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The Ancient Kingdom of Kongo: Its Present Position and Possibilities

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Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 5 (May, 1902), pp. 541-558

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1775621>

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The Geographical Journal.

No. 5.

MAY, 1902.

VOL. XIX.

THE ANCIENT KINGDOM OF KONGO *: ITS PRESENT POSITION AND POSSIBILITIES. †

By the Rev. THOMAS LEWIS.

It is a matter of genuine regret that a subject so full of interest and importance is not in the hands of a man who can do it justice, and bring with him more experience and authority in matters geographical than I possess. It has been my privilege to labour in Africa under the auspices of the Baptist Missionary Society for nineteen years, fifteen of which have been spent in Portuguese Congo, and for the most part at San Salvador.

My journeys in Kongo and Zomboland have been made wholly with a view of facilitating and extending the work of our society, and of studying the customs and habits of the people. But whatever qualifications I lack as a geographer, I claim to be a sincere devotee of the science, and an enthusiast in the work of opening up the Dark Continent to the light and blessing of civilization.

It is a remarkable fact that the northern portion of the province of Angola is the least known of all the districts in this part of Africa, notwithstanding its proximity to the sea-coast, and its being the first discovered by the early Portuguese travellers, and the country covered by the ancient kingdom of Kongo. We owe the very name of "Congo" to this old kingdom, for according to native usage the name applies only to the district around San Salvador, the native name for which is "Ekongo," and the natives know no other. The Congo river is generally called Nzadi, or Nzari, which means "the river," and is corrupted

* The form "Kongo" is adopted in this paper when it applies to the Ancient Kingdom, from which the name is derived, and "Congo" in its modern use as referring to the river or State territory.

† Map, p. 668.

by the Portuguese into Zaire, but when the people wish to distinguish it from other rivers, it is called Mwanza. Owing, perhaps, to the prominence given to the Kongo kings and court in the records of the Portuguese navigators and explorers of those days, the name has been applied in modern times not only to the ancient Kongo country, but to the Mwanza river, and to the vast region on both its banks reaching right away to the furthest limits of the Congo State. But while those vast regions are being rapidly opened up to the influx of commerce and civilization, this land, so rich in history and interest, has been passed by and to a great extent forgotten. What is known to-day of the ancient provinces of the kingdom of Kongo—Sonyo, Mbembe, Mbamba, Nsundi, Mpangu, and Mbata? Even Sonyo, situated nearest to the coast towards the mouth of the river, is practically a *terra incognita* to-day. Very little is known of this northern district lying between the river Congo and the Kwangu; even the delimitation of the boundary between the State and Portuguese territory has not yet been carried out.

We first became acquainted with this marvellous country in the story of the voyages of Diogo Cam, who, on reaching the mouth of the river in the year 1482, learnt from the natives who boarded his vessel that "far in the interior there lived a powerful king." He thereupon despatched to this king "some Christian negroes as his ambassadors," to assure him of the friendly intentions of his visitors from Portugal, and of their desire to trade. Thus was effected the first discovery of a wonderful people and a powerful African monarch.

Battell, Duarte Lopez, Cavazzi, and others have left us truly wonderful descriptions of the kingdoms of Kongo and Angola as they were, or supposed to be, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. And, making due allowance for a vivid imagination in matters of detail, we are compelled to recognize the royal service which these early travellers rendered to the cause of what may be termed "unscientific geography." In those palmy days of the Spanish and Portuguese nations, there is no doubt but that a certain amount of civilization was introduced into the country. The whites who were sent out from Portugal established themselves at several points on the south bank of the river, and with commendable skill and perseverance built houses, fortresses, and churches, the ruins of which are still to be seen at Sonyo near the mouth, at Mbembe in the interior behind Ambrizette, and notably at San Salvador, the capital of the ancient kingdom. This last is beyond doubt the most important, and is full of historical interest. We read of a mighty monarch who ruled over a vast region, with a host of princes governing dependent provinces. The pomp and glory of this brilliant court are startling in the extreme, and one gasps for breath at reading of the rapidity with which the king and nobles of a hitherto heathen and pagan country put on the garb of our European civilization and espoused the Christian religion. For in the year 1491 many priests arrived from

Europe, and very soon three churches were built—one dedicated to the Saviour, whence the city derived the name of San Salvador; the second

RUINS OF ANCIENT CHURCH, SAN SALVADOR.

and third were dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St. James, in recognition of their miraculous intervention on behalf of the people at a critical

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point in one of their battles. These were not, however, the first, for a church was erected when the first Christian king, Don Joaõ, made a vow of fidelity to God, and planted a large wooden cross in an open space in the town as a witness; afterwards he commanded that a church be erected on the spot, to be called the Church of the Holy Cross. In all eleven churches are spoken of as having been built here, but it is almost certain that they did not co-exist. Old buildings were destroyed and rebuilt; these were rededicated to some other saint according to the tastes of the priests there at the time, and hence the confusion. We are assured, for example, that one night the devil came and carried away the roof of the church of Santa Cruz, and the Yakkas from the Kwangu, who seem to have been in league with his majesty of the lower regions, followed hard after, and completed the destruction of both church and city.

When the Kongos, after a short period, reoccupied their capital with the help of Portuguese traders and priests, they directed their attention to the fortification of the city, and surrounded it with massive stone walls. They also constructed inner walls around the king's palace and the dwellings of the nobles; also one surrounding the European quarters. Pigafetta speaks of these walls, and his description of them is one of the few things that can be relied on in his highly embellished book of romances.

There may arise at some future time some sceptical and unbelieving spirits, who, unable to discover any traces of these walls, will ridicule the idea that they ever existed. The Government authorities and the Roman Catholic Mission at San Salvador have no veneration for these relics of a glorious past. The city walls have been demolished, and the stones from the foundations have been requisitioned for modern Government buildings. Our own mission has assisted in these acts of vandalism; but we protected the last piece of stone wall near the cathedral ruins—probably a portion of the monastery where the priests dwelt—until it became dangerous to life. Three years ago we were reluctantly compelled to pull it down, and the stones were used to erect a modern church large enough to accommodate 900 worshippers. About the same time the priests and Government officials made a futile attempt to restore the old cathedral. They pulled down the walls of the main building, and the side chapel dedicated to "Our Lady," with the intention of erecting a practically new church, but preserving the main arch of the chancel and the eastern end which contained the old and massive stone altar. They carried the walls up nearly to the square, when suddenly the whole structure collapsed. It was not the devil this time, but a heavy storm during the night, which caused the fall. The new building was not laid on the original foundations, and a rotten foundation on the graves of generations of African royalty was not sufficiently strong to bear the weight of a modern church. This

accounts for the present condition of these once picturesque ruins, and it must be confessed that they have lost the greater part of their interest to us. The arch, however, is still left us, standing firmly among the *débris*, and is about the only thing left to mark the civilization of three centuries ago.

The massive walls and churches were built of the ironstone so plentiful on the plateau on which San Salvador is situated. Some huge blocks of this stone were used in the foundations and for the doorways and arches of the churches. The walls had thin layers of limestones used as "headers" to bind them together. Very excellent mortar was

LAST PIECE OF THE CONVENT WALL, SAN SALVADOR.

made, and an abundant supply of limestone was obtained from the quarries a few miles away. The amount of labour represented by these ruins must have been enormous, but we must remember that the work was done in "the golden days of slavery," and Kongo at that time was the great centre of the trade. The population of the capital then is given at 100,000; to-day it does not exceed 1500.

Time changes everything, and to those of us who have laboured so much in trying to find good building-stone wherewith to build our houses, it is most tantalizing to read the fine description of the rocks of San Salvador given by Pigafetta. He says—

"The mountains of Congo furnish quarries of various valuable stones, from which might be cut columns, architraves, bases, and other

large blocks, for building anything that was required. Indeed, it is said some masses are of such enormous size, that a whole church might be cut out of a single piece of the stone, like that which forms the obelisk now standing before la Porta del Popolo. Besides these, there are the mountains producing porphyry, jasper, and white and coloured marbles, which in Rome are known as Numidian, African, and Ethiopian marbles, some columns of which are in the Gregorian Chapel. Other marbles are found here, and amongst them very fine ones inlaid with jacinths, which are gems, and form veins on the mother stones, and these, when separated and arranged in small pieces, can be formed so as to look like pomegranates. Columns, obelisks, and such-like works of art can be made from this marble, which sparkles as if studded with beautiful jewels."

Alas for the deterioration of the ages! As if it were not enough to rob us of the pomp and pageantry of a mighty African kingdom with its magnificent civilization and religion, we are left to wonder what has become of these mountains so marvellously rich in beautiful and precious stones. Pity they did not use this Numidian or Ethiopian marble in the construction of their churches—or at least in that of the church altars—instead of using the common ironstone. The fact is, these mountains of porphyry, jasper, and marble are purely the product of unbridled imagination.

It is impossible, with materials at our command, to say how long this city was occupied by the Portuguese. When the "trade" was firmly established, and the kings and nobles of Kongo became the active agents of the white traders and faithful vassals of the King of Portugal, the European residents could withdraw to the coast at Loanda and Ambrizette, paying yearly visits during the dry seasons to San Salvador to conduct to the coast the accumulated gangs of slaves. Sometimes, however, the gangs were entrusted to the care of a reliable native. I knew well two old men who went repeatedly for this purpose to Loanda. They counted on three months for the return journey, and many gruesome tales they had to relate. They thought that they were in the service of Nemptutu, the King of Portugal! The companies of slaves were generally accompanied by one or more priests, who received slaves from the natives in return for baptizing their children and administering spiritual consolation to the nobles of the land. These gangs of chained slaves, moving ponderously along on their way to the coast, have left behind them indelible marks; and their tracks are easily recognized by the names of towns and villages where they halted or encamped for the night. Such names are "Vunda," meaning "rest," where the midday halt was made, and "Vemadia," a corruption of "Ave Maria," where the priests and their newly made converts in bond chanted their vespers and rested for the night. Kinganga, again, is a name of a "town of the priests," and

the inhabitants of these towns consider themselves to this day the property of the Nganga, or the Catholic priest.

We have all through Kongo and Zombo a distinct connection with the past in the Santu or Christian names which every man and woman indiscriminately adopts in addition to the usual native name. The early priests gave their converts Christian names, and the titles Don and Donna were prefixed to the names of the king, queen, and princes. This established a custom which delighted the heart of every savage, and now every child that is born in the land is dubbed Don or Donna something; and it would be a most interesting psychological problem to demonstrate the power by which such empty and self-assumed titles

"IVORY" ROCKS NEAR SAN SALVADOR.

and names can fill a savage race to such a degree of unspeakable pride and personal vanity. It is considered a serious breach of etiquette and a personal insult to address anybody without first mentioning his Santu name, and elaborately calling him Don so-and-so.

The crucifix is another relic of the early missionaries, and is to be found often among the many fetishes of native chiefs. These are generally made of a brass figure fixed to an ebony cross, and in the Kongo district they are looked upon as charms. The Christian symbol or meaning is entirely lost, and they are besmeared with the sacrificial blood of animals at the hands of the witch-doctors in the same manner as all their other charms. In Zombo, however, the crucifix is a symbol of power passed down from one chief to his successor. This custom is general. Sometimes it is a sceptre, as in the case of the kings of Kongo, sometimes a sword, a knife or any trinket. The only crucifix

I have seen in Zombo belongs to a chief who rejoices in the name of Nkila-nkosi (the Lion's tail), whom I found one day sitting outside his hut polishing it with a piece of cloth and ashes. I was at once deeply interested, and he conversed freely with me about it, but it had no supernatural significance to him, and it was only a symbol of his chieftainship. He waxed eloquent at my asking him what would happen if it was lost or stolen from him, and he assured me that he would wage war with any offending clan who attempted such a thing. And he meant it.

No doubt the crucifix is the origin of the multitudinous crosses that are met with at every point. Nearly everybody has one among his fetishes, and sometimes they are elaborately carved. The traveller also sees arranged on the walls of houses of chiefs little crosses made of folded palm leaves. These represent presents of palm-wine made by visitors, and in accordance with strict etiquette, a leafy cross is inserted at the side of the stopper of each calabash or demijohn as a sign of respect to the recipient. He in turn displays these loving tokens on the walls of his hut to let passers-by know what an important man he is. And there is often a keen competition among rival chiefs as to who can display the greatest number. So it has come to pass that the most holy of symbols can be degraded to one of petty jealousies and debauchery.

Speaking of crosses, it is interesting to note that at the Kibokolo market-place, in the Zombo country, there is a huge wooden cross erected, as I have been told, to commemorate a treaty of peace made between the different clans of the district when they agreed to make this their common market, and their cause a common cause. Hence, the mere existence of wooden crosses does not necessarily mean that they mark the site of ancient Catholic missions.

To bring our story down to modern times, it is necessary to say that the kingdom many times in its history had to pass through trying and turbulent seasons, and there were occasions when the succession to the throne was not an easy matter to settle. The practice of polygamy does not simplify questions of royal succession, and there are always those conflicting claims of various clans and families who are ever ready to fight for the imaginary glory of such an exalted position as is only offered by a royal throne in the wilds of Africa.

One of these occasions occurred about fifty years ago, when three important clans gathered their forces in the neighbourhood of San Salvador, each claiming the right of succession. There was considerable fighting, and trade was impossible. The Portuguese despatched a force into the interior to quell the disturbance. They espoused the cause of the Kivuizi family, but not until there was much bloodshed did they succeed in placing Don Pedro on the coveted throne. Mbumba, one of the rival claimants, was appointed to the nominal position of

prince, and the title of "Nosso Principe" was conferred upon him. The third refused to acknowledge the new rule, and until his death, three years ago, he declined to pay homage to the King of Kongo. He hated the Portuguese with a perfect hatred. During the war a Portuguese officer fell into his hands, and Kiamvu carried away the head in triumph to his town, only a few miles away across the river Luezi. He cut out his heart, which he triumphantly ate at a great feast in honour of the occasion, while he drank his palm-wine out of the cranium of his victim's skull. This spectral vessel was constantly brought out on special occasions for his drinking-cup when he wished to display his prowess in war and his hatred of the Portuguese. Since

LUSENGELE STREAM, KIBOKOLO.

his death this relic has come to the hand of Senhor Faria Leal, the present Resident at San Salvador.

During this short occupation the Portuguese built a fortress covering a little under an acre of ground on a projecting point on the eastern end of the plateau. This stands to-day, but is of no special interest to us.

Such is the past record of a kingdom which has now been reduced to all but an empty name, for the present king of Kongo is nothing more than an ordinary native chief, with very limited powers, even over his own people. Nevertheless, he is endowed with a remarkable amount of self-importance and conceit, imagining himself of more consequence than the Tsar of all the Russias, and having an equal only in the King of Portugal.

The district of Kongo, as this northern portion of the province of Angola is officially known, varies considerably in different parts in respect of soil, climate, and scenery. A distant view from the deck of an ocean steamer as we enter the mouth of the river affords a most pleasing effect of a combination of graceful palms and tropical verdure, and the eye catches with delight a glimpse of the green grass which clothes the distant hills; but as we steam up the river close to the banks of the swampy islands, and watch the muddy water oozing out from among the peculiarly formed roots of the mangroves, one's enthusiasm for the beautiful is very considerably modified. When about 60 miles from the mouth, we reach Boma—the capital of the Congo State—on the north bank, where there is quite a settlement of Europeans of all nations, but principally Belgian officers of the State. The mangrove swamps are now left behind, and the river becomes narrower, with rugged barren hills on both sides. We have lost the thick tropical foliage, but it is decidedly picturesque (from the deck of a steamer). When Noki or Matadi is reached, and we make the acquaintance of real African life, it is then that we realize what the Kongo country and the climate can be. Many a new-comer has watched the departure of the steamer in which he sailed for this inhospitable land, with a bitter tear and an aching heart, and often saw it for the last time. Noki and Matadi, in close proximity to each other, are perhaps the most deadly places on the Congo. The heat is great, and the bare rocky surface of the soil around the dwellings reflects the rays of the sun so that sometimes it is unbearable. The sanitation, or rather the absence of it, is a disgrace to any nation, and happy is the man whose lot it is to proceed inland and dwell on the highlands of the interior. We who go into Portuguese territory climb up the famous Noki hill, the ruggedness of which did not seem half so formidable from the steamer as it is in reality; but once on the top, about 900 feet above the sea, we breathe more freely. We proceed on our journey, at first dodging around boulders of rocks and passing over rough road, but as we advance further away from the river the soil becomes richer and the roads better. For the first three days we meet with hardly any native villages, and there is very little cultivation of the ground; but after the third day we come to the rich valleys of the Mpozo and Luzo; then we cross the Lunda and lesser streams, all running into the Mpozo. In the productive soil of these valleys the grass grows very high—about 15 feet in some places—and it is with great difficulty we make our way through it. Nearing San Salvador, which is reached about the sixth day, the country becomes more hilly, and about three and a half hours before we reach the capital we pass the Mpungi, or Ivory rocks, so called by the natives on account of their peculiar peaky appearance. There are many superstitions about these rocks, which cannot be noticed in this paper.

At San Salvador we are 1840 feet above sea-level. The town is very much like any other African village, situated on the top of a hill, with the river Luezi winding at the foot from the east to the south. Here we have come within the limits of the accompanying route-map, and I need not enter into much detail about the country. Leaving San Salvador in an easterly direction, we pass over an undulating country, and after travelling about 50 miles we reach the foot of the plateau. The ascent is very steep and rugged, and the scenery grand. Close by are the Mbrizi falls, well known to geographers; but there are, not many miles to the south, two other falls, to all appearance equal in volume to those at Kizulu, and the waters of both falling into the Mbrizi in the valley. Travelling along this plateau, we pass the source of the Mbrizi river, and not far away is the highest point I have registered, viz. 3400 feet above the sea. Further on this plateau is abruptly broken by the Lufunde valley, on both sides of which are deep chasms and precipitous rocks, and the sparkling waterfalls are a delightful change to the weary traveller after the monotony of the journey. The valley is very fertile and well cultivated, but there are many swamps and morasses, which are here utilized for an extensive eel fishery. They are caught by means of small bottle-shaped basket traps made of split bamboo. The fish are arranged on a spit about a yard long, and then smoked over a fire, and thus preserved they are ready for the markets. The catfish (*ngola*), which abounds in the rivers, is treated in the same manner.

Having crossed the Lufunde, we ascend once more to the plateau where, three years ago (in 1899), our society established a new mission station at Kibokolo, which I hope to call my home for some years to come, and make it a centre from which to make journeys into the unexplored regions to south and east. Continuing our journey eastwards on the plateau, we come to the Nkissi river, which is known here as Nzadi a Malewa. The Malewa valley is extremely swampy, and the river constantly overflows its banks during the rainy season, rendering it dangerous to cross in the roughly hewn native canoes which ply for hire at the various ferries. The river is infested with crocodiles, but there is some fishing and a large quantity of edible shellfish, in appearance like periwinkles, but much larger. This is the furthest point east that we have touched, and I found that the dialect spoken in this district differed somewhat from the Kongo language, although we could easily understand each other.

The principal point of interest to the geographer in this sketch-map of the Zombo highlands is the number of river sources it shows. Zombo, in a most literal sense, is a land of water and streams, clear as crystal; sometimes rippling through shady glens and pebbly watercourses, then dashing down a ravine and over the precipitous rocks into the valley beneath. Within this small area we have the sources of the well-known

rivers of Luvu, Kwilu, Fulezi, Luango, all running north towards the Congo; while the Mbrizi, Pasasa, and Lufunde flow to the south, joining, however, before they empty themselves into the Atlantic. Thus the Zombo country forms the watershed of the Congo-Mbrizi basin.

The greatest part of the country is covered by the common African grass, which, however, is shorter and less coarse on the highlands, and is burnt by the natives in the dry season of every year. The woodland is practically confined to river-banks and ravines, with patches around the towns and villages. Good timber for building purposes is limited. There are one or two excellent trees, notably the nkamba, or African mahogany, and nlongwa, a good working wood, of which there is a fair supply in most districts. The baobab is met with everywhere, but is practically useless.

The soil is good and produces a variety of things. In Kongo the women do all the farm work, but in Zombo the men are more industrious, and do a fair share of the farm labour. The tillage is of the simplest and the implements primitive. The hoe is the only implement used, with a cutlass to clear away the brushwood if necessary. They work a piece of land for a year or two, and get out of it an average of three crops a year; then they allow it to lie fallow until they take a fancy to return to it. There are no land laws, and consequently no landlordism—a model place for a certain class of politicians—and the first person to select a plot of ground and mark it with his hoe, occupies it as long as he uses it. No rent or taxes are demanded. The African grows his food cheaply and easily, for the labour of scratching the surface of the soil with a hoe is very light. The principal native products are the manioc or cassava, yams, sweet potato, maize, millet, and various kinds of beans and pumpkins; the seeds of the latter are considered a delicacy, and take the place of meat to a great degree. These, with the plantain and banana, are the principal foodstuffs of the Kongos and Zombos.

The natives are not heavy meat-eaters. The domestic fowl—that marvellous combination of skin, bones, and feathers—the old friend of all African travellers, and the inevitable bleating goat, are common to all districts. There are also some sheep to be had. But the darling pet of a Kongo man is his pig. You can treat his wife and children as you like, but if you touch his pig, beware! To kill a man's pig that breaks through your fence and digs up your vegetable garden is to commit the unpardonable sin, and the owner never forgives you. Hog's flesh is equally dear to him. Game in some parts is plentiful, but more especially in Zombo. There we have several kinds of deer, antelopes, and wild hares; the only difficulty is to bag them. Guinea-fowls, partridges, and pigeons abound, and there are some pheasants; and in the swampy valleys we find wild ducks and many other birds. Eagles, vultures, and other birds of prey, are common, and very

annoying, while the woods are resplendent with the gorgeous plumage of the birds. Elephants, buffaloes, and leopards are to be found, but must be sought for in the more sparsely populated districts.

The climate of Zombo, compared with that of the Congo in general, is healthy. At Kibokolo, although for the past two or three years we have lived in a rough way in temporary grass houses, the health has been excellent. The same thing may be said of the Portuguese at Makela, who say that the climate is equal to that of Portugal, which is doubtful. It is too early yet to speak with any certainty on this subject, and time alone can decide it. But with an altitude of over 3000 feet, a sandy and well-drained soil, with an abundant supply of

A NATIVE SMITHY, CONGO.

excellent water, I see no reason why it should not be a fairly healthy climate. Certainly it is a great improvement on the swampy lowlands of the Congo valley. The mean maximum temperature is 84.6° in the shade, and the mean minimum 64.8° , thus giving an average daily range of twenty degrees. The rainfall last year was 55.5 inches, which, I believe, was below the average. The rainy season is from October to May. Reports recently received from Kibokolo announce very heavy rains in the month of September last.

We must here pass by the manners and customs of the people—the subject is too tempting a one to venture even on the fringe of it—but we must say a word in reference to the natural capacity and character of the people themselves.

The native is the principal factor in the development of any country, but especially is this the case in the tropics, where everything depends

on native labour. We cannot afford to neglect him; and no knowledge of the country is complete without a thorough understanding of the native as he is and as he can be. The mind of the savage is not a blank; and when one becomes familiar with his beliefs and superstitions, and the complicated nature of his laws and customs, preconceived notions of his simplicity of thought go to the winds. I have yet to find that most apocryphal of beings described as the "unsophisticated African." We laugh at and ridicule his fetishes and superstitions, but we fail to follow the succession of ideas and effort of mind which have created these things. After most careful observations extending over nineteen years, I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing in the customs and fetishes of the African which does not represent a definite course of reasoning. On my first journey into the Zombo country, in 1898, we came across at almost every point a peculiar arrangement in the form of a trap, which was set up at the entrance into villages and huts, and on inquiry I learnt that these were traps with which they endeavoured to catch the devil. Very ludicrous, certainly; but then I tried to imagine the gigantic feat of mental exercises which enabled them to think out a plan to secure so desirable an end. And can it be possible that the savage mind has gone a long way ahead of his civilized brother in making some attempt to capture the common enemy? The point which I wish to press is that the native is capable of thinking and reasoning, and therefore can be trained to take a prominent part in the development of his country.

Hitherto, both the country and its people have been sadly neglected. And I venture, at this critical time in the history of Africa, to put in a plea for a fuller recognition of the native element in dealing with African questions. You cannot manage Africa apart from the African, and the future destiny of this vast continent from the Cape to Cairo will depend in a large measure on how we deal with the natives. It is of the utmost importance that they should be trained and equipped to take their proper position in the triumphant march of progress and civilization. I view with the deepest concern and distrust the present fever-heat rush of civilization into the heart of Africa. It is not a natural growth, and it does not represent any real development of the native character. It is the quick growing fungus that rots the whole structure. It is the donning of a suit of ready-made clothes to cover the Ethiopian skin, and the wearer will not know how to mend or patch it. The imported article is very good for fiscal purposes, but, whether it be in commerce or in religion, we ought never to lose sight of the truth that a veneer of civilization is the worst possible thing for a savage people, and carries with it the seeds of all trouble, political and otherwise. Freedom without principle means anarchy and confusion. For this reason domestic slavery cannot be abolished by force. The progress of the country and the advancement of free institutions

depend wholly on the development of the character of its people, and this can only be effected by a long and patient course of training. And in this noble work Christian missions occupy a leading position.

From this point of view, it is not altogether a disadvantage that this country is in the hands of the least ambitious and self-assertive of European governments. The very weakness and poverty of the Portuguese has its advantages, for the small military force at their command makes them wary of entering upon mischievous punitive expeditions and thus devastating large tracts of country. About twenty native soldiers are sufficient for San Salvador, and at the military post of Makela the officer there has managed to keep the peace with three. I have great admiration for the tact and wisdom of any government which guards itself against the mistake of placing too many soldiers at the command of an inferior and inexperienced officer. Nevertheless, one would fain see a little more activity on the part of the Government in opening up the country, and it is a matter for congratulation that during the past few years some advance has been made. In the year 1887 an official resident settled at San Salvador, but commercially this old capital is of little importance, and the trade is very small. The trade routes and rubber markets are some distance away. While the Portuguese were vegetating on the coast and at San Salvador, the trade was being diverted across the borders into the Free State at Chiloango, Tumba Mani, and other points where the Belgians had prosperous trading stations. This constant deflection of trade from the Portuguese district had the effect of waking up the authorities to a sense of their duty, and in 1896 a fiscal station was established at Makela, near the borders. Seven or eight trading firms have their agents there at present. The competition between them is very keen, and it is doubtful whether the existence of so many conflicting interests are a blessing to the country in any sense. Three years later a third military post was established to guard the interest of the province at the extreme north-east corner on the Kwangu river, and it is expected that this will be effective in protecting trade.

A more important move, in my opinion, would be to protect the principal caravan routes from the interior to the coast stations. Often these routes are closed against all on account of native disputes and fightings. On such occasions unwary caravans are attacked and plundered of all their goods and produce. Even in time of peace, it is appalling the amount of blackmailing that goes on. The owner of a native caravan with rubber, going from Zombo to the coast, considers himself fortunate if he reaches the trading stations with half his rubber in his possession, and more fortunate still if he carries home with him the greater part of the goods he received for it. This blackmailing system is of such enormous dimensions that whole towns and districts practically live on their plunder of native caravans, and, as far as I

know, the Government has never attempted to cope with this most serious obstacle to trade and the development of the country. I am far from suggesting the misguided policy of despatching a force of native soldiers to burn towns and villages and clear the *routes* of all natives. This is no government, and whenever the policy has been followed it has been most disastrous. It is of the first importance that native carriers should be able to obtain food on the way as they go with their heavy burdens to the coast, for they cannot carry with them sufficient provision for their return journey. This fact partly accounts for the great difficulty experienced by traders and others in obtaining carriers for the transport of their merchandise. This transport problem is a very serious one, and the final solution of the difficulty will not be arrived at until railways have been constructed from the coast to the chief markets in the interior. Under the present system the Government official at Makela is practically a recruiting agent, running all over the country and demanding under threats and penalties so many carriers from native chiefs for the various trading houses.

But the most serious outlook for the future, however, is that the whole district, rich in fertile valleys and productive highlands, is lying idle, without any attempt to make use of it. The last report of H.M. Consul at Loanda is absolutely correct, when it says that "thousands of square miles of rich land are to be met with on the margins of the different rivers and in the higher lands in the interior awaiting the plough and harrow," but the Government gives no facilities or encouragement to bring these vast regions under cultivation. A school of agriculture and the establishment of a botanical garden would be a step in the direction of averting the total ruin which threatens the province. I do not know of a single commodity of commercial value which is produced in the Kongo and Zombo countries except what the natives consume themselves. A little coffee is grown in one or two places. The cultivation of rubber has almost, if not wholly, disappeared. What is brought to the markets to-day comes from a long distance away. The soil will grow almost everything. Coffee grows well; the tobacco-plant is a sight worth seeing in Zombo, and flourishes everywhere; sugar-cane thrives luxuriantly in the valleys and on the hills. In fact, with a little enterprise, I see no reason why other tropical and sub-tropical plants should not be introduced, with lasting advantage to the country.

Here we are confronted with the difficult problem of native labour, which is essential to success in an agricultural undertaking. But I venture to think that this is not so serious an obstacle as we are sometimes led to believe. The African native *can* work and *will* work when he is taught to take an interest in it, as can be shown by the fact that the large church completed three years ago by our mission at San Salvador was built *entirely* by the young men trained by myself, and

paid for by the natives themselves. The difficulty in the case of a savage is that his needs are so few that there are really no inducements for him to work; and as long as he is satisfied with bare animal existence, simply to eat and to drink and wear no clothing, there is no earthly reason why he should do any work. The obvious remedy to all this is to create new needs by educating him to take a wider view of life and holding before him higher ideals. It is an immense advantage even to trade to tell a man that he ought to support his wife and children in a respectable manner, to build a decent house to shelter them, and to clothe them modestly as human beings, instead of depending on his wives for the food which he eats. He will then have to rouse himself from his sloth and inactivity, and apply himself diligently to some remunerative occupation, which will be the making of himself and the salvation of his country.

In closing, I would say that the future of this ancient kingdom of Kongo does not depend on the discovery of gold or copper mines within its borders, but on the more important discovery of the native himself—the discovery of all that is best in him and all that is noble. For generations he has been looked upon as “a slave,” “a piece,” and “a hand,” but not until the *man* in him is found and recognized can there be any real progress made in the development of Africa.

APPENDIX.

METEOROLOGY.—The following is an abstract of thirteen months' meteorological observations made by the Rev. Thomas Lewis at Comber station, Kibokolo, in the Zombo country ($6^{\circ} 16' S.$, $15^{\circ} 17' E.$, 3100 feet). The instruments in use were a self-registering rain-gauge by Crosley, and a combined maximum and minimum thermometer by Hughes & Sons.

Month.	Temperature.					Rainfall.		
	Mean max.	Mean min.	Mean 9 a.m.	Extremes.		Inches.	No. of days.	Highest in 24 hours.
				Highest.	Lowest.			
1899.	°	°	°	°	°			
November	83.5	65.8	71.9	91	63	9.26	16	3.12
December	84.2	65.9	73.4	93	61	7.25	11	1.01
1900.								
January	83.5	66.7	70.8	92	65	7.16	9	1.62
February	86.2	67.4	71.1	93	66	6.98	5	2.44
March	86.5	66.7	73.2	98	63	5.06	9	2.70
April	86.0	66.8	72.5	93	63	12.22	13	3.35
May	88.3	66.6	73.0	98	63	5.66	9	1.35
June	84.4	61.0	66.5	97	55	0.00	—	—
July	79.9	57.6	62.0	92	54	0.00	—	—
August	81.2	57.9	63.3	89	53	0.00	—	—
September	83.7	62.1	67.6	93	56	0.81	3	0.45
October	85.6	65.5	71.4	95	62	8.19	9	2.07
November	84.9	65.8	72.7	91	63	5.00	12	1.28
Means or totals * ...	84.6	64.8	69.8	—	—	58.33	80	—

* December, 1899, to November, 1900.

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The first rain in 1900 fell on September 15. June to August were rainless. There are two rainy seasons, as at San Salvador, with maxima in April and in October or November. Heavy hail fell in the afternoon of December 29. Many of the hailstones were over half an inch in diameter, and the ground was white.

MR. LEWIS'S MAP.—The map accompanying this paper is based upon the Rev. Thomas Lewis's itinerary surveys, checked by latitude observations at eleven stations. The longitudes are dependent upon the Rev. Geo. Grenfell's careful determination of the position of San Salvador, viz. $6^{\circ} 15' 45''$ S., $14^{\circ} 17' 30''$ E. These results differ very considerably from the results claimed to have been obtained by Dr. Chavanne, viz. San Salvador, $6^{\circ} 20' 28''$ S., $14^{\circ} 47' 3''$ E.; and Kizulu village, $6^{\circ} 17' 19''$ S., $15^{\circ} 18' 54''$ E. (*Reisen und Forschungen im alten und neuen Kongostaate*, Jena, 1887, p. 455). Information furnished by former explorers of the country has been inserted in skeleton letters.—E.G.R.

Before the reading of the paper, the CHAIRMAN (Mr. G. S. MACKENZIE, Vice-President) said: I regret to say that through indisposition your President is unable to be present to-night to fill the chair, and I am called upon to do so in his absence. I have much pleasure in introducing to you the Rev. Mr. Thomas Lewis, who has spent twenty years of his life on the West Coast of Africa, and will to-night read to you a paper on "The Ancient Kingdom of Kongo: its Present Position and Possibilities." We are indebted to the African missionary, not only for his work in educating and civilizing the native, but also for the many important geographical explorations made by him. In connection with the latter, I have only to mention the names of Livingstone, Moffat, Hannington, Mackay, and many others too numerous to enumerate, to ensure our giving Mr. Lewis, as a member of the missionary body, a most hearty welcome here to-night. I will now ask Mr. Lewis to read his paper.

After the reading of the paper, the following discussion took place:—

The CHAIRMAN: We have a letter of regret from Sir Henry Stanley, saying that he is unable to be here to-night. He made an effort to get off a previous engagement, but was unable to do so. Sir Harry Johnston wrote also to say he had an engagement, but, if possible, would look in.

Mr. E. G. RAVENSTEIN: I am a very poor substitute for either Sir Henry Stanley or Sir Harry Johnston, but I will, nevertheless, offer a few remarks. I think you will all agree with me that we are very much indebted to the Rev. Mr. Lewis. It is not the first time that the Society has been indebted to a missionary of the Baptist Missionary Society. Mr. Grenfell before this has achieved distinction as an African explorer, and, though a missionary, has done geographical work which, I believe, exceeds in value the work done by many men who claim to have gone into Africa as African explorers. Mr. Lewis has spoken wisely and discreetly of the needs of Africa. It is wonderful to think that the ancient kingdom of Kongo, which was supposed to be a glorious kingdom in the days when the Portuguese first became acquainted with it, should have sunk so low, notwithstanding the influence of civilization. But this is not what I should like to speak about to-night; I rather wish to draw attention to the great value of the geographical work done by Mr. Lewis. He is quite right in deploring that this kingdom of Kongo, with its history of 400 years—a very long history for an African kingdom—should not be better known in these days. The Portuguese knew it in their early days, and so did the missionaries, but their accounts were so vague that we utterly failed to

Note.

The following Latitudes were determined by Rev. Tho. Lewis, the Longitudes being based on the position of S. Salvador as determined by a series of observations by Rev. Geo. Grenfell.

				LAT.	"	LONG.	"
S. Salvador	-	-	-	6	15 45	14	17 30
Kialundwa	-	-	-	6	12 50	14	18 10
Ntanda (Mbanza)	-	-	-	6	9 20	14	28 20
Bangu	-	-	-	6	11 40	14	47 30
Kizulu (Arthington) Falls	-	-	-	6	14 0	14	48 30
Mpeveleka	-	-	-	6	16 0	14	50 0
Koma	-	-	-	6	8 50	14	59 50
Makela (Mbongi)	-	-	-	6	2 45	15	18 30
Tadi	-	-	-	6	6 15	15	17 10
Kibokolo (Comber Sta.)	-	-	-	6	16 20	15	17 30
Kimfuti	-	-	-	6	24 0	15	9 30
Kibulungu	-	-	-	6	10 15	15	32 15

E. G. Ruwenstein