loango declined, that of Malemba and Cabinda increased. Malemba was favoured by Dutch traders. The Middelburg Commercial Company sent 31 ships to the Loango Coast between 1733 and 1794, 27 of these in the years 1755-1776. Of the 27, 20 traded at Malemba, 3 at Loango Bay, one at Cabinda, two at Loango Bay and Malemba, and one at Malemba and Cabinda. The letters and journals of the ships' captains show that the good

xxv; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 17.

³Gaston-Martin, L'Ere des Négriers, 207, 218, 254.

¹AC, C6/14, Report on the African Trade, 13.10.1762.

²AC, C6/24, Nantes traders to Min. of Marine, 13.3.1784; Captain Deschalonge to Nantes, Loango, 3.11.1783; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, xxv.

³AC, C6/24, Le Havre traders to Min. of Marine, 21.12.1783; DFC, Goree II /134, Remarks on the Trade of the Angola Coast by M. Marigny, 1784; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 9.

supply and quality of slaves drew the Dutch to Malemba. Malemba was also the favourite trading point for French traders in the 1780s. It was thought to offer the best trading prospects on the whole coast, drawing slaves from a wide area.¹

Cabinda was Malemba's main rival by the late eighteenth century. The French reported that the slaves bought at Cabinda were well-liked in the French colonies and fetched good prices.² English ships also favoured Cabinda, although by 1766 they were also going up the Congo River to try and avoid the increasing competition on the Loango Coast.³ Evidence of the importance of Cabinda was given by the attempts to establish a monopoly there. The willingness of the Ngoyo officials and the suitability of Cabinda as a base for ships, were contributing factors in its popularity; but the good supply of slaves was also a crucial argument to support the building of permanent European establishments.

These developments on the coast reflected the different origins of the slaves that arrived at the Loango Coast ports and the variations in supply. Contemporary evidence on slave origins is scanty. There are two main sources which provide some clues: the

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, xxiv; II, 25.

²AC, C6/24, Memo. on French interests on the African Coasts, March, 1784; J. K. Tuckey, Narrative, 140, 281.

³MMC 376, Letter from the "Eenigheid" to MCC Directors, Surinam, 7.7.1767; AM, B4/73, Memo. of Captain Caumont, Nov. 1756.

first is where direct reference is made to the origins of slaves, the second concerns trade routes to the interior, from which possible slave sources may be deduced. It is evident that the Loango Coast slave trade cast its net very widely, and that slaves came not only from the immediate hinterland but from long distances in the interior.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, various categories of slaves were recognised at different ports. At Loango Bay were to be found Monteques, Mayombes and Quibangués; at Malemba, Mayombes and Congues; at Cabinda, Congues, Songes and Mondongues.¹ Dutch traders who frequented Malemba, recognised only two major types of slaves, Kongos and Majombes.² An English trader reported: "slaves of three nations are brought to Cabinda, Malemba and Loango, the Congues, Majumbas and Madungoes".³ These broad categories obviously do not cover all the peoples who were exploited in the Loango Coast trade. In the nineteenth century, Pechuël-Loesche was more specific, referring to Bayangela, Babongo, Nantetsche (Teke)

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 12-13, 25, 37.

²MCC 1285, letter from the "Watergeus", Malemba, 7.10.1776;
MCC 961, letter from "Prins Willem de Vijfde", Malemba, 24.10.1755.

³Accounts and Papers, XXIX, Evidence of James Fraser to the Select Committee ... on the Slave Trade, 1790.

and Bayansi slaves being sold on the Loango Coast.¹ Professors Vansina and Curtin who have analysed a small sample of the slaves captured by Royal Navy vessels, as reflected in the Sierra Leone population in the 1840s, found Vili, Yombe, Mboma, Sundi and Teke represented.²

Eighteenth century traders may have referred to the slaves on sale on the Loango Coast in broad categories for convenience. This would provide a mutually understandable frame of reference for European and African traders alike in negotiations. Thus, the appellations became part of the trading jargon. Another explanation for the terms is offered by Degrandpré. He wrote that these names did not necessarily indicate the exact source of slaves. The nomenclature was derived from the people who supplied the slaves or across whose territory the slaves had passed en route to the coast.³ This might explain, for example, why Mayombes figured prominently at Loango Bay and Malemba; these were not necessarily Yombe slaves but may have received the name since they passed through Yombe territory or were supplied by Yombe middlemen. The same would apply to the many Congues on sale at Malemba and Cabinda. They could be Kongo slaves, but this might also be a general name

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 4.

²P. Curtin and J. Vansina, "Sources of the Nineteenth Century Atlantic Slave Trade", JAH, V, 2, 1964, 188-189, 199, 204. There were also several other groups in the West Central Africa Sample.

³L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, xxvi.

for slaves bought in the Kongo kingdom south of the Congo river, or slaves which had passed through Kongo territory en route to the coastal markets.

At Loango Bay, a quarter of the slaves on sale in the 1780s were called Teke (Montequés), a sixth Bubangi (Quibangués) and the remainder Yombe (Mayombes). The latter were also on sale at Malemba where their quality was better than those on sale at Loango Bay.¹ These terms are indications of the slaves which arrived on the Loango Coast from areas to the north-east or east; in general terms, from regions north of the Congo river.

Some slaves came from regions of Gabon which lay between the coast and the Ogowe river. In the eighteenth century, not only were there few slaves available at Mayumba, Sette Cama and Cape Saint Catherine; there were also few slaves on sale at Cape Lopez and in the Gabon estuary. In 1788, it was estimated that only 500 slaves were sold annually at Gabon and Cape Lopez, a small figure compared to the 13,500 suggested for Loango Bay, Malemba and Cabinda.² The slaves from south of the Ogowe, at least, were probably taken to Loango Bay, Malemba or Cabinda, by way of Mayumba.³

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 14, 25.

²Accounts and Papers, XXVI, Evidence of Robert Norris to the Committee... considering the Trade in Slaves, 1789.

³L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 5-6.

The main suppliers of slaves from this region were Punu and Vunu who lived north of the Nyanga River. They were ideally placed to act as middlemen between Coastal groups like the Nkomi of Fernan Vaz, the Ngobe of Cape Saint Catherine, the Lumbu of Sete Cama, the Lumba and Vili of Mayumba, and those who lived in the mountainous hinterland east of the Ngunie River; these included the Nzabi, Tshogo, Sangu and Pove. Salt was an essential commodity in this trade, but European goods became more and more important. The peoples of the Massif du Chaillu hinterland provided slaves in return.¹ Fourneau, who visited the area in 1885, found that there had previously been flourishing slave markets. From this region, where the left tributaries of the Ogowe River, the Nyanga River and the Luesse River (an important right tributary of the Niari) have their source, slaves were taken down the Ogowe or towards the Loango Coast.² Since the area of modern Gabon was largely populated by peoples arriving in the nineteenth century, however, the late eighteenth century trade may have been slight.³

Evidence of trading contacts between the Loango Coast and regions of the upper Ogowe, Alima, Kuyu and Likuala Rivers appears

¹A. R. Walker, Notes d'Histoire du Gabon, 114; G.H. Deschamps, Traditions Orales et Archives au Gabon, 24, 27, 30, 38, 47, 53, 54.

²A. Fourneau, Au Vieux Congo; Notes de Route, 1884-1891, Paris, 1932, 110-111, 154-155.

³E. Bouët-Willamez, Commerce et Traite, 153; R. Avelot, "Recherches sur l'Histoire des Migrations", 370-412.

in nineteenth century accounts. In the 1870s, de Brazza, travelling along the Ogowe, Passa and Alima Rivers, found that the inhabitants of these regions were receiving salt, guns and cloth from Mayumba in exchange for ivory and slaves. The Adumas, the celebrated canoemen on the middle and upper Ogowe, did not go further upstream than the Nkoni river. Beyond this point European goods diminished in value since the people had direct trade contacts to the west, with the Atlantic Coast at Mayumba. People such as the Mbamba had so few contacts down the Ogowe that they were puzzled by de Brazza's appearance from a northerly direction, and asked if he had come from the Mayumba Coast.¹

In the trade to the north-east from the Loango Coast, the Yaka and Teke-Lali of the plateau regions north of the Niari Valley, were important middlemen.² From there, goods travelled further inland through the mediation of another related Teke group, the Ategue of the Upper Alima, to the Mbete, Mbamba and Mboko; that is, possibly as far as the Likuala River and the equator.³

Here again, the lack of contemporary evidence makes it difficult to establish how far these contacts existed before the nineteenth century, and how great^{was} the volume of trade. Many of the

¹P.S. de Brazza, "Voyage dans l'Ouest Africain", LVI, 22, 50.

²The Yaka were descendants of the seventeenth century Jaga, see above, p. 39. This group settled on the Sibiti plateau. The Teke-Lali take their name from the important right tributary of the Niari; they are not to be confused with the Lali (Laadi), a Kongo group who live at modern Brazzaville. See, G. Sautter, De l'Atlantique au Fleuve Congo, I, 313 fn. 3.

³P. S. de Brazza, "Voyage dans l'Ouest Africain", LVI, 56, 60; H. Brunschwig,

people mentioned in late nineteenth century sources had probably arrived in the area in the course of the previous hundred years; they were gradually pushed westwards by the arrival of other groups from the north and east. For example, the Mbochi, having crossed from the left bank of the Congo River, arrived on the Alima about the mid-eighteenth century. The Teke resisted their arrival but were forced to cede ground to the newcomers. The Mbochi's arrival also pushed the Ategue and Mbamba into the upper Ogowe regions.¹ At the same time, groups such as the Mbete arrived in the area from the north, forcing others to migrate westwards. The process was continuing when de Brazza arrived on the Passa river. He found that the Wumbu were recent arrivals on the west bank, where they took refuge from Mbete expansion. De Brazza suggested that these migrations of peoples from the north and east towards the coast resulted from a desire to participate more fully in trade with Europeans.²

These trade contacts between the Loango Coast and regions to the north-east were probably much weaker in the eighteenth century than in the late nineteenth century, when they were documented. Yet they had existed for some time. Bukkameale, the seventeenth century ivory staple, was probably situated in this area.

"Les Cahiers de Brazza, 1880-1882", Cahiers d'Études Africaines, VI, 2, 1966, see entry for 9.7.1880; H. Brunschwig, "La Négotiation du Traité Makoko", Cahiers d'études Africaines, V, 1965, see entry for 28.8.1880; G. Sautter, De L'Atlantique au Fleuve Congo, I, 247, 378; II, 622.

¹ A. R. Walker, Notes d'Histoire du Gabon, 9; G. H. Deschamps, Traditions Orales et Archives au Gabon, 60, 62; G. Sautter, De L'Atlantique au Fleuve Congo, I, 245-246, says that the Mbochi date their migrations to the Alima area seven to eight generations ago.

² P.S. de Brazza, "Voyage dans l'Ouest Africain", LVI, 36, 50.

Also, through trade with the Teke, the Vili may have had indirect contact with the peoples of more remote regions. The great demand for slaves in the eighteenth century would intensify such commercial contacts. The regions north-east of the Loango Coast do not appear to have provided slaves on the same scale as the markets south of the Congo River. This may have been due to difficult communications through thick forest, to the absence of large populations and because no empire arose to match that of the Lunda states which could provide slaves for the Atlantic Coast trade.

Much of this trade probably bypassed the main Teke state centred on the Mbe plateau. The journey to the Loango Coast via the Pool area would have doubled the distance from the upper Ogowe and the upper Alima. The Yaka and Lali middlemen therefore directed trade from the north-east to the coast across the Niari valley. From there caravans could pass along established routes through the Mayombe to Loango Bay, or to Malemba by means of the Loudima and Chiloango basins.

The extent of Teke power beyond the Mbe plateau by the end of the eighteenth century had shrunk. They faced encroachment from the Mbochi on the Alima; they also became involved in a struggle with Bubangi migrants for control of the Congo river traffic upstream from Stanley Pool. To the west, the Kongo migration into the Niari valley and along the north bank of the Congo river towards Stanley Pool continued, probably encouraged by the disintegration of the

Kongo kingdom in the 18th century. Kongo groups such as the Sundi and Lali who invaded the region were more prolific and more energetic than the Teke. Their migration continued into the nineteenth century. In the Boko Songo regions Kongo traditions still recall the acquisition of Teke land and toponymy reveals the former Teke presence.¹

In spite of these encroachments, the Teke tenaciously held on to their position as middlemen in the trade that arrived in the Stanley Pool region. In the nineteenth century and perhaps earlier, they had trade contacts with the upper Ogowe and Alima regions where the Ateque sold them slaves.² The Bubangi slaves which appeared in Loango markets in the 1780s were almost certainly obtained from the Teke. The latter could either have obtained them across the Mbe plateau or along the Congo river.

The arrival of the Bubangi and related groups was an important event for the trade of the Congo river upstream from Stanley Pool. According to French sources of the nineteenth century, the term Bubangi was often used in a very broad sense, different from its modern usage; now the Bubangi are a small group of people who

¹M. Soret, Les Kongo Nord-Occidentaux, 16, 22; L. Papy, "Les Populations Bateke (AET)", Cahiers d'Outre-Mer, II, 6, 1949, 112-134; G. Sautter, De L'Atlantique au Fleuve Congo, I, 476.

²G. H. Deschamps, Traditions Orales et Archives au Gabon, 63; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 321.

live on the north bank of the Congo river, near its confluence with the Ubangi. Peoples variously referred to as the Apfuru, Abanho, Bubangi, Baloi and Bayansi, were sometimes called Bubangi. They were part of a large group with common characteristics including similar customs, languages and tribal marks. A prominent feature was their common way of life. They were river peoples, who settled along the banks of the Congo and some of its right tributaries such as the Lefini, Alima, Sanga, Lukuala and lower Ubangi. There they plied an active trade by canoe.¹ Their political organisation was much looser and less stable than that of the Teke; it was based mainly on the village unit.²

These "peoples of the rivers" shared the same origins. According to their traditions, they came from the upper Ubangi river and were pushed south by newcomers, who probably included the Bwaka from the Sudan. Descending the Ubangi river, the river peoples were attracted to the Congo by European goods that arrived in the area through Teke middlemen. Led by a chief called Kotongo-Sungu, they occupied strategic points along the Congo river and its right tributaries between the Ubangi and Stanley Pool. These

¹H. Brunschwig, "Les Cahiers de Brazza", entries for 11.4.1880, 12.8.1880; A. Veistroffer, Vingt Ans, 87-88; C. de Chavannes, Un Collaborateur de Brazza: Albert Dolisie. Sa Correspondance avec l'Auteur, Paris, 1932, 102; E. Froment, "Trois Affluents Français l'Oubangui", Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Lille, VII, 1887, 458-474, and XI, 1889, 180-216.

²Edouard Dupont, Lettres sur le Congo, 207; G. Sautter, De l'Atlantique au Fleuve Congo, I, 239.

developed into important trading centres.¹ The Yansi, for example, crossed to the left bank of the Congo, establishing themselves along the river from Bolobo, their chief centre, to the mouth of the Kwa. Northwards their canoes travelled as far as Irebu; downstream they carried on a lively trade with the Teke.² The Loi remained on the Ubangi to dominate trade on the middle river, while the Furu advanced along the Alima pushing back the Mbochi who had preceded them. A struggle developed between the Bubangi and the Teke for control of the Congo river trade. Some of the immigrants penetrated downstream as far as the "couloir" north of Stanley Pool, under a chief named Mukeme. They were prevented by the Teke from advancing into the Stanley Pool region itself.³

The precise dating of these events remains uncertain. Traditions suggest that the migrations from the upper Ubangi date from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Contacts between the Teke and the "people of the rivers" in the 1780s seem confirmed by the arrival of Bubangi slaves on the Loango Coast. The

¹E. Froment, "Un Voyage dans l'Oubangui", 187; A. Dolisie, "Notice sur les chefs Batekes avant 1898", Bulletin des Recherches Congolaises, 1927, 44-49; G. van Bulck, Les Recherches Linguistiques au Congo Belge, Brussels, 1948, 624; H. Baumann and D. Westermann, Les Peuples et les Civilisations de l'Afrique, Paris 1967, 201.

²R. de Beaucorps, Les Bayansi du Bas-Kwilu, Paris, 1933, 17; E. Dupont, Lettres sur le Congo, 207.

³E. Froment, "Un Voyage dans l'Oubangui", 1889, 193, 199; G. Sautter, De l'Atlantique au Fleuve Congo, I, 244, 245.

consolidation of their position along the river banks, from where they could promote trade and grow cassava with which to supply passing canoes, took time. By about 1840, the vanguard of the Bubangi had arrived in the "couloir" area to confront the Teke. It was not until the beginning of the present century, however, that peace was finally achieved and the Bubangi agreed to trade at Stanley Pool only through Teke middlemen.¹

Some slaves also reached the Loango Coast markets from the more immediate hinterland. Some of those called Mayombes in eighteenth century sources may have been from the Mayombe region. Yet, their numbers were probably few. The Yombe were essentially middlemen on routes leading from the interior to the coast. The natural obstacles of the terrain made it difficult for their enemies to penetrate the area. Furthermore, the Yombe lived in remote villages on hill-tops or on hill-slopes, away from the main routes which strangers knew. After the fall of Bungu in the southern Mayombe, no major kingdom emerged; Yombe social and political units were small. The principal region which fell victim to slave traders was the southern edge of the Mayombe, near the Congo River; there, the forests thin out into more accessible savannas. This area is at present less populated than north of the Likula River, where a dense population inhabits what might be called "true" Mayombe

¹A. Dolisie, "Notices sur les Chefs Bateke", 44-45; E. Froment, "Un Voyage dans l'Oubangui", 187.

territory. It has been suggested that the difference in population density may be due to the slave trade, since in the nineteenth century, the southern Mayombe was exposed to attacks by the Solongo. The latter were notorious slave raiders who took their captives to sell at Boma and the **other** markets on the Congo River.¹

Many Kongo slaves were sold on the Loango Coast, especially at Kakongo and Ngoyo. Whereas Loango was well-placed to exploit the sources east of the Mayombe, she was less able to benefit from trade contacts south of the Congo River by the late eighteenth century. The Vili kingdom was no longer strong enough to dominate Kakongo and Ngoyo, and the rulers of the southern kingdoms were able to block the roads to the north and prevent slaves passing to Loango Bay.² The inability of the Loango traders to offer the plentiful and popular Kongo slaves was the chief reason for the decline of the Loango slave trade by the 1780s.

The Loango Coast traders, the Mubiri,³ continued their trading activities at San Salvador in 1704. They may even have established a permanent colony, for, about 1707, they were involved

¹A. Doutreloux, L'Ombre des Fétiches, 23, 67; C. van Overberghe, Les Mayombe, Brussels, 1907, 61-62, 389; G. Fortems, La Densité de la Population dans le Bas Fleuve et dans le Mayombe, Brussels, 1960, 62, 85-86.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 166.

³In the eighteenth century, Mubiri seems to have applied to the Vili of Loango and also to the traders of Kakongo and Ngoyo who organised the trade between the Kongo kingdom and the Loango Coast markets. See L. Jadin, "Aperçu de la Situation du Congo", 408; L. Jadin, "Relations sur le Royaume du Congo du P. Raimondo da Dicomanô,

in Kongo politics, fighting in the army of a claimant to the Kongo throne, Pedro Constantine da Silva Kabenga, against the Manikongo, Pedro IV. Some became the adherents of Donna Beatrix, the leader of the heretical sect of Saint Anthony.¹ The Kongo capital occupied an important strategic position in the trade-network of the kingdom. It was perhaps to regulate commercial interests that a colony of Vili settled there. Loango Coast traders were still living in San Salvador in 1857.²

The political confrontations within the Kongo kingdom offered ideal conditions for slave traders in the eighteenth century. Competition for political office continued and factions emerged to dispute not only the title of Manikongo, but also that of the chieftancies of the six major provinces and smaller political units. By 1747, for example, Sonyo had 15 chiefs who all acted like absolute rulers.³ By the last decade of the eighteenth century, the Manikongo had less authority than many of his subjects. Prisoners resulting from these conflicts were sold as slaves, whom the Mubiri and Kongo traders could direct to the markets on the Loango Coast.⁴

missionnaire de 1791 à 1795", BARSC, III, 2, 1957, 328.

¹J. Cuvelier, Relations sur le Congo, 222.

²A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 33-34.

³La Pratique Missionnaire, 105.

⁴L. Jadin, "Relations sur le Royaume du Congo", 326-328.

Trade contacts also extended to states on the upper Kwango river. By 1683, the Mubiri were carrying firearms and powder to the Mbundu of Matamba, and probably had commercial relations with Kasange as well. These two states blocked the route to the interior east of the Kwango. In the eighteenth century, they acted as middlemen in a flourishing slave trade between the Mwata Yamvo's Lunda empire and the Atlantic Coast. The people of Matamba and Kasange were probably no more willing to permit African traders, such as the Vili, to penetrate their territory and nullify their position as middlemen, than they were the Portuguese from Luanda.¹

The Loango Coast traders were exploiting at least two trade routes through Kongo territory to the upper Kwango. One seems to have passed through north and north-east Kongo, perhaps through San Salvador and Mbata. A second route went south from San Salvador passing through Ndembu territory on the upper Loge and upper Dande rivers, before it turned east to Matamba and Kasange. This was the route which the Portuguese tried to block in 1759 by building a fort at Nkoje.² In the late nineteenth century, Vili settlements several generations old and of a considerable size, were situated in Ndembu territory on the upper Dande. By this time, after the slave trade period, they were mainly craftsmen and cattle-rearers. They maintained contacts with the Loango Coast; immigrants from their homeland

¹D. Birmingham, Trade and Conflict in Angola, 132, 143, 147-149.

²See above, p. 150

continued to arrive to fortify the settlements. Other Vili were settled in the hinterland of the coast between Mussera and Luanda.¹ In 1863, Burton found Mubiri, whom he calls blacksmiths, living at Calumbo not far from Luanda. These lived like gypsies and wandered away when taxes were due. They were not despised by the other inhabitants of the area, but they were regarded as a separate caste.² Some or all of these groups may have been drawn to Angola when trading contacts with the Loango Coast were active.

The Mondongues or Madungoes who were sold on the Loango Coast are difficult to identify. Their common characteristic was that they came from long distances in the interior. Most of them bore heavy markings on their faces.³ This may have been a general term to identify slaves from the far interior who did not fit into the other categories of Mayombe, Congue, Monteque or Quibangué. Bastian suggested that this was a collective name for Teke peoples or that the Mondongues were near neighbours of the Teke. He also suggested that at Luanda slaves from the interior were known collectively as Mundungos and that they were under the rule of the Mwata Yamvo.⁴

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 3.

²R. F. Burton, Two Trips to Gorilla Land and the Cataracts of the Congo, London, 1876, II, 37.

³L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 38-49; Accounts and Paper, XXIX, Evidence of James Fraser to the Select Committee... on the Slave Trade, 1790.

⁴E. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 313-319.

Investigations of the origins of slaves in the West Indies have confirmed that Mondongue was a vague term. There, it meant that the slave in question came from the interior, to the north and east of the Congo mouth.¹ The full extent of these trade contacts in the interior cannot be established. A Loango Coast trader claimed in 1783 that he had been so far inland that he had met traders who had seen white men on the East African Coast.² About 1787, a slave on sale on the Loango Coast said that she had met white men in eastern Africa.³ The veracity of such statements cannot be proved, but it is possible that at the height of the slave trade, such contacts across the Continent existed.

Between Stanley Pool and the estuary, much of the Congo River is barred by cataracts, rapids and rocks. As the trade between the Kongo kingdom and the Loango Coast increased, the crossing points on the river gained in importance. These places were used by the Kongo in their early migrations over the Congo river and in tradition they are surrounded by tales of miraculous passages on rafts, elephants and by other means.⁴ One such ferry-place was at

¹P. D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade, 188.

²Accounts and Papers, XXVI, Evidence of James Penny to the Committee... considering the Trade in Slaves, 1789.

³L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 223-224.

⁴K. Laman, The Kongo, I, 10, 17, 19, 39.

Manyanga, where the Congo becomes navigable after its stormy course from Stanley Pool. There were two places called Manyanga, one on each side of the river, and both important markets. Trade routes from the Loango Coast and from San Salvador met in this region. It seems probably that Sundi traders sold slaves to the Loango Coast merchants at Manyanga markets.¹

From Manyanga, for about 80 miles, the Congo is navigable as far as Isangila. Both Isangila and Inga, further downstream, directed traffic from the Kongo kingdom to the Loango Coast. The easiest outlet was to the north-west across the Lukula and Chiloango basin to Malemba. Tuckey noted that the Malemba traders were very familiar with the navigable part of the Congo between Isangila and Manyanga, although they did not know the region of the Yellala cataracts. The Inga ruler recognised the overlordship of the Manikakongo and received his insignia of office from him.²

After Inga, the Yellala cataracts make the Congo river uncrossable as far as Vivi. Noki and Boma, downstream from Vivi, were both important crossing points and large markets. From Boma

¹E. Dupont, Lettres sur le Congo, 299; H. M. Stanley, Through the Dark Continent, 1874-1877, London, 1878, 189-190; L. Jadin, "Relations sur le Royaume du Congo", 328.

²J. K. Tuckey, Narrative, 199, 212, 285, 369. For a discussion of the frontiers of Kakongo and Ngoyo on the Congo river, see, J. H. Pirenne, "Les Elements Fondamentaux de l'Ancienne Structure Territoriale Politique du Bas-Congo", BARSC, N.S., V, 3, 1959, 557-577 ; Histoire du Site d'Inga, Brussels, 1957.

to San Salvador, via Noki on the south bank of the river, was a journey of only four days. This was shorter than the route from San Salvador to the Atlantic Coast at Ambrizette or Mussera.¹

Boma was ideally placed to receive the Kongo trade and dispatch it northwards to Malemba by the left tributaries of the Chiloango; or to send trade to the Ngoyo Coast.

In the Congo estuary, the Solongo of Sonyo continued to be an important element in commercial relations in the eighteenth century. They provided slaves either from wars with neighbouring Kongo states or through their contacts with San Salvador. Sonyo, itself, was exhausted by the internal disputes of the Kongo kingdom, and was a small and insignificant state by the end of the century. Mpinda was seldom visited by European traders.² Instead, the Solongo carried their trade to the Loango Coast, especially to Ngoyo. They intensified their efforts to gain a permanent foothold north of the Congo River, almost certainly to promote their trade, although Solongo traditions claim that there was overpopulation in Sonyo. By the second half of the eighteenth century, the Solongo had established themselves in Ngoyo territory, along the north bank of the Congo, and had pushed into Kakongo. They founded a thriving settlement at Maguenzo, near to Kinguele, the Kakongo capital. The Solongo had

¹A. Delcommune, Vingt Années de la Vie Africaine, 1874-1893, Brussels, 1922, I, 47; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 98, 101; II, 69.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 35, 38; ADLA, 738, Memo. on the African Trade presented to Choiseul, 1762.

the consent of the Manikakongo who probably saw the advantage of these Sonyo contacts. Sonyo merchants were active at Kinguele and at Malemba in the 1770s.¹ Most Sonyo slaves (Songes) were sold at Cabinda, however. Since the journey from Sonyo to Cabinda was shorter than to Malemba, the Ngoyo traders were well-placed to dissuade the Solongo from taking their trade further north. The Sonyo sources became so important for the Cabinda trade that, in 1749, a dispute between the Solongo and the Woyo was sufficient to close the Cabinda market and send European traders to Malemba.²

The growth of the slave trade from the Kongo kingdom and the Angola hinterland to the Loango Coast paved the way for the rise of Boma as an entrepôt in the Congo River. Seventeenth century Dutch sources identified Boma as a collection of islands. The Dutch attempted a small trade in slaves, copper, ivory and palm-cloth in 1642.³ By the 1680s the Boma community had expanded and was concentrated on an island, "well-situated, pretty large, extremely populous and... with all manner of sustenance". The region was part of the Manikongo's kingdom.⁴ In the 1770s Kongo still claimed

¹J. Cuvelier, Documents, 118; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 318, 330; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 2-3.

²AM, 4JJ, 73/66, Journal of the "Favori", 8.5.1739; MCC 459, Letter from the "Grenadier", Malemba, 12.2.1749.

³OWIC 46, Zegers Report, 1643; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 190.

⁴J. Merolla, A Voyage to Congo, Churchill, I, 656.

Boma, but since the Kongo ruler could barely control the land around San Salvador, Boma was probably independent by this time.¹ By the early nineteenth century, the inhabitants had moved to the north side of the Congo River.² Boma was ideally situated for development as a trading centre. Trade arrived from five directions; from the Kongo kingdom, across the Congo River; from Stanley Pool via the difficult route along the north bank of the Congo River, which passed through Manyanga, Isangila and Inga; from the Niari valley to the north-east, through the Ludima basin; from the Mayombe; and from the Loango Coast. Nineteenth century developments allowed Boma to draw trade from the Loango Coast ports, as they had once attracted it from Luanda and Mpinda.

¹J. Cuvelier, Documents, 8.

²J. K. Tuckey, Narrative, 155-157.

Chapter 7

SLAVE TRADE VICISSITUDES AND THE EXPANSION OF LEGITIMATE COMMERCE, 1793-1870

The closing years of the eighteenth century marked a turning point in the external trade of the Loango Coast. Another 70 years were to pass before the slave trade was finally brought to an end, yet there were differences between the commerce of the nineteenth century and that which had gone before. The steady flow of the eighteenth century trade was interrupted and, by the middle of the following century, was subject to more difficult conditions due to the anti-slave trade campaign south of the equator. The French, English and Dutch slave traders were replaced, chiefly by Portuguese, Spaniards and Brazilians. The organisation of trade was adapted to meet new conditions. Towards the end of the period covered by this chapter, a legitimate commerce gradually superceded the trade in slaves.

By the 1790s the Loango Coast slave trade was less active than it had been in the preceding decade. There were several inter-related causes. Firstly, the supply of slaves to the coastal markets was irregular. The problems of the Loango Coast trade were outlined in a French report. This suggested that the large number of slave-ships that had frequented the area in previous years had brought a decline in the most immediate sources and that most of the slaves

were coming from long distances in the interior. They usually had insufficient food on the journey, and many died en route to the coast. The writer suggested that the region had been exhausted, and that only a shift of trade to another area could allow the resources of the Loango Coast trade to recover.¹

The Loango Coast traders were also faced with growing competition from their southern neighbours, along the Congo River and on the coast between the Congo River and Luanda. Increasing competition had caused English traders to leave the Loango Coast and explore the possibilities of trade along the Congo River as early as the 1760s.² Trade was at first slow but by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Congo River slave trade was well-established with Boma the principal centre. At the end of 1807, for example, 10 ships were competing with each other for the Congo River trade, seven of them British.³ Boma itself was a thriving community. The town was in two parts. The chief's village was one hour's march from the river; the market town called Lombee was on the river bank and governed for the king by a Mafouk. There was a thriving trade in salt, palm-oil, palm nuts, corn, pepper and mat sails for canoes, in the local markets. Tuckey was told of eight

¹AC, C6/23, Memo. by a Nantes trader on the African trade, n.d. 1790s.

²MCC 376, Letter from the "Eenigheid" to the MCC directors, Surinam, 7.7.1767; MCC 518, Journal of the "Haast U Langzaam", Malamba, 29.10.1767.

³Report in the "Charleston Courier", 24.7.1807, cited by E. Donnan, Documents, IV, 516 fn 3.

Portuguese ships trading in slaves at Boma in 1816.¹

By the 1770s, Ambriz, at the mouth of the Loge River, had begun to interest the European traders on the Loango Coast.² The taxes and presents paid to the officials and brokers at Ambriz by foreign traders were less than those north of the Congo River; also, slave prices were lower. In 1784, the average price of a slave at Malemba and Cabinda was 54 pieces, with 10 pieces for the brokerage fee; at Ambriz, the price was $36\frac{1}{2}$ pieces with four pieces for the brokerage fee.³ At first, the Ambriz trade was merely a branch of the Loango Coast commerce. Ships which were anchored at Loango Bay, Malemba and Cabinda, might send their long-boats to pick up slaves at Mossula and Ambriz. Once the trade was established, however, it gained momentum in its own right. In 1789, the combined export of Ambriz and Mossula was reckoned at 3,000-4,000 per year.⁴ By the end of the century, the figure had risen to 5,000-6,000 slaves annually.⁵ The Mbamba found the manufactured goods brought by English ships especially attractive, so that they began to divert the best slaves not only from routes to the north but also from Luanda.⁶

¹J. K. Tuckey, Narrative, 152-157, 162-164, 293.

²AM, B4/115, Letter of Captain Destrais, Cabinda, 24.2.1770; ADLA, C738, Memo. of a letter from Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce to Minister of Marine, 1783.

³AC, F3/61, Instructions for the Trade on the Angola Coast, 1784.

⁴P. Labarthe, Voyage, 192.

⁵AC, C6/27, Memo. on Trading Rights at Ambriz, 1801.

⁶L. Jadin, "Relations sur le Royaume du Congo", 333.

The growth of the slave trade on the coast north of Luanda was reflected in the anxiety of the Portuguese. By 1777, their ships were attacking the trading vessels of other Europeans as interlopers.¹ On the diplomatic front, they were also active. Following the Cabinda Affair of 1783-1784, the Portuguese tried to obtain an agreement from the French to stop trading in the region between the Congo River and Luanda and to recognise the proprietary rights of Portugal. The French would accept no limitations as long as their English and Dutch rivals continued to trade in the area.² In 1791, the Portuguese took direct action by sending a military expedition from Luanda to Ambriz. English and Dutch were driven from the harbour, and a fort was established on a low hill that commanded the route to San Salvador. In 1798, several African rulers from the south side of the River Loge were persuaded to go to Luanda where they recognised Portuguese sovereignty along the Loge River. These claims remained strongly contested by Portugal's European rivals.³

An important facet of the weakening trade of the Loango Coast at the end of the eighteenth century was associated with events in Europe. The French Revolution did not bring an immediate end to the French slave trade. In the years 1790-1792, Nantes alone

¹ AM, 4JJ, 71/52, Journal of the "Roi de Congo", 30.2.1777.

² AC, C6/24, Vanguyon to Vergennes, Lisbon, 15.8.1785; Memo. on the Angola situation, 17.9.1785.

³ Sá da Bandeira, Faits et Considerations, 11-15; J.J. Monteiro, Angola and the River Congo, 86.

dispatched over 40 ships annually.¹ By 1793, however, the Republic stopped paying bounties to slave ships and this, together with the internal confusion of the new Republic, brought the French slave trade to a standstill.² Since the French dominated the Loango Coast trade in the late 1780s, the stoppage of their trade in 1793 brought a temporary crisis for the Loango Coast traders. There was no revival of Dutch trade, for the war with France brought their slave trade to an end.³ In 1794 and 1795 only a few English ships were found trading at Loango Bay and one Spanish ship at Cabinda.⁴ An expansion of English trade on the African coasts south of the equator is indicated at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1798, 69 Liverpool ships traded in "Angola" for 23,303 slaves, and in 1799, 39 vessels left for "Angola".⁵ These figures do not, however, clarify the extent of the Loango Coast trade, for by this period, statistics for "Angola" included the English trade along the Congo River and on the Ambriz Coast as well as that of the Loango Coast. In the first decade of the nineteenth century the Loango Coast trade continued to be slow compared

¹J. Meyer, "Le Commerce Négrier Nantais (1774-1792)", Annales, Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations, XV, 1960, 122.

²AN, F12/1653, Memo. on the Slave Trade, 30.1.1793; Augustin Cochin, L'Abolition de la Traite, Paris, 1861, II, 289.

³W. S. Unger, "Beknopt Overzicht: II", 15.

⁴MCC 1103, Journal of the "Vergenoegen", Loango, 6.9.1794, 2.10.1794; AM, BB4/84, Journal of the "Epervier" on the Loango Coast, March, 1795.

⁵G. Williams, Account of the Liverpool Slave Trade, II, 646-648.

with that of the 1780s. A French expedition that visited the region in 1805 reported that the African traders pleaded for their return.¹

By about 1820, the conditions brought about by the Napoleonic Wars had been removed and a situation established on the Loango Coast which continued as long as the Atlantic slave trade existed. The abolition of the slave trade meant that English and French traders did not return, instead major Portuguese, Spanish and Brazilian slave trading interests developed along the coast. Loango Bay and Cabinda again became centres for the slave trade, but Malemba did not recover.

In 1816, when Tuckey's expedition arrived off Malemba, the Mafouk visited the English ship to ask if they had come to trade in slaves. It took some time for Tuckey to convince him of the negative. The Mafouk abused the European governments which had ruined the trade of his town. He said that Malemba was overrun with slaves which he would sell at half price. The only vessel that had been seen at Malemba during the previous five years was a French ship that had arrived a year before. The decline of the slave trade was underlined by the poverty of the Malemba officials.²

The position of Cabinda provided a sharp contrast. The Ngoyo port had become an important centre for the Portuguese slave trade.

¹AM, BB4/252, Report of Admiral Linois on the Loango Coast, December, 1805.

²J. K. Tuckey, Narrative, 126, 282-283.

At the time of Tuckey's visit, there were nine ships carrying the Portuguese flag and one carrying the Spanish flag engaged in trading slaves. The Portuguese only used Malemba as a branch of the Cabinda trade, occasionally sending small boats to collect a few slaves in order to complete a cargo.¹ Yet, the Portuguese appreciated the potential competition that Malemba offered if other Europeans became established there and revived the slave trade. It was probably to protect her Cabinda interests that Portugal repeatedly tried to safeguard her rights on the whole coast from the Congo River to the Chiloango River. In the Luso-British negotiations for the abolition of the slave trade in 1810, 1815 and 1817, the rights of Portugal to continue the trade at Cabinda and Malemba were spelled out.² Cabinda's preeminence over the Kakongo port in the nineteenth century was partly due to the Portuguese settlement there. It may also have resulted from Cabinda's success in directing the slave trade to the Ngoyo Coast from Boma. Certainly, Boma was the chief supplier of Cabinda slaves in the nineteenth century. Bastian reported that Boma had been the scene of much bloodshed because of its important market which the leaders of the coastal states wanted to monopolise.

¹ J. K. Tuckey, Narrative, 126, 285.

² Sá da Bandeira, Faits et Considerations, 16-17, 19-20. For further details on the diplomatic controversy that raged between Britain and Portugal over their respective rights in the Congo area, see Roger Anstey, Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century, Oxford, 1962, 40 ff.

Following the increase in the trade at Boma, it was occupied by princes of the coast who spoke the dialect of Cabinda.¹ This coup by Cabinda leaders may have taken place by the early nineteenth century.

Although the Portuguese government did not show the same concern for their Loango interests, this did not reflect a decline in the importance of Loango Bay as a slave trading centre. Indeed, with less competition from Malenba, Loango's trade increased. At the same time, Mayumba, which continued to provide ivory and redwood developed as a thriving slave trading centre, a position it had never achieved in the eighteenth century. This may have resulted from a growth in the population of the Gabon region, with the arrival of new groups in the nineteenth century. Another reason was the abolition of the slave trade north of the equator in 1815, which encouraged more traders to seek their slave cargoes in the south.² In 1817, a Liverpool ship reported that it had encountered 22 ships on the coast between Gabon and the Congo River.³

The cruiser system adopted by Britain for the Guinea Coast did not take effect south of the line until after 1839, thus allowing the slave trade to continue on the Loango Coast in relative

¹ A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 127; II, 9.

² John Adams, Remarks on the Country, 154, 172; G. A. Robertson, Notes on Africa Between Cap Vert and the River Congo, London, 1819, 343, 349.

³ T. E. Bowditch, Mission from Cape Coast to Ashantee, London, 1819 (Cass, 1966), 435.

security. There is little reliable statistical evidence to ascertain the volume of the trade and to compare its strength with that of the late eighteenth century. The view of older authorities that the Atlantic slave trade reached even greater proportions in the first half of the nineteenth century has been recently challenged in the statistical survey of Professor Curtin.¹

Success in the diplomatic field was an essential part of the British effort to bring the slave trade to an end south of the equator. An important advance was made when some Franco-British cooperation was achieved. France increased penalties for slave traders in 1817, 1827 and 1831, and in 1833, concluded an agreement with Britain to allow reciprocal rights of stopping and searching ships. Hostile relations prevented immediate united action, however. This was achieved to some degree following the treaty of 1845 between the two powers for the complete suppression of the slave trade. Each country agreed to maintain a force of 26 cruisers on the West African Coast. The commanders of the ships were empowered to negotiate treaties with African chiefs for the abolition of the slave trade.²

Agreements were also necessary with the nations whose traders actively promoted the African slave trade. These were chiefly Portugal,

¹P. D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade, 231-235 and Chapter 5. For older authorities, see P. D. Rinchon, La Traite et l'Esclavage des Congolais par les Europeans, Brussels, 1929, 105; C. Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, London, 1949, 24.

²C. Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, 48-49; E. Bouët-Willaumez, Commerce et Traite, 186-188.

Brazil, Cuba and the United States. In 1836, Portugal signed a treaty with Britain which prohibited the slave trade north and south of the equator. This remained a dead letter; in 1839, Palmerston persuaded the British Parliament to pass an act enabling British cruisers to seize Portuguese ships equipped for the slave trade. Following this, in 1842, Portugal herself conceded the Rights of Search on her ships.¹ Brazil's agreement to punish slave traders and to confiscate their ships in 1831, and her 1845 agreement to allow the search of her ships, remained ineffective until the 1850s. This was also true of the Spanish agreement allowing Rights of Search in 1835.² The value of a slave soared in the New World markets as the anti-slave trade campaign on the African coasts became more effective. Thus, the slave trade continued as long as the Cuban and Brazilian markets remained open, and the British and French cruisers too weak to completely end the trade.³ The slave ships had the advantage of being able to fly the United States flag in order to avoid search. Although the United States had agreed in principle to the suppression of the trade in 1815, it was not until 1862, that Rights of Search of her ships was allowed. At the same time American ship-builders and financiers provided the means for the slave traders of

¹C. Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, 48-49.

²ibid., 45, 89.

³ibid., 27; P. D. Rinchon, La Traite et l'Esclavage, 184; C. Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, 27.

various nations to continue their business.¹

While Europeans and Americans wrangled among themselves about ways of ending the trade, it continued to flourish south of the equator in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. By this period, the conduct of the coastal trade was carried out on somewhat different lines from that of the previous century. There were two major developments. One was an increase in the points from which slaves were embarked; the second was that white traders established more permanent trading houses ashore. Several factors contributed to this new situation.

The Brazilians, Spaniards and Portuguese were not tied to the customary means of trade that had evolved in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Both African and non-African traders were influenced after 1840 by the increasing threat from patrolling cruisers. It was advantageous to increase the number of places on the coast where slaves could be hidden while awaiting a ship. Permanent factories ashore could arrange the purchase of slaves in advance before the ship arrived and thus hasten the embarkation process. These developments were both ^{the} cause and result of the decentralization of power that was taking place in the Loango, Kakongo and Ngoyo by the nineteenth century.² Bouët-Willaumez who first

¹C. Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, 42, 56-57.

²See below, Chapter 8.

visited the Loango Coast in 1837 and then on several occasions during the following ten years, has left a detailed account which shows how trade was organised by the mid-nineteenth century."

Although a small trade was carried on a few miles south of the Fernan Vaz lagoon and at Sette Cama, most slaves were marched south to Mayumba, which by the 1840s was a town of about 1,000 inhabitants. The slave barracoons, numbering seven or eight, were in the hands of Portuguese, Brazilian and Spanish traders who often had larger interests at Loango Bay or Cabinda. Usually about 500-600 captives were awaiting the arrival of a ship. South of Malemba, a new trading centre had developed at Banda. This was chiefly a collecting point for slaves; 700-800 prisoners could usually be found there, waiting to be taken to the point where the slave-ship arrived. The barracoons were branches of Loango and Cabinda factories.¹

About 25 miles north of Loango Bay, another marshalling point was situated at Chilongo, at the mouth of the river of that name. Loango traders might send slaves to Chilongo to be embarked, or to be sent on to Mayumba, when cruisers were watching Loango Bay; or slaves might be sent there for safety and returned to Loango Bay after the anti-slave trade patrol had passed. The central

¹E. Bouët-Willamez, Commerce et Traite, 162-163, 206-207; Description Nautique, 13-14; BPP, ix, 1850, Evidence of Captain Matson to the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the African Slave Trade, 1849.

position of Loango Bay on the coast between Cape Lopez and the Congo River encouraged its strategic importance in the 1840s, when eluding cruisers became an essential part of the slave trade. Many of the Spanish, Brazilian and Portuguese merchants chose to stay permanently at Loango and direct their business from there. About 30 trading houses could be found, most of them out of sight of the shore, some at Buali itself, and some further inland.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Pointe-Noire, just south of Loango Bay, was frequented by slave traders. This was an excellent anchorage and a useful place from which to embark slaves when cruisers were menacing Loango Bay. It was also a staging post on the road to Cabinda. At Malemba, there were only three barracoons. Its main function was to serve as an embarkation point for slaves, who were brought from Cabinda only five hours' journey overland.

Cabinda was consistently the greatest of the Loango Coast slave trading points in the nineteenth century. It received slaves not just from Boma and the Congo River, but from as far north as Gabon, and from south of the Congo. Some of the barracoons were at Cabinda Bay itself, but most of the trading establishments were hidden at a distance of two or three hours' journey from the shore.¹ The prosperity of the region was reflected in the African town built at one end of Cabinda Bay. It was described as being very

¹ E. Bouët-Willaumez, Description Nautique, 15-19; Commerce et Traite, 163-165, 207, 208; HPP, lxxvii, 1847, Annual Report of Luanda Commissioners, 31.12.1845.

populated, clean and well laid-out. The people, themselves, were much respected by European traders and won a reputation like the Kru of the Guinea Coast. They were prepared to leave their homes and find employment on European ships or as factory servants. They were known as ship-builders and hired as carpenters, cooks and tailors, on the Loango Coast and as far as Benguela and Mossamedes to the south and Gabon to the north.¹

The investments of European and American traders ashore were sizeable. One estimate of the value of buildings and merchandise in the Cabinda area was over half a million francs. Another report said that merchandise worth 140,000 pounds sterling was kept in the factory of the Brazilian trading company of Manuel Pinto da Fonseca of Rio de Janeiro at Cabinda.² Even allowing for some exaggeration from officers trying to impress the strength of the slave trade on their governments, these totals represented very large interests. Such bases were necessary for the advance purchase of slaves. Slave-ships did not usually carry sufficient trade goods for a cargo of slaves, as had been the case in the eighteenth century. They would have aroused the suspicions of cruisers who might then watch them and eventually apprehend them. Goods were usually brought to the Loango Coast by merchant ships chartered for

¹E. Bouët-Willaumez, Commerce et Traite, 164, 207-208; P. Güssfeldt, Die Loango Expedition, I, 48; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 7.

²E. Bouët-Willaumez, Commerce et Traite, 192; BPP, lxvii, 1847, Luanda Acting Commissioner to Foreign Office, 10.3.1846.

that purpose; the trade items were then stored in factories for the purchase of slaves.¹

Mobility, speed and secrecy were the keynote of the mid-nineteenth century trade organisation. As the anti-slave trade trade campaign gathered momentum, new points of trade - in lagoons, in river estuaries, on high ground from where cruisers could be seen approaching - proliferated. African traders were quick to adapt to the situation. A major feature of the slave trade became the "coasting" business. Numerous large canoes, usually with a jib and two lateen sails, plied up and down the Loango Coast. They were often loaded with supplies or local trade goods such as redwood or ivory. They were also instruments of the slave trade. It was difficult for naval patrols to stop these small mobile craft, for their purpose was always uncertain.²

Great skill accompanied the rapid embarkation of slaves. Sometimes there was a prearranged rendezvous between the shore traders and the slave-ship. The latter simply had to signal its arrival and immediately surfboats would appear loaded with the cargo. In a matter of hours, the ship could be on her way with several hundred slaves.³ One remarkable account reported the arrival

¹E. Bouët-Willlaumez, Commerce et Traite, 165.

²ibid., 208-209; BPP, lvi, part 1, 1851, Commadore Fanshawe to Admiralty, 10.4.1850; lxiv, 1861, Annual Report of Luanda Commissioners, 25.2.1860.

³E. Bouët-Willlaumez, Commerce et Traite, 214; BPP, lxvii, 1847, Acting Luanda Commissioner to Foreign Office, 10.3.1846.

of a Brazilian ship off Cabinda at 1.10 p.m. on January 18th, 1845. It was loaded with 450 slaves and at 2.45 p.m. weighed anchor; the loading time was one hour and 35 minutes.¹

Although contemporary accounts give few details on how the Vili and their neighbours conducted their trade in this period, it is clear that the number of people involved in positions of responsibility increased. The traditional practice of appointing Mafouks to trading centres continued. Previously, when all the trade of Loango was channelled through Loango Bay only the principal Mafouk had opportunities of organising trade directly with Europeans; thus, only he could exploit the economic and social benefits of the position. By the 1840s, Mafouks were appointed to administer all the new trading points such as Pointe-Noire. Several Mafouks lived in the various villages around Cabinda Bay. At the same time brokers were appointed for all the European factories.²

The skill of the coastal traders and the ineffectiveness of the cruiser system in the 1840s meant that the slave trade on the Loango Coast did not at once fall into decline. Thus, more direct methods were tried to stop the trade. In 1842, Lieutenant Matson's expedition attacked the trading centres at Cabinda and Ambriz, destroying five barracoons at the former and three at Ambriz.

¹ G. E. Brooks, Yankee Traders, Old Coasters and African Middlemen: A History of American Legitimate Trade with West Africa in the Nineteenth Century, Boston, 1970, ms. page 134. I am grateful to Dr. Brooks for allowing me to read the ms. of his work.

² E. Bouët-Willaumez, Description Nautique, 17; W.F.W. Owen, Narrative, II, 171, 173. Owen refers to Mafulas, but Mafouks or Mafoukas seem meant.

These actions caused panic among the slave dealers in the region, but they were short-term in their effectiveness for the buildings were soon constructed again. The British government subsequently prohibited such actions since they might be interpreted as an act of war.¹

Another initiative was to secure anti-slave trade agreements with the Loango Coast rulers. These were usually difficult to obtain since the coastal traders had depended on the slave trade as the major source of income for two centuries. A promise of legitimate trade was hardly attractive; it was a move into the unknown and European promises did not inspire faith. The rulers of the less important trading areas were the first to concede. In 1847 and 1848, for example, British Naval officers concluded treaties with the rulers of Sette Cama and Malemba, respectively. The African administrations agreed to stop the export of slaves, allow the destruction of barracoons and factories, and to order the expulsion of slave traders.² These treaties were more difficult to obtain from Loango and Ngoyo.

In the years 1852-1853, another British naval force appeared in the area. Wilmot, the officer-in-charge, visited Loango on two

¹C. Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, 96-98; BPP, xxii, 1847-1848, Evidence of Commodore Matson to the Select Committee on the Slave Trade, 30.3.1848.

²BPP, xlvi, 1883, Anti-slave trade agreement between the chiefs of Malemba and Alex. Murray, 31.3.1848; ix, 1850, Sir Charles Hotham to the Admiralty, 22.7. 1848.

occasions but was unable to secure a treaty. According to his report, the ruler (probably the Nganga Mvumbi since there was no crowned Maloango at the time¹) declared that ships would be supplied at Loango whether they came to trade in ivory and wax, or whether they came to trade in slaves. It appeared in the discussion that one group in Loango approved the signing of the treaty, but that the ruler's position was insecure, and he feared that such an action would split the people further and give his opponents a chance to attack him.²

At Cabinda, the Woyo leaders recognised that their best allies were the Portuguese who had sustained the Cabinda trade in the nineteenth century. On Wilmot's first visit, his offer of an anti-slave trade agreement was refused. When he returned in February 1853, the authorities at Cabinda hoisted the Portuguese flag as proof of their allegiance. According to the Portuguese and Woyo version of the incident, Wilmot later returned to the Mambouk's house. At a party at which the African leader became drunk, the British officer offered to take charge of the education of one of his sons. The Mambouk agreed, and put his mark on a piece of paper which Wilmot said was his written consent. In fact,

¹See below, p. 273

²BPP, lxxiii, 1854, Wilmot to Rear-Admiral Bruce, 25.2.1853; Annual Report of the Luanda Commissioners, 25.1.1853. A. Cochin, L'Abolition de la Traite, II, 297, refers to a British treaty with Loango in 1847. No confirmation of this has been found in British sources. If there was a treaty, it was short-lived since a further agreement was thought necessary in 1852.

it was the same anti-slave trade agreement which the Mabouk had previously refused to sign.

When Wilmot left in triumph, the Cabinda leaders protested in a letter to the Portuguese at Luanda, asserting their recognition of the Portuguese flag and calling on the Portuguese to give them protection. The letter was carried to Luanda by a Woyo delegation.¹ Some confirmation of the above account was given in the cold reception which a British ship received at Cabinda in 1855. The Ngoyo ruler refused to receive any presents from the visitors even when an officer went to the Ngoyo capital itself.²

As the slave trade became more difficult, the Malemba authorities appear to have had second thoughts about their relations with the Portuguese. In 1854, a deputation was sent to Luanda offering the allegiance of Malemba to the Portuguese crown and asking that a Portuguese military force be sent to occupy the town.³ The British Commissioners, however, believed that the move was initiated by Luanda merchants who had interests in the Malemba slave trade.⁴

¹BPP, xlvi, 1883, Count Lavradio to Foreign Office, 17.9.1853; Agreement of H.M. Government and the kings and chiefs of Cabinda, for the abolition of the slave trade; Declaration of the Mambouk Maniloemba of Cabinda; Cabinda chiefs to the Governor-General of Angola, 20.2.1853.

²BPP, lxii, 1856, Commodore Adams to Admiralty, 18.8.1855.

³BPP, xlvi, 1883, Foreign Office to Pakenham, 6.4.1855; Pakenham to Foreign Office, 22.4.1855.

⁴BPP, lvi, 1854-55, Luanda Commissioners to Foreign Office, 29.3.1855.

The effective abolition of the Brazilian trade by 1853 brought a temporary lull in the slave trade south of the equator.¹ By the end of the decade, however, the trade was again flourishing due to a revival of the Cuban trade with American finance and under the American flag. A Dutch trader reckoned that the trade carried on by Spanish and American interests amounted to 20,000 slaves per year. The Loango Coast share of the trade had declined, however; warships seldom found it necessary to call at Loango Bay. In the 1850s the evasion of patrolling cruisers became more difficult, since most of the naval ships were concentrated south of the equator. Boma became the centre for the slave trade. The Congo River was ideal for escaping capture. The many creeks, islands and mangroves provided cover where slave-ships could hide until the cruisers were out of sight; then they made a quick escape by means of the fast Congo current.² The final blow to the slave trade came with the Anglo-American agreement of 1862 which allowed ships carrying the American flag to be searched. By the mid-1860s the slave trade had virtually ended. The last slave-ship left the Loango Coast in 1868.³

¹C. Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, 140; BPP, xliv, session 2, 1857, Annual Report from Luanda Commissioners, 16.2.1856.

²J. F. Koopman, Verslag van Eene Reize naar de Westkust van Afrika, 1859-1860, 67-68, 72, 73; BPP, lxi, 1857-1858, Annual Report of Luanda Commissioners, 11.2.1857; lvi, 1854-1855, Lieut. Bedingfeld to Commodore Skene, 37.1854.

³E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 4.

A French enterprise started by the Company of M. Regis of Marseilles was an attempt to continue a trade in manpower, which was familiar to the Loango Coast inhabitants, and yet to remove the stigma of the slave trade. This system was known as "free emigration"; in reality it was a means of providing indentured labour for the French West Indies. The condition in which the recruits were kept in the coastal factories and on board ship were reminiscent of slave conditions.¹

In 1857, Regis signed a contract with the French government to provide a labour force of 20,000 for Martinique and Guadeloupe from the Loango Coast and points along the Congo River.² In the same year, he acquired a large factory at Loango, renting the land annually. He also obtained factories at Banana, Cabinda, Puntada Lenha and Boma.³ By 1862, the Regis Company had obtained 15,000 Africans for the French Islands, but the Company had run into difficulties. A growing opposition to the "free emigration" scheme resulted in an Anglo-French agreement to end it. Regis was willing to develop legitimate trade if he was assured of the support of the French government. The French, however, were already deeply

¹P. Güssfeldt, Die Loango Expedition, I, 91; W. L. Mathieson, Great Britain and the Slave Trade, 1839-1865, London, 1929, 152-154; R. Burton, Two Trips to Gorilla Land, II, 314-315.

²AOM, Gabon II/2a, Minister of Colonies to Commander Didelot, 10.10.1861.

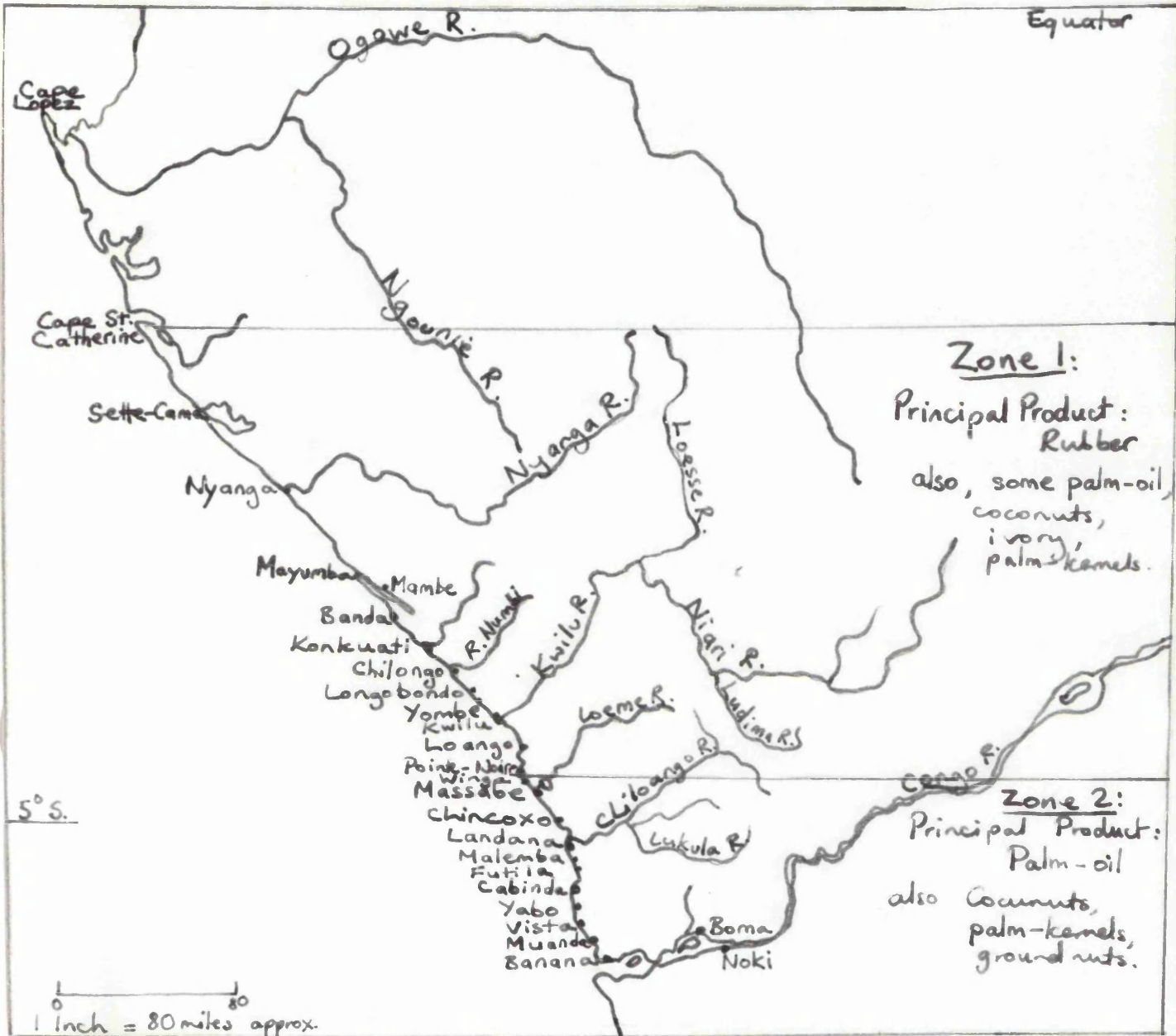
³AOM, Gabon XV/2, Note on the Establishments of M. Regis, 1.10.1861; Note by M. Regis for the Minister of Colonies, 20.5.1860.

involved in other West African trading concerns, and were unwilling to extend their Congo activities at this point. Regis, therefore, withdrew.¹ In 1866, French legitimate trade was taken up by the Company of Dumas, Lagnier and Lartique of Le Havre. They established factories at Pointe-Noire, Landana and Banana, trading chiefly in palm-oil, palm kernels, rubber and a little ivory.²

The earliest attempts to establish an alternative to the slave trade were made by Americans. American legitimate commerce had begun on the Loango Coast by the 1830s and expanded in the following decade, encouraged by the efforts of anti-slave trade cruisers. Contrary to their policy elsewhere on the West African coast, where they seldom tried to establish themselves ashore, Americans set up permanent bases on the coasts south of the equator. At Loango Bay, Cabinda, Ambriz and Ambrizette, officers and super-cargoes were often ashore for long periods while the ships continued to Luanda or supplied Portuguese traders elsewhere on the coast. In the 1840s American factories were established near the shore at Loango Bay and Cabinda. They were trading in gum copal, archil and ivory. In return they could supply American products such as tobacco and rum at unrivalled prices, as well as guns, cloth

¹ AOM, Gabon XV/2, Regis to Minister of Colonies, 11.6.1863 and 25.6.1863; Report of the Congo Commission to Minister of Colonies, 27.3.1862; Report on the Congo situation for the Minister of Colonies, June, 1863.

² AOM, Gabon XV/4, Dumas to Minister of Colonies, 10.4.1866; Gabon III/1, Conquy-Gerant to Minister of Colonies, 5.9.1875.



Legitimate Trade on the Loango Coast: Products and Factories, c.1870
 (based on R.P. Duparquet, "État Commercial de la Côte du Loango".)

and powder. The Americans traded both with Africans and with the Portuguese, Brazilian and Spanish slave traders. They provided supplies for the white traders and goods for the slave trade. The Americans certainly had a finger indirectly in the slave trade pie, for the legitimate trade of the Loango Coast was too slight in the 1840s to support a profitable independent business.¹

By 1850, the Americans had been joined by some English companies. Hatton and Cookson, and C. Horsfall and Son, established factories at Loango Bay, while the Company of African Merchants arrived in the mid-1860s to start trade from their headquarters at Cabinda.²

By the end of the period covered by this chapter, the most powerful legitimate trading concerns were in the hands of the Dutch. Having dominated the Loango Coast in the seventeenth century, they were squeezed out in the slave trade era, to return with the recrudescence of legitimate trade in the mid-nineteenth century. This new activity began in 1857 when A. Kerdijk, a Rotterdam merchant, chartered a small vessel in which he sailed to the mouth of the Congo River and successfully traded a cargo of manufactured goods for ivory, ground nuts, palm-oil and palm kernels. In 1863,

¹ G. E. Brooks, Yankee Traders, ms. pages 87, 121, 134, 339; E. Bouët-Willamez, Commerce et Traite, 161, 163, 165-166.

² R. Anstey, Britain and the Congo, 21, 26; BPP, lvi, part 1, 1851, Commodore Fanshawe to the Admiralty, 10.4.1850.

he joined with L. Pincoff to found a trading company which in 1869 took the name of the Afrikaansche Handelsvereeniging (AHV). Banana, a new trading centre on a spit of land that protruded into the Congo estuary south of Cabinda, became the centre for Dutch interests. Factories were established on the Loango Coast as far as the Kwilu River.¹ By 1873, there were 16 Dutch factories in this short stretch of coast, with the principal ones at Banana, Massabe and Landana.² A considerable proportion of the capital of the Dutch house was owned by British subjects.³

The Portuguese trade at Loango Bay and Cabinda decreased with the suppression of the slave trade. They tended to develop their legitimate trading interests at points south of Luanda.⁴ An attempt was made to compete with the Dutch on the Loango Coast through the Companhia dos Mercantes del Norte. They were in general unsuccessful; most of their factories were taken over by the AHV. The Dutch retained the Portuguese as agents in their factories, especially those in the interior.⁵

¹ S. Hofstra, "Eenige Gegevens over het schip 'Lodewijk' en over den Handel van Rotterdam op West Afrika in de Negentiende Eeuw", Rotterdamsch Jaarboekje, 1938, 179-186; O. Z. van Sandick, Herinneringen van de Zuid-West Kust van Afrika: Eenige Bladzijden uit mijn Dagboek, Deventer, 1881, 4 fn. 1.

² A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 23-24.

³ R. Anstey, Britain and the Congo, 30-31.

⁴ Lopes de Lima, Ensaio, III, 81.

⁵ A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 34-35; P. Güssfeldt, Die Loango Expedition, I, 38.

The Loango Coast may be divided into two zones, according to the principal products of the area by 1870. From Cape Saint Catherine to Pointe-Noire, the chief export was rubber. There were nine different species of the trees which were tapped at certain times of the year to yield a milk-like substance which congealed and was formed into balls the size of a large fist, making it easy for transport. Frequently, the rubber was sent from branch factories to Banana in the south for dispatch to Europe. From Pointe-Noire to the Congo River, the chief product was palm-oil which in Europe gained new dimensions of importance with the expansion of industry. The oil, which was noted for its fine quality, was collected and sent to the coastal factories where it was purified before shipment to Europe. By 1863, the Dutch were exporting 800 tons annually from Banana to Rotterdam; by 1870, they were exporting three times as much oil from the Loango-Congo region as from their factories north of the equator.¹

The changing patterns of trade were reflected not only in the different exports, but also in the new trading points at which factories for legitimate trade were established. These did not always correspond in importance to the points which had dominated the slave trade, in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. Cabinda

¹R. P. Duparquet, "État Commercial de la Côte du Loango et du Congo entre Cama et Ambriz", Les Missions Catholiques, 1875, 116; S. Hofstra, "Eenige Gegevens", 188; BPP, lxvi, 1864, Commodore Wilmot to Rear-Admiral Walker, 3.10.1863.

remained a centre of trade due to the interests of the Portuguese, but Loango Bay and Malemba were not almost completely eclipsed by new centres such as Banana, Landana and Pointe-Noire.

The rise of Banana was directly associated with the growth of legitimate trade. The factory first established by Regis as a collecting point for the "free emigrants" was taken over by the AHV. There were three major advantages of the new centre. Firstly, it was expedient to have a place from where the Congo River trade could be organised. Secondly, it was useful to have a base outside Cabinda where Portuguese influence was powerful. Thirdly, as the slave trade came to an end, the situation along the Congo River became more tenuous. The frustration of African traders whose livelihood was based on the slave trade reached new peaks and they retaliated by attacking European factories. Banana's position, with its good anchorage, allowed it to flourish as a commercial centre and to receive protection from naval cruisers. It became the entrepôt for the Congo estuary and for all the trade between Sette Cama and Ambriz. It received rubber, coconuts, palm-oil, palm kernels and archil from regions to the north and groundnuts and ivory from the coast to the south.¹

Landana's importance grew out of its geographical position at the mouth of the Chiloango River. The latter, being easily navigable

¹P. Güssfeldt, Die Loango Expedition, I, 34; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 21; R. Burton, Two Trips to Gorilla Land, II, 64-65; BPP, lxvi, 1864, Commodore Wilmot to Rear-Admiral Walker, 3.10.1863.

for a long distance assumed a new significance with the growth of the palm-oil trade. Villages along its banks became collecting grounds for the oil and kernels of the surrounding districts. These products were then sent to branch factories of the AHV on the river or were dispatched directly downstream to Landana. The rise of Landana, as opposed to the possible revival of Malemba, which was only a few miles to the south, was also due to the necessities of the palm-oil trade. The transport of the great barrels of oil from Malemba would have been difficult since access to the shore was only possible by steep paths.¹ In contrast, Landana had a broad flat beach where the drums could be rolled down to the sea; there was also a good anchorage for ships.²

The excellent anchorage at Pointe-Noire was probably the chief reason for its growth at the expense of Loango Bay. Moreover, the central government of Loango was too weak to insist on the use of the customary site of coastal trade; expediency had superseded tradition. By the early 1870s factories belonging to traders from six nations were situated at Pointe-Noire: Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, German, French and English. Other important trading centres were established along the coast of the old Loango kingdom, especially

¹ See above, p. 201

² P. Güssfeldt, Die Loango Expedition, I, 78, 83; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 28; R. P. Duparquet, "État Commercial", 129.

at Massabe which collected the trade of the Loeme River, and Chicoxo, a terminal for caravans from the interior.¹

The year 1870 marks no complete break in the history of the Loango Coast, economically or politically, but it is something of a watershed. The third last decade of the nineteenth century saw developments which link it more to the colonial period than to the earlier part of the century. In particular, there was an increasing European involvement in the region, which ultimately led to its partition between three colonial powers. In the early 1870s there was a rapid expansion of legitimate commerce,² the arrival of a German scientific expedition (inspired by a newly founded Society for the Exploration of Equatorial Africa), and the arrival of French missionaries at Landana.³

The political disintegration of the kingdom of Loango was already complete by 1870. Indeed, a major attraction of the region for new trading companies was that no European power had a claim to the area and no African government was strong enough to exact harsh terms. A modern study concludes:

¹P. Güssfeldt, Die Loango Expedition, I, 90, 91; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 29, 50-54.

²See E. Pechuël-Loesche, Kongoland: I. Amtliche Berichte; II. Fachmännische Untersuchungen, 1876-1886, Jena, 1887, 496. In 1876 Pechuël-Loesche counted 78 factories for legitimate trade on the coast north of the Congo, compared with 33 along the river and 35 to the south.

³The Mission of the Pères du Saint-Esprit.

... From the merchant's point of view, the organisation of the trade was in one sense simplicity itself. In the absence of large political units anywhere on the lower Congo and the adjoining coast, with the qualified exception of the Boma district, all that was required to begin trade were 'dashes' or 'presents' to the local chiefs... ¹

This absence of strong political units provides a direct contrast with the situation that Europeans encountered in Loango in the seventeenth and even eighteenth centuries. The final chapter tries to trace the development of Loango institutions more closely and to suggest how their evolution may be related to the changing pattern of external trade.

¹R. Anstey, Britain and the Congo, 22.

Chapter 8

TRADE AND CHANGE AMONG THE VILI

The economic changes that took place in Loango in the course of three centuries interacted with traditional Vili society and produced far-reaching change. The fragmented political scene of 1870 was a far cry from the powerful, unified kingdom described by European traders in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The social and political structure of the traditional Loango kingdom was essentially simple. A monopoly of power was in the hands of the Maloango, the pinnacle of authority, whose position was reinforced by his semi-divine nature. He guaranteed the stability of society. Power was shared with a traditional aristocracy who inherited a privileged position from the first Vili through matrilineal inheritance. The authoritarian position of the Maloango and the nobles allowed them to exploit the pre-European Loango economy to their own benefit. Freemen outside the aristocracy might pursue traditional occupations such as fishing, smithing and weaving; it was unlikely, however, that they could amass wealth on a significant scale, similar to that of the Vili leaders. This was the prerogative of the latter through the system of tribute and taxation, and also on account of their territorial control which allowed them to influence trade. As Dapper commented, the free men had little to distinguish them from slaves, except for the freedom itself.¹

¹This paragraph is a summary of the much fuller account given in Chapter 1.

By the eighteenth century significant changes had come about in the political and social institution of Loango. These were directly related to economic developments, especially to the expansion of external trade in the slave trade era.¹ It brought new opportunities for advancement outside the traditional system. The most notable changes took place on the coast where more people could gain employment in the slave trade. Energetic and competent individuals might secure positions as brokers, royal officials, merchants and caravan leaders or, at a lower level, as factory servants, surfboatmen and porters.

By the 1780s, if not long before, the brokers were the key figures in Vili society.² Nobles were still respected but even they aimed to secure lucrative positions as middlemen in the coastal slave trade. Once a man became a broker, he could easily attain noble rank by marrying a princess. The latter were only too willing to acquire wealthy husbands. Many brokers, however, might decide that the disadvantages of such a liaison outweighed the honour, for the husbands of princesses were subject to many traditional limitations. A major attraction in becoming a prince was that it protected one from the power which princes had to enslave those outside their class. The danger could be circumvented, however, both

¹That is, the period covered by chapters 4-6.

²For the functions of the broker in the conduct of the coastal trade and the possibilities of remunerations, see Chapter 5.

by physical power and by the fact that the financially well-off could substitute another in their place.¹

More important than traditional power was the social and political status that a broker could achieve in the new Loango society. Brokers had easy access to European luxury goods and could improve their style and standard of living. Brokerage fees frequently included exotic items, luxuries and status symbols. As European competition mounted, the value of these items increased. Labarthe gave detailed instructions on goods that should be carried for taxes and presents. These included contemporary European clothing such as blue coats, red coats with large collars and embroidered in gold thread, cocked hats also embroidered in gold, and several "beautiful" guns.² Other favoured items were carpets and furniture, silver dishes and cutlery, luxury cloth such as satin, and necklaces of fine coral.³ By the second half of the eighteenth century, sons of the Mafouks of Malemba and Cabinda were being educated in France; it seems very probable that a few Vili went to Europe as well.⁴ Thus, an élite was emerging based not on

¹L. B. Proyart, Histoire, 91-92, 111-114; J. Cuvelier, Documents, 52; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 107, 199-200.

²P. Labarthe, Voyage, 198, 296-297.

³L. B. Proyart, Histoire, 77, 95, 155; P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 52.

⁴P. D. Rinchon, Pierre van Alstein, 156; AC, C6/24, Letter from J. Bourse, Malemba, 5.10.1783.

the traditional aristocracy, but on the possession of European luxury goods and their ability to assimilate a European mode of living.

The real political power which brokers could attain by virtue of their wealth was more important than mere social prestige. In the first place, they could acquire a high administrative office (perhaps even a place on the royal council), by purchase from the ruler who sold official positions to the highest bidder.¹ Also, rich men could acquire land since the Maloango, as mfumu nssi of the kingdom, had the right to dispose of all unoccupied territory. Having obtained a piece of land, an important individual could found a village. Through his wealth and the power to protect, he could attract a following of both freemen and slaves. A typical example of one such figure from Ngoyo (and there were surely others like him in Loango and Kakongo), was Andriz Samba of Cabinda who had 700 dependents. These followers supported their master in war and cultivated his land. He, in turn, protected them, lodged them and even paid their debts.²

The Maloango and the nobles were not entirely outside the framework of economic advancement which accompanied the expansion of the slave trade. Anyone, including the nobles, could become a

¹L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 126-127.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 104, 107, 188-189, 208-211.

broker provided that they obtained the consent of the Mafouk.¹ The Maloango, for his part, retained his traditional rights of tribute and taxation. He also derived revenue from the sale of administrative offices. The more profitable of these, such as the position of Mafouk, must have been especially lucrative for the ruler. Theoretically, he retained the right to dismiss officials and resell the office at will.² The distribution of lands by the Maloango was probably also rewarded by presents. The ruler also derived an income from trade, in the form of presents and dues from ships. He may even have participated indirectly in trade, by supplying slaves through brokers, but this cannot be confirmed. Although the Maloango's income from trade with Europeans may not have been as great as that of important brokers and officials like the Mafouk, Manibanze and Maquimbe, his total revenue was relatively substantial.³ But, whereas in the seventeenth century wealth had depended largely on the Maloango, in the eighteenth century he had become only one among several wealthy men. These were not entirely dependent on the ruler for their income.

The system of government in Loango in the latter part of the eighteenth century seems to have remained, in its outline, the same

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 106-107.

²ibid., I, 184-185, 191; L. B. Pryart, Histoire, 95, 126-127.

³For details on business done at Loango, see the Account Books of ships of the MCC, nos. 219, 335, 488, 932, 1014, 1106, 1308.

as that described for the early seventeenth century.¹ The Maloango remained at the top of a hierarchy of administrators which he himself appointed, and was advised by a council of principal officials. In the mid-seventeenth century, the chief members of the royal council were the provincial governors along with the Makaka and the most important household servants of the Maloango.

By the late eighteenth century, the composition of the council was somewhat different. The leading members, the Maboma, retained his place. It was possibly the fact that he was the governor of the most important province of Loangiri which contained the capital and Loango Bay, that enabled him to retain his dominant position while other provincial governors declined in importance. The Maboma was a sort of prime minister in the lifetime of the Maloango and had the general responsibility of seeing that the royal commands were executed. During an interregnum, the Maboma was the chairman of the regency council, and was the most feared figure in the land. The Maloango usually took the precaution of appointing a deputy, so that if the Maboma died during an interregnum, the second man could take up his position and a state of anarchy be avoided.²

The other principal members of the council were all officials whose work brought them into direct contact with the Europeans at

¹ See above, pp. 44-47

² L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 170, 195; L. B. Proyart, Histoire, 129. The title of Maboma means "Lord of Fear" according to Proyart. French and Portuguese sources refer to the "Capitaine Mort" and the "Capi-tão Mor" respectively.

Loango Bay. This may explain why they came to supercede the provincial governors in importance. The Mafouk was the most important figure after the Maboma. He had the greatest opportunities to amass wealth from trade; he also had a large retinue of followers and deputies nominated by him and dependent on him.¹ The other members of the council mentioned by Degrandpré were the Maquimbe, the Manibanze, the Manibele and the Makaka.² Proyart added the Mangove and the Manpoutou.³ Instead of being an administration orientated to the collection of taxes and tribute in the Loango provinces, it was it was organised primarily for the conduct of the European slave trade.

An important discrepancy in the information given by Proyart and Degrandpré concerns those who were eligible for these high offices. According to the latter, princes could not be members of the council, since it became the council of electors during an interregnum. Princes could not be represented since they might have a vested interest in influencing their own election.⁴ If the princes really were excluded from the principal administrative position, this indeed represented a major victory for the nouveaux-riches. On the other hand, Proyart's account gives the regent, ministers and princes as

¹For details on the functions of Mafouk, see above, pp. 166-168

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 182.

³L. B. Proyart, Histoire, 124.

⁴L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 170, 175, 196.

the electors of the new Maloango.¹

The decline of the Maloango's real authority and the corresponding rise in the power of the council is perhaps most clearly shown in the question of succession to the throne. Seventeenth century sources give an impression of some stability in the system whereby the Maloango appointed his four immediate heirs before his death, the principal claimant being nominated to the lordship of Caye.² The wealth and respect enjoyed by Loango rulers in that period was probably sufficient to ensure the peaceful accession of a new ruler. The royal princes would have sufficient riches to promote their legitimate claims to the throne. On the other hand, the system may not have been as cut-and-dried as contemporary sources' accounts such as that of Battell make it appear. Both Brun and Dapper give passing indications of jealousy among the claimants to the throne. Civil war was possible if, for example, the ruling Maloango had no nephews.³

By the late eighteenth century, a somewhat confused situation regarding the succession had developed. Theoretically, the ruling Maloango claimed the right to nominate his successor whom he elevated

¹L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 129.

²See above, p. 50

³Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 9; O. Dapper, Beschrijvinge, 160-61.

to the rank of Macaye. In fact, he no longer had the power to ensure a peaceful succession. His tenuous position was revealed by the fact that he sometimes deferred his choice until the last minute, to lessen the risk of a divided kingdom, at least during his own lifetime. Thus, he played off the princes against each other and encouraged their loyalty to him. This practice might lead to trouble for a Maloango could die suddenly, leaving the throne vacant and without nominating his successor. Even when he made a choice it was usually contested and a powerful prince might take up arms, calling in foreign help.¹ By the second half of the eighteenth century, the death of a ruler was generally followed by an interregnum which might last several years; for instance from 1766 until 1773 at the time of the visit of French missionaries.² There was not only dissension over the choice of a new ruler, but also over the burial place of the old Maloango; the inhabitants of Lubu apparently contesting the traditional rights of those at Loangele.³

In this situation the regency council became the overriding authority in the land, and this compounded the difficulties of

¹L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 130-132, 161.

²ibid., 129-130; J. Cuvelier, Documents, 21, 100.

³L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 130. He refers to a dispute between the inhabitants of Loangele and the royal district of Loango. Pechuël-Loesche argues convincingly that Lubu which lay in sight of Loango Bay and close to Buali was meant. He recounts the tradition surrounding the dispute, see Volkskunde, 179-182.

finding a new ruler. According to Degrandpré, the regency council included almost the same officials as the council of the Maloango in his lifetime. Collectively, these electors had unlimited authority. It was in their interest to perpetuate the interregnum as long as possible so that they might exploit their position fully.¹ They were susceptible to bribery and intrigue; often the elected prince had paid in advance in goods. The electors made the most of their position during an interregnum, since the new Maloango did not always retain them in office.²

Once the new ruler came to the throne, he had theoretical powers of life and death over those who had appointed him, as he had over the meanest of his subjects.³ In reality, however, the ruler was limited by the independence of his leading subjects and his inability to enforce his rule. In selling offices to the nouveaux-riches the Maloango was bolstering his own economic position but he was inadvertently promoting the interests of those subjects who were least likely to respect traditional authority. By the 1770s these powerful individuals had become so self-assured that they acknowledged their position as vassals only as long as the Maloango did not interfere with their privileges. Clearly they

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 171-172; J. Cuvelier, Docum ents, 49.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 172-175.

³ibid., I, 196.

could support their pretensions with the firearms that were widespread in the kingdom, as the result of trade. If the Maloango had been able to unite all the resources at his command, he would have been more powerful than any of his subjects, but this he was unable to do. Traditionally, he called on his leading vassals to provide armed men to defend his interests. By the late eighteenth century, however, none of the leading figures were prepared to make war on behalf of the ruler, for his weakness was their strength.¹

In matters of day-to-day administration, the authority of the ruler was also called in question. Although the Maloango continued to spend several hours each day hearing lawsuits and holding council meetings, he could not supervise the implementation of his commands. The Maboma and other ministers often substituted their orders for those of the Maloango.² Yet, the Loango ruler was more fortunate than his Kakongo and Ngoyo counterparts, for the geographical proximity of the capital to Loango Bay meant that the central administration had more control over activities at the trading area than was possible when the capital was situated some distance in the interior.³

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 183, 186-187; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 121.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 183, 195; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 123-124.

³L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 183.

Fundamental changes were not only taking place in the upper levels of society. Equally important was the effect of the changing pattern of trade on the rest of the population. In certain respects, the economic developments and the modifications of the power structure among the leading Vili left the ordinary people untouched. Only the richest and most powerful individuals were deeply involved in the changes brought by the slave trade. The majority of the population continued to follow occupations such as farming, fishing, weaving and operating local markets on the traditional pattern. In other words, the wealth which the slave trade brought to the brokers and principal merchants and administrators passed the ordinary people by.¹

They were, however, much affected by other aspects of the changing political scene. Those who lived near the coast, for example, were frequently molested by the new officials who had come to power. These administrators used the position which they had bought to extort excessive taxes and tribute from the common people in the name of the Maloango's government. This was comparatively easy for them to do since taxation was not fixed, but assessed according to the wealth of the subject. Arbitrary actions by officials sapped the people's initiative, for if they farmed more land than was needed for their subsistence, it became merely an

¹L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 76, 159.

excuse for further extortions by grasping administrators.¹ The Vili were thus described as being indolent at the end of the eighteenth century, in contrast to the thriving community described in pre-slave trade days.²

The expansion of contacts with Europeans and the growth of a trade in slaves, also had an adverse affect on certain traditional occupations. By the late eighteenth century, for example, indigenous cloth was much less worn. The wealthy preferred European materials although some of the poorer sections of the community continued to wear local cloth.³ Cloth money was still in circulation in Vili markets,⁴ but its export to Luanda probably stopped by the end of the seventeenth century, and it lost its value in Loango itself. This was especially true for the wealthy who had previously used indigenous cloth, copper and ivory as a means of counting their riches. By the 1780s, debts were usually paid in slaves; according to one observer, palm-cloth had so lost its value that he had never seen enough of it to equal one slave.⁵ The decline of the copper and ivory trade also had adverse effects

¹L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 31, 119-122; J. Cuvelier, Documents, 50; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 115, 184, 186.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 80; cp. Samuel Brun's Schiffarten, 13.

³L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 71; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 109.

⁴ibid., 98, 108.

⁵Accounts and Papers, XXIX, Evidence of James Fraser to the Select Committee ... on the Slave Trade, 1790.

for those Vili who had previously made a living from these industries. In the late eighteenth century, they were described as disliking the work involved with copper. Degrandpré noted that a profitable copper and wax trade might be started at Mayumba, but added that as long as the slave trade dominated the coast no other trade could thrive.¹ For those who lived near the coast or who were prepared to go to Loango Bay to find work, there was alternative employment as porters, factory servants, wood-cutters, water-carriers or surfboatmen. Yet such occupations were essentially non-productive for the society in the long run, since they were part of the slave-trade and hardly to be compared with the indigenous crafts involved in work with copper, ivory or palm-cloth.

Perhaps the most serious problem for the common people was a lessening of their security which was brought about by the rise of unruly local officials. Small chiefs became strong enough to block the roads and prevent dissatisfied subjects from going to petition the Maloango.² Yet, Degrandpré may have exaggerated these local disturbances and may have judged the situation from the position near the coast, rather than from an overall view of the Loango kingdom. According to Pechuël-Loesche, writing 100 years later, the inviolability of the Nzila si Nzambi³ remained in force

¹L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 106-107; L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 39-40; II, 6.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 186.

³See above, p. 46

until the end of the eighteenth century, and even into the nineteenth century, provided a man could find his way to them.¹

Whereas slaves were referred to only fleetingly by seventeenth century sources, they were frequently mentioned a century or so later. By the late eighteenth century, a man's following was the chief determinant of his wealth.² There were several reasons for this development. In the first place, many of those whose wealth was based on the external slave trade were likely to count their own riches in similar terms. Alternative sources of investment had declined in value and in certain cases it was possible to sell domestic slaves to Europeans.³ Furthermore, the number of supporters that one could muster was important in a society where traditional authority was languishing; power derived from one man's ability to enforce his will. In one respect this benefitted the slaves since a master had to be careful lest he alienate them and encourage them to join the camp of his enemy.⁴

Walter Rodney has suggested that those involved in organising the slave trade may have become used to having a number of slaves

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 163, 209.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 64, 209-210; Accounts and Papers, XXVI, Evidence of James Penny to the Committee ... considering the Trade in Slaves, 1789.

³See below, p. 271

⁴L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 121.

in their possession, thus encouraging the custom:

... large numbers of Africans were captured with the view to being sold to the European slavers, but they remained for greater or lesser periods (or sometimes for ever) in the service of their African captors. To begin with, there was usually a time-lag between capture and the moment the buyer presented himself. Then, there were always individuals whom the Europeans rejected for one reason or another; while the African merchants also decided against carrying through the sale under certain circumstances...¹

This situation probably existed in Loango, for there were no European forts where slaves could be held prior to their embarkation on that coastline. Africans were wholly in charge of the buying, collecting and holding of slaves until the arrival of the European ships in the harbour. Periods of European war when few vessels arrived off the coast were times when African middlemen found themselves in possession of large quantities of slaves. Typical of such a situation was that reported by a Dutch vessel in 1706 which referred to an "overflow" of slaves at Malemba and that found by Tuckey in 1816 when Malemba was "overrun with captives".²

Where seventeenth century accounts give little indication of how a man became a slave, eighteenth century sources are more explicit. Crimes such as murder, robbery, adultery and debt were punishable by enslavement.³ This situation may well have developed

¹W. Rodney, "African Slavery", 435.

²OWIC 99, Elmina Governor to XIX, 24.4.1706; J. K. Tuckey, Narrative, 126.

³L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 211-212; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 136-137; J. Cuvelier, Documents, 52.

during the slave trade era, or at least the use of enslavement as a form of punishment may have been intensified. Those who meted out justice in local courts were also those who stood to gain by such a change. An important limitation on the sale of Vili to Europeans was contained in a law which prohibited the sale of anyone born in Loango. Even at the height of the slave trade this regulation was strictly enforced by the Mafouk and brokers.¹ There was a significant loophole, however. A master had the right to sell a slave if he was disloyal or if he had become a slave on account of a crime.² Given the fact that the slave trade had become almost the only way of obtaining luxuries, and for some even the necessities of life, this provision was a clear incentive to broaden the range of crimes for which enslavement was the penalty. As Degrandpré commented, the goods which Europeans brought had become so essential to the Loango population, especially among the most powerful, that although the trade in slaves had many evil consequences, the people shut their eyes to them.³

The weakening of the Maloango's authority among his Vili subjects was paralleled by a decline in his power over his neighbours

¹L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 158.

²ibid., 2, 158.

³L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 215.

and the peripheral areas of his kingdom. Although Kakongo and Ngoyo continued to pay homage to the Loango ruler at his election and at his death, the action was traditional, and meaningless in real terms.¹ This was clearly shown by the fact that the Maloango was powerless to prevent the Kakongo king from closing the roads to the north and diverting the lucrative Kongo trade to Malemba. At the same time, slave caravans from Mayumba passed through Loango to Malemba and Cabinda.² According to Degrandpré, Loango was the smallest of the three kingdoms by the 1780s.³

As serious for the Maloango was the breakaway of peripheral regions of the Loango kingdom in the east and north. By 1770, the Mayombe hinterland was a collection of small independent chief-tancies.⁴ When and why this happened is not clear from the sources. The difficult terrain may always have made control of the area difficult. The temptation to dominate the trade routes and to collect tolls independently may have been a factor in the move for Yombe independence. The northern province of Mayumba had also broken away from the Loango kingdom to establish an independent state with its own ruler. Like Kakongo and Ngoyo, Mayumba continued to acknowledge the nominal sovereignty of the Maloango by paying homage at

¹L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, ~~xxvi~~-xxvii, 166-167; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 91.

²L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 166, 215; II, 5.

³ibid., I, xxvi.

⁴J. Cuvelier, Documents, 45; L. B. Proyard, Histoire, 8. The map of the Loango Coast drawn by French missionaries and reproduced by

certain times. Pechuël-Loesche cites the tradition of a Vili princess called Nsoami who fled from her home to set up an independent Mayumba state, probably in the 1760s.¹ North of Mayumba, in the region around Cape Saint Catherine, the inhabitants continued to claim allegiance to the Maloango.² This, however, was clearly a device to maintain their independence against their Mayumba neighbour. With Mayumba lying between the Loango heartland and the regions further north, it was unlikely that there were close contacts between them. Loango, therefore, had shrunk in terms of real power to a coastal strip from the Chiloango River in the south to just north of the Kwilu River.

These external developments surely only served to underline the failing authority of the Maloango at home. His declining prestige probably exacerbated the internal tensions. The death of the Maloango Buatu in 1787 was an important event since no man took the title and position for over 100 years. Several were elected to the position of Nganga Mvumbi, the title of a prospective ruler before his coronation, but none of these was ever crowned. The German expedition which visited Loango in the 1870s found that the body of Buatu still remained unburied, according to the custom that a

¹ Proyard and Cuvelier gives the old eastern boundary of Loango with the Teke. In each case, however, the text makes clear that the Yombe states were independent by this period.

¹ L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 164, 166; J. Cuvelier, Documents, 45; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 182. The latter suggests the period from the 1760s to the 1780s for the incident, but the evidence of Cuvelier confirms the earlier date.

² L. Degrandpré, Voyage, II, 4.

Maloango could only be buried by his successor.¹

The reasons why no individual became Maloango are relevant to an understanding of the Loango social and political scene in the nineteenth century. Firstly, no one had the power or wealth to proceed to the crowning ceremony.² The preliminaries which took a year to complete involved great expense for the new Maloango. He had to entertain hundreds of people who were obliged to come and pay homage to him, each prince had to be given ceremonial cloths, the electors had to be rewarded and the burial of the old king undertaken. The traditional ceremonies that were carried out on the journey to Binkosse, the coronation site, also involved much expense. This was an extravaganza that no individual could undertake by the nineteenth century. It is another indication of how wealth was shared at the top level of society. Riches were no longer the monopoly of a few, among whom were the families who could eligibly provide a new Maloango.³

Perhaps as great a factor as the question of wealth, was the fact that the position of Maloango was no longer an attractive one. An energetic and able man had a more profitable outlet for his talents as a trader or as an administrator, at a less exalted

¹ L. Degrandpré, Voyage, I, 116; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 155, 185; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 64, 263.

² A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 262; O. Z. van Sandick, Herinneringen, 32.

³ A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 262; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 158-162; R. E. Dennett, At the Back of the Black Man's Mind,

but more influential level in society. According to nineteenth century sources, an outstanding feature of the position of Maloango were the number of Xima which limited freedom of action. The Maloango, for example, was not allowed to leave the environments of his palace, he must never see the sea, he must never touch objects made in Europe or see any white person; the Xima concerning his eating and drinking habits continued. The princes were likewise limited. They were not allowed to cross the boundary rivers of the kingdom, they were not allowed to look at the sea or to enter a European house.¹

How old these prohibitions were is not clear; what is certain is that many of them were not in force (if they existed at all) in the early seventeenth century. The only limitations or taboos mentioned by observers such as Battell, Broecke and Brun, were those customs about the Maloango's dining; they also referred to his secluded life. If other limitations had existed, it is strange that they were not mentioned, for the figure of the Loango ruler was one who interested all European visitors in that period. Their non-existence is suggested by the behaviour of the Maloango, especially in relation to Broecke. The friendship of the

14-15, tells how the Nganga Mvumbi of Loango, Mani Luemba, asked the French government to finance his coronation. This they refused, so he was forced to remain uncrowned.

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 161-162, 177; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 262, 263, 268. There were some other prohibitions also given in these sources.

two men has already been noted - how the ruler visited the Dutch trader at his lodging and how he received with delight the presents of European cloth which Broeck gave him.¹

The fact that almost all of the later prohibitions placed limits on the relations of the Loango ruler and princes with Europeans is significant. Pechuël-Loesche linked the growth of the Xima to the expansion of trade with Europeans. These external contacts were viewed with growing apprehension by the conservatives of the kingdom, the religious authorities. They were in a position to increase or intensify the application of the Xima, and could use the prohibitions to seclude the traditional authorities from the temptations of the slave trade, and to preserve the Vili culture against alien influences. This, of course, was also part of their vested interests.² These limitations were doubtless welcomed by the nouveaux-riches who were also concerned with circumscribing the actions of the Maloango and the class of nobles for their own ends.

By the 1870s many of the princes disregarded the Xima wearing imported clothes and visiting Europeans at their factories. Others, however, were more strict; they sent envoys in their place

¹See above, pp. 82-83

²E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 178.

to negotiate with white traders.¹ Probably, a Maloango was under more pressure to observe these limitations than the princes. Whatever the force of the Xima, there was little attraction in such a position for a man who saw the advantages of contacts with Europeans.

The development of external trade in the nineteenth century contributed to the decentralisation of power in Loango and to the replacement of the Maloango's government by the rule of petty chiefs. The latter, who were united only by common traditions, scarcely even acknowledged the Maloango as overlord.² The fluctuations of the slave trade at the end of the eighteenth century and in the first two decades of the nineteenth century probably produced great tensions among those whose wealth was based on trade contacts with Europeans. Events in the decades from about 1840 to 1870 further aided the fragmentation of the old kingdom. As has been seen, the growing effectiveness of the anti-slave trade patrols off the Loango Coast necessitated a reorganisation of the conduct of trade by the Vili coastal traders. The most significant change from the point of view of the present discussion was the scattering of trading points along the coast, as opposed to the old system of

¹ E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 178.

² ibid., 1-2, 185.

channelling all trade through the Loango Bay area. This aided the devolution of power from the central administration to Mafouk and local chiefs.

The expansion of legitimate trade increased the opportunities for direct contacts with European traders. Although the slave trade had taken the monopoly of power away from the traditional aristocracy, it had still been dominated by relatively few individuals. Legitimate trade centred on individual factories which were sited on the coast and in the interior, for example along the Lueme and Kwilu rivers. Europeans rented land from local rulers and paid a monthly tax. Each factory had its own Mafouk and brokers. There was no unifying administrative structure to conduct trade on the African side. The production of crops such as rubber and palm-oil employed a new group of people.¹

Thus, by about 1870, the process set in motion in the slave trade era was intensified. More and more men of independent means were taking a title with the prefix "Ma", acquiring land and followers, and masquerading as the mfumu in their region. Bastian, for example, citing what he termed the most important of the Mabomas in Loango, gave 13 names; Mafouk became a title for any Vili who acted as a sort of consul at a European factory; there were many with the title of Mambouk, the most important being the governor of the frontier

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 252; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 200-201; A. Delcommune, Vingt Années, I, 36; O. Z. van Sandick, Herinneringen, 42, 51-52.

province with Mayombe. The titles were, however, generally meaningless in the 1870 context, for they were part of the old kingdom and not relevant to the new situation. It was often impossible to tell who bore the titles authentically, and who were imposters. The latter often tried to obtain recognition for their claims and permission to use the princely insignia, for like "upstarts" elsewhere, they had a lingering respect for tradition. Thus, they made pilgrimages to the capital to the Nganga Mvumbi to gain recognition so that they might legitimately wear special caps, shoulder decorations, carry sceptre-like knives, animals' tails, ride in hammocks - all marks of the princely class.¹

At the lower levels of society, the situation assisted new leaders who were looking for followers. This was partly a result of the end of the slave trade on the Loango Coast. There were, for example, groups of individuals - drifters, vagabonds, refugees, foreigners, debtors - who might previously have been sold in the slave trade. They could not remain in that state, especially in view of the confused situation in Loango, but had to seek support from some powerful individual. This they did by offering themselves in service to somebody in return for protection; they became dependents and were limited in their freedom, which could usually be

¹ A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 191-192, 194, 201, 255; E. Pechuel-Loesche, Volkskunde, 199, 203-205.

recovered on payment of an indemnity.¹

Other groups preferred to live apart from the Vili, finding their strength in the establishment of their own communities. These had no ties with the traditional political or social system in Loango. There were, for example, those referred to in German sources as Bavumbu. According to Pechuël-Loesche, they were traders who had connections with the Take and the region of Pumbu, their name being derived from Bantu ba Mpumbu. Bastian said that according to tradition, they came from Boma. The Bavumbu had come to the coast to find business, and became rich, winning the respect of the Vili. By the 1870s, they had settled in their own villages on the coast.² Others who lived apart from the Vili, by the same period, were groups of freed slaves who had returned from Brazil and the West Indies. Bastian cited a village called Matinika, for example, which had been founded by slaves who had returned from Martinique. Other freed slaves settled among the Vili and were absorbed by intermarriage.³

¹ A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, 195; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 195-199, 235-245, gives a detailed account of the various gradations in Vili society by the 1870s. This voluntary acceptance of a state of dependency may also have been part of traditional society, but the numbers of people in this state probably increased greatly, given the conditions of the nineteenth century. For a discussion of types of servitude, see E. de Jonghe, Les Formes d'Asservissement.

² A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 42-43, 275-277; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 6-7.

³ A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 179-180, 254-255; E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 4.

These new groups, whether drawn together by some powerful individual, or created by common interest and the end of the slave trade, were generally unstable. In traditional society, many factors held a village together through time - living on ancestral lands, family ties, respect for the traditional ruler. Some of those historic units still survived in the 1870s, especially in the interior. They had a hereditary prince and could sometimes show where the fire of state had burned.¹ Such communities were rare, however. The new villages had little to hold them together except for the power which the chief had to expel rivals and to command the respect of his followers. Villages were created and then fell apart in a short space of time.² The absence of a strong central authority meant that local wars between local rulers were a frequent occurrence. In 1873, for example, when Bastian went to visit the Nganga Mvumbi, Mani Nombe, he found that the dignity had withdrawn his residence into some thick woods nearby, in order to take shelter from the various small wars that were going on.³

¹E. Pechuël-Loesche, Volkskunde, 198-199, 204.

²ibid., 198-199, 204-205; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 194.

³O. Z. van Sandick, Herinneringen, 32; A. Bastian, Die Deutsche Expedition, I, 64. The power of the Maloango became limited to a small region around the capital. This was shown when Cordier, the French officer, made protection treaties with the Vili authorities in 1883. He concluded one treaty with the chiefs of Pointe-Noire and another identical treaty with the ruler at the Loango capital only a few miles away. See R. Lethur, Étude sur le Royaume de Loango, Appendix I and II, for copies of these treaties.

These social and political changes that were effected in Loango over three centuries were a living and vital response to the new forces introduced through the expansion of external trade. The dismemberment of the old Vili kingdom was not merely a process of decay, but rather an adaptation to circumstances; Professor Vansina has termed this the "dynamics of fragmentation".¹ Seventeenth century Loango was a vigorous kingdom which had the resources to allow control of the new trade contacts, rather than be swept along by them. As has been suggested, the initiative in Afro-European commercial relations was frequently on the African side. The Maloango may himself have been the instigator of the system through which the slave trade was administered. A sharing of power was necessary in view of the growth in the business of the central government. The broadening of the base of economic power probably brought about a greater devolution of authority than the ruler intended, and ended by making the office of Maloango irrelevant in practical terms. The passing of power from the central government to local chiefs was a process which was further encouraged by the trading situation in the nineteenth century.

¹J. Vansina, Kingdoms of the Savanna, 194.

Appendix

A PROVISIONAL AND INCOMPLETE LIST OF

LOANGO RULERS, C. 1600-1900

The following incomplete list of Loango rulers is based on published oral traditions and contemporary references. Unfortunately, there are only short periods towards the end of the 18th century and in the later 19th century when a sequence of rulers can be given with any certainty. In this list, the spelling of names as they appear in the sources has been retained. Where sources conflict, alternatives are usually given.

Sources: A. Battell, 44, 44 note 1, 45;
 L. B. Proyart, 130; J. Cuvelier, 21, 100;
 L. Degrandpré, I, 116; A. Bastian, I, 64, 266-267;
 E. Pechuël-Lesche, 155, 185, 188;
 R. E. Dennett (At the Back of the Black Man's Mind),
 5-7, 15; R. Lethur, Appendix, I.

c. 1600 Maloango Gembe (Gymbe, Njimbe). Following Gembe, the names of several rulers are known, but the sequence in which they ruled is not known: Maloangos Tati of Konde, Bicullu, Makussu, Nombe, Puati of Chibanga, Yambi, Mutati (possibly the same individual as Tati of Konde), Bicullu Unkangebange (same as Bicullu above ?)

? Maloango Ntangu
 ? - 1766 Maloango Makosse
 1766-1773 Interregnum
 1773-1787 Maloango Buatu (or Puati)

After 1787, a succession of Nganga Mvumbi followed. Three versions of these successions are available (i and ii) by Bastian, and (iii) by Dennett:

- i) Nganga Mvumbis Tati, Luemba, Macossu I, Puata I, Puati II, Macossu II, Macossu III, or:

- ii) Nganga Mvumbis Luemba, Mancossu, Umpuati, Nyambi, Mancossu, Umpuati, Mancossu, Nombe (also called Lemba Kambeninsiko), Luemba Mawalla, Gamwo Macossu Manombe, Gamwo Umpuati Umbunje, Yamba Muinsa, Puati Umtomba, Macossu Matukula, Makossu, or:
- iii) Nganga Mvumbis Makawso Masonga, Makawso Manawambo, Makawso Matukila of Kondi, Man'anawambo.

Following these:

- ? - 1874 Nganga Mvumbi Nombe or Numbi
 1874-1882
 or 1883 Nganga Mvumbi Ntatu
 1882 or
 1883 - ? Nganga Mvumbi Macasso Chicusso
 ? - ? Nganga Mvumbi Prati
 1898 - ? Nganga Mvumbi Luemba

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

ARCHIVES

1. Dutch Archives

i) Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague

These archives contain the records of the First and Second Dutch West India Companies. Those of the older company are very incomplete, since many of the papers were destroyed in the 19th century. The principal documents used were the Minutes of Directors' Meetings, Minutes of the meetings of the Zeeland and Amsterdam Chambers, reports from Brazil, Loango, Luanda, Elmina, and letters exchanged by Company servants and directors. For the Second West India Company, the main papers used were Minutes of Directors' Meetings and letters they exchanged with Elmina, for Elmina in turn directed the Loango Coast trade. Other papers consulted were the Elmina Journal (1658-1709), the Journal of Louis Dammaet, a Dutch factor on the Gold Coast (1652-1656) and the interesting Leupe Collection of maps.

ii) Rijksarchief, Middelburg

The archives of the Middelburg Commercial Company which sent ships to the Loango Coast between 1733 and 1794 are remarkably complete, having survived the almost total destruction of the town centre in 1940. The records used were the journals, account books, cargo books, and letter books of Company ships.

iii) Archives at Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and Leiden

The small West India Company file at Rotterdam (File 802) had only one document of importance for this study, a report on the trade of the West India Company's African trade about 1670. The journals of Pieter van den Broecke (1607-1612) are preserved in the University Library at Leiden (BPL 952). These journals have been published by K. Ratelband. The African trading records at Amsterdam had nothing of interest for the Loango Coast. Also at Amsterdam are the offices of the Nieuwe Afrikaansche Handelsvereeniging. Here there were few papers of relevance for this study; nevertheless, the Amsterdam archives do contain some interesting records of the Company's activities in the Congo during the late 19th century.

2. French Archives

i) Archives Nationales, Paris

The Colonial Archives before 1815 and Marine Archives before 1870 are deposited at the Archives Nationales. However, there are many exceptions to this rule. Papers used included official reports on the African trade and the journals and letters of ships' captains. The most complete file for the Loango Coast is C6/24, with documents from the 1780s.

ii) Archives Outre-Mer, Paris

The Colonial Archives of the 19th century contain some

relevant documents on the legitimate trade with the Loango Coast, and reports from the French anti-slave naval patrol, stationed at G_a bon. The section called Depots des Fortifications des Colonies is especially concerned with the plans and finances of establishments on the West African Coast, but also contains some general reports for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

iii) Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

The Departement des Cartes et Plans has a large and useful collection of maps. Apart from the famous d'Anville collection, there are many manuscript maps, some of which have comments on the margins concerning the trade of the region, concerned.

iv) Archives at Nantes and Rennes

Letters and papers about African slave trading enterprises can be found in almost all the archives of major French ports. Nantes has probably the most important collection, being the most active ville négrier of 18th century France. Papers used included letters from captains on the Loango Coast, petitions from Nantes merchants to the French Government, and general reports on the African trade.

v) French Missionary Archives

The archives of the Pères du Saint-Esprit and the Missions Étrangères were visited. Most of the papers of the former were too

late for this study, since their mission at Landana was begun in 1872. It was discovered that all the relevant papers in the second mission were already published by Cuvelier, in his Documents sur une Mission Française au Kakongo, 1766-1776, Brussels, 1953.

3. British Archives

i) Public Record Office, London

The records of the Royal African Company are deposited within this archive. The papers consulted were ships' journals, Minutes of the Court of Assistants, and some of the outgoing letters. The English Company's interest in the Loango Coast was very spasmodic, however,

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